

One-way traffic or highway to mutual benefit?

Part 1: China and Africa in the era of Mao Zedong

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Samevatting

Tans is die geweldige oplewing in handels- en ander betrekkinge tussen China en Afrika op almal se lippe. Daar word gevra hoe dit binne die konteks van internasionale betrekkinge beoordeel behoort te word. In hierdie artikel, bestaande uit twee dele (Deel Twee volg in 'n volgende uitgawe van *New Contree*), word die historiese ontwikkeling van betrekkinge tussen die Volksrepubliek van China en Afrikastate sedert 1949 ontleed. Deel 1 handel oor die “eerste golf” van China-Afrikabetrekkinge tydens die bewind van Mao Zedong, en deel 2 oor die “tweede golf” in die tydperk sedert 1976. Hierdie eerste deel van die artikel berus op 'n sintese van die standaardwerke oor China-Afrikabetrekkinge wat in die 1960's en 1970's verskyn het. Tot vandag toe het daar nog nie sodanige nuwe inligting oor die Mao-era aan die lig gekom wat 'n grootskaalse revisie van destydse sienings regverdig nie. Die hoofdoel van die artikel in sy geheel is om die histories-wetenskaplike feite oor die evolusie van Chinese betrekkinge met Afrika oor 'n periode van sestig jaar daar te stel, sover moontlik gestroop van die Westerse en Oosterse propaganda wat dikwels die ware feite vertroebel. Tendense, patrone, kontinuïteit en diskontinuïteit tussen die twee golwe van China-Afrikabetrekkinge word vergelyk om 'n relatief objektiewe perspektief op die huidige intensiewe betrekkinge te probeer verkry, en die leser in staat te stel om 'n beter oordeel oor die onderwerp te vel.

Introduction

The period since the People's Republic of China (PRC) launched its new Africa policy in January 2006 has not only been the period of the most intense diplomatic interaction ever between the emerging Asian giant and the African continent, but also a period in which the two-way trade between China and Africa has continued to increase at an amazing rate.

What is the significance of the strengthening of diplomatic and economic relations between China and Africa in recent months? In this two-part article the development of China-Africa relations since 1949 is investigated from a historical perspective. The first part of the article deals with Chinese relations with Africa during the reign of Mao Zedong (the so-called “first wave”) and the second part with these relations after the Mao era (the “second wave”). Trends, patterns, continuities and discontinuities between the two “waves” are analysed to put the current relations between China and Africa in their proper historical and international relations context.

This first part of the article takes the form of a synthesis of scientific research about China-Africa relations published in the 1960s and 1970s. Several of the standard works on the topic were consulted. Considering the fact that mainly English-language texts were used and a few of them were written from a decidedly pro-Western bias in the context of the Cold War period, special care was taken to avoid anti-Chinese propaganda. It must be noted that not too much new information about the Mao period, that could result in a major revision of existing knowledge, has become available since the late 1970s. The main purpose of this article is to provide the historical background of the PRC’s relations with Africa, which have evolved over a period of almost sixty years, as objectively as possible, in order to interpret the historical data as an aid to assessing the significance of what is happening currently in terms of China-Africa interaction.

Chinese contacts with Africa before 1949

Chinese scholars claim that their country’s contacts with Africa may go back as far as the Han dynasty (202 BC – AD 220), when Chinese wares probably found their way to Kush and African goods from Axum were allegedly brought to China. There are no records of direct human contacts in this early period, but it is not impossible that African and Chinese traders may have met along the long-distance trade routes of the time.¹

During the Tang dynasty (AD 618-907) a Chinese officer, Du Huan, visited a place called Molin, probably in contemporary Eritrea. His reports on Africa were the first by a Chinese person.²

1 P Snow, *The star raft. China’s encounter with Africa* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 2.

2 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 3.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries a flourishing trade across the ocean developed between South China and East Africa, with Muslim traders as intermediaries. Relatively large quantities of sought after African goods, including ivory, tortoise shell, frankincense and ambergris, reached China. The Chinese porcelain and coins found at archaeological sites on the Swahili coast (in contemporary Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique) and at Great Zimbabwe as well as Mapungubwe, provide evidence of the exchange of goods across the ocean over an extended period of time. A group of Africans, led by a person called Zengjiani, and probably traders rather than state ambassadors, was reported to have visited the Chinese court in the late eleventh century. They were treated with respect.³

In the Song period, from the twelfth century, the Chinese built ships for ocean voyages and became a maritime people, possessing the best seafaring technology of their time. The earliest evidence of African slaves in the service of wealthy Cantonese people dates from the twelfth century. A Chinese cartographer, Zhu Siben, compiled a map of Africa in the early fourteenth century, probably using Arab data. Wang Dayuan, who claimed to have travelled round the Indian Ocean on merchant voyages in the 1330s, is today regarded as the first Chinese visitor to the East African coast.⁴

It was during the Ming dynasty that more direct contacts between China and Africa occurred. Around the same time that African visitors from Malindi, Mogadishu and Brava made the journey to the Chinese emperor's court the large fleet of the famous navigator Zheng He, the Grand Eunuch of the Three Treasures and so-called "Chinese Columbus", called at various ports on the East African coast. His galleons sailed down the coast from Somalia to Mozambique on a series of expeditions between 1414 and 1433 to demonstrate the power of the Chinese empire and to track down the political foes of the Chinese emperor. It is even possible that Zheng He's ships may have sailed round the southern tip of Africa. Although on occasions tens of thousands of soldiers accompanied the Chinese fleet, they did not, like the Portuguese later, come to conquer, only to win the allegiance of distant peoples for their emperor. The most prized item brought back to the emperor was a giraffe.⁵

3 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 5, 6, 8, 19-20.

