Power or Influence? Making Sense of China's Evolving Party-to-party Diplomacy in Africa

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Abstract: Power and influence are concepts that have been studied by International Relations and foreign policy scholars for decades. Special attention has recently been focused on examining China's rise, Chinese government's power projections and tools of influence in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South. In much of this scholarship, power is viewed as a set of (material) resources, and influence is taken to be the tools that help convert an actor's resources into outcomes. If examining China-Africa relations focuses exclusively on infrastructure construction projects, mining activities, and other material investments, it would be feasible to analyze power as a (material) possession or as a capability that can be converted into influence. However, China-Africa relations go beyond material investments and include evolving initiatives that provide training workshops and seminars for thousands of senior party cadres and political elites from across the continent. By focusing on these training programs, it becomes evident that mainstream frameworks about power and influence are not satisfactory. This article utilizes the case of China-Africa party-party cadre trainings to illustrate a framework that treats power and influence not as if they exist in a linear relationship where power accumulation occurs first and then it translates into influence, but as mutually reinforcing processes. I argue that power and influence both grow and expand through party-to-party exchanges mainly because of three main interrelated mechanisms; social capital and network expansion, norm diffusion, and expertise sharing.

Keywords: **power, influence, China, Africa, political party exchanges, human capital**

> Over the next five years, the CPC will invite political parties from around the world to send to China exchange visitors totaling 15,000 for more interactions. Going forward, the CPC will enhance exchanges with political parties of other countries to share practices of party-building and enhancing state governance and conduct more exchanges and dialogue among civilizations so as to improve our strategic mutual trust. -- Xi Jinping's Keynote speech, Beijing 2017

On October 3, 2019, the Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Relations released a statement declaring that Uganda "firmly supports the one country, two systems policy of the People's Republic of China on the matter of Hong Kong and other areas."[1] The statement further mentioned that

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"Hong Kong is part of China." The next day, Tanzanian Chief Spokesperson, Hassan Abbasi, confirmed his government's support of the one country, two system approach in an interview conducted with Xinhua News Agency.[2] A few months later, Namibian Minister of Land Reform, Utoni Nujoma reaffirmed Namibia's support of Beijing on the question of Hong Kong.[3] During the same speech, the Namibian minister acknowledged the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Fund for bringing learning opportunities to vast numbers of Namibians across the country. Similar declarations of support were made by several other African governments.[4]

The People's Republic of China (PRC) with its several government agencies and through party-to-party exchanges had since the early years of the Communist Party of China (CPC) managed to build bridges of influence and accumulate social capital, debts, and gratitude with anti-colonial African counterparts that once independent backed the PRC many times in the international arena. In more recent decades, the CPC reinvigorated its ties to political parties in Africa through an expansive party-to-party exchanges and training workshops for party elites. From PRC's United Nations Security Council permanent seat to the various statements we read recently by African governments endorsing the PRC's policies in Hong Kong, the question that emerges is how to make sense of the CPC's power and influence manifested in this support by African elites.

Within the growing and robust literature on China's foreign policy in Africa, the question of the mechanisms and operations of China's influence remain underexplored. The aim of this article is to address this lacuna by examining party-to-party exchanges and professionalization trainings for senior cadres in China-Africa relations as mechanisms that expand and multiply both power and influence. Accordingly, the article poses the following research question: how is influence produced and disseminated in China-Africa interactions? Taking into account the global picture of China-Africa relations and building on robust scholarly work done in the field, this article starts from the observation that China's influence (and by extension power) in Africa comes not so much from Chinese investments in physical buildings (ports, parliaments, and presidential palaces) as much as it is produced and manufactured through the creation of expertise and elite capture. The argument presented is two-pronged, first that understanding influence as the translation of material, power capabilities is limited when looking at China's human capital investments in Africa, and that influence and power are mutually reinforcing of one another. Influence and power are both produced and expanded through multiplying one's relational network (through party-to-party exchanges). In order to make the case for rethinking China's influence and power projections in Africa, the article proceeds as follows. It first starts by providing an overview of International Relations scholarship on influence and power to lay bare the assumptions often made about what power and influence are and how those do not fit the context of China-Africa relations. The article then examines how influence works through the mechanisms of party elite exchanges and senior cadre training workshops from a theoretical perspective. The second section of the article unpacks the mechanisms and influence that are produced and proliferated through China-Africa party-to-party exchanges. The section examines the influence and power from the perspective of what Chinese actors stand to gain from senior cadre workshops, and what their African counterparts stand to gain from

participating in these training workshops and inviting Chinese delegations to visit their countries.

