

The Growing Economic Role of China in Africa: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract The economic rapprochement between China and African countries has become the subject of debates in various intellectual forums. While most African leaders welcome China's involvement in various development projects, some western officials and scholars are critical of this economic relationship. For the past 16 years, since the first China–Africa forum held in 2000, China has been carrying out projects under the agreements signed with various African countries. The positive outcomes of the Chinese investments in most countries are still elusive as far as the welfare of the masses is concerned. This chapter examines the factors that determine China's policy toward Africa in general and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in particular. While endorsing African countries' right to diversify their trading partners, the chapter highlights some impediments that affect the successful economic partnership between China and the DRC.

Keywords China • Africa • Economic partnership • Democratic Republic of Congo

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant developments in Africa's external relations in the dawn of this twenty-first century is the economic rapprochement with non-western countries such as Brazil, India, and China. Of all the non-western countries, China has been the most aggressive in promoting policies and strategies that have resulted in many long-term economic agreements with African countries. Indeed, dissatisfied with the lack of economic progress from decades of relations with the western countries, some African leaders are persuaded that China offers the plausible alternative to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of economic development. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Chinese state enterprises are actively involved in economic projects, and, through the China–Africa forum, Chinese and African leaders exchange ideas on how to strengthen their economic relations. New loans and debt cancellations are some of the means used by China to strengthen its rapprochement with African countries. As a result, China is gaining deeper access to the exploitation of various mineral resources that used to be the exclusive domain of the western countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the sub-Saharan African countries that has signed long-term agreements with Chinese state enterprises. Over a period of 35 years, the Chinese will invest in various projects and use the funds generated from the exploitation of mineral resources as reimbursement. While some pundits applaud the end of western control over Africa's mineral resources, some scholars and western leaders are suspicious of the lack of transparency in various economic deals between China and some African countries. From the Africanist perspective, the question should not be whether western or non-western countries must have the exclusive right to invest in projects designed to promote development in Africa. The question should be what impact any economic agreement may have on the eradication of poverty and promotion of development in Africa. By looking at the growing economic role of China in Africa with focus on the DRC, this chapter will address the following questions: How do the Congolese masses benefit from the economic agreements between China and the DRC? Can the Chinese do better than the western countries that had exclusive control over Congolese resources from the precolonial period to the 2000s?

To address these questions, the chapter will first examine the historical evolution of China's economic relations with Africa. This will be followed by an analysis of China's involvement in the DRC. An assessment of the

economic, political, and social implications of the Chinese involvement in Africa will be the focus of the third section. The conclusion of the chapter will be drawn in the last section.

4.2 CHINA'S ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

China's economic involvement in Africa must be understood in reference to its overall foreign policy objectives. Every country formulates its foreign policy on the basis of its national interest. Therefore, national interest is the primary factor that determines the foreign policy objectives of any sovereign country. These objectives, as far as Africa is concerned, have shifted as a result of China's changing role and aspirations in the global arena. Clearly, China's current foreign policy objectives are quite different from its past policies. Indeed, in the 1950s and the 1960s, China's foreign policy toward Africa and other third world countries was based more on ideology than pragmatism or *realpolitik*. China pursued a foreign policy that stressed peaceful coexistence and respect for other states' territorial integrity and sovereignty. Obviously, this reflected a stand against colonialism and underscored China's support to the liberation struggles in territories controlled by western countries. Therefore, assisting revolutionary liberation movements was at the core of China's engagement in Africa. Most of the leftist liberation movements in Africa had some kind of relationship with China, Cuba, or the Soviet Union. In this context, the Sino-Soviet alliance was contemplated to stand up against the western threat to the national security of China. Robert Sutter (1978) suggests that

PRC foreign policy up to 1958 was influenced primarily by international pressures on China. The start of the cold war and the buildup of U.S. strategic power in East Asia prompted the Chinese to move closer to their ideological allies in USSR-leading to the establishment of the Sino-Soviet alliance in 1950. (p. 4)

However, China's assistance program was later revised in the late 1950s following its ideological split with the Soviet Union. The Sino-Soviet split traces its root in the divergence of interests between both countries and, more importantly, in the ideological interpretation of the Marxist philosophy. Referring to the Sino-Soviet split, Joseph Camilleri (1980) stresses the following point:

