

Assessment of China's foreign aid for Cameroon in 2009-2020

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Abstract

The visit of Jia Quinglin from China to Cameroon in 1971 and the formal President's Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon return visit to China in 1973 started paving the way for Sino-Cameroon relations. Huge progress has been made towards advancing the cooperation of these two nations. This cooperation has had significant impact on both economies. China's relations with Cameroon have been more or less like an economic livewire to Cameroon, although it cannot be ruled out that it has also some drawbacks. Chinese presence in Cameroon has been growing and is concentrated in the private sector. Areas of Chinese presence include construction, agriculture, and medium size businesses. Cameroon has not only witnessed enormous increase of Chinese investment and presence, but also of Chinese foreign aid. China's foreign aid to Cameroon in the past years has been very much consistent and enormous. The main question here is what impact has this aid on Cameroon and Cameroonians? Cameroon is one of China's major partners in Africa and also a beneficiary of China's benevolent activities in Africa. China's foreign assistance has been gearing towards the development of the local economy. This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the contribution and impact of China's foreign aid on Cameroon in the period of 2009-2020.

Introduction

The African continent is fast becoming a subject of global politics. This has manifested itself in the form of competition for natural resources and the establishment of military bases by the interested partners such as the European Union (EU), United States of America (USA), and People's Republic of China in the last decade. Competition between the US and the EU on the one hand and China on the other has become a source of conflict reflected in many civil wars visible on the continent. Snow (1988, cited in Stahl, 2018), stated that the European apprehension of China's presence and influence in Africa is a threat to Western supremacy and global

hegemony. A gooutandbuy policy, initiated by the Chinese policy makers, has its primary focus on the approach which has witnessed a Chinese oil resource corporation migrating to Africa, Central Asia, and South America to secure raw material supplies (IDE-JETRO, 2021). China this far has been able to establish itself as a major Official Development Assistance (ODA), due to its rapid economic growth. This role did not only bring China to a centre stage, but also has evoked fears in the minds of major donors. Some opinions have greatly criticised China's role in Africa which has been perceived as the new scramble for Africa (Stahl, 2018). Nevertheless, the western traditional donors might have decided to change their strategies and develop their ODA departments' foreign policies. The alarm which accompanies China's entry into Africa mirrors the Western countries' fears of China's position as a challenger in the world economy (Lönqvist, 2008). However, this is contrary to what most leaders in presentday Africa thinks. Just as many African governments have consciously turn to China as a potential partner in national development and regime legitimacy, African citizens have increasingly reached out to China for useful resources for personal and business progression (Mohan, Lampert, 2013). Chief Mukuni, the Head of Leya tribe, believes that Zambia now have 73 tribes, with the addition of the Chinese. He went further to insist on removing visas for Chinese tourists during the dry season, concluding that "We don't care about the color of the money, we just want to boost our tourist industry" (Yoneva, 2017). Some areas of China's influence in Africa include development projects, technical cooperation, medical assistance, and debt relief, loans and financial aid. China's footprints in Africa are very glaring and cut across almost all the 54 states that make up the continent. China's Assistant foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong in 2018 stressed that "China's cooperation with Africa has no political strings attached. It is a boost to local economic and social development and economically viable and winwin in nature" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2018). The Beijing forum on China-Africa cooperation, held from 3rd to 4th September 2018, produced two major outcomes: the Beijing Declaration, which is building an even closer and stronger China-Africa community with shared future, and the Forum on ChinaAfrica Cooperation (FOCAC) Beijing Action Plan for 2019-2021. The keynote address of President Xi Jinping of China, highlighted China's "Five-no" policies to Africa: 1) No interference in African pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions, 2) no interference in their internal affairs, 3) no imposition of China's will on them, 4) no attachment of political strings to assistance, 5) and no seeking of selfish political gains in the investment and financing cooperation (Xinhuanet, 2018). In recent years, China has become one of Africa's biggest, if not the strongest, partner. This relationship has led to China pumping billions of dollars into the continent. African states have benefited hugely from China's funded development project. During the 2018 China-Africa Forum for Cooperation Summit, China announced it set aside US\$60 billion for the development of Africa, this as a means to strengthen the China-Africa relations (Tubel, 2018).

There are huge differences between Cameroon and China, ranging from geographical location, population size, language, and GDP. China is located in the Asian continent, while Cameroon in the Central Part of Africa. According to the 2019 World Bank Report, the total Chinese population is estimated at over 1.3 billion people, while the Cameroon's total population

at over 25 million. The same World Bank report put China's GDP at US\$14.28 trillion, while Cameroon was US\$39.67 billion (World Bank Report, 2019). Mandarin is the main language in China, Cameroon has English and French as official languages. However, these differences in sociopolitical, economic, and cultural structure did not in any way prohibit these nations to find a common ground of cooperation. Their cooperation dates as far back as March 1971, when the then Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese Peoples' Political Consultative Conference Jia Quinglin arrived in Yaounde, Cameroon, for a threeday official visit (People's Daily Online, 2010). In 1973, the former president of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo visited China to meet with Mao Zedong, thus becoming the first African president to have ever visited China after the period of the most violent Cultural Revolution. Four years after this period, President Ahidjo returned to China to meet with Mao's successor Hua Guofeng (Bone, 2020). Between the 1970s and 1980s, several accords were signed between Cameroon and China which helped to solidify their cooperation in trade and cultural exchanges (Bone, 2020). The cooperation of these nations did not end even after the resignation of President Ahidjo in 1982. It has been extended and further strengthens under the the current President Paul Biya. In January 2007, the then Chinese President Hu Jintao paid an official visit to Cameroon during which bilateral cooperation was signed covering such areas as economy and technology, health, education, and telecommunications. Many fallouts have been recorded after he visited Cameroon, for example, during Hu visits the two nations concluded a 40 million Yuan (US\$5.15million) grant agreement and 30 million Yuan (US\$3.86 million) interest-free loan agreement for economic and technical cooperation. Furthermore, two concessional loans of Yuan 350 million (approx. US\$45.02 million) were granted to Cameroon (Musa, 2007). In 2008, the then China Minister of Culture Cai Wu's visited Cameroon and signed a cooperation agreement. The fallouts of his visit included in 2008 and 2010 the extension of planned implementation of the agreement with complementary items in the areas of culture, education, journalism, and other areas of possible exchange.

The aim of this study is to investigate the overall impact of China's foreign aid on Cameroon within a specific period from 2009-2020. According to Williams (2021), foreign aid is defined here as that international transfer of capital, goods or services that goes from one country or from one international organisation to the other for the benefits of the receiving country or its population. Williams went further to add that the aid can be military, economic or emergency humanitarian. In line with the foregoing overview of Cameroon and China relations that span over the years, this study is designed to:

- Examine perception of China's aid to Cameroon by the citizens,
- Assess whether China's foreign aid to Cameroon encourages local development in Cameroon.

