

Tracing the Distribution of Chinese and World Bank-Funded Projects and Public Demonstrations in Cameroon and Uganda

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Author: Afa'anwi Ma'abo Che

Affiliation: Political and Administrative Studies, Kampala International University, Ggaba Road, P.O. Box 20000, Kampala, Uganda

Email: afaanwiche@kiu.ac.ug

Abstract

Extant literature has explored the effects of foreign aid on armed conflicts and state repression, but not public demonstrations. This article compares distribution patterns of Chinese and World Bank-funded projects and public demonstrations in Cameroon receiving predominantly Chinese official finance and Uganda receiving predominantly traditional, Western aid. Distributive patterns suggest negative and positive associations between Chinese and traditional official finance on the one hand and public demonstrations on the other. However, with respect to anti-project demonstrations specifically, I find through fieldwork interviews in Cameroon that, Chinese-funded projects are more prone to anti-project demonstrations owing to less stringent risk management standards.

Keywords: Finance, Protests, Riots, China, World Bank, Africa

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Introduction

Armed conflicts and militia challenges to peace and security are decreasing whereas unarmed challenges are increasing globally. Public demonstrations involving protests and riots are among the most prominent, disruptive non-militia challenges to states. In recent years, especially 2018 and 2019, Africa and the world have witnessed an alarming surge in anti-government protests and riots. The proliferation of protests is taking place when the world's two largest economies, China and the United States (US), are bogged down by trade tensions which appear to be hurting the former more than the latter. While the US economy, one of the largest traditional Western sources of development aid to Africa, seems to be waxing strong under President Donald Trump, the Chinese economy, which emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century to become one of Africa's largest sources of foreign official finance, appears to be experiencing a slowdown (Zakaria, 2019), with Chinese financial pledges and flows to Africa plummeting (Sun, 2018).¹

Are the current associations between a strong US economy and a slowing Chinese economy on the one hand and public demonstrations on the other merely coincidental or reflections of systematic differences of the (side) effects of Chinese and traditional official finance on public demonstrations? Extant quantitative literature has explored the effects of foreign aid on armed conflicts (e.g. Strange et al., 2015) and state repression (e.g. Carter, 2016; Kishi and Raleigh 2017), but not public demonstrations. To contribute towards redressing this gap, I trace and compare distribution patterns of Chinese and World Bank-funded projects and public demonstrations across time and space in Cameroon receiving predominantly Chinese official finance and Uganda receiving predominantly traditional Western aid.

While the case studies reveal that Uganda has endured more public demonstrations relative to Cameroon, I observe from data on demonstrations in the two countries² that Chinese-funded development projects have encountered more anti-project protests and riots compared to Western, particularly World Bank-funded projects. This observation motivated comparative project studies involving fieldwork interviews on selected Chinese and World Bank-financed projects in Cameroon to verify and explain the higher rates of public demonstrations against Chinese-funded projects. The following research questions guided the fieldwork in Cameroon:

1. Are there instances of collective grievance expression, especially via demonstrations, against Chinese and World Bank-funded projects in Cameroon? Which projects

encounter more demonstrations in Cameroon – Chinese or World Bank-funded projects?

2. Are impact assessments conducted on Chinese and World Bank-funded projects in Cameroon to determine social and environmental risks that could potentially induce grievances and demonstrations, including labour-related, flora and fauna-destruction, and community and livelihood displacement protests?
3. Are the protests and riots plaguing the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon since 2016 related to marginalization of the Anglophone regions in the distribution of Chinese and World Bank-financed projects?

These questions were explored through comparative case studies of three projects funded by China (the Douala-Yaounde expressway project; the Memve'ele hydropower project; and the Kribi deep seaport project) and two projects funded by the World Bank (the Lom Pangar hydropower project; and the Douala road infrastructure project). All the selected projects are in the energy and transport sectors seen in preliminary analysis of Raleigh et al.'s (2010) Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED) to have experienced more protests and riots than other sectors. The fieldwork consisted of interviews with: 19 people who were directly involved as workers, consultants, managers, or contractors on the selected projects; 5 Lolabe community members affected by the construction of the Kribi seaport; and 3 secessionist activists in the Northwest region of Cameroon.³ Project sites of all the selected projects were visited except the one relating to road infrastructure in Douala. Interviews took place in July 2019 and were conducted in English and French. Interactions with (Mandarin) Chinese speakers were facilitated by real time translations via a professional translator fluent in Chinese and English.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: First, extant literature relating to the effects of Chinese and traditional aid is reviewed to clarify this paper's focus on public demonstrations. Second, upon describing data sources and methods used in tracing the distribution of Chinese and World Bank-sponsored projects and public demonstrations in Cameroon and Uganda, this paper reports observed distribution patterns comparatively. Next, I report findings from fieldwork comparative assessments of the propensities of Chinese and World Bank-funded projects to encounter anti-project protests and riots. In the final section, this paper highlights key findings, policy recommendations, and gaps for future research whilst concluding the paper.

Literature review

China has risen to become one of Africa's largest external official finance providers, with almost every African state receiving Chinese concessional and non-concessional flows almost every year since the turn of the twenty-first century. Chinese official finance is typically oblivious to civil liberties and the public accountability profiles of recipient states due to its 'non-interference policy', which makes it distinct from traditional official finance⁴ in terms of constraints accompanying, and potential consequences of, external development finance assistance to Africa. While there is an abundance of studies on the effects of traditional Western finance on development (e.g. Cohen, 1995; Wright, 2010), state repression (e.g. Carter, 2016) and peace (e.g. Grossman, 1992; De Ree and Nillesen, 2009; Kishi et al., 2017) in Africa, there is a dearth of literature on the effects of Chinese official finance due, at least in part, to the relatively more recent emergence of (and scarcity of reliable data on) Chinese official finance as a major source of external financial assistance to Africa.

