

Rethinking the political economy of Chinese-African agricultural cooperation: The Chinese Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers

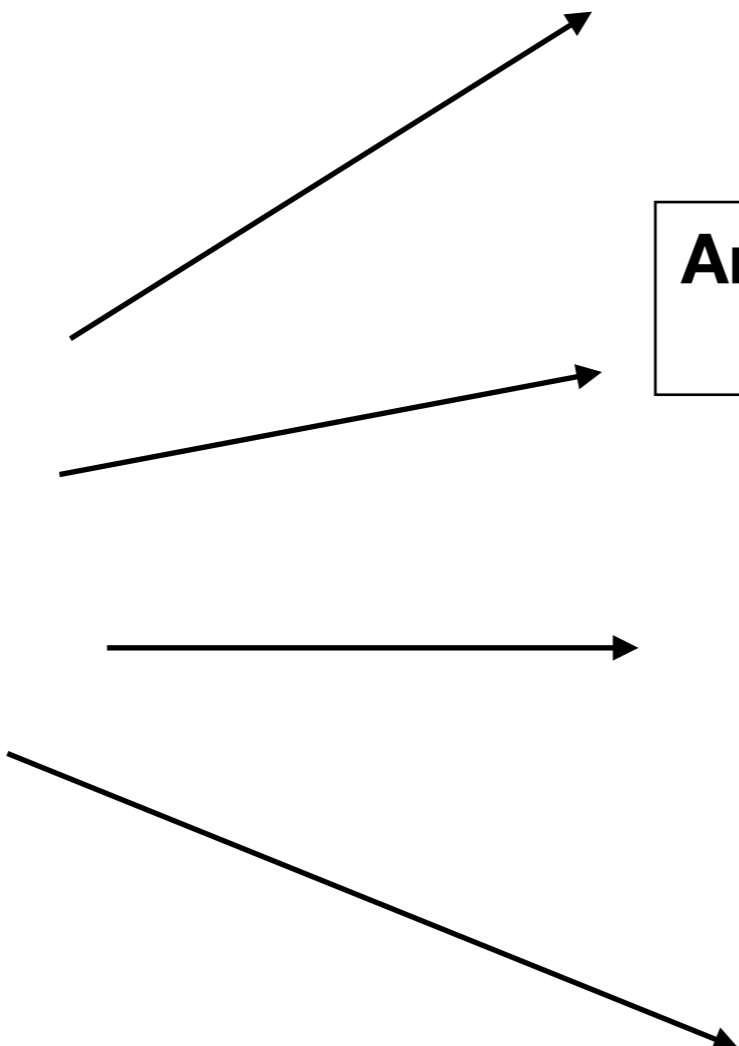
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**Agricultural technology
Demonstration Centers
(ATDCs)**



China's politics of aid

**Arena for South-South Cooperation
(SSC)**

Agricultural initiatives

Political economy

Agricultural technology Demonstration Centers (ATDCs)

- Current flagship project of China-Africa agricultural cooperation
- Launched during the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)
- Established in over 25 African countries
- Raised International attention
- Aid+Business model

Blurred aid, development, investment

- Official Development Assistance (ODA) is defined as government aid, with the main objective of promoting the economic development and welfare of developing countries (“official, verified, and comparable”)
- China’s 2011 Foreign Aid White paper: complete projects, goods and materials, technical cooperation, human resource development cooperation, medical assistance, emergency humanitarian aid, volunteer programs, and debt relief

The headline is the absolute and relative increase of bilateral and multilateral contributions from the non- DAC development partners

(Zimmerman and Smith, 2011)