These objectives lead to the following questions: 1) what are the effects of foreign relations with China, particularly in the domains of foreign aid to Cameroon? 2) What is the cost of the Chinese aid to Cameroon? 3) What conditions favour China's foreign aid to Cameroon? 4) How is this foreign aid implemented? 5) Does Chinese foreign aid encourage local development in Cameroon?

Even though the debate on China's influence in Africa has recently gained more attention, much is still to be done. Especially so, as little or no media and research attention has been paid to the impact of the China's foreign aid on Cameroon. The study of Sino-African cooperation has attracted some attention in Cameroon in recent years. Researchers studied its various aspects, for example, the economic cooperation between Cameroon and China, its infrastructure and investment projects in 2007-2018 (Mbajon, 2019), and impact of Chinese investment on Cameroon (Asongne, 2017). This topic is considered important and worth exploring due to its relevance for the development of Cameroon.

This paper is divided into six sections: Section one is the general introduction, it discusses China's interest in Cameroon, the scope and justification of the study. Section two offers review of selected literature and establishes the theoretical framework. Section three focuses on the sources and distribution of China's assistance to Cameroon. Section four examines the effect of China's foreign aid to Cameroon. Section five explains the methodology and, finally, Section six discusses research findings and conclusion.

China's interest in Cameroon

Over the past years, China has developed interest in Cameroon. The question that keeps one wondering are the reasons of this interest in Cameroon. Cameroon-China relations are somehow similar to the relations China has with other African countries. China's interest in establishing strong relations with African nations can be attributed to the need of or the quest for natural resources, expansion of exports market, and achieving economic growth. According to Khan and Baye (2008), in spite of great differences in economic structure compared to China, Cameroon has a great deal to offer to China as far as natural resources and market for manufacturing products are concerned. Encouraged by the efforts Cameroon has been undertaking in the past years to improve on its business atmosphere, China urges its firms to take the advantage of the country's investments potential. Furthermore, China wants its impacts on Cameroon is felt there, taking into consideration the huge natural resources deposits that is present in this country. It has urged its investors also to get involved in areas like mining or petrochemical and energy development. China's Director for African and West Asian Affairs in the Ministry of Commerce, Dong Wand, stated that, even the experiences gathered from other parts of the world, his country is also very much interested in lowcost housing development in Cameroon (Cameroon Tribune, 2017). Cameroon's political atmosphere has proven to be relatively stable and therefore good for business. The International Monetary Fund had projected a 5.5% growth in Cameroon GDP in 2017. Cameroon has been working very hard to achieve this vision until 2035, setting the following particular goals: to reduce poverty to a minimal level, become a middleincome country, become a newly industrialised country, consolidate democracy and enhance national unity (Paper, n.d.).The challenges are immense and meeting them requires total and unwavering commitment and support from not only Cameroonians as a people, but also from external partners. Economic emergence, therefore, requires opening up to partners that are willing to support,

among which China has proven to be one of Cameroon's major partners. In order to invite more Chinese support to Cameroon, the Cameroonian authorities consider it their duty to provide comprehensive information on Cameroon's potential areas that need China's intervention. Also, the geopolitical location of Cameroon is seen as a major force to reckon with. It is located at the heart of the Gulf Guinea, through which access is granted to the other landlocked countries like Chad and the Central African Republic, facilitating the trade into the interior. During the Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis of 1995, when there was a leadup vote against China at the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR), this vote would have condemned China for the human rights abuse. A visit was made to Cameroon by a member of the Commission, the then Premier of China Li Lanqing, who influenced Cameroon to vote against this resolution. As a result, the resolution went through without holding China accountable for any violations of human rights (Bone, 2020). This favour is said to have well returned to Cameroon, with regard to Cameroon's ongoing Anglophone crisis¹ since 2016. Opinions hold it that China has strongly been on the defence wall, preventing the matter brought up in the UN Security Council.

The scope and justification of the study

This study aims to investigate the overall impact of China's foreign aid on Cameroon. The researcher attempts to describe the compliance of the public to China's foreign aid to Cameroon, according to the needs and benefit of the population. This study was conducted specifically in Cameroon. Public opinion was sampled on the impact of China's foreign aid to Cameroon. The time period of 2009-2020 was chosen so as to achieve a balanced view on how successful China's foreign aid on Cameroon has been. This time period provides the respondents with an appropriate time to well understand any objectives the foreign aid was intended to serve. It also gives the respondents a very fresh recollection of their experiences with regard to any China's foreign assistance Cameroon had received this far.

Literature review

In order to have an empirical understanding of China-Cameroon relations, this paper makes reference to some academic literature on China's foreign policy. Among the emerging donors, China is by far the most important provider of aid. Although the amount of development assistance provided by other rising powers is not yet very significant, they are starting to establish specific development cooperation structure (Stahl, 2018). The rise of China is indeed one of the many significant geopolitical realities in the world today. With its non-interference policy, it is also sending waves of influence in the developing world through cooperation in economy and infrastructure development and it is considered to be an alternative to the US hegemony

¹ The conflict, referred to as the Cameroon Anglophone crisis, began in October 2016, when the lawyers and teachers in the English speaking regions (the Anglophone regions) of North-West and South took to the streets. This was the protest against the alleged government's intentions and efforts to systemically assimilate the two Anglophone regions, their legal and educational systems. The government responded to the protest with military force.

(Sultan & Sultan, 2018). African leaders have come to believe in the values of their cooperation with China which, according to them, will further promote China-Africa cooperation and will accelerate the realisation of sustainable development in African countries. They also believe that the belt and road initiative is closely linking Asia and Africa together, injecting new vitality to China-Africa cooperation and offering innovative solutions for global governance (Sike, 2018). As Africa is undergoing a new round of awakening, the emerging countries represented by China can serve as a key driving force. Also, China and Africa should jointly fight back against the discourse hegemony and ideological attacks from western countries. When it comes to the influence and effects of Africa-China cooperation on Africa development, no one knows them better than the African countries themselves (Li, 2014).

Despite China's growing presence in Africa, Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) into Africa account for only a small share both of China's total outward investment and of most African countries inward investment. Thus, in recent years, Chinese FDIs have been diversified towards manufacturing and other nonresource sector in order to enhance Africa's high-economic growth (Brautigam et al., 2018). The relationship between China and African countries is bilaterally consensual, economically motivated, and globally based on free market dictum. Thus, every significant power or economic force is dealing with China (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011) the debate on these relations has just begun within a global context. The discussion on the nature of South-South relations, especially between a newly emerging industrial country, located in Asia, and the African countries, which represent the least industrialized area of the world, has more recently brought the subject of the unequal balance of power between the two regions under intellectual scrutiny. Several intellectual debates on China-Africa relations have been mostly reactive in the sense that many analyses have focused on Africa's past relations with the Global North. The existing literature on these relations has, to a large extent, not sufficiently located the discourse within the existing dominant ideologies, namely neo-imperialism and neo-liberalism. It is also important to localize these relations within the World Trade Organization's dogmas and practices, the United Nations Charter, and African Union Charter in order to assess whether or not they can be characterized as either neo-imperialist or neo-liberal. Furthermore, it is important to identify on which specific areas these economic relations have generally focused and in which specific African countries they have been dominant. How do the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party perceive and define them? How do the African Union and specific African countries perceive and define these relations? And what are the policy implications in China and in the African public sectors? The main objective of this paper is, using the data and figures from Chinese sectoral investments and export-import of China and specific African countries to make a critical evaluative analysis of these relations and determine if they are qualified to be called neo-imperialist or neo-liberal. The article is both an empirically-based analysis and a reflection.

