The Economic Relationship between China and Post-independence Botswana: A Focus on the Construction Industry?

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Abstract

The Botswana economy, like most countries in the Southern African region, has been growing rapidly over the past 30 years largely driven by Chinese trade and investment. Nonetheless, there is a growing body of literature highlighting the negative impact of the ever-increasing Chinese involvement in Africa South of the Sahara through the channels of trade, investment, and governance, among others. While Chinese involvement in Botswana is beneficial for the development of the countries in particular and the continent in general, there are important debates surrounding this connection which is often seen as a reworking of the colonial style trade system. This paper uses secondary sources of data to evaluate the current Chinese engagements in Botswana, specifically through textual analysis, comparative studies, interpretive work, and critical analysis. It also reviews literature and critically assesses and explains the engagements of China in Botswana's construction industry. The paper contends that despite visible traces of Botswana's dependence on China, there are progressive dimensions to the current relationship which could be strengthened with more robust internal regulation, coordination, monitoring and action from Botswana's policymakers and industry regulators. This paper therefore conceptualizes a set of discourses that may inform certain practices, especially by leaders, that could produce perceptible effects in Botswana's economic liberation and sustainable development. Thus, the paper also postulates that China's increasing trade with Botswana, although not without challenges, is helpful to Botswana's economic development. Accordingly, the paper contributes to the better understanding of Chinese economic growth and expansion and Botswana as an emerging economic market for Chinese multinational corporations.

Keywords: Botswana, Africa, China, Economic Resources, Bilateral Relations, Natural Resources, Dependency Theory

Introduction

All signs indicate that China is an ascending economic and political power in the current world system (Mol, 2011; Hong, 2021). The global economic growth has been significantly affected by Chinese trade with Africa which has, in turn, enabled Africa to improve its terms of trade by increasing the demand for African natural resource exports that continue to drive their economies (He, 2013). In addition, China's presence in Africa is judged positively by African countries and leaders based on its impact on their economies, while at the same time lessens their dependence on the West and demonstrates to Western countries and companies that Africans have a choice about with whom to trade and invest (Mol, 2011).

Chinese injection of private capital, technology and entrepreneurial ideas offers host countries significant economic opportunities (Naidu and Mbazima, 2008), especially the fledgling industrializing African countries (Mmegi Monitor, 2013). China's massive foreign exchange reserve explains why it is considered an important investment partner by many African countries that have a significant interest in economic investment and trade partners that can help boost their economies (Mol, 2008; 2011). The burgeoning foreign exchange reserve enables Beijing to offer Third World countries concessional loans and other preferential credits.

Globally, China's growing involvement in Africa has attracted substantial popular and media interest, as well as academic research and literature (Carmody, 2009). China has managed to increase its global presence and capture the attention of partners that have the potential to satisfy its interest while the visibility of the Western world continues to dwindle especially in Africa (Amadi, 2012). The dwindling Western presence is reducing not only competition but also critical scrutiny and unwanted third-party attention to Chinese operations (Mol, 2011). China's growing geopolitical and economic influence in Africa have been viewed, especially by Western pessimists, as unstable and labeled as the "second scramble of Africa" (Naudu and Mbazima, 2008). Therefore, China's economic inroads into Africa seem to be an indication of the inevitable shift of Africa's dependency from the Global West/North to the Global South. This is viewed by the West as fostering a "new dependency" within the Global South as China is perceived as constraining the economic adjustment and the democratization process in Africa (Amadi, 2012). This paper therefore engages in the ongoing debate on Africa's emerging economic dependence on China by utilizing the example of Botswana. But first, I provide a brief background of the relationship for those readers who may not be familiar with its development.

Sino-Botswana Relations: A Brief Background

Over the past many years, bilateral ties between Botswana and China have witnessed sustained, rapid development under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation—FOCAC (Huanxing, 2010). China and Botswana, through this initiative, have fruitful cooperation on the economy, trade, human resource development, cultural exchanges and coordination in the international arena. This cooperation is viewed and presented as important in giving Botswana and the rest of Africa leverage in their relations with the North and compels African governments to reflect on and adopt initiatives that address the challenges of globalization and the continent's development (Chen, 2009; Mmegi Monitor, 2012).

