

Chinese Funding: A Curse to Africa: A Case of Shurugwi Zimbabwe

CHIDO T CHIPFAKACHA 

Independent Researcher, Zimbabwe
burningchido@gmail.com

Abstract

The role of China in the liberation of Africa from colonial rule cannot be down played as I laid a foundation to Africa today. Most African countries were aided by China militarily and ideologically in the fight against Western colonial rule. Though some scholars would suggest that China's contribution was as a result of the hostility that was there in the times of the cold war between the self-acclaimed democrats of the Western bloc and the Communist Eastern bloc. Philosophers like Marx Engel, Karl Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong had a major influence on the liberation of Africa. The purpose of this paper is to show how the relationship that started as sincere has become a curse for the poor and unconnected Africans. In recent years the Chinese has overtaken the Briton hood Institutes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank as the major lenders of loans to African States. Kwame Nkrumah warned us of the danger of Africa being recolonised in what he termed neo colonialism where the colonisers will come as investors. Neo colonialism is no longer a theory but has become a reality as will be exposed in this article using empirical, qualitative and quantitative research methods to show how a friendship with China has benefited the elite politicians at the cost of citizens affairs. Africa is endowed with natural resources yet it has the poorest population per Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The paper will show how it is easy for a Chinese to own a business in Africa compared to the native Africans using the case of Shurugwi in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: empirical, neo-colonialism, politicians, China, resources, endowed

Introduction

The Chinese's foreign policy has seen an aggressive new way of international policy. The Chinese foreign policy is characterized by giving government loans which have undisclosed clauses. The Chinese loans do not look at issues of democracy or accountability making it a darling of autocratic regime's. From East Asian countries like Sri Lanka to Southern Africa Chinese funding has been distributed but to what end and what is the end deal. Zambia at one point has had its airport confiscated by the Chinese for failing to pay the back a loan. They have been a case where the Chinese money was directly channelled to the family of former DRC president Joseph Kabila. The Chinese have not been shy to spoil authoritarian leaders in 2020 they gifted the then Zambian president Edgar Lungu with a private jet. Chinese loans have led to mortgaging of natural resources by African governments who sort to gain on personal terms from the loans as they are no strict conditions compared to loans from the Briton Hood Institutes that have conditions, the Briton Hood loans look at things like Human Rights records which most African states don't have a good record and they look at the state of borrower's debt payment history while Chinese loans uses natural resources as grantees for the loans. Chinese borrowers do not follow up on how the money was used and these have become a haven for corrupt politicians.

Literature Review

Muleya D (2011) wrote about a deal that was by the Zimbabwe Mining Development and a Chinese Company, Wanbao Mining which was facilitated by Chinese bank EximBank though the deal later collapsed after it was realised that the concession of deposits of platinum there were interested in which covers 110 square kilometres of land in Selous and Northfields had already been used as collateral to acquire a USD\$200 million loan. Zimbabwe has since 2009 been paying the loan in order to regain the platinum deposits. This deal shows that they are a lot of unaccountable deals that have signed on behalf of Zimbabwe that mortgages their natural resources. The sad part of these are that people that sign the deals are well informed that they are selling the future of the country to the Chinese which is opposite of many like Lobengula Mzilikazi who was cheated by the missionaries as he was illiterate. The Zimbabwe Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube in September 2022 made a shocking revelation in parliament when he claimed that Zimbabwe owed China almost USD\$2,6 billion, the loans which were mainly for the mining, manufacturing, infrastructure, agriculture and health sectors (Zvinoira T 2022). The loans can clearly explain why in the agricultural sector black farmers have not been granted title deeds as the land is used as guarantee to secure loans by the ZANU PF government.

The growth of the need for food to feed China's growing population has led to a new agricultural colony in Africa. China's growing demand for food and its rapid shrinking arable land due to land degradation and urbanisation have made finding of agricultural land a priority for Chinese government (Horta L 2008). China has made drastic measures to get land leases from African states like Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to name a few. The Chinese bank EximBank facilitated a USD\$2 billion loan to the Mozambican government to build the Mpanda Nguva mega-dam on the stretch of the Tete province, China has signed large land leases to establish Chinese run mega farms and cattle ranches allowing an initial 3000 Chinese settler farmers to farm in the Zambezi Valley (Brautigam D 2008).