4 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 8, 9, 11, 19.

5 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution* (London, Hutchinson, 1975), p. 11; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa: An analysis of contemporary Soviet, Chinese and Cuban policies* (Richmond, Foreign Affairs Publishing Company, 1977), p. 58; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 21-30; X Qin, "Summit new peak in China-Africa relations", *China Daily*, 31 October 2006, p. 4.

Chinese civil servants, who adopted the Confucian world view, regarded these voyages across the ocean as a not useful, extravagant and even frivolous activity. They persuaded the emperor to put a stop to the expeditions. Even the records of Zheng He's great voyages were destroyed. By this time the Chinese capital had been moved from Nanking to Beijing 1,000 kilometres further north, which signified the closing of China's doors to the outside world. The last official contact with Africa in the Ming period occurred in 1441 when an Egyptian sultan sent envoys with tribute to the imperial court.⁶

Because of the vast distance separating China from Africa and the technological constraints of the pre-industrial era, direct links between China and Africa did not materialise for hundreds of years.

During the period of European colonial expansion in Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was an indirect link between China and Africa in the form of Chinese labourers used by European colonial powers in Africa. Chinese mineworkers were brought to South Africa. In other parts of Africa Chinese workers helped to construct many of the continent's early railway lines.⁷

Maoist China and Africa: policy objectives and approaches

For a few years after assuming power in 1949 the new communist regime in Beijing did nothing to reach out to Africa. There were several reasons for this:

- The communists had to focus on consolidating their authority within China.
- All the attention of the PRC in terms of foreign relations was focussed on relations with other Asian states within its immediate geo-strategic sphere of influence.
- Much energy was expended on the PRC's involvement in the Korean War.
- Very few African states had attained independence and could pursue independent foreign relations.⁸

By the mid-fifties, when many African states were on the verge of independence from colonial rule, the situation had changed. From Africa's side there

⁶ A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 11; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 30-31.

⁷ P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 41, 46, 47.

⁸ See e.g. A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 4-5.

had been much interest in independence movements in colonial Asia. Because there had been no official contact before, very little knowledge about China existed in Africa.⁹ Several African leaders explored the possibility of links with the communist world and attended East bloc meetings in the 1950s.¹⁰ Soon the Chinese and several African leaders would start showing an interest in closer relations.

The event which created the opportunity for the PRC to initiate its modern links with Africa was the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. The meeting at this conference of Zhou Enlai, the Chinese premier, with Gamal Abdel Nasser, the leader of Egypt, gave the PRC the opening it needed to launch relations with Africa. Zhou established a working relationship with Nasser and Egypt accepted the Chinese invitation to send a delegation to Beijing.¹¹

After Bandung a new type of understanding between China and some African countries started emerging. In September 1956 a new West Asian and African Affairs Department was established in the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹²

Why would the Chinese leaders be interested in building relations with countries on a distant continent, which could offer little to China by way of strategic or economic benefits? In order to be able to answer this question the interrelatedness of the PRC's African policy with the overall objectives of the Chinese foreign policy must be appreciated. These objectives during Mao's rule were according to Smaldone:

- Diversification and expansion of its foreign trade and economy.
- Gaining international recognition and influence.
- Achieving a position of leadership among Third World nations.
- Winning the mantle of ideological guide in the communist world.
- Undermining Western influence in the international system.¹³

China-Africa relations in the Mao period must be interpreted in the context

9 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 9.

10 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 72.

11 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 8; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 59.

12 BD Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970: The foreign policy of the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), p. 26; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 62.

13 JP Smaldone, "Soviet and Chinese military aid and arms transfers to Africa: a contextual analysis", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1980), p. 102.

of the Cold War and cannot be separated from the PRC's relations with the USA and the USSR. The following considerations applied in this regard:

- Relations with the USA: After a hundred years of Chinese humiliation at the hands of foreign powers it was no surprise that it would be a major objective of Mao's government to challenge the Western domination of world affairs.¹⁴ As a communist state the PRC was an enemy of the USA. During the Mao period the two countries fought each other in bitter wars in Korea and Vietnam. US propaganda was levelled against the "yellow peril" or "red menace" from China. The Americans accused the PRC of being a "trouble-maker" and trying to instigate revolution in Africa.¹⁵ China sought allies to counter US efforts to isolate her.
- Relations with the USSR: In the late 1950s a widening split between the PRC and her former closest ally, the USSR, occurred. It culminated in an open break in the 1960s. Not only did the PRC start following a foreign policy independent from Soviet inputs, but Beijing also launched a bitter campaign against the Soviet Union. Some observers interpreted China's African policy as a series of pragmatic manoeuvres to counter Soviet influence on the continent.¹⁶

Africa came to play a crucial role in China's fight against "American imperialism" and "Soviet revisionism" and her bid for international legitimacy and power. To strengthen her own position vis-à-vis the superpowers the PRC projected herself as a developing country or part of the so-called Third World. Events in the 1950s and 1960s convinced the Chinese leaders that the Third World, with its economic poverty and political instability, was the principal revolutionary element in the international system. Beijing's strategy, first expressed by Lin Biao in the 1960s, was to work towards joining the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Central America in a united liberation front to challenge the world domination of the superpowers and to create a new force in international politics.¹⁷

¹⁴ P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. xiv.

¹⁵ See e.g. JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa: Red China's African offensive* (New York, Walker and Company, 1965), p.3; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p.3; H Kapur, *China in world politics* (New Delhi, India International Centre, 1975), p. 31.