In recent years, due to its expanding economy, the Chinese government encourages its enterprises to embark on large-scale economic partnerships, including projects in construction, in Africa. Many scholars have contributed to the understanding of the ways in which China's growth and investment affect the developing world (for example, Maswana, 2009, Mmegi Monitor, 2012, Alden and Large, 2018; Hong, 2021). Concomitantly, this paper specifically evaluates current development outcomes of China's engagement in the construction sector in Botswana. The paper begins by outlining the Botswana economic structure and context from the post-independence era to the present and the reasons behind its recent economic growth experienced before the Coronavirus Disease (COVID)-2019 pandemic given that it halted many economic activities globally. It then discusses China's engagement in Africa in general and then focuses on Botswana in particular, where China remains a big player in the construction industry. Before doing all this, however, I first discuss the methodology and then the theoretical framework used to ground the analysis.

Methodology

This paper utilizes a combination of textual analysis, comparative studies, interpretive work, and critical analysis as the methodology to explain China-Botswana relations. In studying these relations, I adopt a comparative study of the two countries as far as bilateral relations are concerned. Based on a literature review, I identify and examine some of the challenges that characterize China-Africa relations in general and China-Botswana relations in particular.

I also examine the processes of interaction between political and social factors in the given social formation of Botswana to interrogate economic relations between the two countries and explain the nature of their relationship in the post-colonial era. I found limited academic material on Botswana-China relations and, thus, supplemented the available resources with newspaper articles, some of which are authored by academics.

Theoretical Framework

While Dependency Theory is widely marginalized in today's academic discourse, this paper employs it to understand the growing relations between Botswana and China and the latter's huge investment in the former's construction industry. Dependency Theory was developed by the works of many philosophers such as Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Andre Gunder Frank, Arghiri Emmanuel, Aníbal Quijano, Samir Amin, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto and many others (Kalu, 2012). Igwe and Okere define Dependency Theory as a "historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favours some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economies" (2013, 67).

Dependency Theory as an economics system theory seeks to explain why rich countries continue to become richer while poor countries become poorer. The economy of a certain group of countries (poorer states) is therefore conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, rendering them powerless and subjected to economic policies that favor the interests of the dominant, richer states. This unequal relationship leads to the formation of global peripheries that are forced onto underdevelopment as commodity exporters while the dominant countries continue to develop their economic capacities (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2011).

Africa's underdevelopment has been understood in the context of the global asymmetrical economic relationship between the Third World and First World (developed) economies and world capitalist foundations (Igwe and Okere, 2013). Dependency Theory uses these external factors to explain the backward economies by highlighting the imposed unequal relations in the global economy existing between the "core" and the "periphery" or "metropolitan" and "satellite" notions expressed by Frank (Kalu, 2012). The imposing presence of China in the Global South is therefore seen as redefining the understanding of "dependency" as Africa is being integrated into the wider global system characterized by economic imbalances that lead to a state of dependency for developing countries. The next section therefore examines Chinese engagements in Africa and the dynamics characterizing such engagements.

Chinese Strategic Involvement with Africa

Prior to its current engagements in Africa, China had a substantial preexisting political and economic capital in the continent, with evidence of China's overseas development assistance (ODA) to Africa from 1956 to 1987 (Taylor, 1998). This previous engagement was because of a previous global geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union for influence in the continent (Carmody and Owusu, 2009). In general, trade between China and Africa continues to increase and has led to the economic growth of many African countries as well as that of China. Unlike its Western counterparts, who view Africa largely as a development burden or site of humanitarian intervention and security threat, the Chinese state appears to view Africa as a strategic economic space for investing its huge currency reserves and for securing access to resources for its development (Carmody, 2009).

China formulated the *zhou chuqu* ("go out, go global") policy in 2001, instructing and motivating state-owned and private Chinese enterprises and banks to become closely involved in natural resource procurement and infrastructure development abroad in order to sustain the economic needs of China. Essentially, Chinese business deals in Africa are well coordinated as a national strategy, whereby state-owned and private companies and national state authorities are collaborating coherently and harmoniously together to ensure success. The formulation of the China-Africa Policy in 2006 aimed to encourage and support Chinese enterprises' investments in Africa through preferential loans, and the subsequent Beijing Action plan of 2007–2009 further promoted this initiative (Mol, 2011). By 2019, over 60 percent of the total revenue of all major international contractors in Africa were taken over by Chinese companies (Hong, 2021).

