

China–African Francophone Growing Economic Involvement: A Case Study of the Republic of Mali

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Abstract: African Francophone countries are increasingly engaging with China politically, socially, culturally and economically since 1958, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation especially the machinations of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) create in Beijing on 2000. The recent growth of Chinese influence and companies across Africa in general, Africa Francophone in particular has drawn African and world attention. As a result, both economic and political implications are emerging at the global level, raising concerns among actors in the global economy. Most critic and literature to date that appears to borrow from the logic of dependency theory presents African Francophone Countries as pawns, subject to the demands of exploitative and dominant China, who is benefiting at Africa Francophone's expense. So for that reason, the relations between China and African Francophone require close examination, and this document seeks to address two major issues.

First, it tries to and investigates whether or not dependency theory explains the nature of African Francophone nations and China's relationship, using Republic of Mali as a case study. Furthermore, it will address whether dependency theory can correctly describe this relationship. In this research we refer to Dos Santos' assertion. According to Dos Santos's assertion "the dependency is a historical condition in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which their own is subjected" (1). Some publication claim that the impact of Chinese engagement in Africa Francophone, whether positive or negative, whether on a comprehensive scale or a small scale benefiting the leaders class and a circle of privileges people, will be determined by African Francophone governments and their policies regarding China. While it is clear that African Francophone States have found a new partner for diplomatic support, trade, and aid even to resist Western interventions and initiated policies. It is also apparent that to accrue any sort of lasting benefit, African Francophone Nations must actively manage their relationship with China. Existing research has yet to adequately address the motivations of African Francophone who choose to engage with China and African Francophone perspectives on this growing relationship. This paper will attempt to address these questions in part by exploring Mali's China policy.

This paper contradicts the assumption of most publications to date that seems to borrow from the logic of dependency theory and present African Francophone economic as pawns, subject to the demands of a dominant and exploitative China, who is benefiting at Africa Francophone expenses. Arguably, African Francophone is willing partners of the Chinese, driven by their state-centric belief that engagement with the Chinese is in their national interest. For Malians, their country is engaging with China because it is in their best interest and as the historical relationship continues to grow, it will need to be managed in order to maximize the benefit to Mali. The historical partnership China-Mali relations have been deeply rooted in the history of Chinese and Malian peoples. The first contacts between China and Mali date on early 1960.

I. Research Question and Core Objective:

The Dependency theory emerged in the 1960s as a way of understanding relations between countries, in particular those between more developed and less developed countries. Neoclassical economic theory, however, declare that "economic growth results is net benefit to all, though not always equal benefit, a condition referred to as Pareto optimal". History has shown that despite developed nation's recorded economic growth, developing countries experienced lower levels of growth. In studying this phenomenon, Prebisch asserts that "economic growth in industrialized countries has negative impact on developing countries". According to this logic, developing countries sell raw materials to developed countries that use those materials to create manufactured "value-added" products that are then sold back to the developing countries at a higher price. The finished goods cost more than the raw materials; thus, developing countries cannot accrue enough income to both pay for their

exports and grow their economy. This unbalanced exchange creates a state of dependency for developing countries where “dependency can be defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences -political, economic, and cultural- on national development policies”. The Dependency theory provides an explanation of “why developing countries stay poor while industrialized, developed countries become wealthier”? However, dependency theory has since been discredited because it lacks cohesion and clarity. More importantly, it fails to account for the influence of local elites political policies in developing countries and the resulting impact uneconomic growth. However, many of the arguments made on the nature of economic cooperation between China and African Francophone states still borrow heavily from the logic of dependency theory. This logic of dependency theory takes us to the research objectives, hypothesis and questions.

2.1. Research Objective:

The main objectives of this Research are following:

- 1- To examine economic trends to see if increasing economic engagement with China through economy and trade has adversely affected Africa Francophone, especially Mali economic and cultural performance, as would be expected in a state of dependency;
- 2- It presents a case study of Mali with the goal of revealing the drivers behind increasing Malian engagement with China.

II. HYPOTHESIS:

The hypothesis to be tested in this study is following:

Malians are increasingly engaging with China because they believe it will result in a net benefit for themselves and for their country.

2.2. Research Questions:

The central research question posed by this study is:

Why do Malians choose to engage with China?

In addition to the above central question, the study includes other sub questions:

- ◆ What is Mali’s foreign policy toward China?
- ◆ What are the objectives of state leaders and governmental administrations that choose to engage with China over other actors?
- ◆ What does Mali stand to gain?

III. Significance of the Research

This research examines Mali’s current China policy to ascertain why Malians are engaging with China as well as reviewing policy since the creation of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). This research intends to understand and explain African Francophone motivations in allowing and increasing Chinese engagement. It investigates and challenges widely held assumptions about Chinese exploitation and goes on to explore African Francophone perceptions of China’s involvement. However, the significance of this study extends beyond Africa Francophone or China. It seeks to examine and highlight new relationships in international cooperation. Also, the study will enable researchers and non researchers understand what Africans Francophone are allowing China to do and why, and further help to interpret China’s presence and impact. This study will additionally challenge development policy makers in their approach in studying China, Africa Francophone and their growing interrelations.

IV. Methodology

Data for the research study gathered through in-person or telephone interviews, and field research, collected in Mali. A significant amount of the information that will be presented in the document has been conducted in Mali with other sources of data coming from some administration documents, books, newspapers and WebPages. The interviewees included incumbent and former officials from Mali government: Diplomats, Ministers, particularly M. Seydou Badian Kouyate (the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mali, main actor of Mali-China relations),

Moussa Traore (the former President of Republic of Mali during 23 years), and staff of financial institutions, researchers, entrepreneurs, traders and consumers. The main purpose of this is to analyze the past, the present, the impacts and actual problems of China-African Francophone with special emphasis on Mali economic engagement as noted in the present document.

4.1. Why the Republic of Mali?

Using the Republic of Mali as a case study, this paper attempts to extrapolate the motivations and objectives of Africans Francophone who are increasingly engaging with the Chinese. The selection of Mali as the research site relates to both the political, cultural and economic nature of the country, also to the deep relations between China and Mali since Prime Minister Zhou En Lai's visit in the country on 1964, January and Modibo Keita, Malian President's Visit in China the same year. Mali has resources not explore which can interest China. China's cooperation with Mali differs somewhat from its associations with most African francophone states. In its early stages, China's engagement with Mali was marked by the diplomatic support, the exchange of information and technology. Chinese know-how contributed to local industrial and social development,

Mali's story of Chinese engagement is different than the rest of Africa Francophone. Mali is situated in the earth of West Africa. Its population base of 18 millions can theoretically support domestic industry while at the same time consuming large quantities of Chinese goods. Also Mali has significant political influence in West Africa Francophone; that if appropriately managed, can be exploited by China in other West African francophone countries. Mali is, however, distinctive in its relatively stronger and more independent government, and thus more likely to resist a situation of dependency on trade with China.

Map of Africa continent with countries and borders (Google map)



To this end, fieldwork has been conducted in Mali, during the months of July and August 2018, utilizing a strategic case-study approach that employed an open-ended interview format. A case study was necessary to understand new phenomena that have not previously been addressed by scholarship. In sum, many formal and informal interviews have been conducted with Malians that engaged with China. Engagement with China will

be operationalized as any sort of interaction with Chinese people and China. The study has been conducted 22 formal interviews.

To be considered formal, an interview required a signed informed consent form has been voice-recorded. Interview respondents included former diplomats, government officials, businessmen, industry representatives, market traders, and academics, as well as Chinese company's representatives. To get a better view of Malian engagement with China, the study conducts the interviews in different geographic locations. The data that has been collected through these interviews has been coded to identify themes in responses to the questions posed, the most significant of which is: Why are Malians engaging with China? To validate the findings of this study, I rely on interviews with and peer reviews by Malian political, administrative and academics.

Keywords: Africa Francophone, China, Mali, Dependency theory, Investment,

I. Introduction;

China-African relations have been deeply rooted in the history of Chinese and African peoples. Africa is known as the cradle of humanity, but recently Africa is seen as a rising continent. China is the cradle of one of the world's richest and oldest civilizations. China is at the origin of major inventions, such as the ink, the paper, the powder, the compass which contributed to revolutionize the world progress, notably in the fields of economy, trade and knowledge sharing.

It is believed that the Chinese did not embark on colonial expeditions because they did not have the material and technical means. That is not true. Until the 15th century, China was a maritime power in Asia long before Europeans. The first contacts between China and Africa date back to the 10th century. Under the Tang Dynasty, Chinese established their first connection with the pharaoh of Egypt. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), several decades before the Europeans, notably the Portuguese Vasco de Gama arrived in Africa; further contacts were found between China and Africa. China has organized maritime expeditions to Africa. The head of these expeditions was the explorer Zheng He and he visited: Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, the Arab-Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, and East coast of Africa to Mozambique. These expeditions established useful contacts for trade and diplomatic relations. Despite favorable circumstances, the Chinese have never considered settling in the countries they discovered and create settlements there. They never had plans to implant Chinese though. In the 19th century, contacts between China and Africa were interrupted by European colonization of China on the one hand and Africa on the other hand. This period is called in China "the century of humiliation" because of the barbaric exploitation of China by foreign powers.

