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Donovan C. Chau. *Exploiting Africa: The Influence of Maoist China in Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. x + 212 pp. $46.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-61251-251-8.

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Maoist China in Africa

The book is a historical treatment of Chinaâs relations with Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania, focused on the period 1956-76. This was when China beganâat first tentatively and then latterly with a degree of enthusiasmâto become engaged with the continent. It is important to know the historical background of Beijingâs entry into the continent. Often we are told that this was either a new phenomenon previously not seen (one extreme); or that China had been in Africa since time began, usually with reverent hushed nods to Admiral Zheng He and his early fifteenth-century Celestial Fleet (the other extreme). Both views are crude distortions of reality. What is interesting about Chauâs historical work is that he reveals a number of things that are unnervingly comparable to todayâs Sino-African relations. Aid projects to leverage political advantage, the influx of thousands of Chinese workers into Africa, the repeated state visits by senior Chinese leaders to court African elitesâand the over-the-top reception of African leaders in Beijing when they come visitingâwere all well-established patterns back in the 1950s and 1960s and are comparable to behavior today.

Differences in approach to different African countries of course also staked out Sino-African relations, as they do today, and Chau demonstrates this through a skilful use of the case studies. Much Chinese energy was put into constructing a support constituency in Africa that would bolster Beijingâs claim to represent China at the United Nations, achieved in October 1971 with twenty-six of the seventy-six votes cast in favor of the People's Republic of China (PRC) being African. Providing space for Chinese policy vis-Ã -vis the Soviets was also a key element of Beijingâs interest in the continent. Although the author does not discuss this, such âbalancingâ led to Chinese tactics which helped initiate harmful splits in the liberation movements fighting for independence. In exchange for assistance, Beijing often compelled movements to condemn both Western imperialism and Soviet ârevisionism.â This effectively resulted in a division amongst the various liberation movements and a veritable alphabet soup of contending organizations: Moscow-backed ANC, FRELIMO, MPLA, SWAPO, and ZAPU versus Beijing-backed PAC, COREMO, FNLA, UNITA, SWANU, and ZANU.

As Chau shows, Beijing was heavily involved in the internal politics of some of countries it was acting in. Algeria is a good example, where Beijing gave relatively considerable support for the anticolonial struggle against the French. However, in countries where China could not build up kudos during a prolonged liberation struggleâsuch as in Ghana and TanzaniaâBeijing fell afoul of the contending and competing ambitions of local politi-

cians. This at times led to China rather foolishly taking sides in what were clearly intra-elite competitions. The fallout was usually negative, as in Ghana where diplomatic relations were suspended in 1966 following the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah. This was especially embarrassing for China as Nkrumah was in Beijing at the time on an official visitâthough the Chinese press politely refrained from mentioning his toppling and Zhou Enlai played host to him in Beijing as if nothing had happened. Nkrumah had signed a treaty between the PRC and Ghana which allowed for a number of Chinese experts to be sent to Ghana to train members of liberation organizations at a military training camp in 1964. A number of Ghanaians were also dispatched to China to undergo guerrilla training in late 1964. Almost immediately after the coup, the new Ghanaian military government ordered the expulsion of the Chinese âexpertsâ from Ghana whilst China pragmatically attempted to negotiate how best to hand over unfinished aid projects. The military training camp headed by Chinese instructors was closed and the instructors expelled and in October 1966, after Sino-Ghanaian relations had deteriorated further, diplomatic relations were, as noted, suspended.

One area which I feel the author has somewhat overlooked is the effect of the Cultural Revolution on Sino-African relations during this period. Reaching a nadir during the so-called Boxer Diplomacy period in the summer of 1967, when Red Guards occupied the Foreign Ministry and drastically interfered in the operations of the department, all the embassies in Africa (with the exception of that in Egypt), had their ambassadors recalled and were only headed by chargÃ©s dâaffaires. In addition, during this period, a number of states in Africa were deeply angered by what was perceived as Chinese provocation. For example, Tunisia broke relations after being accused (in *Peking Review*, September 22, 1967) of âstanding on the side of US imperialism,â whilst Kenya expelled the Chinese chargÃ© dâaffaires after a letter emanating from the Chinese embassy accused the minister for economic planning of deliberately trying to sabotage Sino-Kenyan relations. The number of foreign delegations visiting China was an indication of the turmoil that was occurring in the Foreign Ministry during the Cultural Revolution. In 1966 the number was 116 (most of the invites for these visits had been issued prior to the start of the unrest), but in 1967 this had been reduced to 53 and by 1968, the number of visiting delegations was a mere 12.

It is apparent that Chinese policy in Africa suffered due to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, which does not really come out much in the book. Diplomats and heads of organisations were viciously attacked and vilified. Yet, a number of visits by important allies *did* take place. These were from the five African states closest to Beijing: Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Mali, Tanzania, and Zambia. Between 1967 and 1970, Congo-Brazzaville sent 14 delegations to China; Guinea, 9; Mali, 11; Tanzania, 15; and Zambia, 9. That Tanzania sent the most delegations during this period demonstrates during this period that China maintained relations of some substance with trusted friends. For example, Nyerere paid an official visit to Beijing, something which very few other heads of state did during the period (Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia was another exception). I feel perhaps that the author should have explored this a bit more.

I am also not convinced that China was primarily motivated in involving itself in Africa because it was always a would-be global actor. I agree that the tangible, if yet unquantifiable âMiddle Kingdomâ mentality has long informed policymakers in Beijing. Great-power aspirations certainly draw upon strong emotions linked to nationalist sentiments, ethnocentrism, and a deeply rooted sense of injustice at the hands of foreigners. And there was certainly an internationalist tone in many of Mao Zedongâs foreign policies. Yet firstly, this was largely rhetorical and secondly, this was not aimed at making China a great power but was about promoting Maoâs own interpretation of Marxism-Leninism as *the* correct reading of the canon. Furthermore, during this period China totally lacked the means to even remotely claim to be a global actor. I would argue that the shortcoming in Chinaâs ability to project itself resulted in China attempting to utilize the developing worldâand specifically Africaâas a means by which it could, at times, advance Beijingâs image at a relatively cheap price.

Unable to project itself onto the international sceneâparticularly outside of AsiaâChina based its foreign policies during this period on a resolute opposition to expansionism by other powersââhegemonismâ (*ba quan zhu yi*)âof all types. Because of its self-perceived position in the international system, China constructed a fairly consistent foreign policy aimed at preventing or limiting the development of âhegemony,â whilst at the same time trying to carve out space for itself. In Africa, where Cold War machinations were brazen, antihegemonism was a popular policy and fitted Beijingâs aims at the time. Yet even then, various internal political problems (the Cultural Revolution being prime) and an inability to hammer out concrete ideas into policy roll-out undermines the notion that Chinaâs policymakers were always in control.

Notwithstanding, the book is a valuable contribution and provides a rich and detailed history of Chinese involvement in three quite disparate (but at times, similar) African countries. The book is certainly recommended.

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