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by *Jo-Ansie van Wyk*

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by *Ute Röschenthaler*

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by *Suzette van der Westhuizen and Jo-Ansie van Wyk*

UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR CHINESE STUDIES
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Issue 1
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Crouching tigers, leaping lions? Developmental leadership lessons for South Africa from China and Malaysia

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Abstract

Developmental leadership contributes to socio-economic development in developing states. China has, for example, set itself an ambitious power development, production and distribution agenda, whereas Malaysia's Big Fast Results Methodology is contributing to its economic development. Both these states offer some lessons for South Africa as Southern Africa's strongest economy. In fact, South African President Jacob Zuma's Operation Phakisa and its focus on, *inter alia*, the oceans or blue economy is directly taken from Malaysia's Big Fast Results Methodology. Moreover, South Africa has consolidated its relations, especially in the power sector with China, which is expanding its nuclear power sector at a very fast pace. Against the aforesaid, the article intends to analyse the relatively new concept, *developmental leadership,* in the context of declared developmental states; and using two case studies (electricity and oceans governance) for illustrative purposes to determine the applicability, impact and lessons from the Chinese and Malaysian models for South Africa as a developmental state.

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Introduction

The People's Republic of China (hereafter China), South Africa and Malaysia have embarked on different development trajectories due to, *inter alia*, each state's unique domestic and international needs and contexts. Despite these and other differences, similarities between these states also exist. All three states have, for example, significant development needs; are designated or self-confessed developmental states; have or continue to experience various types of undemocratic governments; are undergoing state transformation; and are emerging regional and international leading powers from the Global South, especially in the context of the United Nations (UN), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

China has become South Africa's largest trade partner (superseding the European Union) since President Zuma took office in 2009. In fact, Alden and Wu (2014: 15), concluded that 'two-way trade has flourished under the Zuma administration', with China also becoming one of Africa's largest trade, development and donor partners during this period. Besides China, Malaysia is perceived as an important leader and member of the NAM, giving Malaysia considerable status among its peers in the Movement as well as the Global South. Malaysia also has a developmental model often replicated by and proposed for developing states (Desta, 2012: 26-31). In Africa, South Africa and Tanzania, amongst others, adopted the Malaysian developmental model in 2014 and 2013 respectively (Zuma, 2014; Tanzania Invest, 2013).

The Chinese and Malaysian developmental trajectory reiterates the role and structure of the state in respect to development. In order to achieve socio-economic development, leaders of a state often transform and/or restructure the state to achieve and/or improve development. For the purpose of this contribution, these leaders are defined as developmental leaders, *i.e.* leaders with a specific developmental agenda (further clarification on the concept follows below). In China and Malaysia, leaders- in this context, developmental leaders - have transformed and/or restructured the Chinese and Malaysian state to, *inter alia*, define and implement developmental

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policies wielding results. In China, for example, leaders embarked on an ambitious power development, production and distribution agenda, whereas Malaysia's Big Fast Results (BFR) methodology has been implemented and contributes to economic development. Given their experience, both China and Malaysia offer some lessons for South Africa which continues to face significant developmental challenges. Malaysia's success has been recognised by others. In fact, South African President Jacob Zuma's Operation Phakisa and its focus on, *inter alia*, the oceans or blue economy is directly taken from Malaysia's BFR methodology due to Malaysia's relative success in this sector. Apart from recognising Malaysia's success, South Africa's leaders also recognise China's relative successes. One consequence of this recognition is that South Africa has consolidated its relations with these states. This has been evident in the high levels of interaction between South Africa and these states, as well as increases in trade between these states.

Therefore, as state leaders are here considered to be the main development actors, the article intends to analyse the concept, developmental leadership, in the context of China, Malaysia and South Africa as declared developmental states; and using two specific case studies (electricity and oceans governance) to determine the applicability, impact and lessons from the Chinese and Malaysian development models for South Africa as a developmental state. A further motivation for this contribution is the fact that the literature on the developmental state (DS) and the democratic developmental state (DDS) is vast, and which, for brevity's sake is not repeated here but, where applicable, referred to. This is in contrast to scholarship on developmental leadership. Therefore, the contribution proceeds to clarify the concept developmental leadership before proceeding to an analysis of the selected case studies. In the third instance, the article focuses on Operation Phakisa as a state-led development initiative. The article then proceeds to deduce development lessons from China and Malaysia. The penultimate section attempts to offer some recommendations on developing developmental leadership. Final concluding remarks follow thereafter.

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Developmental leadership

Concepts are the building blocks of theory and provide scientific explanations of events or phenomena. However, as Heywood (1999: 6) cautions, '(i)n politics ... the clarification of concepts is a particular *[sic]* difficult task'. Two types of concepts can be distinguished, namely normative and descriptive concepts. The former is described as values, referring to ideals, which should or must be achieved. Value-laden concepts include, for example, concepts such as freedom, tolerance and equality. These concepts often advance or prescribe specific forms of conduct, instead of describing events or phenomena. In contrast, descriptive or positive concepts refer to 'facts' which have an objective or demonstrable existence; referring to *what is* (Heywood, 1999: 7). Therefore, the utility of conceptual analysis as a method is that it provides greater clarity, which contributes to a shared understanding of the meaning and utility of a particular concept (Baldwin and Rose, 2009: 780-781).

Therefore, the rationale for conducting a conceptual analysis of developmental leadership is prompted by several considerations. First, the concept has received scant scholarly attention. Second, literature on the concept is overshadowed by the literature on developmental states, predominantly focusing on the primacy of the state as the primary provider and enabler of development. This article, thirdly, focuses on the primacy of *leaders* rather than *states* and *governments* to mobilise and utilise state resources to achieve development. Finally, developmental leaders often establish developmental coalitions to achieve their objectives.

In defining developmental leadership and developmental coalitions, the article follows Leftwich (2009: 10-11):

> Successful and sustained development depends crucially on whether and how various leaders and elites within and across the public and private domains are able to form sufficiently inclusive 'developmental coalitions' (or growth coalitions), formal or informal, which:
>
> • Negotiate the fundamental political settlements which are essential

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for building the core institutions of effective states.

• Establish, maintain and implement the locally appropriate, legitimate and feasible institutional arrangements which facilitate economic growth and (inclusive) social development.

• Co-operate – locally, regionally, nationally, sub-nationally, sectorally or within and between organisations – to overcome major collective action problems and/or major political, economic and social problems.

Given the limited scholarship on developmental leadership, the contribution follows the pioneering work of Lyne de Ver's (2009: 9) whose definition of developmental leadership is:

> the process of organising or mobilising people and resources in pursuit of particular ends or goals, in given institutional contexts of authority, legitimacy and power (often of a hybrid kind). Achieving these ends, and overcoming the collective action problems which commonly obstruct such achievements, normally requires the building of formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organisations, both vertical and horizontal.

Therefore, the meaning, implications and utility of developmental leadership are wide-ranging. In other words, leadership is contextual; purpose-driven; organisation and mobilisation of people and resources to achieve particular objectives; and involves co-operation in the form of coalitions and/or partnership (Lyne de Ver, 2009: 3-4). Whereas most scholarship on leadership focuses on leadership as/and management, developmental leadership focuses on the political process to achieve certain outcomes. Thus, developmental leadership entails leaders' harnessing of a state's political and 'infrastructural power' (Michael Mann in Huber *et al*., 2015: 14) to achieve development-related political and policy objectives. Developmental leadership also entails a leader's ability to initiate and maintain *reform* (formal or informal political coalitions including state and business actors co-operating and

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working towards policy and institutional reform in order to achieve development but retaining their independence) (Peiffer, 2012: 7); and *developmental coalitions* (formal or informal political coalitions including state and business actors co-operating and working towards using these institutions to achieve development) (Leftwich, 2009:10-11) in a specific context.

Thus, the following elements of developmental leadership can be deduced: authority, legitimacy, influence and charisma. Moreover, a developmental leader should be cautious not to abuse state resources to compensate so-called developmental partners; and should, thus, prevent clientelism (exchanging goods or access for political support), prebendalism (use of public goods for personal gain by civil servants) and patronage (support in exchange for political support). In some instances, developmental leaders such as Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and South Korea's Park Chung-hee have not been the shiniest examples of democratic developmental leadership; although both succeeded as developmental leaders in their developmental state contexts. Similarly, this is the case in China and Malaysia. Thus, this article distinguishes between democratic and undemocratic developmental leadership as two types of developmental leadership.

The next section focuses on developmental leaders in China's nuclear energy regime as an illustrative case study from which some lessons for South Africa can be learnt.

China's nuclear energy regime

Energy security is crucial in achieving and maintaining development and growth (Cherp and Jewell, 2011: 330-355). Like elsewhere, China's growth has been carbon energy intensive (WNA, 2015a); resulting in greater demands for energy and, pertinent to this contribution, China's efforts to energise the Chinese dragon to maintain and improve its exceptional annual growth (Zhao, 2013). Apart from increasing oil imports and developing gas resources, the Chinese government has also set ambitious targets for the expansion and development of its peaceful nuclear energy sector. Currently, China maintains 26 nuclear power reactors in operation, whereas 24 are under construction and a significant number is envisaged for the foreseeable future (until 2050) (WNA, 2015a); a consequence of policy development

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and implementation (outlined below) during the past decade.

In achieving its ambitious development and energy-related objectives, in February 2005, the National People's Congress (NPC) approved the so-called Renewable Energy Law, which includes incentives and regulations for the development of the country's renewable energy sector. Subsequent to this, the State Council established a State Energy Leadership Group under the leadership of Premier Wen Jiabao - including Vice-Premiers Huang Ju and Zeng Peiyuan as deputy heads of the Group – and the State Energy Leadership Office, as well as the energy focus of the Eleventh Five Year Plan; thus, signalling the high political priority of the country's energy security (Cheng, 2013: 6). Subsequent to these developments, various other energy reform initiatives followed to achieve the identified four main energy-related objectives, namely energy security; economic efficiency; social equity; and environmental protection (Meidan *et al.,* 2013: 46-49). In October 2012, the State Council released a White Paper on Energy Policy, which increased the proportion of non-fossil energy sources such as nuclear energy. Following this, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) adopted a national climate change plan in September 2014 and in November 2014, the State Council published the Energy Development Strategy Action Plan (2014-2020); calling, *inter alia,* for the launch of new nuclear power projects not only on coastal areas, but also inland (WNA, 2015a).

Against the aforesaid, several features of China's nuclear energy regime are evident. The country suffers from an energy deficit (WNA, 2015a); the nuclear energy regime is centrally driven and set out in the country's Five Year Plans (Meidan *et al.,* 2013); nuclear power expansion is set to continue (WNA, 2015a); the Chinese government (and thus, not private actors) is the owner/operator of all of the country's nuclear organisations, utilities, and companies (WNA, 2015b); and China's 'heavy bureaucratic tradition' and consensual decision-making process results in lengthy policy processes (Meidan et al., 2013: 47).

More important to the contribution, is whether developmental leadership is present in China's nuclear energy regime. Evidence suggests that China's political

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leadership is central to the country's nuclear energy regime (Cheng, 2013) but that this is not developmental leadership in terms of the working definition of developmental leadership in this contribution (Lyne de Ver, 2009: 9). In fact, the nature of the Chinese state and state leadership challenges the notion of developmental leadership, which in terms of Lyne de Ver's (2009: 9) definition presupposes a democratic state. However, this contribution argues that developmental leadership can operate in undemocratic environments and achieve developmental objectives. Whereas the Chinese leadership is engaged in the process of organising or mobilising people and resources in pursuit of particular goals in its institutional context of authority, and legitimacy, it has not built formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organisations existing in the private and public sector; especially due to the absence of a Chinese private sector in the country. At best, developmental leadership in China can be linked with what Wu (2015) terms, 'authoritarian capitalism', *i.e.* state-driven capitalism and central state monopoly of the developmental agenda.

In the Chinese context, another issue requires a reconsideration of developmental leadership in general and, in particular, in China, *i.e.* state transformation. State transformation occurs either by coercion, imposition and/or war, and/or by adopting policy models of other states (emulation, learning and knowledge sharing); whereas domestic determinants include, amongst others, levels of economic development, domestic coalitions, state-society relations and leaders. State transformation *per se* refers to 'fundamental shifts in the scope of state activities, bureaucratic capacities, purposes, instruments, and structures of authority' (Huber *et al*., 2015: 3-9, 13). It is generally accepted that China is a state in flux with unprecedented state transformation from a socialist state to a pseudo-socialist state with capitalist/neo-liberalist features (Bolesta, 2015; Chow, 2015; Hameiri and Jones, 2015) or can be defined as a post-socialist developmental state (PSDS) (Bolesta, 2015: 227). When the notion of state transformation and developmental leadership is considered in the context of China, the 'fundamental shifts in the scope of state activities, bureaucratic capacities, purposes, instruments, and structures of authority' (Huber *et al*., 2015: 3-9, 13) should be taken into account and, possibly, identify developmental leadership

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sui generis in the context of China as a PSDS. Chow (2015), amongst others, refers to, for example, changes occurring in Chinese state-owned enterprises distancing themselves from the central government but responsible to the central government; the emergence and role of Chinese non-state actors in China; changes in the bureaucracy and provincial-central government relations. However, the Chinese leadership has initiated limited reform coalitions; limited due to, amongst others, the domination of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), lack of privatisation and the preoccupation of maintaining a strong, stable state (Bolesta, 2015: 242).

Moreover, democratic developmental leadership in the context of democratic developmental coalitions is absent due to the lack of 'relational aspects' (Bolesta, 2015: 13) of the democratic developmental state (relations/coalition of state political elite; the state bureaucracy; the society; and business) despite its efforts to seek 'developmental legitimacy' (Bolesta, 2015: 242). It is also evident in the country's persisting developmental challenges such as societal inequality (Bolesta, 2015: 242) with leaders' reform initiatives predominantly benefitting the party elite and interests resulting in clientelism, prebendalism, patronage and 'rampant corruption' (Bolesta, 2015: 234) in China.

China's power, status and prestige, as well as its ideological and solidarity links with South Africa makes it's a very attractive model for South Africa to emulate. In fact, Sino-South African bilateral relations have moved beyond mere routine diplomacy to a strategic partnership. Yet, Pretoria's kowtowing and evident adaptation and conformity to Beijing is unique in its diplomatic relations (*The Star,* 23 March 2009). More on this follows later in the paper. The next section focuses on Malaysia as a selected case study.

Malaysia's Big Fast Results

Malaysia is also one of the 20th century developmental states emerging from the so-called second wave of the developmental state; *i.e.* the emergence of East Asian developmental states (Jones Luong, 2015: 629). Adopting and adapting the development models of Asian Tigers such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, Malaysia embarked on a developmental state trajectory during the tenure of Prime

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Minister Mahatir Mohammed (1981-2003) (Desta, 2012: 26-31). For the purpose of this section, a comprehensive analysis of the Malaysian developmental state is not presented. Instead, the focus is limited to Malaysia's more recent development initiative, the BFR methodology.

The Government of Malaysia adopted the strategy in 2009/10 as a national development vision to address national key development priority areas such as poverty, crime and unemployment by 2025 (Idris Jala, 2014). For Malaysia (2014a), BFR 'means exactly what it sounds like: impactful and immediate consequences. But more than that, it's the standard operating protocol of the GTP [Government Transformation Programme] when it comes to assessing whether an initiative is good enough to be included in the stable of changes' (Malaysia, 2014a). Furthermore, the Government of Malaysia describes the BFR as 'about getting buy-in' while aiming to 'cultivate collaboration between ministries, government agencies and stakeholders, public and private, to define clear targets, clear direction and the clear allocation of resources' (Malaysia, 2014a). Moreover, the BFR is also about political and ideological expediency:

In short, BFR is about getting things done. It aims to rid the public of a ubiquitous concern – that the Government simply is unable to execute and deliver on programmes that otherwise sound great in theory. It's about ensuring that the initiatives put in place will do what they aim to do, and that they get done (Malaysia, 2014a).

The BFR strategy highlights some of the salient features of the Malaysian developmental state *and* developmental leadership. Returning to the contribution's working definition of developmental coalitions and leadership, Malaysia leaders and elites within and across the public and private domains were able to establish sufficiently inclusive 'developmental coalitions' (or growth coalitions), formal or informal, through the 8-step methodology of the strategy. The 8-step methodology, as described by the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Senator Idris Jala (2014), entails:

1. Strategic Direction: determine the strategic direction required

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2. Labs: determine what needs to be done
3. Open Days: share the Lab findings with the population and incorporate their feedback
4. Roadmap: inform citizens of plan of action
5. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Targets: determine KPIs to measure progress
6. Implementation of plan of action in communities, regional and national level
7. External validation of results achieved
8. Annual reporting and information sharing with population on achievements

Due to its developmental focus, community involvement, and external validation, the 8-step methodology has resulted in the implementation of locally appropriate, legitimate and feasible institutional arrangements which facilitate economic growth and (inclusive) social development in respect of the BFR strategy (Idris Jala, 2014).

The Malaysia GTP and its Vision 2020 are driving the BFR via the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU), established in September 2009 in the Prime Minister's Office. PEMANDU oversees the implementation, assessment and delivery of the GTP (aiming to improve access to public services; reducing crime; fighting corruption; assuring quality education; raising standards of living; improving rural development; improving urban transport; and addressing the cost of living) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) (aiming to transform Malaysia into a high-income state by 2020) (PEMANDU, 2015). The GTP focuses on 'transformational change' by getting 'buy-in from all stakeholders from the rakyat [community] on the ground to the most senior Cabinet Ministers'; and, thus, a departure of 'Government knows best approach' of the past (Malaysia, 2014b); illustrative of a developmental coalition and leadership by organising or mobilising people and resources to achieve development.

Against the aforesaid, President Jacob Zuma undertook an official state visit to

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Malaysia in August 2013. During this visit, the Government of Malaysia introduced him and his delegation to the BFR Methodology 'through which the Malaysian government achieved significant government and economic transformation within a very short time' (The Presidency, 2014). Upon Zuma's return and with the assistance of the Malaysian government, the BFR approach was adapted to the South African context and to 'highlight the urgency of delivery' the approach was renamed to Operation Phakisa ("phakisa" means "hurry up" in Sesotho) (The Presidency, 2014).