Chinese companies have been characterised by abuse of workers throughout the African continent, Nelson Holding a Chinese mining company brought before court by its sixty nine workers for failure to pay its workers from January to September 2014 (Khupe A 2014). Chinese mining companies have been marred by many accusations as reported in the 14 December 2014 Africa Confidential reported that the Zimbabwean government had privately parcelled out mining concessions to the Chinese mining companies in exchange for arms.

Chinese Mining in Shurugwi

The Chinese footprint in Zimbabwe is visible everywhere from the high politics and lower politics. The building of the Zimbabwean parliament in Mt Hampden is one foot in Zimbabwean politics by a nation who claims that they do not involve themselves in internal affairs of a sovereign. The late Zimbabwean strongman RG Mugabe in his words in a TV interview, "the Chinese don't give us free things they is always something with funding." The cost of Chinese funding has come with its curse on the Zimbabwe landscape among other things, Shurugwi a small mineral rich town in the mineral rich Great Dyke has suffered greatly, a place which used to be known as the scenic Shurugwi because of its beautiful mountains has become a scared the landscape. Shurugwi is a small mining town located in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe richly endowed in mineral wealth ranging from chrome, gold, and platinum other precious materials. Now the place is characterized by scars on the mountains as the Chinese are doing open cast mining which is cheaper but expensive on the environment. The Chinese do not observe the Environment Management Act of Zimbabwe which protects the environment; since the government is indebted to the Chinese they cannot bring them to book but watch as the environment is destroyed. A trip

in to Boterekwa a place that used to be green with life of the forest it is painful that now the place have become a site of many open cast mines and most buses coming from South Africa no longer use the road as they are scared since mining now is done near the road.



Figure 1: Boterekwa Shurugwi. Source: Own Picture

In 2006 Zimasco which was the biggest chrome mine in Zimbabwe was sold to the Chinese by the Union Carbide a British company. The company under the Union Carbide used to practice mainly inclined shaft mining which did not have much bearing on the environment but since the Chinese took over they have resorted to open cast mining, when they feel they is no longer any chrome in the area they have left large unfilled open cast mines which have become artificial dams. Many people have since lost their jobs as to the Chinese mining cuts on human labour they utilise machinery like front loaders, tippers and graders among others. The houses have become dilapidated as they do not maintain infrastructure but focus on profiteering. The mining company has also ceased to operate most of its operations which they have contracted to individuals and Chinese mining companies through the tributary system where in chrome mining the miners sell to them and gold claims are rented out for \$250 a hectare on a yearly contract that is renewable as long your payments are up to date.



Figure 2: Mountain scar left by a Zimasco chrome tribute in Ironsides Shurugwi. Source: Own Picture

The government needs to look at the way the Chinese operate and EMA must be given power to protect the environment without political involvement. The environment bleeds till when

shall the land of Josiah Magamba Tongogara continue to be destroyed by the Chinese; they have not brought any developments but oppression and destruction of our environmental heritage. Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans and it shall never be a Chinese colony the government should act or else Shurugwi will not be scenic.

Chinese Miners Threat to Artisanal Miners

Artisanal miners make up the largest percentage of indigenous miners in Zimbabwe, and these comprise of small scale miners. In Zimbabwe the small scale miners predominantly are found in gold and chrome mining activities. The Zimbabwe artisanal miners project is one of Africa's most successful empowerment story of the indigenous black populace in the mining sector. In Shurugwi individual like Paradzai Hapazari, Ticha Darangwa, Chris Mahara, Chimona to name a full have gone on to successful owners of gold miners, and their success has helped in job creation among the general populace of Shurugwi. The success of these individual in the mining sector has made an imprint that cannot be erased for future generations as the young now know mining can be done with the hand of the West. In 2018 the 2nd Republic of President Mnangagwa introduced ball mills and hammer mills that have created employment as they require what is termed a baseman who operates these small mills, these small mills have benefited the artisanal miners who do not pay for the service as he owners benefit from the sands which they litchi gold from using cyanidation.