From 1949, following the hard battles of the People of China under the foresight of the Communist Party of China, led by Chairman Mao Zedong, the creation of the new China opened new horizons for a rapprochement between Africa and China. The new China-Africa relations take a new beginning in the Non-Aligned Movement at "the Bandung Conference". In fact, in 1955, 29 states from Africa and Asia, including the People's Republic of China, met in Bandung, Indonesia, to highlight the "urgent need to encourage the economic development of Africa-Asia Zone" (2). Diplomatic contacts were deepened a little more. China and Africa were more supportive in their desire to emancipate themselves from Western powers and pursue their own paths. Sharing similar historical experiences and national liberation struggles, China and Africa will forge a deep and sincere friendship.

During 1960s, Sino-African relations will take on a new dimension, China supporting its African friend in his desire to get out of underdevelopment. In this regard, during a memorable visit in Africa in January 1964, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai declares: "After helping African countries to get political independence, China wants to help Africa to achieve economic independence and development" (3). During Mali stage, he said in Bamako: "The relations between Mali and China are like the Niger River and Yangtze River water that flows forever" (4). This statement seems perfectly suited to China-Africa relations of today.

In 1978, thanks to the foresight of the Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by President Deng Xiaoping, China launched the policy of "Reform and Opening-up". This policy provided an opportunity for China and African countries to get closer to economic, trade, social and cultural cooperation.

In 2000, China and African countries agreed in Beijing to create the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). At that time only two Africa Francophone countries – Senegal and Burkina Faso- didn't recognize the People Republic of China. Since the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, relations between China and Africa have been steadily getting stronger. China and Africa show mutual understanding and solidarity. Both parties work to raise step by step the highest level of their relationships. The two Africa

Francophone countries Senegal and Burkina Faso will recognize the People Republic respectively in 2005 and in may 2018. Since the creation of FOCAC, China's deepening engagement in Africa francophone has provoked numerous reactions in the Western, and even in African countries.

Some African Francophone countries, perceive the new Chinese partner in a subjective way. Pragmatism, diligence, hard work and a sense of Chinese solidarity are appreciated and even admired. These reactions are fueled in some cases by hopes for what China can bring Africa Francophone in investment, trade and alternative development partnership. In other cases, most critics of China's engagement with African francophone economies center their emphasizes on what China benefits out of the cooperation.

Firstly natural resources and export markets to fuel its burgeoning economy, mineral and agricultural products to feed its increasingly urbanized population. China's emerging role in Africa francophone is much broader than security resources, the one that mirrors wider changes worldwide as China is attempting to be a major actress in international relations in the 21st century in terms of economic investment, and also military expenditure and peace building across post-conflict environments in all Africa. China's actions in favor of peace and security in Africa francophone are in line with African aspirations in the "Agenda 2063" of African Union. It is the aspiration to a peaceful and secure Africa. These aspirations, dream of the peoples of Africa are in line with the Chinese dream. It is a dream of peace and development. China intends to share its dream, prosperity with African countries include African Francophone in all areas through "Belt and Road Initiative". "China supports Africa's implementation of the "Silencing Arms in Africa initiative". China is ready to play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in Africa and to support the strengthening of the autonomous capacities of African countries in terms of stability and peace" (5). It is good to remember that China is currently the largest donor of soldiers to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Actually more than 2,500 Chinese peacekeepers are deployed in five UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. This makes China the largest contingent contributor to peacekeeping operations among the five permanent members of the Security Council. In Mali, China has sent 395 peacekeepers whose work is much appreciated by populations because of their discipline and civic commitment. These Chinese peacekeeper soldiers repaired roads, bridges and airport runways. They provided free care to local populations with a medical unit of 70 peoples. Moreover, it is in Africa that China has set up its first naval base outside the country, in Djibouti specifically.

The idea that China would be really crucial to African development is neither new nor accidental. In fact, Chinese policymakers have been aware of this notion for quite some time. After Bandung Conference in 1955, was conceived during the period of 1960s in an attempt to promote the advancement of developing country goals in a new world order. During 1960s, Sino-African relations take on a new dimension, China supporting its African friend in his desire to get out of underdevelopment. In this regard, during his visit in Africa in 1964, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai confirms the availability of China to help African countries to get their economic independence and development from the western. Since then, China has played an active role in promoting South- South cooperation, being China-Africa cooperation a significant part of the equation. On 1978, thanks to the foresight of the Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by President Den Xiaoping, China launched the policy of "Reform and Opening-up". This policy provided an opportunity for China and African countries to get closer to economic, trade, social and cultural cooperation. In 2000, China and African countries agreed in Beijing to create the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Since then, relations between China and Africa have been steadily getting stronger. China and Africa show mutual understanding and solidarity. Both parties work to raise step by step the highest level of their relationships. In December 2015, at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit, held in Johannesburg in South Africa, China and Africa established a comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership. During the Summit, the President of China Xi Jinping reaffirmed his country's support to poverty alleviation in Africa under the plan for 2016-2019. The Chinese President asserts that China is willing to assist African countries by sharing its experience in poverty alleviation. In a three-year (2016-2019) plan, China pledged US\$60 billion to support the continent of Africa in its quest to alleviate poverty in a perspective that falls parallel to the World Bank's target of eliminating poverty by 2030 globally and the African Agenda that intend to create the "Africa we want" by 2063. All these are ways of demonstrating its good intentions as well as creating an environment conducive to friendly diplomatic relations, business, and trade.

African Francophone generally views China as a good and sincere partner. In a recent survey, China's growing presence in Africa francophone wins largely positive popular reviews. Recent results from Afro barometer's 2016-2017 surveys in 22 African francophone counties, assert that the public holds generally favorable views of economic and assistance activities by the Chinese. Africans francophone rank China and France in the first and second position, respectively, as development models for their own countries.

Remarkably, in all African francophone countries - situated in East, West, North, South and center of Africa continent - the Chinese either matches or surpass developed countries, particularly the France in popularity as a development model. Chinese are known as hard worker, disciplines people and discrete. Public perceptions not only confirm China's important economic, diplomatic and cultural role in Africa francophone but also generally portray its impact as beneficial. African francophone economies welcome China's willingness to provide cooperation, exchange and aid without preconditions that they respect human rights to ensure government transparency, as typically required by the western and many international organizations and Africa partners of development. China do not interfere in countries interior affairs. Irrespective of this, few analyses have approached Sino-Africa francophone relations as a vibrant way dynamic in which the two parties adjust to policy initiatives and popular perceptions emanating from each other. The current growth of China's impact and enterprise across African francophone economies has drawn global attention. As a result, both economic and political implications are emerging at the global level, attempting to address potential repercussions to the African francophone population, the estimated consequences to Western interests in Africa francophone and overarching effects at the global level.

In its approach to Africa francophone countries as all Africa, China relies on an approach adapted to the realities of the continent and based on the principle of "China's peace fulrise". The 2005 Chinese Government White book on Strategy in Africa notes that "cooperation must be based on the search for mutual basic interests of the Chinese people and the people of Africa ". It also defines the three cornerstones of China's strategy, namely a historical legitimacy, a diplomatic approach based on the "soft power" theory and a Win-Win economic cooperation. According to dependency theory, African francophone countries are involving with China because China wants to involve with Africa. However, noted African francophone scholars continue to stress that, while the Chinese may be driven by their own domestic demands, their activity is defined by the African francophone governments and with which they wish to interact. As such, African francophone motivations matter because they are at the core of China-Africa relations. African francophone economies and their institutions are taking a more active role than what some document gives them credit for. The reasons Africans francophone seek relations with China affects the nature and levels of Chinese involvement within states' borders. In addition, levels of monitoring and types of domestic policies play a key role in defining the implications, impact and character of China's presence in African francophone countries. Unfortunately, the literature lacks explanations of African francophone perspectives and offers a minimal discussion of African francophone actors' roles in permitting and controlling China's involvement. Some studies claim that the impact of Chinese engagement in Africa, Africa Francophone includes, whether positive or negative, whether on a comprehensive scale or a small scale benefiting the political elite and a small privileges circle, will be determined by African francophone governments and their policies regarding China. While it is clear that African francophone states have found a new partner for diplomatic support, trade, and even political to resist Western-initiated policies and intentions, it is also apparent that to accrue any sort of lasting benefit, African francophone countries must actively manage their cooperation with China. Existing research has yet to adequately address the motivations of Africans francophone who choose to engage with China and African francophone perspectives on this growing relationship. This study will attempt to address these questions in part by exploring Mali's China policy. In this context,

Republic of Mali presents a unique case study upon which to assess China's goals and ambitions in Africa francophone. The key aim of this document is to determine the nature of China-Mali relations and to ascertain Mali motivations in this engagement.

The rest of the document is structured as follows:

Part 2: Examines the intertwined interests of China and its Africa francophone partners, exploring what each wants from the other; two parties derive significant diplomatic, economic, social and cultural benefits from their cooperation;

Part 3: Examines dependency theory in Africa francophone, noting that its logic has been applied to much of the literature on Chinese engagement in Africa francophone. The part begins with a discussion of dependency theory, its root and development, followed by an interpretation of the current state of affairs in Africa francophone and Mali, and a discussion of the relationship with China viewed through the lens of dependency theory. The part then shows state-centric realism as a sufficient framework via which to comprehend and assess China-Africa francophone and China-Mali cooperation, especially Africa francophone and Mali aspect of engagement with People Republic of China;

Par 4: Examines the motivations of Mali in his engagement with China, answering the questions of: "who in Mali is engaging with China and why?"