But after 1958 one could detect a sharp conflict as to what policy the communist bloc should pursue in its relations with the outside world, and as to what weight should be accorded to Chinese and Soviet perceptions and interests in the formulation of such policy. Reference has already been made to the conflict of interests arising from the Soviet Union's reluctance to provide China with nuclear capability; the Soviet vacillation in supporting the Chinese claim to Taiwan; the Chinese opposition to the reduction of tension with the United States; the Chinese determination to give wholehearted support to revolutionary armed struggles in underdeveloped areas. But it would be inaccurate to regard these differences simply in terms of the disparity between the strategic or diplomatic positions of the two countries. For inextricably interwoven with considerations of national interest were the conflicting ideological perceptions of the two protagonists. (pp. 68–69)

Hence, the Sino-Soviet split had a significant impact on Chinese policy toward Africa. Only liberation movements aligned to the philosophy of Mao Tse Tung were qualified to receive assistance from China. However, the common dominator in the Chinese and Soviet policies toward Africa was the opposition of both countries to western colonialism. In spite of the Sino-Soviet split, both China and the Soviet Union were strongly supporting the efforts to end colonialism in Africa even when their assistances went to different political movements. For instance, in helping Africa get rid of the western domination, the Soviet Union and China found themselves, on some occasions, assisting opposing liberation movements in countries such as Angola and Zimbabwe. During the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, the former Soviet Union provided material support to Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), while China backed Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). In Angola, the former Soviet Union assisted the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), while the National Front for the Liberation of Angola received massive military support from China. The Sino-Soviet split, on the other hand, facilitated the rapprochement of China with major capitalist countries such as West Germany, Japan, and Great Britain (Robert Sutter 1978, p. 33). In spite of this rapprochement, China was still critical of both the Soviet and western imperialisms. As far as Africa is concerned, the foreign-aid objectives of China, as summarized by Warren Weinstein and Thomas Henriksen (1980), were based on three imperatives:

First, Africa served as a battlefield against both American imperialism and Soviet social imperialism...Second, China has sought the recognition and support of the African States, both as members of the international community and as members of the third world... Finally, according to Chinese perceptions, Africa constituted a stage in the world's unfolding revolutionary struggle against capitalism, imperialism, and social imperialism. (pp. 118–119)

The growing economic power of China in the 1990s and the need for oil and other natural resources to sustain its economic growth have brought new dimensions in China's foreign policy. Ideology is no longer at the core of China's foreign policy. Pragmatism has become the foundation upon which China's foreign policy is formulated. The search for new sources of material resources and new markets for China's products have significantly elevated the position of China to active player in the global arena, especially in Africa. China no longer considers the western countries as the dominant players in economic relations with Africa and promises to transform Africa in a way that Europe never did during the more than 80 years of its occupation of Africa. In short, China wants to bring development to Africa and African leaders are jumping at this opportunity. To be competitive in the global arena, China embraced market-orientated policies at home and in its trade relations (Henry Nau 2012, p. 298). Since 2000, China has initiated a forum where African leaders meet and discuss economic development projects with Chinese leaders. The first China–Africa forum was held in Beijing in 2000, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was the host of the second forum in 2003. The next forums were held respectively in Beijing, China (2006), Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt (2009), and Beijing, China (2012). Clearly, the level of China's engagement in Africa is changing the landscape of economic cooperation between African countries and the rest of the world. At the moment, China has become the third-largest trading partner of Africa after Europe and the USA. If this trend continues, in the next 20 years China may become the most important African trading partner. This prospect is causing some alarm in the western world. Drawing from the works of various scholars such as Ian Taylor, Chris Alden, and Michael Wines, Jeremy Youde (2007) has summarized the objectives of China's foreign policy toward Africa in the following terms:

Many trace the closeness of China and African states to China's desire to cultivate strong friendships with states that will overlook its human-rights record, its need to ensure resource and food security, its attempts to deny Taiwan a place at the international table, and Africa's attractiveness as a market for mass-produced low-quality goods. China's fast-growing economy undoubtedly needs the resources and the raw materials available in African states in order to sustain its growth. In addition, much of its trade on the continent focuses on countries with which, for political or economic reasons, many western states refuse to trade. China and these African states serve as important economic lifelines for each other. (p. 4)