In 2018

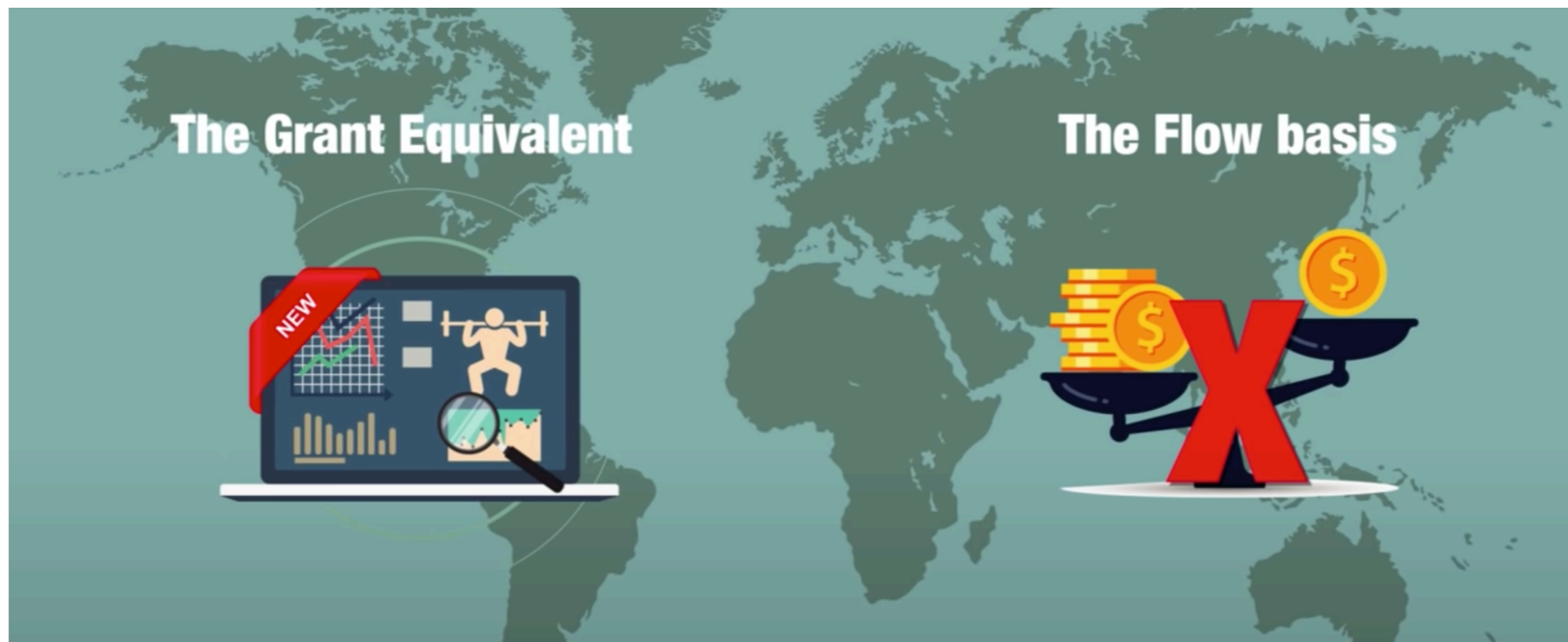


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<https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

Chinese foreign aid and South-South Cooperation (SSC)

- South-South cooperation is a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains. Involving two or more developing countries, it can take place on a bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional basis (UNOSSC, 2018)
- Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence
- Foundation principles of SSC: **non-interference** in other countries political constitutional matters
- Challenges of SSC 3.0 (2015—>):
 - Stronger framing in geo-strategic pragmatism
 - Difficult to maintain claims of non-interference
 - Harder to make ideational distinction from Western Partner

(Emma Mawdsley, 2019 South–South Cooperation 3.0? Managing the consequences of success in the decade ahead)

- Shaped by other 'moving parts' e.g. pre- and post-COVID changes in the global economy, African countries, western partners...

[https://
edition.cnn.com/
2014/05/17/world/
africa/cameroon-china-
boko-haram/index.html](https://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/17/world/africa/cameroon-china-boko-haram/index.html)

Boko Haram attack on Chinese firm in Cameroon; soldier reported killed

By Michael Martinez, Christabelle Fombu, and Pierre Meilhan, CNN
Updated 1941 GMT (0341 HKT) May 17, 2014



Three Chinese nationals killed by angry crowd in Central African Republic

By The Associated Press
Fri., Oct. 5, 2018 | 1 min. read



[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/
201810/06/
WS5bb87787a310eff303280d83.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201810/06/WS5bb87787a310eff303280d83.html)

Three Chinese nationals were murdered and burned in Zambia, in a week when racial tensions were running high

