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Western Washington University

**A History of China-Tanzania Relations:
How China Became Donor, Friend, and Foe**

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HIST 499: Topics in African History

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Introduction

In its post-liberation period, the African continent experienced tremendous growth and change. After colonial powers pulled out, brand-new states lacked the capacity and experience to effectively govern. African countries were suddenly faced with questions of nation building. How were they supposed to grow their economies, build up infrastructure, and define their national identity? Many struggled and were plagued with violence, extreme poverty, and poor governance. It should be noted that Africa is not a monolithic entity; each country has its own set of challenges. The good news is that Africa is doing better developmentally than ever before. The African Development Bank named Africa the fastest growing continent based on sustained growth in humanitarian conditions, economic opportunity, and political indicators.¹

However, it is widely accepted that Africa is underdeveloped by modern standards.² To accelerate growth, African countries turn to receiving foreign aid. It is hard to discuss Africa and foreign aid without eventually mentioning China. In the world of development, China has turned heads by focusing serious attention and resources on the African continent. In the past few decades, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has significantly ramped up investments and strengthened existing relations with African nations.³ During the 1990s alone, Chinese-African

¹ "Africa Is Now the Fastest Growing Continent in the World," African Development Bank and African Development Bank Group, *Banque Africaine De Développement - Bâtir Aujourd'hui, Une Meilleure Afrique Demain*, last modified 2019. www.afdb.org/fr/news-and-events/africa-is-now-the-fastest-growing-continent-in-the-world-12107.

² "Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme," UNDP, accessed March 6, 2023, www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?gclid=CjwKCAiAu5agBhBzEiwAdiR5tOr3Vj_zYcvNniRhbxLnRpSkXcTIZLplg8OsIWVFCIXD_YWLeRZjRoCHCgQAvD_BwE.

³ "Data: Chinese Investment in Africa — China Africa Research Initiative," China Africa Research Initiative, www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa.

trade increased by 700%.⁴ Tanzania is a prime example of a country on the receiving end of Chinese attention.

Tanzania serves as a sample country in Africa to gain insight on how China and Tanzania have historically interacted. By using Tanzania as a case study, it can illuminate the nature of Chinese-African relations in general. Not all findings relevant in Tanzania can be mapped onto other parts of Africa, but they can convey similar trends and motivations. This project seeks to identify how the relationship affected both Tanzania and China. An additional goal is to chart how the nature of the partnership itself changed throughout history. The recent pattern of heightened Chinese activity leads to questions of power dynamics, China's end game, and the impact on Tanzanian growth. This paper argues that the intentions and execution of China-Tanzania relations have not changed significantly over time; therefore, Chinese involvement is not to be feared in Tanzania.

Another dimension of Chinese involvement to consider is not purely economic development, but how Chinese action is perceived by the international community. The reality is that Chinese activity in Africa has set off alarm bells in the West. In a post-Cold War context, geopolitics is not technically separated into Eastern and Western blocs anymore. That being said, there still seems to be a bifurcation of superpower countries. This is evident in the example of China and Russia being adversaries of the United States and the United Kingdom. Part and parcel of the superpower status is the need to keep improving and competing against one's fellow superpowers. The United States, among other Western countries, tends to view

⁴ Jean-Christophe Servant. "China's Trade Safari in Africa," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 11, 2005, <https://mondediplo.com/2005/05/11chinafrica>.

authoritarian states, like China and Russia, as threats more than friendly competitors.^{5 6 7 8}

Consequently, the actions of rival ramps are often viewed in a negative light.

There could be many explanations for the antagonization of certain nations by the U.S. Some propose that East and West tensions never really went away, but just manifested in new ways.⁹ According to this view, the U.S. needs to invent an enemy in order to grow economically and for the military-industrial complex to thrive. Progress alone is not motivating enough, there needs to be a force to work against and outperform. Currently, China is one of these threats that critics claim is blown out of proportion in order for the U.S. government to fulfill this agenda. Those who doubt the threat of China disregard nefarious intentions and categorize the relationship as a friendship instead.¹⁰

On the flip side, others believe China is a genuine threat to American national security.¹¹ These people maintain that there is no threat inflation and that a close eye must be kept on America's adversaries. Some hold the idea that China is using Africa as a pawn in a larger strategic game that will somehow undermine the U.S. in the future. China aiding Africa is seen as a targeted foreign policy approach that is meant to further China's plans of domination and

⁵ "China's One Road, One Belt Grand Strategy: Founded on the Weaponization of the Global Supply Chain," *Defense Transportation Journal* (December 2020).

⁶ Christopher O'Leary, "Logistics with Chinese Characteristics: Beijing has Weaponized the Supply Chain," *The National Review*, 2019.

⁷ "Summary of the National Defense Strategy of The United States of America," Department of Defense, (2018): 3. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

⁸ Peter O'Malley, "China is at work in Africa with a dangerous strategy. US must act now to counter it." *Fox News*, September 7, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/china-work-africa-dangerous-strategy-us-act-counter>.

⁹ Stephen Kotkin, "The Cold War Never Ended: Ukraine, the China Challenge, and the Revival of the West," *Foreign Affairs*, September 26, 2022, www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2022-04-06/cold-war-never-ended-russia-ukraine-war.

¹⁰ "Chinese FM's 'Tour to Africa First' Shows Long-lasting Close Friendship," *Helsinki Times*, January 16, 2023, www.helsinkitimes.fi/china-news/22823-chinese-fm-s-tour-to-africa-first-shows-long-lasting-close-friendship.html.

¹¹ "The China Threat." Federal Bureau of Investigation, October 26, 2022, www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat#:~:text=The%20counterintelligence%20and%20economic%20espionage,the%20FBI's%20top%20counterintelligence%20priority.

subvert African wellbeing. This is the prevailing attitude from U.S. intelligence agencies and crucial Western think tanks.^{12 13}

It is possible that a combination of these two ideas exist. China could be a real threat, but perhaps not to the extent that it is being portrayed by U.S. mass media and think tanks. China could also be a threat in realms apart from foreign aid and policy. Regardless, the conversation of global rivals sets the stage for why China is especially relevant in Africa. Relations with developing countries like Tanzania could be a mechanism to establish dominance in the global sphere.

The aim of this paper is to not stick to any view completely. Acknowledging that objectivity is a myth for historians, the effort is to not see Chinese activity as entirely benevolent or entirely heinous. This paper will survey Sino-Tanzania relations from their origins in 1964 to the present, focusing most on the formative years of the mid-1960s to the 1980s. This period is essential to understanding the tangible ways the relationship was established. The nature of China-Tanzania involvement will be observed in terms of diplomacy, economy, politics, and social changes over time. Analysis should quell Western anxieties, as the relationship's notable consistency is not indicative of an exploitative Chinese foreign policy.

