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AFRICAN-ASIAN RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF WESTERN DOMINATION OF GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

In a world characterized by economic hegemons, contemporary African-Asian relations are subject to the influences of Euro-American dominance on the one hand and the imperfections of regional integration processes and local challenges on the other. Historically grounded in anti-colonial solidarity, these ties have shifted to strategic economic partnerships as both regions seek to carve their paths in what is becoming an increasingly Western-led world order. The 1955 Bandung Conference was an important event where newly independent countries came together in solidarity against imperialism and called for South-South cooperation. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's investment in African infrastructure are among modern examples of growing engagements in the continent, propelled by trade, resource extraction, and geopolitical influence. However, these ties are also controversial—although they provide alternatives to conditionalities imposed by Western powers, critics point to neo-colonial threats as well, such as debt dependency and unbalanced trade. Asia's dollar-fuelled ascent has mapped out a new geography for Africa in global supply chains, but the inequalities of the structure remain. Western lenders retain a stranglehold on capital flows, while East African countries rely more and more on Asian markets for technology, loans, and infrastructure. Rivalry between smaller Asian economies includes Japan and South Korea, having developed aid and soft power in contrast to China's state-driven investments. Africa's AfCFTA, meanwhile, aims to emulate ASEAN's integration model to increase regional self-reliance. These shifts reveal a dual-pronged reality: Afro-Asian relations contest Western hegemony while being conditioned by it. Externally, tensions cloud the relationship, from "sovereign power" labor disputes involving Asian-owned mines in Africa to debates over sustainable development. However, if shared interests in a multipolar world are increasing, asymmetries of power and control of resources remain. This study suggests that despite the transformative potential of African-Asian relations, these relations require overcoming neo-extractive tendencies to attain equitable growth. As the two regions reshape the global future of globalization, their partnership has the potential to either reproduce old hierarchies or pave the way for alternative economic paradigms that transcend Western hegemony.

Keywords: *Afro-Asian Relations, Western Economic Domination, South-South Cooperation, Post-Colonial Solidarity, Resource Diplomacy, Multipolar World Order.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Africa and Asia have some of the world's oldest languages. In Africa, Ethiopian and Egyptian languages have long histories, while some of Southeast Asian languages are over 2000 years old. There are dynamic interactions between Africa and Asia on the shores of the Indian Ocean which have been relevant in promoting political and economic development. Such interactions also helped in the formation of states and polities which facilitated extensive economic activity. Despite an image of isolation, contact between peoples of different continents has been a prevalent and formative phenomenon. These interactions have been significant in human history by facilitating the exchange of ideas, religious beliefs, technologies and material goods. It is argued that substantial cross-oceanic connections are present in Eastern, Central and Northern Tanzania. It is suggested to have been the principal hub of movements between Africa and Asia, with particularly strong historical links to India and the southern sections of the African rim (Beyene, 2024).

Diverse movements of people are present, while historical data in particular underlines significant migration between Mozambique and Madagascar. Both records suggest a model of alternating influent and exilic interaction between Africa and Asia. Waterborne cargo could have sailed on a favorable ratio of powerful trade winds that changes directions seasonally between Northeast Africa and Western India. A dirigible maritime technology in antiquity is required to keep such trade exploiting mono-directional winds. Archeological and archeo-environmental data that attests the presence of such a technology during the late 1st millennium CE and later is presented. Clear evidence for Indianization is found of an ancient rural settlement in southeastern Oman, including a kiln for manufacturing pottery resembling Indian Red Ware, an assemblage of Indian-inspired seals, and small round stone buildings as initially found in the early historic phase of South Asia (Rasool et al., 2021).

African-Asian relations in the era of Western predominance of the global economy have been explained from an economic point of view. This special issue contends that an analysis of such relations, however, should pay attention to more than commercial and financial ties. Cultural and intellectual aspects, as well as broader social dimensions of the interactions between Afro-Asians and Europeans, need to be explored. Such an approach could contribute to unveiling the process of "coloniality," a set of practices that extend colonial gains beyond their political duration and that can be found in the Euro-African-Asian interactions of the early modern and modern ages.

However, qualities such as “African” or “Asian” cannot be understood in essentialist terms. It indicates here actors moving between geographic entities that, in premodern and early modern historiography, clearly exceed the spaces defined in postcolonial terms. It is indeed a long-term common-place in world history to assert that Africa and Asia developed commonly, or at least were mutually affected. On the other hand, relations and exchanges among Afro-Asian and European states or empires fundamentally reconfigure the place socio-historical “Afro-Asians” hold in broader, long-term processes of global interdependence.

1.2. The Impact of Western Domination

The impetus for this study emerged from the general conjecture whether developmental experiences of Asian economies in the 20th century provide a viable perspective for understanding and managing the principal preoccupation of African economies in the 21st century—the transformation from agrarian-based to industrial knowledge-based economic activities. The conjecture is encouraged by recent and ongoing development of educational and research co-operation between African and some Asian institutions with the shared fundamental objective to pursue the above transformation.

The interaction between these two regions—geographically contiguous but economically disparate since the early 15th century—is destined to be long and arduous. From the mid-16th century, while Asia was industrially and commercially developed, able to exploit its assets to meet the challenges imposed by the formation of a Euro-centric global economy and the colonization by it of territories in the Asian region, Africa remained essentially at its agricultural-based economic stationary state. In consequence, the waves of Europeans who ventured into the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean expanded gradually the imperial domain to entire shelter of economic activities from the indigenous inhabitants. The pace of transformation in the Asian countries in the 20th century appears anomalous compared with earlier celebrated records of sustained growth due to acceleration of industrially based production which marks the economic advancement of the Western European countries from the late 15th century. This was underpinned by invention and development of technologies in various economic sectors which have no counterpart in the ingenuity possessed by their Asian and African contemporaries (Hillbom, 2024).