Analysis by Jenni Marsh and Chiwoyu Sinyangwe, CNN
Updated 0020 GMT (0820 HKT) June 6, 2020



News & buzz

A Texas teenager breaks two world records for longest legs

Opinion: 'The thank you Vice President Pence' debate

[https://edition.cnn.com/
2020/06/05/china/china-zambia-
murder](https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/05/china/china-zambia-murder)



**Now there are more than 27 ATDCs
around African countries**

Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009)

III. Economic Cooperation

3.1 Agriculture

3.1.1 The two sides stressed the importance of agriculture in their respective economies and that enhanced agricultural cooperation will play a positive role in eliminating poverty, promoting development and ensuring food security for both sides.

3.1.2 The two sides noted with pleasure the major progress made in China-Africa agricultural cooperation and resolved to intensify their exchanges and cooperation in farming, animal husbandry, irrigation, fishery, agricultural machinery, processing of agricultural produce, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, food safety and epidemic control, and actively explore new forms and ways of agricultural cooperation.

3.1.3 The Chinese side decided to:

--Send 100 senior experts on agricultural technologies to Africa and set up in Africa 10 demonstration centers of agricultural technology with special features;

--Give encouragement and support to Chinese enterprises in expanding their investment in agriculture in Africa and getting more involved in agricultural infrastructure development, production of agricultural machinery and processing of agricultural produce in Africa;

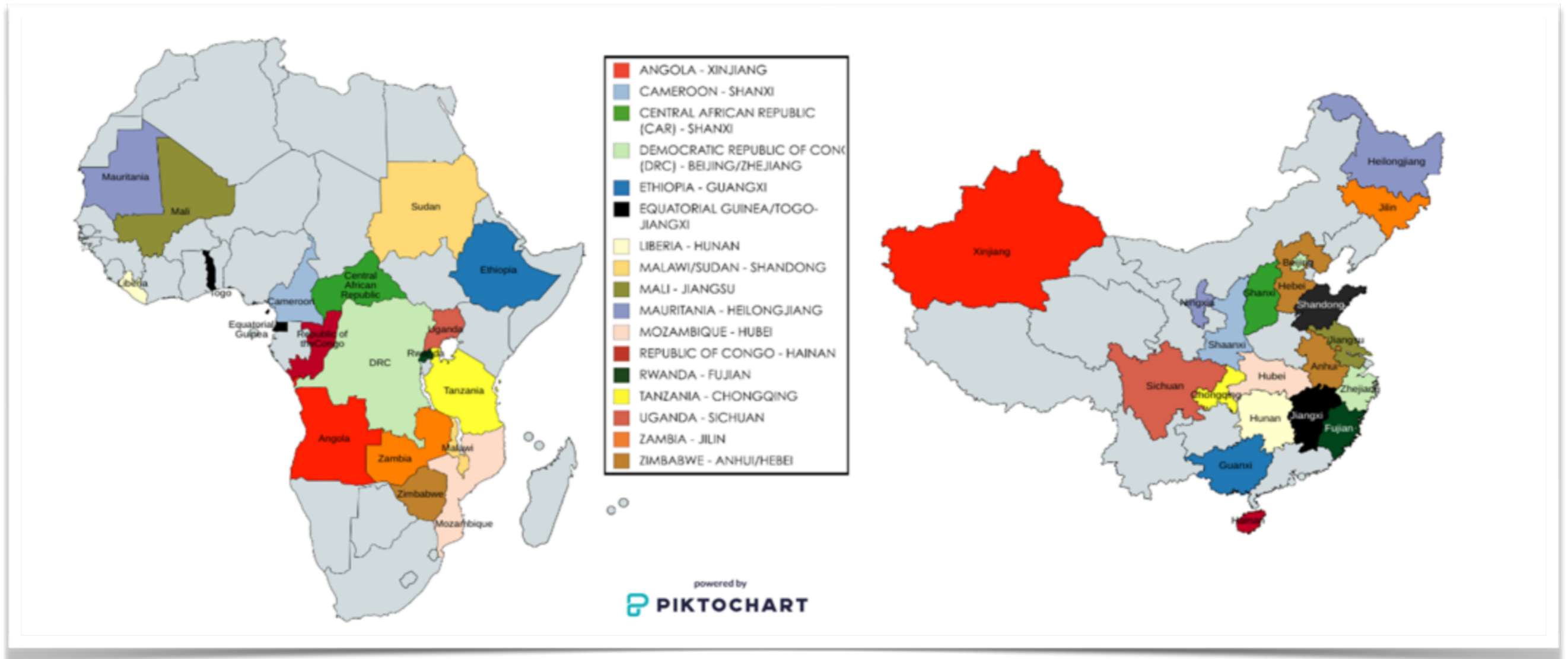
--Step up cooperation with Africa in extending applicable technologies and human resources training in agriculture;