The Beijing Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development acknowledges that globalization presents more challenges and risks than opportunities to the vast number of developing countries (Carmody and Owusu, 2007). The program articulates the need for China and Africa to reposition themselves for the establishment of the "new world order" to advance their needs and interests. Chinese and African leaders, at a 2003 trade summit, criticized Western "hegemonism" and agreed to build political and economic ties to counter Western dominance which places poor countries in unfavorable positions. These echoed sentiments expressed earlier when President Jiang Zeming visited Africa in 1996 and put forward following five guiding principles for Chinese-African relations: (1) sincere friendship, (2) equality, (3) solidarity and cooperation, (4) common development, and (5) being future oriented. African governments and elites also welcome Chinese state agencies due to their "no conditions" aid as well as their more flexible, less bureaucratic and rapid delivery of projects (Mol, 2011), compared to the more negative experiences with former colonial powers (Carmody and Owusu, 2007).

China continues to use its large foreign exchange reserves for African investment projects, thereby developing potential for infrastructural transformation in Africa (Carmody, 2009; Hong, 2021). Chen (2009) argues that China's interest in contributing to infrastructure development in resource-rich economies in Africa and elsewhere in the world is well documented. Similarly, although there is a need for thorough empirical studies, Carmody and Owusu (2007) identify several elements of China's geo-economic strategy in Africa. Four of the elements they identify are relevant to Botswana and they include: (1) ensuring access to critical natural resources to China's economic growth, (2) to recycle its massive foreign exchange (forex) reserves into profitable investments overseas, (3) to facilitate the development of Chinese multinational corporations, and (4) to find viable markets for the products of Chinese industry. Botswana's diamond industry, for instance, which is the backbone of the economy, has benefited extensively from the Chinese export market which has pushed Botswana's infrastructural development agenda forward (Taylor, 2003; Liangyu, 2018). Chinese infrastructural investment is highly significant in this African context which is generally characterized by poor transport infrastructure, resulting in added costs of transport and insurance especially in land-locked countries like Botswana. Infrastructure development therefore implies improved ability of African states' capacities to compete in manufacturing even globally (Carmody and Owusu, 2009).

Botswana-Chinese Relations

Botswana, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, is often characterized as a major success story in the continent (Chen, 2009), even though this image is fading as the country competes with emerging democracies in the Southern African region (Sekakela, 2018). Formerly a British protectorate, Botswana became an independent republic on September 30, 1966. At independence, the country was one of the poorest in the world, with an economy that was mostly sustained by cattle rearing, the export of beef and remittances of wages sent back home by Botswana immigrants working in South Africa. The economic situation, however, changed after independence due to the discoveries of nickel, copper, coal, and especially diamonds, coupled with a generally good rainfall, leading to rapid economic growth (Taylor, 2003). Botswana, with its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) estimated to be 16,800 US dollars in 2012 as compared to about 236 US dollars in 1967 is now classified by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country (Ahmed and Mmolainyane, 2014). The country has achieved a great deal in developing good infrastructural, educational and health services that did not exist at independence. Infrastructure development remains one of the core long-term programs for the country, allowing Botswana to become an attractive destination for foreign investment. China has taken advantage of this and has become a very key player.

Although delegations from Botswana visited Beijing in 1965, 1966 and 1967 (Chen, 2009), diplomatic relations between Botswana and China were only formerly established in 1975 (Huanxing, 2010). Ever since then, relations between the two countries have blossomed, stretching beyond arts and culture to encompass the economy, medicine (Taylor, 1997), science, technology (Taylor, 1998), infrastructural development, among many others (Sunday Standard., 2009; Sekakela, 2018). Sino-Botswana trade linkages were further strengthened in 1984 when a trade delegation from Botswana visited China to attend the Guangzhou export commodities fair. At the fair, the then Vice President Quiet Ketumile Masire highlighted that Botswana welcomed China to invest in Botswana and to jointly develop projects for mutual benefit. Furthermore, in 1986 during the visit of Li Peng (the fourth Premier of the People's Republic of China), Botswana and China drew economically closer when both countries granted the other "most favoured nation" status resulting in a doubling of Sino-Botswana trade (Taylor, 2003). In addition, in the same year (1986), the two countries signed a trade agreement to facilitate their bilateral trade operations (Huanxing, 2010).