© 2011 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden.,"author":{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Lumumba-Kasongo","given":"Tukumbi","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":"","container-title":"African and Asian Studies","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"2-3","issued":{"date-parts":[[2011]]},"number-of-pages":"234-266","title":"China-Africa relations:

A neo-imperialism or a neo-colonialism? A reflection”,”type”:”book”,”volume”:”10”,”uris”:[, <http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=b896c109-8acf-4dca-986f-295aca4dc8d3>]”,”mendeley”:{,formattedCitation”:(Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011. The impact of BRI (Brazil, Russia, India) and China’s foreign aid should not be understated. Although often viewed as an initiative to simply promote economic prosperity, the BRI is also a vehicle for China to enhance people-to-people bonds, “win-win cooperation” and cultural exchange, all of which are financed and interlinked directly with China’s development cooperation (Lynch et al., 2020). Chinese finance has become an increasingly important source of capital for infrastructure projects in Africa. Despite decreasing over the past years, and falling below US\$9 billion in 2019 for the first time since 2010, Chinese finance will continue to be an important source of infrastructure finance for African countries (Acker, Brautigam, 2021). In a broader range of fields and on a deeper level, China-Africa cooperation has expanded with even richer connotation and delivered comprehensive economic and social benefits (Huang, 2018). China-Africa relations hold a lot of promises and benefits for both, for example Africa has to offer huge market and abundant mineral resources, while China brings in development assistance for critical infrastructure sectors, technology transfer, scholarships and cultural exchange (Zwanbin, 2020).

Theoretical framework

In the course of this study, the researcher made use of two different theories deemed necessary for understanding the analysis of foreign policy between China and Cameroon. These include the theory of bilateralism and realism. Agreements signed between two countries are usually within specificities so that each party goes home equally satisfied. Over the years, there has been growing debate on the merit of bilateralism. The theory of bilateralism concerns relations between two nations. This theory is different from other theories, like multilateralism which concerns more than two nations, and unilateralism which concerns just one nation or party that acts on its own. Over the years, nations have been relating to each other through bilateral relations. The agreement between states recognises that each party has to send an ambassador, who establishes oneself in the capital city. For example, there is Chinese Embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon capital city, and Cameroon’s embassy established in Beijing, China’s capital city. These establishments help in facilitating communication and relations between both countries. Economic bilateralism is common between nations, whereby both parties may agree mutually to lower their tariff. Security bilateralism is also established between nations for the purpose of defence in case of external attack. Bilateralism is very well relevant in today’s economy – all countries need the support of one another if they are to achieve economic growth protection. The theory of bilateralism offers the possibility of mutual gains. It also offers greater freedom and efficiency of action because fewer actors are involved. However, the other school of thought criticised it of being too costly and insufficient to deal with some world problems (Legro, 2008).

Another theory used to support the present study is the theory of realism, of which a classical proponent was Hans J. Morgenthau (1940-1980), a classical and comprehensive realist, who

developed it in the aftermath of World War II. His preoccupation was to address the relationship between interest and morality in international politics (Antunes, Camisao, 2018). The basis of realism in international relations implies that all nations are working to increase their own power or are working for their common interest. Those that manage to hold the most power thrive well and can easily engulf the achievements of smaller or less powerful nation. The theory, therefore, implies that the maximal goal of a nation can hardly be attained and can only be achieved either by deceit or violence. In recent time, evidence of the realism can be seen in China's foreign policy with it growing might. China has been extending its diplomatic and economic relation not only to Africa, but also to the rest of the world. The first assumption of realism is that nationstate is the principal actor in international relations. The second is that of a unitary actor, the third is that decisionmakers are rational actors in the sense that rational decisionmaking leads to the pursuit of the national interest. Finally, states live in a context of anarchy, that is, in the absence of anyone being in charge internationally. The classical realism provides a theoretical tool that enables a more realistic analysis of the future of world order. When perceived from Morgenthau's point of view, the world will perhaps be less chaotic than the Liberals argue (Zhang, 2017). The realism theory was later modified by Kenneth Waltz (1979), with the introduction of the neorealism or the structural realism theory. The neorealism sees power as the most important factor in international relations. Waltz emphasis put on neorealism implies that all states are constrained by existing in an international anarchic system, and furthermore, that any path of development or any objective pursued is therefore based on their relative strength in comparison against other states (Antunes, Camisao, 2018).

Sectoral distribution of China's aid on Cameroon

Cash loan

China's growing presence in the global scene as a major donor to oversea nations did not leave Cameroon aside. Since the cooperation of these two nations, Cameroon has secured various aid from China. Assistance to Cameroon has been realized through grant or donation, interest free loan, and concessional loan. It is no doubt that such aid has huge impact on the nation's GDP. Compared with other donor institutions, Cameroon finds dealing with China very much convenient and comfortable based on some of its policy advantages that it has over others, like the World Bank. The World Bank and China share two different patterns. While the World Bank's stated goals are to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity at a global scale (WBG, 2015), China's goal, on the contrary, is based on mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity of both the lender and borrower (The People's Republic of China, 2011). Unlike the World Bank, the Chinese government is not a single creditor with a unified and coherent policy framework guiding all its official lending activities. There are many Chinese government lending institutions, including stateowned policy banks, stateowned commercial banks, and state-owned enterprises engaged in official lending activities, and each lender has its own policies. Also, the World Bank seeks to manage credit risk in its overall portfolio. Unlike commercial lenders, the

Bank does not set prices for its sovereign borrowers based on their risk profile, which is why the International Development Association (IDA) lending terms to low income countries and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) lending terms to middle and upper income countries do not demonstrate much differences (Morris et al., 2020).

Sources of China's cash loan to Cameroon includes the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the People's Bank of China representing the Central Bank of China, other Chinese privately owned and commercial banks like the China Construction Bank, Agricultural Bank of China (ABC), Bank of China (BoC), the Eximbank and the China Development Bank. China's financial donation to Cameroon is a strong element to reckon with. In the past years, Cameroon has had some difficulties in repaying its debt. These nonrepayments of debts the International Development Association usually are either postponed or cancelled, Cameroon have had some of it debts cancelled by China. For example, China made an announcement of forgiving Cameroon's US\$78 million out of a total of US\$5.7 billion debt. This was China's move to support the economic hardship of the Central African countries. The said loan was due to be repaid in 2018 with a total burden of \$5.7 billion (Shaban, 2019). Table 1 shows the sectoral source of China's cash loan to Cameroon from the period of 2009-2019, where the data was made available. It shows the various loan IDs, status, year, lender, amount in US dollars (USD), interest rate, libor rate, grace period, and terms.