¹⁶ See H Kapur, *China in world politics*, p.31; EK Lawson, "China's policy in Ethiopia and Angola", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 167.

¹⁷ H Kapur, *China in world politics*, pp. 34, 39; GT Yu, *China's African policy: A study of Tanzania* (New York, Praeger, 1975), p. 4; EK Lawson, "China's policy in Ethiopia and Angola", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 178; JP Smaldone, "Soviet and Chinese military aid ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 102; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. xvi.

As a result of their shared experience of anti-colonialist struggle and their common desire to preserve their independence from foreign domination the Chinese and Africans seemed to be natural allies.¹⁸ Chinese leaders made use of these parallel experiences and the Mao Zedong government took a strong anti-colonialist stance. The Chinese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee stated in 1958 that “the Chinese people always sympathize with and support the African people in their just struggle for national independence and against colonialism and racial discrimination”.¹⁹

In their appeals to African countries the Chinese leaders stressed the solidarity of race rather than class.²⁰ The Chinese political leaders portrayed their country as being part of the “non-white” world.²¹ Radio Peking referred to Africans as “our black brothers”. In Chinese propaganda “Afro-Asian solidarity” meant ranging the black and yellow-skinned people against the whites.²²

The PRC pursued a two-pronged strategy in Africa, combining a “united front from above”, i.e. state-to-state relations with sovereign governments, with a “united front from below”, i.e. support for revolutionary groups that were still fighting to liberate their countries from colonial rule.²³

In the late 1950s, when actual decolonisation in Africa had barely started, the Chinese leaders still cherished the dream that the Chinese revolutionary model would be implemented in Africa and that the African continent would become “a major revolutionary outpost in a Sinocentric world”.²⁴ Africa was included in Mao’s plans for a worldwide onslaught on Western “imperialism”.²⁵

Beijing had the vision of a two-phase revolution in Africa, for which short-term and long-term foreign policy objectives were developed. The first phase would be the attainment of political independence from colonial rule. In the short term Beijing would have to deal with African nationalist governments, even those that might be bourgeois in outlook. In terms of Chinese

18 See AM Halpern (ed), *Policies towards China: Views from six continents* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 402; A Hutchison, *China’s African revolution*, p. 5; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 65.

19 BD Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970*, p. 40.

20 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 6.

21 CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommunisme in aksie* (Pretoria, Departement van Inligting, 1975), p. 106.

22 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, pp. 3, 22.

23 A Hutchison, *China’s African revolution*, pp. 19, 86.

24 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 7. See also A Ogunsanwo, *China’s policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 114; A Hutchison, *China’s African revolution*, p. 7.

25 I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 61.

thinking a second revolution would be necessary, where the black proletariat would seize power from the black bourgeoisie that had been put in power at independence by the Western colonial powers. For this purpose the Chinese engaged in training revolutionary cadres, who were willing to align their states with Chinese policy, for a Maoist type of revolutionary struggle. China wished to spread the doctrines of the Chinese revolution in Africa through so-called people's organisations and sided in Africa with any faction that could assist her in increasing her own influence at the expense of either Western or Soviet influence. During the 1950s and 1960s China was involved in subversive activities in Cameroon, the Congo, Burundi, Niger, Nigeria, Upper Volta and Togo.²⁶

China-Africa relations would not remain unchallenged. During the greater part of the Cold War the Western powers were hostile to any Chinese attempts to consolidate relations with Africa. Snow remarked:

Any Asian interest in Africa, any African sympathy with Asia has been seen as constituting an implicit threat to the West's supremacy.²⁷

There were exaggerated fears in the West about Chinese designs in Africa and every move from Beijing was greeted with suspicion. The United States was prepared to resort to drastic methods, using CIA tactics, to try and eject the Chinese from Africa.²⁸

However, Western opposition was not the only obstacle in the way of Maoist China's attempts to consolidate her relations with Africa. Neuhauser contends that Beijing's revolutionary zeal and almost fanatic pursuit of the anti-Soviet campaign alienated many African leaders.²⁹

26 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa* ... , pp. 4, 14, 218; AM Halpern (ed), *Policies towards China* ... , p. 436; H Kapur, *China in world politics*, pp. 23, 39; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa* ... , pp. 131-134.

27 P Snow, *The star raft* ... , p. xiv.

28 P Snow, *The star raft* ... , p. 110. See also A Harrigan, *Red star over Africa* (Cape Town, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1964), pp. 92-96.

29 C Neuhauser, *Third world politics: China and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, 1957-1967* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University East Asian Research Center, 1970), pp. 71-72.

Political links between China and Africa

Formal diplomatic relations between China and Africa

Africa's preference for non-alignment in a Cold War situation dominated by the USA and USSR as superpowers suited Beijing. After the Bandung conference Afro-Asian solidarity was emphasised by Beijing and Chinese efforts were launched to establish contacts with Africa.³⁰

Diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and independent African states were inaugurated in May 1956, when diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level were established between China and the Republic of Egypt. The first Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference, resulting in the establishment of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, in which China played an important role, was held in Cairo from 26 December 1957 to 3 January 1958. Egypt would remain the PRC's major partner in Africa for a few years and the Chinese embassy in Cairo became the main base for the expansion of Chinese influence in Africa. Because of his opposition to communism Nasser was later accused by the Chinese of having abandoned the struggle against imperialism and relations between the PRC and Egypt cooled down.³¹

Between 1958 and 1964 the PRC established formal diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Somalia, the Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, Tunisia and Congo-Brazzaville. Chinese embassies in these countries were used as bases from where contacts further afield could be initiated.³²

A new drive to expand China's relations in Africa was heralded by the visit of Zhou Enlai, the Chinese premier, to ten African countries from December 1963 to February 1964. The purposes of the visit were to boost China's image in Africa, to establish more firmly the Chinese presence in Africa, to consolidate relations with specific African countries, and to seek African support for the Chinese offensive against the Soviet Union. During this visit Zhou emphasised the long record of contact between China and Africa and their common experience of oppression, and laid down the principles for China-Africa relations. He promised that China would be the champion of

30 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 8-9.

