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East versus West: Chinese and American Development Efforts and Perceptions in Cameroon

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**East versus West:
Chinese and American Development Efforts and
Perceptions in Cameroon**

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SIT Cameroon: Fall 2012
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Abstract

Every year, donor countries pour billions of dollars of foreign aid into developing recipient countries. Humanitarian and “win-win” rhetoric generally accompanies the grant, hospital, school, or sports stadium. To a realist international relations scholar, it is highly unlikely that powerful nations like the United States and China donate anything without political or economic strategic interests in mind. How do American and Chinese strategic interests affect the quality of development aid? This paper seeks to answer this question in the context of Cameroon, a Central African state rich in resources and young minds but whose growth is hampered by its colonial past and its stagnant political environment. This study also seeks to understand what Cameroonians, the intended targets of foreign assistance, think of these donors’ development projects. Based on interviews with government officials and citizens in Yaoundé, Cameroonians are frustrated with the United States’ lack of infrastructural projects and the transformative effect its political interests have on Cameroonian culture. Cameroonians appreciate the visibility of Chinese infrastructural projects but are wary of what economic or political power China might wield over Cameroon in the future. If development aid continues this way, it will be difficult for Cameroon to reach its potential.

Résumé

Chaque année, les grandes puissances font des dons de milliards de dollars aux pays en voie de développement. La rhétorique humanitaire et « gagnant-gagnant » accompagne généralement les subventions, les hôpitaux, les écoles, ou les stades. Pour une étudiante des relations internationales, il est improbable que les grandes puissances comme les Etats-Unis ou la Chine fassent un don sans considérer des intérêts politiques ou économiques. Quels sont les effets de ces intérêts stratégiques américains et chinois sur la qualité de l’aide internationale ? Cette dissertation tente de répondre à cette question dans le contexte du Cameroun, un état de l’Afrique centrale plein de ressources et de jeunesse mais qui a une histoire de colonisation et un environnement politique stagnant. En outre, cette dissertation cherche à comprendre ce que les Camerounais, la cible de l’aide internationale, pensent des projets développementaux. Selon des entretiens avec des officiels et des citoyens de Yaoundé, les Camerounais sont frustrés parce que les Etats-Unis ne font pas les dons en l’infrastructure et parce que ses intérêts politiques transforment la culture camerounaise. Les Camerounais apprécient la visibilité des projets infrastructurels de la Chine, mais ils se méfient du pouvoir économique ou politique que la Chine pourra exercer sur le Cameroun dans l’avenir. Si l’aide développementale continue ainsi, il sera difficile pour le Cameroun d’atteindre son potentiel.

Dedications

Maman, I could not imagine living with anyone else. You remind me every day what is important in life. Thank you for the warm welcome into your house, heart, and family.

Christelle, je ne pourrais jamais exprimer ma gratitude en français ou en anglais. Donc, je voudrais dire seulement : « Merci beaucoup, ma sœur ». Tu vas rester proche de mon cœur.

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To the SIT staff, thank you. We would have been lost (literally) without all of you.

To the countless Cameroonians who gave me their opinions on the Chinese, gave me directions, or gave me a hard time, thank you for sharing this beautiful country with me.

And to my classmates, I love you. I am here, in this room, with all of you.

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INTRODUCTION

When politicians say “international development,” “foreign assistance,” or “bilateral aid,” what comes to mind? If you are in the Central African state of Cameroon, think dollar signs. Think the Palais des Sports, Cameroon’s newest and flashiest sports arena generously financed by the People’s Republic of China. Think a failed \$1.2 million good governance program financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Think airplane donations, military training, and dams. Think Hu Jintao, China’s president, shaking hands with Paul Biya, Cameroon’s president, posing for pictures at the Palais des Congrès, and congratulating each other on the “podium development” they have accomplished. Finally, think of what Cameroon has to offer a donor country: natural resources, stability, strategic location, and nearly 20 million consumers.

In Cameroon, bilateral development aid has become the lingua franca of foreign policy. Two of Cameroon’s longtime partners are the People’s Republic of China and the United States. Both send diplomats and foreign aid strategies to woo Cameroonian government officials and to bargain for political, economic, and/or militaristic strategic interests. Despite the billions of dollars the United States and China have spent, what changes have Cameroonians seen? In 2012, the life expectancy hovers around 50 years, and the unemployment rate is more than 20 percent.¹ Even in Yaoundé, the capital, roads are in disrepair, and some families still live without running water.