Theoretical Considerations on Power and Influence in Global Politics

Influence is a widely used concept in politics and can be found in several phraseologies commonly used in political analyses such as spheres of influence in strategic studies, or studies of economic statecraft (being influential). Influence is also analyzed within international organization studies exploring the extent to which a state has or can exercise influence on the global stage. Additionally, the term influence has also recently seen an upsurge usage in contexts referring, generally, to perceived Russian and Chinese disinformation tactics to influence elections in the U.S. and other places.[5] Influence, different than power, is as Evelyn Goh writes, typically taken to mean "the act of modifying or otherwise having an impact upon another actor's preferences or behavior in favor of one's own aims."[6]

For Goh, there are three different types of influence. These include preference multiplier, persuasion, and the ability to prevail. For each category, the aims and tools of influence vary. For instance, preference multiplier is a situation when the influence-wielding actor and the influenced actors have preferences that are already aligned. In this case, the tool of influence is intensification, and the aim is to exploit structural positions for mutual benefit using policies to generate deliberate collective outcomes.[7] In the second type of influence which Goh calls persuasion, preferences don't always align and are debated or undecided. In this case, the tool of influence is argumentation and demonstration while the aim is to tell the better story in order to assure and convince other actors.

Goh argues that in the case of China's relations with its Southeast Asian neighbors, these first two types of influence apply the best. Of the two types of influence, the first kind (preference multiplier) is the one that is least conducive to showing China's power and capabilities because it is the easiest type given that actors' preferences align already.[8] This leaves us with the third type of influence which is the ability to prevail in a situation where actors' preferences are opposed. The tool of influence here is coercion, and the aim is to ensure that self-interest and preferences are protected by altering other actors' preferences and behavior. Goh argues that this third type of influence might be best illustrated in China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea but is the least common types of influence that describe the PRC's foreign policy conduct in Southeast Asia. However, Goh's typology of influence when applied to the case of China's foreign policy conduct in Africa can capture some but not all aspects of power and influence.

Whereas the concept of power is usually used to refer to a state's resources (economic, military, or even cultural), influence is typically viewed as the translation and conversion of those resources into actual outcomes. An actor is therefore first powerful and then influential, a claim which this article disputes below but for now it is important to develop the distinction between power and influence in international relations. Indeed, when debate about power versus influence is applied to the context of China's rise, it tends to go in one of two directions, either realist assumptions about the threat of China's rise by theorists looking at China's evermore expanding (military) resources, or discussions about China's soft power by ways of

thinking of China's influence (especially in Western societies) to be weak and unchallenging.[9] Although there is a burgeoning scholarship examining China's influence, this has been mostly focused on China's Southeast Asian neighbors and to some degree Australia and New Zealand as well as recently looking at Europe and the U.S.[10]

Additionally, much of the scholarship on influence and power assumes that there is a linear order of the two concepts where power comes first and after some considerable power accumulation, then powerful actors move on to activating and converting their resources and power into influence. However, power does not necessarily come before influence or that influence is the translation of power capabilities. Instead, this article argues that power and influence are mutually reinforcing of one another and that there is a synergy between the two especially when taking into account China's party-to-party and elite exchanges with African counterparts. Power and influence should not be treated as separate but as processes that exist in a feedback loop reinforcing and feeding one another. Separating between power and influence is more conducive to analytical frameworks of international relations that take power to be a (material) possession and influence as the outcome of that possession. However, power, in my view, is a relational process that produces and is in turn multiplied through the influence an actor gains from its network of relations and connections.[11]

How Does China's Influence in Africa Work?

Scholars of International Relations have for a long time been interested in the integration and socialization of China into the liberal international order.[12] To that effect, evaluating influence over China has been examined from the perspective of joining international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, norm-following, as well as its steadily growing involvement in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. However, since the 19th party congress of the CPC held in October 2017 when Xi Jinping's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" was added to the constitution of the PRC marking a consolidation of Xi Jinping's power and his vision for rejuvenating China, scholars and policy analysts started paying closer attention to the question of China's influence over actors and states across the world. Scholarship on China-Africa relations has either looked at party-to-party exchanges without theoretically engaging what it means for power and influence in International Relations theory, or has looked at power and influence without focusing on the case of party-to-party exchanges. Indeed, in the context of China-Africa relations, influence has mostly been examined through a variety of financial influence mechanisms (debt trap, financial loans, and foreign aid), military (through the negotiations of China's military base), cultural (through Confucius Institutes, and news media platforms).[13] Yet, to expand on this scholarship and better our understanding of influence and power, more research needs to shed light on the implications of the increasing ties between Chinese elites and their African counterparts.