1.2.1. Economic Exploitation

The conquest and subsequent colonization of African and Asian territories by European imperial powers early in what became known as the modern era was so overwhelming, it is difficult to conceive today of any other possible outcome. It has been estimated that by adopting an aggressive approach to the outside world in the 15th century, Europe managed to remain in control of 85 per cent of the globe throughout the 19th and for much of the 20th centuries. China, on the other hand, did not become the focal point for imperialist exploitation until the mid-19th century, long after European domination was an established phenomenon and when Africa no longer had the capacity to resist (Grinin, 2022).

Fundamental to the growing power of the European imperial nations was the incorporation into their concepts of wealth of the control of territorial expansion, underpinned by the violent penetration of non-European peoples' territories. With their knowledge and technology, the Europeans excelled at the physical sciences of force projection, pushing back, smothering and reformulating underlying notions of differential scales of violence and trade reciprocity on which the Asian and African concepts of wealth and social advancement were based. Foreign colonization has engendered and perpetuated the systematic transfer of economic surplus to the metropolis, usually in the form of undervalued raw materials obtained through trade imbalances and the denial of industrial development in the colonial territories (Udoh, 2024).

1.2.2. Cultural Hegemony

Liu and Tsai, (2021) argue that the decline of Western economic hegemony as the natural framework for cultural impregnation in Asia has facilitated the reformation of culture as a versatile and open integrator of social development. Not what culture is but what it does is what counts as the advent of a culture industry which has increasingly produced and marketed culture as a consumable good that is consumed simply by having it. With the spread of industrialisation, culture as genuine artistic creations is largely displaced by mass-produced 'entertainment' commodities which, as necessities for cultural consumption, make up the cultural rights of society. The decline of Western economic hegemony as the natural framework for cultural impregnation in Asia empowers the reformation of culture as a versatile and open integrator of lifestyles. As a result, culture appears no longer to be an epiphenomenon but a dynamic force that is 'self-sufficient' and 'free to move anywhere in socio-cultural space and to enter promiscuously into relations with almost any other fragment.' In other words, what is globalized then are cultural lifestyles which can connect in different permutations with local perceptions and practices.

Cultural employment is achieved in three main ways. First, culture receives greater attention and funding by the West and the industrialized states which intensifies East-West cultural flows. Second, a never-ending demand for culture generates a vibrant culture industry that commodifies culture as portable or ready-made lifestyles. Third, and reciprocally, official practices in Asia condone and promote such a culture industry which is now universally legitimized as the eighth art that surpasses political economy as the optimal means of development (Javaid et al., 2024).

Since the spread of industrialisation cultural products are geared toward the consumption requirements of mass society, thus the transition from art to freedom, 'not to contemplate but to get use out'. Such regional blocks are seen as versatile and open integrators of different lifestyles rather than homogenized blocks of a particular ideology or competitor to the type of cultural development adopted in Asia. The power of culture compels its recipients to adopt the whole spectra of lifestyles, from the accent to the syllable, which are given or embodied in a particular act, system, structuration, institution, or artefact of culture. The imposition and dissemination of a particular lifestyle functions as a total system that defines and dominates that portion of the world to which it is exported. The opposition to the aggressive expansion of a particular lifestyle is usually feeble and underprivileged, reduced to mere endorsement of certain cultural rights or practices, disseminating thereby self-exoticizing identity. Furthermore, culture may be seen as a monopoly of the West or its economic satellites, getting the low 'hard' currency in return. This imbalance trade then multiplies the risk, discourages non-Western countries to succeed by means other than economics, and makes them permanent prey for continued and one-sided cultural aggression (Prasiasa et al., 2023).

1.2.3. Political Interference

Many critics tend to date the birth of the principle of Westphalian sovereignty and its corollary of non-interference back to the peace settlement of Westphalia in 1648. However, a closer look at the Westphalian Treaties reveals that the two norms actually failed to be institutionalized there, as the political fragmentation of Germany and the confessional statute quo were more unequivocally reaffirmed. What emerged from those treaties was therefore in all respects not a repudiation of intervention and of powers rather than states, but a preservation thereof as a nonlegal practice, embodied in the perpetual defensive alliance of the Estates of the Empire. As a result, it seems more legitimate to identify the actual institutional emergence of what would later come to be theorized as the key norms of modern Westphalian law (non-intervention, recognition, permanent sovereignty) in the ensemble of peace negotiations and treaties that followed the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 (Halpérin, 2023).

Stretching over an entire decade, these negotiations were between the belligerent states in the Wars of Spanish Succession, and they would lead to the 1713 treaties, such as those of Utrecht, Rastadt and Baden, as much as to the congeries of defensive alliances and neutrality treaties, of mutual guarantee pacts and territorial accords, to which these were supplemented by the year 1720. Analogous to and antedating the settlement of Westphalia, the post-Utrecht settlement manifested a predominantly counterhegemonic compromise aimed at resisting the putative efforts by a hegemonic nightmarish monarchical France to establish a Pax Gallica in Europe. On that point, the settlement marked a radical break with the original principles that had underlain and remained a leitmotiv of the peace initiatives in the War of Thirty Years, i.e. plans for the construction of a multipolar equilibrium entailing the containment of the most powerful state and exclusion of the idea of a homogeneous and stable balance (Dal Soglio, 2021).

2. CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN- ASIAN RELATIONS

The end of the Cold War seems to have been followed by the dominance of the West of the global economy. After 500 years, the power balance has again shifted to the advantage of the Western powers. Globalization seems to strengthen the era of Western domination with its overwhelming impact in various aspects of global life in general and in economy in particular. Globalization is the representation of Western economic domination in multilateral institutions, international trade, international investments, and Northern nation states. Despite the fact that the role of Western institutions in trade and investment is weakening, the current reform processes do not change the basic foundation and fundamental principles of these institutions established after the WWII. To stabilize such domination, the West engages in "selective globalism" in the implementation of the multilateral course of action in key trade and investment issues (Tung et al., 2023).