Both Chinese and Tanzanian sources will be used, as well as sources from outsider perspectives that look into their relations. Most of the source matter comes from diplomatic and political realms, but empirical economic sources, sociological studies, and personal interviews are included to understand life on social and economic levels. Primary sources are mostly

¹² FBI, "The China Threat."

¹³ Melanie W. Sisson, "The Pressing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party to US National Defense." *Brookings*, 9 Feb. 2023. www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-pressing-threat-of-the-chinese-communist-party-to-us-national-defense.

diplomatic documents and speeches, while secondary sources include monographs, articles, and online material meant to expand concepts such as socialism, diplomacy, infrastructure, and aid. Sources from a variety of perspectives are selected to prevent analysis from being one-sided.

Historical Context

Before it was Tanzania, the region was called 'Tanganyika'. It was under German control from the 1880s to 1919. In 1919, the British colonized the territory until 1961. Under British authority, the territory remained poor and there were mostly Africans as well as south Asian and European populations. On December 9, 1961, Tanganyika became independent. Later on December 10, 1963, the island of Zanzibar achieved its independence too. The following year—1964, the two entities united to form the United Republic of Tanzania. A year before independence, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was created by Julius K. Nyerere. At the point of independence, Tanzania was underdeveloped and rattled from the recent security threat of the Zanzibar Revolution. Nyerere was the activist and visionary who led Tanzania to its independence. Nyerere became president of Tanzania in 1964 and stayed in office until 1985. The TANU party remained the country's leading party until the late '70s because Nyerere believed in an autocratic one-party state.

Tanzania was gaining its footing during the 1960s by making a name in the international world and establishing a national economy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the country went through a recession due to socialist policies of communal agriculture reducing overall food production. Since then, the national effort has been to rebuild from the economic damage of those policies, fight corruption, and modernize on fronts such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, and politics. Currently, the country is a lower-middle income country with upward

growth that is happening at a relatively slow rate.¹⁴ While this is true, Tanzania has simultaneously been deemed a success story in the world of foreign aid.¹⁵ Evidence of this is its political stability which is atypical in the region.

Prior to contact with Tanzania, China was also facing a period of great change. Lee Dai-Ming, the ex-minister of the Chinese Cabinet to Chiang Kai Shek, identified urgent Chinese problems of 1947 as follows: “starvation of an estimated 100 million people”, “uncontrolled inflation of the Chinese currency” and “[t]he Civil War, which is draining manpower by the millions, and annihilating industrial as well as agricultural potential.”¹⁶ China was coming out of the brutal Chinese Civil War, resulting in the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, fleeing to Taiwan in 1949. The Communists were left in power under Mao Zedong, and the People’s Republic of China was created. Through the 1950s, the Chinese population was at the mercy of Maoist policies like the Great Leap Forward in efforts to modernize China. The Civil War, the Chinese Revolution, and the Great Leap were periods of enormous growth, but also immense tragedy. The planned economy was dysfunctional, tens of millions perished in the Great Chinese Famine, and China was considered a political outsider in global Cold War politics.

Following the retrenchment of the revolutionary period, economic reforms in the late ‘70s sparked industrialization and rapid rates of growth. China’s economy continues to excel into the present day. Now, China is one of the most powerful countries in the world in terms of its military, economy, and international relations. Politically, China is an autocracy, but the iron-

¹⁴ “The World Bank in Tanzania,” World Bank, 2023, www.worldbank.org/en/country/tanzania/overview.

¹⁵ Sebastian, Edwards, *Toxic Aid: Economic Collapse and Recovery in Tanzania*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.

¹⁶ Lee Dai-Ming. *NAACP 1940-55. General office file. Bandung Conference, 1955*. University Publications of America.

grip of the Maoist era has loosened considerably. The Chinese public is currently denied freedom of expression and public discourse is censored by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China is trending towards an expansion of global influence, seen most recently in the 2013 “One Belt One Road” initiative, also known as the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), which Tanzania is a part of. The BRI further expands Chinese economic and political power. It seeks to integrate China more fully into Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. This initiative is what has some Western viewers As China’s initial 1964 contact with Tanzania indicates, this trend of facilitating global connections is not a recent development. Through diplomacy, trade agreements, and aid deliverance, China is working to invest in developing countries. They have primarily done so by taking on infrastructure and industrial projects abroad that stimulate the Chinese economy and develop weaker countries like Tanzania.

China was ready to interact with Tanzania for a few reasons.¹⁷ First, Tanzania could be a battleground against American imperialism and imperialism in general. Second, the countries were ideologically aligned in a common revolutionary struggle. Third, Tanzanian reliance would make China look more legitimate and formally recognized. Fourth, potential projects were economically expedient for Chinese growth. Due to its anti-imperialist platform, meager economy, and need for formal recognition, Tanzania was ready to accept help from an external power. On April 26, 1964, China extended diplomatic ties to Tanzania.

Debate About Aid

¹⁷ George Yu, *China and Tanzania: A Study in Cooperative Interaction*. (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1970), 15-18.

There are three prevailing schools of thoughts in regards to aid coming from China:

Chinese aid is detrimental, Chinese aid is beneficial, aid itself is detrimental. One is that Chinese aid should not be trusted. There are a few rationales as to why Chinese aid is suspect. These ideas are not Tanzania-specific, but can certainly apply to the Tanzanian case. When the term “Chinese aid” is used, what does it mean? It describes a wide variety of financial investments made in Tanzania by the Chinese government. Aid can take the form of humanitarian services, military assistance, or fiscal investments. China tends to give fiscal aid like loans and grants for infrastructure projects. This differs from the preferred Western strategy of giving humanitarian assistance for infectious diseases, food, agriculture, medicine, etc.

Loans offered by China are zero-interest loans, concessional loans, and commercial loans.¹⁸ In recent years, there have been controversies about Chinese loans offered to Tanzanian and other African nations. Some say these loans are doomed to fail and thus doomed to make the African nation financially dependent on China. Along this line of thinking, China is thought to gain by seizing critical assets or asserting political leverage over countries unable to repay. This is labeled as “debt-trap diplomacy”. At the surface, it might seem like China selects any country it wants, hooks it in with loans, then that country must bend to the will of China. On the whole, debt-trap diplomacy is a myth that inflates China’s real influence while simultaneously undermining the capability of African nations to make informed decisions .¹⁹

China plays hardball in loans, they are favorable towards Chinese leaders and corporations, and there is a lack of transparency. At the same time, the only way they can ensure repayment of these huge sums of money is to tighten loan conditions. Chinese lenders also make

¹⁸ “The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap in Africa.” Bloomberg Originals, YouTube, accessed 18 Mar. 2022, 6:14, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QDEWwSkP0.