Obviously, countries do not engage in interstate relations solely for humanitarian purposes. As one Cameroonian put it, “*En relations internationales, il n’y a que les intérêts.*”² However, this paper seeks to determine whether the desires of donor states distract them from the needs of recipient citizens. What have these multimillion dollar development

¹ “Cameroon,” CIA World Factbook, accessed November 30, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geo/cm.html>.

² “In international relations, there is nothing other than interests.” Interview with supermarket employee B, November 26, 2012.

efforts done for the sector of the population who could benefit most? Since it seems that donor countries rarely receive feedback from aid beneficiaries, the goal of this project is to analyze Chinese and American development strategies in Cameroon and Cameroonian citizens' perceptions of these donor countries.

Two questions guided the research: How do Chinese and American strategic interests affect the quality of development aid in Cameroon? How do Cameroonians perceive these countries' projects and, by extension, the donor countries? Based on observations in Cameroon and on scholarly literature, the hypotheses are as follows:

H_{1a}: The political and economic strategic interests of the United States and China, respectively, reduce the potential impact that these governments' development projects could have in Cameroon.

H₀: Strategic interests have no effect on the quality of development projects that the Chinese and American governments finance.

H_{2a}: The more aware Cameroonian citizens are of Chinese and American development projects, the more successful the projects have been.

H₀: Cameroonian citizens' awareness has no impact on the success of the Chinese and American governments.

This project reflects data gathered over four weeks through observations and formal and informal interviews with Cameroonian, American, and Chinese government officials and Cameroonian citizens in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Because development aid is a vast and often ambiguous subject, it is necessary to define several key terms within the scope of the paper. First, development aid is a specific type of foreign aid that, separate from disaster relief or security assistance, aims to improve citizens' standards of living.³ This paper defines development aid as bilateral aid, i.e. assistance from a donor country's government to a recipient country's government, in the form of grants, loans, technical assistance, and in-kind contributions. However, the research

³ Carol Adelman, "Foreign Aid: Effectively Advancing Security Interests," *Harvard International Review* 29 no. 3 (2007): 62-67.

was conducted in terms of development projects – the goods and services available to the public – and did not consider the amount of money Cameroon receives from the United States or China.

Secondly, strategic interests can be defined as what the donor country hopes to gain by engaging in development aid. A country's political interests ensure its national security by securing allies, and its economic interests ensure national security by securing resources. Finally, the success of development projects can be defined as an effective and transparent use of development aid that has a positive impact on the sector of society that could benefit most from foreign aid.

Although scholars have already written much about the United States' and China's strategic interests in Africa, only Bjørn Nordtveit has written about China's advances in education development in Cameroon.⁴ An insufficient amount of information exists on Cameroon's development. This study fills a gap in the existing literature by comparing American and Chinese interests and by asking the recipient population what they feel is lacking from Cameroon's development. Scholars discount the public's voice too often in favor of statistical analyses of growth. Additionally, the Cameroonian public does not represent all of Africa, so its needs and wants must be considered within the country's cultural context.

The remainder of this paper is divided into six sections. The first section reviews the history of US-Cameroonian and Sino-Cameroonian foreign relations and argues that the existing literature on US and Chinese strategic interests is not specific enough to Cameroon. The second section explains the project's methodology. The third section presents the data, and the fourth section describes the emergent themes. The fifth section responds to the research questions and argues that US and Chinese strategic interests affect the quality of

⁴ Bjørn H. Nordtveit, "An emerging donor in education and development: A case study of China in Cameroon," *International Journal of Educational Development* 31 (2011): 99-108.

development aid and Cameroonians' perceptions of the donor countries in Cameroon. The final section concludes and explores the implications of continued strategic-interests-as-development-aid foreign policy.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS

A quick glance at the titles of recent works by two of today's leading development aid scholars reveals the divide between those who foresee end of poverty and those who think aid is dead.⁵ Furthermore, scholars cannot decide whether recipient countries' governments are the problem or whether donor states meddling in others' affairs is to blame.⁶ Regardless, both the United States and China have long and entangled histories with Cameroon.