There are two government channels within the Chinese governance structure that are typically associated with developing China's influence abroad. One is the United Front Work Department (UFWD) which comprises "a network of civic and business associations, student groups, Chinese-language media, academic institutions, and politicians, which is used to intimidate, surveil, and co-opt the overseas Chinese community."[14] The other key government

channel that is associated with the exercise of China's influence is the International Department of the Communist Party of China (ID-CPC) which was formed in 1951 and evolved from the third section of the UFWD.[15] The ID-CPC's original goal was to strictly work with foreign communist parties as well as national liberation movements from Africa.[16] The ID-CPC has over the years built a network "to maintain contact with 400 parties in over 160 countries," and "holds regular meetings with its foreign counterparts, provides training for foreign cadres, and sponsors part schools abroad."[17] In contrast with the ID-CPC, the UFWD has very little relevance to examining China's influence in Africa since it is mostly active in Europe, in the U.S. and Australia. Indeed the advantage of ID-CPC over other government channels is that it "not only provides access to high-level decision-makers in formal government functions, but it also allows for engagement with influential political actors outside the realm of regular foreign affairs diplomacy, such as power-brokers operating behind the scenes or future political leaders."[18]

In Xi Jinping's quotes shared in the epigraph above, he places the importance of investments in human capital trainings and party-to-party exchanges within the context of sharing experience in state governance and party-building. In his assessment, the goal of these party-to-party invitations issued by his government is to share (not exchange) China's expertise with regards to state governance and party-building. Sharing such experiences with party elites from across the globe serves to enhance mutual understanding and to improve what President Xi called "strategic mutual trust." Party-to-party trainings and exchanges are viewed to have strategic goals for China.

History and Evolution of Party-to-party Exchanges in China-Africa Relations

Party-to-party exchanges in China-Africa relations have existed since the Bandung Conference and Mao's era. Bandung was a "watershed in CPC political relations in Africa. Premier Zhou Enlai, who led the Chinese delegation, interacted with delegations from Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, and soon-to-be-independent Sudan and Ghana."[19] The CPC's support which started mostly as a rhetorical support in the early aftermaths of the Bandung Conference slowly became more concrete and materialized in military trainings, medical team visits, and equipment support.

Elite capture in the early history of CPC's relations with African nations had several ideological end-goals for Beijing, most notably gaining political recognition for the PRC as the official government of China and curbing Soviet Union's influence in the Third World. This was a successful move by Beijing. In the short time between 1958 and 1964, "the CPC's political outreach in Africa achieved impressive results. Beijing sent 144 missions to African countries and received 405 African delegations (…) By 1964, political outreach and host diplomacy had paid dividends with 15 of 35 independent African countries choosing to recognize Beijing, rather than Taipei – up from only seven in 1960."[20]

In the time between the original formation of the ID-CPC and Deng Xiaoping's opening reforms, it gradually moved from engaging left-leaning social democratic parties to practically parties all along the ideological spectrum. Interestingly enough, especially in light of Beijing's

typical state-to-state approach, the International Department is mandated to engage all parties including the opposition parties. In fact, in 1982, "the 12th National Congress of CPC put forward four new principles (independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs) to guide its party diplomacy, so as to establish a new type of inter-party relations with all possible partners around the world."[21] The results of these formal ties were very tangible for Chinese diplomacy. "By 1988, over 40 political parties from Sub-Saharan Africa had established relations with the CPC." The momentum of these party relations was good and the "CPC has established relations with 81 African parties both in and out of power." With ongoing waves of democratization sweeping across Africa in the 1990s, a disenchantment with China was looming and an ebb in party-to-party exchanges with China occurred.[22] The downward trend was then reversed in the early to mid-2000s with renewed attention to China-Africa party-to-party exchanges.

The main difference between the early instances of China-Africa party-to-party diplomacy and the more recent formats is that the trainings do not seem to be seeking legitimacy for the CPC in Africa as they once were. Now, there is a stronger and more confident voice of leadership and mentoring that emanates from CPC officials and the trainings seem to be, far from seeking legitimacy, about sharing China's governance model. This contrasts with the earlier forms of party exchanges and elite capture in China-Africa relations which were first and foremost about strengthening and ensuring the stability and legitimacy of the CPC, especially during the Cultural Revolution years.[23] The goal has now shifted from providing support for African ruling parties which were Mao-friendly to instead expanding China's collaborations with as many parties as possible so as to have good working relations with whichever party comes to rule.