Botswana and China continue to host high-level delegations to share development experiences and views on international affairs. Notably, Chinese senior officials have since visited Botswana while the four past presidents of Botswana have all visited China. Such visits are viewed as the opportune times to reflect on both nations' successes and challenges, as well as to chart a path toward long lasting beneficial relations, especially in the economic arena. Similarly, in his first state visit to China in 2018, current Botswana President Keabetswe Masisi met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and signed important cooperation agreements to develop bilateral relations under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and further expand cooperation under the framework of the FOCAC (Liangyu, 2018). The Botswana government has, over the years, made deliberate efforts to liberalize many sectors of the country's economy and attract foreign investors. For Botswana, the new ties with China are viewed as a new starting point with significant development opportunities to overcome the "middle-income trap" and achieve high-quality development.

Botswana's Construction Industry and Chinese Investors

Prior to the arrival of the Chinese companies, the construction industry in Botswana was dominated by South African and European construction companies as well as a handful of citizen-owned companies that were predominately unsuccessful in establishing themselves in the market. It is common knowledge within Botswana that many of the citizen-owned companies behave like cartels and often fix prices which, in turn, lead to huge costs and time overruns in projects. This remains problematic because failure of indigenous economic activity translates into a lack of growth in the indigenous capitalist class that may transform the economy of Botswana and help curb the dependency on external partners in the construction industry. At the individual level, the dependent relationships may manifest themselves in corruption as the emerging elites use their connections to develop their wealth and power through trade relations with corrupt entities.

Huanxing (2010) posits that the Chinese government has been providing economic assistance to Botswana including grants, interest-free and low-interest loans, with which Botswana railway and roads, bridges and offices, schools, health facilities, housing construction projects have been undertaken. Notably, the first Chinese company to work in Botswana, China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC), came to the country in 1985 to rehabilitate the railway line financed through a concessional loan by the Chinese government (Chen, 2009). Since then, Chinese construction firms, both state-owned enterprises and private companies, remain actively involved in the construction industry in Botswana and have made satisfactory returns on their investments in return. Chinese enterprises have completed several large-scale construction projects in Botswana such as hospitals, airports, dams, stadiums and housing units; most of these projects were achieved due to funding provided by the Chinese government through the soft loan facility. The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, together with Standard Bank, provided 825 million US dollars for the construction of the Morupule power station expansion project, which was at the time the largest transaction by a Chinese bank in Africa and was regarded as advancing a new model of Chinese involvement in infrastructure development in Botswana that sets an example for the rest of Africa (Chen, 2009). In 2012, there were 24 Chinese construction companies engaged in major government projects in Botswana at an estimated total cost of 20 billion Pula (around 1.49 billion US dollars) (Mmegi Monitor, 2012), while more than 40 largest infrastructural projects in Botswana were acknowledged to have been completed by the Chinese by the end of 2016 (Liangyu, 2018). Hong (2021) argues that Chinese construction companies operating in Botswana remain competitive and continue to secure more and bigger contracts since 2017 when the Chinese government intensified infrastructural investment.

The Chinese-Botswana Case: How Relevant is Dependency Theory?

The Chinese-African relationship should be understood from a new perspective, may be as an alternative development model to Africa that should not be understood within the discourse of core-periphery development imperatives. Africa's late entry into the "international system" has largely perpetuated the perception of the continent's "vulnerability and weaknesses" (Amadi, 2012). Even though China can be said to follow the Western core approaches—i.e. periphery pattern of exchange in its quest for natural resources—China has been willing to pay a higher price to gain access to these much-valued African resources through investments in infrastructure projects, technical support, and educational partnership programs, all of which are viewed as enhancing the economic growth of the economically vulnerable African continent. In essence, China to an extent is seen as a partner that can address African challenges that Western competitors have failed to address (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2011).