This clearly highlights the fact that China's interest in Africa is triggered by political and economic considerations. It is safe to argue that China has become more pragmatic in its relation with African states to the point that its economic agreements are based on its national interest. To be specific, ideology no longer constitutes a determinant of China's foreign policy. China understands the political impact of its relationship with African countries whose presence in various international arenas carries a significant weight. A close relation with African countries provides China with political support in international organizations where issues pertaining to human rights violation are sometimes leveled against Beijing. Getting the support of a large number of African states is seen by China as the best way to squash potential resolutions condemning China. In short, China needs the voting power of African countries in forums such as the General Assembly of the United Nations and the Human Rights Council. China's economic incentives such as foreign aid and debt cancellations have been attractive to African governments since no preconditions are attached to them compared to foreign aids from the western countries. As long as its interests are served, China is willing to work with any African country. Internal politics or human rights violations do not dictate China's policy toward any African country. The official policy of China is based on the five following principles: reliable friendship, sovereign equality, nonintervention, mutually beneficial development, and international cooperation (Jeremy Youde 2007, p. 4). These principles imply that China would not interfere with the domestic affairs of African states. The Chinese tend to portray the western countries as paternalistic because of their concerns over corruption, undemocratic practices, and violation of human rights. This Chinese approach is attractive to some African leaders who are sensitive to criticisms from the international community. However, it triggers concerns among African masses and intellectuals. For the next ten-plus

years, China intends to spend billions of dollars to promote trade and build infrastructure across the continent.

In the 2006 China–Africa forum held in Beijing, 48 heads of African states and Chinese leaders pledged to reinforce cooperation and trade between Africa and China. The forum set a target of \$100 billion of trade between China and Africa by 2010. Referring to China’s involvement in Africa, Polgreen and Howard (2008) has argued that

from South Africa’s manganese mines to Niger’s uranium pits, from Sudan’s oil fields to Congo’s cobalt mines, China’s hunger for resources has been a shot in the arm, increasing revenues and helping push some of the world’s poorest countries further up the ladder of development. But China is also exporting huge volumes of finished, manufactured goods—T-shirts, flashlights, radios and socks, just to name a few— to those same countries, hampering Africa’s ability to make its own products and develop healthy, diverse economies.

One of the outcomes of the economic rapprochement between China and Africa is the access to Chinese products by African markets. The proliferation of cheap Chinese goods is affecting local industries that cannot compete with Chinese goods as far as prices are concerned. This concern seems to be ignored by some African states, who are lured by Chinese incentives that include weapons sales, student scholarships, new loans, and so on. As Denis Tull (2009) puts it:

Increased aid, debt-cancellation, and a boom in Chinese-African trade, with a strategic Chinese focus on oil, have proven mutually advantageous for China and African state elites. By offering aid without preconditions, China has presented an attractive alternative to conditional Western aid and has gained valuable diplomatic support to defend its international interests (p. 323)

Human rights activists continue to condemn China’s attitude toward countries that violate human rights. Indeed, China does not tie financial packages to political conditions. Whether corruption is rampant in a particular country or human rights are violated, China is ready to do business. As a matter of fact, over the past few years, China has cancelled the debts of 31 African countries totaling about \$1.27 billion (Tull 2009). Many of these countries, like Zimbabwe, have a poor record of human rights protection. To date, the economic involvement of China in Africa continues

to grow at a fast pace. The discovery of new oil reserves in the African continent has provided China with more incentives to be an active player in Africa. Speaking of oil fields in Africa, Tull argues that

bolstered by a massive infusion of investments of \$360 bn (2001–2030) that transnational companies have announced to make, production could reach 13 million barrels per day in 2020. Regardless of these projections, Africa's contribution to China's overall oil imports is already significant. In 2004, Africa's share of Chinese overall oil imports reached 28.7%, up from 25.2% in 2003. Angola, Beijing's most important African oil supplier, exported 117 million barrels to China in 2004, a 60% increase from the previous year. With a share of about 13% of Chinese oil imports, Angola came close to the level provided by China's leading oil supplier, i.e. Saudi-Arabia (125 million barrels). (pp. 329–330)

While China's presence throughout the African continent is applauded by most African leaders, who consider it as an important step toward economic progress, some observers question the Chinese motives. A focus on the DRC can help understand the impact of Chinese economic involvement in Africa.