--Strengthen cooperation with African countries within the framework of the Special Program for Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

“Agriculture played a central role in China’s own economic development and sharing these experiences has been a consistent priority in China’s engagement with Africa. Chinese cooperation with the sector in Africa focused on technology and capacity building as well as providing hybrid seeds. It is also influenced by China’s own domestic development experience”

(Adejumobi & Jalata, 2018)

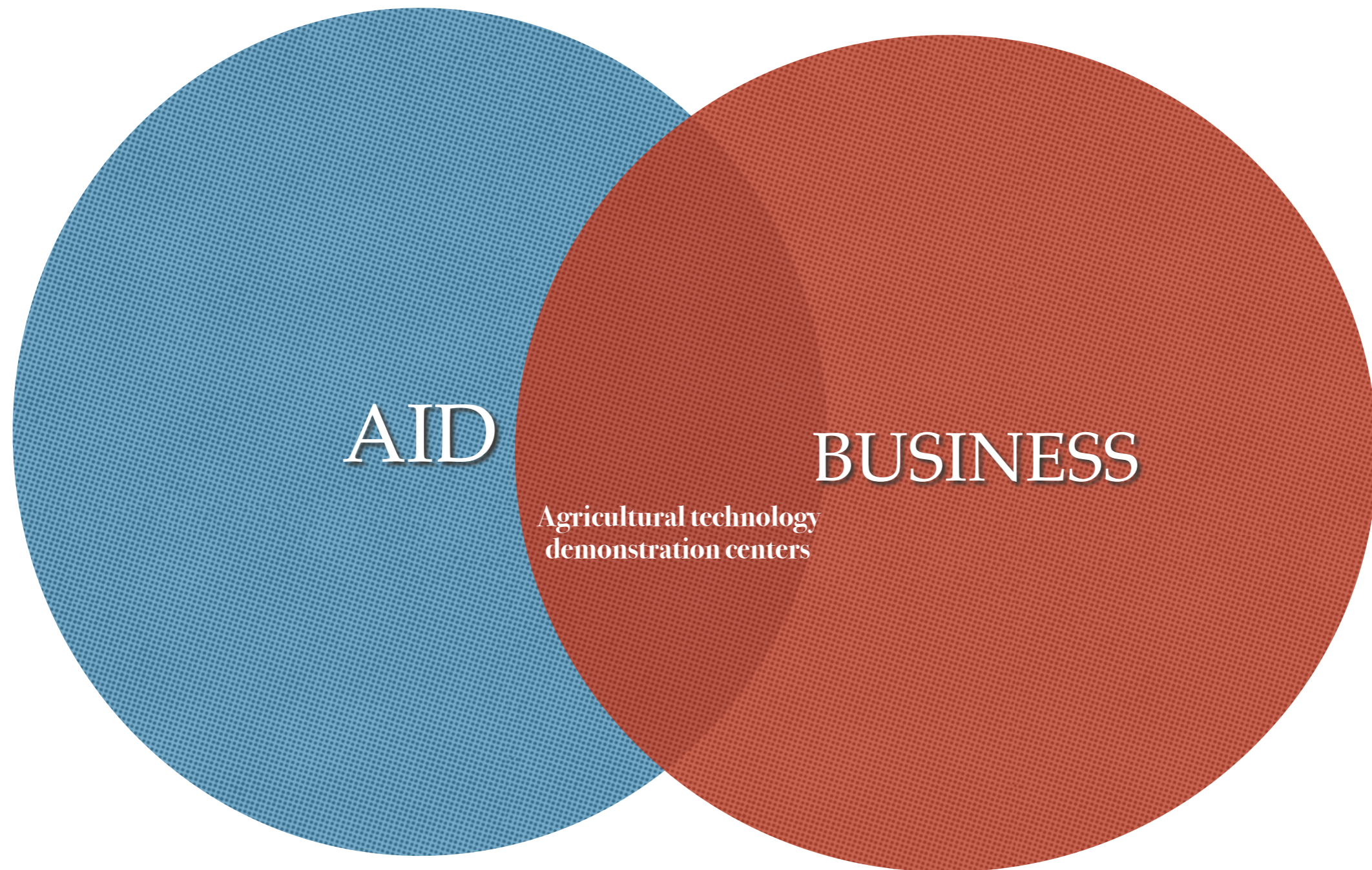
Behind China's state capitalism: 'One Province One Country'