Table 1: Sectoral source of China's loan to Cameroon in 2009-2020

Loan ID	Status	Year	Lender	USD (M)	Interest rate	Libor rate	Grace period	Term
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
CM.028	Implementation	2009	Eximbank	97	2		5	21
CM.068	Completed	2009	Eximbank	44				
CM.005	Completed	2009	Eximbank	28	2		5.5	20
CM.008	Completed	2009	Eximbank	52	1		11.5	32
CM.084	Completed	2010	Eximbank	32				
CM.010	Completed	2010	Eximbank	51	2		4	19.5
CM.011	Completed	2010	Eximbank	14				
CM.012	Signed	2010	CIDCA	8	0			
CM.013	Completed	2011	Eximbank	69	2		8	34
CM.014	Completed	2011	Eximbank	423	2		7	20.5
CM.015	Signed	2011	CIDCA	16	0			
CM.016	Completed	2011	Eximbank	71	2		2	19.5
CM.018	Implementation	2011	Eximbank	541		Euribor 6 months+310 bps	6	16
CM.017	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	483	2		7	21
CM.033	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	333		Euribor 6 months + 300 bps	2	11

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
CM.036	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	168	2		5.5	21
CM.027	Completed	2013	Eximbank	71	2		5	21
CM.035	Implementation	2013	Eximbank	156	2		5	21
CM.080	Signed	2013	CIDCA	12				
CM.081	Signed	2013	CIDCA	17				
CM.034	Completed	2013	Eximbank	175	2		5	20.5
CM.058	Implementation	2014	Eximbank	389				
CM.083	Completed	2015	Eximbank	90				
CM.020	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	82				
CM.038	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	337				
CM.062	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	678				
CM.026	Completed	2016	Eximbank	135	2		5	20
CM.049	Implementation	2016	ICBC	303				
CM.078	Implementation	2016	Eximbank	62				
CM.069	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	142		6M Libor + 3.2%	3	15
CM.070	Implementation	2017	BoC	123			2	10
CM.046	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	525	2		5	20
CM.054	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	150	2		5	20
CM.065	Signed	2018	Eximbank	86				
CM.071	Implementation	2018	BoC	42				
CM.077	Signed	2019	BoC	56				
CM.082	Signed	2019	BoC	42				
-	-	2020	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Brautigam, Hwang, 2021.

The analysis of the data in Table 1 clearly indicates that Cameroon has not only been receiving from the main government of China. Greater contribution has been made by private financial institutions from China. Important to note here is that some of these loans have been granted with no interest rate. Maximum of the interest rate received is 2% only, except in 2009 with the loan ID number CM.008 that had 1% interest rate. The term period varies, usually with Eximbank, there are four period components of the terms of the loan. The interest rate, the grace period, the repayment period and the total term period or maturity and tenure also vary. The grace period falls between the signing date and the first disbursement, this period requires no payment. While the grace period, which is usually 5-years with Eximbank of China is over, repayment begins with a life span of 15 years. The analysis shows that the longest term is in 2011 with the loan ID number CM.013 worth US\$69m that has a term of 34 years plus a grace period of 8 years. The least term is in 2012 with the loan ID number CM.033 of a total amount of US\$333m with zero interest rate and a grace period of 2 years. So far the highest loan was recorded in 2015 with an open loan ID number CM.083 from Eximbank with an open amount of US\$678m. The least

signed loan was in 2010 with ID number CM.012 and a sum of US\$8m. It is worth to mention here that according to the John Hopkins SAIS, China-Africa Research Initiative (2021), apart from the government of China, Cameroon had received in total loan sum from other Chinese financiers. For example, in the period of 2000-2019, Cameroon had received a total of US\$5557m from the Eximbank of China, US\$303m from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd. (ICBC), US\$263m from Bank of China (BoC) and US\$79m from others.

Funded projects in Cameroon

China's assistance to Cameroon is very glaring in the numerous infrastructural projects that are carried out through Chinese funded projects. This is so, as most of the loan obtained from China are geared towards infrastructural and development projects. For example, way back in 1982, with a supported amount of US\$75 million loan from China, Cameroon had the Lagdo Dam constructed (Bone, 2020). In 2017, a Chinese businessman Lu Fuqing announced a plan to build an auto plant in an industrial zone near the Chinesebuilt deep seaport in Cameroon. This plant is said to be the first car plant in Central Africa (Sixtus, 2017). Motivated by favourable business climate in Cameroon, China has been urging its local firms to invest in Cameroon. Speaking at a press conference on 28 March 2017, the official of the Ministry of Commerce noted that Cameroon's economy has been very resilient in spite of falling oil prices that have affected many economies (*Cameroon Tribune*, 2017). The construction of the Memve'le Dam in 2003 at a cost of FCFA 420 billion, estimated at US\$673m, a project jointly financed by the Eximbank of China and Cameroon. With a loan solely for the construction of the dam, this project was implemented by China International Water and Electrical Corporation on the one hand and Cameroon government on the other hand, as well as the African Development Bank (*AidData*, 2003). Like in the other years, financial aid from China has been project oriented. It is evidenced that China's loans to Cameroon are exclusively project based which has led to the realisation of some major outstanding projects in Cameroon. Table 2 shows the Information and Telecommunication Technology (ICT) consistently received and benefited substantially since 2009 to 2020 with varied amounts. Also the water and energy sector ha over these years been funded enormously in different years. This is in line with the government policy to develop the energy sector – evidenced by the construction of various dams in the Cameroon, e.g. the Memve'le dam. The least beneficiary to this aid has been the educational sector that received very little. This sector has been left in the hands of the scholarship, for instance, in 2013, 31 Chinese volunteer teachers dispatched from China to Cameroon to deliver Chinese language courses (Cameroon-China Embassy, Yaounde, 2013).

Other construction projects include e.g. the Kribi deep Sea Port Project – Phase I, financed through a loan at a cost of \$US423 in 2011 by Eximbank of China. China financed 85% of the project, while Cameroon was to complete the remaining 15%. However, this project was later renegotiated and Cameroon did not pay anything in the course of the project. China National Electric Equipment Corporation and the China Engineering Company Ltd. were in charge of

implementing the project (*AidData*, 2011). China donated also the Malaria Research Centre, housed by the Yaounde's Gynaecology-Obstetrics and Paediatrics Hospital. The project was raised at a cost of US\$400,000 (*AidData*, 2009).

Other projects include: the ongoing construction of the Cameroon National Assembly through Chinese assistance. The deputy speaker of the Cameroon National Assembly Theodore Datoua, upon visiting the site, stated that the project is a result of the positive cooperation that ties Cameroon and China. The project has a duration of 46 months and is estimated to cost FCFA 55 billion. It is constructed by a Chinese company China Urban Construction Group (BUCG) (Amabo, 2021). Other projects carried out by Chinese cooperation include the construction of Yaounde multipurpose sport complex, that was inaugurated in 2009, financed by China at a cost of US\$30m (Khan, Baye, 2008). China has also been involved in the construction of the major stadia in Cameroon, especially as Cameroon hosted the African Cup of Nations in 2021. For example, in 2014, the China Machinery Engineering Corporation handed over the Limbe Municipal stadium with 20,000 seats to the Cameroon government. At the same time in the Western region of Cameroon, the Chinese firm completed the construction of the Bafoussam Omnisport Stadium containing 20,000 seats on the different spectator stands. Table 2 below exhibits the sectoral distribution of China's aid to Cameroon from the period of 2009-2019, where the data was made available. It shows the loan ID number, year, lender, amount in USD, and the purpose for which the loan is intended.