Part 5: Presents the conclusion.

Taking Stock of the Intertwined Interests of the People Republic of China and African francophone Engagement.

Taking stock of the People Republic of China's evolving interest with Africa francophone.

Contrary to the conventional perception regarding China's interest in Africa francophone, China's interest in Africa francophone includes at many dimensions of national interest:

-Firstly, China's interest lies in stability security and prosperity in Africa francophone countries. China's concern in the region also lies in ensuring Africa's well-being, safety of China's investment as well as the continuation of its commercial affairs;

-Secondly, political and historical legitimacy in international scene particularly with regards to China's principle of non-interference, "South-South solidarity", and adherence to the "One China" policy;

-Thirdly, markets for Chinese exports and lastly, access to natural resources. China's increasing engagement is accompanied by a real and dynamic diplomatic push to build a friendly partnership with African francophone governments, to seek Africa francophone valuable diplomatic backing to defend its interest in international scene for China's ambitions and worldview, and given the size of the African supporting (voting) bloc. For that reason, Africa francophone represents a significant voting bloc for Chinese-led initiatives or against Western-led initiatives with which China disagrees.

The success of China in Africa francophone has strengthened the country's status as an economic superpower. Also, Africa francophone plays a significant role in the diplomatic jostling between the People's Republic of China and many International Organizations. Out of the 76 overall votes backing the People's Republic of China taking over the Chinese seat from Taiwan in 1971, many votes came from African francophone countries. Face on this situation chairman Mao Zedong declares that "it was our African brothers who carried us into the United Nations" (6). China's top leaders made high-level visits to Africa from 1979 to 2010. Vice-premier Qian Qichen visited about thirty-six African countries between 1990 and 1998. Chinese Presidents Jiang Zemin (in 1996), and Hu Jintao (in 2009) made many official visits in Africa in general in Africa Francophone in particular. They visit Mali respectively on 1996, may 17 and 2009, February 12. The flurry of activity we see today has deep roots and therefore laid the foundation for an intense diplomacy that continues unabated today. We note that in July 2018, President Xi Jinping made his 9th visit to Africa, his 4th as President of the People's Republic of China. He started this visit to Senegal, an Africa Francophone country. That is the proof of the Chinese leader's attachment to Africa. On September 2018 China organize the 7th FOCAC Summit in Beijing. It has been an opportunity for both parties to work together on the theme: "China and Africa: building a stronger community of destiny through win-win cooperation". The Beijing Summit gave a new impetus to the Sino-African cooperation in building the community of destiny for humanity. At Beijing Summit, China and Africa worked to strengthen global planning, increase convergence of vision and coordinate efforts to effectively advance "building a stronger China-Africa community destiny. The Beijing Summit opened up new prospects for China-Africa cooperation under the "Belt and Road initiative" (BRI). China has seized this opportunity to closely associate Africa include Africa Francophone with the "Belt and Road Initiative, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the national development strategies of African countries. The Summit brought together China's strengths in financing capacity, investment, technology and expertise on the one hand and natural resources, demographic potential and market potential on the other hand with new pragmatic cooperation measures. Burkina Faso, the last Africa Francophone country to recognize People's Republic of China (on May 2018), participated to this Summit. At the Beijing summit, President Xi Jinping proposed to both parties to:

- "build together a community of China-Africa destiny marked by cultural prosperity",

- "Build together a community of China-Africa destiny marked by common security"(7). On basis of 10 programs, he provided 8 major initiatives that will propel "the construction of the Community of a stronger China-Africa cooperation in the new era". All Africa Francophone appreciated the proposal of Xi Jinping.

Throughout the 2000s, China's number one interest remains securing access to natural resources to advance its burgeoning and ambitious industrial development efforts. However, this demand for primary goods such as iron, copper, zinc, and petroleum, assisted African francophone nations to alleviate poverty more than it had in decades. The demand for resources has also affected the trade volume between China and Africa francophone

significantly in the last years. China's trade with Africa francophone has grown quickly many times in the last years. China's trade with Africa francophone recorded \$ 4 billion in 2000. In 2015, it grew to \$ 45 billion. However, the developing tale of increase in trade between China and Africa francophone changed in 2016. From January to November 2016 the trade between China and Africa francophone decrease to \$40.6 billion. In 2016, the trade volume increases more. In 2017 the trade increase making China Africa francophone's largest trading partner since 2010. China trade with Africa francophone is largely import driven, with China taking petroleum mostly from four African francophone countries: Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Mauritania. It purchases cadmium, Colton, copper, cobalt, platinum, diamonds ferrochrome, and gold from countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some of the largest African francophone exporters to China are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania. China fishes off Senegal Guinea Conakry and Mauritania. China grows cassava, maize, and sorghum in such place as Madagascar and ships the produce home. Recently, too, China became a major purchaser of cotton grown in Mali. As a result of the resources demand, growth in sub-Saharan Africa francophone has been very impressive over the past year, especially in the mid-2010s when GDP growth average close to 6 percent per annum. However, the growth outlook for 2017 and 2018 look brighter. The regional economic outlook attributes this rebound to a pickup in global activity and the backdrop of policy adjustments. In terms of China's investment in Africa francophone, recently, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks raised US\$3 billion from US\$16 billion in 2014 to US\$27 billion in 2016. Meanwhile, Chinese FDI flows to Africa francophone fell to US\$2 billion in 2014 from US\$2.3 billion in 2012, mirroring falling commodity prices and China's economic slowdown. To guarantee the future supply of energy, China is heavily investing in the upstream and downstream petroleum sectors in some African francophone nations like Mauritania, and Mali. In Mali China operations has been stopped because of insecurity in the north part of the country since the Tuaregs rebellion in 2012. Africa francophone also represents an important market for Chinese products. Africa francophone's collective gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to grow to \$2.1 trillion by 2022. Investment in African francophone economies can potentially facilitate China's efforts to restructure its own economy away from labor-intensive industries, especially as labor cost in China upsurge. China's shifting economic growth model aligns with Africa francophone's imminent labor forces boom, presenting a significant opportunity for the two parties. As we remark Africa Francophone countries are not so important in trade with China like others Africa countries. Actually Africa Francophone countries provide markets for Chinese-manufactured consumables: textiles, blankets, footwear, toys, telecoms equipment, cell telephones, computers, televisions, and furniture. China also sells to African Francophone governments: heavy communications technology, agricultural equipments, military equipments, generators, road machinery. To Africa Francophone, China sends tourists, laborers, supervisors, and diplomats, all of who bulk up the trade data. Furthermore, China's role in Africa francophone is changing from natural resources extractor to long-term strategic partner. Mali is a good example. China has not been known for establishing military relations in Africa francophone, even beyond its immediate sphere of influence. This is changing these lasts years following China's decision to participate actively United Nation's military peace action in Africa. China will be able to use his military base to improve the way it manages its peacekeeping operations and humanitarian efforts in Africa francophone. China believes that an Africa that is economically vibrant and whose government and security apparatus are capable of sustaining investment and trade are not only beneficial to the African population, it also benefits China commerce in Africa. Therefore, significant terms like "human development", "common prosperity", "security", and "peace" are included prominently in China's several Government white books. China has become conscious that insecurity in Africa francophone can influence its diplomatic and economic interests. For that reason President Xi Jinping proposed to both parties to:

- "Build together a community of China-Africa destiny marked by common security. To this end, "China advocates a new concept of comprehensive cooperative and sustainable global security. China strongly supports African countries, African Union (AU) and other African regional organizations in their efforts to find African solutions to African problems and supports Africa's implementation of the "Silencing Arms in Africa". China's actions in favor of peace and security in Africa are in line with African aspirations in the "Agenda 2063" of African Union. It is the aspiration to a peaceful and secure Africa. These aspirations, dream of the peoples of Africa are in line with the Chinese dream. It is a dream of peace and development (8). China intends to share its dream, its prosperity with Africa countries in all areas through "Belt and Road Initiative". China promise to offer \$60 million in free assistance to the African Union to build and maintain its arms, both its regular army and crisis response, as well as United Nations peacekeeping in Africa.

China has sent about 2,500 Chinese troops and police officers to serve as UN peacekeepers in Africa with an important deployment going to Mali (395), and elsewhere. In September 2015, Xi Jinping, President of China pledged to assign 8,000 more Chinese soldiers to serve in a standby peacekeeping unit that could be deployed during crises. China is also specifically seeking to upgrade counterterrorism cooperation with Africa continent, given Africa's struggle with militants including Boko Haram in Francophone countries (Niger, and Cameroun)

and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) in Sahel zone (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Tchad), and in northwestern Africa. China's goal is to build up African capabilities so that African nations – as well as organizations like the African Union, the Economic Community of West Africa States – can ensure their own security and stability. In 2015, China passed a counterterrorism law that for the first time authorizes China People army's deployment on overseas counterterrorism missions. China People Army has also established itself as a dynamic security partner through military contacts based on military advisors, training and education programs, and construction of military facilities.

