



**Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British  
Geographers**

**Annual Conference 2007**

**29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> August**

**New imperialism or 'south-south'  
co-operation?**

**China and India's growing role in world  
development**

**Sponsored by the Developing Areas Research Group**

**Convenors**

**Giles Mohan (Open University), Emma Mawdsley (Cambridge  
University), Marcus Power (Durham University)**

**Themes**

The sessions examine China and India's growing involvement in the global economy and its implications for political, economic and social change. The key questions are: What different opportunities do developing world states offer these two countries in terms of investment, trade and aid? How does current Chinese and Indian involvement build on and gain legitimacy through long term engagement with 'non-aligned' and/or 'socialist brothers'? Are there specific models of development 'partnership' that India and/or China seek to promote and what are the implications of this for the way we think about 'south-south' co-operation? How do Western discourses on China and India reflect attempts to legitimise a 'rational' liberal approach to development by existing hegemony? And what differences exist within Western discourses? How is geopolitical and economic rivalry with the USA played out and what possibilities are there for militarisation and destabilisation? How are political actors outside of beneficiary elites reacting to Chinese and Indian investment and trade? In terms of the politics of aid, what tensions arise between different versions of aid effectiveness?

## RUNNING ORDER

### Session 1 Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> August, 14.40-16.20

<b>Paper 1</b>	
Paper title	China and the Politics of "Legitimate" Development in Africa
Presenter	Dan Large
<b>Paper 2</b>	
Paper title	Fu Manchu versus Dr Livingstone in the Dark Continent? Popular geopolitical images of Sino-African relations
Presenter	Emma Mawdsley
<b>Paper 3</b>	
Paper title	New African choices? The politics of Chinese involvement in Africa and the changing architecture of development
Presenter	Marcus Power
Co-author	Giles Mohan
<b>Paper 4</b>	
Paper title	Sino-African relations and the problem of human rights
Presenter	Ian Taylor

### Session 2 Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> August, 16.50-18.30

<b>Paper 5</b>	
Paper title	Global (Ex)change: China-Africa trade links and livelihood options for Africa's urban poor
Presenter	Michal Lyons
Co-author	Alison Brown
<b>Paper 6</b>	
Paper title	China's Infrastructure Corridors in Africa
Presenter	Martyn Davies
<b>Paper 7</b>	
Paper title	India's Growing African Strategy: Competing with China
Presenter	Sanusha Naidu

## ABSTRACTS

### **China and the Politics of "Legitimate" Development in Africa**

**Dan Large, SOAS, University of London**

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The extraordinary upsurge of concerned interest in China as an emerging development actor in Africa has occurred alongside significant gaps in knowledge about its actual trade, investment, aid and development activities in the continent. As such, much debate has been detached not just from practice and grounded African and Chinese perspectives. Combining theoretical treatment with supporting detail, and drawing on a variety of literature including Chinese, this paper engages Western discourses constructed around the developmental role of China in Africa, focusing on the political dimensions of the ways in which discourses on China's role in African development frame notions of legitimate action on the continent. It first examines Western discourse of China in Africa anchored on the question of development, and primarily liberal constructions of an almost entirely monolithic view of the deleterious impact China is held to have on democracy and human rights. Governance is a key example of contested legitimacy. The second section explores discursive changes over time and, in particular, the appropriation and mobilization of a more explicitly articulated official Chinese discourse on development in Africa. This forms one discernible trend in recent years as a means to legitimate expanding Chinese activity and answer Western concern. This 'development in Africa with Chinese characteristics' discourse combines efforts to foreground the unique aspects of China's approach with positions and language more in line with 'international' development orthodoxy. Finally, this raises the question of the ways in which China in Africa is rejuvenating development debates on Africa though dynamics as well as Africa's interest in development alternatives. and testifies to the emerging agenda aimed at socializing China as a development agent in Africa.

### **Fu Manchu versus Dr Livingstone in the Dark Continent? Popular geopolitical images of Sino-African relations**

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This paper examines the ways in which British broadsheet newspapers have represented the growing diplomatic, trade, investment and developmental relations between China and different African countries. It suggests that, while duly noting complex interactions and outcomes, there is an emphasis on the negative dimensions, and within these, on conflict and violence. A second set of observations concerns the ways in which the 'West' (and particularly the UK) is represented within these articles. The analysis finds that, when framed together with China, western actors are presented in

almost entirely uncritical terms as agents of progress, and as acceptable arbiters of what constitutes 'responsible power'. The paper concludes by commenting on why such popular geopolitical discourses matter.

