DISCUSSION PUBLISHERS
Research Center · Open Access Edition

Towards a Critical Geopolitics of China's Engagement with African Development

Marcus Power, Giles Mohan

Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1413
Year	2010
Field	Social Sciences
DOI	10.1080/14650040903501021
Author ORCID	0000-0002-5433-5143
Licence	CC-BY
Original source	Durham Research Online (Durham University)
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/252ac0be-a551-4e97-8707-cf5f740bd6ee
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

Republished by Discussion Publishers under the original CC-BY licence. Copyright remains with the original authors; please cite the original work.

Cite as: Marcus Power, Giles Mohan (2010). Towards a Critical Geopolitics of China's Engageme. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-141

Abstract

China, in its quest for a closer strategic partnership with Africa, has increasingly dynamic economic, political and diplomatic activities on the continent. Chinese leaders and strategists believe that China's historical experience and vision of economic development resonates powerfully with African counterparts and that the long-standing history of friendly political linkages and development co-operation offers a durable foundation for future partnership. Both in China and amongst some Western commentators a form of exceptionalism and generalisation regarding both China and Africa has been emerging. In this article instead we seek to develop theoretical tools for examining China as a geopolitical and geoeconomic actor that is both different and similar to other industrial powers intervening in Africa. This is premised on a political economy approach that ties together material interests with a deconstruction of the discursive or extra-economic ways by which Chinese capitalism internationalises. From there we use this framework to analyse contemporary Chinese engagement in Africa. We examine the changing historical position of Africa within Beijing's foreign policy strategy and China's vision of the evolving international political system, looking in particular at China's bilateral and state-centric approach to working with African partners. Chinese practice is uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the notion of development as an independent policy field of the kind that emerged among Western nations in the course of the 1950s and increasingly China has come to be viewed as a rogue creditor and a threat to the international aid industry. Rather than highlighting one strand of Chinese relations with African states (such as aid or governance) we propose here that it is necessary to critically reflect on the wider geopolitics of China-Africa relations (past and present) in order to understand how China is opening up new choices and altering the playing field for African development for the first time since the neo-liberal turn of the 1980s.

Keywords: China-Africa relations, critical geopolitics, geoeconomics, development cooperation, Chinese foreign

Full text

The complete text of this work is hosted by its original publisher.
Read it via the Discussion Publishers page:
https://discussionpublishers.com/research/252ac0be-a551-4e97-8707-cf5f740bd6ee
Original record: http://dro.dur.ac.uk/11712/1/11712.pdf
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040903501021