Chen (2009) argues that Southern Africa (particularly Botswana and South Africa) offers the "best business environment" in Africa South of the Sahara For instance, Southern Africa has resources ranging from oil to minerals, metals, wood, land, and diamonds (Sunday standard, 2011). China perceives its continued commercial linkages with Botswana as beneficial as the country is one of the strongest economies in Southern Africa (Tailor, 1997). In a bid to capitalize on this advantage, Chinese multinational companies formed "Business Action of Africa" with some signing onto "New Partnership for Africa's Development," both recognizing the importance of improving business and investment conditions in the African continent. Botswana in this case has a comparative advantage over smaller or peripheral states as its diamond trading has attracted crucial revenue not only from Chinese cooperation but also from European and American partners at the level which other African states have not been able to each. Such a revenue has a direct influence on the infrastructural development of the country.

Botswana remains the world largest producer of rough diamonds (Sunday Standard, 2010). China is the second largest luxury diamond consumer in the world after the United States, importing 1.66 billion US dollars' worth of diamonds in 2004; thus, the trade volumes between Botswana and China have been increasing to meet China's high demands. Although many Chinese companies have shown strong interest in investing in Botswana's crucial mining sector, to date there exists no direct transaction of diamond mining between China and Botswana (Chen, 2009). China has predominantly been engaged in the construction industry in Botswana, while the logic of Dependency Theory indicates that developed countries exploit raw materials from the periphery and sell them back at a higher price as finished products. Thus, China's role in Botswana limits the applicability of the theory in this particular aspect. Maswana (2009) argues that dependent states supply cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labor while serving as repositories for supply capital, technologies, and manufactured goods from their dominant partners. This highlights a situation whereby a dependent state's economic growth possibilities lie outside its economy. In the Botswana context, Chinese influence and dominance in the construction industry is more complex. On the one hand, Botswana sees it as an opportunity rather than as a challenge to establish a platform for closer economic cooperation, albeit with hidden consequences. On the other hand, as the world's manufacturing base, Chinese companies engaged in projects in Botswana take advantage of the need to import materials and machinery that China can supply at a competitive price, although this has implications for markets within Botswana, thereby rendering them redundant. In this situation, Botswana's market is monopolized by the Chinese, leaving the country with limited choice but to depend on China for both supplies and the needed technical capacity.

Dependency Theory in its conservative nature depicts a picture in which the Third World is clearly defined as vulnerable to external forces, lacking in autonomy, and subject to trade imbalance (Kalu, 2009). It can be argued that, on the surface, Chinese-Botswana relations may be viewed as fairly balanced, with instances that seem to be imbalances in favor of Botswana while others are in favor of China. For example, Botswana as mostly revealed in the media and political fora (Sekakela, 2018) benefits more from interest-free loans to develop its infrastructure. Such economic opportunities are perceived to be positively influencing "economic growth", "poverty amelioration" and lead to "increased standards of living" of the citizens (Kalu, 2012, 55). In addition, given the internal competition among Chinese private companies and state-owned enterprises, Botswana has perceived itself as benefiting from relatively inexpensive infrastructural deals at the expense of Chinese companies' profit margins due to low bidding prices to win the tenders. Chinese investors as compared to their foreign competitors (European or South African) adopt a budget/cost structure in which they only add a 10-15 percent profit margin while their competitors add 30-50 percent (Chen, 2009). Despite the associated risk of such practices, Botswana has celebrated substantial savings on its public infrastructure investment projects, despite the hidden costs emanating from the compromised quality of goods and services supplied by Chinese investors. Substandard projects that cost taxpayers substantively are a big threat to infrastructural development in Botswana.