31 C Neuhauser, *Third world politics ...*, p. 3; A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 9; H Kapur, *China in world politics*, p. 24; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 59.

32 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 19; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 71.

subjugated Africans against European rule and of free African governments against European influence.³³

Zhou's visit was regarded by some as a *tour de force*³⁴ and by others as a diplomatic failure, because he could not persuade a single African government to demonstrate preference for Beijing over Moscow.³⁵ But the visit was a propaganda success and was followed by increased diplomatic activity between China and Africa, evidenced by the following:

- Most of the newly independent African states recognised the PRC. The number of independent African countries that recognised the PRC increased from 3 (out of 9) in 1958 to 19 (out of 37) in 1965 and, after a brief decline during the Cultural Revolution period, to 23 (out of 42) in 1971.³⁶
- In the 1960s the PRC was isolated in most of the world, but not in Africa. It was the one major non-communist region where Chinese diplomats were still welcome. By 1970 the PRC had formal diplomatic relations with 15 African states.³⁷
- Reciprocal visits between China and African states increased dramatically. Between 1958 and 1970 a total of 827 African delegations visited China and 473 Chinese delegations travelled to Africa.³⁸

It was not all plain sailing and there were a number of obstacles in the way of closer relations between China and Africa. Some of these were:

- Many African leaders especially in Islamic societies, including Egypt's Nasser, were opposed to communism and feared a possible "second scramble for Africa".³⁹
- The conflict between the PRC and the Soviet Union caused the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation and Afro-Asian solidarity committees in African countries, which had formerly facilitated contacts and generated goodwill for China, to split. The planned second Afro-Asian conference was postponed indefinitely.⁴⁰ Countries interested in closer relations with the PRC were placed

33 AM Halpern (ed), *Policies towards China ...*, p. 435; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 61-2; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 74-76.

34 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 62.

35 AM Halpern (ed), *Policies towards China ...*, p. 436.

36 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 119, 274.

37 BD Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970*, pp. 1, 66-67; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 111.

38 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 33, 122, 266-7; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 90.

39 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 25; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 80, 284; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 88.

40 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 238-239.

in an awkward position by the Chinese insistence that African states should make a clear choice between Beijing and the Chinese enemies.⁴¹

- Because of the Chinese propaganda campaign against France during the Algerian War and the premature recognition by China of the Algerian regime that overthrew Ben Bella, the PRC made little headway in French speaking African states.⁴²

In the 1960s Tanzania emerged as a major African partner of China. The Sino-Tanzanian Treaty of Friendship, signed in 1965 during Nyerere's first state visit to China, was a landmark of Chinese diplomacy in Africa. It included the following principles: mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.⁴³

In the late 1960s China encountered serious setbacks in relations with Africa. In Ghana, Mali, the Central African Republic and Dahomey leaders maintaining friendly relations with Beijing were ousted as a result of coups and these states severed their diplomatic relations with the PRC.⁴⁴ When the Cultural Revolution swept through China the Red Guards ransacked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. All Chinese diplomats in Africa, except in Egypt, were recalled. Some African countries suspended their diplomatic relations with the PRC. Whereas the 1960-1965 period represented a high tide of Chinese relations with Africa, the 1966-1970 period saw a Chinese retreat in Africa.⁴⁵

In 1968 a major reassessment of the Chinese African policy was done and it was decided to renew and extend diplomatic relations with African states. By 1969 Chinese envoys started returning to Africa and in the 1970s Africa would once again become a priority region in Chinese foreign policy. Severed diplomatic links were restored and new diplomatic links were established. The number of African countries with formal relations with the PRC rose from 15 in 1970 to a total of 29 by the end of the Mao regime. With the ex-

41 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 217.

42 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 259, 263.

43 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 283; GT Yu, *China's African policy: A study of Tanzania*, p. 12.

44 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 103.

45 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 3, 189-190, 239; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 133, 140; GT Yu, *China's African policy: A study of Tanzania*, pp. 5, 7, 9.

ception of the Ivory Coast and Gabon all OAU member states had diplomatic relations with the PRC.⁴⁶

Beijing's attention was now focussed on relations with a few selected African states: Tanzania, Mali, Guinea, Zambia, Mauritania and Congo-Brazzaville. The "special relationship" with Tanzania, in particular, was central to Beijing's African policies. The PRC backed socialist strong men in Africa. On the one hand loyal friends, such as Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda, earned lasting Chinese gratitude, but new friends were also identified. Mobutu Sese Seko, who had previously been shunned by Beijing, was befriended. Zaire became one of the main bases in Africa for the Chinese efforts to check Soviet advances on the continent.⁴⁷