Taking stock of Africa Francophone evolving interest with the Chinese

African francophone governments, look to China to offer diplomatic recognition and legitimacy as well as contribute to their economic development through development assistance, infrastructures, investment and trade, and that will power Africa francophone countries economic evolution. To some extent, numerous leaders from Africa francophone hope China will interact with them in ways that the Western nations do not, by engaging economically without condescendingly preaching about governance. Partly for the reason that African francophone remains conscious of the inequities of the colonization period. African francophone leaders are eager to be treated with respect on the international scene, both in bilateral interaction and in multilateral forums like the United Nations, the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, IMF, and other international organization meetings. The Chinese go out of its way to emphasize that its African francophone partners are independent and sovereign states, equal, and it often contrasts its position with the France colonial history of exploiting Africa francophone countries. To this regard President, Xi Jinping, during his visit to Africa on March 2013, declares: "Africa wants to be treated as an equal". This is what numerous Western Leaders do not understand, or at least are not willing to do. The Chinese at least know that we have to treat people in Africa as equals. In terms of human development, although China's definition of "development assistance" is different from the Western, the Chinese foreign aid program does many of the same things – offer or improve health care and poorly served communities, give backing to rural development, and train African students. China offers many types of foreign aid which are: goods and materials technical cooperation, debt relief, human resources development cooperation, medical assistance, emergency humanitarian aid, and volunteer programs, To Africa Francophone, China's aid covers a wide array of fields such as agriculture, education, transportation, energy, communications, and health. The aid includes assistance supporting textiles factories (Mali, for example), hydropower stations (Democratic Republic of Congo), stadiums, hospitals, and schools. In terms of loan, the billions of dollars China commits to Africa francophone are repayable, long- term loans. The largest Chinese financier of African francophone loans is the China Export-Import Bank (Eximbank). China assistance permits African francophone nations to highlight their willingness to stand up to Western donors. Chinese loans are not necessarily meant to access natural resources: although Democratic Republic of Congo is resource-rich country, Mali is a resource-poor country. The largest China Eximbank project in Africa Francophone is the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway from Bamako in Mali to Conakry in Republic of Guinea. Africa francophone continues to lag behind the rest of the developing world in the quality of its infrastructure service. So, African francophone governments are particularly eager for financing in infrastructure that can promote intra-trade as well as attract investment. Recently, "the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that budget spending on infrastructure by sub-Saharan African nations reached around \$51.4 billion, meaning there is a financing gap of about \$41.6 billion. External commitments, both private and public, seem to fill a substantial share of this gap where China has become a key bilateral source of financing as well" (9). China's initiative to build and improve infrastructure such as roads, railways, and telecom systems have been a boon to Africa francophone's manufacturing sector, and have freed up domestic and resources for other critical needs such as health care and education, and have aided everyone doing business in Africa francophone. African francophone nations desperately need to create stable employments. African francophone governments would presumably welcome investments that generate employments, especially via value-added production, no matter where the investment comes from. Nevertheless, overseas investment in African francophone manufacturing, especially from Western nations, is minimal. The lack of Western investment or aid for large-scale private sector manufacturing leaves the Chinese alone in their increasing involvement in this sector. It can be argued that China's presence in Africa francophone is timely.

African francophone governments seek China's support for military equipment, weapon, and training. Some seek Chinese material to supplement what they acquire from the Western. However, China considers military sales as just one element of its trade with African francophone nations, and it has proactively pursued African francophone market. African francophone governments believe that China represents a huge market for African francophone raw materials, so, African francophone governments seeking export markets are hopeful that they can expand bilateral trade with China, though for the most part trade patterns have mirrored those of France colonial era, in which countries from Africa francophone export raw material and import manufactured goods. Furthermore, China's demand for its raw materials and the inflow of foreign direct investment has offered a

source of additional income. Most recently, as wages in China have risen, Chinese manufacturers have outsourced production to Africa francophone. This has provided both employment for Africans francophone, and the opportunity to master new skills. Africa francophone countries produce few things that China needs that can be manufactured and exported. The absence of large raw material deposit in Africa Francophone countries (compared to others in Africa Continent) forced the local economies to grow and generate revenue through other means. Africa Francophone countries display relatively high growth rates and have large low-wage working population. The combination of these two factors makes Africa Francophone countries attractive and promising locations for developing a basic manufacturing industry. Furthermore, Africa francophone's strategy of going forward should be to diversify – that is the challenge for African francophone nations. Diversification should follow the path of industrialization. In order for Africa francophone to industrialize, the continent has to open up to opportunities and investments from leading firms around the world applying highly robotized and digitized production method. Africa francophone economic future will be determined by how African francophone nations relate with the Chinese, design and implement effective industrial policies needed to promote industrialization and economic development.

Africa Francophone-China Engagement: Dependency Theory

Does Dependency theory define the nature of China-Africa Francophone relations?

This is an important question which will be address in the remaining part of this document using Mali as a case study. Also, the document observes China's dependence on "soft power" to win over African Francophone nations, and asks whether dependency theory relates to China's need to develop an international economic government. Previous papers and documents on current China's economic and political dealings with African Francophone nations (either on the individual or aggregate levels) has yet to sufficiently describe, let alone analyze, the inscrutable nature of the relations between Africa Francophone and China. Most of the literature centers on two distinct opinions: the anti-China in Africa francophone delegation and the view that give backings to novel opportunities for China and Africa francophone. The anti-China scholarship, its own proponents, especially have exercised less restraint by asserting perceived influences of expanding China's engagement in Africa francophone and posting possible reasons for augmented African francophone cooperation. Numerous papers and documents provide an argument of the potential impact of China's engagement and China's activity in Africa francophone (both negative and positive) and reiterate the novel opportunities afforded to African francophone nations concerned with development and economic growth. However in spite of a somewhat positive outlook dependency theory fails to critically evaluate the influence of the Chinese activities in Africa francophone. Looking at China and Africa Francophone relations, in many ways, the examination of the Chinese influence in Africa francophone reads like the literature on underdevelopment. The logic is laden with neo-imperialist concepts borrowed from dependency theory: the idea of a passive Africa francophone is inconsequential except for its usefulness as an economic pawn for China's sole advantage. These assertions, however, are not evidently attributed to dependency theory. It is good to know that "dependency theory emerges as a way to comprehend the phenomenon of wealthy nations getting wealthier and poor nations getting poorer at a time when the liberal economic theory claimed that augmented trade would lead to the economic advantage for all (10). At this point, dependency theory was viewed as a possible way of clarifying the persistent poverty of poorer nations. The traditional neoclassical approach said "virtually nothing on this question except to declare that poorer nations were late in coming to solid economic practices and that as soon as they learned the methods of modern economics, then the poverty would begin to subside" (11). This viewpoint has since been extended into the arena of international trade and development by dependency theorist. One seminal assumption of dependency theory is that the interdependent relations between two or more economies take the form of dependence when some nations (richer countries) can expand and be self-sustaining while other (dependent) nations can do so only as a reflection of this expansion, which may affect the immediate development either positively or negatively. Some other studies assert that "dependency theory inaccurately overemphasizes the impact of economic processes and does not account for other influences in assessing development" (12). The further survey claims that "One cannot escape the conclusion that the dependency movement may have been intellectually counterproductive" (13). Also, Caporaso argues that "dependency theory died out more from neglect than frontal criticism. Irrespective, dependency theory as a means of interpreting international relationships or clarifying economic relationship has lost traction in academia and has for the most part been abandon"(14). Despite the fact that dependency theory on the international economy and political economy has been phased out of scholarship, its impact remains. Some of the first Africa Francophone students in China (1970) mainly participating to seminar for just few months, under a scholarship offered by the government of China registered bad experiences because of language and cultural problems. Some of these students encouraged Africans to learn from the foreigners but to accept offers only after critical consideration. It is important to note that most of these Africans disdain for the Chinese African francophone policy at that time

was aimed specifically at China's radical push for an African francophone revolution. "Dependency Theory holds that economic processes are the basic structure force of history, and that over the last several centuries it has been northern capitalism (first in its mercantile, then in its free trade, later in its financial and today in its multinational guises) that has been history's locomotive"(15). Contributions of dependency theory are its normative stance on the global economic impact on politics and the constant call to action. These influences are evident in papers and documents on China's engagement with the African Francophone countries. To a certain extent, it is easy to see how the anticipated influence of the Chinese engagement in Africa francophone can be framed using the language and logic of dependency theory.