Source: Development Reimagined

<https://developmentreimagined.com/2020/05/11/chinas-agricultural-technology-demonstration-centers/>

Agricultural technology demonstration centers (ATDCs): “The new business of development” (Jiang et al., 2016)



Final aim: link effectively development assistance with market-oriented operations and overcome the economic sustainability of aid projects

ATDC Guidelines (MOC & MOA, 2011)

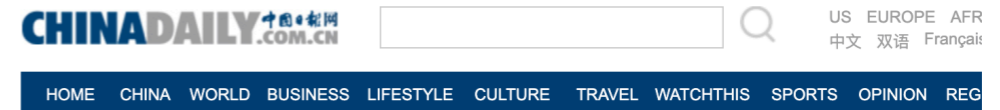
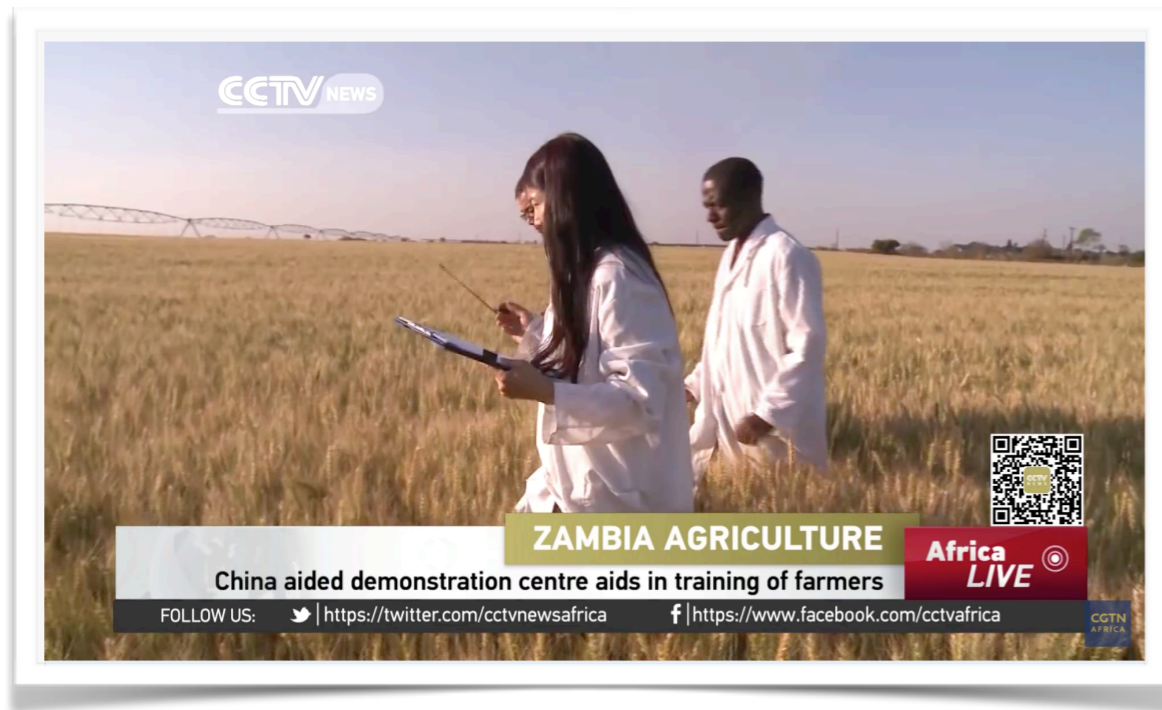
The centers are intended to serve four main goals:

