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This book was written by Charles Onunaiju, a keen China watcher and founding director of the Center for China Studies (CCS), a Nigerian think tank based in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. The book has six chapters, outlining the internal developments in the Peoples Republic of China as well as Beijing's external relations, paying particular attention to the history and nature of China-Africa relations. In Chapter One, the author presents an overview of the massive socio-economic transformation China has undergone since the enactment of the 1978 reforms launched by Mao Ze Dong's successor, Deng Xiao Ping, typically credited with the economic and political "opening up" of China to the Western world. In the 33 years since these reforms were first implemented, the author notes, China's GDP has grown an average of nearly ten percent. To give readers a sense for the magnitude China's phenomenal transformation, the author reports that in 2011, China's rate of electricity generation surpassed that of the US—after having generated only 0.01 % of the electricity generated by the US in 1900, followed by 1.2% and 34% in 1950 and 2000, respectively (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 19). Early in the work, the author also discusses the Beijing Consensus—also often called the "China Model" or the "Chinese Economic Model" in reference to the political and economic policies enacted by Deng Xiao Ping—which was coined to contrast the 1989 "Washington Consensus,"ⁱ a set of policies that Onunaiju asserts amount to little more than a prescriptive, "Washington knows best approach to telling other countries how to run themselves" (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 24). The Beijing Consensus, in contrast, which encourages financial self-determination and the use of leverage to keep Western superpowers in check, is portrayed as a "development approach driven by a desire to have equitable, peaceful, high quality growth, which turns traditional ideas like privatization and free trade on their heads" (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 24).

In the book's second chapter, the author offers well-researched detail about China's history and seeks to explain China's evolution from an ancient civilization to a global power whose "governing model is more appealing to the developing world and some middle sized powers than America's market democratic model [is]" (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 29). Onunaiju refrains from glossing over challenges and pitfalls that have confronted China since its proclamation as the Peoples Republic in 1949. He portrays China's cultural revolution of the 1960sⁱⁱ as a period of an anarchic struggle for power within the Communist Party of China (CPC) and characterizes Chairman Mao's Great Leap Forward campaign of the 1950s, aimed at leapfrogging China into an industrial power house, as a "debacle." The work's third chapter includes an examination of... overview of the role of Chinese Communist Party in leading China's modernization drive.

For scholars and observers interested in China-Africa relations, chapter four is worth reading carefully. In it, Onunaiju traces the economic contacts between China and Africa, which predate the arrival of European colonialists (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 121), to demonstrate that contrary to standard Western European narratives, China and Africa have had contact for centuries. The author contextualizes the emergence of strong China-Africa revolutionary political ties in the 1950s, in Beijing's drive to establish friendships with newly independent African states in order to break China out of its diplomatic "pariah status," imposed by the United States and its Western allies. Thus, in 1964, Premier Zhou en Lai undertook a historic ten-country visit to Africa. The visit "marked the beginning of an enduring [Chinese] diplomatic practice that emphasizes the importance of regular face to face contact with African leaders"

(Onunaiju, 2016, pp. 129-130). Zhou En Lai developed very warm personal ties with influential post-independence African leaders such as Ahmed Sekou Toure (Guinea Conakry), Julius K. Nyerere (Tanzania), and Kenneth D. Kaunda (Zambia). Premier Zhou used his diplomatic foray into the “dark continent” to unveil the five principles guiding China’s relations with African and Arab countries (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 130). Onunaiju states that “it was during [this] period that China undertook its most auspicious economic aid to Africa through the construction of the more than one thousand [kilometers] Tanzam railway, linking Zambia’s copper mines to the Dar-es-salaam port in Tanzania” (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 131). Onunaiju provides a broad overview of China-Africa ties from the era of revolutionary solidarity between Beijing and the new states of Africa, as symbolized by the Tanzam or *Uhuru* (Freedom) Railwayⁱⁱⁱ and Africa’s support to Beijing’s accession into the United Nations (UN) in 1971 to the establishment of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a mechanism for Beijing’s economic cooperation diplomacy in 2000.

Despite Onunaiju’s detailed analysis of China-Africa ties, his treatment of China-Africa relations appears to omit certain events that embarrassed both China and her African allies. He does not mention the anti-African riots that erupted in major Chinese cities in the late 1980s.^{iv} The Chinese government at the time was caught off guard by the rioters’ anti-African sentiment and, ironically, it was the “imperialist powers,” the United States, Britain, and France that put pressure on Beijing to end the xenophobic riots. The book also does not deal with the allegedly antagonistic relations between Chinese firms operating in Africa and the host communities in which they operate, nor does he visit the well documented series of breaches of environmental and labor laws allegedly committed by Chinese firms. The author could have mentioned that in some countries, increased presence of Chinese investment has resulted in electoral significance. Zambia, where opposition leader and later President Michael Sata campaigned on a promise of curtailing Chinese investment in the country’s 2006, 2008, and 2011 presidential elections, is a case in point. Onunaiju could also have given some attention to the strategic rivalry between the United States and China in Africa. Some scholars have argued that the formation of US Africa Command (AFRICOM)^v in 2007 was in large part motivated by America’s grand objective of containing China’s rising influence on the continent.

Onunaiju’s final chapters conclude with an informative overview of China’s growing global reach by discussing Beijing’s strategic partnerships in the Arab world, Asia, and the Americas. This account leaves the reader with the impression that there is a tectonic shift afoot in the global balance of power and that the Peoples Republic of China will be an increasingly influential player in the emerging post-Cold War global political, security, and economic architecture. In short, the work is informative, and Charles Onunaiju deserves credit for ultimately explaining not only the enduring institutional, political, and ideological legitimacy of the Communist Party of China (which enabled it to survive the collapse of Marxist – Leninist regimes in the former Soviet Union and among other Central and Eastern European regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s) but also the increase in political and economic power of the People’s Republic of China in the early 21st century (Onunaiju, 2016, p. 111). Thus, despite its omission of some critical detail, this book would be an informative read for anyone who seeks to analytically contextualize China-Africa relations within the context of China’s rise to power in the 21st Century.

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ⁱ The term “Beijing Consensus” was originally coined as an alternative to the “Washington Consensus,” referring to the set of economic policy prescriptions that reflect a Western orientation toward a market-based approach to economic growth and development, with particular emphasis on the influence of domestic market forces and the opening of the economies of developing countries to global markets.

ⁱⁱ China’s “cultural revolution” refers, rather euphemistically, to a decade-long socio-political movement (1966-76) set in motion by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Mao’s stated objective was to preserve “true” Communist ideology in the country by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society. However, the movement’s use of violence, imprisonment, displacement, torture, and harassment led to conflict and violence across the country,

ⁱⁱⁱ Running 1860.5 km from Tanzania’s Dar-es Salaam in the East to New Kapiri Mposhi in Central Zambia in the West, the TANZAM Railway is the main rail link connecting Eastern Africa with the Central and Southern parts of the continent, and is widely regarded by Africans as the Railway of Freedom and Railway of friendship, See Mulikita, NM; Book Review Monument to China-Africa Friendship: Firsthand Account of the Building of TAZARA Compiled by the Department of Policy Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China; World Affairs Press (2015); 257 pages., https://africanexecutive.com/article.php?section_id=25, (accessed 18 September, 2016)

^{iv} See David Holley, ‘13 Injured as Chinese, African Students Clash’, Los Angeles Times, December 27, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-12-27/news/mn-811_1_african-students(accessed 18 September, 2016)

^v US AFRCIOM is one of nine US Unified Combatant Commands. Headquartered in Germany, its area of responsibility covers all of Africa except for Egypt, which falls under the US Central Command.