Some people cultivate a kind of skepticism, in terms of China's engagement with Africa francophone countries. Scholars argue that China is simply relaying the France colonial torch of purchasing raw materials from Africa Francophone countries and selling value-added products back, creating an unfavorable trade balance for Africa francophone. For example, in a declaration quoted in a Senegalese trade leader during a manifestation against Chinese traders in Dakar in 2009 talked about trade relations between Senegal and China; he asserts that "Senegal export primary commodities to China and the Chinese create manufactured "value-added" products and sell back to Senegal with a foreseeable outcome an unfavorable trade balance against Senegal". Also a scholars declare that "in a state of dependence, the economic expansion is skewed so as to induce the perpetuate balance of payments deficit, to distribute income and wealth in a highly unequal manner, and to upsurge marginality in the society. The association of reliant is produced and maintained by a coalition of people in both the dominant (rich) and subordinate (poor) nations who take advantage of the opportunity and who act to ensure that their nations pursue suitable policies. The general system, however, offers a greater advantage to the dominant nations than for those in subordinate positions" (16). In respect to these assertions if the dependency exists in China and Africa francophone cooperation as claimed, then we can anticipate the following:

Firstly, augmented economic engagement with the Chinese should bring about little, no or reverse economic expansion for nations in Africa francophone;

Secondly, China is the leading and debatably the only motivator in China and Africa francophone relations. Dependency theory is inherently a system theory. The main critique leveled against dependents is their incapability to account for the action of individual actors in their motivation to clarify the relationship between China and Africa francophone. The action and drives of African francophone nations are not an important influencing factor in the relationship between China and Africa francophone. However, existing proof cannot assess whether these anticipations are borne out. To start with, characterizing China and Africa francophone relations as dependent appears not to be accurate. An important element of the explanatory power of dependency theory is built on the foundation of a shared history. Speaking of share history, it is important to note that historical context is an essential perspective to determine if the dependent relationship imposes upon peripheral, resource-rich nations. Dos Santos declares by asserting that "the conditions of dependency are not instantly imposed upon peripheral nations but are developed over a long period of time" (17). Though they have persisted through a very long period of time, China-Africa francophone relations have largely been made up of diplomatic interactions devoid of the economic characteristics that dependency theorist claim to influence the emergence of dependent conditions. China and Africa francophone cooperation recently started to cultivate important economic, cultural and diplomatic traits that may over time culminate in conditions similar to dependency. The past 18 years have marked a new level cooperation with the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) conferences starting in Beijing in 2000. The FOCAC creation has catalyzed snowballing partnerships. Africa francophone and China's shared history is actually only at the present being documented. In light of this more visible cooperation, it is difficult to contend that the relationship between China and Africa francophone countries at the moment display Africa francophone's dependency, despite the fact the possibility exists that a dependent relation may develop over time. Another writer called Smith asserts that "the characteristics of dependency theory are typically described as vulnerability to the dearth of autonomy, external forces, and trade imbalance" (18). The trade relations between Africa francophone and China are at the aggregate level fairly balanced. At the individual level, some of the dyadic partnerships are not balanced in favor of China and others are imbalanced in favor of African francophone countries. Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo for example. The Chinese policy in Africa francophone countries has been tag "diplomacy economic" and mentions that the Chinese policy of Africa francophone adopts a decidedly businesslike approach, without political interference, which permits for the pursuit of arrangements that, if properly implemented have the potential for positive outcomes. African francophone countries do have autonomy in their engagement with China. These African francophone countries are active participants that choose this relationship. While the literature has not completely addressed the drives of African francophone leaders and their role in increasing their engagement with China, there is the need to know that African francophone consent and agency is essential for this cooperation. Furthermore, it can be debated that African francophone

involvement with China has lessened African francophone vulnerability to external actors. Also, the engagement has provided an avenue for the Chinese to share their technology with African francophone nations in form of knowledge transfer and African francophone nations are increasingly recognizing their efforts in the development of infrastructure. Above all, China's option has afforded African francophone leaders novel leverage in their association with other nations as well as external players. These activities could bring about economic expansion, upsurge the standard of living, as well as alleviate poverty, which run counter to expected indicators of underdevelopment or dependency. It does not seem that Africa Francophone-China cooperation can be suitably characterized by dependency theory. While Africa francophone history with the West fit quite well with the story and clarification presented by dependency theory, this logic can no longer be automatically superimposed on the relationship between China and Africa francophone. China's foray into Africa francophone has introduced and shared novel technology and capital that has diluted and diminished the West control of those resources. Evans asserts that this control of capital and technology plays a significant role in the development of dependency relations. If the Chinese are not developing a dependent relationship with African francophone leaders, then it is logical to infer that the Chinese are developing a novel global economic cooperation to address the alterations in international political economy.

China approach based on "soft power":

It is good for us to define the Soft power. The soft power is a "Concept used in international relations and developed by the American professor Joseph Nye to write the ability of an actor to indirectly influence the behavior of another actor or the definition by this other actor of his own interests through means non-coercive (cultural or ideological structural). (...) the resources of the "soft power" correspond to the capacity of attraction, of seduction, exerted by a cultural, economic or ideological model which makes that the others fall within the framework determined by the one who disposes of these resources. They represent an ability to accept as universal a particular worldview so that the domination of the one who produces it is accepted because considered legitimate" (19)

State-centric Realism

Realism is an approach that emphasizes on the individual's quest for self-interest. In spite of the growing significance of the market, historical experience indicates that the purpose of economic activities is ultimately determined not only by markets and the prescriptions of technical economics, but also (either explicitly and implicitly) by the norms, values and interests of the social and political systems in which economic activities are embedded. Gilpin asserts that following the end of "Cold War" there has been a shift from Marxist economic doctrines such as dependency theory and a snowballing adoption of liberalism. About liberalism, Neo-liberalism asserts that economies grow best when the market is free of limiting state interventionist policies. Nonetheless, the reduction of the state in the market, and the promotion of free market economies is the manner proposed by Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) have failed to achieve sustainable economic growth for African francophone nations. Gilpin presents a dissimilar viewpoint for investigating international political economy, state- centric realism.

State-centric realism recognizes the state as the principal player in global affairs driven by national interests, and not a system of states influenced by the distribution of power. Gilpin proposes that "the policies and interests of a nation are determined by the governing political leaders, the pressures of powerful groups within a national society, and the nature of the national system of political economy."(20) This investigative viewpoint of state-centric realism accounts for African francophone agency in China's engagement in Africa francophone. It gives backing to the debates made by leading African francophone experts that the drives of African nations players matters.

This document declares that just as dependency theory inadequately describes underdevelopment in Africa francophone and the role of the Western therein, it is even more unsuitable for explaining current China-Africa francophone relations. Arguably, the growing China-Africa francophone relations can be viewed as African francophone states' self-interests, exercised in the pursuit of political and economic goals as much as China's interest, a realist national interest. This document is most concerned with African francophone agency and declares that African francophone are increasingly engaging with China, not because of a systems theory of dependency that presents African francophone as "powerless" pawns. For instance, Some scholars assert that "A reincarnation of dependency theory, in which Africa francophone was viewed as a quivering victim of external forces, must be abandoned, both in order to comprehend better what is happening and why it is happening, and in assisting Africa francophone to make the best of the chances opened up by the speedy emergence of the Asian motivator economies and the consequent reform of the international order in the 21rst century". In other words, African Francophone countries are trading with China in a way that is similar to an inter-state partnership.

African francophone countries are significant players in their engagement with China but they stop short of discussing the precise role of African francophone countries and motivators behind their increasing engagement. This document argues that, contrary to the dependency theory that assumes African francophone countries are passive actors, African francophone countries choose to engage with China and specifically to trade for the same reasons that all nations trade with each other, because as liberal economic theory and a state-centric realist viewpoint support, global trade is in both parties' national interest. Others authors debates that the four basic national interests are social stability, economic growth, aggregate national income, and political power. The relationship between these four interest and openness hinges on the potential economic power of any state (relative size and level of economic development of the state) and the different distribution of potential power determine different global trading structures. Potential economic power is operationalized in terms of the relative size and level of economic development of the state. Furthermore, for the aggregate national income, the greater degree of openness in the global trading system, the greater the level of aggregate national income. Trade provides small states relatively more welfare advantage than it offers large ones. On the part of social stability, greater openness exposes the domestic economy to the exigencies of the world market. Social instability is in that way augmented, since there is friction in moving factors, especially labor, from one sector to another. Social stability is *ceteris paribus*, inversely related to openness, but larger size and greater economic development mitigate the deleterious consequences of exposure. Regarding the political power aspect, the higher the relative cost of closure (direct income losses and adjustment costs of reallocating resources), the weaker the political position of the state. These costs are smaller for large states and for relatively more developed states. Therefore, a state that is relatively large and more developed will find its political power enhanced by an open system because its opportunity cost of closure is less. For the economic growth, it involved a complex relationship with global economic structure. Openness furthers the economic growth of small states and of large ones so long as they maintain their technological edge. Relationship impossible to specify definitively for medium sized countries.

The soaring China and Africa francophone engagement can be debated as a means to achieve all four of these aims. This implies that the Africa francophone chose to engage with China for the reason that it is a path to accumulating aggregate national income, snowballing economic growth, leveraging political power, and improving social stability in the international stage. Trade has perhaps been the most noticeable indication of African francophone nations snowballing engagement with the Chinese. The presence of China offers a new market for African francophone countries exports, even more, significant for the reason that China buys African francophone goods at market prices, has the potential to add to aggregate national income. Thus, an upsurge in national income is positive economic expansion. This is as a result of the fact that China is a new trade partner for all African countries, in addition to and not in lieu of previous trading partner. So, trade with the Chinese offers marginal income, an extra revenue source for African francophone countries. Also, China's foreign direct investments in African francophone countries have offered significant capital that has the potential to add to sustainable economic growth. Arguably, the capability of China to fill the needs of African francophone society is a significant driving force for the African Francophone states snowballing engagement with the Chinese. With increasing globalization, the nature of the state interaction is shifting, influenced by advances in communications and technology that has the power to change the face of international relations. This document argues that African Francophone countries are engaging with China to effect change, especially interaction change. African francophone engagement with China has been noted as markedly dissimilar from typical African francophone foreign relations, especially with Western nations. It is a relationship with a distinctly business like tone, laden with negotiation intended for the realization of mutual benefits and mutual goals. China government has implemented incentives that encourage the Chinese businesses to engage in Africa francophone through the machinations of international organizations, China gives backing and South-South solidarity can also draw attention to matters that concern African francophone countries. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is an international organization with a framework that has allowed consideration of all African concerns. Also, with China's policy of non-interference and adherence to the recognition and respect for state sovereignty, China permits African francophone nations to play a role in their own policy procedure. This was demonstrated in the address of the President of the Republic of Senegal Macky Sall made at the seventh FOCAC Summit held on 2018, September 3rd and 4th in Beijing that presented African ideals and principles in increasing China-Africa engagement.