Operation Phakisa and the blue economy

Global consensus converges on the economic benefits and potential of the so-called blue economy, or maritime economy (UNCTAD, 2014). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that, globally, almost 350 million jobs are linked to the oceans through fishing, aquaculture, coastal and marine tourism and research activities, with an additional one billion people relying on fish as their primary source of protein (UNCTAD 2014: 2). More than 200 million Africans where 39 of the 54 states and islands are littoral, rely on the ocean for food and nutrition, whereas the fisheries industry provides employment for more than 10 million Africans (AU, 2012: 8). In 2010, for example, South Africa's oceans economy contributed approximately ZAR 54 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), with approximately 316, 000 people employed in the sector (*South African Government News Agency*, 19 July 2014). Supporting the said global consensus, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Maite Nkoane-Mashabane, described the blue economy as the 'next frontier of global economic growth' (Nkoane-Mashabane, 2014).

A relatively recent concept, the blue economy, also referred to as the ocean or maritime economy, is defined as 'economic and trade activities that integrate the conservation and sustainable use and management of biodiversity, including maritime ecosystems, and genetic resources' (UNCTAD, 2014: 2). The concept has been adopted by various states, including several African and other developing regions.

Mauritius, for example, initiated its first Ocean Economy Roadmap in 2013 to take

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advantage of the economic potential of the island's oceans. Moreover, the Roadmap emphasises the need to unlock the economic potential of the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) 'by ensuring sustainable and co-ordinated utilisation of living and non-living resources' and by including tourism, seaports and seafood-related activities and sectors (UNCTAD, 2014: 6). In order to achieve these objectives, the government of Mauritius has established a national public-private task force, and plans to establish an ocean's business park and an ocean's research centre. It also plans to conduct a 'comprehensive regulatory review of the ocean's economy' (UNCTAD, 2014: 6). In January 2014, Seychelles, another African state, launched its own ambitions in 'The Blue Economy – Seychelles' vision for a Blue Horizon' (UN, 2014). According to the President of Seychelles, James Alix Michel (2015: 162-177), the country's blue economy strategy entails economic diversification; the creation of high value employment opportunities in the maritime industry; increasing the contribution of the country's maritime sector to Seychelles' GDP; and the sustainable development of the country's maritime environment.

Apart from implementing national blue economy policies, the notion of the blue economy was also addressed at conferences and adopted by multilateral organisations. In December 2013, the government of Portugal, for example, invited the AU to participate in its 'Blue Growth of the Atlantic' conference (AU, 2013). The AU, in the Final Communiqué of the 387th Peace and Security Council on 29 July 2013, described the blue economy as the 'new frontline of Africa's renaissance' (AU, 2013). In January 2014, small island development states (SIDS) and coastal states attended the Blue Economy Summit in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UN, 2014).

Operation Phakisa was officially launched on 19 July 2014. By President Zuma's own admission, Operation Phakisa is not an original idea as it is an 'adaptation' of the BFR Methodology of Malaysia, following President Zuma's visit in 2013 (Zuma, 2014). Operation Phakisa focusses exclusively on harnessing the socio-economic benefits of South Africa's vast maritime area. South Africa's maritime sovereignty includes a coastline of 3 924km; an exclusive EEZ of 1,553,000km^2 and 4,340 000km^2 maritime territory (Defence Review Committee, 2012: 7-2). These vast

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maritime areas contribute to what can be called an additional tenth province of the Republic.

President Zuma explained the origins of Operation Phakisa as the result of a consultative process, including 'teams from government, labour, business, academia and other sectors to work together in experimental laboratories, to explore all possibilities and further unlock the potential of our country's vast coastline' (Zuma, 2014). These teams focus on four areas, or workstreams, namely:

- Marine Transport and Manufacturing
- Offshore oil and gas exploration
- Aquaculture
- Marine protection services and ocean governance (Zuma, 2014).

Speaking at the launch of Operation Phakisa, President Zuma outlined aspects of South Africa's blue economy whilst maintaining that South Africa's maritime economy have the 'potential to contribute up to ZAR 177 billion' to the country's GDP and create 'just over a million jobs by 2033' (Zuma, 2014). The rationale for Operation Phakisa is undoubtedly to enhance development. President Jacob Zuma's announcement of Operation Phakisa early in his second presidential term in 2014 was the latest in a series of government initiatives such as the National Development Plan (NDP) to stimulate development. However, the question remains: how appropriate and applicable are these transplanted models of development, and does it offer any developmental lessons?

Development and developmental leadership lessons from China and Malaysia

The development status of China and Malaysia oscillates between DS and PSDS. A self-confessed developmental state, South Africa is increasingly adopting a 'Look East' (*i.e.* favouring ties with states in Eurasia, the Middle and Far East rather than ties with traditional partners in the West) approach in its foreign policy and development strategy. For analytical purposes, South Africa's nuclear energy expansion plan and the development of its blue economy have been selected as

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comparative case studies in order to draw lessons for the improvement of development through developmental coalitions and leadership.

Both China and South Africa's energy demands are increasing; and have been identified as a priority development issue with nuclear energy expansion chosen as a solution to meet future energy demands, achieve energy security, and achieve sustainable levels of development. Whereas China has nuclear weapons, South Africa has dismantled its nuclear weapons and terminated its nuclear weapons programme. The nuclear regime in both China and South Africa are tightly controlled by the state with no private sector involvement in nuclear power generation and distribution. In the case of China, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that the Chinese government is approaching its energy security as a human security issue. There is some evidence that the Chinese government has exercised developmental leadership by initiating and establishing sufficiently inclusive developmental coalitions to address the country's energy-related development needs through locally appropriate, legitimate and feasible institutional arrangements that facilitate economic growth and (inclusive) social development. Whereas Malaysia has established various public-private developmental coalitions, China, and in particular the nuclear energy sector, has established development coalitions within the state among state actors. This bureaucratic version of developmental coalitions and developmental leadership is unique but has, in terms of the working definition of the contribution, wielded some results as Chinese developmental leaders have indeed organised people, resources and institutions to achieve specific developmental objectives.

Like many other sectors in China, the governance of the nuclear power sector remains statist and elitist with little to none democratic oversight (Wu 2015). Here, the Chinese model is similar to the current South African situation where the state-owned power utility, Eskom, maintains a monopoly on the power sector in the country. However, in the South African case, several indications of developmental leadership and developmental coalitions in the country's power sector are evident. This includes, amongst others, the South African government's agreements with independent power producers (IPPs), the stimulation of the renewable energy

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resources sector and energy-related tax incentives. However, these developmental leadership and coalitions are not evident in the country's embarking on a nuclear power expansion plan. Decisions relating to the latter are overseen by a committee under the leadership of President Zuma, and coalitions formed seem to entrench existing state-business elite relations benefiting the elite to the detriment of government's aim of achieving broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE). Moreover, developmental coalitions on nuclear energy are limited and exclusive. A notable example occurred in June 2015 when the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) signed a strategic co-operation agreement with the Chinese Sichuan province; following an earlier co-operation agreement signed in 2010 (*World Nuclear News,* 8 June 2015). Thus, China's model of undemocratic energy governance cannot and should not be replicated in South Africa.

South Africa's acknowledgement of its application of Malaysia's BFR raised considerable concerns signalling the importance of knowledge sharing (Balozi, Othman and Issa, 2014: 7-21). First, despite Malaysia's success as a developmental state, the country has not been able to meet all its developmental needs. Whereas the BFR focuses on improving public and social services, and improving the income status of ordinary Malaysians, it remains to be seen whether its 8-step methodology is applicable to South Africa, in general, and to the blue economy specifically; also since the project was announced less than a year ago. Second, at the time of writing, Operation Phakisa has moved to its second focus area, namely health, with little evidence of improvements to the country's blue economy.

Thirdly, President Zuma's observation that Operation Phakisa is the result of a 'consultative process', including 'teams from government, labour, business, academia and other sectors to work together in experimental laboratories, to explore all possibilities and further unlock the potential of our country's vast coastline' (Zuma, 2014), seems hollow as very little evidence of the initiation and establishment of developmental coalitions in this respect exists. A developmental coalition can include an informal coalition such as 'teams' but then it should have some durability. It is, thus, unclear whether this 'consultative process' will be once-off or on-going. However, of greater concern is the undemocratic nature of

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development in South Africa:

• **Executive pre-eminence remains prevalent in development planning**. Like Malaysia, where the PEMANDU is located in the Office of the Premier, the South African National Planning Commission (NPC) is located in the executive, *i.e.* The Presidency. Moreover, Operation Phakisa is also located in and managed by The Presidency, rather than the lead departments (Trade and Industry, and Fisheries).

• **State transformation is not *democratic* and *developmental* transformation**. Like the Chinese state, the South African state is also undergoing transformation in the image of the majority and ruling party, the African National Congress's (ANC), idea of a developmental state. However, in the case of South Africa, evidence of state capture emerges with corruption, so-called 'tenderpreneurship' (i.e. government officials who use their political influence to be awarded government tenders) (Nzimande, 2012), cadre deployment, and state-business relations really consisting of state-ruling party business relations. Eskom, the state power utility, has awarded a contract for the construction of Medupi and Kusile, two coal-fired power stations, to, amongst other, Hitachi SA; a company partly owned by Chancellor House, the ANC's investment company. Moreover, the lack of developmental transformation means that certain patterns of development are perpetuated and do not lift South Africans out from the 'development trap'.

• ***Reform coalitions* are currently absent**. This is in contrast to the tenure of President Mandela that was, *inter alia*, characterised by the transformation of the state through the establishment of reform coalitions.

• ***Some* developmental coalitions exist**. Notable examples of this include the National Economic Development and Labour Council

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(NEDLAC) and the NPC. However, these developmental coalitions are state-driven and supported; and are often reactive or simply dismissed. During his tenure in The Presidency, Trevor Manuel led the NPC that on one or more occasions rejected government's intention to proceed with the development of nuclear energy. The NPC's protests were simply dismissed.

Against the aforesaid, and in the context of this research, China and Malaysia offer some lessons for building democratic developmental states for economic transformation in South Africa:

- In both China and Malaysia, developmental leaders have contributed to development in the countries' nuclear energy sector and wider developmental sector respectively;
- Developmental leaders achieve relative success through the initiation and maintenance of development coalitions, which requires 'the building of formal or informal coalitions of interests, elites and organisations, both vertical and horizontal (Lyne de Ver 2009: 9);
- Inclusive developmental coalitions build and maintain democratic developmental states; resulting in state and societal transformation indicating 'fundamental shifts in the scope of state activities, bureaucratic capacities, purposes, instruments, and structures of authority' (Huber *et al*., 2015: 3-9, 13).

Developing developmental leadership

If developmental leadership is a determinant of developmental coalitions and development, the question arises: what is developmental leadership, and how is it developed and nurtured?

This article has defined developmental leadership earlier and repeats the definition here with annotations based on the aforesaid: 'the *process* [durability; thus, on-going] of *organising or mobilising* [thus, action-driven and taken by one or more individuals offering material and non-material incentives and/or penalising] *people*

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[thus, relational; human resources in and outside government] and *resources* [thus, material or non-material] in pursuit of particular *ends or goals* [objective or subjective; material or non-material], in given [thus, not in all] *institutional* [formal or informal] contexts of *authority* [the ability and power to act], *legitimacy* [the power designated to] and *power* [material or normative] (often of a hybrid kind). Achieving these ends, and overcoming the *collective action problems* [commonly shared concerns] which commonly obstruct such achievements, normally requires the building of *formal or informal coalitions* [mechanism] *of interests* [material or non-material], *elites* [in and outside government] *and organisations* [in and outside government], both *vertical* [in and outside government] *and horizontal'* [in and outside government] (Lyne de Ver, 2009: 9).[1]

The idea that leadership development can take place is widely recognised. In South Africa, for example, both the ANC and the opposition, the Democratic Alliance (DA) have leadership academies. Universities offer leadership courses and executive training if offered by institutions such as the UN and the World Bank. Moreover, leaders are elected or made, or dismissed via the ballot box or the bullet. As states and the global context change, the requirements for and from leaders change in scope, capacities, purpose, instrument, and structure of authority.

In order to assess the development of leaders in a developmental state, the emergence and resilience of leaders in China, Malaysia and South Africa is explored. In China, like in South Africa, political leaders emerge and are recruited from the ruling parties, *i.e.* the CCP and the ANC respectively. In Malaysia, ethnic ties often enable recruitment. Therefore, it seems that political associations prevail over merit; often resulting in leaders wanting to maintain the *status quo* as it is to his/her advantage. Therefore, leadership innovation and accountability, and thus, development, is stymied; and hence, Leftwich's (2009: 10-11) emphasis on 'fundamental political settlements' between opposing elites and domains (public or private) to 'establish, maintain and implement the locally appropriate, legitimate and feasible institutional arrangements which facilitate economic growth and (inclusive) social development'.

The development of developmental leadership can also benefit from greater

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accountability in society. Undemocratic developmental states such as China with high levels of corruption do not foster developmental leadership. In this instance, the opening up of the Malaysian society has greatly enhanced the prevalence and quality of developmental leadership. In Southern Africa, for example, Botswana's success as a developmental state is based on its developmental leadership's ability to establish reform and later developmental coalitions with, for example, diamond giant De Beers and the establishment of Debswana, the state and De Beers-owned diamond company. A similarly example is the developmental leadership of the Bafokeng King in South Africa. Under the leadership of the Bafokeng King, the Royal Bafokeng Trust has been established to distribute the benefits of the tribe's platinum mines among members of the Bafokeng tribe.

Developmental leadership can also be developed through regional co-operation in order to 'overcome major collective action problems and/or major political, economic and social problems' (Leftwich, 2009: 10-11). In Southern Africa, for example, migration and environmental concerns are just two of the many developmental challenges facing more than one state in the region.

Conclusion

The article set out to analyse the concept *developmental leadership* in the context of declared and/or designated developmental states such as China, Malaysia and South Africa. It applied two case studies (nuclear power and oceans governance) to determine the applicability, impact and lessons from the Chinese and Malaysian experience for South Africa as a developmental state. South Africa regards both China and Malaysia as developmental models.

The contribution concludes that China and Malaysia are both different but also similar to South Africa. China's developmental state model in respect of its nuclear power is undemocratic, elitist, state-controlled and often secretive; similar to perceptions of the South African situation. In the case of Malaysia, the study concludes that the BFR as implemented in South Africa is too premature to reach conclusions; except to say that Malaysia's relative developmental progress is due to development coalitions and developmental leadership as defined earlier; aspects

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from which South Africa has already benefitted as Operation Phakisa has already been expanded to focus on the South African health sector. This, notwithstanding, the author is cognizant of the peculiarities of specific developmental context such as ethnically diverse or unequal societies.

The article has attempted to contribute to the concept of developmental leadership by focusing on some of the differences between democratic (Malaysia) and undemocratic (China) developmental leadership. It has argued that development is possible in both instances but that the benefit is likely to accrue to the state in states led by undemocratic development leaders who accumulate and distribute developmental benefits for political rather than developmental purposes. Against the aforesaid, the article calls a reconsideration of the concept developmental leadership to take cognizance of certain leadership realities (such as the increased recognition and role of traditional leaders such as the Bafokeng King mentioned earlier) in Africa. It also calls for the democratisation of developmental states in order for the emergence of developmental leaders based on merit.

Endnotes

1. Author's emphasis.

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Good quality or low price? Competition between Cameroonian and Chinese traders

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Abstract

In the past couple of decades, the variety of affordable trade goods in African markets as well as the number of both African and Chinese traders who import such goods from China have grown gradually. Through interviews with travelling traders and observations made in Cameroonian markets, this article examines the trajectories of Cameroonian traders who travel to China, and other Asian countries; it also studies their experiences of rivalry with Chinese traders in Cameroon whom they accuse of unfair competition. This article argues that different categories of Cameroonian traders experience this competition with a different intensity and that travelling traders who are not yet fully established in the local market feel mostly challenged by the competition with Chinese traders. To improve their situation, all traders argue that the Cameroonian government ought to intensify its efforts in regulating trade and reducing customs fees and taxes.

Introduction

Like in other African countries, the availability of affordable goods for consumption has increased immensely in Cameroon since the 1990s. Clothing, shoes, handbags, accessories, household goods, electronic devices, motorbikes and many other items are found in urban and rural markets at low prices. These cheap trade goods, of which many come from China, transformed the product landscape in Cameroon. With their arrival, lifestyles have also changed and consumers learned to choose between different brands and qualities of products. Previously, such products were

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out of reach for the majority of the population, as imports from Europe, North America or Japan were much more exclusive. In contrast, the prices of many locally-manufactured goods have risen due to the devaluation of the currency in 1994. In Cameroon in the 1980s, for example, locally brewed bottled beer was much cheaper than in the 1990s and 2000s (Röschenthaler, 2010). The sales of printed wax cloth from Europe and Cameroon radically dropped because consumers preferred cheap imitations from China. Hence, many Cameroonian traders abandoned the trade with expensive wax cloth and acquired ready-to-wear clothing, hitherto mainly available in the form of second hand clothing from Europe.

This evolution took place in the context of the liberation of African markets in the 1990s and the gradual expansion of the Chinese economy due to which prices for imported Chinese consumer goods rapidly decreased in Africa. As the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s led to widespread unemployment and subsequently diminished the buying power of Africans (Ferguson, 2006; Konings, 2011), affordable Chinese goods satisfied the demand of African consumers. The downside of this evolution, however, included the weakening of local industries that had begun to prosper in the 1990s as they were not prepared to compete with the cheap Asian productions. Good examples of these industries are the shoe and clothing industries in Nigeria and Kenya (Meagher, 2010; Ikhuoria, 2010; Kamau, 2010). From the 2000s onwards the fresh flower production in Cameroon also lost many customers to affordable and more durable Chinese plastic flowers. Not only does local African production have to compete with cheaper low-quality Chinese products, but African traders who import such goods from abroad are also presently competing with Chinese traders importing similar products from China. Additionally, they also have to cope with the increasing number of Chinese migrants who invest in African countries, with to-date unknown implications for local economies (Lee, 2014).