Table 2: Sectoral distribution of China's funded projects in Cameroon in 2009-2020

Loan ID	Status	Year	Lender	USD (M)	Purpose
1	2	3	4	5	6
CM.028	Implementation	2009	Eximbank	97	Douala Water Supply Project - Phase II
CM.068	Completed	2009	Eximbank	44	Limbe Stadium
CM.005	Completed	2009	Eximbank	28	Bafoussam Omnisports Stadium (Kouekong Stadium) Construction
CM.008	Completed	2009	Eximbank	52	Optic Fiber Backbone Network (Construction of CTPhone)
CM.084	Completed	2010	Eximbank	32	350;000 CDMA Lines
CM.010	Completed	2010	Eximbank	51	Mekin Hydropower Project 15MW
CM.011	Completed	2010	Eximbank	14	Engineering Machinery; Included in Rehabilitation Process of the State-owned Civil Engineering Equipment Pool (MATGENIE)
CM.012	Signed	2010	CIDCA	8	Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement
CM.013	Completed	2011	Eximbank	69	Electronic Postal Program
CM.014	Completed	2011	Eximbank	423	Kribi Port Project - Phase I
CM.015	Signed	2011	CIDCA	16	Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement
CM.016	Completed	2011	Eximbank	71	Low Cost Social Housing (1500 Units)
CM.018	Implementation	2011	Eximbank	541	Memve'ele Hydropower Project 211 MW

1	2	3	4	5	6
CM.017	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	483	Yaounde-Douala Highway - Phase I
CM.033	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	333	Military Equipment to MINDEF
CM.036	Implementation	2012	Eximbank	168	National Telecom Broadband Network Project - Phase I
CM.027	Completed	2013	Eximbank	71	MA60 Chinese Aircrafts Purchase; Two Units
CM.035	Implementation	2013	Eximbank	156	Emergency Telecommunication Network
CM.080	Signed	2013	CIDCA	12	Various Projects (Loan 2013/01)
CM.081	Signed	2013	CIDCA	17	Various Projects (Loan 2013/02)
CM.034	Completed	2013	Eximbank	175	Potable Water Supply Projects in 9 Towns: Bafoussam; Bamenda; Kribi and Sangmelima - Phase I
CM.058	Implementation	2014	Eximbank	389	Kribi-Lolabe Highway; Kribi-Edoua Section - Phase I (100km)
CM.083	Completed	2015	Eximbank	90	Photovoltaic System; Electrification of 350 Communities - Phase I (166 Communities)
CM.020	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	82	National Fiber-Optic Backbone Expansion
CM.038	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	337	National Broadband Telecommunication Network - Phase II (including South Atlantic Inter Link (SAIL) undersea cable and Zamengoe data center)
CM.062	Implementation	2015	Eximbank	678	Yaounde Potable Water Supply from Sanaga River (PAEPYS)
CM.026	Completed	2016	Eximbank	135	E-National Higher Education Network
CM.049	Implementation	2016	ICBC	303	Warak Hydropower Project on Bini River; Adamaoua 75MW
CM.069	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	142	Memve'ele to Ebolowa Hydropower Transmission Lines ; 225kV
CM.070	Implementation	2017	BoC	123	Photovoltaic System; Electrification of 350 Communities - Phase II (184 Communities)
CM.046	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	525	Kribi Port Project - Phase II (EBC Part; total US\$675million)
CM.054	Implementation	2017	Eximbank	150	Kribi Port Project - Phase II (CL Part; total US\$675million)
CM.065	Signed	2018	Eximbank	86	Potable Water Supply Projects in 9 Towns: Dschang; Yabassi; Maroua; Garoua; Garoua-Boulai - Phase II
CM.071	Implementation	2018	BoC	42	National Extension of Intelligent Urban Video Surveillance System - Phase I
CM.077	Signed	2019	BoC	56	Ebolowa-Kribi; 225 KV and Mbalmayo-Mekin; 90 KV Transmission Lines
CM.078	Implementation	2016	Eximbank	62	Project for the Rehabilitation of the CRTV
CM.082	Signed	2019	BoC	42	National Extension of Intelligent Urban Video Surveillance System - Phase II
-	-	2020	-	-	-

Source: Brautigam, Hwang, 2021.

From the analysis of the data displayed in Table 2 it is evident that Cameroon has been striving towards achieving economic development. This is so, as the loans obtained have been development and project oriented. These loans are intended for a wide variety of purposes in different sectors. From the list, one can conclude that with realisation of these projects Cameroon is truly on the right way towards achieving by 2035 its vision of development. Some purposes of the loans from 2009-2019, according to Brautigam and Hwang (2021), include: the Douala water Supply Project – Phase II financed with an amount of US\$97m from Eximbank of China. The realisation of the Limbe Stadium project with a loan signed in 2009, the Baffoussam Stadium with a loan signed still in 2009, and recently, the National Extension of Intelligent Urban Video Surveillance System – Phase II project financed with a loan signed in 2019 worth US\$42m. So far, the Eximbank of China has been the main private financier and has exhibited high trust and confidence in terms of credit to Cameroon. Other projects realised by other financiers include: Phase I of the National Extension of Intelligent Urban Video Surveillance System financed with a loan from the Bank of China (BoC), the Ebolowa-Kribi 225KV and the Mbalmayo-Merkin 90KV transmission lines financed with a loan from the BoC signed in 2019, the Warak Hydro-power Project on Bini River, Adamaoua 75MW Project to be funded with a loan from Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) worth US\$303m, signed in 2016. Various Projects were financed with the Loan 2013/1 and 2, worth US\$12m and US\$17m, by the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) in 2013. The highest amount was recorded in 2015 – US\$678m for the Yaounde Potable Water Supply from Sanaga River (PAEPYS) project obtained from the Eximbank, and the least is recorded in 2010 – US\$8m gotten from CIDCA. From every indication one is tempted to conclude that if Cameroon is to realise its vision until 2035, then it will be thanks to the People’s Republic of China, taking into consideration the number of loans and the purposes for which they are destined.

Humanitarian assistance to Cameroon

Cameroon is not only receiving assistance from the central government of China. The aid also comes from other institutions and individuals. For example, in the fight against COVID-19 in 2020, one of the China’s richest men, Jack Ma, co-founder of the Alibaba, single handedly donated to Cameroon medical supplies, such as 20,000 COVID-19 testing kits, 1000 medical protective suits, and 100,000 masks that were specifically destined to fight COVID-19 (Agbor-togo, 2020).