Figure 3: Paradzayi Hapazari Processing Plant (Vital Mine Ironkop Shurugwi). Source: own

The emergency of Chinese miners has become a threat to artisanal miners as the Chinese have begun to target mines with good samples. Wonderful mine which have been the heartbeat of artisanal mining has already fallen in the hands of the Chinese. The Chinese now own most of the mines in Boterekwa formerly known as Wolfsburg Mountain, the previous black owners have been forced to sell to the Chinese or loose the properties with nothing. The Boterekwa pass wants the pride of Scenic Shurugwi now suffers from land degradation as the Chinese prefer using a process called heap litching which involves cyanidation at a large scale. The process of cyanidation has polluted water bodies near there mining activities and the Environmental Management Agency have done little to control the harmful environmental damage by the Chinese who are said to be heavily connected to top government officials. People like Mr Muchenje a respected local mining tycoon was forced to sell his mine in Peak Mine Shurugwi in October 2023.

Fear of what the future holds for artisanal miners has gripped the mineral rich town of Shurugwi and in November 2023 they was an incident of fighting among artisanal miners in the few shafts that have been left for artisanal miners at Wandara mine (Wonderful Mine), they was a clash

over who gets shifts between the Chironde miners and the ZBS miners. The clash between the two groups saw the loss of life of more than five individuals, eye witnesses claim that some individuals were thrown in deep open shafts. The fight was stopped after intervention from members of the Zimbabwe defence forces. As the Chinese occupy the best mines more fights for bread crumbs among the locals will ensure.



Figure 4: Wandara cyanidation site of Chinese mining. Source: Own Picture



Figure 5: Peakmine open cast mining by the Chinese. Source: Own Picture

Accounts of Abuses by Chinese employers

An incident in 2020 where 2 mine workers were killed in a nearby city of Gweru in a mine by a Chinese national after complaining about salaries and working condition is another character of how locals have been subjected to ill-treatment by the Chinese at no discreet by the government as it is in the pockets of Chinese funding (WION Web Team 2020). In Muzarabani a Chinese businessman once boasted to villages he was evicting that they did not have title deeds to the land referring to the Communal Lands Act of 1983 which gives the government power over rural land in Zimbabwe. They has been incidents where Chinese have taken gold mines from locals claiming that the government gave them the land

The Chinese have destroyed the environment in Shurugwi by making the town a hell hole places that before were left alone to preserve the environment they have mined there, they have formed

syndicates with the locals. They do not cover the ground where they dig if deem the places unprofitable. If the Chinese are left to continue with these activities in the next 10 years towns like Shurugwi will not have anything scenically left but artificial lakes, land degradation and places like Boterekwa will crumble they will be no road to talk off.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chinese business has increased industrial competitiveness in Africa where the mining, agricultural and manufacturing industries have been predominantly Western. China has been an all-weather friend for African countries that have faced hostility from the West though this practise has not been done at the discreet of the abuse of the rights of locals as what happened with the shooting in Gweru. Like in Morgenthau's realist theory where they are no permanent friends in the international system but it's a game of interests, the Chinese have played the game of interest very well as they are popular for working with dictatorships across Africa. The Chinese have supplied weapons in exchange for natural resources in some cases. The Chinese have become a symbol of neo colonialism among the poor Africans.

The government of Zimbabwe should learn from Zambia as they have since cancelled the Chinese debt as of August 2022. They is nothing like free lunch in international politics as they are no permanent friends in the international system but its a game of interests. When it comes to human rights the Zimbabwe government must learn from the Rwandan and Malawian governments where Chinese nationals have faced the wraith of the law after abusing locals in those countries, the Chinese should respect the rule of law in African states. The Chinese like every investors should respect the locals in African communities where they work long gone are the times of slavery Africans must be treated well in mines not be subjected to slave working conditions in their countries simply because a corrupt few are benefiting from the Chinese activities. The African Union and other regional bodies in Africa should put in place a framework that regulate the behaviour of investors within the continent in order to safeguard African nations from a second wave of colonialism in the name of funding and loans . Africa should be protected for the future generations we inherited the continent from our forefathers lets protect it for future generations.

The government of Zimbabwe should respect the constitution and allow agencies like the Environment Management Agency room to practise their mandate without political influence.

Chinese investors should be closed monitored and face the wrath of the law when it comes to abuse of workers and payment of workers in time.

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