Developed countries lead by the US, EC and Japan intensify regional and bilateral arrangements, which have negative externalities for developing countries. Internally, the policies of developing countries- South and North- are shaped by the prescriptions of the IMF and the World Bank. Many developing countries implement an externally dictated and harshly imposed structural adjustment program. Such programs liberalize their economy, deregulate its control of State economic enterprises, reduce budget deficits by improving tax system and make investments to ensure forced saving. As a result, developing countries reduce importation and privatize State owned companies. This uses industrialization of Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea as evidence to elaborate how these recipes deviate these countries from a growth path (McMahon, 2021).

2.1. Bilateral Agreements

A new scholarship development in Sino-African relations has been about the growing investment ties of economies on both continents. While acknowledgment of early CPI of investment ties in Ethiopia and southern Africa from the First Century AD had been few and far between, recent work did seek to appreciate that early futuristic form of China's "going global" policy as a traffic of both capital and religion. However, aside from that period, Sino-African investment in the modern era has been generally downplayed in favor of a focus on funding development cooperation and a burgeoning body of studies on resource concerns that saw the lifestyles accompanied by, and resulting from, these funding and transfer partnerships (Krugman, 2023).

In this respect, with academic focus only recently being turned on to investment in Sino-African relations, stock existed little in the manner of praxis reports for those looking to understand the general landscape of transnational agreement in this economic sphere. Troubled by this gap in the understanding of foreign investment between China and Africa, the present work takes the form of a survey of contract papers, based firstly on the count of firsthand information strong on an investigation by the embassies and Chinese law company in seven states hosting the most stock. The present work then other wish form docket review of these contracts. This article is the first to offer research concerning the praxis side of investment in Africa since the beginning of the Reform and Opening era (Butcher et al., 2025).

2.2. Investment Trends

The amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow from China together with the rapid increase in China's outward foreign investment raises the interest of how and where the Chinese invest in other countries abroad. Nowadays, developing countries have started to play a vital role in the foreign investment market and China is one of the main actors among them.

As many developing countries in Africa and Asia have opened up their economies and reformed their investment legislation in align with global standards, it is intriguing to analyze the investment trends of China into these continents. The main aim of this paper is to analyze Chinese outward FDI to Asia and Africa and investigate the investment trends and distribution of Chinese outward FDI in these regions while also making a comparison of China's investment position with that of the European Union (Azam & Haseeb, 2021).

The policy of FDI region is bounded with Africa emphasizing the percentage share of China within the whole Chinese FDI flow. China's outward FDI to Africa is a relatively new phenomenon even though Chinese firms have been doing projects in Africa for long time. The past decade shows a rapid increase in China's FDI to the African region and it has already been one of the keen research areas that attracts scholars to work on it. To hedge the oversupply of production inputs, China's "Peaceful Rise" strategy is trying to mobilize international markets under this new economic policy. Engagement with African nations having rich natural resources is one part of these policy changes. As a result, China replaced the western countries concerning the net FDI inflow to Africa in the year 2005. Though in recent times the growth of FDI inflow of China to Africa has speeded up, it is the minimum concerning the percentage share of Chinese investment flow in the whole world currently. On the other side of the continent, as the FDI inflow from China is still under spotlight, sustainable growth in the next time reveals that Africa will be a large investment field in the future for China. Middle East investment trend seems growing with a rapid speed, Middle East's share will be raised from 4.1 in 2004 to 8.1 in 2012 (Abdulsalam et al., 2021).

2.3. Trade Partnerships

These partnerships are changing in character and lose their asymmetry; however, this does not mean that they are experienced by Africans as less exploitative. In an active effort to expand its global influence and put pressure on existing global powers, the Chinese government currently conducts an ambitious world trade policy. The phrase "original China" serves as a metaphor for the Chinese trade system, which had been in existence long before China's classification as a world trading power. The maritime Silk Road was one of the three main sea trade routes connecting China with Africa and the Middle East, even before the European "discovery" of the Indian sea route. In the 15th and 16th centuries trade was prosperous and the majority of commodities imported from China to East Africa were high value Chinese goods (Aboul-Dahab, 2021).

Two colonial trade systems promoted by Portugal in the mid-16th century profoundly changed the global patterns of trade and resulted in the marginalization from the world trade of both East Africa and China. This was a turning point in the global division of labour, creating unequal trade relations in the world economy. Outperforming all the western powers, China focused instead on its economic and political self-sufficiency. Moreover, the then social and economic structure of West Africa was not attractive to the western mercantile states. The rapid economic growth of China and the revitalization of trade between that country and Africa have been observed. China is not a new player in the material exchange with Africa, but the most recent intensification of both economic and diplomatic relations has drawn significant attention. Africa and China link in asymmetrical, though rapidly increasing, commodity and raw materials stream. Africa exports mostly primary commodities, while Chinese exports to Africa are mainly industrial, manufactured goods with correspondingly higher added value. African products face high non-tariff barriers, including strict quality, health and safety standards, possibly blocking African manufacturers from benefiting as effectively from greater access to Chinese markets (de Andrade Arruda, 2022).

3. THE ROLE OF CHINA IN AFRICA

Recent years have seen a significant alteration in Africa's role as the junior partner in the Africa-Asia relationship. The rise of China and India, as well as of East and Southeast Asia more generally, has drastically changed this. In this new era of the rapidly shifting global economy however, focus has been placed on relations between African countries and these more near at hand partners, at the expense of the traditional partnership with, and agendas vis-a-vis the developed countries of the western bloc. Little attention has been paid to the consequences of the recent interest of the countries of the global North, particularly the Western countries, in Africa. The rising power of BRIC countries, the Asian surge, as well as the Western decline, urge a retrospective in order "to bring together for the first time a body of research that puts contemporary Africa-Asia relations into a wider, long-term, historical and theoretical perspective (Gartrell, 2022)."

Thus, this perspective sheds much needed light on African-Asian relations in a more equal era, when the African and Asian regions were co-shapers of the global economy. Under this analytical lens, the new entry of China and India into Africa is seen as more of a reentry, post-colonial in reverse, rather than into the non-Western "other," now known as the "developing world". This context places Anglo commitment to Africa and the resultant competition in a new light, reframing Africa's role from a passive object of aid and charity, to a progressively inegalitarian, and more predatory, neoliberal global partnership. In this regard, it is not only the nature of the newer entrants that changes, but also the West in dwindling power and influence (Ibourk & Elouaourti, 2023).