1. ATDCs serve to promote bilateral agreements and China's foreign strategy in recipient countries
2. The centers aim to promote innovative agricultural practices and modern technology to enhance food security
3. The centers are designed to be a privileged platform for Chinese companies to invest in Africa, explore new markets in line with China's 'Agriculture Going Out' policy
4. ATDCs serve as a base for research, demonstration, training, and display

(Jiang, 2020)

Operational Stages	Chinese side	African counterpart
Construction (about one year)	Complete the construction of the infrastructure; Provision of agro-equipment, and machinery	Offer logistical support: land, electricity, water; Assist Chinese engineering and technical personnel
Technical cooperation (three-years)	Research, demonstration, training; dissemination of relevant technique and improved seeds	Assist with technical and management issues; facilitator
Business operation	Achieve economic sustainability; attract agro-companies	Tasks not specified in the ATDCs guidance

Discursive framings, narratives



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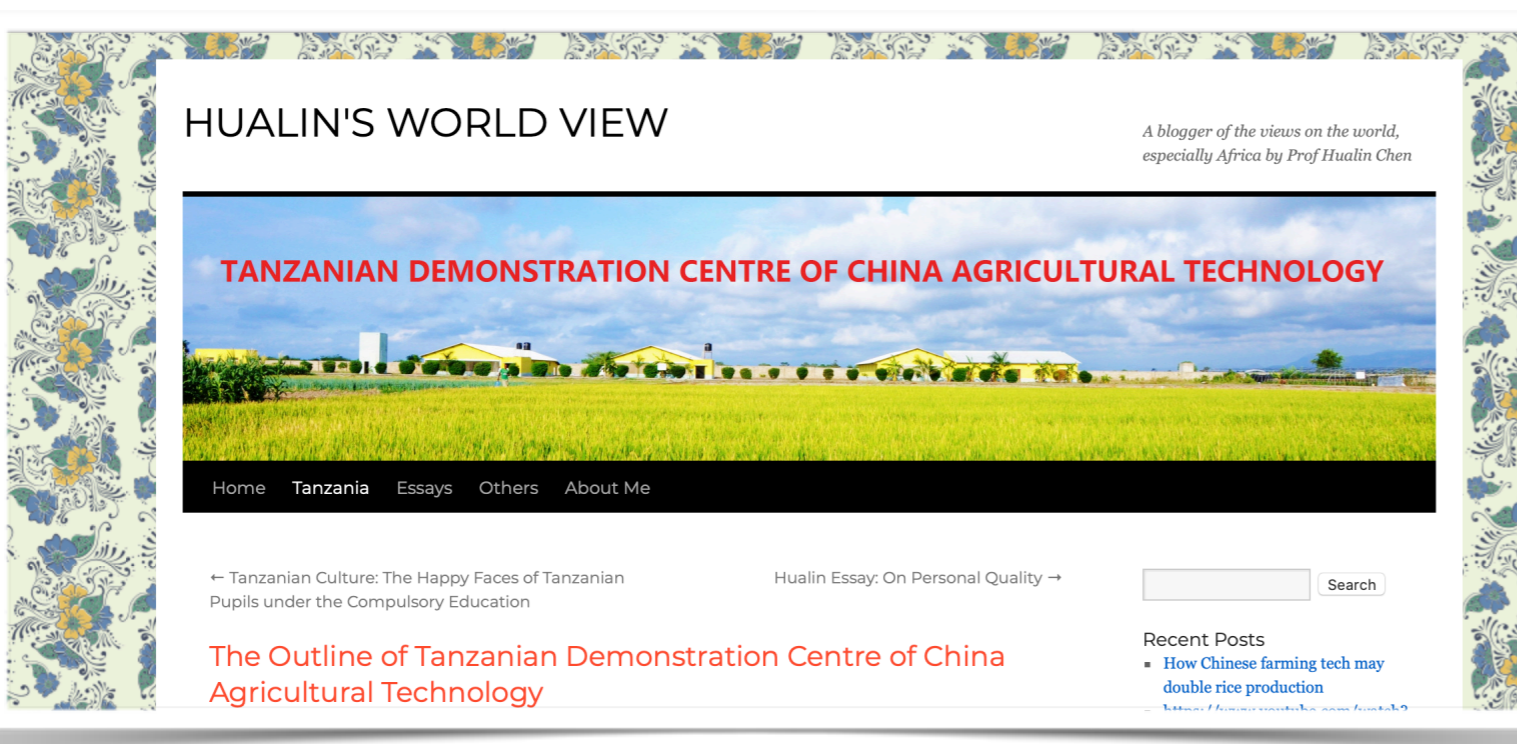
Tanzania, China join hands to boost rice harvests