The nature of China's engagement with African francophone countries via strategic cooperation and negotiated agreements produce an environment that compels African francophone to become determinants and decision-makers in their own procedure. By allowing African francophone governments play an active role in their domestic affairs, development procedure, and policymaking. This approach will provide a greater possibility for African francophone countries to actualize sustainable transformation and expansion, particularly when external policies of global financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have blatantly

failed to create the ‘Africa we want’ as proposed by the Africa Agenda 2063. This novel role demonstrates an important move in African international relations. Africa francophone’s engagement with the Chinese is a showcase of a different approach to interaction, one with augmented African francophone participation that will lead to an upsurge in political power, with the capability to transform the way African francophone nations interact with other external actors. There is an adequate evidence to believe that state-centric realist African francophone countries are choosing to engage with China for the reason that it permits African francophone countries to actualize their interest in improved social stability, expansion of political power snowballing aggregate national income, and better economic expansion, domestically and on the international level. The central question remains: what benefits await Republic of Mali for engaging with China? To test the argument that Mali chose to engage with China because it is in their national interest as well as answer the central question, a case study of the Republic of Mali was conducted. The document argues that Malians tend to engage with the Chinese because they believe Chinese investment in infrastructures and China’s development assistance will lead to improvements in the standard of living and a help alleviate poverty. Malian belief, particularly by governmental actors, that engagement with China reinforces their sovereignty and affords them fresh international legitimacy. Malians believe that the presence of China as a strategic partner and potential alternative for the Western creates a condition in which the Western must change the way they interact with Mali or at least indicate an interest in addressing global issues of concern to Mali. So, the next part will try to see if as argued, dependency theory is really present in China-Mali relations and if Malians chose to increase its engagement with the Chinese because they believe that it is in their best national interests.

CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALI

Map of Mali: Google map



Intertwined interests of the Republic of Mali and the People’s Republic of China

The Republic of Mali is located in the heart of West Africa (as show in the map) with an area of 1,241,238 sq km. The country is border by seven countries: Algeria to the north, Republic of Niger and, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire to the South-East, Guinea Conakry to the South, Mauritania and Senegal in the West. The country is cross by two main rivers in West Africa, which are the Niger River (2400 km) and Senegal River (1200 km). The natural resources of Mali are: Gold (Mali is the 3rd producer of gold in Africa after South Africa and Ghana); Phosphates; limestone, marble, gypsum, iron and rock salt. According to researchers, the north part of the country disseminates oil. The population is about 18 M peoples.

Mali economic profile:

“GDP US\$10,484,542,735

GDP growth rate: 5, 4% in 2017

GDP growth rate in 2017/ sector: Agriculture 6, 5; Industry 5, 6 and the services 5%.

GDP per Capita: US \$:753,200.

of Mali has free enterprise economy policy. The economic efforts in 2015 are part of an economic policy focused on strengthening the actions relating to the diversification of production and the fight against poverty”.

Mali plays a regional central role in increasing China’s engagement in West Africa francophone. And as such, the drivers of Mali actors in China’s engagement matters, not only because this drive motivates the process, but because they determine the nature of the relationship. What is the driving force behind Mali’s sudden economic interest in China? Is it part of a well calculated approach to unlocking the country’s true economic potential or is it merely a meek response to an unfolding development? Though posed by many scholars, these questions have yet to be adequately addressed by empirical research. Mali is a resource-endowed nation with a young and growing diverse population. The population of Mali is growing rapidly. Actually Mali’s population is one of the largest in West Africa francophone. The population is estimated to be officially 20 million in 2025 and about 35 million in 2050. Consequently, the population of Mali is projected to surpass that of the most African francophone countries of West Africa shortly before 2050. Mali favorable demographics advantage also makes Mali a consumer country. It is a consumer country, in which domestic industry, with suitable management, might successfully compete with China’s import. Recently some journals cite Mali as having one of the highest Chinese outbound visitors to West Africa francophone in 2017. This lends credence to the assumption that a comparatively higher level of engagement and trade can be expected between Mali and China relations are not comparable to other African francophone countries. With Mali’s significant political influence on West Africa region, the argument can also be made that Mali’s engagement with China might have a ripple effect on other African francophone countries subject to China’s exploitation. Mali has a potential for growth and is engaging with China for the reason that China is a country who’s political, diplomatic, and economic objectives are similar with Mali to offer investment for development. China, on the other hand, is a dynamic emerging economy that has achieved political and economic independence and growth. The main aim of this document is to determine the nature of China-Mali relations and to ascertain Malian drives in this engagement.

Mines and agriculture influences Mali’s characterization as a resource nation, and it would be easy to assume that China is interested in Mali because of its mines, cotton and oil potentiality. While that assumption maybe correct, it does not tell the complete narrative of China’s interest. Mali does offer gold and cotton for China and factors significantly into China’s resource grab in African francophone. In 2015, during Davos Economic Forum of Tianjin, Mali Government signed several Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with several Chinese companies for more than \$50 billion dollars investments, in oil and gas industry research and exploitation, mines, infrastructures, electricity sector. However, while Mali is the first producer of cotton and gold in Africa Francophone, Mali is not a leading supplier of African francophone products to China. Mali relationship with China differs from most other African francophone nations, as engagement with Mali was marked early on by exchange of diplomacy and technology, where Chinese know-how contributed to the development of local industry. From 1960 to 1968, China builds about 20 factories in Mali.

Mali is strategically located in the earth of West Africa. The country is a regional and continental self-determined nation. Since independence, Mali adopted and maintained a policy of political neutrality in foreign relations. Because of its influence and strong belief in itself as a formidable actor that has inspired Mali’s active involvement in the continent of Africa via its foreign policy on significant global matters. As a result of the country’s economic and political credentials, Mali significance in Africa is arguably necessary for any actors looking to make a strategic politic play on the continent. Mali’s influence in West Africa, active role in Africa union efforts, as well as in development and governance make Mali a key player in African politics. Mali is a founder member of Africa Union. China’s efforts to collaborate politically with African states on the international level can no doubt be bolstered by Mali’s support. China cannot afford to overlook Mali if they aim to be actors in Africa specifically in Africa francophone.

The reason for choosing Mali as a case study is based on both political and economic contexts. The influx of China’s product into Africa, especially cheap textile, goods has affected domestic business and trade negatively in Mali. Malian policies concerning the Chinese have displayed the influence of domestic business, which has been active in provoking the government to adopt or at least promote the protection of domestic affairs. They have displayed the impact of public opinion as well. A case in point: consumers like to access to inexpensive

Chinese products. The Malian government's responsiveness to concerns with China's engagement, though not perfect, has yet to be sufficiently addressed by literature on the increasing China's engagement in Africa.

Mali-China cooperation, Trade and investment:

Narrowing development gaps has been a critical issue for both developing and developed nations under structural changes caused by the surge of globalization. In the case of Mali "narrowing development gap" has been regarded as one of the most significant challenges. China believes that supporting Mali in coping with this challenge is important for the future of Mali. In with this, China economic cooperation with an effective trade contributes towards addressing this challenge. Since 1992, China has become a major economic partner of Mali. Mali is China important market, a good trading partner and major investment destination in West Africa francophone. China's exploitation of the Malian market is of questionable benefit to Mali. China has been embraced with large arms by Mali and has continued to expand its trade relations in the country. Trade between China and Mali has increased from US\$0.5 billion in 2000 to US\$2.30 billion in 2013, making Mali the first largest trading partner in West Africa francophone. On the part of the investment, China's total investment in Mali climbed to US\$ 5 billion. In Jun 2015, Mali approved US\$3 billion Chinese investment in gold mine and agriculture (cotton, sugar cane). According the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mali, to the end of 2017, the total volume of project contracts by Chinese in Mali climbed to about US\$7.3 billion. Chinese investment can be seen across the country in construction, infrastructures development, communication technology, and road development. A good example is the recent Mali Investment Promotion Agency (API-Mali). Over cumulative \$1, 5 billion was received from China for investment in economic growth in areas like mines, agriculture, housing infrastructures, road and transportation, and energy sector development. A Mali-China Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed for investment for the hydro-electric project, railways, and agro- industrialization. Mali views its association with the Chinese as one that also profits from its own export needs and its international negotiating prowess. The nation is presently affectionately referred to as "Africa's China" among global investors. The partnership will allow Mali to become an actor in both present Asia's and African francophone's markets. Presently, China is building a free trade zone in the city of Kayes located on the railway (Bamako- Dakar) not far from sea port of Dakar in Senegal. The literature on China and Mali has yet to acknowledge what might the interests and drives of Malians in relation to China. The remaining part of the paper attempts to fill this gap in the literature by presenting a case study of Malian drives for snowballing engagement with China. The remaining part first clarifies the methodology employed to gather and analyze the primary statistics for this research, and presents the main themes in response to the question:

Why is Mali engaging with China?