4.3 CHINA AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

China's engagement in the DRC is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of its foreign policy in this twenty-first century. The need for political support in the international community, the search for natural resources to sustain its growing economy, and the need to find markets for its products are some of the determinants of China's foreign policy toward Africa in general and the DRC in particular.

In the 1960s, when the DRC became independent, China's presence was insignificant. Its first diplomatic action was to recognize the secessionist government of Gizenga in Stanleyville following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. Its diplomatic representation ended after the reconciliation of Gizenga and the national government of Cyrille Adoula. In the 1970s, when Mobutu decided to embark the country on the path of authenticity with diplomatic overtures toward all countries, a new relationship was developed with Mao's China. Mobutu bragged about Chinese loans which waived interest charges in contrast to western loans. During this period of time, China agreed to help promote agriculture in

the country and build some facilities such as a new stadium and a new parliament building. The Chinese were also encouraged by the anti-western rhetoric of Mobutu whose relation with the West became strained as a result of the nationalization of private firms in the country. Under Mobutu's politics of "Zairianization," private enterprises that belonged to foreign investors were nationalized and given to Congolese citizens. Many of these Congolese had no skills in running business, and the outcome was disastrous. In any case, tension between the west and the Congolese government reached its peak during this period of time when Mao Tse Tung suddenly became Mobutu's role model. After his visit to China, Mobutu encouraged Congolese to follow the example of the Chinese who kept their cities clean and worked hard to produce enough food to feed themselves. However, this close relation with China was brief as Mobutu reconciled with the West in order to protect his power.

The return of China to the DRC has been facilitated by the policy of Joseph Kabila whose development project centers around five priorities. This project requires an extensive amount of money and China is willing to pump this money through its state enterprises in exchange for Congo's mineral resources. In the process of finding solutions to the myriad of problems the country is facing, the Congolese government has been lured by attractive offers from the Chinese government. In 2007, the agreement signed between the Congolese government, represented by the minister of infrastructure, public works, and reconstruction, and the Chinese government, through a group of Chinese enterprises and banks represented by Mr. Li Changjin, guaranteed the funding by China of development projects in exchange for the exploitation of mineral resources. The accord was adopted by the Congolese parliament without the participation of legislators from opposition parties who denounced the contract as another form of exploitation. In any case, according to the agreement reached between China and the DRC, the Congolese government would receive \$9 billion of Chinese investments. Of the \$9 billion, \$3 billion will be used to renovate the crumbling mining sector which has been inefficient due to corruption, mismanagement, and many years of wars, and \$6 billion will be allocated to infrastructure projects. A portion of the loans provided by China Development Bank was designed to create a Congolese incorporated company called SOCOMIN (Societe Congolaise Miniere) jointly owned by the Congolese (32%) and two Chinese-owned companies, China's Sinohydro Corporation and China Railway Engineering Corporation (68%). According to John Farmer and Ann Talbot (2008),

the Chinese State companies have been granted rights to two large copper and cobalt concessions representing around 10.2 million tonnes of copper and 620,000 tonnes of cobalt. The DRC produced 500,000 tonnes of copper annually in 1989 at its highest levels of output.

The project includes a 3400-km highway, a 3200-km railway, 31 hospitals with 150 beds, 145 health centers each with 50 beds, 4 large universities, the parliament building, and 20,000 apartments. In return, the Congolese government will pay China with copper, cobalt, and road tolls until China recovers its money. According to the agreement, SOMININ will pay off \$12 billion in investments and mining infrastructure thanks to the revenues generated by the sale of copper over a 15-year period. It seems that China is in a winning position in this type of agreement. To John Vandaele (2008),

the Chinese have hedged their position quite aggressively. The first profits will be used to repay the mining investment, something that is typical of most private joint ventures with Gecamines. The agreement also says that the Congolese government has to guarantee the safety of the investments and the repayment of the infrastructure works. Any disputes would be settled by the arbitration tribunal of the international Chamber of Commerce in Paris, and not through Congolese courts, that have a reputation of being corrupt.