As part of this new phase of strategic partnerships, the Chinese government had eyes on investing in netting close ties not only to Africa's leaders of the time but also to the next generation of African elites. Through a mix of professionalization trainings in the CPC's party school in Beijing and education scholarships for hundreds of African elites, Chinese and African party officials' relations were strengthened through these exchanges. The following are some of the examples. Since 2011, the declaration of South Sudan as an independent state, China has offered at least four thousand scholarships and short-term trainings.[24] Many of the short-term trainings were offered to delegations of party members to attend CPC's party school for seminars on party organizational structure, cadre management, party national-local level civil servant relations, tax collection trainings, and media relations. Since 2007, China's Ningbo Polytechnic's campus (located in Zhejiang Province) hosted more than a thousand trainees from forty-eight African countries. These trainings that African elites and students get in China "can translate into a willingness to work with China and view China's internal policies favorably in the future."[25] Similarly, China's ambassador to Uganda said that every year about five hundred Ugandans are offered professionalization trainings in China.[26]

Influence and Network-Building in China-Africa Party-to-party Exchanges

One of the CCP's strongest party-to-party ties in the continent today is with South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC). Despite official diplomatic relations between South Africa and the PRC being delayed to 1998 after a long history of official recognition of the Republic of China (ROC), the ANC is today one of the CCP's closest collaborators in the continent.[27] This is evidenced in the multiple party delegation visits, training seminars attended by ANC members in China, youth party member exchanges between the CCP and the ANC, and plans to increase cooperation between ANC leadership and Shanghai's China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong (CELAP).[28] To be sure, in 2012, a total of fifty-six senior ANC leaders attended CELAP in four cohorts leaving a very positive impression on their views on party structure, organization, and cadre training.[29] Ahead of the 2019 elections, the ANC enhanced its party-to-party ties with the CCP seeking to learn lessons on how to manage public relations and messaging campaigns during the elections. To this effect, ANC's Secretary General Ace Magashule had announced that the party would be "sending 300 of its cadres to the CPC's training academy to learn about party discipline and loyalty." Other skills targeted in this exchange were communication machinery and propaganda diffusion.[30] The ANC's hosts in Beijing responded positively to this idea as political trainings open up the opportunity for CCP officials to "educate fraternal African political parties on China's experience in economic development and political governance."[31]

The CCP's political influence in South Africa had indeed come a long ways since the serious challenges it faced during the early years of the Cold War when the CCP backed South Africa's Communist Party (SACP) instead of the ANC which had closer ties to Moscow.[32] The tumultuous history of the start of officials relationship between the two parties seems to belong to a very distant past as the ANC and the CCP grew rapidly closer. This rapprochement can also be observed in the CCP's support for the development of a party school for the ANC in the outskirts of Johannesburg. Both inspired and financed by the CCP, the ANC built a new political leadership school in the town of Venterskroon in 2014.[33] Officials stated that the institute would be modeled after the Shanghai-based CELAP which is where Chinese "party members and foreign guests attend classes on 'revolutionary traditions,' learning everything from Marxist theory to media management."[34] China's party-to-party diplomacy in South Africa today is, however, not exclusively focused on the ANC as the CPC still maintains strong ties to the SACP. As recently as April 2020 and in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the ID-CPC held a virtual training workshop for twenty senior cadres from SACP along with the party's First Deputy General Secretary, Solly Mapaila.[35]
Additionally, China ranks the closeness of its international partners according to several categories of diplomacy that include strategic partnership, comprehensive strategic partnership, and the highest status which is comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. The higher the status of relations, the more frequent party-to-party ties are, and the stronger elite exchange programs become.[36] Scholars have showed that China has over the years been consistent in expanding its partnerships and building stronger networks with elites across the world.[37] The ID-CPC, which orchestrates a great deal of party-to-party exchanges, keeps a very busy

schedule hosting sometimes up to three to four delegations from African countries per month with significant overlap time between the delegations' scheduled visits.[38]

To illustrate, on April 2017, at the invitation of the Communist Party of China, a delegation of the Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme (PNDS) led by Mohamed Bazoum (President of PNDS) visited China April 10-15.[39] During the same month, at the invitation of the CPC, the mayor study group of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) headed by Fetlework Gebregziaber (member of the EPRDF Executive Committee and Head of Urban Politics and Organization Division of Secretariat of the Central Committee) visited China April 19-29.[40] Two months later, at the invitation of the CPC, the cadre study group of the EPRDF led by Tefera Deribew (Minister of Rural Politics and Organization Department of Secretariat of the Central Committee and Coordinator for Rural Sector at Democratic System Building Coordination Center at the Office of Prime Minister) visited China June 9-19.[41] Overlapping with the delegation from EPDRF was another delegation from Niger. At the invitation of the CPC, a PNDS delegation led by Sani Iro (PNDS Communications Director) visited China June 8-13.[42]