China-Mali trade and business analysis

Although trade and business between Mali and China is flourishing, a look at export and import values displays that trade balance heavily favors China. This paper hinges on the beginning of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) conferences as the indicator of the Chinese cooperation with Mali. Trend prior to 2000, the year of the first FOCAC conference display Mali trade activity China without China's interaction and trade activity after indicating the perceived influence of China interaction through FOCAC. First exploring limited China's interaction (1992-2000), and then snowballing China's interaction via the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (2000-2017). Looking at, the apparent imbalance, for all intents and purpose is similar to the textbook dependency theory in action. Nonetheless, based on calculation, employing data from World Trade Atlas, China's exports to from 2000 to 2017 soar 350.7 percent, which signify an approximate average annual growth rate of 30 percent. Alternatively, Malian exports to China soared by 768.93 percent during the same period, at an average annual growth rate of 63.7 percent. Noticeably, the growth rate data yielded a poor outcome indicating that Malian exports to China fluctuated extremely during this period, with extreme rates ranging from - 35 percent to +535 percent (21). Although this may give the appearance of dependent relationship uncontrolled by Malian, the author argues instead that this volatility indicates the novelty of the trade relationship and exists for the reason that China was not yet a key buyer of Malian exports.

China's export to Mali soared at a rapid rate than Malian exports to China. According to a comment from a Malian government official in terms of China-Mali economic cooperation, the government official asserts that Malian engagement with the Chinese...has not been booming as expected. Mali has not exploited; in its place, it is an unfavorable trade balance against Mali. The only thing is the Chinese purchase gold and cotton from Mali." Even with the snowballing purchase of gold from the Chinese, there remains to some extent a significant imbalance tilted towards the Chinese. Certainly, the trade statistics do not present a complete picture of the diplomatic and economic cooperation that exist between Mali and the Chinese and do an even poorer job by showing the impact of China's engagement with Mali. After the launch of the recent iteration of Sino-African

relations as defined by the FOCAC Summit of 2000, Malian trade with China grew rapidly. This implies that the 18 year practice displays that FOCAC is an effective platform for China and African countries to enhance mutual benefit and conduct pragmatic cooperation. Mali exports to China, gold, cotton and arts items, which is likely due to the increase in the price of commodities, partly driven up by increased Chinese demand. China's willingness to purchase raw materials at market prices has provided a fresh market for exports and given Mali an extra revenue stream. This extra income can then be invested as Malian see fit, for instance, into the economic stimulus to bolster the growth of local economies or to develop infrastructures. Notably, Mali trade with the Chinese still only accounts for a small portion of Mali's total trade activity. Aggregate Malian trade balance has continued to display positive growth with a few exceptions, the most notable in 2008-2009 when the global recession affected the performance of several nations. So, in spite of an unbalanced trade relationship, Chinese trade with Mali is not significant enough to create a situation of economic or politic dependency.

Trade between Mali and China pales in comparison to Mali overall's trade balance which shows that Mali trade with the Chinese may not yet have a significant influence on Malian economic expansion. Also, the recent positive economic expansion in Mali suggests that the country is on the rise again and therefore a significant part of the 'Africa Rising' discourse. Mali has maintained a remarkable growth over the last years, recording an average growth rate of 5.3 percent in a large economic base and the potential for further growth is reasonably high. The recent recalibration of Mali GDP base in June 2017 by the Ministry of Economy and Finances to better mirror the size and structure of the economy, saw it surge past many Africa Francophone countries to become West Africa francophone's second largest economy. This may not directly have to do with Mali's engagement with the Chinese. Mali has continued to witness significant growth above West Africa francophone average in the last decade. The process of structural transformation of Mali economy has started. But Mali is also making the atypical transformation from agriculture to services and this is not unique to Mali. Overall, these efforts have been successful, as evidenced by increasing Chinese enterprises and population in Mali. Chinese companies are making big money in Mali, but Malians are also pursuing the trade with the Chinese. It is vital to know that true economic impact is made in the long-term. For the reason that China's presence in Africa francophone and in Mali has augmented nowadays, the argument can be made that it may be too soon to predict what the real, far-reaching economic impact of Mali-China trade will be. China's exports to Mali are not just mass quantities of cheap little plastic goods and textile and furniture but also expensive equipment used to construct factories, roads, and railways. In other words, a significant amount of China's exports to Mali include the necessary components for successful infrastructure development in Mali. Such equipment is assisting Mali to build power generations facilities. However, in spite of investment in infrastructure development, there is still some argument regarding the influx of inexpensive Chinese goods leading to the deindustrialization in Mali indigenous enterprises particularly in the textile manufacturing. Despite the fact that the opinion from some people augmented efforts by the Mali government to improve monitoring of imports into Mali, as well as investing more heavily in domestic economic development may offset the expected negative influence of trade with China. Although Mali is currently going through a substantial trade deficit, there is no proof that the China-Mali dynamic will remain this way, especially given China's movements to upsurge cotton and gold imports from Mali. Augmented cotton importation from Mali to China, coupled with augmented sourcing of other raw materials by Chinese corporations, including but not limited to gold, solid minerals, and other metals. On the other hand, while most of the Mali imports have been spread across several categories, the top three products are generators, telecommunications equipment, and motorcycles. Actually, about 80 percent of the top 10 merchandise categories can be construed as capacity-building imports, not comprised entirely of finished products. It can be argued that China's recent engagement in Mali is timely, because with continued investment and trade between China and Mali, under suitable management, can and should promote industrialization in Mali. Although this may not be the picture of industrialization as inscribed by Western nations, however, China presents an opportunity for forwarding social headway and economic expansion in the Republic of Mali.

Benefits driving Mali engagement with China:

Following the launch of FOCAC, which is the most visible manifestation of growing China-Africa relations, African nations seem to have profited from the engagement with China. The literature centers extensively on the benefits to China but very little research empirically investigates the benefits to African countries and specifically to African francophone nations. Furthermore, the literature has yet to acknowledge what might be the interests and drives of African francophone nations with regard to China. This part of the paper attempts to fill this gap by displaying a case study of Mali drives for snowballing its engagement with China. At the onset, it might seem that Mali's engagement with China is indicative of dependent relationship with a dominant nation. However, limiting Mali's engagement with China to an 'unequal relationship' is to belittle and dismiss the greater intentions that motivate this relation. The reason for selecting Mali as a case study is based on both economic and political contexts. The remaining part of the document discusses the two main drivers and

intentions behind Mali increasing engagement with China. The question remains: what benefits await Malians for engaging with Chinese? Malians aim to maximize and exploit the economic and cultural opportunities afforded by engaging with the Chinese, as well as learn from China's development model regarding its technological advancement that seems to be working for the world.

Maximize diplomatic and Economic Advantage

Taking stock of the increasing Mali government

If we look at the past 50 years (1968-2018) of China-Mali relations, it can be submitted that the future of the relationship is quite bright. The ties are likely to be warmer. Malian increasingly engages with the Chinese because of the economic benefit it brings to them, specifically profitability and affordability. The increasing trade with China has become arguably the most visible indicator of growing relations between China and Mali. Although this part does not directly discuss Malian aims, it identifies factors that make the Chinese attractive to Malians, which this document would argue are just as vital as Malian aims, as they pertain to the Malian government, entrepreneurs, and consumers. It falls to Malian's government to offer and pursue opportunities that will promote growth and development. Engagement with China while originally a government motivated phenomenon, has since transformed into a business-motivated and consumer relationship. However, government's role remains vital to China-Mali relations. In several ways, the government is the quintessential facilitator of the dyadic relationship between entities from both sides. As such, it is vital to identify the drivers that compel Malian foreign relations with China. When asked why Mali is seeking engagement with the China, the first answer from most government officials was that Mali must engage with China. Everybody must engage with China because of its soaring economic and political significance on the global stage.

China has always filled the void in many African countries especially in the Republic of Mali by offering affordable infrastructure but also issuing soft long term loans to bankroll projects. So as to make significant headway it is important that Malian government pay particular attention to revitalizing infrastructures. As a result, Mali government is looking to China to play a role in the development of Mali infrastructures. Mali is dealing with the problem of transforming transport infrastructure that does not meet the need of a modern economy. For the next years, Mali requires US\$ billions to offer energy and infrastructure for its increasing population. Demand for energy and infrastructure in Mali is ever soaring as the populace increases. Consequently, so has the demand for viable funding solutions to support investment in such infrastructure projects. Compared with many of others African francophone countries, Mali has relatively advanced infrastructure networks that cover extensive areas of the nation's territory except the North part of the country and, thanks to its strong economy. It is better placed than many of its neighbors to increase the share of fiscal resources going to infrastructure Mali has recently attracted Chinese financial and technical support for its ambitious infrastructure plans. There are many infrastructure development projects between Mali and China. Also, the Chinese are playing an active part in the development of transportation industry. The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) with loan facilities from the ExIm Bank of China is currently revamping Malian light rail network to improve public transportation options for people in the country. This makes people wonder which western nation, has the financial wherewithal and appetite to embark on such ambitious projects in Africa today, beyond the extractive industries. Also, CCECC is handling the modernization of President Modibo Keita international airports in Bamako. The government is also pursuing engagement with China to improve the communication infrastructure. By further developing the infrastructure in Mali, the Malian government hopes to promote conditions that will foster sustainable development growth.