By the early 1970s the old idealistic "spirit of Bandung" had gone. Rapidly changing circumstances, both in China and in Africa, necessitated more realistic and pragmatic approaches. Whereas the PRC had formerly tried to sell the communist ideology to Africa, she now desired to project the image that her relations with Africa were altruistic and free of ulterior motives, preconditions or political interference. There was a measure of scepticism in Africa about Chinese intentions. Some African countries were shocked by the "cold new realism of Chinese diplomacy", while some of the more idealistic revolutionaries still pinned their hopes on Beijing. The fact that the PRC was prepared to support unsavoury characters such as Mobutu and Nimeiry made African leaders realise that the Chinese were not as altruistic as they made out and had their own strategic objectives in Africa. African states leaning towards socialism were surprised when the PRC welcomed US President Richard Nixon on a state visit in February 1972. The question was raised whether China really cared for Africa.⁴⁸

Chinese support for liberation movements

Chinese publications created the not always accurate impression of the PRC as an active and significant revolutionary factor in Africa, with Chairman

46 BD Larkin, *China and Africa, 1949-1970*, p. 88; A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 244; GT Yu, *China's African policy: A study of Tanzania*, p. 11; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 72; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 104.

47 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 3; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 251-2; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 103, 123.

48 CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommuniste in aksie*, p. 105; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 105, 132-134.

Mao's revolutionary thinking as the guiding light for African liberation movements.⁴⁹

Admittedly, China established her revolutionary credentials in Africa at an early stage by supporting "people's wars". Beijing gave material assistance to the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the Algerian War between 1957 and 1962 and to Congolese guerrilla bands. However, the Chinese sometimes burnt their fingers as a result of opportunistic policies. They were expelled from Burundi because they supported Congolese dissidents and Tutsi refugees. Because of their assistance to Kenyatta's rival Oginga Odinga they fell into disrepute with the Kenyan government.⁵⁰

In the early 1960s, despite the fact that very few African states had attained their independence through revolutionary struggle, Beijing was still committed to the "united front from below" concept and clung to the idea that future revolutions in Africa could be based on the Chinese revolutionary model. After his visit to the continent in 1963-4 Zhou Enlai referred to the "excellent" revolutionary prospects in Africa.⁵¹ In 1965 Lin Piao, the Chinese Minister of Defence, delivered a major policy address entitled "Long Live the Victory of People's War!", in which he explained the official views on people's revolutionary struggles.⁵² However, the Chinese were not particularly successful in exploiting revolutionary opportunities in Africa.

Beijing's main rival in giving support to African liberation movements was of course Moscow. In both Western and Chinese propaganda the impression was created of a Chinese influence in African liberation struggles far greater than was actually the case. Because of limited resources, practical difficulties and diplomatic considerations the Chinese could never match the Soviets in this regard and came "a poor second in the race for influence in the revolutionary movements".⁵³

Beijing's choice of liberation movements to support was dictated by Sino-Soviet rivalry. None of the major African liberation movements was prepared to forfeit Soviet backing by endorsing Chinese policies. Therefore the PRC

49 DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, FAA Study Report no. 2 (Pretoria, Foreign Affairs Association, 1976), p. 2.

50 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 25, 112, 114, 116; JP Smaldone, "Soviet and Chinese military aid ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 102.

51 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 7, 106; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 75.

52 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 103.

53 DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 3.

was forced to switch support to rival breakaway groups, where they existed. These groups included the PAC in South Africa, ZANU in Rhodesia, the FNLA in Angola, and COREMO in Mozambique.⁵⁴

Beijing's support to African liberation movements consisted of propaganda support, military training, arms supplies and material assistance. Military training and training in subversive techniques were done at the Nanking Military Academy and at camps in Africa. Between 1955 and 1976 a total of 2,675 African military personnel from 13 countries, about 40% of whom were from the regular Tanzanian army, received training from the Chinese. The PRC supplied relatively small amounts of various types of arms to several African states (mainly to Tanzania) and liberation movements. Between 1961 and 1971 arms to the value of \$42 million or 4% of the PRC's total arms exports to the developing world went to Africa, which made the PRC the seventh largest arms supplier to Africa. Between 1967 and 1976 arms deliveries to Africa increased to \$142 million, still constituting only 2.8% of the African arms market. Nowhere in Africa did the military aid programme of the PRC, as a marginal but steady arms supplier to Africa, alter regional or local military balances.⁵⁵

After the reassessment of the Chinese African policy in 1968 Beijing wished to present the PRC as a sober member of the world community. Legitimate relations with sovereign states were pushed and assistance to liberation movements downplayed. Chinese support for dissident groups in independent African states was abandoned. Support for guerrilla movements in territories not yet liberated, especially in southern Africa, was maintained, but these movements were cautioned to restrain their activities.⁵⁶

In Angola in the mid-seventies the Chinese, backing the FNLA, were forced to withdraw. They could not match the firepower of the MPLA, backed by the Soviet Union. It was a shattering blow to China's pride. After the bitter lesson in Angola the PRC sprinkled only modest quantities of arms in countries where they wished to win sympathy or make a symbolic statement, such as Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia and Somalia. When the pragmatic Chinese real-

⁵⁴ DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 4; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 118.

⁵⁵ DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 4; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, pp. 146-149, 154-155; JP Smaldone, "Soviet and Chinese military aid ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, pp. 77, 102, 104-109; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 77-78.