The limited studies on the effects of Chinese official finance in Africa focus on the impact of Chinese finance flows on development and disagree on their effectiveness. Some reveal that Chinese development finance is more easily accessible and allows for 'local ownership' of development projects, and project monitoring and evaluation processes, with African states having more discretion in using inflows to redress poverty and enhance development (Brautigam, 2009; Mwase and Yang, 2012; Chen and Landry, 2016). Others reveal that the 'no-strings-attached' structure of Chinese official finance incentivizes investment of inflows in corruption (e.g. Isaksson and Kotsadam, 2016), prestige, and nepotism projects (e.g. Tull, 2006; Dreher et al., 2016) making Chinese official finance ineffective whilst rendering Chinese-funded projects susceptible to employee rights violations as evinced in Zimbabwe's experience captured in this very journal (Chipaike and Birchhof, 2019; Chipaike and Eugenia, 2020).

More prominent is the scarcity of studies on the effects of Chinese aid on peace and security in Africa as noted by Strange et al. (2015: 935). While China's 'non-interference policy' presupposes that Chinese official finance, relative to conditional traditional finance, might be more fungible and predisposed to induce state capture and state securitization violence by rebel groups and state forces, extant studies, including Strange et al. (2015) and Kishi and Raleigh (2017), do not find evidence that Chinese official financial assistance is distinctly associated with armed conflicts. Instead, the unconditional nature of Chinese

finance facilitates access to additional resources for boosting the security apparatus of African states thereby promoting peace by increasing the opportunity costs for mounting armed challenges to African states (Strange et al., 2015).

However, twenty-first century peace studies suggest that armed conflicts and armed violence against the state are decreasing whereas unarmed or non-militia challenges to the state, including from elites within the formal government, are increasing in Africa and globally (Raleigh et al., 2010). Public demonstrations, composed of protests and riots, are among the most salient, disruptive non-militia challenges to states today, but are yet to receive scholarly attention in terms of how they relate to Chinese and traditional official finance. Kishi and Raleigh (2017) acknowledged this gap, but upon noting a decline in externally-based rebel challenges to African state leaders and a surge in domestic civilian challengers, they focused on comparatively exploring the effects of Chinese and traditional official finance on variations in African states' use of repression in response to domestic opposition, including through civilian targeting. Kishi and Raleigh (2017: 3) remarkably found that 'states in receipt of higher rates of unconditional, Chinese official finance actively engage in more violence against their citizens relative to states with more conditional, "traditional" official finance profiles'. Kishi and Raleigh's projection of a distinct statistically significant positive correlation between Chinese aid and state repression has been extensively publicised in international media outlets,⁵ including by the scholars themselves (Kishi and Raleigh, 2015), but the relationship between Chinese aid and public demonstrations remains unexplored.

As public demonstrations provide opportunities for use of repressive force, current literature exploring the nexus between foreign official finance and repression ostensibly overstates the repressive effects of foreign official finance. The present study contributes towards redressing this bias by investigating the more immediate effects of different attributes of Chinese and traditional official finance on public anti-government manifestations. The linkage between foreign official finance and repression appears to be narrowly rooted on one strand of political survival theory emphasising repression as an instrument for consolidating political power by state leaders (Heger and Salehyan, 2007). However, though the primary objective of state leaders, according to political survival theory, is to achieve and keep political power, a core strand of the theory accentuates the provision of 'public goods' (e.g. tarred roads, electricity, and hospitals among others) as the main mechanism for minimizing grievances against the state whilst enhancing the legitimacy and political longevity of state leaders (Buono de Mesquita et al., 2003). The latter more

fundamental strand of political survival theory suggests that state leaders are just as, if not more, inclined to use foreign official finance on public welfare, rather than using it ruthlessly.

In most African states, the ‘winning coalition’ has historically been the state’s security forces, and state leaders could invest in ‘private goods’ to military officials solely, to maintain power. Following what Huntington (1991) calls the ‘third wave’ of democratization at the end of the twentieth century and the emergence of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P or RtoP) norm (ICISS, 2001), the size of the winning coalition in most African states has expanded to incorporate voter support bases largely consisting of African leaders’ birth regions and co-ethnic regions, necessitating the provision of more public (as opposed to private) goods for political survival. As democratic space is broadening and winning coalitions are expanding, larger amounts of resources are required to please African leaders’ political survival support bases through the provision of public goods.

Given the need for more resources to satisfy winning coalitions, the unconditional ‘demand-driven’ structure of Chinese official finance, which is oblivious to debt sustainability, potentially provides African leaders with more foreign funds and opportunities for providing public goods and services, relative to traditional official finance, which is ‘supply-driven’, more debt conscious, and comes in much smaller amounts. Given the greater political utility and usability of unconditional Chinese (as against traditional) official finance to African leaders for averting and minimising anti-government grievances, it is hypothesised that, states and sub-national regions receiving mainly Chinese official finance are likely to witness less protests and riots, relative to states and regions receiving mostly traditional official finance. The next section explores empirical evidence for this hypothesis in one country (Cameroon) receiving mainly Chinese official finance and another (Uganda) receiving mostly traditional, Western official finance.

Foreign official finance and demonstrations in Cameroon and Uganda

Comparative country studies involving sub-national mappings of the distribution of foreign official finance and public demonstrations in Cameroon, receiving predominantly Chinese official finance, and Uganda, receiving predominantly traditional official finance, suggest possible negative and positive relationships between Chinese and traditional aid on the one hand and demonstrations on the other. Cameroon and Uganda chosen as case studies share similar political trajectories. Both states’ current Presidents, Paul Biya of Cameroon and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, are among the world’s longest standing leaders. This provides some grounds to assume common commitment to keeping political power consistent with

Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) renowned *Logic of Political Survival* which posits that, policy preferences of every state leader (including with respect to use of state resources and foreign aid) are fundamentally determined by a quest to preserve political power. Both countries amended their constitutions during the 21st century to ensure the eligibility of their current leaders for re-election. This further reinforces the assumption of common commitment to political survival by both countries' leaders. Also, as noted below, both countries have received about the same amount of foreign official finance from China and traditional sources combined, between 2000 and 2017. Thus, it can be assumed that neither country received more foreign inflows which could provide a disproportionate advantage for leadership survival.