The global capitalist system itself should not be assumed to be static, characterized by developed and developing countries as prescribed by the conservative perspectives of Dependency Theory. Today, as demonstrated by Chinese firms' relations with Africa, the experiences are dynamic and involve more actors (both states and non-states), whereby foreign direct investment is the new tool (Hong, 2021). I therefore subscribe more to Frank's version of Dependency Theory, whereby the global capitalist system is described as a network made up of alternating "metropolises and satellites" that showcase a relationship characterized by exploitation and subordination. In the case of Botswana-Chinese relations, the metropolises will be the individual large Chinese corporations that directly claim the economic surplus from investments in infrastructural projects that the Botswana government finances. In this case, the Chinese firms carry out both development and underdevelopment activities simultaneously as opposed to China as "the state" that is ideally supposed to be the exploiter, which Frank recognizes as opposed to other proponents that only grant the status of metropolis and satellite to nations.

The majority of Chinese international construction and engineering contractors (ICECs) are state-owned enterprises whose dual roles as both commercial entities and instruments of the state's policies pose intellectual challenges to existing conceptual frameworks and demand new ways of looking at bilateral relations between Botswana and China. This paper thus leans toward Frank's conceptualization of Dependency Theory because it allows for the flexibility that is helpful in identifying dynamics that indicate an unintended exploitation by Chinese firms that have identified Botswana as their economic zone and have built a development model that should be interrogated for better understanding in the forever changing political economy.

Limitations of Dependency Theory

Maswana (2009) acknowledges that one of the areas through which the center consolidates its economic and cultural domination over the periphery is through the technology transfer leading to uneven economic opportunities. Traditional Dependency Theory has examined the material bases of organized social life, in particular at the growth and extension of the world capitalist system. ignoring other factors such as technology which facilitate social change (Igwe and Okere, 2013). It is only contemporary dependency theorists such as Latin American Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto who acknowledge the influence of technology in establishing dependency. Botswana's citizen-owned construction companies have been limited in their capacity to develop an autonomous process of technology and innovation to explore alternative paths for the country's development. Even though Dependency Theory assumes that economic domination exists between North-South relationships, the preceding scenario highlights the unusual position represented by China within the center-periphery framework. Here, technological advancement rather than natural resources offers opportunities for relations. Hence, Chinese-Botswana relations cannot be fully understood in the traditional theoretically constructed pattern of core-periphery discourse as economic development is a multidimensional process.

China's growing influence has played a large part in establishing economic opportunities for

Botswana's recent economic growth and human development, but this does not mean that we should overlook the contradictions in Chinese-African relations. As in any relationship, there are threats and tensions. Chinese engagement in the African continent cannot be considered to be coherent and uniform for all African states, which are themselves individually unique in their colonial heritages and political, economic and social structures, which should be taken into account. There is a need for a comparative case study approach highlighting the different Chinese agendas in particular African states. Although Chinese business networks have been important in the economic transformation of the majority of African countries, such networks are not without their own challenges and negative impacts (Carmody and Owusu, 2007). The overall evidence presented in this section fails to support the idea that China's involvement in Botswana follows a center-periphery pattern. World economic relations are arguably no longer clearly divided into standard core and periphery patterns, and development perspectives no longer hold as the form put forward by traditional dependency theorists such as Paul Sweezy. Rather, the Chinese-Botswana relationship presents a new pattern of interdependence and a new direction for the world economic order that need new tools and lenses to study it in order to avoid the colonial era dependency of the country and others that still lack the capacity to develop their own infrastructures.

Analysis and Discussion

This paper acknowledges that China may, to a limited extent, be perceived as establishing a dependent Botswana. Overreliance on Chinese companies by Botswana and other African countries has negative impacts on local citizen-owned companies. Since independence, the government of Botswana has embraced citizen-economic empowerment in its development planning and strategies as witnessed by the establishment of many such empowerment schemes like Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA), Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) and Botswana Development Corporation (BDC) to leverage financial support and promote citizen empowerment in major and strategic industries. Unfortunately, Botswana's government has failed to formulate a specific citizen-empowerment policy to guide this important process. In the presence of Chinese competitors, it is imperative for Botswana to engage in deliberate efforts to protect its homegrown investors' ability to raise the capital they need to grow, innovate, diversify, and compete. Effective regulations and policy will help this process given that a combination of policies, regulations and efficient practices characterize the top-performing economies of the world from which Botswana can learn. Currently, there are illustrations that some local companies and businesses are being downsized or forced into bankruptcy due to the strong competition they face from Chinese investors (He, 2013). This calls for Botswana's intervention to protect them.