⁵⁶ A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 166; W Weinstein, "Chinese aid and policy in Central Africa", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 155; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 104.

ised that pro-Soviet liberation movements were gaining the ascendancy they were prepared to change their allegiance and start supporting major movements such as Frelimo and the MPLA.⁵⁷

Prinsloo is somewhat cynical about Chinese objectives and regards Beijing's support for liberation movements as a product of the conflict with the Soviet Union rather than of a commitment to the PRC's own goals or those of African liberation.⁵⁸

African diplomatic support for China

On the surface the PRC's assistance to Africa seemed altruistic and free of ulterior motives, but the Chinese leaders were cool strategists intent on enlisting African diplomatic support. They desired to persuade Africans that the PRC's enemies, the USA, the Soviet Union and the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan, were their enemies too.⁵⁹

To the PRC African support in the UN was absolutely crucial. From 1949 both the ROC and the PRC claimed to be the sole legitimate government of China that ought to be represented in the UN. The United States and her allies backed the ROC's claim and the communist bloc backed that of the PRC. From the 1960s the allies of the PRC moved an annual resolution in the General Assembly to transfer China's seat at the UN from the ROC to the PRC. As contenders to represent the Chinese people in the UN there was competition between the PRC and the ROC for African diplomatic support. The ROC's counter-efforts in Africa were not very successful. In 1963 18 African states recognised the ROC and 12 recognised the PRC.⁶⁰ Each year Taiwan's support declined when votes were cast in the UN General Assembly on the China question. In 1951 only 7 delegates voted for the PRC's admission to the General Assembly, 42 against it, with 11 abstentions. Twenty years later, in 1971, Beijing received 76 of 111 votes, with 35 opposing votes and 17 abstentions. The required two-thirds majority to evict Taiwan from its seat was reached. Of those 76 a crucial 26 came from African countries.

57 DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, p. 10; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 125-127.

58 DS Prinsloo, *China and the liberation of Portuguese Africa*, pp. 10-11.

59 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 105-106.

60 AM Halpern (ed), *Policies towards China ...*, p. 393.

Mali and Algeria were Beijing's sponsors at the meeting. Thus it was Africa's support that finally secured the PRC's seat in the General Assembly.⁶¹

Chinese economic relations with Africa

Trade

Direct trade with Africa was initially a low priority for Beijing. The Chinese and African economies were non-complementary, because they imported and exported similar types of goods. Apart from a few strategic minerals, such as copper and cobalt, China needed little from Africa. Although the PRC would like to acquire better access to Africa's resources a solid basis for a major commercial relationship did not exist.⁶²

When the Chinese foreign policy changed in the late 1950s Beijing became more interested in developing trade with Africa. At first Chinese economic relations with Africa were limited to a few countries. The first Chinese trade office in Africa was opened in Cairo as early as 1955. In the 1958-68 period Egypt was, in terms of both exports and imports, China's most important trading partner in Africa. China imported cotton from and exported steel to Egypt. Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia were China's other trading partners in Africa in this period.⁶³

In the early 1960s Chinese foreign trade suffered setbacks because of a severe drought in China and disruptions in production as a result of the Great Leap Forward.⁶⁴

In the mid-sixties, after Zhou Enlai's African visit, Chinese trade with Africa increased. Beijing offered trade agreements and medium-term credit in a single package to potential African partners, "wrapped in the friendly tissue paper of 'peaceful coexistence' and 'non-interference in internal affairs'".⁶⁵ Political considerations did play a role in Chinese trade relations with Af-

61 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 277; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 5; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 111-112, 115.

62 HC Hinton, *Communist China in world politics* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 189; A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 85; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 198, 203; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. 175.

63 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 272; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 59. For detailed trade figures in the 1958-1971 period see A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 194-195.

64 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 85; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 16.

65 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 187.

rica. Favourable trading agreements were offered to countries which Beijing wished to reward for political favours. A healthy two-way trade developed between China and Africa. Africa supplied mostly raw materials to China and bought relatively unsophisticated Chinese manufactured products for which there was no ready market in the developed world.⁶⁶ Chinese exports to Africa rose steeply to £51 million in 1966 and imports from Africa to £39 million in 1965.⁶⁷

From 1970, after a temporary decline during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese share in African markets started increasing again. The Chinese were able to maintain their commercial relations where no diplomatic relations existed. By the mid-1970s China was a major importer of cotton from Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, sisal from Tanzania and Kenya, and copper from Zambia.⁶⁸

Nyerere's Tanzania emerged in the 1970s as by far the PRC's most significant ally on the African continent. China became Tanzania's main supplier and aid donor.⁶⁹

In Africa there was a growing appreciation of the cheapness and improving quality of Chinese goods. Large-scale imports of Chinese goods held the danger that it could affect intra-African trade and inhibit African countries from setting up light industries to manufacture comparable goods.⁷⁰

By the end of Mao's rule China's trade with Africa amounted to about 30% of her total trade with the non-communist world, but still played only a small role in the economies of African countries. Expectations were that the Sino-African trade would increase in absolute terms, but decline in relative terms.⁷¹

Development aid

Beijing regarded development assistance as an important and influential foreign policy instrument. It was used as a political tool in the dispute with the

66 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 5, 198.

67 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 151, 262.

68 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 263; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 201.

69 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 204-205.

70 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 201-202.

71 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 204.