Between 2000 and 2017, based on World Bank aid project data (2000-2017),⁶ traditional aid data (2000-2013) (Tierney et al., 2011), and Chinese aid data from *AidData* (2000-2013) (Strange et al., 2015) and the China-Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS-CARI, 2014-2017) (Atkins et al., 2017), Cameroon and Uganda received about the same amount (US\$ 12 billion) of foreign official finance from China and traditional sources combined.⁷ In Cameroon, more than half of this amount was from China (US\$ 7,486,547,177, spread over 87 projects), with the central African country experiencing only 218 public demonstrations.⁸ Conversely, in Uganda, more than half of foreign finance was from the World Bank (US\$ 6,154,400,000, spread over 107 projects), with the East African country experiencing 909 public demonstrations, over four times the number of protests and riots in Cameroon. Public demonstrations in the case studies are gauged from Raleigh et al.'s (2010) Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and cover the period 2001-2018, with observations of foreign official finance lagged (2000-2017) to ensure independence in observations of the two sets of variables.

Given the huge numbers of traditional official finance projects in Cameroon and Uganda, and the scarcity of georeferenced project data for multiple traditional bilateral donors such as the US (Dreher et al., 2016: 6), this study explores the allocation patterns of official finance from China and a non-state traditional source, the World Bank – the leading multilateral donor to Africa with a reputation for attaching strict accountability conditions to aid projects. Of these two sources of foreign official finance, Cameroon has received a greater proportion of its project finance from China (see Figure 1) whereas Uganda has received more of its project finance from the World Bank (see Figure 2). Analytical data on sub-national allocations of Chinese-funded projects in Cameroon and Uganda is generated at

the first administrative level from variables in *AidData* (Strange et al., 2015), including titles, descriptions, and locations of projects. Projects with World Bank funding are listed online by the World Bank⁹ and analytical data on their sub-national allocations is drawn from project titles, descriptions, and various project-related documents on the World Bank's website, including project implementation status and project monitoring reports.¹⁰

[Figure 1 here]

[Figure 2 here]

Upon assembling data on Chinese and World Bank aid project allocation at the first sub-national administrative level, this study finds that allocation patterns for Chinese project finance in Cameroon appear to conform to the recipient ‘demand-driven’ model (Dreher et al., 2016). Accordingly, a majority of Chinese project finance with indicative regional allocation status¹¹ are channelled to specific regions, including the South region, President Biya’s birth region. Graphical explorations of the distribution of Chinese-funded projects and public demonstrations reveal a negative correlation between the former and the latter, suggesting at least some empirical support for this study’s hypothesis. While the South region has received the most intra-regional Chinese project finance and hosts the highest number of Chinese-funded intra-regional projects after the central region which includes the capital city of Yaounde, it has suffered only one demonstration as depicted in Figure 3. By contrast, the Anglophone regions (Northwest and Southwest) seeking through demonstrations and armed conflict since 2016 for either federalism or secession (Okereke, 2018) are among the regions with the fewest Chinese-financed projects.

[Figure 3 here]

There is also some evidence of a negative correlation between Chinese-sponsored projects and demonstrations across time (annually) in Cameroon. As illustrated in Figure 4, spikes – including in the presidential election years of 2011 and 2018 – and dips in the number of Chinese-funded projects were respectively accompanied by decreases and increases in counts of demonstrations.

[Figure 4 here]

The inverse relationship between Chinese project finance and demonstrations over time and space at the sub-national level in Cameroon bears empirical support for this paper's thesis that the unconditional nature of Chinese official finance renders it suitable for political use by state leaders to pursue their primary objective of legitimising and consolidating power

by providing public goods to regions that make up the winning coalition. In most African states, the winning coalition was historically the state's security forces, and leaders could focus its investment of private goods in the military in order to maintain power. Following what Huntington (1991) calls the 'third wave' of democratization at the end of the twentieth century and the emergence of the R2P norm (ICISS, 2001), the size of winning coalitions in most African states has expanded to incorporate voter support bases usually consisting of African leaders' birth regions and coethnic regions, necessitating the provision of public (as opposed to private) goods for unaggressive political survival.

Assembled data on World Bank and Chinese aid allocation to districts making up Uganda's first level administrative units reveals that World Bank project finance inflows come in smaller amounts (relative to Chinese flows) and are spread across multiple districts across all four regions (Central, Western, Eastern, and Northern) of the country. While the largest single Chinese project finance (the Karuma Hydropower Project, involving close to US\$1.5 billion) is channelled to the Western region hosting President Museveni's birth district, the largest single World Bank project finance (the Uganda Power Sector Development Project, involving US\$ 300 million) is focused on the Central region harbouring Uganda's capital and lone city of Kampala with more than one million people and two of the ten poorest districts in Uganda, namely Kalangala and Buvuma (Rafa et al., 2017).¹²

[Figure 5 here]

Together, districts in Central and Western Uganda have received the most World Bank project finance and the higher number of World Bank-funded projects, but the two regions have also suffered more public manifestations as shown in Figure 5. Eastern and Northern districts, while receiving less World Bank aid, have experienced fewer demonstrations. This bears at least some evidence for a positive linkage between traditional project finance and demonstrations. The distribution of World Bank aid projects and demonstrations within Uganda across time also exudes some corroborative evidence for a positive correlation between traditional finance and demonstrations. As illustrated in Figure 6, increases and decreases in annual counts of World Bank-funded projects are roughly accompanied by spikes and dips in occurrences of protests and riots. But this positive correlation is not as neat and systematic as the inverse relational patterns observed between Chinese-financed projects and demonstrations.

[Figure 6 here]

The positive, albeit weak, correlation patterns between allocation of World Bank-sponsored projects and distribution of demonstrations across sub-national space and time in Uganda supports the thesis that traditional official finance is less susceptible to political utilization for gratifying the winning coalition and preventing protests and riots that threaten political survival. An increase in the number of World Bank projects in Uganda in the year running up to presidential elections in 2011 did not prevent widespread protests. Instead demonstrations surged. In the run-up to the 2016 general elections, World Bank-financed projects dropped but as in 2011, demonstrations surged.