With the continuous increase in the cases of COVID-19, on 5 March 2021 the Yaounde Central Hospital representing the Minister of Public Health, Hassan Ben Bachir, received a batch of medical equipment donated for the fight against the coronavirus. Some of the items received included ventilators, oxygenators, and electrocardiographs from China, represented by Guo Jian-jun, the Economic and Commercial Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon (CGTN, 2021).

Still in the fight against COVID-19, on 12 June 2020 a donation worth FCFA164.5m was handed over to Cameroon by the Chinese Ambassador to Cameroon Wan Yingwu and received for Cameroon by the Minister Delegate for Defence at the presidency of Joseph Beti Assomo. The gift included COVID-19 testing kits worth approximately 2m Yuans. In a break down, the items includes 50,000 individual protective masks, 6000 surgical masks, and 4,200 protective glasses. Materials were aimed at following up patients. Beti Assomo, the Cameroon Minister of Defence, in emphasizing the cooperation between China and Cameroon, mentioned that although China is also hit with coronavirus, yet it did not prevent China from supporting Cameroon. He went further to conclude that this is why China is today one of Cameroon major partner (Hilton, 2020).

Also on 7 April 2015, China represented by its ambassador to Cameroon, Wei Wenhua, attended a delivery ceremony of two Xinzhou 60 aircraft, that took place at the Younded Nsimalen International Airport. Representing the Cameroon government was the Cameroon Minister of Transport Enkiri Robert. The two aircraft delivered were manufactured and designed by China Aviation Technology International Holding Co., Ltd. The aircraft were in all handed over to Cameroon Airlines for civil aviation flights. This donation follows other similar donation that was made in 2012 to the Cameroon Air Force, when another Xinzhou 60 aircraft was delivered to the Cameroon Air Forces (China Embassy in Cameroon, n.d.). According to Bone (2020), Cameroon and China have signed a good number of military accords thanks to which China is supplying to Cameroon small arms, military patrol boats, radio equipment and is providing to Cameroon military training.

Also, on 17 November 2015, in the Cameroon economic capital Douala the Cameroon's formal Prime Minister inaugurated the Douala Gynaecology-Obstetrics and Paediatrics Hospital. This ultra-modern hospital complex is said to be worth approximately FCA15billion and was financed through a loan agreement signed between Cameroon and the People's Republic of China during the visit of President Hu Jintao to Cameroon. This project was launched in 2009 and the construction works were performed by the China Shanxi Construction Engineering Group Corp. The Gynaecology-Obstetrics and Paediatrics Hospital in Douala came as second after a similar project carried out in Cameroon capital city, Yaounde (*Business in Cameroon*, 2015).

The Cameroon's political crisis, an uprising of the Anglophone Problem that started in 2016, led to untold destruction of property and loss of lives of citizens from the South and North West Regions of the country. The Cameroon government launched the plan of reconstruction and development of these regions, and the Chinese government committed itself to support the government of Cameroon in this project through humanitarian assistance. The project was estimated to cost FCFA12.7 billion and was destined for a population of close to 80000 people. In an announcement made by the Cameroon Head of State, President Biya, the government of China did commit itself to provide 20 million Yuan, estimated about FCFA1.7 billion, to support the project (Andzongo, 2018).

Human resource assistance

Away from politics, other domain of China's assistance to Cameroon is the Chinese personnel that are presently in Cameroon providing different specialised services in the areas of health, construction, processing, and trading. Chinese presence in Cameroon has been growing steadily over the years. According to the John Hopkins SAIS (2021), as of 2019, a total of 2515 Chinese workers were present in Cameroon, cutting across different sectors in the Cameroon's economy. They can be found in the sectors of health, construction, agriculture, education, and trading. For example, August 2019 saw a batch of Chinese medical personnel of doctors and nurses in Mbalmayo providing medical assistance to the population in that community at no cost (Xinhua 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to mention here that evidence on the ground shows that most of the labour force provided in Chinese funded projects are very often provided by the Chinese themselves, Cameroonians are left to provide minor services. Table three shows the trend of Chinese population over time in Cameroon from 2009-2020, where the data was made available.

Table 3. Chinese workers in Cameroon in 2009-2020

No.	Year	Number of workers
1	2009	716
2	2010	607
3	2011	1063
4	2012	2309
5	2013	2450
6	2014	3636
7	2015	4303
8	2016	3775
9	2017	2677
10	2018	2783
11	2019	2515
12	2020	-

Source: China Africa Research Initiative, 2021.

It should be noted that the Chinese workers sent to work in Cameroon under the Chinese contracts are providing labour services in areas like construction, factory works, health, and education. Apart from these areas, a good number of Chinese are also seen in the areas of trading. The table therefore shows that as the years are going by, the number of Chinese present in Cameroon is increasing. For example, in 2009 the Chinese population in Cameroon numbered 716 persons scattered in different sectors. In 2019 it attained 2515. The increasing number can be justified with the warm cooperation between Cameroon and China. Chinese population in Cameroon have also boosted the country's economy as a good number of them are involved in

petty and wholesale trading. A good number of Chinese population are very well established in major cities like Douala and Yaounde. For this reason, Chinese products have been flourishing in the Cameroonian market. At a time they were far less expensive and therefore quite affordable, especially for the low income earners, than some products imported from different countries. For instance, in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the Cameroonian market there were commonly available old fashioned analogue telephones. This significantly affected the internet accessibility, as very few could afford sophisticated smart android phones. Now, unlike in the last 10 years, the local markets are filled up with major Chinese brands of smartphones, e.g. Huawei, Techno and ZTE, that are not only available, but quite affordable. The availability of these phones contributed to the increasing number of internet access in Cameroon and, consequently, enhanced access to information. Other products include Chinese shoes, toys and dresses that predominate on the Cameroonian local markets.

Effects of China's foreign aid to Cameroon

As part of the diversification of its partnership, the Government of Cameroon is committed to its bilateral relations with Emerging Countries for the development of its economy. Its relations with China have been very fruitful, in particular through the implemented financial instruments (Eximbank of China, Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China). Over time, China has become a strategic partner of Cameroon, financing large-scale projects in the infrastructure sector. Relations with China have left huge impact and evoked mixed feelings in the Cameroonian population.

