AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE AID PROJECTS
EVIDENCE FROM INDIVIDUAL- AND PROJECT-LEVEL GEOCODED DATA

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1 MOTIVATION
1. MOTIVATION

CONTEXT

Many existing studies on where Chinese aid go
Rogue aid, favoritism, and allocation (Dreher et al. 2015; 2018; 2019); Competition (Humphrey and Michaelowa 2019)

Others on various (negative) outcomes
Corruption (Isaksson and Kotsadam 2016; Brazys et al. 2017); Environmental degradation (BenYishay et al. 2016); Economic Development (Dreher et al. 2016); Economic inequality (Bluhm et al. 2018); Conflict (Gehring et al. 2019); Labor (Isaksson and Kotsadam 2018); Trust (Blaire et al. 2019)
WHAT DO ORDINARY AFRICANS THINK ABOUT GROWING PRESENCE OF CHINESE AID?
1. MOTIVATION

PREVIEW OF FINDINGS

**Findings:**
Concerns about growing Chinese influence
Greater recognition of Chinese influence

Robust to some additional tests

Some preliminary conjectures about the mechanism
2 DATA AND MODEL
2. DATA AND MODEL

DATA: IV

Geocoded Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset, 2000-2014, Version 1.1.1. released by AidData

Known universe of all overseas Chinese official finance, including a total of 3,485 project level records worth $273.6 billion in 6,190 locations
DATA AND MODEL

DATA: IV

Capturing proximity to Chinese Aid Project

Distance measure with 20 km radius

Main IV: Respondent location within the radius
## 2. DATA AND MODEL

### DATA: DV

Afrobarometer: public survey data from 35+ Cs on political and economic conditions, etc. 1990s ~

Round 6 (2014-2015) asked Qs related to China

Respondent locations at village- & town-level

N = 49,955 from 33 countries
2. DATA AND MODEL

DATA: DV

Sentiment towards China:
Chinese influence positive? (Ordinal)

“Now let’s talk about the role that China plays in our country. In general, do you think that China’s economic and political influence on [ENTER COUNTRY] is mostly positive, or mostly negative, or haven’t you heard enough to say?”
Perceived usefulness of Chinese aid:
Chinese assistance doing a good job? (Ordinal)

“Now let’s talk about the role that China plays in our country. In your opinion, does China’s economic development assistance to [ENTER COUNTRY] do a good job or a bad job of meeting the country’s needs, or haven’t you heard enough to say?”
2. DATA AND MODEL

DATA: DV

Perceived level of Chinese economic influence:
Chinese influence over economy (Ordinal)

“Now let’s talk about the role that China plays in our country. How much influence do you think China’s economic activities in [ENTER COUNTRY] have on our economy, or haven’t you heard enough to say?”
2. DATA AND MODEL

DATA: DV

Perceived level of overall Chinese influence:
China as most influential (0/1)

“Which of the following do you think has the most influence on [ENTER COUNTRY], or haven’t you heard enough to say?”
2. DATA AND MODEL

DATA: DV

Preference for model country for development:
China as role model (0/1)

“In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country?”
Locations of Chinese Aid Projects and Afrobarometer Respondents

Chinese Aid Projects (red), Afrobarometer Respondents (black)

Source: ChinaAid Data and Geocoded Afrobarometer Data, Round 6
2. DATA AND MODEL

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

• Ordered logit and logit models

• Dependent Variable
  • Chinese influence positive?
  • Chinese assistance doing a good job?
  • Chinese influence over the economy?
  • China as most influential?
  • China as best development model?
2. DATA AND MODEL

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

• Independent Variables
  • Respondent within the aid project radius
  • Individual characteristics for respondent: SES, Access to Info, Corruption, Migrant, Relative Econ Standing
• Country fixed effects
• Standard errors clustered at the town/village level
3 RESULTS
Effects of Exposure to Chinese Aid Projects on Respondent Perceptions

Chinese influence positive
0.924***

Chinese assistance good
0.936**

Chinese influence over economy

China as most influential

China as best model

Odds Ratio

Note: Full controls with country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the community level. Bars depict the 95% confidence intervals.
4 EXTENSIONS
LINGERING CONCERNS

Non-random project placements
  e.g. Jablonski 2014; Briggs 2014; Dreher et al. 2019

Placebo test using World Bank projects

Matching using observable characteristics
Effects of Exposure to Chinese Aid Projects on Respondent Perceptions

Dependent Variables

- Chinese influence positive
- Chinese assistance good
- Chinese influence over economy
- China as most influential
- China as best model

Odds Ratio

Note: Full controls with country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the community level. Bars depict the 95% confidence intervals.
4. EXTENSIONS: MATCHING

**Effects of Exposure to Chinese Aid Projects on Respondent Perceptions**

Dependent Variables:
- Chinese influence positive
- Chinese assistance good
- Chinese influence over economy
- China as most influential
- China as best model

Odds Ratio
- 0.912***
- 0.965
- 1.079***
- 1.054*
- 1.058*

Note: Full controls with country fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the community level. Bars depict the 95% confidence intervals.
4. EXTENSIONS: WHY NEGATIVE?
Summary

Exposure to Chinese Aid ->
Negative perceptions of Chinese influence
Negative perceptions of Chinese assistance
Greater recognition of economic Chinese influence
Greater recognition of overall Chinese influence
Greater recognition of China as development model

Next steps: project type, monetary values, number of projects, more on the mechanisms, etc.