Owing largely to the smaller amounts of traditional finance and the externally-imposed purpose specifications and burdensome bureaucratic accountability constraints accompanying flows from the World Bank and other traditional sources, leaders receiving predominantly traditional finance are left with less leverage, relative to leaders receiving mainly Chinese finance, over foreign aid utilization for pleasing winning coalitions and enhancing political survival. It is therefore not surprising that a recent study by Briggs (2019) found Uganda as one of the African countries wherein (traditional) foreign aid is associated with low levels of incumbent electoral support. President Museveni is among Africa's longest serving leaders though Uganda receives aid mostly from traditional sources. But the number of protests experienced by the Ugandan polity is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, with the Museveni regime effectively maintaining its grip on power largely due to divided

and weakly organised opposition parties as well as electoral gerrymandering, vote rigging, and coercive measures against political opponents (Tangri and Mwenda, 2010).

While the comparative country analysis above reveal that Uganda (receiving predominantly World Bank finance) has endured more demonstrations relative to Cameroon (receiving predominantly Chinese finance), I observed from ACLED data on demonstrations in the two countries that Chinese-funded projects have encountered more anti-project demonstrations relative to World Bank-funded projects. Based on ACLED, there were slightly more protests and riots erupting from employee-related and host community grievances on Chinese-funded (relative to World Bank-sponsored) projects in Cameroon and Uganda combined over the period 2001 – 2018 (see Table 1 and Table 2 in the next section). This observation motivated comparative fieldwork interviews on selected Chinese and World Bank-financed projects in Cameroon to verify and explain the greater propensity of Chinese-funded projects to encounter anti-project demonstrations. The next section reports the fieldwork in Cameroon.

Demonstrations against projects

As outlined in the introduction, three research questions guided the fieldwork. The questions were explored through comparative case studies of three projects funded by China (the Douala-Yaounde expressway project; the Memve'ele hydropower project; and the Kribi deep seaport project) and two projects funded by the World Bank (the Lom Pangar hydropower project; and the Douala road infrastructure project). All the selected projects are in the energy and transport sectors seen in ACLED to have experienced more protests and riots than other sectors.¹³ The fieldwork interviews revealed that Chinese-financed projects in Cameroon have actually encountered more protests and riots than are recorded on ACLED. More meticulous project impact assessments, project impact management plans, and the presence of complaint/grievance management offices on World Bank-funded projects figured prominently on respondents' explanations as to why projects involving the world's top development policy institution encountered fewer protests relative to Chinese-financed projects in Cameroon.

The fieldwork started off with a meeting with a Cameroonian academic who has research experience on Western-funded projects in Cameroon. Upon sharing this study's research interests, the contact linked me with two key informants: one having engineering experience on the three selected transport projects, including on the construction of the Kribi-Lolabe highway as part of the bigger Kribi deep seaport project and the other having

managerial experience on the two selected energy projects. Findings on the first two research questions are largely deduced from responses of the two key informants, corroborated by information from other project-specific interviewees. Relying on key informants with work experience on both Chinese and World Bank-funded projects allowed the research to gain comparative insight directly from the informants whilst minimizing the potential for subjective researcher bias in interpreting responses from several sources on the different projects. Findings on the third research question are based on interactions with Ambazonia activists.

[Table 1 here]

[Table2 here]

Comparative findings

On the first research question relating to frequency of demonstrations against Chinese and World Bank-funded projects, while there were variations in estimates by respondents, numbers of demonstration instances reported by respondents were consistently higher than those captured on the ACLED database, with those relating to Chinese projects surpassing those associated with World Bank-funded projects. Though recounted grievances associated with manifestations on both Chinese and World Bank-funded projects were similar in nature, demonstrations on Chinese projects were reported to be more severe, usually leading to repressive intervention from state security forces. The key informant on transport projects contrasted the rates of police interventions against industrial actions on the Chinese-funded Kribi seaport and World Bank-funded Douala road infrastructure projects by noting that:

Armed police officers were invited to crush almost every agitation by Cameroonian workers on the Kribi seaport and by community members complaining about meagre compensations, or the lack thereof. But when I think of my time fixing roads in Douala, the police were rarely called-in by our bosses. Instead, the project authorities were willing to talk with us and understand our problems. A lot of force was used to protect

the Chinese in Kribi whereas they were the ones discriminating against local workers and reducing their salaries unfairly.

Of the three selected transport sector projects, the Douala-Yaounde expressway project was reported to have suffered the most industrial actions and compensation-based protests by people whose property have either been destroyed or targeted for destruction to facilitate road construction works. According to the key informant on transport projects:

Demonstrations on the stretch of the road close to the capital city of Yaounde usually witness interventions from both military authorities who initially use force to disperse protesters and civilian authorities from the ministries of public works and housing who try to dialogue with protesters and offer them assurances that they will be fully compensated. Issues relating to compensation remain a major obstacle to the progress of road works.

On the selected energy projects, there have been expressed labour and community grievances on both the Memve'ele and Lom Pangar hydropower projects over poor housing, feeding, waste management, unfair dismissals, salary deductions, and discrimination by Chinese contractors against local workers. However, respondents depicted the management of the Lom Pangar project as being more responsive to expressed grievances compared to the management of the Memve'ele project. The key informant on the selected energy projects emphasised the contrast as follows:

While grievances on Lom Pangar seldom went beyond strike actions with workers grounding their tools, grievances on Memve'ele escalated to major protests and even riots, attracting media attention and brutal suppression by security forces. To the security and government officials in the South region [the President's birth region] hosting the Memve'ele hydropower project and other major Chinese-funded projects, protests and riots betrayed disloyalty to the President. Therefore, regional authorities reacted ruthlessly against protests on projects.

On the second research question pertaining to project impact assessments on Chinese and World Bank-financed projects, interviews revealed that impact assessments were done for all the selected projects in fulfilment of funding requirements. But the standards of assessment and the accompanying impact management and compensation plans on the World Bank-funded Lom Pangar and Douala infrastructure projects were more comprehensive. Both key informants asserted that while the assessments and accompanying management plans for Chinese-funded projects had to satisfy the Cameroonian authorities and national laws for funding to be disbursed, assessments and risk management plans for World Bank-funded

projects took longer to develop, were based on extensive consultations with envisaged project host communities, were subjected to expert reviews by the World Bank, and were required to conform not only to Cameroonian regulations but also to the World Bank's own international safeguards.