In spite of the fact that the agreement allows one in five workers to be Chinese, there is a proliferation of Chinese in various sectors of the economy including economic activities that fall outside the projects financed under the agreement. Therefore, in addition to having access to Congolese markets, China is also exporting labor force to the DRC. In a country where the unemployment rate is above 50%, exporting an unskilled labor force may be a source of social tension. Clearly, the agreement seems to benefit China more than the DRC. Indeed, China will have access to much needed copper and cobalt for its development projects at home. In addition, China will certainly reap billions of dollars in the 30-year contract which can double or triple what was spent in investment and infrastructure projects. The tax exemptions and the special privileges given to China compared to other foreign investors give China an upper hand in these joint ventures with the DRC. According to the Belgian consul, Guy Sevrin, cited by Gwen Thompkins (2008), "it is not clear how they will do their business here. There is no transparency in Chinese investments in the DRC". Many believe that China is being given preferential treatment

by the Congolese government. It seems that China and the western countries are not being held to the same standard. While the western countries are required to respect the Congo's mining code, China is not. Alluding further to Chinese investments in the DRC, Thompkins (2008) refers to John Skinners, manager of a mining company, who made the following statements: "This money is part of the mega-surplus that China gets from trading with the US. They don't know what to do with this money. And \$9 billion is not a big amount of money to the Chinese. Look at the benefit they're getting. They're getting to do infrastructure with Chinese companies, they get a stake in a mine that guarantees a huge amount of copper into the future for Chinese industry, and it gives them a serious foothold in Africa". In any case, there is nothing wrong in making profit from investing in a business venture. The western countries that are critical of Chinese investments have made huge profits from their investments in Africa since the colonial period. The Chinese engagement in the DRC should be supported because the DRC has the right to diversify its trading partners. However, any investment should benefit the people at large, and not the elite, who should be held accountable for any mismanagement and corruption. There must be transparency in the contracts that the Chinese sign with the Kabila government. Building roads, hospitals, and universities is good for any country, but there must also be some serious studies of the balance sheet between what the Chinese get in extracting mineral resources and what the Congolese get. It is also worth noting that the economic relation between China and the DRC does not have a positive impact on the promotion of human rights in the DRC, given the Chinese policy of noninterference in the internal politics of its partners. As of now, several human rights organizations have expressed concerns over the physical eliminations and arbitrary arrests of journalists, opposition leaders, and activists who are critical of the present regime. Can the Congolese people count on the Chinese government to exercise pressure on the Congolese government? The answer is no.

4.4 THE IMPACTS OF THE CHINESE ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE DRC

It has been more than six years since the DRC signed the agreement with Chinese companies to build infrastructure, hospitals, and universities. In short, the agreement has been expected to modernize the country and improve the socioeconomic conditions of the average Congolese citizens.

In spite of additional negotiations and revisions of the agreement, the Congolese people are making an assessment of the Chinese economic involvement in the DRC. In the May 27, 2013, edition of *Radiokapi*, Moise Ekanga, executive secretary of the office of the coordination and monitoring of the Chinese-Congolese program of construction made the following points: “Roads, bridges, buildings and other infrastructures have been built in Kinshasa as well as in provinces but there is still a lot that needs to be done”. He also added that the proliferation of new residential homes in Kinshasa and the emergence of a qualified Congolese labor force in public constructions are attributed to the agreement. The enlargement and rehabilitation of the Lumumba Boulevard in Kinshasa is another outcome of the agreement, according to Congolese authorities. However, to most observers, the agreement has still not met the expectations of the Congolese people. Indeed, driving in Kinshasa has always been a nightmare for lack of adequate roads. Potholes, traffic jams, and lack of traffic lights are some of the main problems confronting Congolese people on a daily basis. The National Road 1 from Kinshasa to Matadi seems to have been built to respond to the needs of the elite who need to have easy access to the port for the imports and exports of their goods. In the colonial period, the railway was built between Kinshasa and Matadi for the export of raw materials to Europe. Within cities and between cities, the roads are in bad shape. Actually, the flow of goods from rural to urban areas has not seen a major improvement due to a lack of adequate roads and transportation. What about the eradication of poverty and the creation of jobs? The unemployment rate is above 50% in the DRC (www.tradingeconomics.com/congo/unemployment-rate). The government has the obligation to create jobs for millions of Congolese who are unemployed. However, the agreement with China allows Chinese enterprises to bring a significant number of workers from China even though they are unskilled. This is not in the interest of the people of Congo.