¹⁹ Bloomberg Originals, “The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap.”

fervent efforts to explain the terms of the loan to the recipient nation.²⁰ China announced in 2022 that 23 loans for 17 African countries were to be forgiven.²¹ Many African countries are actually getting let off the hook because of Chinese lenient—not trapping—tendencies. When loans infrequently default and infrastructure projects get halted, it is historically due to the project being rushed.²² This is not an ideal outcome, Africans lose jobs and the project is incomplete, but it is not evidence of predatory lending.

A second school of thought is that Chinese aid is a positive force. Many claim it is superior to Western aid.²³ International organizations and Western countries offer humanitarian assistance for infectious diseases, food, agriculture, medicine. Chinese aid establishes foundational infrastructure to make greater trade and production possible. The Chinese approach to giving is generally more popular with longer lasting effects than the Western style.²⁴ One of the defining characteristics of Chinese aid is that it does not hinge upon the domestic political climate in the recipient country.²⁵ This is in contrast to Western-style aid that is conditional on the recipient country's democratization or political stability. This conditional design excludes countries who do not subscribe to a democratic model and punishes unmet political standards that are unrealistic for weak states. In practice, the Chinese method stimulates the economy more directly and has been known to facilitate more independent choices by the recipient.²⁶

²⁰ Bloomberg Originals, "The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap."

²¹ Kate Bartlett, "China Cancels 23 Loans to Africa Amid 'Debt Trap' Debate," *VOA*, August 25, 2022, www.voanews.com/a/china-cancels-23-loans-to-africa-amid-debt-trap-debate-/6716397.html.

²² Bloomberg Originals, "The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap."

²³ Centre for Chinese Studies, "Patterns of Chinese Investment, Aid and Trade in Tanzania," *World Wide Fund for Nature*, 2009, 6.

²⁴ Bloomberg Originals, "The Myth of the Chinese Debt Trap."

²⁵ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, ?.

²⁶ "The Truth About China in Africa," *PolyMatter*, December 24, 2021, 5:24, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gwgcIfzttA.

In Nyerere's 1963 speech "Relations with Private Capital Investment", he states "[w]e want capital investment in Tanganyika not because we like factories"... "[w]e want capital investment simply and solely because we want to improve the lives of the people of this country".²⁷ For Nyerere, the ends justify the means. If China can help Tanzania realize their state-building goals, then they must work with China.²⁸ Africa is making strong alliances with China, potentially leaving less room for Western actors. There is an idea that it is a zero-sum game with only so much real estate for foreign countries to get involved in. When one country is touched by a foreign donor, it becomes untouchable for the donor's adversaries. Economist Dambisa Moyo states "we can not exclude China from certain transactions, because it is China. You need a real reason, and you have to name it."²⁹

The third idea is that aid itself is suspect. Some claim that it is ineffective, difficult to regulate, and attacks the recipient country's sovereignty regardless of where it is coming from or who the intended user is.³⁰

Diplomatic Change Over Time

As an infant nation, developing diplomatic relations from scratch is a lofty task. When imperial powers pull out, nation-building is left to new leaders with little to no experience. To expand on China being the right choice for Tanzania's needs, an important factor was China's lack of colonial legacy. In a conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Second Vice

²⁷ Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity: Uhuru Na Umoja: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65*, (Oxford University Press, 1967), 207.

²⁸ *China Africa Research Initiative*, "Data: Chinese Investment in Africa."

²⁹ "Les investissements chinois en Afrique vus par Dambisa Moyo," *Chine Magazine*, last modified August 6, 2018, <https://www.chine-magazine.com/les-investissements-chinois-en-afrique-vus-par-dambisa-moyo/>.

³⁰ Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*, (Oxford University Press, 2011).

President Rashidi Kawawa, they express their mutual disdain for powers with imperial pasts.

Zhou Enlai laments, “Western countries are unreliable and they always want to control our Asian and African countries”.³¹ Though this was a generalization, it was in China’s interest to appeal to this aspect of their identity that set them apart from many potential donors. Another interesting discovery is that Western suspicions of Chinese involvement in Tanzania date back to the early 1960s. In reference to Chinese contact Nyerere complained that “Western politicians have been examining us through microscopes to see whether we have been—as they would put it— ‘contaminated’ by these contacts.”³² To summarize in broad terms, China and Tanzania were at points in time where their interests aligned. Their trajectories, motivations, and goals lined up, even though the scale of the two countries were markedly different. Diplomacy between them started strong and has stayed strong ever since.

Prior to bilateral relations, a turning point in Chinese-African relations was the Asian-African (Bandung) Conference of 1955. Tanzania was not yet independent or united and could not therefore attend. However, the People’s Republic of China was a dominant figure out of the 29 attendees. Their attitudes at the conference contain their foreign policy goals, prior to their contact with Tanganyika and Zanzibar. As documented in Richard Wright’s report of the conference, Premier Zhou Enlai addressed: “If we seek common ground in doing away with the sufferings and calamities under colonialism, it will be very easy for us to have mutual understanding and respect.”³³ This international meeting was essential for establishing that non-aligned countries were ready to have a future without colonialism involved. If colonizing powers

³¹ Zhou Enlai and Rashidi Kawawa. “Record of Conversation: Premier Zhou and Second Vice President Rashidi Kawawa.” *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, 17 June 1964, digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/record-conversation-between-premier-zhou-and-second-vice-president-rashidi-kawawa.

³² Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 51.

³³ Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co, 1956), 159.

were going to be out of the picture and Tanzania was a fairly weak state, there was the hope that a sponsor-like presence would step in.

One of the first diplomatic documents exchanged between China and Tanzania was the Sino-Tanzania Treaty of Friendship of 1965.³⁴ In it, the document acknowledges that “friendly cooperation...conforms to the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries”. This treaty of friendship is vague and informal, but a clear signal that Chinese and Tanzanian interests align. Specifically, “the common struggle against imperialism” is identified as a bonding force that is repeatedly drawn upon in Sino-Tanzania relations and reiterated in the Bandung Conference. Both countries are expected to uphold “mutual non-aggression” and to “develop economic and cultural relations”. Given how hazy this pact is, it is significant that the economy and culture are named. Both countries knew that economic and cultural exchange was top of mind. This first Treaty of Friendship set the precedent for many similar treaties that reaffirmed its original sentiments.

In George Yu’s analysis, he labels Sino-Tanzania relations as a partial and informal alliance. In Yu’s opinion, “Chinese-Tanzanian cooperative interaction has been conducted largely on an ad hoc basis”.³⁵ This document fully demonstrates his claim. A treaty of friendship is non-committal and just a mere expression of common interests. There is no mention of military or political reciprocity. One nation is not expected to go to war for the other. In addition, there is no punishment for the treaty being broken. Yu points out that “the alliance has been

³⁴ “Treaty of Friendship Between the People’s Republic of China and the United Republic of Tanzania,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/tyfls_665260/tyfl_665264/2631_665276/200204/t20020425_600072.html

³⁵ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 14.

given no formal organizational expression.”³⁶ While the diplomatic relationship is steady and robust, it is important to highlight its underlying non-committal aspect.