Soviet Union to boost China's image as the champion of the Third World.⁷² Kapur interprets the Chinese strategy as follows:

It became increasingly evident to the Chinese leadership that if it really aimed at seeking a viable relationship with the outside world, if it wanted to exercise a significant influence in international politics, and if it did not wish to be out-manoeuvred by the super powers ... in areas where it had already established some political influence, foreign aid had to be made an important and integral component of its foreign policy. Therefore, notwithstanding the serious economic difficulties from which the nation was in the process of extricating itself ... some of the resources were mobilized to frame a politics of foreign aid.⁷³

During his 1963/64 visit to Africa Zhou Enlai invited African states to approach China for aid on the basis of the so-called Eight Principles of Chinese aid-giving. These included equality and mutual benefit, respecting the sovereignty of recipient countries, self-reliance and independent economic development, and low investment projects with quick yields. After Zhou's visit the PRC initiated her aid programme in West Africa and later expanded it to East, Central and Southern Africa. China's economic aid commitments increased to around \$269 million for the 1963-65 period.⁷⁴

The weakness of the Chinese economy compared to the superpowers restricted the PRC's ability to compete with the major aid donors. In the period up to 1970 the Soviet Union supplied almost twice as much development aid to Africa as the PRC. Limited resources forced Beijing to be sparing in aid and to focus on a few selected countries, such as Tanzania, Zambia, Somalia and Sudan. Other recipients of Chinese aid in this period included Ethiopia, Egypt, Algeria, Guinea, Mali, Ghana, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzville, Mauritania, Kenya and Uganda. Because of a lack of abundant capital the PRC engaged in low investment, labour-intensive, cottage industry-type development assistance projects in Africa.⁷⁵

Beijing tried to convince African leaders that the "mutual aid" offered by the Chinese was a better way to build their national economies than the "one-sid-

72 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 40; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 205.

73 H Kapur, *China in world politics*, pp. 40-41.

74 GT Yu, "China's competitive diplomacy in Africa", JA Cohen (ed.), *The dynamics of China's foreign relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University East Asian Research Center, 1970), p. 75; A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 178; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 50, 52, 87; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 76, 145.

75 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, pp. 93, 258; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 49.

ed” aid offered by the West and the Soviets.⁷⁶ Chinese terms for development assistance seemed more generous than those of the rich countries. No direct political demands were made and interest-free loans were offered, repayable over an extended time after long grace periods.⁷⁷ Another feature of Chinese development assistance which was particularly appealing to Africa was that China provided equipment and experts at a price beyond competition.⁷⁸

In Chinese propaganda directed at the masses of ordinary Africans care for the people was the overriding theme of Chinese aid. The most important element of Chinese efforts to demonstrate that they had the interests of the African people at heart, was the dispatch of many Chinese doctors to Africa over an extended period of time.⁷⁹

Because of the internal turmoil during the Cultural Revolution China could offer only token aid in the late 1960s and actually withdrew development aid from African countries criticising the Cultural Revolution.⁸⁰

After 1970 there was a renewed drive from Beijing to strengthen economic relations with Africa. Limited resources forced Beijing to focus, in terms of economic assistance, on a few selected African states. Mali, Guinea, Tanzania, Zambia, Mauritania and Congo-Brazzaville were the major recipients of Chinese aid.⁸¹ After the end of the Vietnamese War the PRC had more money available for development assistance in Africa. To spread development aid wider the Chinese gave preference to small and medium-sized economic assistance and made modest grants to the largest possible number of recipients.⁸² In this phase African states that agreed to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations were rewarded with generous aid commitments. Apart from the selected few the PRC also gave development aid to Algeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Dahomey, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Togo, Tunisia and Zaire.⁸³

The major portion of Chinese development aid to Africa, around 40%, was

76 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 188.

77 JP Smaldone, “Soviet and Chinese military aid ...”, W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 103; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 145-146.

78 CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommunisme in aksie*, p. 106.

79 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 158-159.

80 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 141, 160.

81 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 3.

82 GT Yu, “The Tanzania-Zambia railway: A case study in Chinese economic aid to Africa”, W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 120.

83 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 167, 208-209.

spent on communications, including railways, roads and telecommunication. The agricultural sector received about 15% of Chinese aid. Funds were allocated for infrastructure projects such as hydro-electric schemes, dams, airports, stadiums, hospitals and factories. Chinese engineers, technicians and teachers were sent to Africa.⁸⁴

China's flagship development aid project in Africa was the Tanzam railway line. This railway of 1,860km between Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Kapi-ri-Mposhi in Zambia provided an outlet to the sea for Zambia's copper and helped to lessen the country's economic dependence on white-ruled Rhodesia and South Africa. Failing to obtain Western support, Tanzania and Zambia turned to China for help. Finance for this project was offered by the PRC in 1965, the final protocol was signed in 1970 and the railway came into service in 1976. Apart from the railway line, the project also included the construction of 2,500 bridges and viaducts, 19 tunnels, and the supply of locomotives and rolling stock. The workforce employed on the project consisted of about 1,500 Chinese and 36,000 Africans. It was by far the PRC's largest foreign aid project and was completed at a cost of more than \$455 million. It required economic sacrifices from the PRC, but brought the following rewards:

- It was a symbol of China's power and capabilities and boosted the PRC's international prestige.
- It demonstrated China's commitment to African political and economic development and enhanced China's credibility.
- By assisting two frontline states (Tanzania and Zambia) to become economically less dependent upon the white-ruled south, Beijing showed her support for southern Africa's liberation struggle and won the allegiance of all African countries opposing white supremacy.
- The special relationship with Tanzania and Zambia consolidated the Chinese presence in the region.⁸⁵

Whether China's development assistance in Africa was successful in terms of the mutual benefits derived from it is debatable. There were successes and failures. Philanthropy cost the Chinese dearly in some cases where projects in Africa collapsed. Chinese project teams were often frustrated by their clients

⁸⁴ A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 167, 219; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 84; D Thompson, "China's soft power in Africa: From the 'Beijing consensus' to health diplomacy", *China brief* (Jamestown Foundation), 13 October 2005.

