

Towards a Critical Geopolitics of China's engagement with African development

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Geopolitics, postcolonialism and development

- Slater (2004: 224): “power and knowledge ... cannot be adequately grasped if abstracted from the gravity of imperial encounters and the geopolitical history of West/non-West relations”
- All conceptualisations of development contain and express a geopolitical imagination which condition and enframe its meanings and relations
- A postcolonial geopolitics that decentres the west, deconstructs framings of ‘the other’ and mutual constitution of colonizer and colonised, and recovers subaltern agency



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Postcolonial development theories: Recentring 'the west'?

“how the everyday enactments of development in the varied landscapes of the North and South rest upon (post-) colonial relations”

(Radcliffe, 2005: 297)

“The donor country – Western, of course – is rich and enlightened”

(Kapoor, 2008: 79)



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'South-South' cooperation: Beyond IR and Euro-Americanism?

- Beyond reductionism and Eurocentrism in IR's dealing with Sino-African politics
- Hybrid and interdisciplinary theory
- Structural analysis
- Neo-liberalism as process
- State-capital relations



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Aid as geopolitics

- Multipolarity, flexible alliances to contain hegemony, a new & just international order
- A permanent Forum on China-Africa co-operation (FOCAC), 'Go Out' Policy of 2002, 2006 *Africa Strategy*
- Avoiding the language of 'donor'/'recipient', blurring of aid, investment & development



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Aid as geopolitics

- Invocation of long-standing 'principles' of foreign assistance – camouflage tactics?
- Non-interference as untenable
- 'Soft power' diplomacy popular with African partners, alternative to IFI financing and conditionalities



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A postcolonial geopolitics of development

- Reorienting our analytical lens to 'South-South' interactions
- Chinese approach has elements which 'de-centre' west from development processes
- But must be rigorously sceptical about such claims
- China not only game in town



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