

A Zambian perspective on Chinese investment.

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The specific Zambian situation

- There is recent Chinese investment all over Africa, but Zambia is special
- There is a record of conflict and even violent clashes between Zambian workers and Chinese management.
- Chinese investment has been a major theme in a presidential election. It was taken up by opposition candidate Michael Sata who mobilised much support in urban areas.

Central question

- Is the discourse on Chinese investment in Zambia a racist discourse.
- Main source of information: Sata's speech at Harvard University sharing a platform with Mia Farrow on Darfur.

1/11/07

Sideshow: Taiwan

- Sata also attacked the one China policy and advocated recognising Taiwan.
- He got US\$ 50.000 from Taiwan.
- Diplomatic row, but this issue was not important for the Zambian population.
- The nature of Chinese investment was

Sata's central theme: sovereignty

- Sata made a counter accusation as regards funding: MMD (ruling party) got funds from the People's Republic. Attack on sovereignty.
- Special Economic Zone for China: Chinese province in Zambia.
- Presence of a Bank in Zambia only for Chinese entrepreneurs.

Quality of Chinese presence

- Phoney investments: importing low quality goods; trading in places where competing with Zambians (markets); often low technology in use.
- Chinese firms bring in unskilled labour. It is not injecting capital in the country but actually stimulating immigration into Zambia.
- Chinese firms do not follow labour, safety and environmental legislation.

Is it a racist discourse?

- The aggression is not only against Chinese investors but also against other newcomers: Indian and Lebanese entrepreneurs.
- The stress is on the laws of the land that should apply to everybody.
- Many conflicts are actually labour conflicts.
- Also Indian owned KCM has had a violent labour conflict: blowing up the pumphouse of the mine

Cultural misunderstanding as an explanation:

- Common cultural explanation on labour discipline, e.g. “Chinese workers work until they are finished, Zambians are trained by the British and work towards teabreak” (a quote in Chris Alden, 2007)
- Maybe a different experience with development strategies is more important

East Asia and Africa.

- East Asian development strategies are based on a situation where natural resources are scarce and labour is abundant: development built upon appropriation of surplus from labour.
- Africa's entrance to modernity is through exploiting natural resources. That requires much more capital and high technology.
- The Chinese way of doing things relying on labour in the first place is therefore not experienced as progress.