For some years now, scholars have studied the role of Chinese traders in African countries. Most of them examined the more recent Chinese migration to Africa, including Chinese business networks (Bräutigam, 2003) and private small and medium-sized enterprises (Gu, 2009); Chinese migrants as agents of development

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(Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009); Chinese wholesalers in Namibia (Dobler, 2005) and Senegal (Scheld, 2010); small traders and merchants in Mali and Senegal (Kernen and Vuillet, 2008); Chinese private traders in Burkina Faso (Khan Mohammad, 2014); Chinese street hawkers in Lomé and Bamako (Lyons and Brown, 2010); and Chinese business people in Cape Verde (Haugen and Carling, 2005). These studies have a strong focus on the role of Chinese businesses and only a few explicitly study both African and Chinese economic activities (Haugen, 2011), including their interaction in Ghana and Nigeria (Lampert and Mohan, 2014); Senegal and Ghana (Marfaing and Thiel, 2011); and Angola (Schmitz, 2014); as well as Chinese shop owners with Ghanaian street sellers (Giese, 2016), illustrating that there is not only competition but also co-operation between Chinese and African small-scale traders.

Reflecting on the implications of Chinese migrants in Africa, the interaction between Africans and Chinese, and the differences in their approaches to business and competition between the two groups, some scholars insist that success is not based on ethnic characteristics but on the capacity of innovation (Kohnert, 2010); while others argue that the political culture in a specific African society is a decisive factor and influences the extent to which Chinese migrants are perceived as beneficial or threatening (Lampert and Mohan, 2014; Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009). Others point to the importance of local imaginaries and rumours about migrants that have a strong influence on how Chinese traders are imagined (Thiel, 2016). On the basis of import statistics, Alena Thiel illustrates that despite rumours saying the contrary, the amount of goods that Chinese traders bring into the country is by far smaller than that of African traders (see also Marfaing, 2016; Marfaing and Thiel, 2011).

These studies focus on Chinese traders in African countries and their co-operation with Africans. However, the ventures and experiences of African traders who import trade goods from Asian countries to Africa have remained underexposed. Thus, this article explores the experiences, strategies and concerns of one category of African traders, the itinerant traders, who regularly travel to different Asian countries to import trade goods. The traders studied in this contribution are Cameroonians who travel to China, but also to other Asian countries, including the UAE, India, Japan,

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Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand and some of them who additionally import from markets in other African countries, Europe and North America.

The results of my research confirm that the situation of traders largely depends on the trade policies in a country and the priorities that a government pursues in its negotiations with China. However, I argue that traders should not be seen as a unified group of economic actors but that the various categories of traders experience the Chinese presence in different ways. In Cameroon, the male and female traders who regularly travel to Asian countries and are not yet able to fill an entire container on their own, are those who complain most about the Chinese competitors. Nevertheless, those established businesspeople and the informal street vendors interviewed for this study noted growing complications but did not express fears of dropping out of business with the same intensity. This article examines the opinions and trajectories of travelling traders, due to whose agency a large part of the Chinese goods are imported and distributed to African consumers as well as the challenges that they have to face when they carry out their activity. I interrogate the conditions under which traders import goods to Cameroon and their approaches to cope with the competition from Chinese traders. Competition was a term that indeed came up in many conversations with Cameroonian traders. On the one hand, they appreciated competition as forming part of a healthy market activity, yet on the other hand, when traders came to discuss the Chinese practices that they defined as unfair competition (*concurrence deloyale* in Francophone Cameroon),[1] it evoked feelings of discontent and annoyance.

The article primarily draws from semi-structured interviews with 33 travelling Cameroonian traders in Yaounde, Douala and Bamenda, cities which are known in the country for their influential markets.[2] The interviewees were selected by a snowball system and also by approaching traders in their market offices where the sale of Chinese products was most evident. They were asked for their biography, business history and profile, their journeys to Asia, marketing strategies and experiences with Chinese traders in the country. Among the 33 traders of our sample, four are women and 29 are men; seven travel to Dubai only and 26 to China; among the 26 China-sojourners, six additionally also travel, or travelled in the past,

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to Dubai, seven to other Asian countries (Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand), six to other African countries (Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], Mali, Nigeria and Sudan), two to Europe (Italy, France) and one to the United States (US).

The interviews with the travelling traders were complemented by informal conversations with street vendors and extensive observations in different markets. The study also benefited from earlier research on trade in Cameroon and Nigeria since 1987 as well as from interviews with African traders, company owners and community leaders in Hong Kong, China and Kuala Lumpur (2013–2016). The interviews carried out in Hong Kong and China confirm the tendency that many traders regularly explore other markets to enlarge their transnational network of suppliers, intermediaries and clients (see also Marfaing and Thiel, 2014; Röschenthaler and Jedlowski, forthcoming).

The article begins by providing background information on the Cameroonian market and local understandings of the different categories of traders. It continues with the experiences of traders who travel to Asia, mainly China, to buy products that they later sell in Cameroon. The following sections discuss the competitive situation that emerged due to the arrival of Chinese migrants in Cameroon and the opinions of the travelling traders. Finally, the article examines the suggestions of the traders on how their situation could be ameliorated and where they see the origin of their problem.

Cameroon's economic landscape

Cameroon is one of the African countries that quickly became prosperous after independence in 1960. At the time, it had a well-functioning system of state employment with pension schemes and social welfare, state-owned and private plantations of tea, cocoa, coffee and oil palms. While the state remained the largest economic actor until the 1990s, few private firms were able to establish and grow at its side (Konings, 2011).[3] Among them were those of Lebanese and Greek migrants, including the Tsekenis family who owns large supermarkets, as well as local Douala and Bamileke entrepreneurs with plantations, companies and enterprises (Warnier, 1993, 1995; Geschiere and Konings, 1993). An increasing number of local traders

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also became active in importing goods from abroad, mainly Europe and North America at the time. The fall of the world market prices in the 1980s, the subsequent structural adjustment programmes, and the devaluation of the Franc de la communauté financière africaine (FCFA) by 50 per cent disrupted the prospering economy. Eventually the liberalisation of the market turned around the economic situation in the country (Konings, 2011).

Between independence and the 1990s, Asians (above all Japanese, South Koreans and Chinese) arrived in Cameroon mainly in the frame of development projects (Ateba Eyene, 2012; Röschenthaler and Socpa, forthcoming; Tedié, 2014). In the 1970s, Cameroon invited the Chinese government to establish medical and infrastructure projects in the country. In the mid-1990s the Sino-Cameroonian co-operation intensified and the number of Chinese projects grew. Also, in the 1990s, the Chinese government increased the number of scholarships for Cameroonians to study in China, and soon these students were followed by a growing number of Cameroonian traders travelling to China to purchase trade goods for sale in Cameroon (Konings, 2011: 191; Pokam, 2015: 13; Röschenthaler and Socpa, forthcoming). Accordingly, between the 1970s and 1990s, the number of private Chinese traders in Cameroon remained low and from the 1990s onwards a growing number of small-scale and large-scale traders began to settle in the country; at the beginning they mainly provided services to Chinese workers in development projects but after an explicit invitation of the Cameroonian government, they gradually expanded their activities to the various economic sectors in the country.

For the understanding of Cameroon's complex political and economic history, it is important to keep in mind that major political actors in the struggle for independence[4] and later in the 1990s for establishing a political opposition came from the Cameroon Grassfields and the Littoral Region around Douala (Mbembe, 1996; Shinn and Eisenman, 2012). This constellation, and the fact that Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president (1960–1982), came from the north, persistently influenced the decisions of the present government (dominated by Boulou-Beti from the Central Region) in its attempt to maintain the delicate balance between economic and political actors in the country. These considerations have also motivated the

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outcome of negotiations between the Cameroonian government and China.

Making things happen: traders in Cameroonian markets

In Cameroon in the 1990s, the number of local traders has generally increased due to growing youth unemployment and the new opportunities of selling cheap Chinese trade goods, in addition to local products. A number of local terms have emerged for the various traders, with regional variations in the Anglophone and Francophone parts of the country. Note that these terms have local meanings that do not literally translate from French to English. Our interviewees grouped these local traders into several categories. Among the small-scale traders are the *petit vendeur* or small-scale trader, the *debrouillardeur* (a street vendor who announces his trade goods with a loud voice), the *attaqueur* (a street trader who never rests but always looks for new markets) and the *porte-a-porte* (a street vendor or hawker who goes from door to door). Some of these small-scale traders carry their trade goods in their hands or on their head; others use a cart (*pousse-pousse*) (Picture 1).

Picture 1. *Cart of a street vendor selling toothpaste from China, Yaounde, 2013 (Photo: Ute Röschenthaler)*

When the street vendors have accumulated sufficient capital, they will rent a more stable place to sell such as a kiosk or a shop they share with fellow traders, which enables them to enlarge the number of regular customers until they manage to rent their own shop and become the *buyam-sellam* or retailer. Other small-scale traders

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advance from street vendors to travelling traders who bridge larger distances and profit from the price margins in different regions or countries from where they acquire trade goods. Some travel between villages and towns, others cross borders to Nigeria (to purchase car spare parts for example), to Benin and Mali (for cloth), or to Dubai or China for a wide range of products. These itinerant traders who import trade goods call themselves *travellers* or *voyageurs.*

The itinerant traders travel to destinations of various distances, but travelling abroad or "making the line (*faire la ligne*)" does not yet make somebody "big", as one shoe trader in Douala (February 2014) explained, who is ten years in business and began to travel to China two years ago: "I am not an *homme d'affaire* [an entrepreneur who might do dubious business as well]. I am not yet a *commerçant* [businessman, wholesaler]. I am no longer a *vendeur* [retailer]. I am somewhere between *bon vendeur* [successful retailer] and a *commerçant* […] because I still buy before I sell [I am a *buyam-sellam*] but I have already taken much risk". He can not yet import an entire container on his own. He still acquires his trade goods for sale to individual clients because he does not yet have enough capital to purchase trade goods in a sufficient quantity which would allow him to distribute them to smaller wholesalers and retailers only. He is one of those *voyageurs* who do both wholesale and retail.

Significant is the amount of capital a trader can work with that makes someone big and able to "make things happen" (Röschenthaler, 2011: 414–417), have real agency (Gadzala, 2015) and take risks, which is actually also a characteristic feature of entrepreneurs, especially in the African context (Röschenthaler and Schulz, 2016). The local traders, however, did not use the term "entrepreneur" but businessman, *commerçant* or *homme d'affaire*. These different traders constitute a universe of big and small economic actors who play an important role in the acquisition and distribution of trade goods for consumption in Cameroon and neighbouring countries.

The travelling traders in our sample began their careers either as informal street vendors or were trained in a trader's family, but at the time of the interview they all had created companies that were registered, i.e. they had reached a formal stage.

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About one third of the *voyageurs* we talked to have studied at universities (electronics, communication, physical sciences and biomedicine, among other disciplines), found no job and eventually decided to become a trader. When asked about their opinion from where the successful traders who travel to China and other countries come from, our interviewees more or less univocally estimated that roughly half of them were Bamileke (mostly from the towns of Bafoussam, Baham, Bangangté and Mbouda) in the West Region (forming part of the Cameroon Grassfields), one quarter came from the two northern regions, and one quarter from the remaining regions or from other African countries, resident in Cameroon, such as Nigerians, Malians, Senegalese etc. In our sample, 16 *voyageurs* are Bamileke, two are from the north, two from Bamenda, and 13 did not indicate their origin. Of these traders, 12 were established *commerçants* and 21 *vendeurs*.

The majority of the Cameroonian trade barons such as the Fokou, Fotso, Kadji and Quifeurouge indeed are Bamileke who own big supermarkets, companies, factories and import/export businesses. They have become the model for numerous other traders: wholesalers, retailers and street vendors. These big business people have their companies, store houses and factories in Douala, which has become Cameroon's economic capital and largest city due to its strategic situation at the Atlantic coast. At its port, most of the foreign trade goods arrive in the country. The city attracts numerous local and foreign traders intending to acquire imported trade goods. These traders arrive from the political capital Yaounde, from towns in the West Region and other hinterland cities of Cameroon and of neighbouring African countries such as Gabon and Equatorial Guinea as well as from Chad and the Central African Republic who do not have access to ports. In a contrary movement, Cameroonian merchants in Douala expand their businesses and create branch companies and outlets in other cities in the country and abroad to distribute the trade goods they have imported from China and other Asian countries mentioned earlier.

The traders in our sample began either as hawkers or street vendors and learned trading by accompanying friends. When these traders had learned how street vending worked they asked a family member or a friend for a small sum of money as credit, acquired trade goods and began to sell them. Another important source of trade

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capital was membership in informal saving and credit associations. Young women or men who were born into a family of traders were trained by family members. Sometimes the person who trained them accumulated their salary and handed it over to these trainees when they were ready to trade on their own. As they gained experience, these traders made their capital grow. One of the mobile phone traders in Douala emphasised, however, that in order to become successful and stay in the business, it was not enough to be creative and persevering, it was necessary to have survived hard times. A trader selling electronic devices in Yaounde, emphasised that money also did not solve all the problems:

> If you have big brothers or a rich father, he can give you capital. But experience has shown that if you just receive the money, you will not spend it well, because you have not experienced suffering. If you start with nothing and begin as a hawker (*tu commences comme attaquant*), and then start to travel (*tu brules les étapes*), you gain a lot of experience compared to someone who just receives the money, opens a shop and begins to sell. […] If you start from zero, you master many things (March 2014).

One trader (a Bamileke, who sells school equipment in Yaounde), told me how he first began with hawking small items, then he travelled between Bafoussam in the West Region of Cameroon and Onitsha in Nigeria to buy car spare parts and other iron ware; he then met one of his "older brothers" in Douala, one of the first generation travellers to Hong Kong, Thailand and China, and worked with him for several years. He distributed his brothers' products in the various markets of Yaounde, and began to travel for him to China. Presently, this seller of school equipment has become an independent businessman in Yaounde who regularly travels four times a year to Yiwu – a growing city for export trade mainly to Africa and the Middle East (Cissé, 2015) – and imports equipment for school children, office materials, medical products, building materials and other items that are seasonal in demand. During each journey he is able to import three to four containers full of trade goods. He already constructed two living houses, a warehouse, and has further plans for investment. He trains his children and family brothers to acquire the

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necessary knowledge for travelling to China and other destinations as well (Yiwu March 2013, Yaounde June 2015). Indeed, almost all of the *voyageurs* in our sample trained youths in their businesses in order to prepare them for travelling to different countries and enlarge their international trading network. These youth who are now being trained will be the new businesspeople in the future.

"Making the line (*faire la ligne*)" or travelling to the dragon's den: Cameroonians in China

Since the late 1990s, more and more African traders decided to travel to Asia. First, traders went to Dubai, because Arab traders were already importing from China to Dubai; then African traders themselves went to Asian countries such as Thailand, Singapore, India, Malaysia, or Hong Kong, from where they purchased local and Chinese trade goods via local intermediaries (Bertoncello, 2007). After the financial crisis in the late 1990s, African traders advanced to get nearer to the source of the cheap trade goods (Le Bail, 2009; Bertoncello and Bredeloup, 2009; Marfaing and Thiel, 2011). The city to go to was Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, which had historically been the starting point of the *Silk Road,* and in whose hinterland more recently numerous factories had been created. Suppliers in China quickly reacted to the demands from abroad, produced trade goods in great numbers and opened trade fair-like markets in an increasing number of Guangzhou's neighbourhoods. As the scale of trade expanded, in the mid-2000s the city of Yiwu in Zhejiang Province emerged as a second popular trade centre with trade fairs and exhibitions all year round (Cissé, 2015).

When Cameroonian traders began to "make the line" and import trade goods from China, only a few other Africans went there as well and there was not yet much competition. These Cameroonian first generation traders are currently the big businesspeople in Douala. Until the Olympic Games in 2008, it was not difficult for Africans to obtain Chinese visas. Most African traders purchased trade goods in Guangzhou and then returned home to sell them. Others renewed their visas and remained in China. Some of them were former students at Chinese universities, had learned Chinese and were able to translate for itinerant African traders (Haugen,

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2013). Other Africans moved to Guangzhou from their trading posts in other Asian countries and still others arrived directly from their home countries and tried to create a business in China (Bredeloup, 2012). Chinese immigration laws, however, did not allow foreigners to stay permanently in the country nor obtain Chinese citizenship, which would have provided them with more security related to their economic investments. Hence, Africans had to repeatedly renew their visas, constantly facing the quandary of being expelled.

Despite the complicated regulations and often racism experienced, some of the Cameroonians – as well as other Africans – managed to stay in the country, to act as intermediaries, and establish companies such as cargo agencies for itinerant traders. This was made possible either with sufficient capital, by marrying a Chinese woman or by creating a branch company in China and employing Chinese workers.

Word quickly spread to African countries that there was money to make in China, and also banks responded to African needs (Picture 2). Despite the difficulties, numerous traders went to China in the following years to try their luck and establish a business. However, travelling requires contacts and knowledge of where to go in a city like Guangzhou. Cameroonian traders stated on their first journey they were surprised to arrive in such a large city, with big highways and an extensive public transport system; they had to cope with the language barrier and the Chinese food, which they were not used to. A mobile phone trader in Douala (January 2014) explained that it was like arriving from a small town in a city: "It is something very new, it is like if you leave Nkongsamba [a town in the Cameroon Grassfields] for Douala, it's the same excitement" and an apparel trader stated:

> First of all I was startled by the beauty of the town, all the skyscrapers, the buildings; you are in the 11th floor of a house and the cars pass by in front of you, the roads are very spacious, there are flyovers on four levels. The transport is marvellous, the metro […], and I noticed old people are not paying bus fares (Douala, February 2014).

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Picture 2. *Western Union advertises money transfer to Dubai and China, Yaounde 2013*

(Photo: Ute Röschenthaler)

Nearly all traders in our sample explained that it was very helpful to call on the support of a friend at the beginning in China, otherwise money was easily lost:

> These are big cities, you can only know with a companion where to go. You have to change money. You have to calculate. They tell you that it is five Yuan. You need to know how much that is in FCFA. Then you begin to search for what you want to buy, and to negotiate the price. They do not speak French or English. You need a translator (TV-trader, Yaounde, March 2014).

The Cameroonian traders explained that those who knew the language definitely had advantages. Without mastering the language, one needed the help of a Chinese or an African intermediary, and these brokers would know how to secure their own profit in multiple ways. Stovel and Shaw (2012) also mention that brokers are usually paid twice, by each of the parties they connect. Cameroonian traders particularly suspected Cameroonian intermediaries to exploit them, except when they were their good friends with whom they worked together earlier. Hence, a shoe trader in

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Douala (January 2014) stated with admiration:

> If you see a Cameroonian, or any other black person who has a shop in China, show him due respect! There are shops for which you pay 20 millions FCFA [about EUR 30,000] per year; that is 1.6 million FCFA [about EUR 2,400] each month for the rent. […] And it is very difficult to find a Cameroonian who is able to get to the source [of the trade goods].