From the earliest diplomatic contact, Tanzanian officials often conveyed an admiration for Chinese social values. Among them were the spirit of traditionalism, frugality, self-reliance and organization.³⁷ As Tanzania became a functioning nation, these are the qualities early leaders sought to emphasize. Frugality and organization in particular, on state and personal levels, were seen as ways to get to China’s level of success. On President Nyerere’s first state visit to China, he commented: “I wished all the people of Tanzania could come to China and witness for themselves what a determined people can do.”³⁸ He could not hide his admiration.

In 1971, a United Nations resolution was submitted to recognize the People’s Republic of China as the legitimate governing body of China.³⁹ Resolution 2758 also granted China the fifth spot on the UN Security Council. Tanzania was one of the countries that voted for this resolution, which then passed. It was a major step in Chinese state legitimacy and global recognition. With a Security Council member in its corner, Tanzania’s diplomatic and political gravitas increased. Additionally, this was a key moment for Tanzania to display their loyalty and support to China. This is an example of how “China has used aid as a reward for foreign policy actions of Tanzania.”⁴⁰ In some sense, political allegiance is bought, but this is commonplace in the international community.

³⁶ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 14.

³⁷ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 35.

³⁸ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 35.

³⁹ “Political Relations Between China and Tanzania,” EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, 2003, tz.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgbx/zz/200804/t20080422_7261605.htm.

⁴⁰ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 60.

In the role of sponsor or mentor, China sometimes downplays its status. Jiang Zemin, president of the People’s Republic of China from 1993-2003, called his country “the biggest developing country and Africa, the continent with the largest number of developing countries.” Why does China simultaneously claim to be the big man and the little man? China is a large, powerful country, but it does not want to emphasize this too much for fear of looking too Western. As Jamie Monson puts it, “China sought to retain two seemingly contradictory identities— that of a formerly colonized subject as well as that of a Cold War player.”⁴¹ The Chinese-Tanzanian bond is predicated on China being markedly different from the West. Sometimes it labels itself a developing country to appeal to that underdog status instead of identifying solely as an entrenched superpower.

Diplomatic solidarity has been proven through visits, voting in international organizations, bilateral agreements, and summits. Since Chinese diplomatic relations with Tanzania were established in 1964, they have kept up an impressive visitation record. To date, every Tanzanian head of state—except one—visited China during their term. Similarly, Chinese officials have made consistent trips to Tanzania from the 1960s to the present. From the beginning, China spoke to sentiments of anti-imperialism and championing Tanzanian sovereignty. Ever since, shared core values have kept the relationship strong.

That one Tanzanian head of state who did not visit China was John Magufuli. He was president from 2015 to 2021 and he died in office. His presidency marked one of the only rocky periods in Sino-Tanzanian diplomacy. The tension was still short-lived and did not garner much

⁴¹ Jamie Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*, (Indiana University Press, 2009).

of a reaction from the Chinese side.⁴² Magufuli claimed that the Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) was corrupt and denied them a railroad contract. Magufuli also stopped the Bagamoyo Port construction in 2016 because he was trying to demonstrate how Tanzania did not have to rely on outside powers, like China, to be successful. Since China was never very swayed by Tanzanian domestic policy, Magufuli's choices did not fluster Chinese diplomats or cause any lasting changes in diplomatic relations..

Some experts point out that Chinese foreign policy has changed with regards to Africa. Analysts observe China growing out of their isolationist stage and becoming more involved in the global economy through the African market.⁴³ While this is a valid point, it does not characterize diplomacy directed at Tanzania. With Tanzania, the nature of the relationship is one of maintenance and integrity.

Economic Change Over Time

Immediately post-independence, Republic of Tanzania leaders recognized the amount of work to be done in the national economy. In a 1966 speech to the National Assembly, Nyerere admits that on the economic front, "1965 was not an easy year for Tanzania".⁴⁴ Farmers faced droughts, crop losses, and some of Tanzania's major exports lost value on the world market. The man expected to guide the country was Julius Nyerere. In the same speech, he states his vision going forward: "Tanzania has decided that it wants to get richer as fast as possible".⁴⁵ Next, he

⁴² Muhidin Shangwe, "From Friends to Partners? The Changing Nature of Sino-Tanzanian Relations," *French Institute of International Relations*, September 2021, 13.

⁴³ Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 6 (Nov-Dec 2003), 22-35.

⁴⁴ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 158.

⁴⁵ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 165.

emphasizes how spending should concentrate on “things which will, in the long run, produce wealth”, such as “building factories, schools, roads, telephones, offices, houses, and so on”.

From the outset, Nyerere recognized that developing infrastructure was essential to the country’s post-colonial growth. The vision for Tanzania was clear, but it was not translating to practice.

Agricultural production was low and colonial-era infrastructure was deteriorating. Since Tanzania was struggling to jumpstart the economy on its own dime, it looked to its new friend to the east.

China’s economy was in recovery from the recent famine and growth was trending upward. China was at the right place and time and Tanzanians saw potential for a fruitful economic partnership. Aid and trade were the two main types of economic interaction. In a 1965 speech, Nyerere addressed the need for private capital investment in Tanzania. He demands, “[w]e want capital investment in Tanganyika not because we like factories”... “[w]e want capital investment simply and solely because we want to improve the lives of the people of this country”.⁴⁶ In 1964, China donated \$45.5 million in aid to Tanzania, making up half of its total annual aid to the African continent.⁴⁷ Loans and grants were awarded by China with zero-interest or low-interest. There was an awareness that external aid was a means to an end.

On the trade front, relations officially began with 'The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation' of 1964 and the Trade Agreement of 1965.⁴⁸ Since then, the countries have exchanged dozens of economic agreements. President Nyerere saw trade with China as

⁴⁶ Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity: Uhuru Na Umoja: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952-65*, (Oxford University Press, 1967), 207.

⁴⁷ Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 59.

⁴⁸ “China and Tanzania on Economic and Trade Relations and Economic and Technical Cooperation,” EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, 2008, http://tz.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sqbx/jjmy/200804/t20080404_7261748.htm

another way to show their alignment in “the fight against poverty and economic backwardness.”⁴⁹ Initially, Tanzania imported agriculture and raw materials (cotton, tobacco, sisal) to China in exchange for finished goods (plywood, wire rods, textile products).⁵⁰ The Chinese goals of trading with Tanzania were as a mechanism of foreign policy, as a way to finance foreign aid projects, and as a means to obtain certain commodities like foreign exchange.⁵¹ Sino-Tanzanian corporations emerged as some of the first manifestations of the friendship. In general, “China’s commercial relations have been overtly non-discriminatory”.⁵² China and Tanzania show preference to each other, but their trade interactions are by no means exclusive.

