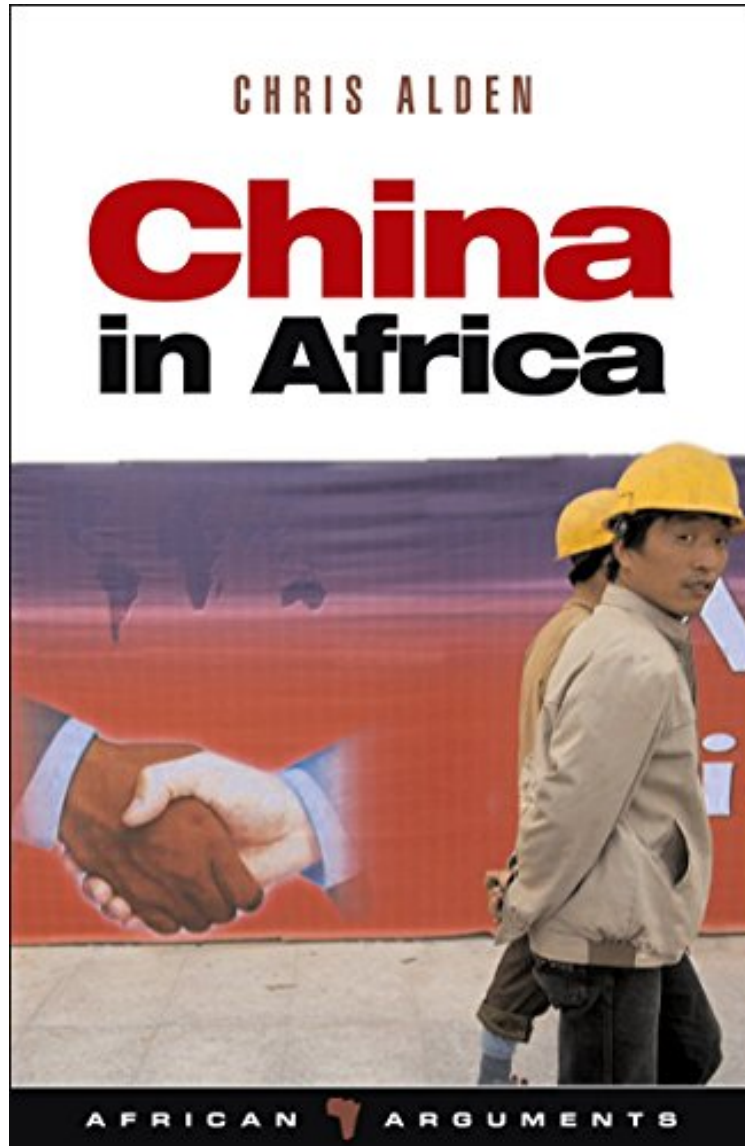


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China in Africa (African Arguments)

Chris Alden

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Chris Alden : China in Africa (African Arguments) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised China in Africa (African Arguments):

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Overview of Chinese Activity in Africa By Joseph F. Birchmeier This book contains a wealth of information concerning: China's new foreign policy towards Africa; the perceptions (both positive and negative) of the Africans towards the Chinese and their activities in the region; the current tendency of African nations to turn their support away from the U.S. and the West and towards China; and Western reactions to Chinese involvement in Africa. This is a relatively short book (136 pages) that is easily read and

understood. In my opinion it is very balanced in its presentation of the topic - not making a judgment of whether increased involvement in Africa by China is a positive or negative trend, but simply stating the facts as the author sees them. Highly recommend this book for anyone looking for detailed information about China's increasing involvement in Africa. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