By Lucie Morangi in Dakawa, Tanzania and Tan Yingzi in Beijing | China Daily Global | Updated: 2019-06-24 08:34



One early morning this month, a Tanzanian villager named Tatu sat outside her house cooking and selling vitumbua - buns made of rice flour. Behind her stood a huge stone house. She explained that the low building at the corner of the land was for poultry and rabbit farming, a new activity in which she was dabbling.

'CGTN.com is the official website for China Global Television Network, which brings a Chinese perspective to global news'





“

We have jointly undertaken research and developed high-yield seeds that are drought-tolerant.”

Andrew Ngereza,
center manager of the
Tanzania Agricultural
Research Institute-Dakawa

Dakawa, rice sowing



Tanzania: Dakawa, Morogoro Region



CCTV NEWS



ZAMBIA AGRICULTURE

China aided demonstration centre aids in training of farmers

Africa
LIVE

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 | <https://www.facebook.com/cctvafrica>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_k_bdjZ2ZIA

Despite the geography: Common challenges

AID

- Language and cultural barriers
- Different farming culture, neglect local suitability (Makundi, 2017)
- Lack of post-training follow up
- Limited engagement with other actors

BUSINESS

- Limited support from recipient governments
- “Waiting, relying on, and asking”
- High Risk of agriculture investments in Africa

Existing gap in ATDC research

Future studies on ATDCs should consider (Nalwimba, Qi, Mudimu, 2019):

- Gender dimension
- Farmers' abilities
- Elaborate a scale of adaptation for technology relevancy (to which extent the ATDC empowers local farmers?)
- Consider the political economy: broader economic factors in which an ATDC is situated, this will enable us to come up with nuanced studies on the performance of the ATDC as an intervention in agricultural development
- Discuss how the ATDCs can strike a balance between aid and business

Reflections

- Indirect impact on the economy of the territory, local societies, and the environment
- Gender blindness
- Attempt to introduce Green super rice (hybrid rice)
- Food security vs Food Sovereignty (La Via Campesina, 2007)
- "It is entirely possible for people to be food secure in prison or under a dictatorship" (Patel, 2009: 665)
- Different narratives, different actors (the relevance of technology adoption goes behind Chinese influence)
- Land issues
- Lack evaluation and monitoring

Rethinking the political economy of Chinese-African agricultural cooperation

- Link micro-perspective with political economy process
- ❖ Thinking geographically: taking seriously questions of space, place, scale (Massey, 2013)
- ❖ Quality of data is not the main challenge: GDP do not capture the reality of Africa on the ground
- ❖ Economic models for Africa's growth are still designed outside the continent and resemble the experiences of foreign actors
- ❖ Decolonization of African studies

❖

There are certainly more structural issues, including the appropriation of the African commons, the dynamics of the vast informal economies in Africa and their insertion into the global economy, and the growing inequalities within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world. Neglecting these foundational matters and fine-tuning GDP only endorses – indeed worsens – the ongoing world order which tries to spit Africa out to the margins and tie it there. The technical, data- based analysis of GDP can – indeed should – be part of a holistic political-economic critique of mainstream economics, especially in its deployment to understand Africa.

Obeng-Odoom, 2017