The Urafiki (Friendship) Textile Company was a Chinese-sponsored joint venture with Tanzania that began in 1967. Between 1967 and 1968, top Chinese aid projects included “[s]urvey of feeder roads in rural areas”, “heavy plant construction”, “urban water supply”, and “police training school”.⁵³ Industrial efforts were a top priority for Tanzania economic development. Working with China meant that money was funneled into textile mills, joint shipping lines, state farms, major transportation infrastructure, medical staff and equipment, and working with interest-free loans.⁵⁴

While the textile mill was a sizable endeavor, the next project undertaken remains the single largest Chinese project in the African continent. This project is known as the TAZARA Railway. This was a Chinese-sponsored railroad that was meant to connect Tanzania’s Dar-es-

⁴⁹ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 33.

⁵⁰ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 40.

⁵¹ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 43.

⁵² Yu, *China and Tanzania*.

⁵³ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 59.

⁵⁴ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 52.

Salaam and Zambia's Kapiri Mposhi. The project was 1,060 miles long and construction lasted from 1970 to 1975.⁵⁵ The work was done by Chinese state-owned enterprises, the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation and the Railway Engineering Corps.⁵⁶ Financing and technical support for the TAZARA Railway totalled over \$400 million and was delivered "in the form of a long-term interest-free loan."⁵⁷

This was a huge development for Tanzania. It gave increased access to remote places, gave people more freedom in employment location, allowed for easier mobility of trade goods, among others. Built into the trade agreement was the expectation of "repayment divided equally between Tanzania and Zambia over a thirty-year period and with a grace period of five years".⁵⁸ Dividing resources between many projects was a way to diversify aid given. It is a financial safeguard for China and a way to distribute development within Tanzania.⁵⁹ Chinese aid projects like factories, airports, and railway maintenance are constantly happening in Tanzania today.

President Nyerere established a socialist economic and political policy of *ujamaa*, which will be expanded on in a later section. *Ujamaa* reached its height in the mid-1970s. A trademark of the policy was villagization, or the grouping of rural people into collectivized farming villages. Nyerere's vision fell flat and had dismal consequences on the national economy, as seen in the figure below.⁶⁰ The economy did recover, but it is notable that economic instability resulted from domestic policy, not a foreign one. Another aspect that drew Tanzanians to

⁵⁵ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 3.

⁵⁶ Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, 163.

⁵⁷ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 3.

⁵⁸ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 30.

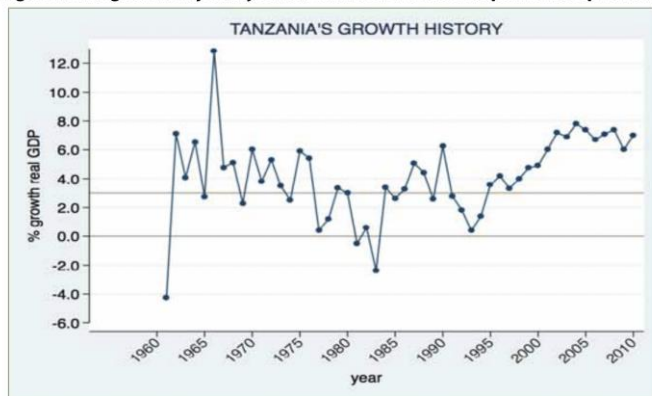
⁵⁹ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 59.

⁶⁰ Wuyts, Marc, and Blandina Kilama, "THE CHANGING ECONOMY OF TANZANIA: Patterns of Accumulation and Structural Change," *Economic and Social Research Foundation*, Jan. 2014, 4. esrf.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/THDR-BP-3.pdf.

socialism as an economic model was anti-imperialism. Tanzania turned away from the capitalist free-market economy employed by their colonizers and turned to socialism as an alternative.

Between 1962 and 1983, Tanzania was one of the biggest recipients of foreign aid in the world.⁶¹ Tanzania has made numerous trade agreements with various regional and international trade unions over its history.⁶² Also, Tanzania has developed bilateral trade relations with

Figure 1: The growth trajectory of Tanzania's GDP since independence up to 2010



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 1995a: Table 7.1; 1995b: Table 1; 1999: Tables 3 and 4; 2012: Tables 1 and 3 (authors' own calculations)

countries all over the globe. It should be noted that Tanzania has received significant economic aid from other countries (United States, United Kingdom) and international organizations (EU, World Bank).⁶³

Tanzania's variety of donors and trade partners points to the non-exclusivity of its relationship with China. Other relations have

generally been stable, apart from with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). After the socialist policies of the 1970s ravaged Tanzania's economy, Nyerere accused the IMF of offering a loan in 1980 that he thought was "meant to hurt the small man".⁶⁴ There was somewhat of a falling out, then IMF relations eventually returned to normal. This is important to contrast with China; in over 60 years, there were no bumps in the road as with the IMF.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Edwards, *Toxic Aid*, 2.

⁶² "Country Navigator," UNCTAD Investment Policy Hub, <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/country-navigator/230/united-republic-of-tanzania>

⁶³ "U.S. Foreign Assistance By Country - Tanzania," Foreign Assistance.gov., 2022, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/cd/tanzania/2022/obligations/0>.

⁶⁴ "IMF "Sabotage" In Tanzania, Says Nyerere," *Multinational Monitor*, August 1981, www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1981/08/tanzania.html.

⁶⁵ Wuyts, "THE CHANGING ECONOMY OF TANZANIA," 5.

Approaching the 21st century, Chinese economic strategy shifted from Maoist socialism to more capitalist models, building on Deng Xiaoping's 1978 "Open Door Policy".⁶⁶ This policy invited foreign investment and gave Chinese entrepreneurs a better market to work in. Following the precedent of heavy investment and globalization, China established the 2000 "China Go Global" foreign policy.⁶⁷ This gave a name to the strategy of expanding global ties that China adopted for the previous 30 years. In the past three decades, China's investment in Tanzania has continually increased. According to the World Bank, Tanzania is expected to import USD 3.851 billion worth of goods and services from China in 2022.⁶⁸

As of 2020, the most common destinations for the exports of Tanzania are India (\$891M), the United Arab Emirates (\$866M), Switzerland (\$796M), Uganda (\$734M), and China (\$388M).⁶⁹ The biggest imports originate from China, the United Arab Emirates, India, and Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰ The 2021 graphic depicts Tanzania imports the majority (25%) of its goods from China. In terms of aid, China by no means has a monopoly on imports, Tanzania's import portfolio is sufficiently diversified. From the 1960s to the present day, the type of Tanzanian exports to China and Chinese imports remain similar. As of 2021, raw materials and agriculture

⁶⁶ Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, 8.

⁶⁷ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). "China Go Global." 2014. www.oecd.org/china/china-go-global.htm.

⁶⁸ "China-Tanzania Archives," TanzaniaInvest, <https://www.tanzaniainvest.com/china>.