Consistent with the differences in standards of impact assessment and impact management between the two foreign financiers, proposed compensation for people (to be) displaced from their properties and livelihoods by the selected projects were reportedly far more substantial and comprehensive on World Bank projects. Interviewed members of the Lolabe community affected by the construction of the Chinese-funded Kribi seaport reported that their farms were destroyed but they received no compensation. Other respondents, including the key informants, noted that those displaced by the Chinese-funded projects were compensated and in some cases resettled but the compensation packages did not cover loss of economic livelihoods. Conversely, on World Bank projects, compensation packages incorporated trainings for adaptation to new economic activities such as sustainable fishing on the Lom Pangar project. Owing to their more robust impact assessments and impact management plans, it is hardly surprising that World Bank-funded projects suffered fewer manifestations.

Interactions with respondents suggested further differences in levels of involvement of foreign financiers in the implementation, supervision, and enforcement of contractor compliance to social and environmental risk management plans. While project monitors from the World Bank were more proactively involved, visiting project sites between three to four times a year whilst providing elaborate review reports recommending both punitive and non-punitive measures for compliance improvement, monitors from China visited twice a year and acted only when complaints were made by Cameroonian government authorities.

Both key informants in the study admitted that the more regular visits and punitive threats of the World Bank rendered project managers and project contractors more responsive to any non-compliance 'red flags' and grievances expressed by employees and project host communities. Consistent with World Bank recommendations, a 'complaints office' was setup on the Lom Pangar project enabling project managing officers to receive, process and redress grievances more systematically. One official of Electricity Development Corporation (EDC) – the managing authority of the World Bank-funded Lom Pangar project – highlighted the 'complaints office' as being instrumental for managing grievances and preventing them from metamorphosing to major demonstrations:

After our guys [local workers on the Lom Pangar project] complained about poor quality shelter, unhygienic waste management conditions, provision of expensive and foreign foods, and use of Chinese by contractors on employees' daily work report cards..., we filed the complaints, discussed with our Chinese [China Water and Electricity contractor] friends and our World Bank sponsors. After the discussions, we improved housing for our guys, we opened a restaurant with local dishes, recruited local cooks, subsidized feeding, improved waste management and we hired translators to interpret what the Chinese were saying our guys' report cards.

None of the respondents recounted a complaints office and diplomatic grievance management mechanisms on Chinese-funded projects. Instead, as noted earlier, project managers and project implementing contractors on the selected Chinese-funded projects in this study often rebuffed complaints and used state security agencies to repress protests. Respondents on the Kribi deep seaport project recounted that when they personally raised their own grievances as workers and community members, they were asked by project managing officers and China Harbour Engineering Corporation (CHEC), the project contractor, to refer their complaints to the Cameroonian government.

On the third research question relating to Ambazonia secessionist manifestations, interviewed Ambazonia activists disclosed that the drive for independence of the Anglophone regions is fundamentally a function of 'institutionalised and systematic marginalization' of the Northwest and Southwest with regard to use of state resources, including foreign finance inflows to Cameroon. While resistance to the imposition of French and the French legal systems on the Anglophone regions sparked the current unrest in late 2016, the crisis is much deeper and continues to persist largely owing to neglect of the Anglophone regions in Cameroon's development projects. One of the activists portrayed a stark contrast between the Francophone regions that makeup the current President's political support base and Anglophone regions that have been at the core of political opposition to the President by rhetorically asking me:

You said you have been to the South region. Did you notice how the people there enjoy electricity all day every day but we are here living in darkness? Did you see how good their roads are compared to the potholes and earth roads in the Northwest? They even have a seaport despite being close to the Douala seaport, but the government does not care about developing a port in Limbe [a seaside city in the Southwest region]. They

discriminate against us Anglophone Cameroonians while exploiting our oil in the Southwest.

Therefore, a more even distribution of state resources, including foreign official finance could be instrumental for dampening grievances and the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon.

Conclusion

Temporal and spatial distributive patterns of Chinese and World Bank-funded projects and public demonstrations in Cameroon and Uganda reveal that, the apparent association between a slowing Chinese economy and a strong US economy on the one hand and increased public demonstration rates globally in 2019 on the other might be a reflection of variance in the effects of Chinese and traditional official finance on public demonstrations. In Cameroon receiving mostly Chinese official finance, periods and regions with more Chinese-funded projects appear to experience less protests and riots, suggesting negative correlation between Chinese official finance and public demonstrations. Conversely, in Uganda receiving mostly World Bank aid, this study finds some evidence of more protests and riots taking place in periods and regions hosting the most World Bank-funded projects, indicating a positive relationship between traditional official finance and public demonstrations.

Based on the inferred negative and positive correlations between Chinese and traditional finance flows and rates of public demonstrations in Africa, caution is prescribed against radically reforming China's non-interference aid policy. While Beijing appears to be sensitive to criticisms of its unconditional foreign aid policy, reforms should be strategically focused towards minimizing misuse of aid funds. Reforms should not seek to institute an entirely Western-like approach to foreign assistance. Adopting the West's conditional, supply-driven model could occasion more protests and riots in African states as evinced by Uganda's experience.

However, more robust assessments incorporating regression analysis and controls for any possible mediating factors are required to verify the correlations inferred in this study between foreign official finance and public demonstrations in Africa. Further quantitative research should disaggregate public demonstrations. This paper's political survival theoretical framework predicts negative and positive links between Chinese and traditional official finance on the one hand and anti-government public demonstrations specifically on the other. But the ACLED database used to trace distributions of public demonstrations in Cameroon

and Uganda in this study is aggregative, capturing pro- and anti-government demonstrations, as well as political and non-political protest and riot events including religious, cultural, and business demonstrations. However, as a majority of ACLED demonstrations are political and against government institutions, findings of this study are likely to be upheld in regression analysis using data that exclusively covers anti-government demonstrations.