Until China's Zhejiang Normal University created a Mandarin language teaching centre in Yaounde in 1997, there was no way for Cameroonians to learn Chinese in advance (Röschenthaler and Socpa forthcoming). Only recently, language schools have been created in Cameroon and some traders now send their children to these schools to learn Chinese (shoe trader, Douala, January 2014).

Some Cameroonian traders were disappointed by the complicated situation in China and no longer went to this destination but purchased their trade goods in Dubai, even though in Dubai the profit was lower because trade goods were more expensive. They argued that the Arabs in Dubai were trustworthy whereas one never could be sure that the Chinese would not exchange the trade goods they had selected for lower quality goods in the container (for Cameroonians in Dubai, see Pelican, 2014).

Travelling for trade to far-away destinations requires sufficient capital. To be able to "make the line" to China, Cameroonian traders suggested that a minimum of five to ten million FCFA (about EUR 7,500 to 10,000) was initially required, roughly half of which was needed for purchasing goods and the other half were travel costs, fees and taxes (see Marfaing, 2016, for a similar estimation of costs of Senegalese traders). The journeys have to be accomplished in two to three weeks, which corresponds to the time their visas were valid, and many traders complained that this time span was too short in case the trade goods they wanted to purchase were not in stock, but had to be ordered from a factory. Therefore, traders who needed large amounts of goods ordered them in advance with a payment by bank transfer or Western Union. They travelled to China when the goods were ready for shipping to check the cargo and then pay the rest, research the markets and return home. After

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45 days or two months, the container normally arrived in Douala.

At this point it is important to look at the quantity of goods that traders purchase, which determines the profits that they are able to make. The small *voyageurs* buy only a few items of various trade goods that are sent directly to a shipping agent who packages them in parcels and organises their shipping to the destination. Traders who buy more trade goods might decide to get together with fellow traders from the same country, sometimes twenty or thirty, to share a container together (*groupage*). This saved them from individually negotiating with shipping agents and reduced the fees. In contrast, the big traders or *commerçants* purchased quantities of goods that filled one or more containers. One container filled with the same type of trade goods allows them to get better conditions for customs duties and taxes, and consequently this enhances their profit margin.

Coping with the competition from Chinese traders in Cameroon

Cameroonian traders stated that they had travelled to China to import Chinese trade goods long before Chinese traders came to Cameroon to do the same and turn into their competitors. Between the 1990s and 2007, only few private Chinese migrants arrived in Cameroon and during that time, the Cameroonian traders made considerable profit margins.

However, when in 2007 the Chinese government negotiated with Cameroon the facilitation of migrants' settlement in the country, the number of Chinese migrants quickly increased (Konings, 2011: 191; Pokam, 2015: 50; Röschenthaler and Socpa, forthcoming; Rotberg, 2008: 4).[5] These migrants were searching to make a living and began to venture into nearly all economic sectors of the country. In the course of the 2000s entire markets in Douala (Picture 3) and some streets around the Marché Central in Yaounde became occupied by Chinese shops. Many of them imported similar trade goods as Cameroonian traders had purchased from China, but the Chinese traders were able to sell their trade goods at cheaper prices (Picture 4).

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Picture 3. *Chinese shopping mall in Douala, 2015 (Photo: Bono Armand)*

Picture 4. *Chinese iron-ware shop advertising with cheaper prices, Yaounde 2013 (Photo: Ute Röschenthaler)*

The Cameroonian *vendeurs* in our sample were of the opinion that concomitant with the arrival of the Chinese traders their profits have reduced considerably: "We have to sell cheaper; people no longer have money to dress well" (shoe trader, Yaounde,

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March 2014). Not only had the prices in China doubled, in Cameroon, the prices also had gone down, so that the profit margin was reduced to one quarter of its former amount.

Cameroonian traders tended to attribute the reasons for their difficulties to the unfair competition by the Chinese traders. Their situation, they felt, was even supported by the Cameroonian government. They explained that they did not have the same opportunities as the Chinese traders. The Chinese traders were able to get conducive credit from Chinese banks, had direct access to factories in China, were able to purchase at factory prices, enjoyed favourable customs duties in China and in Cameroon, and could therefore sell at lower prices. Whereas Cameroonian traders would buy in China as well but had to purchase trade goods more expensively and later faced the Chinese traders in Cameroon selling similar products for less than the price that Cameroonians had paid for them in China. Furthermore, the Chinese traders would not limit themselves to wholesale – as other foreign traders had done before – but engaged in the entire range of wholesale, retail and even street hawking, which would make it very difficult for Cameroonian traders to make any profit. Cameroonian traders complained that for them it was completely arbitrary how the Chinese traders fixed their prices, which suggested that they made huge profits, whereas Cameroonians could hardly regain their expenses.

The competitive advantage of the Chinese traders who were able to offer cheaper prices than Cameroonians when they sold similar items, forced Cameroonians to find market niches in which they had more knowledge or extensive networks than Chinese traders. For example, when Chinese traders began to sell cheap clothing, Cameroonian traders noticed that the Chinese traders did not have any knowledge about local fashion. A jeans trader in Douala explained:

> We can sell the things that Cameroonians are looking for; we know exactly what our customers love, but the Chinese are stumbling with this. They can only sell electric items, small gadgets, plastic shoes, but not really clothing. The Cameroonian clothing style is very complicated. Cameroonians have a specific taste for clothing; indeed, and Chadians don't dress like Gabonese

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> or Cameroonians. Hence, the Chinese cannot really know which Jeans or shirts Cameroonians like (January 2014).

Cameroonian *voyageurs* counted on the desire of their customers to get the clothing they wanted and pay more for it. They insisted that they would try to import at least medium good quality from China, whereas the Chinese traders only imported the lowest quality. This competitive advantage of Cameroonian traders, however, could be very short-lived, as Chinese traders research the market and copy fashionable products, which they ordered from China and sold a few weeks later in their own shops for a much cheaper price. This would force the Cameroonian traders to also lower their prices. Therefore, Cameroonian traders suggested that it was best to refrain from selling similar product categories than the Chinese traders would offer or, alternatively, sell one's goods quickly before the Chinese traders were able to copy them.

Some of the traders directly brought samples from China to show to their customers whom they encouraged to reserve a specific quantity, so that when these goods arrived in Cameroon, they were already sold. These traders were also confident that the Chinese traders did not have the same choice of products. One of the *commerçants*, for example, imported tyres from five different countries, whereas Chinese traders would only import from China. Another strategy was to be accommodating and caring towards customers, offer good quality and give them a fair price. Some *voyageurs* noted that the situation even spurred their creativity and innovative spirit as they constantly had to search for new strategies and product varieties.

Cameroonian traders regularly discussed their observations about Chinese traders among themselves. They highlighted that the Chinese traders in the country did not openly talk to them to explain their ideas, that they were not interested in friendship but only in money and that local traders never knew what action they were planning next. The *vendeurs* were ready to accept that local and Chinese traders could each have their specific clientele. Cameroonians could sell more expensive medium- to high-quality products, while the Chinese would sell cheap low-quality goods (see

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Picture 5) for a clientele with a low budget. However, what disturbed them was this uncomfortable feeling of being subject to unfair competition, not only because the Chinese traders copied the goods of local traders to sell them cheaper and pretend that they were of the same quality, but they also felt disadvantaged in comparison to the Chinese traders in their own country.

***Picture 5**. Chinese shop selling various household goods near Yaounde's Marché Central, 2013*

(Photo: Ute Röschenthaler)

"We are really challenged": unfair competition, unequal conditions and too many importers

Notwithstanding, most traders of our sample depicted a complex picture of their situation. They looked at the Chinese presence from various vantage points even though they might have exaggerated some aspects. They complained about unfair competition but also emphasised the positive aspects of competition.

They also acknowledged that the presence of Chinese traders did not necessarily have the same disruptive impact on all traders. The Chinese presence was "good for all those who can profit from their presence as petty traders; it is good for the *debrouillardeur* who does not have the means to travel and who takes his trade

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goods from the Chinese […] and sells them with some profit with which he feeds his family" (seller of sports dresses, Douala, January 2014). This seller of sports dresses understood that the Chinese presence was above all a problem for those *voyageurs* who were not yet *commerçants* (big wholesales), who were not able to import large quantities and had to pay high customs fees, In contrast, the Chinese traders imported large quantities and were able to do this because they were not forced to sell their products quickly, as their prices were low and nobody copied their goods to sell them cheaper. At the beginning, they tried to get into diverse economic sectors, but due to resistance from the population in support of local trade, they refrained from certain activities not to create too much tension.

The Cameroonian traders were aware that the Chinese traders were not their only competitors. Cameroonians also competed among themselves and among the traders from other countries, which contributed to their difficulties to find their niche and their profit. They also noted that the low profit margins might be related to the growing number of young traders who travelled to China who were too many compared to the number of consumers. The traders were also cognizant of the fact that the Chinese presence did not affect the big businesspeople to the same extent that those who were still *vendeurs*. The shoe trader in Douala (January 2014) noticed that "among the Cameroonians, jealousy easily becomes the problem", and that the big businesspeople would do everything to keep the others small so that they had hard times to survive, whereas the big business continued to prosper easily. Nevertheless, the shoe trader thought that the Chinese traders penetrating their markets were the bigger problem.

Some of the traders also advocated the need to organise themselves into an interest group. The Chinese traders had a traders' association that defended their interests. Via their traders' association, the Chinese traders had managed to ask the Cameroonian government for better conditions, less harassment from police controls, and the payment of less customs duty.[6] However, most Cameroonian traders did not favour the idea of a traders' association, fearing that they would end up paying even more taxes (Röschenthaler and Socpa, forthcoming).

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Careful analysis of the traders' arguments reveals that the *vendeurs* are disadvantaged in comparison to the big traders who are able to import one or several containers all with the same trade goods. This reduces not only the price of purchase in China but also the customs duties in Douala that are less when only one category of trade goods is imported, which subsequently can be sold at a cheaper price.[7] However, this regulation does not apply to the travelling *vendeurs* who are not yet able to order an entire container with the same type of product: "If you buy ten cartons and mix the products, and calculate your profits, it is not easy to gain something. But if you buy one container of air conditioners, the duties at customs are lower accordingly and allow someone to get their goods out with less than three or four million FCFA (about EUR 4,500 or 6,000). Hence, the more diversified your products are the higher is the customs fee" (trader of electronic devices, Douala, February 2014). This fact counteracts the strategy of the traders to diversify their products in case one product does not sell well and for these traders the journey is a risky venture.

Particularly those *voyageurs* who are still working hard to establish themselves in the market, felt that it was hard to compete with both the big Cameroonian entrepreneurs and the Chinese traders. The big traders, who are able to import several containers on their own, also have much less difficulties obtaining visas and they also have contacts to suppliers that are nearer to the source. Moreover, they can buy large quantities of goods, have more favourable customs fees and can sell to almost the same conditions than the Chinese traders. They also complained less about Chinese competition. They, too, are earning less than before, but can no longer be easily pushed from the market. They have sufficient capital and space to store their trade goods. The small traders in contrast, have less capital, less storage space, they need more intermediaries and have less favourable conditions for transport and customs, and they cannot sell at the same conditions as the big entrepreneurs and the Chinese traders.

It is understandable that Cameroonian traders have mixed feelings about the Chinese traders and that they also advocate for regulations by the government. The narratives they construct of the Chinese traders as competitors have to be seen against this

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backdrop, and seem to corroborate the observations made by Thiel (2016) in Ghana, although figures for Cameroon are not available.[8] Based on her own calculations, Thiel shows that between 2005 and 2011 Ghanaians imported far more Chinese consumer goods to Ghana than Chinese traders did. The quantities that Chinese traders imported remained the same during that time frame, whereas those of Ghanaian traders have risen (Thiel, 2016: 352; see also Marfaing and Thiel, 2014).

Long term observations are necessary to interpret the situation in a specific country, as the situation evolves with time, as one Cameroonian trader stated: "If there are now more and more Chinese coming here, and Cameroon is a country rich in resources, it means more money in their pockets and less money in ours. We need more regularisation. The conditions are not equal from the beginning. And now they are trying to prevent Cameroonians from going [to China] to buy trade goods" (trader of sports dresses, Douala, January 2014). Indeed, recently visa applications have become more difficult for the Cameroonian *vendeurs*.

"There is no magic, only hard work": traders' solutions to ameliorate their situation

My research illustrates that the travelling *vendeurs* were hard-working, that they were not afraid to make sacrifices and that the Chinese presence urged them to be inventive, despite the numerous challenges and even though they made less profit than before. Many traders seem to have given up travelling to China, and it is difficult to estimate to which extent traders exaggerate the competitive threat. Nevertheless, traders were struggling, restless and stubborn, as a trader of building materials (Douala, February 2014) argued: "There is no magic, only hard work". Many *vendeurs* expressed the desire to expand their businesses, to continue investing, and create branch companies in different Cameroonian cities and abroad. As, a female trader of children's dresses (Douala, February 2014) explained: "Your only dream is to get big". Cameroonian traders insisted that they had the creativity to meet the challenges, the knowledge of local trends and a wide network of trade contacts in their country and abroad, and that the Chinese traders lacked such advantages and had little knowledge about the country in which they settled (for a

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similar estimation, see Giese, 2016).

Cameroonian traders, however, quickly weighed this home advantage against a "home disadvantage". Almost all of the traders had the impression that their success was obstructed by their own government, that officials preferred to punish them instead of the foreigners, whom they allowed to pass at controls whereas citizens were stopped instead, and that government fostered the foreigners at the expense of its own traders and its own industry (shoe trader, Yaounde, March 2014). These traders argued that the Cameroonian government should not allow foreign migrants to come into the country in an unregulated manner. A shoe trader in Douala stated (January 2014): "It is unreasonable that the Chinese who have advantages at home have also advantages here, whereas we do not have such advantages in their country". Foreign traders in China were not allowed to open a shop and sell products as retailers, and when they had managed to create a company, they had to employ Chinese workers, whereas Chinese traders in Cameroon could freely create companies, import products, do wholesale, large and small retail, and even street vending.

Indeed, Chinese traders in Cameroon have advantages that Africans do not have in China. As mentioned earlier, Cameroonian traders get visas for China only for a few weeks, and have to regularly renew these visas, even when they are married to a Chinese citizen and have a family with children (Haugen, 2012). In contrast, Chinese citizens in Cameroon do not need to renew their visas constantly, they do not even need a work permit, they can freely open a business and employ Chinese workers (Konings, 2011; Röschenthaler and Socpa, forthcoming). One trader of electronic devices (Yaounde, March 2014) highlighted the resulting inequalities when he stated: "The business co-operation that we signed with the Asian countries is working perfectly to their own advantage and not to that of Cameroonians". Some traders even suggested that price controls, as in earlier times, when the state used to regulate the prices of products, would also be a solution, at least the government should make a law to prevent Chinese traders from selling below the price at which Cameroonian traders were able to sell.

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Most traders straightforwardly suggested that the Cameroonian government needed to regulate the market: "The solutions are simple. The Ministry of Trade should prohibit the Chinese to carry out retail trade. They can import, but only do wholesale trade" (shoe trader, Yaounde, March 2014). Cameroonian traders suggested that the government should oversee the Chinese migrants, the quality of their products and lower the customs duty for Cameroonians, otherwise not only the travelling *vendeurs* would suffer but the entire economy, as suggested by a trader of electronic devices (Yaounde, March 2014). Not all traders, however, were so critical, but still insisted in the government's duty to regulate, as a trader of electronic devices (Douala, February 2014) acknowledged: "Personally, I haven't seen how they [the Chinese] are spoiling business in Cameroon. This does not mean that the government should continue to allow them to come in numbers as we now find them here in Cameroon. ... But if they [the Chinese] continue to come in very large numbers, then conflicts will emerge from anywhere". None of the traders asked for more liberties, instead they asked for more regulation from the state and had expectations towards the state's functioning.

What could the reason be that a government decides to support foreigners at the expense of its own economic actors, as so many Cameroonian interviewees have complained? Other governments such as Angola, Morocco, or Ethiopia (Gadzala, 2015; Gu, 2009) have managed to negotiate better conditions for their economies. It seems to have something to do with the Cameroonian predicament that government fears the financial power of the traders from the Grassfields and the north and prefers to favour the Chinese economic actors instead. Supporting the Chinese traders might keep the local traders at a distance and Chinese engagement in development projects could secure the support of large parts of the population. However, this same politics of the Cameroonian government has conflicting implications. On the one hand, the government is interested in co-operating with China and furthering the development of its country, and on the other, this same co-operation weakens the local industry and makes it dependent on the Chinese collaboration by importing from abroad, attracting Chinese migrants and making the local youth leave the country. An alternative measure of the Cameroonian government towards its established big

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traders and entrepreneurs has been to advise them to become active in politics (Socpa, 2016) in an attempt to encourage their support of the ruling party (which has a stronghold among the Boulou-Beti ethnic group) in exchange for peace with the state's tax collectors.

Arguing in support of local trade and industries, the Cameroonian travelling *vendeurs* advocated that instead of importing products from China, or allowing Chinese traders to create factories and plantations in Cameroon, the government should support Cameroonian entrepreneurs to create products produced by Cameroonians in their own country. One trader of electronic devices (Douala, February 2014) suggested that it would have been very helpful for the economy if the products that he sold were fabricated in Cameroon. Otherwise

> we are perpetual consumers and not producers. … We have to bring in changes by producing more quality goods and services. National or home-based companies should try and meet up with the demands of the Cameroonian consumers because if the government bans the importation of some goods and services [it can] protect the local companies from losing out in competition with imported goods.

Indeed, during research in China focusing on African traders I met several Africans with successful companies in China who planned to invest in their home countries and begin industrial production there. In this regard, the institutional support from their governments will be essential for the realisation of their ventures.

Conclusion

This article intended to portray Cameroonian traders who travel to China and their experience of competition with Chinese traders in Cameroon. It outlined the different partially overlapping local categories of traders in Cameroon, with a particular focus on those traders (*voyageurs*) who travel to China, among other Asian countries, to import trade goods for sale in Cameroon. Among these *voyageurs* local traders distinguish between *vendeurs* who still do retail and *commerçants* who no longer do retail but only distribute to smaller wholesalers and retailers. Based on the

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examination of these local categories, it was possible to articulate the divergent ways in which different Cameroonian traders experience the competition with Chinese migrants in the country.