⁶⁹ "Tanzania," Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/tza>.

⁷⁰ TRADING ECONOMICS. "Tanzania Imports By Country." 2021. <https://tradingeconomics.com/tanzania/imports-by-country>.

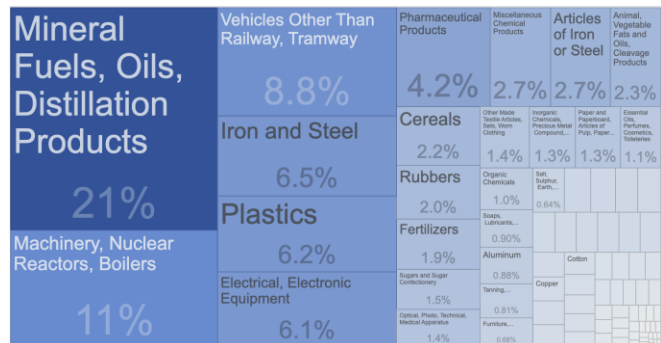
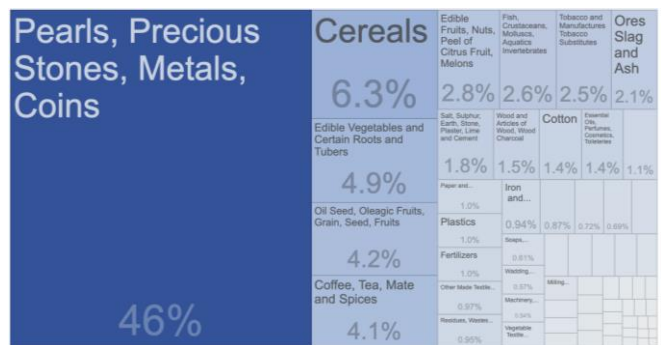
(precious stones, metals, and cereals) are among the top goods Tanzania exports to China.⁷¹



Chinese goods that Tanzania currently receives are finished goods (fuels, machinery, and iron).⁷²

Relations continue to be strong. China's strategy has largely

stayed the same even with the increasing scale of trade deals and aid loans. China continues to pursue trade in diverse industries and give infrastructural-centered aid with fairly non-invasive loan conditions. The practice of non-binding, non-exclusive trade pertains to Sino-Tanzania trade to the present day. Even with rising Chinese trade activity, Tanzania's economic improvement is slow.⁷³ Though Tanzania looked to China as an economic role model, it has not followed China's economic trajectory. That being said, Tanzania's economy is strong, especially in comparison to other previously colonized African countries that are entrenched in civil war, corruption, and extreme



⁷¹ TRADING ECONOMICS. "Tanzania Exports By Category." 2021. <https://tradingeconomics.com/tanzania/exports-by-category>.

⁷² TRADING ECONOMICS. "Tanzania Imports By Category." 2021. <https://tradingeconomics.com/tanzania/imports-by-category>.

⁷³ Wuyts, "THE CHANGING ECONOMY OF TANZANIA" 2014. 4.

poverty. Some question if Tanzania's outcome was a success.⁷⁴ The country is on the right track, but still operating with some handicaps—aid reliance, weak institutions, poor agricultural climate—shared by other African countries.

Political Change Over Time

From the outset, Tanzania was not afraid to assert its political agenda. President Nyerere was on the forefront of Tanzania's early political trajectory. The TANU, which Nyerere led, was firmly committed to socialism for the country from the 1950s. Nyerere described socialism as "the organization of men's inequalities to serve their equality."⁷⁵ When he says equality, he means "equality in socialist belief." He stressed human dignity, democracy, welfare, hard work, and limited private property. Nyerere saw socialism as the most effective way to lift Tanzania out of poverty and inequality. While he spoke highly of the fruits of socialism, he admitted its imperfection. In a speech called "The Varied Paths to Socialism", he acknowledges that "socialism is not Utopian" and that it is not "unaware that men are unequal in their capacities."⁷⁶ While these were Nyerere's ruminations, where was China in this?

China's attendance at the 1955 Bandung Conference gave great insight into Chinese political ideology. According to the *New York Times* on April 24, 1955, "[t]here was no blinking the fact that Communist China had enhanced its influence and prestige at Bandung".⁷⁷ Since the conference was a rejection of Cold-War division, it brought attending countries together under the shared non-aligned identity. Premier Enlai was honest about his country's

⁷⁴ Edwards, *Toxic Aid*, 1.

⁷⁵ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 4, 7-9.

⁷⁶ Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 303.

⁷⁷ Robert Alden, "KEY MEN AT THE BANDUNG PARLEY; Chou Gets the Most Attention; Nehru Seems Unhappy," *New York Times*, April 24, 1955.

situation in 1955: “he and his fellow Chinese were suffering, were backward, were afraid of war”.⁷⁸ Clearly, China and Tanzania were facing comparable challenges.

The hunger, low production, and political transition that Tanzania faced in the 1960s were ones China had dealt with in the previous decade. A shared socialist state identity is another key reason why the two countries were well-suited for a partnership. The PRC was more equipped to step into the mentor role because of its recent nation-building experiences. At the time of Bundung, China was nowhere near its superpower status of today. It is important to remember that while Tanzania looked to China as a model nation, it was still developing and fairly unsophisticated.

Tanzania’s “working towards socialism” launched just after the 1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution. The 1967 Arusha Declaration is regarded as Tanzania’s most concrete presentation of *ujamaa*, African socialism, and self-reliance.⁷⁹ Nyerere wrote it on behalf of the TANU. Ultimately, it spoke of a need for socialist reform. The idea was that “revolution was going to be made from the top, by the state, with the support of the masses - peasant populism at its best.”⁸⁰ Within the declaration, it acknowledges the limitations of foreign aid. It states that several countries want to help Tanzania. However, “no country in the world which is prepared to give us gifts or loans, or establish industries, to the extent that we would be able to achieve all our development targets.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co, 1956), 164.

⁷⁹ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 31.

⁸⁰ Issa G. Shivji, “Nationalism and pan-Africanism: Decisive Moments in Nyerere’s Intellectual and Political Thought.” *Review of African Political Economy*, (March 2012): 107.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2012.662387>.

⁸¹ Julius Nyerere, “The Arusha Declaration by Julius Nyerere 1967,”
www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nyerere/1967/arusha-declaration.htm.