In addition to exploring distributive patterns of foreign official finance and public demonstrations in Cameroon and Uganda, this study undertook fieldwork involving interviews on selected Chinese and World Bank-funded projects in Cameroon to verify and explain higher ACLED rates of anti-project demonstrations against Chinese-sponsored projects, relative to World Bank-funded projects. Interactions with key informants proved the latter projects as being less susceptible to anti-project demonstrations. This is due to more rigorous project impact assessments, project impact management plans, and the presence of complaints management systems on World Bank-sponsored projects.

By policy implication, to minimise risks of public demonstrations against foreign-funded development projects, it is important for foreign financiers to ensure that project impact assessments, impact management plans, and grievance management offices are instituted to World Bank standards. Also, given the distributional grievances contributing to secessionist protests and armed conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, it is important for the government of Cameroon to prioritise the Anglophone regions in the allocation of foreign-funded projects in the immediate future and to adopt an equitable allocation policy after redressing the secessionist crisis. While the fieldwork finds that anti-project demonstrations are more likely on Chinese, relative to World Bank-funded projects, analysis are restricted to selected projects in Cameroon. For global insight, large-n analysis covering demonstrations (or the absence thereof) on all Chinese and World Bank-funded projects in Africa and elsewhere should be conducted.

Notes

¹ At the time of writing the first draft of this article (November – December 2019), trade tensions dominated US – China relations (with the former faring better). However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has since affected both super powers and many other states adversely, with world trade expected to plunge by at least 13% (WTO, 2020).

² The data referred to here is the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) by Raleigh et al. (2010)

³ The secessionists are striving for what they call an independent ‘Ambazonia’ state made-up of the Northwest and Southwest, the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon (Okereke, 2018).

⁴ Traditional official finance in this study refers generally to non-Chinese sources of official finance to African states, majority of which are Western states and agencies organised in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD).

⁵ See for instance Mail and Guardian (2015) and Corcoran (2015).

⁶ World Bank aid project data retrieved from <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list>

⁷ More specifically, Cameroon received US\$ 12,127,107,114 spread over 982 projects and Uganda received US\$ 11,938,746,052 spread over 2,210 projects.

⁸ Public demonstrations in the case studies are gauged from Raleigh et al.'s (2010) Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and cover the period 2001-2018, with observations of foreign official finance lagged (2000-2017) to ensure independence in observations of the two sets of variables.

⁹ World Bank aid project data retrieved from <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list>. Only projects approved by the World Bank between 2000 and 2017 are incorporated in analysis. Cancelled or suspended projects are excluded.

¹⁰ Data on sub-national allocations of Chinese and World Bank-sponsored projects generated in this study at the first sub-national administrative levels in Cameroon and Uganda are available from the author on request.

¹¹ A project has an indicative regional allocation status if I effectively determined the specific region(s) in which the project is located or in which majority of funds for the project is spent. Efforts were made to track the project sites of all Chinese and World Bank-funded projects in Cameroon and Uganda, including projects titled and/or described as “national” projects. National projects whose specific regional locations were either not reported or could not be tracked or determined were excluded from case study analysis together with other projects whose sub-national locations were not reported and/or not determined. Projects with determined regional allocation status are divided into two categories: intra- and inter-regional projects. The former refers to projects that are largely concentrated within specific regions and the latter refers to projects substantially spread across two or more regions. While project finance going to intra-regional projects is captured as provided in Chinese and World Bank project databases, it is challenging to determine how inter-regional project finance is distributed across the different project host regions. Thus, analyses relating to sub-national project finance focus on intra-regional projects while excluding inter-regional projects. But in analysis relating to numbers or counts of foreign-funded projects, both intra- and inter-regional projects are included.

¹² However, Uganda's Northern region appears to be the poorest region with six of the ten poorest districts located in Northern Uganda according to Rafa et al. (2017). Based on the poverty-targeting ‘supply-driven’ model of Western aid, the Northern region should have received the largest amount of World Bank project finance but this was not the case.

¹³ Selection of the Kribi deep seaport project – which, based on ACLED observations (2001 – 2018), has not suffered any demonstration – allows for comparison even among Chinese-sponsored projects vis-à-vis factors giving rise to protests and riots on some Chinese projects but not others.

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Figure 1. Chinese and World Bank finance to Cameroon (2000 – 2017)

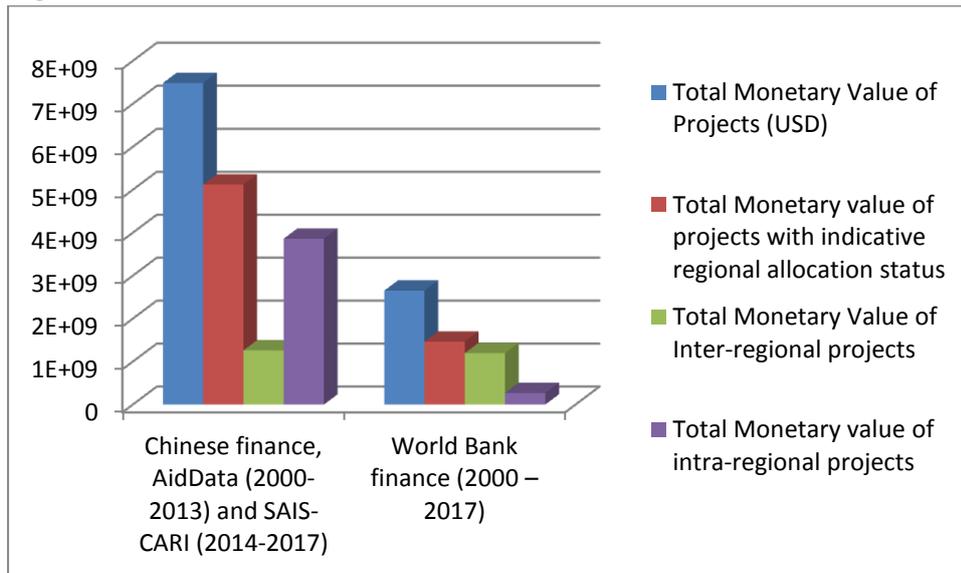


Figure 2. Chinese and World Bank finance to Uganda (2000 – 2017)