AFRICA TURNS EAST By Vakunta Nowhere in the world is China's economic presence more evident than on the continent of Africa. According to Chris Alden's projections, over 800 Chinese companies are doing business in 49 African countries, with 480 involved in joint ventures with African firms. Thousands of Chinese retail businesses are now strung across much of Africa, selling low-cost and low-value products made in China. Total trade between China and Africa stood at US\$10 billion in 2000, rising to US\$18 billion in 2003, and exceeding US\$50 billion in 2006. From multi-billion dollar investments in oil and minerals to petty trade, China's economic leverage is redefining Africa's relations with the global community. Alden's 157-page well-written book--China in Africa--captures the emerging relationship between Africa and the nascent Asian economic superpower. This engaging study seeks to determine whether the emerging relationship between China and Africa will be one of a development partner, economic competitor or new hegemon. He observes that underlying much of the existing analysis of China's new role in Africa, there are three schools of thought that could be summarized as follows: 'China as developing partner', 'China as economic competitor' and 'China as colonizer'. The first interpretation (development partner) holds that China's involvement in Africa is part of a long-term strategic commitment to the continent, one that is driven mainly by its own economic needs. The second interpretation (economic competitor) holds that China is engaged in a short-term resource grab which takes little account of local needs. The third interpretation holds that China plans to colonize Africa. Put differently, China's new engagement in Africa is part of a long-term scheme aimed at exerting some form of political control over African territories. Alden contends that in order to grasp the long-term implications of Chinese presence in Africa, we have to take cognizance of the economic, diplomatic and security rationales behind the policies that determine China's transactions with Africa as well as the response of African elites to China's economic rapprochement. He notes that "led by Chinese petroleum companies flush with massive foreign currency reserves and a strong political mandate, Chinese businesses have been on an acquisition spree for resources across the African continent since 1996" (3). China's presence in Africa has captured the world's imagination, the more so because China's foray into the continent seems to be focused on resource acquisition and commercial opportunism. On the other hand, in exchange for their countries' resources, African elites, notably politicians and comprador bourgeoisie, have acquired assets in the form of new parliamentary buildings, presidential palaces, sport stadiums and more, all built by Chinese construction companies using Chinese labor, numbered in the hundreds (sometimes thousands) while unemployed Africans are totally ignored. Examples of these projects include the construction of an extension to the building housing the parliament in Uganda, new offices for the ministries of foreign affairs in Angola and Mozambique, presidential palaces in Harare and Kinshasa, and stadiums in Sierra Leone and the Central African Republic. The use of Chinese nationals for labor by Chinese companies involved in construction and infrastructure projects in Africa, justified by Chinese managers in terms of their cost, productivity and cultural affinity, seems misguided when considered in relation to the rates of local unemployment among Africans. There is ongoing debate in Africa with regard to the Chinese practice of employing its own nationals in construction companies. Though Africans are occasionally hired to do menial jobs, Chinese nationals are generally preferred and are brought in from the mainland through legal and illegal means. Alden contends that failure to substitute African for Chinese workers is an oversight which harbors economic as well as political ramifications. He further notes that the systematic undervaluation of labor and managerial costs is a key differential in explaining China's success story in Africa. Interestingly, the Sino-African 'honey-moon' is ducked by a myriad of apprehensions, not least of which is the proliferation of China-made fire arms in Africa. As Alden points out, "Military cooperation and the growth of arms sales are an important aspect of relations with some African governments..." (25). Chinese arms sales to Africa stood at US\$1.3 billion in 2003. Chinese fire arms have been used in some of Africa's bloodiest conflicts, especially in the horn of Africa, where decades of civil war in Sudan and Ethiopia have provided a welcome market for Chinese-made arms. During the late 1990s, light arms and ammunition from China were shipped through Dar es Salaam into conflict zones in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Chinese arms played an important role in Sierra Leone's civil war, in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict and more recently in the conflicts in Darfur and Chad. China's military hardware and diplomatic support for the government in Khartoum in its civil war with the South and now with the Darfur region have played a significant role in sustaining the relationship. Alden notes that the Chinese have set up three small arms factories in Sudan that produce light weapons for use in the region as well as in Uganda. Worse still, tied to the development of Chinese small and medium enterprises is the phenomenon of growing Chinese migration to Africa, bringing new settler communities to parts of the continent. Following in the wake of the establishment of Chinese businesses in Africa, is a surge in immigration that has caught African communities by surprise. Chinatowns have sprung up in Johannesburg and Antananarivo to name only a few. Alden notes that criminal gangs from Hong Kong have moved into Africa as well, joining other unscrupulous traders who use front companies to illegally export everything from timber, diamonds and products based on endangered wildlife back to China. One significant negative consequence of China's business inroads in Africa is the demise of national industries. Chinese