### **New African choices? The politics of Chinese involvement in Africa and the changing architecture of development**

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The role of China must be understood in the context of competing and intensified global energy politics, in which the US, India and China are among the key players vying for security of supply. But contrary to popular representation, China's role in Africa is much more than this. And its role opens up new choices for African development for the first time since the neo-liberal turn of the 1980s. As such it is important to start by disaggregating 'China' and 'Africa' since neither represents a coherent and uniform set of motivations and opportunities. This points to the need for, at minimum, a comparative case study approach which highlights the different agendas operating in different African states. It also requires taking a longue duree perspective since China-Africa relations are long standing and recent intervention builds on Cold War solidarities, in polemic at least. It also forces us to consider Chinese involvement in Africa as ambivalent, but contextual. We focus on the political dimensions of this engagement and set out a research agenda that focuses on class dynamics, state restructuring, party politics, civil society responses, aid effectiveness, and militarisation.

### **Sino-African Relations and the Problem of Human Rights** **Ian Taylor, School of International relations, University of St Andrews**

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China's policies towards Africa are increasing at an exponential rate. Equally, they are attracting criticism, particularly over Beijing's no-strings-attached stance on human rights and governance. It is clear that many African states that enjoy Chinese support not only trample on civil and political rights (as per Western ideas of human rights), but also subverts their citizens' economic and social rights (as per China's discourse on human rights). In such cases then, China resorts to a fundamentalist bottom line that sovereignty itself is the basis of human rights. However, this reification of states not only makes little sense in a milieu dominated by quasi-states and neopatrimonial regimes, it also undermines nascent attempts by Africans themselves to improve governance on the continent. Furthermore, if whilst adhering to the principle of non-interference, Chinese activities actually make things worse for some in Africa, then Beijing's position that basic

socioeconomic rights are more important for the poor than abstract political rights might actually become harder for the people of Africa to attain. Whilst China's stance on human rights may well be a genuinely held belief, there is the real danger that Beijing's engagement in Africa might be exploited by autocrats on the continent for their own, well-understood, reasons. Doing no harm, rather than a studied disinterest, needs to be part of China's overall African policy.

### **Global (Ex)change: China-Africa trade links and livelihood options for Africa's urban poor**

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A pronounced trend towards informalisation of urban economies in the developing world, with increasing shares of incomes earned in unregulated employment (UNHabitat, 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa informal retailing is a major source of new employment for Africa's rapidly increasing urban population (Chen, 2004; Cohen, 2004) and economically significant in its own right (Chen, 2005). The impacts of trade, globalisation and adjustment policies on Africa's informal economy have not been widely studied (UNCA, 2005). The import of cheap Chinese manufactured goods to sub-Saharan Africa has expanded sharply as a proportion of African countries' GDPs over the past ten years (IMF 2006), and while the effects on local manufacturing at industrial and 'cottage industry' levels have been better documented, their impact on commerce, has not (Lyons and Brown 2007). The paper focuses on the impact of such imports on urban informal economies of West Africa, in particular market and street trade, and in the context of increasing circulation of goods and people between China and West Africa. Through an investigation of African and Chinese merchants in West Africa and SE China, it explores the idea that profound changes are occurring in the social structures and opportunities for mobility for Africa's urban poor.

### **China's Infrastructure Corridors in Africa**

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The copper belt straddling the DRC and Zambia forms the focal point of China's involvement in Africa's commodity sector. The rehabilitation and construction of the Benguela and Tazara infrastructure lines is creating an east-west infrastructure corridor in Africa. This will have implications for regional transportation links, integration, private sector participation and development in the affected countries. The written paper will identify and define this strategic infrastructure

corridor and the potential developmental ramifications for the region. The presentation at the conference will summarise and highlight key points raised in the paper.

**India's Growing African Strategy: Competing with China**

**Sanusha Naidu, Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch**

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Historically India has always stood in the shadow of China. Currently it seems that India's pursuit in becoming a major power is being eclipsed by China's meteoric geo-strategic rise. This is fairly evident in Africa where China's deepening political and economic engagements appears to be far more profound than that of India. Considering the latter the proposed paper will analyse India's growing Africa strategy. The article will assess India's economic engagements in the continent, sectors where Indian MNCs are investing; which are India's strategic partners and to what extent India's domestic democratic culture informs its political and economic engagements in Africa. The paper will conclude by evaluating whether India's African strategy is aimed at competing with China in the African market over access to resources and political clout.