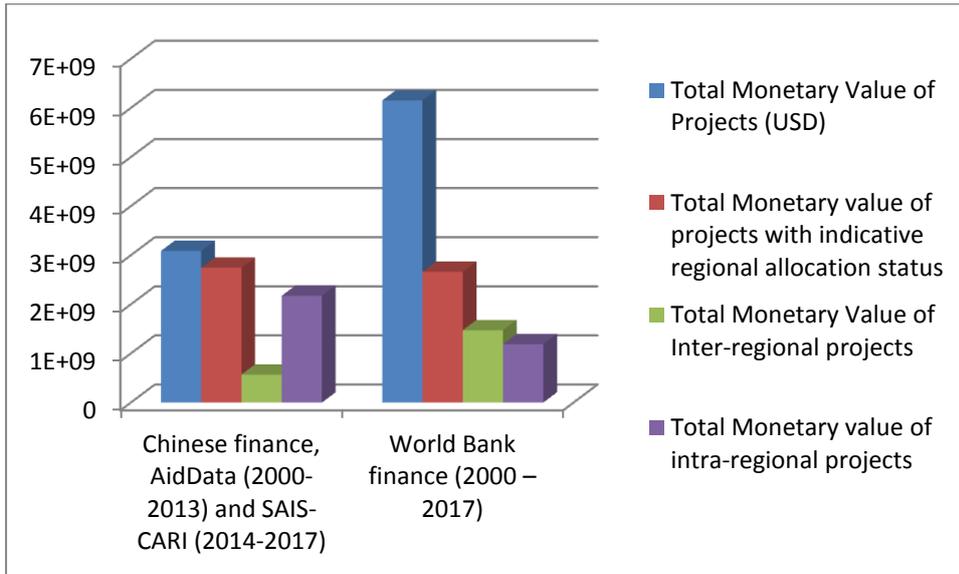


Figure 3. Regional distribution of Chinese and World Bank (WB)-financed projects (2000 – 2017) and demonstrations (2001 – 2018) in Cameroon

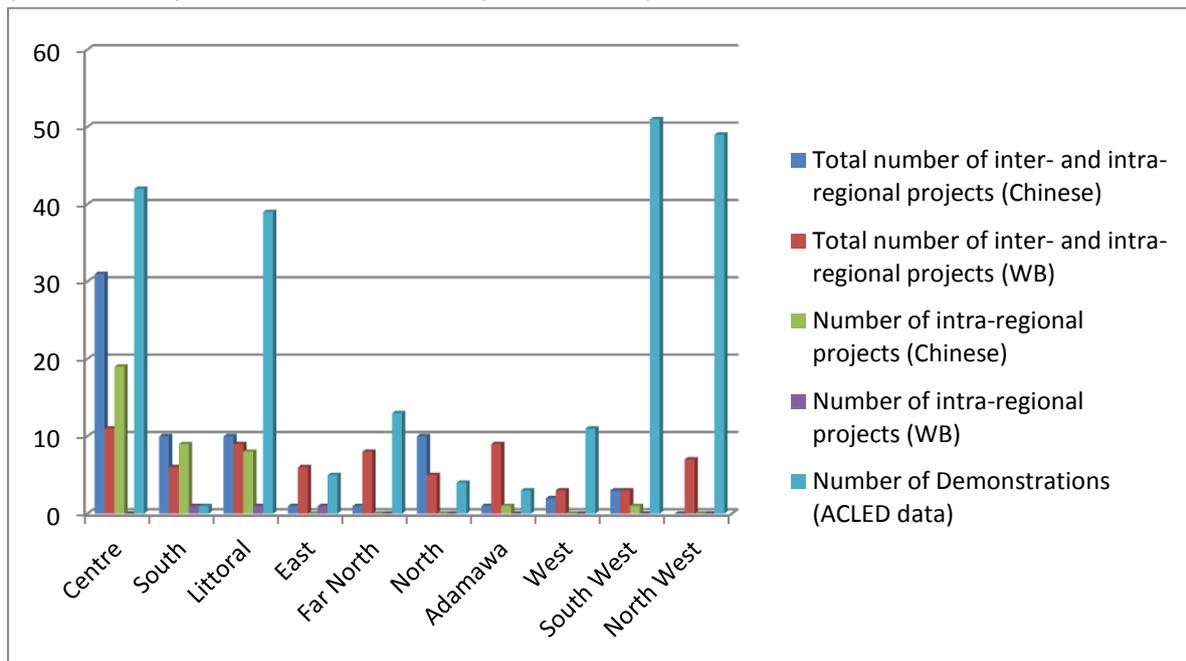


Figure 4. Annual distribution of Chinese (Chi) and World Bank (WB)-financed projects (2000 – 2017) and demonstrations (2001 – 2018) in Cameroon

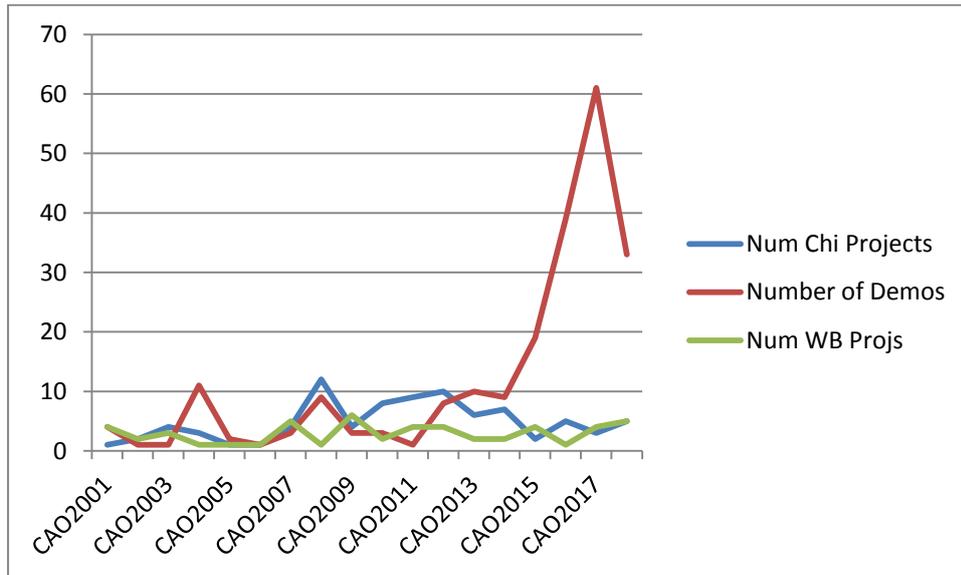


Figure 5. Regional Distribution of Chinese and WB-financed projects (2000 – 2017) and demonstrations (2001 – 2018) in Uganda