In addition to cadre trainings for senior members of African political parties, the ID-CPC also organizes visits and exchanges with African youth party members and youth delegations. In May 2017, at the invitation of the ID-CPC, a young leaders training class composed of six principals for youth affairs of political parties visited China from for ten days. The participating political parties include Forces for the Defense of Democracy in Burundi, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, the Rally of the Guinean People, the Rally for Mali, the Patriotic Salvation Movement of Chad and the Union for the Republic of Togo.[43]

The list of invitations, delegation exchanges, and training events hosted by the ID-CPC for African political parties is very long. However, it is important to observe that African delegations are not just invitees but also issue invitations for their Chinese counterparts to visit. The exchanges include invitations for Chinese party officials to travel to African countries on exchange trips as well. For example, in March 2019, at the invitation of the People's Rally for Progress (PRP) of Djibouti and Burkina Faso's People's Movement for Progress (MPP), Guo Yezhou (Vice-minister of the ID-CPC's Central Committee) led a delegation to attend a special conference on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the PRP. The delegation visited Djibouti and Burkina Faso March 3-9.[44] Similarly, at invitation of Chad's Patriotic Salvation Movement, Egypt and Tunisia's governments, Chen Min'er (member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee) led a CPC delegation on a visit to the three countries from June 24 to July 2 in 2018.[45] Also, in July 2018, Seychelles' People's Party and Tanzania's Revolutionary Party invited Song Tao (Minister of ID-CPC's Central Committee) led a CPC delegation to visit the above two countries July 12-19.[46]

The multiplying invitations, at the request of Xi Jinping as mentioned in the epigraph above, are of significant value for China's foreign policy making as the ID-CPC's mission "includes helping rectify foreigners' "incorrect ideas" on the Party and country, including on issues of sovereignty."[47] Given the increasing frequency of these invitations and intensifying party-party exchanges between China's CCP and African political parties, it is crucial to explore the connection between power and influence in this context. Because party-to-party exchanges

seek to "rectify foreigners' incorrect ideas" they could be analyzed as a tool of influence. Yet simultaneously, holding training workshops diffuse norms, produce knowledge, and increase networking and social power for China. As such, they are also productive of power.

Power or Influence? Unpacking Beijing's Gains from Party-to-party Diplomacy

Power and influence go hand in hand. As appealing as it may be to treat one as a pre-requisite to the other, meaning to treat power resources as a necessary but not sufficient condition of influence, the two are interconnected and mutually-reinforcing. Beijing's party-to-party exchanges with African political elites and senior cadres are a case in point for illustrating the fluid and mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between power and influence. On the one hand, training senior ANC or EPRDF cadres, for instance, can lead to exercising influence when senior party officers take political actions that are in line with Beijing's preferences (this is similar to the first two categories of influence in Goh's typology).[48] On the other hand, providing thousands of training workshops to top political and military elites wields power and social capital because it multiplies the connections that Chinese government officials have with their African counterparts. To better explain the relationship between power and influence, I suggest thinking about three interrelated components to Beijing-sponsored training workshops for African party officials: a network building component seeking to promote *guanxi* connections with African current and future leaders, an ideological component focusing on passing on Chinese know-how in terms of governance and development, and a marketing component aiming at advertising Chinese technology.[49] These three interrelated elements illustrate how power and influence do not exist in a linear relationship but in a circular dynamic.

The first element of analysis in Beijing-sponsored political party training workshops for Africans is that training sessions create strong opportunities for networking between elite as well as junior, and youth political party cadres on both sides. When delegations visit China for such trainings, they typically stay between one and two weeks, and sometimes longer. During the time spent in China, delegations attend various seminars on topics ranging from China's history, China's development model, CPC party structure, internet and social media governance, and so on. Establishing strong diplomatic relations with future leaders of several political parties almost guarantees that Chinese foreign policy makers will have warm working relations with future African leaders from whatever party gets to power. Indeed, several current African state leaders led such party-to-party delegation visits to China prior to becoming president. For example, South Africa's Zuma, Namibia's President Pohamba, and President Guebuza of Mozambique "all led such delegations before they assumed the presidency."[50] The reactions registered from the African side when attending these sessions are typically highly positive. Participants usually express gratitude for the CPC's invitation and speak highly of the opportunity to learn about party management from CPC officials. To illustrate, South Africa's current President Cyril Ramaphosa, who led a visiting delegation to Beijing in 2009 in his capacity of former General Secretary of the ANC, expressed this willingness to learn from the CPC. Ramaphosa observed "it is not long since the ANC was founded and became a ruling party, but the CPC has been a ruling party for six decades and has accumulated rich