practice of dumping low quality 'made-in China' goods on markets in Africa has driven local entrepreneurs out of business and caused widespread misery. Textiles and other clothing items imported from China have put textile companies out of business as well as occasion lay-offs in the hundreds of thousands. In Nigeria, for example, more 80 per cent of the textile factories have had to be shut down and an estimated 250,000 workers have been laid off. Low cost and often low quality consumer products from China have driven local firms and craftsmen out of business. It is in this light that the former trade minister of Zambia, Dipak Patel, airs his view on the dilemma as follows: "Does Zambia need Chinese investors who sell shoes, clothes, food, chickens and eggs in our markets when the indigenous people can?"(49) In sum, the expansion of Chinese small and medium enterprises into sectors and markets formerly dominated by Africans holds significantly untoward implications for local businesses. One other flip side of China's courtship with Africa is that she invests in pariah regimes, thus propping up corrupt regimes on the continent. For pariah regimes, China is a welcome source of stability, a new strategic partner and a provider of development assistance and foreign investment. The oil-rich country of Sudan is one such partner for China who continues to do business with President Omar al-Bashir who has been slapped with three counts of genocide in Darfur by the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague. Last year, an arrest warrant for war crimes and crimes against humanity was issued against al-Bashir whose actions in Darfur have benefited from the protection provided by threats from the Chinese government to veto economic sanctions against Sudan in the UN Security Council. China's threat to veto these sanctions has forced the UN Security Council to water down its measures against the government of al-Bashir. Another noteworthy example is Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who has been able to marshal his anti-imperialist discourse in the service of domestic power struggle and, in the process, deflect much of the African and Western criticism of his undemocratic actions. Nonetheless, the story of China's engagement with Africa is not all gloom. The generality of African leaders perceive China's presence on the continent as a boon. For one thing, Western monopoly of Africa has been broken by the presence of China on the continent. Western firms, once with virtually undisputed command over the natural and financial resources of Africa are now being challenged by a host of emerging country corporations, with China being in the forefront. As China projects its commercial power abroad, strategic competition with US and European interests is on the rise. Furthermore, the positive reaction from African governments to China's expansionist presence on the continent bears testimony to the effectiveness of Chinese foreign policy approach. Alden posits that as fear-mongering continues to grow among China's rivals in Africa, it would be necessary to shed light on the relationship between China's policies and immediate interests in Africa, -the ramifications of closer trading relations and investment regimes between the two regions, and the -areas of policy friction and convergence between China and Africa. These issues are succinctly -explained in Alden's *China in Africa*. The book examines the response of African elites and local- communities to Chinese foreign policy and presence in Africa. It focuses in particular on the influence of African regime typology and political economy as guides to comprehending their reactions to emergent China. Nothing symbolizes Africa's importance to China as succinctly as Angola becoming China's largest foreign supplier of oil. Alden maintains that energy resources constitute the most important focus of China's involvement on the African continent. In a nutshell, Chris Alden's *China in Africa* is a tale of gloom and bloom. Chinese meddling in the economic sector in Africa is fraught with mixed blessings. Most of what China has done on the continent has provided benefit; some things have not. Greater involvement on the continent has already brought about exposure to the vagaries of African politics. Seen from the African perspective, the most significant dimension of Chinese engagement with the continent is that it is a potential source of investment capital and development assistance which Western powers are either uninterested or unwilling to provide. Dr. Peter W. Vakunta, Professor

Nowhere in the world is China's rapid rise to power more evident than in Africa. From multi-billion dollar investments in oil and minerals to the influx of thousands of merchants, labourers and cheap consumer goods, China's economic and political reach is redefining Africa's traditional ties with the international community. This book investigates the emerging relationship between China and Africa to determine whether this engagement will be that of a development partner, economic competitor or new hegemon. Alden argues that in order to understand Chinese involvement on the continent, we need to recognize the range of economic, diplomatic and security rationales behind Beijing's Africa policy as well as the response of African elites to China's entreaties. Only then can the new challenges and opportunities for Africa and the West be accurately assessed.

'Chris Alden has written the first substantive book on China-Africa relations in three decades. Anyone wishing to understand the complexities of China's engagement with Africa must read this fine study.' David Shambaugh, George Washington University The Brookings Institution 'In the welter of badly-thought and badly-written work now being rushed into print on China in Africa, Chris Alden's book is an excellently-balanced and judicious exception.' Stephen Chan, SOAS, University of London 'In this elegant and engaging study, Chris Alden brings together the key pieces that define the complex mosaic of China's recent engagement in Africa. Analytically sophisticated and drawing on an impressive vein of evidence, this book must be welcomed both as an illuminating account and for its measured

judgment.' Garth le Pere, Institute for Global Dialogue, South Africa 'In this short and readable book, Chris Alden provides a clear overview of China's involvement with Africa. It is a fascinating story, which will become more interesting and more important in the years to come.' The Economist 'The companion volume to Zed's "The United States in Africa".' North South 'For me, the best and most coherent approach to the political economy of China in Africa is given by Chris Alden in his short engagingly written book....' of African Political Economy. No. 115. 2008 'A useful analysis of China's increasing economic role in Africa.' Chartist 'Alden's book answers the need for a measured review of China-Africa relations. Alden combines judicious analysis with a balanced, authoritative survey of the context and nature of current relations' 'Unlike those commentators who have rushed to pronounce and prescribe, he captures the rich potential and sense of dynamism that China has catalysed in Africa with a grounded appreciation of the challenges and constraints ... This is important' 'Alden's account is well-calibrated, especially when empirical research on "the content and context of Chinese involvement in Africa is desperately needed."' TLS About the Author Chris Alden is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the LSE. He has researched and published on Asian-African relations for over fifteen years. He has previously taught at the University of Witwatersand, the University of Tokyo, the Ecole Normale Superieure and the University of Cambridge.