3.1. Investment in Infrastructure

The disadvantaged African-Asian relations in the era of Western domination of the global economy are contrasted with their historical era of equality. Such contrast is characterised by the near monopolization of the international system by the West. Then, discussed are the needs for improving sub-Saharan Africa-Asia relations to create a moral block to achieve a higher degree of global justice. Finally, attention is paid to drawing the foundation of a strategy to address that need by examining the opportunities and limitations the inter-regional relations with a focus on China open to the countries of south-eastern sub-Saharan Africa. China has been usually proactive in this area since the late 1990s in the context of its ’Go Global’ strategy and has proposed important measures in relation to its relations with the partners in Asia and Africa (Lloyd, 2024).

Over the past five centuries of the modern era, African-Asian relations can be divided into three main periods. The first is that of the early modern period (from the late 14th century to the mid-17th century). During this period, the economies of Asia and Africa were in a superior position compared to Europe. The second, extending from the mid-17th century to the mid-20th century, is that of the great divergence initiated by the Christian European sea. Since the 15th century, mankind’s activities had an increasing impact on the rest of the world, especially through their mining and energy needs to keep the military forces in activity. However, until the late 18th century, the large-scale international trade networks (run especially between Africa and Asia) remains a marginal part of the economic life of the continents. Then, from the 19th century, with technological breakthroughs, sea and air transport face a spectacular acceleration (Akobir, 2024).

3.2. Resource Extraction

In 2006, a story warned of a Zeitgeist of Yellow Peril. The article informed its readers of China’s lasting hunger for resources; citing a spree of global acquisitions of coal, oil, and iron ore mines. Among the litany of nations providing China the resources it demands, so the story goes, is Africa. The article reads, “the Chinese appetite is greatest for the most vital natural resources... and this has driven chinese companies into Africa in the quest of petroleum, iron ore, copper, timber, cobalt, nickel and uranium.”. In the latter part of the 2000s a narrative similar to the above quotation became commonplace in the global discourse on China’s recent engagement with Africa. Coverage of a new “scramble for Africa” by likening current Sino-African relations to the age of western colonization. In the coming years, various outlets reported both cautiously and lamentably of ‘the new colonialism’. By 2014, the narrative settling into a widely accepted media commonplace, a cover declared, “Taking it with a pinch of salt: Tales of Chinese plunder of Africa are exaggerated” in the background (though below the scantily clad African woman) the headline, “Colonialism Is Back” (Wu et al., 2023).

It is salient to observe here that much of the media discourse on Chinese investment in Africa is lost in a sea of hyperbole sans theoretical mooring. This kind of sensational determent to understanding is neither new, nor in itself unexpected. With the rise of Asia on the global stage, the portion of academia focusing on the regions as much as the theme has not kept up. Indeed, the focus until now has been almost entirely on West-centered narratives of Modernity. Besides the small and compartmentalized universes of Sinology and Indology, a discursive synthesis of East with East is sorely lacking. Furthermore, as can be seen in the print media, what little is exchanged in the way of ideas on the subject is highly colored by popular discourse (Liu, 2023).

3.3. Diplomatic Relations

The relationship between Africa and Asia (Asian here includes all of West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, and Eastern Asia) has been growing rapidly since the end of the post-Cold War era. At the global level, the end of the Cold War led to the collapse of the bipolar world. This rapid change in the world order has made the rise of some “emerging” countries in Africa and Asia possible. One of the visible ways in understanding this issue is that some data are on the increase in official contacts between governments in Africa and Asia. In terms of numbers, relations between African and Asian countries are increasing rapidly in the G-77, APEC, and United Nations.

When dynamic economic growth is used as a criterion for feasibility, the relations between individual African and Asian countries are still at low levels. Predictions about past and current economic growth development in the relations between Africa and Asia show a strong presence, that it is difficult for these relations to provide perspectives beyond low levels of possibility in the future. Presumably, the reason for this is that, with the domination of the Western economy, the economic development and growth of Africa and Asia provided perspective in the future for the northwest Asia region alone, (that is, the Eastern Asia region, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong), started to focus on it. Therefore, this study will reanalyse the inevitable economic flow of the reaction to the African-Asian relationship beyond the northwest Asian view (including the analysis of the northwest Asia region). At the same time, China's current active interest in the African continent and the possible future development of the entire African-Asian relationships will be addressed (Cicchiello et al., 2021).

4. ASIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA

Asia has been a continent of trade and migrants for centuries, with infinite flows of wares and people and mutual influences. Ancient routes of commerce, pilgrimage, and escape created networks that flourished and mutated through different epochs in the long durée of history. With the end of colonial empires, non-European old nations began to rise again as influential actors in the now global drama. Among these were the peoples of Asia and Africa. This was a significant "uneven development in the world system," radically changing international politics and economics. New Asian powers started gradually to dominate the global economy and to challenge the hegemony of the usual Western centres. Following the defeat of Japan, the capitalist rise of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore started already in the 1950s. In the 1960s, from the early development of the People's Republic, China became a powerful alternative partner in the Soviet-U.S. Cold War contest. The China of today is a major global player, the world's leading exporter and second economic power (Hollifield & Foley, 2022).

In 1998, the Korean crisis severely shook international stock markets and the situation was only managed through the concerted action of G7 and G22. The "Asian tigers" of growth triggered a later momentum of expanding globalization, the Sino-U.S. interdependence. Similarly, the explosion in South Asian and Arabian Sea areas with China and South Korea climbing high in the league of the world's maritime activities, and the "string of pearls" strategy, has been enlarging the global strategic horizons. Complementarity reflects the mutual unity of different things. There has been an extensive literature arguing that the renewable energy sectors of the economies of the South hold the potential for significant collaboration (Bellwood, 2023).