Taking stock of the increasing consumers and entrepreneurs

Malian stakeholders react positively to their increasing engagement with China. The import of inexpensive manufactured products from China has opened up whole new opportunities for entrepreneurs and poorer Malian consumers. Chinese-manufactured goods have flooded the Malian market place throughout the nation, and Malians are the engine behind the mass dispersal of Chinese products. Purchase is made by crate loads from airport, broken down into smaller units, and then sold by a third party to yet another party in even small units, until shoppers make contact with the actual traders that finally sell the products. Entrepreneurs note that they prefer doing business with the Chinese because Chinese offer them with exactly what they need and want in terms of levels of quality. They asserted that it is easier to acquire low quality products but upon request higher quality products are made available. Additionally, the flexibility of the Chinese suppliers permits Malians to purchase within their means. The affordability of the Chinese goods for Malian consumers has also resulted in augmented comparative profitability and net income of Malian engaged in the purchase and sale of Chinese

goods. Malian entrepreneurs are doing business with the Chinese because it is an economically viable endeavor that has netted exponential returns in spite of the fact that Chinese goods are typically considered inferior to Western goods, or are cheaply-made copies. Domestic trading of Chinese products has improved the economic situation in the country. It has consequently opened a lot of other business activities thereby creating necessary conditions for high and sustained economic growth which is accompanied by the structural transformation of their economic base leading to a generation of employment. Bamako, the capital has regenerated, investor confidence is soaring and there is actual headway in transforming the living conditions and affordability of basic necessities of life. There has also been an improvement in consumer welfare due to lower sales prices. The affordability of Chinese imports ordinarily classified as luxury products has considerably augmented the relative spending power of the average Mali. The affordability of Chinese products has reduced market prices of most products to a fraction of what they were just years ago. This enhances the level of prestige and self-respect that has not been lost on Malian consumers; as such, the demand for Chinese goods continues to grow at an exponential rate. Furthermore, the rate of employment is a factor that most of the stakeholders agree to have improved. The outcome display that it has been possible for the traders to employ direct and indirect workers on a daily basis. The number of imports coming into the community daily has made it possible to create sustainable employment all through the year. People from neighboring rural areas do not need to travel or migrate to big cities just to gain employment. Though some of them say they perceive that it has augmented a bit, but the effort has been tremendous and quite positive for Bamako local community when one estimates the number of products coming in every day and also comparing Bamako to what other neighboring rural areas look like. Not only has downstream economic activities improved but there is also the promotion of upstream activities. The government has gained a lot of revenue from the importation tax charged from the local importers. From the number of importation examined from the stakeholders, much revenue is being accrued by the government. Also, doing business with the Chinese has opened up Bamako and suburb community to the world by showing the town as a vibrant economy with a strong business community. It has attracted national stakeholders as well as global stakeholders. Also, evidently China has seen that “Mali is a consumer country” and are packaging their products and service to meet the demands of this consumer base. In all situations, when people engage in business with others there are profits accruing to the entrepreneur. But in the case of Mali, there are two factors the Malian entrepreneur consider quite vital. Firstly, the ease of doing business with the Chinese; ease in the sense that probably until recently, the Chinese tended to believe more of Malians than the Western partners. The ease of business for Malians is not only arising from enterprise business. The Chinese government has also implemented policies (immigration, economic...) that facilitate Chinese and Malian partnership. This support from the Chinese government in streamlining the business process is obvious and has turned out to be a robust attraction for Malians. Secondly, business with the Chinese employed simpler business procedures and Chinese partners were considerate and accommodating of their Malian colleagues and business partners. The Chinese are noted as very responsive to their Malian partners, quick to communicate, flexible and considerate of special cases in their negotiations. The Chinese are viewed as reliable as well as better communicators. With these diverse attractions from the Chinese, it is quite evident that the difficulty of doing business with France, European, and comparative ease of doing business with the Chinese is pushing Malians to engage with China.

Besides bolstering the economic growth in Mali in general and in Bamako specifically, trading in Chinese products have also produced positive spillover effects such as the introduction of technology, knowledge transfer and acquisition of new skills. This is the key objective which this document posits as one of the most significant aims motivating Malians to engage with China at governmental, public, and private levels. The Chinese offer a new picture of a nation that has speedily industrialized and has alleviated and successfully addressed issues of poverty amongst constituents. Malians are looking to learn from the Chinese development model, not to duplicate it, but to borrow from the ideas and logic behind China's recent rapid economic and social development. Malians are seeking knowledge from the Chinese in several areas: infrastructure development, education, capacity building through technology transfer, economic development, agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare. Regarding economic development and growth, the particular areas of interest for Malian entrepreneurs, traders, and policymakers is small and medium enterprise (SME) development. A banker at Mali Development Bank (BDM) asserts that Malian Small and Medium Enterprises most likely have to benefit from the snowballing engagement with the Chinese. Western nation's capitalist models of development, for the most part, were built on economies and industries of scale, which are the products of specialization. Such large scale projects have been predominately unsuccessful in Africa francophone and in Mali. Reasons for persistent underdevelopment throughout Africa francophone have been pursued by several policy specialists and scholars. Theories with a rationale similar to dependency theory have been introduced, but lasting and sustainable solutions have yet to be discovered.

This part is not concerned with contributing to the argument on addressing and solving the issues of underdevelopment in Mali, but what remains indisputable is that continued attempts for industries of scale have

mostly been unsuccessful. Numerous factors including, but not limited to, the dearth of reliable logistical backing, unreliable infrastructure, and external pressure have contributed to these unsuccessful methods. This has led to the need to look to the East for a fresh blueprint for development. Engagement with China offer a paradigm shift in the approach of economic expansion, one that may be better suited for Mali's economic, culture and several budding business persons. Mali is learning how to be successful and self supporting or at least self promoting from China. However, Mali can draw inspiration from China but must not aim to be China but surpass China.

CONCLUSION

Although a substantial amount of information was gotten from the interviews and documents that were carried out, it is quite evident that this paper is only scratching partially Mali-China relations and subsequently Mali's China policy. Therefore, future studies should come up with factors that are necessary for Mali or Africa francophone to develop a favorable environment for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Trading which is not to the detriment of the private sector. Also vital is how these factors should be aligned with the overall regional and national development objectives or strategies to leverage domestic comparative advantages. Furthermore, a viewpoint not sufficiently addressed by existing literature is the position that increasing China-Africa francophone relations can be seen as political and economic interdependence because of China's push to establish a novel global economic regime that dilutes the impact of the Western in the global market. The central research question posed by this study is:

Why do Malians choose to engage with China?

Through all underlying recognized themes, this paper finds out that engagement with the Chinese offers Malians a novel opportunity to make headway, and that is the reason Malians choose to engage with the Chinese. The importance of these themes is their demonstrations of intent and agency on the part of Malians engaging with the Chinese. Additionally, it also gives backing to the central argument of this paper: that Africans are willing and active participants of their engagement with the Chinese, and that Malians are making state-centric realist decisions in search of their perceived best interest. Also, Mali is engaging with the Chinese as a result of the level of competition China has created in the global economy. Although China is using Mali to pursue its own national interests, Malian government officials note that Mali is doing the very same with China and continues to do so, because of the Chinese aid in capacity-building as well as the funding of key projects in Mali.

For the purpose of providing technological advancement, Mali government sees China as a better alternative source than the Western. In line with this, some people and critics said that Chinese government is more generous with technology than the Western. However, vital questions have arisen regarding the shelf-life of these technologies, since rapid advancement make even today's technologies obsolete. As a result of this process of obsolescence, the continued viability of the technology that the Chinese bring into Mali is under scrutiny by Mali regulatory administration and consumers. Also, the hardware and equipment from China present a compatibility problem as a result of language barriers. The equipment is sometimes labeled in Chinese with Chinese language manuals that are not accessible to even the average educated Malian. Nonetheless, irrespective of these challenges, the most important thing is that China's technology provision is starkly dissimilar from Western countries. Therefore, Malians are logically going to China to acquire what the Western has withheld. The continued development of business relationship makes the Chinese even more lucrative for Mali as a result of the relative freedom of access to what the Malian people need and demand. It is relatively easy for Malians to trade and have access to China as a result of the comparative freedom of entry and competitive affordability and profitability of China's products. This is not to say no concerns exist; there are significant concerns regarding the quality and safety of Chinese products. But in spite of these concerns, the opportunities that China presently provides outweigh the costs of engagement with Mali.

Mali and African francophone countries alike are also motivated by the easy disbursement of Chinese funding, loans, and investment. To pursue Mali's own self-interest and objective, Malian actors are hoping to learn from China, taking advantage of the relative affordability of Chinese product and technology, the assistance, training, and education readily offered by the Chinese government. African francophone engagement with China, particularly as facilitated by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), has permitted African francophone nations, public, and private players to meet and interact whereas they might not otherwise do so. Although this may not be an obvious drive for engaging with the Chinese, it is actually a great consequence to Africa francophone and Mali's growth.

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