It is obvious that the agreement has not changed the landscape of unemployment in the DRC. Indeed, the unemployment rate is still high today compared to what it was seven years ago. However, the presence of a large number of Chinese is becoming alarming as Congolese citizens feel that jobs are being taken over by Chinese. Even in the streets and markets, Congolese are competing with Chinese in the sale of local products. In spite of the government’s guarantee to restrict the number of foreign workers in some economic sectors reserved for Congolese citizens, the reality on the ground gives a different picture. It is clear that

the agreement between the DRC and China has provided Chinese with immense opportunities for jobs and businesses. If Chinese are coming to the DRC in large numbers, that is not the case for Congolese who want to migrate to China. Obtaining a visa to go to China is not easy for most Congolese while unskilled Chinese workers are making it to the Congo in order to perform manual works. In this context, the agreement seems to work in the Chinese favor.

4.5 THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE DRC

The DRC is a country in transition to democratic governance. Congolese people have suffered a great deal from the colonial period when they were treated almost as slaves in their own native land. After independence, the hopes of Congolese people vanished when they realized that only the elites were reaping the benefits of freedom. Their struggles for freedom and liberties became an uphill battle under the Mobutu regime that was determined to crush any resistance to his power. Mobutu's reign ended with a rebellion led by Laurent Kabila from the eastern part of the country. The objective of the rebellion was to restore the rights of the Congolese people. The assassination of Laurent Kabila catapulted his son Joseph Kabila to power in 2006. The latter was elected president of the DRC. However, the Congolese people are still fighting for their democratic rights and freedoms. The eradication of poverty, the right to obtain employment, the protection of human rights, and the consolidation of democracy are some of the values that must be promoted in the DRC. For Congolese, foreign assistance can play a significant role in promoting freedom, democracy, and human rights if it is given with preconditions. External pressure can help liberate political prisoners and protect journalists and human rights activists. Even though western powers have a record of supporting dictators that protected their interests, they also use their economic power to curb the degree of oppression exercised on citizens. Several African leaders were subject to western pressure and accepted that they should liberalize their political systems. However, China's disregard of corruption and violation of human rights creates a gap between the impoverished masses and the Chinese government. China's position amounts to a sort of conspiracy with autocratic governments against the masses. African people want international institutions and foreign governments to stand with them in their struggle for freedom, democracy, transparency, and

economic development. Any foreign institution that cares about the welfare of African people should speak up against corruption, illegal enrichment, violation of human rights, and abuse of authority that are still prevalent in many African countries.

4.6 CONCLUSION

As a sovereign nation, the DRC has the right to engage in economic relations with all countries as long as the interest of the DRC is preserved. It has the right to diversify its economic partners in international trade. Indeed, it is imperative that developing countries in general and the DRC in particular diversify their economic ventures to end the dependency that was imposed on them since the colonial period. The western countries cannot continue to control the exploitation of mineral resources in the DRC. However, whether dealing with the West or East, all negotiations must look at the interest of the people and the country before making meaningful decisions. Exploitation, regardless of its shape, form and origin, is unacceptable. The Congolese government should do business with China as long as its national interest is not compromised. Unfortunately, the current contracts with China were done hastily without the involvement of the whole parliament. In addition, there seem to be some secret deals that are attached to the agreements, and these secret deals are unknown to the public. In this context, it is not clear, for example, whether the Chinese benefit from tax exemptions when exporting goods to the DRC. Additionally, given the China's record on democracy and human rights, issues pertaining to freedom of expression and citizens' rights are unlikely to be of concern to them. Instead of blindly accepting relations with China without adequate protection for its citizens, the Congolese parliament has the responsibility to promote and protect the interest of the Congolese people whose aspiration for freedom, democracy, and decent living conditions is conspicuous. Normally, through investigations and audits, the executive branch must be subject to permanent supervision designed to make transparent any dealing with other countries. Sadly, the parliament itself has not been a strong institution that can exercise control on the executive branch. The current parliament in the DRC is not able to play this role effectively since it is indirectly controlled by the executive branch. So far, the agreement has not contributed to reduce poverty and unemployment in the DRC in a significant way. The lack of transparency and honest conversation among the political leaders constitutes one of the

obstacles to the successful implementation of the Sino-Congolese agreement. A revision and renegotiation of the agreement may be necessary to ensure that the interests of the country and the masses are protected.

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