Africa is the largest and the most populous continent and contains some of the largest reservoirs of renewable energy resources on the planet. In regard to the AECF, major challenges to the Indian economy are coming from East Asian countries, especially China, which is competing with India not only for natural resources and infrastructure projects but also for investment in the AECF countries. Cooperation in the renewable energy sector is particularly interesting due to the industry's low level of dependency on local renewable energy resources as well as high transportation costs. Several papers have highlighted the challenges to the energy sector in the economies of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa group (BRICS) (Ahuja, 2021).

4.1. Economic Cooperation

In the present era of Western domination of the global economy, the case in focus on Asian-African relations in the post-independence era is African-Asian relations. Although it is the least known today, the nascent economic ideas and the incipient projects about regional economic development strategies proposed by Asian governments and institutions aimed at fostering economic cooperation among developing regions beyond the South-South dichotomy, should be brought to attention. This focus is particularly appropriate since during the 1960s and the 1970s, long before the analysis of the global economic system, other Asian and African intellectuals and institutions issued a constant critical analysis of the global economic system, and an alternative set of policies and the creation of a new institutional framework with which to cope with the problems and challenges of Asian and African underdevelopment at the international level (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2023).

This interaction, generally neglected nowadays, could contribute to a "new reading" of other forms of "peripheral reasoning" with reference to international economic issues, as well as to the interaction among countries and regions of the Third World, at a time when these were far from forming a homogeneous or well-identified political category on the international scene. Furthermore, the present attention to the recent process of "rapprochement" (or "rapport") between Asia and Africa, mainly through the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, and initiatives such as that vis-à-vis the sustainable growth renders particularly timely a "reconstitution" of that "interrupted" Asian-African intellectual dialogue (Shuyong, 2021).

4.2. Cultural Exchanges

This is evident in the resurgence of China and India, two pre-modern civilizations that consumed many of the goods and commodities that had previously been created and produced in the Western regions of Europe and North America. For a substantial portion of the modern era, China, India, and the Indonesian islands were synonymous with wealth, luxury, and refinement. For many Europeans, the fabled East was the otherworldly image of valley flowers, poets astride colossal domes, and despots immortalized in history for their wisdom, justice, cruelty, and the ability to debase itself in a labyrinth of shameless excess.

The challenge of Asian trade to the dominant position of Portugal and the Netherlands was instigation enough. However, what turned savoury competition into a growing agitation for the Company, and a matter of life and death for the English Economy, was the absence of a comprehensive model of previous contacts between Asians and Africans. Japan, though isolated at that time, was a manner of exemption in any case. It was sought to provide an exhaustive survey of documented encounters, not merely as a defensive move to pre-empt impending accusations of ignorance, but in order to articulate a coherent counter-vision, and by identifying the intrinsic complementarity of African-Asian transactions, to challenge the parasitic model that had already been implanted and that had many able defenders. In so doing, a crucial element was omitted (Cross, 2023).

Though working on the trading margins of the Indian Ocean, the East India Company itself was never far from the epicenter of world trade, a crucible where Malayo-Polynesian, Arab, and Indian influences had melded the landed forests of the Western Ghats into a grim living metallic hull of steel and rice. The Company, however, was intrinsically at odds with this bazaar-based hallmark of Mira Ceti, and sought, ineffectively as it turned out, to irrigate its financiers with a distilled and eradicated view of fundamentally agrarian process of which the city had been a remarkably viable outcome (Cross, 2023)

This was a grave shortcoming, and it was one that would be fully exploited since the evolutionary model of the growth settlements was not just an academic nicety, it was crucial to a clear understanding of the rationale upon which were built the networks of work, wealth, and power. Given the significantly may be evocatively often dimly perceived at the time, it was also essential in order to realise. By the inclusion or omission of such-and-so disputes, appeals, privileges, policies, and projects, indeed, by their very terms and articulations, a threshold boundary for wariness was marked, whose very crossing could lead to physical injury, dispossession, destitution, exile, enslavement. This was of course true overcomes local polities, communities, and individuals. It was also true as regards the Company-solicited distinction between, and ostracizing of, so-called anarchic or sectarian elements, that is those who lay outside the endorsed centres of credibility and faith. At least, it was the sword, or the cauterizing iron, in the hands of distant and just abrasively embodied biographies that would reason most effectively with Indian Ocean compacts (Kelsall et al., 2022).

4.3. Political Alliances

After the declarations on Colonial Freedom and the Bandung Conference, a Third World movement emerged developing a complex field of alliances exploited by subjective actors in the international system (usually called states) to maximize their power when confronting the status quo established by the post-WW2 settlement. However, these alignments expressed the difficulty in giving birth to a homogeneous political entity with a well-defined identity and agenda. As Teshale Tibebu explains, cultural conflicts between different actors and divergent economic interests were seen as potential threats to the transcontinental solidarity that initially characterized the movement uniting a selective band of African and Asian countries which defined their internal power legitimation on the basis of political concepts that, in Western democratic terms, were far from being ideologically coherent (Laidin & Berriet-Solliec, 2023).

The conjunction between the rhetoric of such a peculiar alliance and the external constraints of the Western world induced African and Asian governors to shape a consistent plain of international economic relations, far from the self-centred view of economic policy that states were implementing. Instead, in the framework of the struggle against the economic and financial hegemony of the Western powers, the emergence of a continuous economic juncture took place within the Third World countries, that, coping with subsidies and aids, shaped forms of commercial exchange both at the bilateral and regional levels, altering the dynamics of the global trade flows. The contemporary reshaping of such distant economic relations and the rise of powerful new actors arise a parallel with a new field of fruitful investigation which has still not found its space, that is, African-Asian relations before the Washington Consensus (Wootton, 2023).

4.4 Regional Organizations and Collaborations

In the era of Western domination of the global economy, when the Chinese economy is on the rise, one can pay particular attention to the application of the economic growth models of Africa and Asia to the development process today. This is even more important when considering the present under-researched topic of the greater economic history of the two continents where we can identify various political and historical similarities. Africa and Asia were already in a close economic, political, and cultural relationship in the period before the penetration of the West. Both continents declined after their domination by the West. However, after World War II, both Africa and Asia managed to overcome Western imperialism, beginning with a process of decolonialisation in Asia and the North of Africa and later on the rest of the African continent (Shambaugh, 2022).