China's presence has spurred competition in Botswana and other African countries' markets and is viewed as harmful for local industrial growth which is a major component of any development strategy. Unlike Botswana, China provides information, coordination mechanisms and financial assistance for its companies and investors in Botswana which gives them the competitive advantage over the citizen-owned companies and slows the growth of local entrepreneurship. China, for instance, provides credit for feasibility studies, guarantees for bank loans, export credits for financing the operational cost of projects, and lines of credit for capital goods and machinery necessary for effective investment engagements (Maswana, 2009). Therefore, Chinese-owned multinational companies dominate Botswana's construction sector, thereby ensuring that the country's dependence on them is highly pronounced.

Poor leadership and the lack of an effective resource management system/plan has destabilized the internal economic structures of Botswana. Efficient regulation of the construction industry is critical to protect both private and government revenues. For instance, Botswana's relatively poor solid project management abilities/systems pose great challenges to the industrial economy and the development of the country. The lack of internal control and pressure also lays the foundation for an escalation of corruption. Some Chinese constructors have been brought before the courts of law on charges relating to bribery to pass inspections which have led to hazardous construction and compromised public safety. On a more positive note, in 2011, the then Minister of Infrastructure, Science and Technology, Mr Johnny Swartz, was quoted saying that "It is a good development to note that ever since government got tough with companies that do not deliver projects on time and within budget, the companies have started delivering" (Daily News, 2015, 1). This is commendable a leadership effort to ensure successful partnerships with China. Botswana should map the way forward for her future engagements with China.

Dependency Theory overemphasizes the impact of economic processes while ignoring other important factors such as political decision making that influence development and the nature of relations (Kalu, 2009). The poor performance of many African economies cannot only be attributed to unequal exchange and external decision making but also to poor political and decision-making processes of local leaders. Many African states have had political leadership that is more susceptible to support by foreign forces that are often more economically well-off (Lim, 2014). In the modern era, there is a need to differentiate African economies that remain underdeveloped due to overdependence on external economic forces from those that can liberalize and transform their internal conditions to gain development mileage such as South Africa.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In essence, Chinese-Botswana relations have facilitated a successful relationship of enduring strength and mutual benefit for both countries. This partnership unveils more opportunities for investment and growth which ultimately moves the countries forward. Therefore, this paper has provided evidence that a South–South relationship adopted by China and Botswana is helpful and proves that the underdeveloped societies of Africa do not constitute a uniform political-economic structure. Third World nations cannot be categorized as one homogenous group, despite their commonalities that set them apart from the developed countries. In discussing Chinese-Botswana economic relations, colonial heritages as well as social and political structures need to be taken into consideration. This means that, in the case of Chinese-Botswana relations, the holistic approach adopted by Dependency Theory is not relevant.

In general, modern globalization policies and programs have failed to improve the situation of most African countries. These failures call for African policymakers and development practitioners to embark on a critical and informed review to understand the defects inherent in the discourse on globalization in Africa and to present viable alternatives beyond the current relations with foreigners. The Botswana government should continue to rise above the current challenges faced by Africa relating to unfavorable trading conditions and develop a value-orientated and radical approach to its development. Sustainable development in Botswana can only be realized if policymakers appreciate that development is participatory, direct and inclusive, and that external partners do not always have Botswana's best interest at heart. Under the current clear division in the global economy, Botswana should not consider delinking or relinking with China, but rather confront internal realities that inhibit self-reliant development. This will help the country move forward and close the gap that exists between itself and China.

Despite some scholars' dismissal of Dependency Theory's relevance in explaining economic relations among international partnerships, this paper concludes that to a certain limited level the theory can be used to explain Botswana-Chinese relations. The theory aids us in understanding the nature of the economic engagement and influence that China has on Botswana; upon which I recommend that policymakers continue to work toward policies that allow for a balanced relationship. Therefore Chinese-Botswana engagement cannot be understood using the logic presented by the conservative Dependency Theory ideals and caution should be exercised as relations among nations are determined by many factors. For the sake of clarity, the way forward for Botswana is presented in the subsection that follows.