When Chinese migrants began trading in Cameroon, local traders were already travelling to Asian countries, including China, to import trade goods. Among these first generation travellers are those who are at present the big *commerçants* in Cameroon, whereas all those second-generation traders who were trained by them or began as street vendors are the majority of those from our sample of which some have become *commerçants* but the majority are still *vendeurs*.

The Cameroonian traders experienced numerous challenges with the arrival of the Chinese traders who began to compete with local traders on all levels, from street selling to wholesaling, at cutthroat prices. Cameroonian traders labelled this as unfair competition because the Chinese traders would sell products wholesale, retail and on the street all for the same price, and cheaper than a local trader, be it a *commerçant* or a *vendor*, was ever able to sell. Among the local traders, however, the *vendeurs* have suffered most under this unfair competition, as their expenses were highest and the potential gains lowest.

The *vendeurs* suffered most due to a concurrence of several circumstances: the growing number of traders, complications to be granted a visa, getting good prices in China, high customs duties, the loss of local customers' purchasing power and the difficulties of customers to identify the different qualities of products. Conversely, this challenge also pushed them to persistently invent new strategies to survive: find products that the Chinese traders were unable to sell or copy, sell products of better quality, have available what Cameroonians preferred to wear, be more friendly to their customers, diversify their selection and offer products that are attractive to potential customers. Nevertheless, they greatly feared to give up their business, and complained about unfair competition by Chinese traders, the lack of support from the local big *commerçants* and the neglect by their government who rather supported Chinese migrants and not its local economic actors. During the interviews, local traders urged the Cameroonian government to find solutions and regulate migration

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and trade in favour of local traders and industries.

The reluctance of the Cameroonian government to negotiate favourable policies with the Chinese traders regarding its own economy and provide more support to its local traders, as other African governments have done, might indeed have to do with Cameroon's political history and its effort to keep the Boulou-Beti ethnic group in power, align the big economic actors with the politics of the ruling party and keep the rest of the traders the majority of which comes from the economically strong West Region at a safe distance. In turn, instead of forming a traders' association to defend their interests and pressurise the government for more favourable conditions, these traders prefer not to get into the limelight because they fear that the government would respond with imposing higher taxes on them.

In conclusion, traders should not be seen as one monolithic category, as each of them has its individual trajectory, and it depends on the stage to which they have advanced, as well as at a specific time in which they face particular challenges. Also, the various categories of traders have developed different perspectives on their situation that can vary considerably as to the challenges of competition. These perspectives are related to the rapidly changing economic landscape and the trade policies of a country. In Cameroon trade policies obviously favour the large local importers, including the Chinese traders, who both profit from customs reductions. Whereas the different categories of street vendors feel less challenged by the competition with Chinese traders and also largely remain in the informal economic realm, the *vendeurs* who travel to China and who struggle to make enough profit to survive as retailers experience the competition with more intensity.

Endnotes

1. For a good definition of unfair competition as a legal concept that was widely discussed at the beginning of the 20th century in the US when, as a consequence of industrial production, fraudulent methods of competition emerged between different American economic actors, see Haines (1919).

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2. Research was carried out in Cameroon (from 1987 to the present) and more recently also in China (2013-2016) in the frame of the project "Africa's Asian Options" (AFRASO), supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Goethe University Frankfurt. Research for the AFRASO project was carried out in co-operation with Antoine Socpa (Université de Yaounde I) and several Cameroonian assistants. I am grateful for comments from Clement Takang, Inès Neubauer and two anonymous reviewers.

3. The FCFA is the currency of the African Financial Community made up by a majority of the former French colonies in West and Central Africa. It has a fixed exchange rate to the Euro (formerly to the French Franc).

4. At the time, in the late 1950s, China was supporting the Cameroonian independence movement against the French colonisers (Shinn and Eisenman, 2012).

5. In January 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented huge agricultural projects in the Cameroon's Centre and West Regions, which required Chinese migrants as workers, and attracted numerous other Chinese migrants as they were able to obtain longer-term visas even without being in the possession of a work contract (Konings, 2011). The actual number of Chinese in Cameroon is difficult to ascertain. According to the Chinese embassy in Yaounde, there were 1,500 Chinese in Douala and 2,000-3,000 in Yaounde in 2009 who came mainly from Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces (Konings, 2011: 191). In 2013, another source mentions 4,000 Chinese in Cameroon (*Mutations* 27 March 2013 cited in Pokam, 2015: 14). Others estimate their number between 20.000 and 30.000 or even much higher (Konings, 2011: 191).

6. The Chinese traders were of the opinion that customs duty was particularly high in Cameroon. See also the observations of Gu (2009: 578) in Ghana, Nigeria and Madagascar, where Chinese companies noted that the most important constraints they faced were first customs and trade regulations, second the unreliable electricity system and third transport, inflation and exchange rates.

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7. However, it seems that Chinese companies were for some time exempted from paying taxes and customs.

8. The import and export statistics of 2014 state that the total exports from China to Cameroon were 1,877,425 (value in US dollar thousand) and the total imports of Cameroon from China were 1,358,520 (value in US dollar thousand). The difference is 518,905 and might be due to divergent declarations, the exclusion of certain commodities, informal trading activities and smuggling. The statistics do not differentiate between trade goods imported by Chinese and Africans. The actual volume of trade might still be much higher due to informal suitcase trade (see also Haugen, 2011; Thiel, 2016). The source of the statistical data is from ITC calculations based on COMTRADE statistics until 2015. Imports of Cameroon from China (at Chinese customs): http://www.trademap.org/tradestat/Bilateral_TS.aspx and exports of China to Cameroon: http://www.trademap.org/tradestat/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1|156||120||TOTAL|||2|1|1|2|2|1|1|1|1 (both accessed on 30 May 2016).

9. Successful pressure has been reported from traders' associations, for example, in Zambia, Uganda, and South Africa (Mohan and Tan-Mullins, 2009), and also from Cameroonian female market traders who fought against European imports of cheap meat (Johnson, 2011).

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Theatre as transcultural capital in the Sino-Nigerian relational context: cultural celebrations at the Confucius Institute in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies on Afro-Asian relations have mainly focused on the grand narratives of economic, academic, and diplomatic engagements at the macro level, while discourses on the micro level cultural interactions have been given very little attention. This study, thus, addresses these fault lines by investigating exchanges at this level using the case study of theatre performance at the Confucius Institute in Lagos, Nigeria. The study examined how the use of theatre is integral to the Sino-Nigerian cultural exchanges by means of the teaching curriculum and cultural celebrations with specific focus on the Spring Festival. The study specifically investigated how performances such as drama, music, dance, martial arts and magic, project the Chinese culture in line with Mao Zedong's and Yoruba functionalist approaches to theatre. It contends that Chinese theatre in Africa serves as an integral cultural component of the Sino-Nigerian economic, diplomatic and academic exchanges while advocating an infusion of a multiculturalist approach to the festival in which both cultures recognize and respect the 'other' in line with Hanban's objective of building a harmonious world.

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Introduction: theatre as space, people and performance

Crow (1983: 2) describes the words 'theatre' and 'theatrical' as encapsulating performances beyond drama to include spectacles in public spheres such as cultural activities of coronation, masquerade festivities, ritual performances, public oratory (such as at political rallies) among others. Notable elements within such performances include movement, gesture, voice, costume and physical objects. Thus, beyond the etymology of encapsulating theatre as a space (Greek *theatron* –'a seeing place'), Crow (1983) describes the usage of the word as inclusive of the profession, 'going into theatre'. Bimbo Benson[1] (personal communication) corroborates this, positing that theatre can basically be defined as a space in which performance take place. As such, the actors, location and audience are sufficient elements that make up the theatre. Within this broad definitional context, Felner and Orenstein (2006) argued that 'the most essential component of the theatre is the live actor–audience interaction with all its stimulation and surprise which take place across different spaces'.

For Balme (2008: 1), the etymological definition of theatre reflects 'a particular form of sense perception' even as he identified four definitions of the word to show the dynamics of its meaning over time: the building, an activity, an institution and a form of art. Consequently, theatre for our purpose in this discourse is considered as spectacles of performances taking place in different spaces involving actors and the audience. As this study shows, theatrical performances form part of the teaching curriculum and Chinese cultural expressions at the Confucius Institute in Lagos, Nigeria. Such performances are central to the various Sino-Nigerian exchange activities that usually take place within the institute. These activities include the Spring Festival, the Dragon Boat festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, the Chinese Bridge (a Chinese Proficiency Competition for foreign students) and the Chinese Cultural Month. During these activities, performances cover a range of Balme's (2008) identified forms of theatre to include drama (spoken word performances), music (opera), dance, puppet and mask theatre. Drawing from these forms, theatre has a historical function as it is reflective of realities of the age and place of its

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existence (Eni, 2013; Umenyilorah, 2014). The different displays during the Spring Festival, as analysed below, are reflective of this historical continuum with a didactic approach in promoting Chinese language and culture in Nigeria.

Beyond the entertainment and educative functions of theatre, scholars have also emphasised its therapeutic and informative functions (Nasir, 2010; Kamlongera, 2005). Accordingly, theatrical performances advance beyond the passivity of audiences to active interactive modes in the production of cultural meanings. Activities such as the raffle draws taking place intermittently with the presentation of gifts according to various categories engage the audience and are a means of communicating luck and aspirations of good fortune for the new year during the Spring Festival celebrations at the institute. This is representative of the conceptualisation of the performance space as an interactive ambience between the spectators, stage and the environment in which both are located (Balme, 2008). The study focuses on the reinvention of Chinese theatre as part of the engagement of the Confucius Institute with Nigeria at the University of Lagos. The study discusses areas of convergence between Chinese and Nigerian theatre through an overview of their history, nature and functions. It also analyses different modes of performance during the Spring Festival while advocating a multi-culturalist approach for the Sino-Nigerian relational context (through theatre) in the future.

Picture 1. *Raffle Draw session during the 2014 Spring Festival*

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Functionalist approach to theatre in Nigeria and China

Within the active interactive mode, theatre can be conceptualised as a sub-cultural eclectic space serving as a melting pot for material and immaterial culture, and it permeates the political, religious, social, educational, health, historical, and recreational institutions (see also Felner and Orenstein, 2006; Mackerras, 2008; Musa 2004; Umenyilorah 2014). This reflects theatre as a space for didactic ideological and character formation as with indigenous African performances (Kamlongera, 2005). In other words, theatre is intrinsic to the lived experience of the African even within its sixth region (Ogom, 2009: 167)[2] with motifs of cultural traditions sustained in religious modes (Harrison, 2002). It is this interactive mode that makes theatre transformational, as its impact on the audience is sustained beyond the time and space of its performance (Umenyilorah, 2014). One can then easily situate the cultural theatrical performances of the Confucius Institute within such functioning, especially as it engages adults as well as children of different school ages. This function historically aligns with Mao Zedong's approach to theatre during the Cultural Revolution in which performance contents were influenced and censored in an anti-colonialist bid with high emphasis on societal ethos (Mackerras, 2008; Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922). The Nigerian example presents theatre as a medium of sensitising and mobilising the people to action against different forms of ills and oppression (Umenyilorah, 2014; Asen, 2015). This dates back to the pre-colonial tradition of correcting and unseating despotic leaders. Suffice to say, like in other parts of Africa (see Article 19, 2003), certain forms of theatre are greeted with suspicion by the government since it has a potential for creating agitations within oppressive polities.

Broadly, within the African world view, theatre is ingrained into the 'daily rituals of life' (Harrison, 2002). Subsequently, theatre as emerging from ritual forms predate written documentation (Felner and Orenstein, 2006; Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922), and the African origin of theatre in Egypt has the earliest known forms dating back to the Passion Plays of about 2500 BC (Felner and Orenstein, 2006; Harrison, 2002). Since the African cosmogony exceeds realism into the realm of the spirit, the African theatrical experience is an ensemble of the chanting griot, the accompanying

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musicians dictating the different rhythms, and the responding audience[3] who interplay their roles in creating the ecstatic ambience (Harrison, 2002). Similarly, in Asia, such ambience is created with the location of theatre at local temples (Mackerras, 2009; Felner and Orenstein, 2006). In the Chinese and African theatre traditions (as in others), the interactions between actors and the audience are important for every theatre performance. These performances sometimes involve the wearing of masks which are consecrated by the priests for spiritual potency (Owens, 2014) and Chinese actors also venerate the divinity *Lang-lang-pao-sa* as the protector of their profession (Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922). Masking in both African and Chinese traditions is connected with magic, dance, music and worship. In Africa, Masquerades, at times cult-based, are considered as spirits of the ancestors which are often invoked during ritual dances. In Nigeria, there are different masking purposes whose functions include fertility, initiation, productivity, hunting, war, rituals, and entertainment while the Chinese have masks for sorcery, exorcism, dance, rituals, weddings and funerals (Owens, 2014).

Picture 2. *Magic, albeit in a more modernized version, is part of the activities for entertaining guests during the Spring Festival at the Confucius Institute*

The ecstatic experiences of magic are replicated in children's theatre which teaches and entertains children by making them create fantasy in their own world based on the realities of the world around them (Daniel-Inim, 2010). The Confucius Institute,

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thus, provides the platform for school children, from the earliest school years through their teenage years, to explore their fantasy through their model schools. The model schools encapsulate both public/private primary and secondary schools who engage in various activities including the Chinese Bridge, the Chinese Dance (fan dance, Zan dance, ballad) Chinese Opera and Chinese Art. These spaces also provide interactive forum with adult engagement and participation as they watch such performances and others by the students of the Confucius Institute in Lagos during cultural festivities.

The earliest stages of performances in life are very crucial to the formation of character in children through adult life as there is a high level of assimilation and retention through participation (Daniel-Inim, 2010). Therefore, the celebration of Chinese culture through theatre fulfils the conventional role of theatre for entertainment and socialisation (Mackerras, 2009). Beyond conventional theatre, there is a high level of interactive modes infused into the teaching and learning process at the Confucius Institute. The students are actively engaged during practical sessions on Chinese paper cut, music, cuisine and Calligraphy.

Picture 3. *A Chinese Paper Cut Session*

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Picture 4. *The Co-Director of the Confucius Institute, Professor Lirong Jiang, teaching students how to make the Chinese dumpling*

Picture 5. *A student at the Confucius institute learning how to play the Hulusi*

Such performances also create avenues for escape from unpleasant realities of poor facilities, moral decadence, terrorism, violence and irresponsible parenthood among other societal ills of everyday living experiences in Nigeria (Daniel-Inim, 2010). The sessions present a performance of China to the world as a people who advocate loyalty, peace and high ethical standards as communicated in certain lyrics which encapsulate the teaching content.

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Picture 6. *A Chinese calligraphy class*

This aligns with the two-fold enduring functions of Chinese theatre; firstly, as entertainment and secondly, as 'a place where the ignorant receive moral instructions' (Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922). It also creates an avenue for creating and meeting aspirations as channelled by these experiences. In bridging the Sino-African experiences, it serves the same function as community theatre (Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2012) whereby alternatives for better living are presented through dance, songs, mimes and other cultural forms. African theatre had been intruded upon by the colonial importation of theatre during which performances were modelled to suit the taste of the colonialists, even as Western models were projected as the universal model (Mollel, 1985; Asen, 2015). This colonial legacy was later to be countered by the resuscitation of traditional models in newly independent African states. The indigenous African models had more social and historical relevance within their contexts of origin (Musa, 2004; Mollel, 1985; Article 19, 2003). Within the globalisation context, the introduction of Chinese theatre to Africa through the Confucius Institute[4] is, therefore, a cultural complement to the already-blooming economic, diplomatic and academic exchanges, in competition with the West. It is important to note that evidence of cultural exchanges between China and Africa, through arts, (such as painting and graphics) date as far back as the Shang Dynasty (17th – 11th Century BC), while there are even claims of the likelihood of participation of Blacks in government apart from being slaves to the

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Chinese. These Blacks are also reported to have taken part in trade, theatre (as actors and musicians), potters, wild animal trainers, porters, guards and peasants (Li, 2015b). The earliest contacts were likely to be with East Africans (Li, 2015a; Li, 2015b). More so, there is evidence that by 1955, a formal agreement of cultural exchange with Chinese emissaries had been signed with Egypt[5] paving way for others that have since followed (Mulinda, 2015). Such exchanges are usually facilitated through the establishment of cultural centres abroad by each partner.

The Spring Festival at the Confucius Institute

The emergence of cultural institutes abroad have been traced to the late 19th Century before the First World War with Italy's *Dante Alighieri*, Germany's *Goethe Institute*, Britain's *British Council* and France's *Alliance Francaise* playing different but important roles from that period till the present. The layers of engagement across time include cultural nationalism, territorial annexation and protection, cultural propaganda, cultural diplomacy and cultural capitalism (Paschalidis, 2009). The establishment of the Confucius Institute fits into the epoch of cultural capitalism in which there is the commodification of cultural resources, production and experiences (Paschalidis, 2009). The institutes are established through a collaborative funding and support involving Hanban (the state body coordinating all of their activities), a Chinese university and the university of the host country (Hartig, 2012; Zaharna, 2014).

The spread of Confucius Institutes have come under scrutiny based on allegations of political and cultural propaganda due to censorship of the teaching content (avoiding sensitive political issues), and affiliations that give a distorted view of China and its relations. This is regarded by some academics as an infringement on the academic freedom of their host universities, especially in the United States (US) and Canada (Thorpe, 2015; Marcus, 2013). In Africa, the anxiety has been more about neo-imperialistic projects of China. China is, thus, suspected by critics as a new imperialist threat to culture and development. Nonetheless, the establishment of Confucius Institutes continues to grow with about 38 institutes and 10 classrooms spread around Africa.[6] Nigeria has two Confucius Institutes and a language centre.

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The institutes are located at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, while the language centre is based at the Chinese Embassy in Abuja. The Confucius Institute at UNILAG was initiated in May 2009 through the partnership of the University of Lagos, Hanban and the Beijing Institute of Technology. The centre was established for the teaching of Chinese language and the promotion of friendly economic and cultural exchanges. It is, thus, a meeting point of interactions for Chinese nationals and their Nigerian counterparts especially during cultural celebrations. The cultural exchange is being facilitated through the inclusion of cultural theatre in different activities of the institutes. The activities cover the celebration of the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year), the Chinese Culture Month, the Confucius Institute Day, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival. These activities bring together diplomats of different nationalities, school children of different ages, academics, Chinese nationals (mostly teachers and administrators, and Nigerian students.