experiences. We would like to learn from each other. Every participant studied hard and had deep discussions and they admitted they gained a lot."[51] CPC officials and politburo officers have been working on increasing these exchange with African elites because the positive reactions expressed by their African counterparts signal that these training workshops are successfully yielding power and influence.

Moreover, a further illustration of the importance of ID-CPC party exchanges to China's exercise of power and influence is the fact that the International Department accepts and sends invitations for exchanges with political parties from all ends of the political spectrum. Contrary to what might be expected, the CPC does not only invite left-leaning political parties even if it probably has stronger ties to ideologically similar parties however small they are. The CPC's flexible approach to training workshops and seminars for African counterparts of democratic-leaning parties and others far away ideologically from the CPC shows Beijing's interest in developing strong political ties to whichever party that might get elected or rise to power regardless of ideological grounding.[52] Similarly, it is interesting to observe that even if China's foreign policy typically follows a state-to-state approach, the CPC's international department frequently hosts and invites members of opposition parties in various African countries. Inviting delegations to Beijing by the CPC to various political parties is in some ways an attempt at securing CPC's power and influence in case of political transitions, whether anticipated or not. Party-to-party exchanges cannot be examined successfully in a framework that separates influence from power as they both produce, and are produced through, party exchanges.

The second element of analysis in Beijing-sponsored political party training workshops for African elites is that they serve a norm diffusion component which looks to market and advertise Chinese expertise to African counterparts. Speaking at the 19th party congress in 2017, President Xi Jinping asserted that "China's development offers a new option for countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence."[53] China's president was not only confident that China's development model was successful at home but was also convinced that it could serve as a model for foreign partners to adopt as an alternative to Western options. Indeed, an efficient way to make this model known to leaders from the Global South is by training senior and junior party cadres and exchanging know-how about China's development strategies through party-to-party exchanges. The proliferation of International Department invitations for training workshops (with frequency and repetition) open up opportunities to diffuse norms about China's governance model through training sessions that introduce cadres to China's history, Xi Jinping's thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics, the way the party deals with protests, internet and social media control, censorship, and so on. Power and influence in the case of party-to-party exchanges go hand in hand rather than one as an output of the other.

The third element of analysis in Beijing-sponsored political party training workshops for Africans is that they have a cultural influence and power, especially for the trainings which take place in China. Training workshops, especially outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, often include tours of several Chinese cities in different provinces. The tours are cultural business cards for China's rich cultural heritage but also a testimony of China's successful development

model. Organized by Chinese state officials, the guided tours of Beijing, Shanghai, and several major cities within China are very well-received by the participants who are generally left impressed with China's fast development and successful economic story. As explained by Eisenman, "China wants to improve younger generations' perceptions of its political system and gain elite support to counter what Beijing sees as Western efforts to portray Chinese practices in an unfavorable light."[54] In order to rectify what Beijing perceives as negative narratives of China's re-emerging power, the ID-CPC deploys party trainings as both a way to wield more (elite capture) power as well as influence when elites issue statements of support of Beijing's policies in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and other examples mentioned in sections above.

Unpacking Elite Gains from Party-to-party Diplomacy with China

A key component of the training workshops for African party cadres and a common theme that runs across them are seminars on poverty alleviation, Marxist thought, civil-military relations, organizational leadership, party organization, and bureaucracy managements. Other seminars are concerned with trainings on government-media relations, internet censorship and opposition monitoring on social media platforms, as well as introduction seminars on the history of China's relations to Taiwan and Hong Kong. Providing training seminars for foreign government officers and military staff offer unique opportunities for norm diffusion, knowledge production, and socialization of new players into established norms.[55] In July 2020, after that the Chinese government passed a national security law for Hong Kong, a list of twenty-seven governments signed a statement that was read at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva criticizing China for passing the law. In response to that list, a parallel statement listing fifty-seven countries backing China's law in Hong Kong was read at the same meeting. No less than twenty-five of the signatories backing China are from the African continent.[56] Rather than thinking about causal mechanisms between party training workshops and favorable voting behavior at the UN, it is more helpful to think of the circularity and synergy between power and influence in these solid networks span between Chinese officials and their African counterparts.