As previously mentioned, *ujamaa* was a political, economic, and social ideology introduced by Julius Nyerere in 1967. The Swahili word *ujamaa* translates to “familyhood”. The goal of the *ujamaa* program was to establish “state-led socialism”.⁸² In practical terms, this meant “the immediate nationalization of banks, major industries, and national resources by the one-party state.”⁸³ Nyerere’s long-term aim was to center the country around the village. Newly imagined socialist villages would “be defined by collective property ownership and communal agricultural organization.” Tanzania’s connections to China “further manifested and fed into a common ideological and policy emphasis on communal agricultural labor and—in Tanzania—the communal village in particular.”⁸⁴

Since Nyerere constantly looked to the PRC for development guidance, it is conceivable that China’s own employment of communal farming was an impetus for enacting *ujamaa*. If they wanted to be like China, Tanzanians were wise to take note of their communal strategies. Nyerere was optimistic of the strong, supportive community spirit that would be fostered in voluntary *ujamaa* villages. The ideological goal was to portray the “nation-as-family” which “reflected a type of political imagination particular to the nation form.”⁸⁵ This sketch displays a blueprint for one of these villages complete with a community center, post office, place of worship, and housing.⁸⁶ In reality, the *ujamaa* system is widely regarded as a failed program. Poor government management, famine and droughts, low agricultural productivity, and noncompliance from peasants made *ujamaa* unfeasible.⁸⁷ *Ujamaa*’s decline was also exacerbated

⁸² Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 3.

⁸³ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 3.

⁸⁴ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 51.

⁸⁵ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 120.

⁸⁶ TNA, PMO, CDR/12/14/4 (IV), “Mtwara Region Rural Development: Maongozi na Utaratibu wa Kutekeleza Azimio la Arusha Katika Mkoa wa Mtwara”, *Ndanda Press*, March 1968.

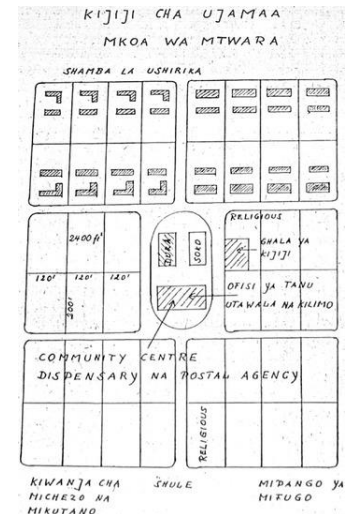
⁸⁷ “Tanzania: Failure of Ujamaa (1976-1986),” Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, <https://www.eisa.org/wep/tanoverview9.htm>.

by the 1973 oil crisis and the Uganda-Tanzania War of 1978. The pinnacle of *ujamaa* enforcement came with Operation Vijiji of 1973. This was a forced villagization effort undertaken by the state to collectivize those who did not initially volunteer to take part in the *ujamaa* project. Coupled with Nyerere's emphasis on self-reliance, the socialist vision was not realized and the economy was left paralyzed.

A critic of Nyerere's application of socialism was A.M. Babu. He saw that Tanzania, like other developing African nations, had two choices. One was to focus political and economic power on small-scale development and the other focused resources on large-scale production. In an *Africa Now* article, he lamented that Tanzania chose the first path or in his words "the path to Blunder land".⁸⁸ Even though he was an open critic, his opinions never led to change

because he was imprisoned in 1972 along with dozens of other political opponents.⁸⁹ A.M. Babu was imprisoned for six years, sentenced to execution by firing squad, but he was not convicted and was eventually released. This anti-free speech behavior towards critics is a reminder that while Nyerere was seen as popular and a fair leader, he was an autocrat.

Ujamaa lowered people's approval of Julius Nyerere and he left office in 1985. The following two presidents, Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995) and Benjamin Mkapa (1995-2005), both spent ten years in office. They made great strides in reversing Nyerere's socialist policies. They moved towards a market-economy, invested in education, and represented the opposition party to the TANU, the CCM. In addition, they made efforts in democratization by eliminating



⁸⁸ Abdul M. Babu, *The Future that Works: Selected Writings of A.M. Babu* (Africa World Press, 2002), 23.

⁸⁹ Amrit Wilson, "Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu: Politician, Scholar and Revolutionary," *The Journal of Pan-African Studies*, vol. 1, no. 9 (August 2007): 8.

the one-party system. In recent years, Tanzania has experienced slow positive political growth. Institutional strength, rule of law, and political participation are at similar levels now compared to 20 years ago.⁹⁰ While it was potentially inspiration for the political instability of *ujamaa*, China has historically remained uninvolved in Tanzanian domestic politics.

Social Change Over Time

At the blossoming of their relationship in the mid 1960s, China and Tanzania had fairly distinct social and cultural identities. Through decades of working together, both countries experienced socio-cultural diffusion with positive and negative effects. A cause of this exchange is the sizable Chinese population that migrated to Tanzania for employment. Due to the ramping up of infrastructure projects like the TAZARA Railway and the Friendship Textile Mill, Tanzania experienced an influx of Chinese migrants working for Chinese state-owned enterprises. Another Chinese migratory wave came in the 1980s and 1990s with Chinese entrepreneurs wanting to do business in Tanzania. This demographic event precipitated into a variety of social impacts. The major Chinese migration to Tanzania, instead of Tanzanian migration to China meant that Chinese culture infiltrated Tanzanian society more than Tanzanian culture affected Chinese society. This diffusion continues to today and Chinese labor presence continues to influence Tanzanian life.

Previously mentioned was how early Tanzanian officials resonated with China's social values. George Yu speaks to these: "In the Chinese model, the Tanzanian finds the spirit, frugality, and organization he seeks."⁹¹ In Nyerere's words, "[w]e could not fail to be impressed

⁹⁰ "Tanzania Country Report," Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TZA>.

⁹¹ Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 35.

by what the Chinese people are doing.”⁹² A.M. Babu caught on to the Chinese spirit in 1984. He reflected after a long-awaited trip to China: “Visiting China now, one cannot help being involved in the excitement and in the optimism for the future”.⁹³ Tanzanians were intrigued by Chinese work ethic, revolutionary spirit, and discipline wherever they applied themselves. In the post-independence years of trying to find a national identity and social order, China provided Tanzania with a worthy blueprint.

Their mentor-mentee dynamic was reinforced through infrastructure projects that frequented the 60-year bond. Chinese corporations were contracted to build ports, bridges, and roads in Tanzania and projects were led by Chinese supervisors. The Chinese model meant that Chinese construction companies brought their own workers to the site. Managerial positions were typically reserved for Chinese experts, and the lower-level technicians were a blend of Chinese and Tanzanian laborers.⁹⁴ The first thousand of Chinese Railway workers arrived by boat in Dar-es-Salaam in August 1969.⁹⁵ Over the next five years, 20,000-30,000 more Chinese workers moved to Tanzania. In total, TAZARA was built by 50,000 Chinese workers.⁹⁶ The Chinese management insisted on completing the project early, putting excess stress on Tanzanian workers who were not used to the fast-paced work culture.⁹⁷ Local workers remember “that the Chinese were tough but fair”.⁹⁸ Tanzanians were not used to the long days, short breaks, and

⁹² Yu, *China and Tanzania*, 37.

⁹³ Babu, *The Future that Works*, 34.

⁹⁴ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 41-42.