Foreign aid poses a great challenge to advancing democracy and the rule of law. This is evident when the aid is provided to autocratic governments – it creates a larger pool of resources for the government officials and political elites to fight over for their own selfish and personal gains, which can have a detrimental effect on the reform policies (Khan, Baye 2008). It is, therefore, tempting to believe that the majority of conflicts, political instability, civil wars and coups d'état, that have been happening especially in Africa in the past decades, may be well attributed to the large foreign aid generously granted to these demanding countries. Measuring the impact of China's foreign aid to Cameroon may seem somewhat challenging and difficult. To some, the impact of this aid is still to be felt. However, because most of this aid is gearing towards developmental projects, opinions gathered indicated that much of these projects have only been realised after signing but have also been abandoned before completion. For example, the Kribi deep seaport for which the loan agreement was signed in 2011, with the goal of reducing poverty and increasing economic growth, cannot still be boasting of completion. To some, the projects still remains a vague dream, with no visible link to their daily lives. Another case here is the 196km phase one of the major highway linking Douala, the country's economic capital, and Yaoundé, its political capital. A project, for which a loan was acquired in 2012, started in 2014 with completion date 48 months later. This project had witnessed several postponements from October 2018 to December 2020, and most recently to October 2021. Opinion holds that this delay in the realisation of this

project can be attributed to bureaucracy in bills payments. To some Cameroonians, the new date set for its completion still seems to be far from real. Another project that has benefited from the Chinese aid is the 15mw Memve'ele Hydropower, for which a loan worth US\$541 was acquired in 2011 from the Eximbank of China and which was to be co-financed by the African Development Bank and the Government of Cameroon. This project was set to be completed in 2017. The results of this projects are still far from being felt due to delays in its completion and the unavailability of the transportation lines. Such delays and incompleteness have affected the locals negatively. Easterly (2006) contends that the aid has done more harm than good, pointing to substantial evidence that foreign aid programs hold back countries and make them dependent. Several African countries are unable to carry out any of their fundamental functions, such as the institution of newly established structures, the maintenance of basic systems and services or the provision of necessary public services and infrastructures, without foreign aid administered in the form of projects or technical assistance (Brautigam, Knack, 2004).

On the positive note, foreign aid is commended for its constructive impact on economic growth, noticeable in diverse measures, such as: 1) increase in investments, 2) rising capacity to import capital goods or technology, 3) less or no adverse effect on investment and savings, and 4) increase in the capital productivity and promotion of endogenous technical change (Mursheed, Khanaum, 2013). Izobo (2020) mentioned that foreign aid is undeniably a crucial source of financial possessions with a potential to promote the rule of law, democratic governance and, in turn, economic development. Brautigam and Knack (2004) further stated that foreign aid helps governments to strengthen their institutions by providing more of educational and technical support with the intention of building strong legislative, executive, and judicial systems to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. Foreign aid can further improve governance and respect for the rule of law by reducing corruption through the management of a country's expenditure and revenue creation in a legitimate manner.

According to some opinions, Chinese aid to Cameroon has gone a long way to improve the livelihood of Cameroonians. Cameroon and China established diplomatic relations in 1971, that is more than 50 years ago. Chinese aid to Cameroon has continued to expand over the years. China has provided grants and concessional loans, military aid, trade aid, and humanitarian aid. This aid is multifaceted and enables Cameroon to resolve its infrastructure deficit. In addition, China's interventions have multiplied over the years and they cover areas such as security, agriculture, health, telecommunications, trade, education, water supply, and sports and recreation. Cameroon has seen its stadia constructed by Chinese, such as the Baffoussam and Limbe Omnisport stadia with 20,000 spectators' seats each, financed by the Eximbank of China in 2009, the construction of the Gynaecology-Obstetrics and Paediatrics Hospital in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé, the construction of the Yaoundé multipurpose sport complex, the construction of the Memve'ele hydropower plant financed by the Eximbank of China in 2011, the realisation of the National Extension of Intelligent Urban Video Surveillance Systems financed by the Bank of China in 2018, the expansion of the National Fiber Optic Backbone financed by the Eximbank of China in 2015, and a host of other projects that have been realised through China's grants. The Cameroon

population have also benefited from the availability of affordable Chinese products, especially electronics, that are flourishing in the local market. All these have gone a long way to improve the living standard of Cameroonians.

From the onset, the Sino-Cameroonian relationship has proven to be very fruitful and is still promising. This is confirmed by senior staff at the Cameroon's Ministry of External Relations, the Ministry of Planning and regional Development, and the Ministry of Finance. At the international level, the respective policies of the Heads of States, for example the war against Boko Haram, managing the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, received reciprocal support in the form of Chinese donations for humanitarian purposes. The two countries share common views on the essential principles, namely the respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the states in the international bodies and the reciprocal support for the candidacies of their nationals in the international civil organisations. On a national plan, as a friendly partner nation, China has been supportive to Cameroon's economic and social development, especially to Cameroon's attaining by 2035 its development goals. China regularly responds to the Cameroonian appeals. The cooperation in terms of financing links the two partners. Several structural and strategic projects are implemented, important for the Cameroonian economy and contributing to the well-being of the population. Cameroonians have witnessed increase in their wellbeing through the Chinese assistance in different projects. In fact, according to the officials from the Ministry of External Relations, over the last years Chinese foreign aid to Cameroon have had tremendous positive impact on the lives of the Cameroon's population.

Methodology

This paper employs both primary and secondary sources of data, gathered with the use of questionnaires designed to capture the views of Cameroonians. Other secondary sources, such as the academic literature related to the topic, were used. A review of literature, the research papers, works of recognized scholars, standard publications issued by institutions, reports, documents, and internet sources, as well as other minor references were used. 100 structured questionnaires were administered, both online and using a traditional method, to randomly selected participants. Workers in the Chinese funded projects in Cameroon were also sampled. Additionally, some detailed interviews were carried out using well-structured questionnaires that were very flexible. They were directed to some selected state officials that are concerned with the implementation and follow up of China's foreign aid and interested in maintaining relations with China. Among these were officials drawn from the Cameroon's Ministries of External Relation (MINREX), Ministry of Planning and Regional Development (MINIPAT), and the Ministry of Finance (MINFI). During selecting respondents, preference was given to state officials in the capital city Yaounde, as these officials are directly involved in policy making and follow up of direct implementation of foreign aid. Any input obtained from these interviews was considered relevant, as it allowed to investigate practical views regarding the impact of China's foreign aid to Cameroon.

Research findings and discussion

Table 4 exhibits the results obtained from the survey. It shows various responses, ranging from description of the sampled questions to the responses that include: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly Disagree (SD). The responses also portray the mean and standard deviation of the various variables, as well as the global mean.

Table 4: Participants' assessment of China's foreign aid to Cameroon within the last 10 years

Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Satisfaction with Chinese aid to Cameroon	19 (19.0%)	50 (50.0%)	4 (4.0%)	27 (27.0%)	2.04	.52
Level of satisfaction with the management of China's foreign aid	4 (4.0%)	19 (19.0%)	50 (50.0%)	27.0 (27.0%)	2.07	.511
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
China's foreign aid has been helpful to Cameroon over the last 10 years.	12 (12.0%)	49 (49.0%)	22 (22.0%)	17 (17.0%)	2.40	.949
Direct or indirect impact of China's aid to Cameroonians felt individually	13 (13.0%)	42 (42.0%)	25 (25.0%)	20 (20.0%)	2.95	.886
Foreign aid from China encourages local development in Cameroon	19 (19.0%)	27 (27.0%)	23 (23.0%)	31 (31.0)	2.34	.911
Ratings of the costly nature of foreign aid from China to Cameroonians	35 (35.0%)	34 (34.0%)	18 (18.0%)	8 (8.0%)	2.99	.811
Whether Cameroon can develop without foreign aid	28 (28.0%)	42 (42.0%)	12 (12.0%)	18 (18.0%)	3.35	.164
Mutuality of China-Cameroon cooperation as a result of aid	10 (10.0%)	20 (20.0%)	31 (31.0%)	20 (20.0%)	2.20	1.013
Desire that Cameroon should receive more foreign aid from China	9 (9.0%)	25 (25.0%)	37 (37.0%)	29 (29.0%)	3.01	1.04
Global mean					2.44	

Source: Author's own work.