This opened up a new chapter in the history of the global economy. Since the 1960s, Africa and China have once again established close economic relations. Trade was the main field of interest, but in recent years capital investment by Chinese entrepreneurs has also gained momentum. Westerners see this as a new form of invasion, but Chinese die-hardness argue that Chinese entrepreneurship is only about reviving the communities that have made a significant contribution to the development of Africa in the past. When looking at the situation from a broad historical perspective, it is clear that Africa and Asia are involved in economic developments in which their own process is envisaged before the icon of the European economic process. French economists, Rostovian Decennial Theory and World System Theory, look at development as a global process that also embraces phenomena in Africa and Asia. When complemented by historical evidence, we can identify various economic and political similarities (Bishku, 2021).

Trade relations between the two continents are observed in operation very early. Africa, which has been using ivory and slave trade for the Chinese ceramic center since the pre-Christian period, regains its reputation after the Chinese economic crisis of the 11th century. Despite temporary interruptions due to various factors until the 15th century, it continues to the continent. This trade, concentrated in the eastern part of Africa, centers on the Straits of Makara and reaches its dizzying appearance in the 13th-14th century. Developing after the 14th century, the European colonial trade, which diminishes the importance of the ancient riverbed, also reveals inter-continental trade shaken for a while. While the Far South is a much earlier date with respect to international commerce, some analyzes show the profile of Chinese trade. While the source of the ivory exported to China in the period of about twenty years (the total official register comes to 1200 tons of ivory) is the elephant teeth of Kerala and India mountains with the core of East African elephant sides, the purchase is made with fabric and one hundred (Duraiswamy, 2024).

The marginal trade of the 15th century with Africa accelerates with the 'great discoveries'. In this period, Portuguese ships for the purpose of 'blowing' to Indonesian spice-rich Firewood

Island went to the discoverers of the Cape in the west of Africa and occupied the local peoples. They claim that Africans are not able to produce the goods they ask for and that there is therefore no other choice but to be traded with Burman gold. This fact does not last long, but European domination adapted to the new trade order, and the king of the Sahara (Handout), who adapted Eurocentric words and who became the successor of Christians, became the cornerstone of the modern international trading system. In the order that opened the way to globalization, commercial and commercial divergences due to technology and political orientation dominate the relations between the continents (Woldekiros, 2023).

4.4.1 African Union Initiatives

With the changing reality of an increasingly multipolar world, the governments of Africa have begun to recognize the width and depth of relations with Asian countries as a tool of international policy. One of the critical projects of the African Union Summit meeting of the end of January 2012, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was the creation of the whole continent free trade zone until the end of 2017. The goal is simple – to create a zone of free exchange involving 26 of 54 African countries, predominantly located in the eastern and southern parts of the continent, as well as to link 600 million people. It would be the greatest free trade area in Africa, and its realization requires the consent and active participation of governments and regional organizations. What is without doubt is that this project responds to an urgent need, vital for the development of the continent, and is capable of reshaping the direction of economic and political cooperation in Africa. In times of serious economic and financial difficulties in many advanced, much larger developing countries, the economic model imposed on the modern world seems to be the subject of serious reflection, particularly on the part of less developed regions of Africa and Asia (Gilpin, 2023).

It is impossible to make revolutionary changes to the world commercial and financial system because, despite their clear flaws, developed countries are not interested in their modification. It should be remembered that the negative consequences that result from interaction with Western countries have long been known in Africa. The former colonial powers had no interest in establishing a solid basis for African economic development. Moreover, many discussions of that time have shown that Western countries prefer the impoverishment of Africa to the creation of competition on the world market. France particularly, driven by IMF and the World Bank, continues to dominate the African Economic and Monetary Union countries. So it is worth considering the proposal of Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein, the president of the semiindependent island of Zanzibar, located in Tanzania, to strengthen the relationship between Africa and Asia. Japan was the first to agree to develop a strategic partnership with the continent, which would mean more active participation in the development and organization of business (Visser & Cezne, 2025).

4.4.2 Asian Development Cooperation

In drawing attention to how the rise to economic power of the Asian nations has altered the geopolitical framework of international relations as it affects the African countries, this provides a most useful context for examining the subject more closely. It highlights and allows a close-up of the complex play of forces at work in the relationships of diverse economic and political units which constitute the global system forged by the penetration of advanced capitalism into the pre-Dominion territories of what is sometimes referred to as the ‘periphery’ (Moyo2024).

Similarly, Visser and Cezne (2025) argue that this system displays characteristic structure and patterns in the interchange of goods, services, and technologies, as well as in the transmission of political and socio-cultural values and belief systems within regions of size and sophistication attained by the present system of states and mechanisms of warfare and propaganda at a level which both underwrites and threatens their functioning. It may be usefully described, as in the context of this paper, in terms of the interaction between the advanced capitalist economies or the ‘metropolis’ (depending on one’s perspective) and those of the less developed economies of Africa and Asia frequently subsumed under the title of ‘the south’. It is argued that the expansion of the metropolis into the South is broadly the principal factor determining and constraining the character of relations in what is an essentially unequal and asymmetrical exchange across regions, in what has at times been described as the ‘center–periphery’ relationship. Another way of viewing it is in terms of the historically constructed hierarchies of power, wealth, and technology, which sustain such north-south dominance.

Efforts towards development and industrialization in the ex colonial territories of Africa and Asia have almost inevitably been subordinated by the prevailing global relations of the post Second World War period dominated by the United States, Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, Japan and latterly by the newly industrializing economies of Asia. These conditions have imposed an adjustment on plans and policies originally formulated to promote the building of a unit’s own indigenous industry, the restoration of a coherent national economy, the modernization of society and the claim to cultural and economic independence. Indeed, the interests of the southern nations may at times have been seriously compromised by the pressure imposed by an external environment more direct or covert (Moyo2024).