Theatre at the Spring Festival Celebrations of the Confucius Institute, University of Lagos

Picture 7. *Participants at the 2014 Spring Festival organized by the Confucius Institute*[7]

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The cultural theatre at the Confucius Institute represents an alternate community children's theatre with the basic aim of understanding the world in a holistic manner. This is because it provides a bridge between the Asian and African world views through the physical components of dressing, Chinese arts, Chinese people, Chinese food, music and culture which form major components of these celebrations in Nigeria. Far from being unique to the Nigerian theatre experience, scholars in the 20th Century Europe projected the transnational nature of the Asian theatre with Brecht (1964) reflecting the influence of China on the reformation of 'Western Psychological realism' (Balme, 2008). Conversely, Mackerras (2008), elaborating on Chinese *huaju* (spoken drama), argued that the Chinese theatre has also been influenced by other cultures in the last few decades. Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien (1922) described the emergence of *wen-ming-hi* (theatre of civilisation) as an offshoot of western influence. Within the Sino-African scenario, however, it is a convergence of similar practices which characterises the community theatre performance (Mackerras, 2008; Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2012). This is a trans-cultural mode which has the potential for creating new dynamics in the practice of community theatre in which a national model of development is presented to the other through performance. It is, however, important to point out the need for a symmetrical multi-culturalist approach to such transnational performances in order to maximise the synergy that such theatrical convergence may have on Sino-Nigerian relations.

One of the performances during the Spring Festival is the elaborate Mongolian Swan goose dance which is a form of ballad that suggests movements of flying geese. The lyrics of the performance are nostalgic and are sung before the toast at dinner by Mongolian people. The song is famous for its 'grand sound, high and melodious tunes' and is descriptive of the Mongolian land and customs'.[8] Located in Central Area (as a landlocked region between Central and East Asia), this grassland region is situated in the North of China and South of Siberia. The song is performed by an all-Chinese cast dressed in a red, white and gold Mongolian traditional attire, and long black stockings reaching just below the knees. The lyrics of the songs are quite thematic with the ideas of Unity ('Swan geese in the Sky, fly in Unity'), loyalty

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('where are they heading for? home is where the heart is'), and hope ('swan geese, coming from the North, take my yearning…').

Picture 8. *Chinese Mongolian Dance during the 2014 Spring Festival*

Picture 9. *Chinese Mongolian Dance during the 2015 Spring Festival*

The accompaniment of instrumental music creates an ambience for nostalgia and allows the audience to relate with the rhythm along the themes of the song. The 2014 edition had an all-female dance group with the song rendered by a Nigerian male singer. The following year, it was a mixed dance group and the song was played from the sound system.

The Xinjiang Uygur folk dance is also one of the traditional dances performed during the Spring Festival. The dance is named after the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, a mountainous autonomous province in China known for their bravery, diligence,

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openness and optimism.[9] The Uyghurs are one of the largest ethnic minorities in China with a significant Islamic population, bordering India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Worthy of note is the fact that the Uyghur dance has been very important as a tool, adopted by the Chinese Military, in maintaining cordial relations within the restive region.[10] The dance involves a fast rhythmic movement with a tilted head, thrusted chest, erect waist, shivering of the knees[11] and elaborate use of the arms. The dance was performed by an all-Chinese male and female cast adorned in the traditional attire of the Uyghurs. The males appear in a white outfit and a red robe and cap, while the females are adorned in an all-red gown and veil. The differences in the regional sources of these performances (the Mongolian and Xinjiang Uyghur dances) are in contrast to the criticism of Confucius Institutes as tools for spreading the propaganda of a mono-cultural China. Also, they are reflective of the historical symbolism of the red and white colour in China. For instance, the use of different colours for the masks in the Chinese Opera signifies different characters. The white mask is used for a disloyal statesman, the red for an upright man and the black mask for a severe and brutal character. Similarly, a parcel that is wrapped in red cloth is said to represent the human head. Any alteration of the traditional forms of make-ups often received hostilities from the spectators (Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922).

Picture 10. *The Xinjiang Uygur dance at the 2014 Spring Festival*

It is also pertinent to note that the western influence on Chinese culture is reflected in the Beijing Opera. The opera is performed in a modernised way as they reflect

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western rhythm and dressing during the Spring Festival at the University of Lagos. Similar to this influence is the use of rap music in Mandarin, which reflects a foreign influence and a global culture to which the Nigerian youth audience can relate.[12] Suffice to say that opera, as a theatre performance, has its variants in the Ijala, Esa, Efe, Egungun and even Ewi traditions in the Yoruba culture. Historically, the Beijing Opera is regarded as a hybrid form evolving from different provinces in China. It gained popularity in 1790 at the 80th birthday and 55th coronation anniversary of Quianlong's Emperor. It is a blend of spoken word, singing, acting, dancing, acrobatics and athletics, usually accompanied by percussion instruments and string fiddles. Hence, its traditional name *Pihuang or Lutang* which means 'plucking' is in reference to the stringed instruments.[13] The opera usually involves the use of masks in both traditions dating back to prehistoric times.

Picture 11. *A Chinese Opera performance during the 2014 Spring Festival*

The masking traditions were spiritual exercises in which performances had lots of implication for societal ethos. Masks were either worn over the face or as covers for the entire body (Owens, 2014). The Beijing Opera, as in other theatres, involves five traditional characters namely *sheng* (male), *dan* (female), *jing (*the male masked face), *chou* (the clown) and *Mo* (an old male character)[14] (Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922). The Chinese theatre was not without its challenges as actors were usually of low social status while Aristocrats between the 15th and 19th Centuries undermined it. Women were prevented from acting (on moral grounds) as young men played their roles (Mackerras, 2009; Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922).[15]

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Race and gender are also mainstreamed during cultural celebrations at the institute. There is an interchange of the role plays of presenters who mainly comprise of both male and female Nigerian and Chinese nationals with equal representation. These presenters take their turns in introducing the presentations in both English and Mandarin. This is in contrast to the imposed patriarchal superiority of Western religion and culture, which subsumed the hitherto dominant and complementary female gender roles within the African experience (Soyinka, 1976; Harrison, 2002). As a matter of fact, the two directors (a Nigerian male and Chinese female) reflect this during the introduction and welcoming of guests to the programmes. This is not just coincidental as Mackerras (2008) argued that theatre was a tool for gender mainstreaming in 20th Century China. The bridging of racial and gender gaps is a symbolic interactive function of the cultural performances at the Confucius Institute in Lagos. More so, since theatre had transformed from a lower status to a higher social status within both societies (Mackerras, 2009; Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien, 1922; Akashoro, Kayode and Husseini, 2010), its potential to influence the audience beyond the location of performance cannot be ignored.

Picture 12. *The directors of the Institute, Professors Awonusi and Jiang hosting the introductory section of the 2015 Spring Festival Celebration*

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Picture 13. *Nigerian and Chinese hosts during the 2014 Spring Festival*

Musa (2004) described the Nigerian theatre as a multi-cultural space, encapsulating the different segments of architecture, management, actors, institutions, activities and even play-texts. Its central theme has been to entertain and educate the Nigerian audience in advancing the principle of unity in diversity (Musa, 2004: 71). The celebration of the Spring Festival creates an avenue for expressing this multi-culturalist solidarity with the Chinese through theatre. Within this transnationality, an all-Nigerian cast is introduced to the audience to perform a song about the Chinese people. Dressed in western outfits, the performers come on stage with a Chinese flag in hand as they entertain the audience with the song 'The Chinese' in Mandarin.

Picture 14. *Nigerian students and staff of the Confucius Institute rendering the song 'The Chinese' at the 2014 Spring Festival*

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The song is about the history of the Chinese people spanning over 5, 000 years with their physical identity revealed as a people of 'yellow eyes, black eyes and ever smiling faces'. More importantly, the theme of hope, unity, and progress in adversity runs through the lyrics, part of which goes thus:

No matter where you have come from
Or where you will be going
The same tear, the same pain,
Tribulations once endured
Will remain in our hearts
The same blood, the same ethnic
Dreams for the future
We shall pioneer together
Hand in hand, regardless of you and me
Heads up high, walking forward
Let the world know
We are Chinese

The above lyrics can be thematically likened to a line in the former Nigerian national anthem which states that 'though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand'; more specifically, in its focus on unity in diversity. Its didactic nature is apt as it presents a multi-ethnic scenario which focuses on progress irrespective of differences. The audience, thus, can relate with the multi-ethnic experiences and how to turn diversity into strength. At the end of the performance, shouts from the audience commending the performance can be heard. A Chinese audience member remarked 'That's good! Good a job!!!'

The Chinese martial arts are among the prominent and earliest cultural exploits of China to Nigeria. Also known as *kung fu* or *wushu*, they include different fighting styles developed by different Chinese schools across centuries. In line with this, the mid-20th Century witnessed a rise in the presence of Chinese theatre and television in the country. While the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria (in Northern Nigeria) screened some Chinese theatre including 'The East is Red' (self-directed by Mao

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Zedong),[16] the television houses screened many Chinese movies from popular martial arts actors and actresses such as Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Li Gong, Jet Li, Leslie Cheung and Ziyi Zhang. The Confucius Institute, therefore, integrates this aspect of Chinese culture into its teaching curriculum and theatre. The particular performance displayed at the institute is known as the *taiji quan* modelled after the *Taiji* Chinese. The show involves the Chinese teachers and their students briefly displaying their dexterity and competence in the arts. Martial arts have been imbibed as a medium for exercise among children, youth and young adults in Nigeria. Most martial arts schools have different grades of students who are identified by the colours of their belt which are usually white, orange, green, brown, and black. The schools are usually domiciled in different stadia, private gyms and university environments across Nigeria. They often have practice sessions on weekends, usually Saturdays.

Picture 15. *Martial Arts show during the 2014 Spring Festival*

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Picture 16. Martial Arts show during the 2015 Spring Festival

The Spring Festival is usually rounded off by the performance of the song 'Wish you good Fortune' led by Professor Lirong Jiang, the Chinese director of the Confucius Institute. The performance is used to pass the message of wishing away ill fortune and ushering in good luck in the New Year. The year 2015 was The Year of the Ram, the animal which represents the eighth sign of the Chinese Zodiac. It is, thus, a year with promise and prosperity; and those born in the year are projected to be kind, helpful, trusting and peaceful, just like the ram (Choy, 2015). All the previous performers are invited to the stage at a point bearing Chinese signs and symbols that project good fortune as they wish everyone the best in the New Year.

Picture 17. The Chinese Co-Director, Professor Jiang, leading the performance of the song 'Wish you Good Fortune at the 2015 Spring Festival

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Conclusion

For Musa (2004), inter-culturalism bridges the gap between two cultures, which could be national or international. Nevertheless, of primary importance is the need for a symbiotic rather than parasitic cultural interaction, as the latter eventually results in the annihilation of a culture to the detriment of its adherents. The intercultural context is one that is suitable for the Sino-Nigerian relational context especially during cultural exchanges as shown in the example of the Confucius Institute above. Thus, rather than a cultural imperialist mode where a culture seeks to negate and dominate other cultures (as was with the Western introduction of theatre to Africa) (see Harrison, 2002; Kamlongera, 2005), a multi-culturalist approach is one that recognises and respects the 'other' and its unique features. This is in line with one of the objectives of Hanban stated as: meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of multi-culturalism and the building of a harmonious world.[17]

In the age of globalisation, societal developments have been enhanced through inter-culturalism, even if such exchanges have often been asymmetrical. Nonetheless, theatre, as a tool for societal development, ought to be dynamic since it functions to educate, entertain and engineer social progress (Musa, 2004; Article 19, 2003). The Sino-Nigerian relational context has been one of mutual trans-culturality; in which cultural capital is exported across both spaces with the examples of the establishment of Confucius Institutes and language centres in Nigeria, and the reciprocal establishment of the Nigerian cultural centre in Beijing in the year 2012 (Mason, 2014). Within this transcultural context of exchange, hybrid models of cultural and theatre forms are beginning to emerge especially in terms of linguistic modes, and the motifs of theatrical contents and expressions. A growing trend and a reflection of these possibilities is the emergence of Nigerian artists based in China who perform in Mandarin. Notable Nigerian musicians in China include Uwechue Emmanuel (Hao Ge), Mr Lo D and Dibaocha Sky, while other popular musicians like KCEE, Faze and Oritsefemi[18] have performed and shot videos in China. Other forms of art have also been employed by Ajike (Ejike) Njoku, whose photography, paintings and literary works are based on how Nigerians and the Chinese perceive one another in a

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bid to promote tolerance and harmony (Peters, 2014).

However, there is the potential for endangerment of cultural patterns where there is irregularity in the cultural content of such hybridity. Scholars like Bodomo (2009) and Zhang (2016) have, thus, advocated the need for symmetry within Sino-African partnerships and relational context. Within the Nigerian cultural space, there is already the agitation, in both formal and informal spaces, around the allegations of cultural propaganda of the Chinese as neo-imperialists using the Confucius Institute as a soft landing tool. With a history of adopting theatre as a mode of nationalistic propaganda in China's anti-colonial war under Mao Zedong (Mackerras, 2008), the establishment of a Nigerian Cultural centre in Beijing mentioned earlier is a crucial step in aspiring towards a symmetrical relationship. The cultural centre is the first African Cultural Centre to be established in China's Capital in the year 2011 and there were subsequent Nigerian cultural week celebrations in Beijing and Nanjing Provinces in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The cultural displays included performances by the National Troupe of Nigeria, two Nigerian cultural troupes (from Bayelsa and Kwara States), and there were exhibitions of Nigerian cuisine, fashion and arts by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) National Gallery of Arts, the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Hao Ge and China's Little Red Flower Troupe were also performers at the events (see Udeze, 2012; Oladokun, 2013).

Within Nigeria, however, the foreseeable future may entail a mixed performance of indigenous theatre such as the Ijala, Esa, Efe, Egungun, and Ewi alongside Chinese opera, folk dance, kung fu, and magic within the same spaces for entertainment. Such collaborations have been spearheaded by the NCAC and the Chinese Cultural Centre (CCC) through the Chinese-Nigerian Evening of Cultural entertainment in Abuja wherein both Nigerian and Chinese cultural troupes performed dance drama, music, and poetry (Onochie, 2015). Within the present context of technological advancement and preference for electronic means of communication, the Sino-Nigeria cultural exchange can also assume virtual forms. Such a mediation of theatre by technology may result in performances in Nigeria being screened to Chinese

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audiences abroad and vice versa. This, in a way, fits into the realist perception of theatre as audiences would better relate with these performances when they are carried out in their natural spaces.

Endnotes

1. Bimbo Benson is a lecturer at the Theatre Arts Department, University of Ibadan (Personal Communication on 17 June, 2015).

2. The incorporation of the Diaspora as the sixth Region of the African Continent was a major focus of the 2012 Global African Diaspora Summit. The Programme of Action A (k) of the declaration reads, thus, 'Encourage the Diaspora to organize themselves in regional networks and establish appropriate mechanisms that will enable their increasing participation in the affairs of the African Union as observers and eventually, in the future, as a sixth region of the continent that would contribute substantially to the implementation of policies and programmes'.

3. The audience emerged from specialisations (of emerging playwright, actors and audience) in theatre. Felner and Orenstein (2006) argued that the earliest audiences were the invisible divinities as everyone present participated in ritual performances.

4. The Confucius Institute at the University of Johannesburg is exploring other art forms by holding art exhibitions of a documentary portrait on Mandela by the Chinese painter, Li Bin. See http://fadagallery.blogspot.com.ng/search?updated-max=2015-09-12T02:09:00-07:00&max-results=7.

5. The earliest mentions of African countries included places in Egypt and Ethiopia amongst other locations in East Africa. The Arabs are reported to have facilitated these early contacts as blacks formed part of their trade entourage (see Li, 2015a; Li 2015b).

6. See http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm.

7. They include the Chinese consul, French Consul (an expert in Chinese Studies), Directors of the institute, Chinese teachers and the students.

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8. See http://www.chinesecio.com/m/pages/view/Mongolian-folk-song-Swan-goose-%E8%92%99%E5%8F%A4%E6%B0%91%E6%AD%8C-%E9%B8%BF%E9%9B%81.

9. See Uygur Dances - Chinese Folk Dances of Xinjiang http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/96Arts10377.html.

10. See China's military in restive Xinjiang told to learn Uygur folk songs and dances. *South China Morning Post*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1858710/chinas-military-restive-xinjiang-told-learn-uygur-folk.

11. See http://www.huangshantour.com/english/SmallClass.asp?typeid=28&BigClassID=66&smallclassid=210

12. Nigerian pop artists are recently making waves in China. Their music is either sung in Mandarin or a code mixing of Mandarin and English Language. One of such artists is Emmanuel Uwechue, with an adopted Chinese name Hao Ge which means 'good song'.

13. See The Cleveland Museum of Art. Theater in China and Japan: A Look at the Beijing Opera and the Kabuki theatre. Unpublished.

14. Ibid.

15. According to Jacovleff and Tchou-Kia-Kien (1922), women were banned from theatre until the 20th Century after Emperor K'ien-Long took one of the actresses as a concubine. As such, men and women did not perform together during this period.

16. Personal Communication with Prof James Gibbs via E-mail Correspondence on 9 April, 2015.

17. See http://english.hanban.org/node_7719.htm.

18. See https://africansinchina.net/tag/nigerians-in-china/.

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Denying the Dalai Lama: South Africa's visa diplomacy, human rights and the media

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Abstract

South Africa has declared human rights a cornerstone of its foreign policy. However, its denial of visas to the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa on three successive occasions is illustrative of the contradictions in the country's human rights foreign policy. South Africa's decision to promote Sino-South African relations rather than address the causes of the Dalai Lama's exile, and China's occupation of Tibet and poor human rights record has resulted in widespread media reaction in South Africa and abroad. Three related matters were highlighted, namely South Africa's human rights foreign policy; the country's visa diplomacy and its refusal of visas to the Dalai Lama to promote Sino-South African bilateral trade and diplomatic relations; and the media as a key domestic foreign policy actor. This study uses a constructivist approach. It concludes that the South African media framed and constructed the South African government's public and visa diplomacy in respect of the Dalai Lama from the ideational turn (the promotion of human rights) whereas South Africa's foreign policy is presented as replaced by a hegemonic turn in favour of China.