Demographically, the sample contained more male participants (60.0%). Almost all (97.2%) participants belonged to the working age group (18 years and above). This indicates an active workforce with adequate gender representation. The study recorded more than three quarter of the responses which confirmed that Cameroon has received aid from China within the last 10 years – (88.0%) against (12.0%) who thought otherwise.

Perception of China's foreign aid for Cameroon over the last 10 years

Table 4 shows a substantial (23.0%) level of satisfaction with the aid Cameroon government receives from China. Most of the participants (77.0%) are disappointed with the way the government of Cameroon managed this aid within the time frame. Specific domains of aid are:

construction projects, (the dam in the East region of the country, water supply projects in the Center Region, building of the Bonaberi Bridge in the Littoral region). Other development projects include, among others, the construction of schools, education and technological transfer, scholarships to Cameroonians and donating to schools, military and other supplies (donation of military equipment by China to the government of Cameroon, donation of hospital kits and other health-related equipment by China to Cameroon, e.g. COVID-19 vaccine or the face masks). Considered were also: recent cancellation of some Cameroon's debts by the government of China, the recent computer loans, the financial aid to fight terrorism and COVID-19 pandemic. Future aid was expected in the domains of infrastructure, health, agriculture, and education.

This is consistent with the opinion voiced in the existing publications, e.g. in the CGTN News webpage which announced that with the increase in the cases of COVID-19 the Yaounde Central Hospital, representing the Minister of Public Health, Hassan Ben Bachir, received a batch of medical equipment donated by China for the fight against coronavirus. Some of the items received included ventilators, oxygenators, and electrocardiographs from China, represented by Guo Jianjun, the economic and Commercial Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Cameroon (CGTN, 2021). In addition, on 22 July 2018 Cameroon received US\$7.3 million worth of military equipment from the People's Republic of China to help fight insecurity and preserve the peace and security of the country. This, actually, constitutes an enormous support to the Cameroon government during a global pandemic.

Chinese aid and the economic development of Cameroon

There was great acknowledgement of the influence of this aid on the Cameroon's economy, especially on improvement of the economic and infrastructural development of the country. Specifically, a great proportion of participants (61.0%) believed the aid have been a great source of help to the entire country, such that some could actually boast of benefiting directly or indirectly from the aid in infrastructural development in the domains of construction of hospitals, schools, roads, water projects, among others. Also, the aid has impacted the educational sector and employment rate, as well as the trading/commerce in the country, among others. This is confirmed by Khan and Baye (2008) who stated that undoubtedly Chinese private investors have brought some benefits to the Cameroonian economy. The stock of capital goods has increased through the importation of cheap capital from China. The Chinese have equally increased the production of goods and services at a very low cost. The construction of national roads has facilitated and improved circulation in major cities. Local workers also benefited from some of the employment opportunities created by the Chinese firms, especially the assistants in Chinese shops, clinics, construction sites, and Chinese restaurants. However, Khan and Baye (2008) confirmed that these are jobs requiring no professional skills, poorly remunerated, of short duration, sometimes laid off as soon as the Chinese can easily speak and communicate with nationals in local languages (English, French and

Pidgin). In some cases local workers even go without any employment contracts from their Chinese employers.

In line with this, Ngang (2008) mentioned in his study the impact of foreign aid on the economic development and growth of Cameroon in the period of 1997-2006 and found out that foreign aid contributes significantly to economic growth but makes no significant contribution to economic development. He went further to conclude that Cameroon could have enhanced its economic development by effectively and efficiently managing its funds received in the form of aid, as well as strategically strengthening anti-corruption measures. On the other hand, Charles (2017) obtained contradictory results from a series of data gathered in 1960-2013 in a study on the impact of foreign aid on the economic growth of Cameroon, using a multivariate integration technique. The study found a negative relationship between foreign aid and Cameroon's economic growth in the given period under investigation. It also found that gross domestic investment has positively affected its growth.

The results equally demonstrated that a proportion of 34% respondents supported the demand that the government of Cameroon should request more aid, although the majority (70.0%) believed the development of Cameroon can be well enhanced without such aid. This, perhaps, is contradictory to the abovementioned benefits of foreign aid to the economy, although such controversy could have stemmed from the grievous mismanagement mentioned by 77.0% of the respondents, embezzlement, and corruption. The respondents advocated for a joint supervision and management of the funds in order to promote and inspire desirable level of local development in Cameroon. This is in conformity with the position of Egbeyong (2018) who studied public opinion on corruption and the role of anti-corruption agencies in Cameroon and found that corruption was a major problem of the country. The existence of this endemic problem was due to lack of transparency, accountability, greed, and inadequate awareness of its consequences. Also, on 22 October 2018, a BBC profiling report regretted that although the Central African country is seen as Africa in miniature, its "economic progress has been hampered by corruption and decades of authoritarian rule" (BBC News, 2018). Consistently, Izobo (2020) found that despite donors' original intentions when distributing aid, a high level of corruption within the recipient governments, poor democratic institutions, onerous conditionality and fiscal imprudence hampered the effective attainment of the assumed purpose. All that has made the foreign aid to be seen more as a curse than a blessing in most African countries. All in all, the trade between Cameroon and China has increased significantly in the past years and the foreign aid from China has also increased. Cameroonians have a fairly divergent view on the effects of foreign aid to Cameroon, they also doubt if the trade is mutual.

Conclusion

This paper sought to examine the impact of the Chinese aid has to Cameroon. Using both primary and empirical evidence, it was concluded that Cameroon has received enormous aid from China over the period of 2009-2020. This aid has holistic effects on the country in diverse

ways. Despite the original intention of every aid, which is to alleviate poverty in a recipient country, its importance is not regarded homogeneously by all as mixed feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise due to the management system and the obtained results. The high level of corruption, embezzlement, and mismanagement within the government circles have made foreign aid a curse rather than a blessing on Cameroon. However, progress is being made by the Cameroon's government to stamp out corruption by the creation of anti-corruption commissions and the arrest and imprisonment of the top corrupt officials. According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index report of 2020, Cameroon is ranked 149/180 on a score of 25/100. This is contrary to the 2019 report on corruption perception index in which Cameroon ranked 153/180, indicating progress towards the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, there is evidence of inevitability, as the development of the Cameroon's economy hinges most on the aid – the road infrastructure, ICT, water and energy, employment, education, and other sectors have benefited immensely from the aid from China. The relationship between Cameroon and China is based on sincerity, solidarity, and mutual respect. Despite the shortcomings, it is no doubt that the aid from China has greatly enhanced the economic development of Cameroon, thus making Cameroon and China steadfast in supporting each other.

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