5. CASE STUDIES

The need for a comparison of Africa-China relations with the aspects of relations among Asian and African countries (and between Asia and Africa) grew out of comparative-historical observations of both regions since the outbreak of the current global crisis in 2008: ‘From the out-set of the wave, it was fairly clear that the burden-sharing would be unequal. Financially (and therefore economically), most would be shouldered by richer countries, the great majority of which are to be found in what is termed, extraordinarily, the “developed world”.’ This was ascribed to the different roles in the world system of three types of capitalism – the declining Anglo-Saxon model attached to the USA, the emerged and rising Asian model, and that of the stagnating Euroland, thus confirming theoretical predictions.

The implicit suggestion was that China may play the role of savior: ‘It was this rationale that lay behind the July 2009 summit of the major African countries with leaders of the most important emerging market economies, Brazil, Russia, India, and particularly China.’ Yet, the critical assessment of the Beijing Consensus of mutual benefit without the ‘baggage’ of historical ties asks for historical depth of comparative relations.

However, ‘switching the analytical and empirical focus from staticeconomism to historico-comparative analysis demands a re-entry into this very large number of possible break-out discussions’. Particularly insisting on breaking a ‘conspicuously silent’ empirical ground by a long-term historical comparison between Asia and Africa is ready to provoke a discussion, but, first of all, it might deserve balancing some scholarly accounts of current relations: ‘China’s new style is characterized by its emphasis on pragmatic policy, non-interference in domestic affairs, the pursuit of win-win outcomes, and a partnership based on equality and mutual trust’. With the denial of direct historical continuity from Mao’s ‘Third World solidarity’, Xi Jiping declared an era of a ‘new type of big power relations’ between China and Africa.

It followed considerable economic transformations affecting both regions: Africa became ‘BC-dependent’ with initial projects in the late 1950s and a railway contract in 1970; new Chinese interests spread to Portuguese colonies; after the Mexico City earthquake in 1985, China became an observer in the G15 process and the Economic Cooperation was signed four years later; the 'troika meetings' started with a conference in Beijing in 2001; in 2002, repeated criticism led to decrease of the Sholai contract; South-South cooperation distribution reform started in 2007; the financial crisis provoked 2010 G20 talks; the 2006 and 2015 FOCACs capped the first three decades of shifting candidates/regions in China-Africa interactions.

5.1. China-Africa Relations

With the transformation of the ruling classes in China, primarily the capitalist class, in African countries, predominantly the avaricious bureaucratic-capitalist class and their comprador sons, the present situation, mentality and demands have transformed. Under the conditions of a one-sided world market, controlled by the imperialists, with a view to competing with the western monopolies, China and newly capitalistically developing countries like India, Brazil, Malaysia have set about taking command over the world resources with whatever capital they could accumulate till now. China's outward investments to foreign countries have recently surpassed the incoming investments. As part of this, in Africa, in the last 10 years China has made huge investments. Numerous infrastructural projects and construction projects are being carried out under the guidance and investment of China. This has led to the necessity of cheap African labour power and raw materials in China. And in view of the African investment program to be conducted in the next decade, Africa has raised the necessities for suppliers and investment partners, other than the Chinese monolithic empire, such as financial situation and market diversification in African countries. And China, too, is compelling Africa to diversify its imports, that were primarily directed to western powers (Li & Zhang, 2021).

To ensure, to some extent, the success of these trade relations, the East African countries have invested extensive amounts in infrastructural developments, mainly ports and their connections to the hinterland. Internet, transport and telecommunications infrastructures are extremely weak and not possible between vast international territories. In the last decade these faults, one of the characteristic marks of corrupt bureaucratism, have marginally bettered. As the land distance between them is short, preference in trade is given to China, as it today holds monopoly over the regional ports of the Indian ocean. China almost always refuses time or cash credit arrangements. The incipient African bourgeoisie are compelled to bring new laws and measures to control this monetary and trade relations. On the other side, the strengthening of the Africa-China bond and the possibility of developing the Mainland-Sri Lanka partnership depend on the international stand of the working and poor masses in China and Sri Lanka (Zheng, 2021).

The message of the architect of China's open door policy, and one of the leaders of the Communist Party of China, when it embarked on an outward looking policy in the late 1970s remarked that China's role in Africa was to offer collaboration for mutual benefit and large-scale co-operation. In December, China joined in the WTO with three conditions of investing directly until. Consequently, China has been focusing particularly on African countries for such investments. China has to deal with energy shortages because, in addition to its rapid development, it is also the third largest country in terms of land area. China has a population of 1.4 billion, 70% of whom live in the countryside. (Brennan & Vecchi, 2021)

5.2. India-Africa Collaborations

Is there a future for Africa and Africans living in the 'Indian' city dubbed the most racist in the country? While one flight connection may seem somewhat trivial, given past accusations, what impact will the new trade treaty—in particular the ECTs—between the seemingly unconnected parts of the African Union and India have on the San bushmen? Might it hasten the demise of the last surviving hunter-gatherers? Is there added poignancy—or will there be increased conflict—if this concludes soon after the unveiling of a controversial statue in his hometown? These events happened during last fieldwork and this submission addresses the latter two issues together.

While much has been written on this much avowed but often problematic friendship seeking to challenge economic predominance on both continents, often unconnected occurrences highlight the potential for the less trumpeted racism that appears to sanction structural violence against these peoples. For, on the same weekend in May 2016 when Mozambique severed its military ties over illicit sapphires and opened its doors to private successors, Odisha almost simultaneously declared its multilateral ECT with Ethiopia and the African Union (Mattheis et al., 2023).

There is more than coincidence in this: the celebrated statue being in bronze, and the alliance to build new 'processing plants', just when a state of the-art fish-processing plant was being inaugurated in Elmina. Such plants are ostensibly intended to enable small farmers to convert their catch into shelf-stable dried fish to prevent poisoning, but will also see the consenting government forfeit its right to ban the export of its own fish! This potential link to tuna—known to have been caught near survival groups—are discussed later, after establishing some of the historical connections between Odisha and the hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari involving an ongoing Seventh Schedule (Wapmuk, 2021).