**Writing in her personal capacity and does not reflect the views of the South African government*

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Introduction

China's power, status and prestige, as well as its ideological and solidarity links with South Africa makes it a very attractive diplomatic partner. In fact, these bilateral relations have moved beyond mere routine diplomacy to a strategic partnership. Yet, Pretoria's kowtowing and evident adaptation and conformity to Beijing is unique in its diplomatic relations. In constructivist terms, identity-related reasons – legitimation, conformity and esteem (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 887-917) – offer some explanations for Pretoria's diplomatic behaviour in this instance. Having opted for China, rather than Taiwan, as a diplomatic partner, and realising the economic and political benefits, South Africa may have sought to gain the approval and acceptance of China; thus attempting to be part of its "in-group" in the international community and realising its diplomatic ambitions. Moreover, enjoying the status and prestige of the so-called South African miracle, South Africa may have attempted to maintain the status and prestige associated with this; thus maintaining its esteem. By opting to select the actor with the most material capabilities to offer, South Africa undermined, and perhaps reversed, the "ideational turn" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 888) in its foreign policy, namely a normative construction, or idea (human rights) it so dearly participated in and benefitted from. South Africa's institutionalisation of its relations with China, whilst not attempting to establish this in the case of Tibet, also underscores, *inter alia*, South Africa's subjugation to China as a hegemonic power. This view emanating from and supported by the media surveyed for this study, and perhaps a hegemonic turn (cf. Cox, 1981: 126-155) in the country's foreign policy, is further illustrated in its preference for big power alliances with regional and global hegemons in BRICS and the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA).

Post-apartheid South Africa's relations with the People's Republic of China (hereafter China) (Alden and Wu, 2014; April and Shelton, 2014), and its foreign policy and principles are well documented (see, for example, Landsberg, 2010). One of these principles is the country's advocacy of and commitment to human rights. However, this area has proved to be one of the contradictory and controversial aspects of South Africa's post-1994 foreign policy and diplomacy (Titus, 2009). This

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is, amongst others, clearly illustrated in the country's denial of visas to the current Dalai Lama, which elicited widespread media reaction; a situation which also illustrates the under-researched link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and the media in South Africa.

A global public figure and symbol of human rights and a Nobel Laureate, the current Dalai Lama, believed to be the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha Avalokiteshvara, is the Head of State and the spiritual leader of Tibet. As a 16-year-old, he was forced to assume full political power during a crisis precipitated by the Chinese Communist invasion and occupation of Tibet in 1959. Despite Tibetans' rebellion in reaction to the invasion, China suppressed the uprising, and the Dalai Lama fled to neighbouring India where he established a democratic government-in-exile working for the freedom of Tibet and the welfare of Tibetan refugees. In 1963, the Dalai Lama promulgated a constitution for a democratic Tibet which Tibetans regard as an independent state under illegal Chinese occupation, and maintain that neither China's military invasion nor the continuing occupation by the People's Liberation Army had transferred the sovereignty of Tibet to China (Tenzin, 1996).

Since 1959, the Dalai Lama has actively campaigned internationally for the Tibetan cause (Tenzin, Undated). Since his first visit to the West in 1973, he has met many world leaders, members of European royalty and civic and religious leaders. The Dalai Lama has also, amongst others, addressed the United States (US) Congress, the European Parliament and innumerable university, inter-faith and civic gatherings (Tibet Society, 2013).

The Dalai Lama also campaigned for the end of apartheid in South Africa and, since 1994, visited the country on three occasions in 1996, 1999 and 2004. In 1996, President Mandela, despite perceived pressure from China granted a visa to and met with the Dalai Lama (Saks, 2011). Mandela's decision coincided with the time South Africa indicated that it would decide whether to end relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) in favour of China. Subsequently, South Africa opted for a "Two China" policy, which, due to perceived Chinese pressure, was later changed to favour China only.

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While allowing the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa in 1999 and 2004, President Mandela's successor, President Thabo Mbeki did not agree to a one-on-one meeting with the Dalai Lama during his 1999 visit to South Africa; signalling a shift in South Africa's visa diplomacy, a shift in the discourse on the Dalai Lama in the South African government, as well as the country's human rights foreign policy. In 1999, South Africa issued a visa to the Dalai Lama to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) in Cape Town. At the time, President Mbeki's aide, Parks Makahlana, argued that the Dalai Lama was only one of a host of religious leaders who wanted to meet President Mbeki, and that the PWR organisers had agreed that a representative group, including the Dalai Lama, rather than individuals, would meet the President (*iol,* 2 December 1999). This pattern was repeated when the Dalai Lama could not meet President Thabo Mbeki on his second visit to South Africa in 2004, and set the scene for future denial of visas to the Dalai Lama on three subsequent occasions (2009, 2011 and 2013; hereafter referred to as the Dalai Lama Affair).

Global and local questions were raised about the motivation for South Africa's *volte face* resulting in wide local and international media reaction and coverage. Moreover, South Africa's stated human rights foreign policy was questioned, as well as the possible influence of China in respect of South Africa's refusal to grant a visa.

Against the aforesaid, this article addresses three neglected areas of South Africa's foreign policy, namely the country's visa diplomacy; its refusal of visas to the Dalai Lama as a human rights issue; and the media as a domestic foreign policy actor. South Africa is no stranger to visa diplomacy; having been on the receiving end during apartheid due to international sanctions and embargoes prior to 1994. Since 1994 South Africa has seen the declaration of a number of individuals as *personae non grata* and denying visas to others (*Mail & Guardian,* 26 March 2014). The aim is also to investigate the South African media as a domestic source of foreign policy, and how it constructed South Africa's foreign policy decision in respect of the Dalai Lama's intended visits; and the government's constructions in response to each denial. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a constructivist approach is employed. It is thus assumed that international reality is cognitively and socially

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constructed to provide meaning to the material world, and that international politics is constructed by influential ideas, collective values, culture and social identities (Adler, 1997: 319). In the Dalai Lama Affair, identities, interests and norms values were repeatedly highlighted by the South African government.

It is impossible to focus on all media coverage in the Dalai Lama saga. Therefore, the media set used for this study consisted predominantly of, but not limited to, the mainly the Gauteng-based publications of largest South African media group, Independent News & Media (hereafter Independent Media) on the basis of Kariithi's (2010) "reducing rectangles". The latter assumes that of everything taking place at a given moment, only a certain portion is noticed. Of all that is noticed, only a certain segment is recorded by the media. Of all that is recorded, only a certain fraction can be monitored. Of what is monitored, only a certain share can be analysed. Independent Media publishes, amongst others, *The Star*, *Saturday Star*, *Pretoria News*, *Pretoria News Weekend*, *Cape Argus*, *Weekend Argus*, *The Mercury*, *Daily News*, *The Independent*, *The Sunday Independent*, and *Independent Online* (iol) (Independent Media, 2015). By June 2015, Independent Media's shareholders included Sekunjalo Media Consortium (the majority shareholder); the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) managed through the state-owned Public Investment Corporation (PIC); and Interacom Investment Holding Limited (China International Television Corporation [CITVC]) and China-Africa Development Fund (CADFUND) (Independent Media 2015).

As the Gauteng-published media are in the government's immediate environment, the South African government, therefore, pays most attention to these sources in considering its reaction to media reporting. For this research, news reports, feature articles, and editorials were included in the media set. The article is structured to analyse South Africa's post-apartheid human rights foreign policy and public diplomacy, the conditions surrounding the three visa denials to the Dalai Lama, the implications of these denials, and the South African government's construction of its justification of its decisions in each instance.

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South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy and public diplomacy

Writing about South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy on the eve of South Africa's first democratic elections, Nelson Mandela (1993) stated that the settled norm of human rights would be "the light that guides South Africa's foreign policy". This set the tone for South Africa's foreign policy in the aftermath of apartheid, with the incumbent African National Congress (ANC) government declaring the promotion of human rights as a foreign policy priority.

Despite this lofty ideal and repeated foreign policy mantra, South Africa's human rights foreign policy was repeatedly questioned stemming from, for example, its position on reported human rights abuses by the governments of, for instance, China and Zimbabwe; its human rights-related voting record as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) from 2007 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2012 and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC); as well as its decisions to decline visas to the 14th Dalai Lama (SAIIA, 2009). Despite these questions, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, confirmed that there had been "no change in the fundamental underpinnings of our [South Africa's] foreign policy since the advent of our democracy in 1994" and that "our stand on human rights is still the same" (DFA, 2007). Apart from embracing a normative dimension of South Africa's foreign policy, the country also embraces public diplomacy as a practical dimension of its foreign policy as a particular type and practice of diplomacy (Melissen, 2011). The media is therefore recognised as one of the instruments in a state's conduct of public diplomacy; referred to as the "centralised mass-media approach" to public diplomacy whereby governments need to correct daily perceived constructions or misrepresentations of their policies and attempt to convey a longer-term strategic message (Nye, 2010). The main strength of the mass-media approach is its audience reach, ability to generate public awareness, and to set the policy and political agenda (Nye, 2010). There is thus a link between foreign policy, public diplomacy and media liaison. How a government goes about conducting these relations with the media can result in either good or tense government-media relations. In fact, the South African government has

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institutionalised this by establishing the Public Diplomacy Branch to communicate South Africa's role and position in international relations in the domestic and international arenas to provide national and international direction to the state's public diplomacy.

Constructing denial and media response

As indicated, South Africa, on three occasions, denied issuing a visa to the Dalai Lama; resulting in critical media coverage of these decisions. These occasions included the denials of visas to the Dalai Lama to attend a peace conference linked to South Africa's hosting of the 2010 *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) World Cup scheduled to be held in Johannesburg in March 2009; to attend the 80th birthday celebrations of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, a fellow Nobel Laureate, in Cape Town in 2011; and a planned summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Cape Town in honour of Nelson Mandela in 2014 who passed away in 2013. This section contextualises these denials.

The 2009 denial

In December 2007, Thabo Mbeki lost the ANC Presidency and was replaced by Jacob Zuma. By September 2008, Mbeki's party removed him as the South African President and replaced him with Kgalema Motlanthe, paving the way for Jacob Zuma's presidency in the wake of South Africa's national elections in early 2009. In the build-up to South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, a particularly politically tense period in South Africa, the country's three African fellow Nobel Laureates - Presidents Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk, and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, using a letter of President Kgalema Motlanthe, Mbeki's successor – invited the Dalai Lama to participate in a peace conference in March 2009 linked to the 2010 FIFA World Cup (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009; *iol,* 24 March 2009; *Sunday Independent,* 29 March 2009).

The South African government's initial stance in 2009 was that no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama, followed by a response from the then South African Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) denying that the government was

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blocking the visit as no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama (*iol,* 22 March 2009). Denials that South Africa had been pressured by the Chinese government followed. The ruling party referred to this in its defence of government's decision, whereas the DFA stated that the Dalai Lama was welcome to visit South Africa, but "not now" (*Sunday Independent,* 29 March 2009). In fact, the Chinese embassy in Pretoria admitted to appealing to the South African government not to allow the Dalai Lama into South Africa, warning that it would harm Sino-South African relations (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009). The Chinese embassy also explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to visit South Africa as it was the 60th anniversary of what Tibetans regarded as China's military invasion and occupation of Tibet, but which the Chinese government described as its liberation of Tibetans from "feudal serfdom" (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009).

As the media and conference organisers maintained that the Dalai Lama was invited to speak at the peace conference linked to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the South African government finally admitted that it had denied the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the conference, saying it was not in South Africa's interest for him to attend as it did not want to "divert attention" from hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009; *Pretoria News,* 24 March 2009). Media like *Weekend Argus* (22/3/2009) made it clear that they considered the fact that South Africa had closed its doors to the Dalai Lama "a disgrace", who, the world over, commanded immense respect. The government conceded that it was also faced with the choice between allowing the Dalai Lama access and damaging relations with China (*iol,* 22 March 2009; *The Star,* 24 March 2009). The government maintained that it did not want the peace conference to be used as a platform to advance political causes (*Sowetan Live,* 26 March 2009). Though government denied the suggestion, the media interpreted this as bowing to pressure from China (*Sowetan Live,* 26 March 2009). Another dimension emerged when the South African government finally indicated that they did not want to jeopardise relations with China (*The Mercury,* 24 March 2009). The South African government explained that its decision was made not to jeopardise bilateral relations with China

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(*The Mercury,* 24 March 2009). South Africa also insisted that it was not in the country's interest to invite the Dalai Lama and rejected accusations that South Africa had denied the Dalai Lama entry under pressure from China (*Pretoria News,* 23 March 2009). It is clear that the government was repeatedly pushed to adapt its stated public policy messages with regard to this story. Subsequently, the media reported that the South African government justified its decision by saying "it did not want to endanger the government's relationship with China" (*The Independent,* 23 March 2009).

The South African media further reacted by describing the government's refusal as a "disgrace"; referring to South Africa's "spinelessness on the international stage" as "embarrassing" (*Weekend Argus,* 22 March 2009). It also argued that the world, like South Africans, had become accustomed to the South African government's "extraordinary hypocrisy" in foreign relations as politicians paid lip-service to principles; yet thoughtless pragmatism governed foreign policy (*Weekend Argus,* 22 March 2009). Regarding the argument that the Dalai Lama's visit would divert attention from the focus of the 2009 peace conference, the media suggested that government officials would have realised that the snub they were defending was creating more publicity than allowing the Dalai Lama to attend the conference *(Daily News,* 24 March 2009). There were also media suggestions that there would soon be proof enough that the ANC decided to ban the Dalai Lama because of all the Chinese money that went into the party's coffers. The media further argued that, increasingly, the world could be divided into those countries that were succumbing to pressure from China, and those that were not; with South Africa falling into the former category.

The media further referred to the "one-China policy" that meant accepting that Taiwan was a renegade province of China that had to return to the mother country (*Pretoria News,* 30 March 2009). China's apparent mounting sensitivity about the Dalai Lama implied that the policy had been secretly extended to Tibet. It was noted that China proffered that part of the respect they accorded to Africa was not to impose conditions on their aid, as Western nations did. The paradox was that by enforcing this "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama policy" at the risk of losing aid, Beijing was

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being far more conditional than any Western nation would dare to be.

In the wake of the 2009 denial, President Zuma's newly-appointed Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, reiterated that the country's human rights foreign policy would remain unchanged, while emphasising that the Dalai Lama was now free to visit the country, stating "though we did not communicate clearly at first what had transpired, this country discriminates against no one, and the Dalai Lama is more than free (to visit)" (*The Star,* 15 May 2009).

The 2011 denial

At the end of August 2011, the media reported that "another row" in respect of the Dalai Lama might be brewing due to the invitation by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu to the Dalai Lama to attend Tutu's 80th birthday (*Sunday Independent,* 28 August 2011). As the prospect of another visit to South Africa by the Dalai Lama came up in 2011, the media, and later the representative of the Dalai Lama in South Africa quoted statements from 2009 not ruling out future visits and challenged the government to grant the visa, referring to the 2009 undertaking by the South African government that the Dalai Lama would be free to visit South Africa in future (*Daily News,* 13 October 2011; *iol,* 28 August 2011). The media also referred to the 2009 explanation that the real problem then was that the visit would have coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile in India and challenged President Zuma to grant the visa. In not granting the visa in 2011, South Africa clearly backtracked on these stated positions (*The Mercury,* 26 March 2009).

Following this, South Africa's Department of Home Affairs (which administers admissions into the country and, therefore, issues visas) announced that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa, whereas Minister Nkoana-Mashabane admitted to receiving the application; saying it was processed (*The Star,* 7 October 2011; *iol,* 28 August 2011). The South African government failed to provide answers about the status of the visa application. It was also pointed out that a decision on the Dalai Lama's visa application would not be made public as it would be communicated to the applicant (*iol,* 2 October 2011). Due to subsequent delays, the Dalai Lama finally

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cancelled his application (*The Star,* 5 October 2011). Kgalema Motlanthe, by now appointed as Jacob Zuma's Deputy President, responded that the South African government would have issued a visa had the Dalai Lama not cancelled his application (*The Star,* 5 October 2011). As the Deputy President was challenged to issue such a visa, his spokesperson merely stated that the Deputy President did not issue visas.

Like the 2009 denial, the media was harsh in its criticism of the South African government's handling of the 2011 invitation to the Dalai Lama. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) *Draft White Paper on Foreign Policy*, which embraced the concept of *ubuntu,* published in 2011 was quoted, concluding that South Africa had not chosen to affirm the humanity of the Tibetan people, presumably because Tibet had nothing to offer South Africa (*Pretoria News,* 6 October 2011).

The media also argued that China would not stop investing or trading with South Africa if the government allowed the Dalai Lama to visit the country and suggested that cash might have been secured for the ANC, which could be cut off without affecting the Chinese economy (*Pretoria News,* 6 October 2011). Moreover, the media commented that it seemed that all pretence at finding a balance between practical and principled considerations in South African foreign policy had been abandoned (*Cape Times*, 5 October 2011).

Moreover, the media described South Africa's approach as "unaccountable, secretive and disrespectful"; accusing the South African government of pursuing a "cynical strategy" over the planned visit by the Dalai Lama by delaying to grant a visa so that the Dalai Lama had to cancel his visit (*Cape Times,* 5 October 2011). In response, the South African government claimed it never came under any pressure from China to prevent the Dalai Lama from visiting and would have given the Dalai Lama a visa had he not cancelled. This explanation was seen as "implausible".

The South African government sought to look unhurried and strong in considering the Tibetan spiritual leader's application for a visa. Instead, it showed weakness and an inability to deal with tricky situations. An explanation by the President saying no

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one in government was saying why he did not get a visa, because it was a "state secret", was seen as foreboding the Dalai Lama visa affair as an indication of how the Protection of State information Bill (PSIB) would operate once it came into effect. However, in 2011, two opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) and struggle stalwarts, Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Mosiuoa Lekota, took government to court over its handling of the Dalai Lama's visa application. In *Buthelezi & Another v Minister of Home Affairs & Others* (2012), Judge Nugent of the Supreme Court of Appeal ruled in his judgement that the Department of Home Affairs and the other respondents in the case "unreasonably delayed" the decision "whether to grant or withhold the visas relevant to this case and in so doing acted unlawfully".