Going Forward: What Should Botswana Do?

As criticism of China establishing a dependent Botswana increases, my central question is the following: How does Botswana manage its relationship with China through interventions to maximize its survival and develop a space for achieving economic development in the country? China's presence neither automatically yields economic transformation for African economies in general nor does it yield transformation for Botswana in particular. This transformation can only occur if African countries and their leaders develop a new form of nationalism and commitment to embrace and enhance their relationship with China. The Botswana government should interrogate its relationship with China and develop a strategic approach to development beyond any form of dependency on financial handouts. As argued by Amadi (2012), development is participatory, direct and inclusive and cannot be institutionalized solely by external factors. The Botswana government should be more proactively engaged in making a roadmap for economic development that is sustainable through decreased dependence on external markets and aid while boosting home grown development strategies to strengthen the economy.

Even though China's policy in Africa has been perceived as economic diplomacy which may result in potential harm to African economies, positive results may be achieved if African leaders are assertive enough to actively engage with China and reduce the vulnerability of the continent to external factors. China's booming economic growth in the last 30 years has accorded Chinese construction companies much needed experience and expertise in operating in a developing economic setting where time and budgets are common constraints. This further increases the attractiveness of China as a partner in Africa. The government of Botswana should improve conditions for local investors by developing regulations and policies that will facilitate the opportunity for business collaborations with Chinese partners as this will allow for skills to be transferred. Botswana as well as the rest of Africa should be in a position to formulate policies based on thorough research on strategies that have allowed some countries to reap the best benefits from engagement with Chinese partners. This study argues that to even the playing field, protectionist policies, for instance, are necessary to cushion the domestic industries from damaging competition from foreign investors. It is important, however, to note that scholars such as Kalu (2009) argue that such protectionist policies may only serve to further exacerbate the inequitable situation, thereby increasing peripheral countries' dependency on outside capital and external actors. Kalu fails to substantiate and elaborate further on how this could happen in a practical sense.

African leaders have nobody to blame for their lack of competence and corrupt dealings with the so called "economic partners." If this behavior continues, Africans will fail to adequately engage their partners in homemade progressive developmental policies, making their dependency on development partners inevitable. Competent and development conscious leadership in Southeast Asia saved the region from any form of dependency despite the presence of American and Japanese investors (Kalu, 2009). In Botswana, the Chinese embassy plays a prominent role in protecting the safety of Chinese investments through maintaining close relations, communication and mediation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Botswana. As an intervention, the government of Botswana should intensify efforts to prevent economic vulnerabilities through protective policies and establish a conducive environment for the empowerment of local investors. Regarding Chinese companies' completion of shoddy jobs, the Botswana government may intensify monitoring and evaluation of projects executed by Chinese investors. This involves imposing a series of requisites or regulations on international investors.

The Chinese have been accused of taking advantage of the loose laws on standards and quality in Africa in general through literally dumping their low-quality products into the continent. In Botswana, officials have not done enough when engaging with the Chinese about their substandard products with the hope that Chinese companies will begin to realize the problems associated with this issue and improve their quality control on their own (Chen, 2009). Complaints have been made about the poor quality of Chinese projects. For instance, it was found that a Chinese contractor had used cheaper imported stainless steel pipes in a housing project in order to cut costs instead of the normal brass pipes making it difficult for the occupants to replace them in the future from those in the local market (Chen, 2009). This does not help the country and, thus, there is a need for proactive and robust initiatives to be implemented by Botswana.

The Chinese have been accused of unduly influencing political leaders and using underhand tactics in countries with which they partner. Dependency Theory argues that large states have the tendency to manipulate political leadership or destabilize domestic political changes to ensure their own advantage or benefit. Botswana needs to be more cautious and work on strengthening partnerships with other countries to reduce its vulnerability to external intervention, especially from China. Botswana in this regard can be commended for having strong political and economic ties with South Africa. This relationship, together with relationships with other Southern Africa countries, is further facilitated and strengthened through regional integration under the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a body which has been instrumental in developing its member states. Such relationships cushion African countries against vulnerabilities and help them to minimize dependence on wealthier nations.

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