5.3. Japan's Role in Africa

The current discourse about the international order deals mainly with Euro-American and Pacific Asian relations and is seen as a globalised field. In this context Africa is still a peripheral element. However, Western supremacy is being contested by Asia. Philosophically, civilisation does not necessarily precede the world but is supposed, in practice, to more or less follow a movement of history from one people to the neighbour. In the re-organising of an every-time novel world there are ever-time novel pairs of peoples (Muschik, 2022). Under these circumstances civilisations keep their original importance but a smaller number of them dominate on the facts, since civility means power. Japan’s modernisation has already caused her predominance in many aspects, suggesting a future fair exchange with Europe. The main reasoning will deal with Sino-Japanese-Western relations, but Japan’s African relations will also be considered. Recent events have already provided supports to such an attempt. It would not be a justification, but a structural explanation. Africa which has always been peripheral in world history has lately come into the limelight of post-colonial studies (Bayly2021).

Asia had been an important element of Africa’s pre-colonial history, but under the colonial condition the two continents were divided, and the establishment of the Afro-Asian movement would have been a very important development in the defeat of imperialism and since disengagement Japan’s strenuous efforts have been made to establish new relations in the era of Western domination of the global economy. However, Japan’s military aggression against mainland Asia and the Pacific countries is almost totally ignored. In an economic literature in particular, negative facts of Japan’s post-war business activities in those regions are whitewashed. Africa, a retrogression of the Afro-Asian relations is indicated. Only recently, the critique of mass-media-generated beliefs has started in the developed countries themselves, but aggressors, mass media are still spreading their version of the recent conflicts (Sud & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2022).

6. CONCLUSION

Recent Chinese interest in Africa and the resurgence of an economic Asia in the 21st century have led to a growing interest in the nature of Asian-African interactions. Common coverage of the subject emphasizes the novelty of such ties, and assumes that they have always been weak or marginal. In fact, the current love affair between Africa and Asia is merely the rekindling of ancient affections quashed by centuries of European violence. Europe's relative decline since 1800 and industrialization in Asia have led to the re-establishment of Asian-African economic ties. The ownership of oil assets in Africa by a booming India, and superior diplomatic skills in Asian capitals are further manifestations of a Eurasian recovery. African views of Asia are a little different. Caution is expressed more often on the infiltration of cheap manufactured goods from India, China, and Thailand rather than Africa's involvement in a coming Asian economic victory.

For African governments and firms it is more the rise of global India that is creating anxiety rather than that of the moneylenders' offspring in Beijing. The buildup of a healthy alternative energy and manufacturing sector in China is a worrying development for many African countries, whose national manufacturing bases bear strong resemblance to those of imperial China prior to the Opium Wars. African views also encompass ancient suspicions of cunning merchants facilitating the ingress of the military: fears that Indian and Chinese businesses are the 'foot soldiers' of latter day gun-ships. India and China seemingly receive diverging reactions from African public opinion, partly due to the regionally segmented rise of Asia. The association of global power with China is less direct and more nationalized in its application, whereas popular pan-African sentiment often identifies India more strongly due to a shared colonial past, as well as persisting Indian network connectivity and cultural presence throughout east and southern Africa.

Between 2000 and 2030 China has eclipsed EU, World Bank and USAID support to the region. The Chinese head of state has made six historical trips to the continent. Over 1,300 Chinese infrastructural projects have been conducted with an investment of over $75 billion. The expanding Chinese-African government relationships have so far shown no abatement, with the inauguration of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, another China-Arab-Africa trade show, and steadily deepening spatial investments from Southeast China to East Africa. The African Union perceives China's rise as an opportunity to 'free' Africa from 'Eurocentric' developmental models. China-Afro trade has grown exponentially with $50 billion valued exchanges in 2006, and in part due to over 800 Chinese state-owned companies currently operating in Africa, or real property investments – the largest being the highly contentious purchase of 10% of Nigeria's mining sector by China National Offshore Oil Corporation. China's rapidly expanding industrial base and the need for long-term, reliable sources of iron, copper, oil and other mineral resources has prompted an increasingly consumerist predation on Africa that defaults the complimentary industrial symbiosis of the 'Bandung bargain' through the 'plus' membership that can now be extended to escalating post-PCM World Bank lending to China's infrastructure construction companies.

Europe responded to the awakening Asian/European/African alliance with the Berlin conference of 1885 that carved the continent up into spheres of influence and trade monopolies in an attempt to 'freeze' inequality in place and effectively ensure mass poverty, disease and conflict. Subsequently, neo-colonial EU/US policy was strong support for intrastate war, genocide and 'aids therapy', involving backdoor arms deals with China who remains Africa's biggest arms supplier. Like Europe before it, the White House views a rising Beijing as a challenge to the status quo of global economic injustice. In 2006 US senator Hilary Clinton briefly silenced the mockery of Beijing's apparent lack of humanitarian commitment to stating, 'the consequence of the present course empowers China'. There is the recent and unlikely emergence of 'middle-ground', non-interference and 'investment-only' rhetoric. The complexity of this policy orientates consolidating growth with an unusual partnership in military research.

The unmatched electronic warfare and signal intelligence capabilities will be transferred into a network-centric warfare architecture in a theoretically permanent foothold on the continent. Behind the public promises of agricultural output, rural schools and orphan biscuits 'eased' through the Sino-African fund, the classified documents describing the assembly and sale of remote controlled gunships to the Nairobi government indicate an ancillary and disturbing jigsaw. Further evidence suggests coordinated overflights by unmanned drones for satellite transmission back to Darwin and Diego Garcia. Attributing Indian and Chinese exploitation to 'ace minerals' or 'death barges' as a more emotive, accessible caricature is also dismissive of a far less visual, but arguably equally pernicious haul of terrestrial infrastructure projects between 300-1000 miles from the Indian Ocean board.

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