⁹⁵ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 44.

⁹⁶ “Ambassador Wang Ke Speaks Highly of China-Tanzania Relations,” EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, 2019, http://tz.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/sgdt/201911/t20191126_6067735.htm#:~:text=Over%2050%2C000%20Chinese%20people%20relocated,of%20friendship%2C%20freedom%20and%20life.

⁹⁷ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 52.

⁹⁸ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 54.

constant time pressure. Yet, adoption of these practices was expected by Nyerere and his compatriots.

Architects, engineers, and doctors migrated to support TAZARA construction from 1970-1975. Importing supervisors was a strategy to save time training and recruiting, which was a top priority of the project. For safety's sake, this practice ensured quality control to the standards of the contracting companies. The downside is that importing supervisory labor can create an imbalanced social dynamic. There were racial and ethnic tensions of one ethnic group managing another. For some Tanzanians, it was hard to adjust to the growing Chinese population in their country. It was also difficult to understand why Tanzanians were generally kept out of leadership positions, since they were already filled by individuals approved by the state-owned enterprise.

Seeing how Chinese and Tanzanian populations interacted with each other can reveal their social dynamics. Generally, the Chinese population has been categorized as reserved and hesitant to mingle with the Tanzanian population. One reason for this behavior is the culture shock and comfortability in staying with people of a similar background. This was reinforced during the construction of the TAZARA railway since "different food preferences of the African workers led to a social separation of cooking and dining groups".⁹⁹ A study out of Rhodes University in South Africa provides a look at how labor relations in Tanzania look in the 21st century. The study looks specifically at how Tanzanians working for private Chinese enterprises are treated. On the topic of separation, a Chinese manager in his forties commented: "Most of us are single even though we are married, but our families are in China, but we stay together."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Claude-Hélène Mayer, Christian Boness, and Lynette Louw, "Perceptions of Chinese and Tanzanian Employees Regarding Intercultural Collaboration." *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 1, no. 2, AOSIS (October 2017).

The tendency for Chinese workers to separate from the local population has perpetuated for the length of the Chinese-Tanzanian relations.

While the transnational work environment led to tensions, it was also a place of community and progress. Chinese and Tanzanian workers learned to adapt and “communication took the form of sign language combined with elements of both Chinese and Kiswahili.”¹⁰¹ Together, they produced great work efficiently. While Tanzanians and Chinese tended to live separately, they still were amicable. Chinese workers would use “Jambo, rafiki”, meaning “hello, friend” “to greet their African counterparts.”¹⁰²

Currently, Chinese cultural diffusion is still prevalent in Tanzania. Today, the Chinese presence in the African nation is strong. Out of the tens of thousands of Chinese workers who moved to Tanzania, the majority returned to their homeland. A decent portion found more work and decided to stay. Now, Tanzania’s largest city, Dar es Salaam has “20,000 Chinese migrants, over 800 Chinese businesses, and a large Chinatown”.¹⁰³ The presence of a Chinatown speaks to the separation, but also how Chinese culture is easily accessible for Tanzanians. Since infrastructure projects are a consistent presence in Tanzania, the labor dynamics attached to them are also consistent.

Conclusion

Why does relational consistency matter? Consistency affects Tanzania’s future. What is absent in Tanzania’s case is a sudden escalation, withdrawal, or tension in its relationship with

¹⁰¹ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 61.

¹⁰² Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 61.

¹⁰³ “Chinese Migration to Tanzania in a Transnational and Translocal Context,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 24, 2012, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/24/chinese-migration-to-tanzania-in-transnational-and-translocal-context-event-3963>

China. Generally, the stability of the relationship has been a net positive for Tanzanian national development. At least, it is not a depressive or damaging force. Tanzania's growth is stable and its major historical failure was largely a self-inflicted injury—the *ujamaa* campaign. Some indicators of success are the country's political stability and rapidly growing economy. Tanzania has one of the highest GDP growth rates in Africa.¹⁰⁴

Stability of the relationship for nearly 60 years makes exploitation unlikely. Signals of subversion might be a shorter period of use, heavy military investments, puppet regimes, predatory loans, exclusivity in diplomatic arrangements, or big investments over a smaller amount of time. This is not the case in Tanzania. Investments have been spread out since the 1960s, military aid is relatively low, Chinese donors are politically apathetic, diplomacy is open and non-binding, trade agreements are nonexclusive, and loans are often forgiven and flexible.

Consistency is another way to say that minimal change occurred over time. Motivation for and execution of the relationship was mostly unchanging over the course of relations. As trade partners, they supply each other with key goods and resources. Through aid projects, Tanzania modernizes and Chinese enterprises profit. Furthermore, China does not have a monopoly on aid in Tanzania.¹⁰⁵ The countries see themselves as partners in anti-imperialism, socialism, and the revolutionary spirit. Mass media and government portrayals of the BRI indicate that China's developments in Africa are escalatory, new, binding, and therefore concerning.^{106 107 108 109} In Tanzania, none of these claims hold true.

¹⁰⁴ Wuyts, "THE CHANGING ECONOMY OF TANZANIA," 1.

¹⁰⁵ "Tanzania Imports By Country," TRADING ECONOMICS.

¹⁰⁶ "China's One Road" *Defense Transportation Journal*.

¹⁰⁷ O'dea, "Logistics with Chinese Characteristics".

¹⁰⁸ "Summary of the National Defense Strategy" Department of Defense, 3.

¹⁰⁹ O'Malley, "China is at work."

Jointly, Tanzania and China have fostered this relationship steadily over time. It was never China selecting Tanzania as a sacrifice for the greater good of Chinese supremacy. China was the one to invite Tanzania to engage in diplomatic relations, but Tanzania had to agree to this. At the relationship's infancy, the PRC was a more established nation than Tanzania, but barely. In the 1960s, the capacity for China to exploit Tanzania was unlikely. China was politically and economically weak. While a great power imbalance exists between the countries today, it would be wrong to project this idea onto early relations in retrospect. Tanzania needs to be recognized as a legitimate and rational actor then and now. It is not just a passive entity that gets acted upon.

The relational consistency should put recent worries about China to rest at least in Tanzania. The power imbalance is not crippling, both countries decide to participate, and the relationship remains informal. In Tanzania, China is getting economic benefits and occasional political support. However, it is not attempting to subvert the country and China continues to express genuine desire to improve Tanzania living conditions. China's concern and support of the country is "benign" and is not offered out of pure altruism, rather is based on established bilateral relations where China benefits in turn.¹¹⁰ If Chinese aid is greater and more effective than Western aid, this is not proof of a grand plan for domination. Instead, it is a successful strategy that may lead to preferential treatment by recipients. When Africa's future is at stake, there is no place for jumping to conclusions.

¹¹⁰ Yun Sun, "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?," *Brookings*, 28 July 2016, [brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah](https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah).

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