Relatedly, another aspect of China's government model which has proved to be attractive for authoritarian-leaning governments in Africa has been the growing use of facial recognition and surveillance technology domestically to monitor dissidents and secure the party's integrity and legitimacy. The Chinese government has historically showed a high capacity in opposition repression both in terms of protests or online media monitoring especially through censoring content from platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and closely watching WeChat. Such technical knowledge about censorship expertise can be shared in training seminars with aim at sharing with invited party cadres and government officials CPC's effective techniques clamping down on social media activities which are deemed critical or challenging to the government in Beijing. There have been several media reports about internet shutdowns in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Sudan with suspicion that they were direct applications of skills learned from Beijing.

Several media reports show that many party members from African countries return home highly impressed with the use of surveillance equipment in China in tracking/reducing crime and improving government control of the internet. In one example, South Sudan's Anthony

Kpandu, who says he reads from his copy of *Concise History of the Chinese Communist Party* every day, reportedly came back from leading a delegation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to China and immediately put in orders for surveillance drones that he saw being used in China.[57] On his visit to China, the politician was impressed with the use of drones in tracking and monitoring crime and upon his return to South Sudan expressed his willingness to acquire the same technology he saw in China and mimic its use. Other governments either acquired or are in the process of acquiring Chinese facial recognition technology to use it for security and policing purposes.[58] Whereas it is difficult to put the responsibility on Beijing for any buying governments using Chinese technology to nefarious purposes, it is certainly interesting to observe the appeal and attractiveness of China's governance techniques. The example of Chinese surveillance technology being acquired by African politicians after being exposed to how it works during party-to-party exchanges illustrates both power and influence and also shows the willingness of African elites to speak up in favor of their experiences learning from the Chinese model. Party-to-party exchanges, indeed, serve to market China's equipment to African counterparts.

Conclusion

Understanding China's power as a resource and its influence as the capability of turning resources into outcomes limits the way we can conceptualize the agency of China's partners and reduces them to being objects that China's power and influence are exercised on. By conceptualizing power and influence as processes which get reinforced as more networks are expanded through party-to-party exchanges, questions about measuring influence become of secondary importance. Some of these questions include asking if trainings by the CPC incentivize African government officials to adopt Chinese-style single-party governance models, or if African civil servants are more likely to be influenced by the seminars they get from their Chinese counterparts on party management, media censorship, poverty alleviation, and opposition monitoring. One direction we can take to answer this question is to examine the content of these seminars and analyze the impressions of civil servants from African countries who participated in these trainings.

The CPC with its International Department plays an important role in Chinese foreign policy making through shaping China's diplomatic exchanges with party officials from other countries. Among the activities organized by the ID-CPC is hosting delegations for visits to China and organizing work visits by Chinese party officials. Establishing party-to-party exchanges with African countries is mostly held bi-laterally with invitations from Beijing at times while at the request of political parties from the African side at other times. The afore-discussed investments in party cadre trainings have served as a launch pad for China's broader foreign policy goals around the Belt and Road Initiative.[59] Conducting and organizing thousands of professionalization training programs for African military or party cadres and public officials provide a unique opportunity for Chinese policy makers to experiment with these trainings before widening the scope to the larger Belt and Road Initiative countries. One of Chinese foreign policy's most successful competitive advantages over Western rivals is Beijing's focus on promoting people-to-people relations and investing in human capital

development in its relations with Africa and other Global South states. Whether through BRI or FOCAC, Beijing's investments in professionalization trainings for senior cadres from African countries allow for three symbiotic objectives to be realized: diffusing a Chinese-style development and governance model, expansion of a professional network between Chinese cadres and their counterparts from African and BRI member-states, and socialization of civil servants and party cadres into China's culture, diplomacy, and readings of history. While this article suggested moving beyond the separation between influence and power as two concepts that occur one after the other, more remains to be done in order to shed more light on how these elite networks between Chinese and African counterparts navigate, negotiate, and challenge power and influence.

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Notes

1 The Independent, October 4, 2019.

2 PRC's embassy in Tanzania, October 4, 2019.

3 The Southern Times, January 20, 2020.

4 The Egyptian foreign affair minister made a similar statement during a phone conversation with his   Chinese counterpart. Xinhua News, 2020.

5 Diamond and Schell 2018.

6 Goh 2014, p. 832.

7 For more on this see Table 1 in Goh 2014, p. 831.

8 Goh 2016, p. 48. explains that "China's influence through preference multiplication is not a typical case   for demonstrating exercise of power because Beijing does not generally have to get others to do what they did not what to do."