The 2014 denial

In 2014, the South African government responded similarly to the 2011 visa application. The Dalai Lama applied for a visa to attend a World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Cape Town meant to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the end of apartheid and the legacy of former President Nelson Mandela (*The Herald,* 2 October 2014). The City of Cape Town had budgeted ZAR 10 million for the summit's 1,500 guests, including fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureates, invited to attend (*The Herald,* 2 October 2014). However, a representative of the Dalai Lama, Nangsa Choedon, was quoted saying the South African government had requested that the Dalai Lama withdraw his application for a visa as South Africa was not able to grant the visa as it would "disturb" Sino-South African relations (*Business Day Live,* 2 September 2014). South African government spokespeople denied this, saying the application was still under review and "a closed matter" (*News24,* 4 October 2014). This led to further media accusations against the South African government of not having "the guts to stand in public and defend its decisions, choosing instead to remain silent" *(Times Live,* 3 October 2014). Subsequently, the Dalai Lama's South African office revealed that the spiritual leader would cancel his visit because it would not be granted in deference to South Africa's relations with China (*Times Live,* 30 September 2014). DIRCO had received written confirmation from the Dalai Lama's office indicating that he had cancelled his planned visit to South Africa, resulting in an outrage from the media *(iol,* 4 September 2014). Many

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repeated. The South African media rejected DIRCO's claim that the Dalai Lama voluntarily cancelled his application for the visa before it could be processed as "nonsense" (*The Citizen,* 1 October 2014). The official opposition party, Democratic Alliance (DA), further challenged President Zuma and his government to go on record and "categorically" confirm that South Africa would have issued a visa to the Dalai Lama had he not cancelled his application (*Pretoria News,* 6 October 2014). Clayson Monyela, DIRCO Deputy Director-General of Public Diplomacy, responded by indicating it was not "proper" to answer "hypothetical" questions on whether South Africa would have approved the visa application, or not. It was remarked that South Africa was losing its hard-fought reputation as a champion of human rights and its independence (*The Star,* 3 October 2014). The decision was also seen as evidence of "cynical national interests" triumphing over the government's professed idealism (*The Witness,* 3 October 2014). The media also accused the South African government of not having "the guts to stand in public and defend its decisions, choosing instead to remain silent" (*Times Live,* 3 October 2014). The media further argued that the decision, or "indecision", exposed South Africa's falsehood of BRICS (the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping) being an organisation of equals (*Pretoria News,* 6 October 2014).

Cape Town Mayor Patricia de Lille, a member of the DA, and host to the said conference, confirmed that the decision to move the event to another city would cost the city ZAR 60 million in lost economic opportunities, tourism and job creation (*Cape Argus,* 3 February 2014). She said the primary reason for the relocation was the fact that the South African government refused to issue a visa to the Dalai Lama. She explained that she had contacted The [South African] Presidency in March 2014 about the prospect of hosting the summit, only to get a response at the end of August 2014. A group of 14 Nobel Laureates had also appealed to President Jacob Zuma to grant the Dalai Lama a visa, with no acknowledgement. Seemingly, the South African government had treated these requests with disdain and showed they were more intent on pleasing Beijing than ensuring that a prestigious international event was held in South Africa. They had undermined South Africa's international standing and embarrassed the country, suggesting that South Africa was being "sold

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to the highest bidder" – China (*Cape Argus,* 3 February 2014).

In response, presidential spokesperson Mac Maharaj said The Presidency took "strong exception" to De Lille's comments (*The Citizen,* 4 October 2014). Maharaj claimed government had not denied the Dalai Lama a visa because he had effectively cancelled his own application by indicating he would not be attending the summit; reiterating a similar claim by DIRCO. Spokesperson for Parliament's Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation Siphosezwe Masango said perceptions of trying to appease China were unfounded. Trade with the Far East and any other strategic trading partners did not, and should not mean China's adversaries were South Africa's (*Mail & Guardian*, 3 October 2014).

Against the aforesaid, it can be deduced that, as South Africa's relations with China consolidated, its rejection of the Dalai Lama escalated. In 2009, the South African government was keen to interact with the media in an attempt to put defendable arguments in the communication environment. However, its approach to media reaction in 2011 was very different to its approach in 2009 in that the government increasingly attempted to evade, rather than to engage, with the media about the issue. The avoidance and denial tactics did little to arrest the fury expressed in the media about the way the government handled the 2014 application. Very little was learned from previous experiences and the government chose to go the same route with the 2014 application, with more or less the same result. The government merely followed the 2011 approach in getting the Dalai Lama to cancel his visit to South Africa. It then created the impression that the application was still under review when the trip was called off. Harsh media criticism and public outcries resulted in both instances from the government's apparent reluctance to handle the matter through public diplomacy platforms; due to, inter alia, political pressure from China, lacking a convincing communications strategy and ineffective government communication.

Implications of visa denials

The Dalai Lama Affair has had several implications for South Africa's human rights foreign policy; formulations of South Africa's national interests; the country's public

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and visa diplomacy; and the role of the media.

South Africa's human rights foreign policy

With its emphasis on human rights, South Africa has managed to uphold a rhetorical advantage in its post-1994 foreign policy. However, the Dalai Lama Affair illustrated the selective application (and thus discriminatory nature) of South Africa's human rights policy. As a result, a strong and critical media voice emerged accusing the South African government of abandoning human rights principles under pressure from China for the sake of beneficial trade relations.

In response, the South African government maintained that abiding to the spirit of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and a commitment to international human rights was less in South Africa's interests than kowtowing to China (*Weekend Argus,* 2 March 2009). Analysts explained that there was not necessarily a conflict between the pursuit of values and national interests; rather, values were often intangible forms of national interests (*The Mercury,* 29 March 2010). The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) enjoined the government to pursue a balanced foreign policy, both value-based and interest-driven. However, a lack of consensus on what constituted the national interests bedeviled this balance. Despite the very strong media attack on South Africa's foreign policy and human rights credentials, the South African government did very little to defend itself in this respect, but chose to make it a national interest issue. In its response, the ANC, the governing party, merely maintained that this decision did not compromise South Africa's stand on human rights. The South African government's silence on China's human rights record is in stark contrast to, for example, South Africa's diplomacy of anger vis-a-vis Israel's human rights policy in respect of Palestinians (see Hall, 2011: 521-555). As far back as 2000, South African human rights groups and opposition parties urged President Thabo Mbeki to use the opportunity of a visit to South Africa by then Chinese President Jiang Zemin to emphasise South Africa's commitment to civil liberties. However, comments by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhu Bangzao suggest that human rights did not come under discussion (BBC, 2000).

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The human rights issue relating to the Dalai Lama resurfaced in 2011. In response, Archbishop Tutu's harsh words to the South Africa government, saying it was "disgraceful" and "worse than the apartheid government", was not sensitive to the sentiments of the Constitution (*The Star,* 5 October 2011). The media argued that the way the government handled the matter suggested a lack of moral fibre and ineptness in the foreign policy arena (*Cape Times,* 5 October 2011). Analysts such as Adv. Shami Kholong, a policy and risk analyst, concurred that the government's "abortion" of the Dalai Lama's visit undermined a pillar of the South African Constitution, *i.e*. the protection of human rights (*The Star,* 6 October 2011). Again, the government did not defend itself against accusations on the issue of human rights, especially as it did not take a decision to refuse a visa. In 2014 communication from the South African government merely addressed the bureaucratic circumstances around the Dalai Lama's 2014 application. DIRCO commented that anybody that tried to "push the narrative" that the Dalai Lama had been denied entry into South Africa or denied a visa was "factually incorrect" (*SABC,* 3 October 2014). The Dalai Lama had sent a written confirmation that he had now decided to cancel his plans to visit South Africa - he had effectively withdrawn his application (*SABC,* 3 October 2014).

National interests and the Dalai Lama Effect

In an effort to ease pressure on it, the South African government explained that its intention to advance the country's national interests justifies its decision to deny visas to the Dalai Lama. The media framed this justification as "bowing to pressure" from China (*Mail & Guardian,* 28 September 2011). The South African government retorted that it did not jeopardise bilateral relations with China. The government further explained that it was not in South Africa's interest to invite the Dalai Lama, but rejected suggestions that it had denied him entry under pressure from China (*Pretoria News,* 23 March 2009). The media also linked the decision to China's establishment of an office in Johannesburg to disburse a ZAR 50 billion China-Africa Development Fund (CAD Fund) (*Pretoria News,* 23 March 2009). *Independent Newspapers* Foreign Editor, Peter Fabricius, noted that China was demanding much more from African states in enforcing its "no-meet-the-Dalai Lama

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policy" than any Western nation would dare to (*Pretoria News,* 30 March 2009). This is indicative of the so-called Dalai Lama Effect, which refers to China's influence over states hosting or planning to host the Dalai Lama (Fuchs and Klann, 2011). The Chinese administration threatens, in a more-or-less open manner, that meetings between its trading partners' officials and the Dalai Lama will be met with animosity and lead to subsequent deterioration in their trade relationships. Research has shown that China has rewarded states denying visas to the Dalai Lama and has instituted punitive measures against states hosting and supporting the Dalai Lama (Fuchs and Klann 2011). This is also evident in Sino-South African relations since 2009 (the first denial of a visa to the denial); a period which coincides with Jacob Zuma's presidency. In fact, Alden and Wu (2014: 15) concluded that "two-way trade has flourished under the Zuma administration", with China becoming South Africa's largest trading partner during this period.

As the South African government admitted in 2009 it had refused the Dalai Lama a visa to attend the peace conference, it also explained that it was "not in South Africa's interest" for the Dalai Lama to attend as the media focus would shift away from the 2010 FIFA World Cup (*The Star,* 24 March 2009). The media also suggested that the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama had more to do with what decision-makers perceived to be "the best [i.e. South Africa's economic] interests" of the country, than distraction from the World Cup event (*Daily News,* 24 March 2009).

Analysts argued that South Africa's indecision, incompetently tossing the application from one official to the other, was informed by a desire to please "new colonial master" China (*The Star,* 6 October 2011). Like 2009, and despite protestation from the South African government, the media consensus was that the government gave in to pressure from China in not granting a visa to the Dalai Lama. It is noteworthy from the coverage in the media set monitored that whereas the government did not do much to contest the human rights angle to the story, it did, however, challenge the accusation that it took the decision under pressure from China.

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Visa diplomacy

South Africa's denial of visas to the Dalai Lama is also an indication of the significance of a state's immigration requirements as an element of its sovereignty and territorial control. In 2014, South Africa ranked 42nd in the Henley Visa Restrictions Index, produced in cooperation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA); placing South Africa behind Seychelles (28th) and Mauritius (30th) as the most accessible African states with visa-free arrangements with 94 states (Henley & Partners, 2014: 2). The 2014 position represents a decrease in the accessibility of South Africa as; in 2008 the country was ranked 35th; 47th in 2010, and 50th in 2012 (Henley & Partners 2014: 6). Moreover, the Dalai Lama Affair is a clear example of the country's visa diplomacy; *i.e*. the issuance or denial of a visa to enter a country in order to express a particular diplomatic position and to influence another actor (Stringer, 2004: 2). Defined as a "tangible measure used to communicate a government's diplomatic mood", visa diplomacy is, therefore, a particular instrument of a state's foreign policy used to coerce or consent; restrict or enable global mobility (Stringer, 2004: 6). The Dalai Lama Affair can have further significant diplomatic implications for South Africa. In this instance, South Africa has denied entry of a Head of State; albeit in exile. However, in contrast it has hosted Heads of State such as Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe) and Omar al-Bashir (Sudan) with questionable human rights records; in some instances indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Possible explanations for South Africa's visa denial

A media statement by the Chinese embassy in Pretoria seems to imply that the Chinese government had appealed to the South African government not to issue such a visa in 2009. The South African government seemed to want to refute such an interaction. Asked if South Africa had consulted China before taking the decision not to grant a visa to the Dalai Lama, the South African government said it was a decision taken by the South African government alone (*Pretoria News,* 25 March 2009). Both countries did, however, clearly use public diplomacy such as media statements and public engagements to state their positions on the matter engaging the

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public through the media.

Regarding the 2009 visa denial, the Chinese embassy in Pretoria, admitted through the media to using traditional diplomacy in appealing to the South African government not to allow the Dalai Lama into the country (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009). The Chinese embassy warned that it would harm bilateral relations and explained that it was a particularly inopportune time for the Dalai Lama to be visiting South Africa, referring to the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising (*Pretoria News Weekend,* 21 March 2009). The Chinese embassy further indicated that for South Africa to allow the Dalai Lama into the country would greatly harm South African-Chinese relations (*The Star,* 23 March 2009). The Chinese government also expressed appreciation for countries that "rejected" the Dalai Lama, saying all countries should respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and "oppose Tibetan independence". Issuing this statement to the media was most probably aimed at influencing the communication environment and through this, the South African government's further handling of the matter.

The South African government was perhaps more reluctant to use the public diplomacy instrument, and was most likely only forced into putting its position on the matter in the public domain by the outcry from media and civil society against its disinclination to issue visas to the Dalai Lama. The South African government was mostly prompted for information on the situation, first insisting that no invitation had been extended to the Dalai Lama; then stating that it had decided it was not in South Africa's interest to invite the Dalai Lama, putting forward the argument that the Dalai Lama would divert the attention from the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the peace conference (*iol,* 22 March 2009; *Pretoria News,* 23 March 2009). The South African government eventually added that it was also faced with the choice of either allowing the Dalai Lama access or damaging relations with China, but rejected suggestions that it had denied him entry under pressure from China (*The Mercury,* 26 March 2009).

The progressive divulgence of the government's stance seems to prove that its hand might have been forced into acceding to handling this on a public diplomacy

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platform. It may much rather have used traditional "silent" diplomacy techniques to address the issue, but the civil society and media sentiment on the matter was such that it had to state its case in public.

The same reluctance to divulge information was evident around the 2011 visa dispute. South Africa initially maintained that the Dalai Lama had not applied for a visa in New Delhi (*The Mercury,* 1 April 2009). In 2011, the government was even more secretive about the process and eventually did not take a decision at all. The only statement on the issue really offered voluntarily was the unfortunate assertion that the visa would have been granted had the Dalai Lama not cancelled his visit (*iol,* 5 October 2011). It seems a valid observation from both events that government only went public on the matter under duress.

As in 2009, utterances by the Chinese government around the 2014 visa application from the Dalai Lama were to a certain extent more revealing that those of the South African government. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang, thanked South Africa for its support saying China highly appreciated the respect given by the South African government to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the support given to China on this issue (FMPRC, 2014)

Again in 2014, the South African government maintained that it had not denied the Dalai Lama a visa, because he had effectively cancelled his own application by indicating he would not be attending the summit (*The Citizen,* 4 October 2014). In this instance, local government through Cape Town Mayor Patricia de Lille communicated on the matter accusing the national government of scuppering the summit by denying the Dalai Lama a visa (*Cape Argus,* 3 February 2014). As with the previous applications, national government only communicated on the matter when there was no other option.

The messenger and the message: media and foreign policy

Internationally, the media's role and functions in international relations, foreign policy and diplomacy is accepted as the so-called CNN Effect (Robinson, 1999: 301-309; Gilboa, 2005: 27-44) or the Al Jazeera Effect (Seib, 2008). The newsworthiness

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of Sino-South African relations for the South African media lies in, amongst others, the rapid expansion of these bilateral relations; historical ties; and continued expressions of solidarity in global affairs. It also lays in the contradictions – such as human rights issues – emanating from these relations. Therefore, the South African media often view Beijing and Pretoria's relations in normative terms; supporting the notion that the South African media has a binary ("friend or foe; predator or partner; profit or plunder") view of China (Wasserman, 2012: 341). This binary view was also evident in the media's framing of the Dalai Lama Affair questioning the South African government's national interests. Instead, the media reframed these visa denials as South Africa's bowing to pressure from China and thus contradicting South Africa's human rights foreign policy. Whereas the media heavily criticised the South African government's handling of the Dalai Lama Affair, it was relatively silent on criticising China for pressurising South Africa; China's occupation of Tibet; and its treatment of the Dalai Lama.

Even if opinions expressed through the media do not actually change foreign policy, they do influence the content of public diplomacy messaging. The media and those quoted in the media could not sway the government to change its position on granting a visa to the Dalai Lama, but the government was pushed to review the content of its messages or its approach to the issue as indicated above.

After the 2009 invitation it even seemed as if government may have been convinced to review its visa diplomacy, with an undertaking that the Dalai Lama would be welcomed in future. Still, when faced with the 2011 and 2014 invitations, it was clear that this was not the case. The study also made it clear that the priorities of human rights and national interests cannot always be pursued in concord. This sentiment was expressed by analysts, but the government did not see its way clearly to articulate this angle in public communication.

Conclusion

Despite a shared historical experience of colonialism; foreign domination; exiled liberation leaders and movements; and human rights advocacy, South Africa has no historical or present diplomatic relations with Tibet; unlike South Africa's relations

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with states such as Timor Leste, the Sahrawi Arab Republic, South Sudan and others. The Dalai Lama is an important international figure, and was considered both the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet until his "political retirement" in 2011 (His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, Undated). As a Nobel Peace laureate he is also an important diplomatic and ceremonial actor but who's diplomatic status is compromised by his exile and his state's occupation by China, a global superpower and a permanent member of the UNSC.

The South African media reviewed for this research payed considerable attention to the Dalai Lama Affair, while displaying predominantly negative media attitudes towards the South African and Chinese governments. Moreover, the main themes emanating from media reaction was South Africa's inability to withstand Chinese pressure, and that this poorly reflects on our human rights foreign policy. The public diplomacy efforts of the South African government stand in stark contrast to this. Here, media attention was often reactive; negative towards the Dalai Lama, but positive towards China; with the benefits from maintaining and improving Sino-South African relations in order to enhance South Africa's national interests the major theme. The South African government was also aware of its place branding in respect of, for example, the 2010 FIFA World Cup which, it seemed, turned out to be South Africa's competitive branding vis-a-vis the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama Affair is likely to be repeated in future as South Africa consolidates its relations with China even further. It is hoped that the media will retain its robustness in respect of South Africa's foreign policy. Moreover, the Dalai Lama Affair is also a call to democratise South Africa's foreign policy to reflect public opinion, including that of the media.

Endnotes

1. In-group preference or bias, is a pattern of conduct favouring members of the own group over those who are not within the group.

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2. The Mbeki administration's "quiet diplomacy" in the light of Zimbabwe defaulting on undertakings to uphold the rule of law (Mhango, Undated).

3. Concerns about South African engagements with China in the light of the latter's control over its media and issues of human rights (Anthony et al., 2015).

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