⁸⁵ A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 222, 224, 225; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, pp. 82-83; GT Yu, "The Tanzania-Zambia railway ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 140.

in Africa. Attempts to involve more African workers in development projects were hampered by problems in properly training Africans. The Chinese relied mostly on their own materials and their own people. Thousands of Chinese workers came to Africa, content to adopt the same living standards as the African population.⁸⁶

In the 1970s the PRC doubled her aid to Africa. The number of African countries receiving Chinese aid increased from 11 in 1970 to 23 in 1973. New agreements for aid were signed with Mauritius, Togo, Rwanda, Burundi, Ghana, Cameroon, Zaire and Ethiopia. In 1972 40% of the PRC's total foreign aid was channelled to Africa.⁸⁷ By the end of Mao's rule 36 African states had received \$2.4 billion in aid commitments from Beijing, 58% of the grand total of Chinese economic aid. The principal recipients had been Tanzania (\$362 million), Zambia (\$307 million), Egypt (\$134 million), Somalia (\$132 million) and Zaire (\$100 million).⁸⁸ Aid-trade packages boosted China's trade with Africa, which reached over 6% of her total world trade, compared to only 3% twenty years earlier in 1956.⁸⁹

Cultural contacts between China and Africa

The idea of "cultural exchange" featured rather prominently in Beijing's initial plans to get a foothold in Africa. Organisations were established in China during the 1960s to promote different types of exchanges with Africa. Examples were the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association, the Asia Africa Society, and the Committee for Cultural Relations with African People. These organisations and other "public bodies" were used for the Chinese penetration of Africa.⁹⁰

"Cultural exchanges" took different forms

86 CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommunisme in aksie*, p. 105; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 160, 163, 164, 169-170.

87 CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommunisme in aksie*, p. 103.

88 JP Smaldone, "Soviet and Chinese military aid ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, p. 103; GT Yu, "The Tanzania-Zambia railway ...", W Weinstein and TH Henriksen (eds), *Soviet and Chinese aid to African nations*, pp. 117, 120-121.

89 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 168.

90 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, pp. 194-5; A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 97; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 62.

- Chinese propaganda: Pro-PRC information was disseminated in Africa in different forms. Chinese printed material in English, French and Arabic was published by the New China News Agency and circulated by mail. Radio Peking's African service, broadcasting Chinese propaganda to various parts of Africa, was established in 1956. By 1975 it broadcast programmes in Chinese, Cantonese, African and European languages for a total of 119 hours per week.⁹¹
- Visits to China: Apart from visits by official government and trade delegations, African women's, youth and labour leaders were invited to make guided tours of China. On their return they often acted as ambassadors of China by expressing sentiments of awe and solidarity.⁹²
- African students: The most significant element of cultural relations was the education of African students at Chinese universities. African students received scholarships to go to China. The first African students arrived in Beijing in 1958. They first had to learn the Chinese language at the Language Institute in Beijing before they could continue their studies in other fields at Chinese universities. In 1961/2 118 African students were registered at the Languages Institute. African students experienced problems in China, because they had little contact with the local population and felt isolated. Many returned to their home countries before completing their studies. During the Cultural Revolution no African students went to China, but in 1970 the programme was resumed.⁹³

China and Africa: Mao's legacy

China's policies toward Africa constituted a reaction to the international environment as it was interpreted by the Chinese government. Mao's regime attempted to change those aspects of the environment which were regarded as being inimical to Chinese interests. Although Western propaganda created the perception that Maoist China was rigid and doctrinaire, Beijing's tactics were supple and flexible and the PRC's foreign policy towards Africa had a pragmatic and evolutionary nature. The PRC dropped attempts to sell the communist ideology to Africa when it became clear in the 1970s that more

91 S Hamrell and CG Widstrand (eds), *The Soviet bloc, China and Africa* (Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1964), p. 60; JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 195; I Greig, *The Communist challenge to Africa ...*, p. 100.

92 S Hamrell and CG Widstrand (eds), *The Soviet bloc, China and Africa*, p. 61.

93 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. 84; P Snow, *The star raft ...*, pp. 196-197, 199; JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 201.

success was being achieved through aid without preconditions or political interference.⁹⁴

There were successes and failures in Beijing's Africa policy, but on the whole the balance sheet was positive. In the 1950s and 1960s China did not possess the power to detach Africa from Western and Soviet influence, but by the end of Mao's rule in the mid-seventies China was moving into the big league.⁹⁵ During the slightly more than a quarter of a century of Mao's reign in the PRC significant progress was made in Chinese relations with Africa. Ogunsanwo writes:

From the peripheral status it occupied in the middle fifties, China's policy in Africa rapidly achieved a self-propelling and compulsive momentum.⁹⁶

By the mid-seventies Africa had become a prominent component of Beijing's foreign relations. Beijing maintained cordial relations with the majority of African countries. Formal diplomatic relations with many African states existed and the bulk of China's economic aid went to Africa.⁹⁷

The Chinese emphasised the mutual benefits of a seemingly unequal relationship. African benefits were tangible. Projects such as the Tanzam railway brought considerable material advantages to the continent. Chinese benefits were more intangible and indirect. African friendship helped China to attain political goals. As the region of "greatest secondary importance" Africa played a major supporting role in the PRC's foreign policy.⁹⁸

94 JK Cooley, *East wind over Africa ...*, p. 4; A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 295; CF de Villiers, FR Metrowich and JA du Plessis, *Die Kommunisme in aksie*, p. 105.

95 P Snow, *The star raft ...*, p. xiv.

96 A Ogunsanwo, *China's policy in Africa, 1958-71*, p. ix.

97 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, p. 282.

98 A Hutchison, *China's African revolution*, pp. 4, 278, 282.