9 For scholarship discussing the China threat vs. China opportunity debates see Pan 2012, Goldstein 2013, Johnston 2003.

10 See edited volume by Goh, 2016 for various case studies on China's influence in South and Southeast Asia.

11 For more on theories of power and an application of relational power to China-Africa relations, see   Benabdallah 2020.

12 See Johnston 2008, Pu 2012, and Thies 2015 for various approaches to China and socialization.

13 See Brautigam 2020 on the debt trap narrative, Hartig 2019 for an analysis of China's influence through Confucius Institutes, Haugen 2013 for an analysis of Chinese recruitment in African universities, Wasserman 2016 for a study on China's influence on editorial agendas in South Africa, and Umejei 2020. It is beyond the scope of this article to summarize the vast scholarship that captures various angles of China's influence mechanisms in Africa, but the point is to show that of all these, examining party-to-party relations remains underexplored.

14 Newlin and Kostelancik 2020.

15 The ID-CPC keeps an open record of multiple diplomatic updates and activities organized with foreign counterparts. The department's website news can be reached through this link https://www.idcpc.org.cn/english/news/index.html

16 Bing 2017, p. 55.

17 Hackenesch and Bader 2020, p. 1.

18 Hackenesch and Bader 2020, p.1.

19 Eisenman 2018b, p. 4.

20 Eisenman 2018b, p. 9.

21 Zeng 2015.

22 Zhong 2013.

23 For more on this matter see Eisenman 2018b, p. 12.

24 Kuo 2017.

25 Nakkazi 2018.

26 Xinhua 2018.

27 For more on the history of the CCP and ANC relations, see Alden and Wu 2014, and for a recount on the CCP's relations with Pretoria during Apartheid, see Taylor 2018.

28 From the website of CELAP, it is announced that the academy had so far organized "training sessions for more than 3,700 participants from over 120 counties. Contents of these training programs include theory and practice of CPC's party building, China's reform and opening-up history, government reform, latest social management practice, business surroundings, and leadership education."

29 For more on this, see Plaut 2015.

30 Kgosana 2018.

31 Kgosana 2018.

32 See Alden and Wu 2014.

33 Findlay 2014.

34 Findlay 2014.

35 International Department news item from April 23, 2020 accessed in June 2020 (see ID-CPC 2020a).

36 South Africa, Egypt, the Republic of Congo, and Algeria enjoy the highest forms of cooperation China maintains on the continent, comprehensive strategic partnership. They are all very close partners of China and ruling parties in these countries keep very close ties with the CPC.

37 For more on China's partnership building, see Li and Ye 2019, figure 2.

38 During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ID-CPC kept on holding party-to-party trainings and exchanges with African counterparts, virtually.

39 ID-CPC 2017c.

40 ID-CPC 2017d.

41 ID-CPC 2017e.

42 ID-CPC 2017a.

43 ID-CPC 2017b.

44 ID-CPC 2019.

45 ID-CPC 2019.

46 ID-CPC 2019.

47 Gitter and Bowie 2016.

48 Goh 2014, table 1, p. 831.

49 *Guanxi* translates to "connections" and it refers to the social network of personal and professional relations that facilitate the conduct of business or political deals in China. often times, guanxi involves the exchange of gifts or favors. For more on this see work by Emilian Kavalski, 2013; Yaqin Qin 2018.

50 Zhong 2013.

51 Zhong 2013.

52 The ID-CPC does not only invite ruling political parties but diversifies its exchanges with various parties with different ideological leanings. For instance, the CPC holds exchanges

with the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) of Côte d'Ivoire (see ID-CPC 2019b), Senegal's Alliance for the Republic (APR)

53 Xinhua, 2017.

54 Eisenman 2018a, p. 17.

55 For studies on norm diffusion and socialization processes in military exchanges in and beyond the case of China, see Atkinson 2006, Benabdallah 2019, Alden and Large 2015.

56 For a full list of the African countries which signed the letter backing China's security law in Hong Kong, see Lawler 2020.

57 Kuo 2017.

58 See Hawkins 2018 and Prasso 2019.

59 See He 2018 for an analysis of CPC party trainings organized for cadres from ASEAN members. The Baise cadre academy for example, hosted in a facility not far from the Vietnam boarder was established to provide trainings and share expertise with hundreds of party officials from various ASEAN member countries. The trainings, modeled very similarly to the ones targeting African officials, invite the delegations to spend a week to 10 days learning about China's history, its development model, "guiding public opinion" online, and basic party operations and management.