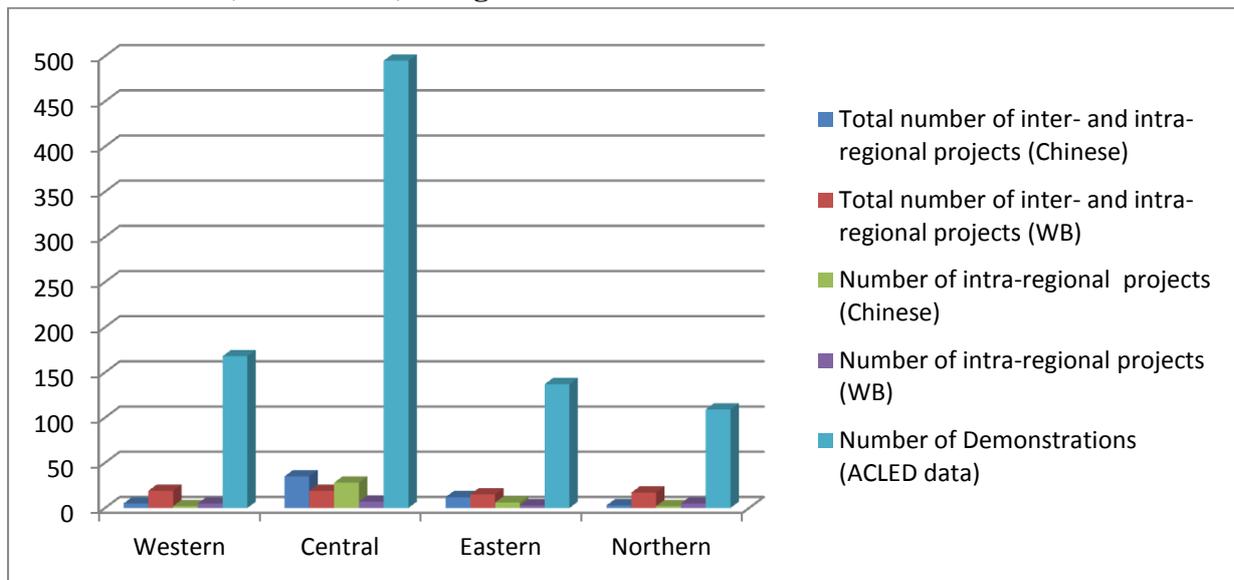


Figure 6. Annual distribution of Chinese (Chi) and World Bank (WB)-financed projects (2000 – 2017) and demonstrations (2001 – 2018) in Uganda

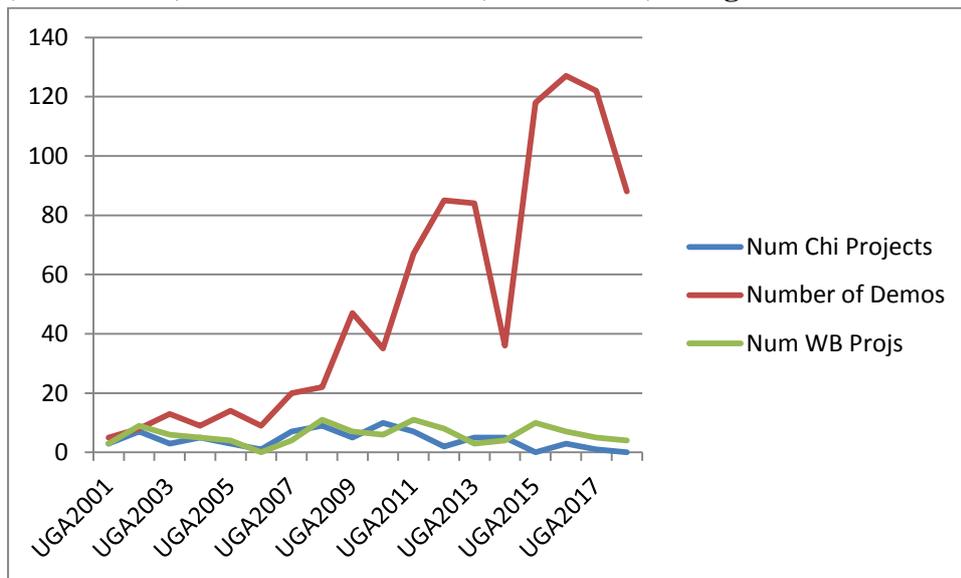


Table 1. Public demonstrations against Chinese and World Bank-financed projects in Cameroon, 2001 – 2018 (ACLED)

Foreign Finance Source	Brief Title of Project	Project Contractor	Project Sector	Number of Demonstrations	Regional Location of Demonstration	Nature of Grievance
China	Memve'ele Dam	Sinohydro Corporation (Chinese)	Energy	1	South	Employee rights-related
China	Douala-Yaounde Road Construction	China First Highway Engineering Company	Transport	1	Center	Employee rights-related
China	Renovation of Provincial Stadiums	China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation	Social Infrastructure	1	Center	Identity-based

Table 2: Public demonstrations against Chinese and World Bank-financed projects in Uganda, 2001 – 2018 (ACLED)

Foreign Finance Source	Brief Title of Project	Project Sector	Project Contractor	Number of Demonstrations	Regional Location of Demonstration	Nature of Grievance
China	Karuma hydropower project	Energy	Sinohydro Corporation (Chinese)	1	Northern	Unemployment-related
World Bank	Second Kampala Institutional and Infrastructure Development Project	Transport	China Railway Seventh Group (Chinese)	1	Central	Employee rights-related
World Bank	Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development Program	Transport	Plinth Technical Services (Ugandan)	2	Western	Host community-related
					Western	Employee rights-related