Cameroon is a Central African state with a population of nearly 20 million. It gained independence from France on January 1st, 1960 and from Great Britain on October 1st, 1961 but maintains close ties with both countries. Outside of oil, its main exports are wood, cotton, cocoa, coffee, rubber, and bananas.⁷ Cameroon is classified as a republic and has had a multiparty political system since 1990. However, the current president, Paul Biya, has been in power since 1982. It is a stable country that has never experienced a successful coup d'état or civil war. These economic and political conditions make Cameroon an attractive foreign relations partner.

The United States opened an embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon on March 5, 1957, three years before Cameroon became an independent state.⁸ One of the oldest development cooperation agreements between the United States and Cameroon is the Peace Corps, which opened its doors in 1962 in Cameroon. There are currently 212 volunteers serving in

⁵ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

⁶ David Burnside and Craig Dollar, "Aid, Policies, and Growth," *The American Economic Review* 90 no. 4 (2000): 847-68; William Easterly, "How Did Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Become Heavily Indebted? Reviewing Two Decades of Debt Relief," *World Development* 30 no. 10 (2002): 1677-96.

⁷ "Le commerce extérieur au premier semestre," National Institute of Statistics, accessed November 30, 2012.

⁸ Joe Ewang Nzume (Chief Director of American and Caribbean Affairs Department, MINREX), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

Cameroon.⁹ Peace Corps Cameroon encompasses five major program areas: education, community health, environment, community economic development, and youth development. The organization focuses on grassroots development that provides citizens with resources to autonomously better their lives.

In Cameroon, five US governmental agencies work on foreign assistance, including the Peace Corps, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (DoS), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and USAID.¹⁰ Because of Cameroon's stability and multiparty system, it is likely that the US government considers Cameroon an important Central African partner in trade and the promotion of democracy. However, USAID closed its office in Cameroon in 1994 after President Paul Biya allegedly rigged his reelection.¹¹ It reopened its doors in 2010 under the same president. Today, with no Foreign Service officers, Cameroon is a limited presence USAID country, and the organization focuses solely on HIV/AIDS prevention. It works with the at-risk population, with pharmaceutical services to provide greater access to medications, with orphans of HIV/AIDS, and with the Global Fund, a multilateral organization dedicated to fighting AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The Department of State sponsors a Special Self-Help Fund and finances worthy local development projects initiated by Cameroonians.

It is difficult to gather concrete information on all American efforts because the list of US development projects in Cameroon is long and varied. Furthermore, the US government's aid delivery channels range from military missions to good governance programs. While it is important to understand how and why donor countries allocate bilateral aid, it was beyond the scope of this study to document all of the United States' projects in Cameroon.

⁹ James Beighle, "US Peace Corps Director of Programming and Training" (lecture, SIT, Yaoundé, Cameroon, October 17, 2012).

¹⁰ Aisatou Ngöng (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

¹¹ Ngöng (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

The development strategies of the United States, and more generally the West, do not have a good reputation in developing countries. The Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) of the 1990s failed miserably by reducing public expenditures on healthcare and education and further impoverishing many developing countries. Today, the United States follows the Post-Washington Consensus (PWC) which, like the SAP, is a market-based strategy for development. However, the PWC recognizes the recipient government's role in healthcare and education spending.¹²

Within the existing literature, no scholar has investigated exactly what the United States wants from its relations with Cameroon. Many have written about US interests in Africa in general, but each African state is different. Generally, it appears that the United States has vested political and economic interests when conducting its foreign policy. In 2008, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) was launched to address traditional and human security issues, like transnational terrorism and good governance – clearly a political interest. However, the United States also wants to edge out China's growing interest in African oil, an economic and political strategy.¹³ Two scholars criticize the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) because its aid is tied to trade and military training conditionalities, more economic and political interests.¹⁴

Finally, one paper argues that foreign aid allocations does indeed respond to political interests, such as colonial histories with recipients, voting alliances, and democratization, while only foreign direct investment responds to a recipient's "economic openness."¹⁵ One paper goes as far as to say that the amount of politically and economically (versus

¹² Bjørn H. Nordtveit, "Western and Chinese development discourses: Education, growth, and sustainability," *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (2009): 158.

¹³ Christopher Isike, Ufo Okeke-Uzodike, and Lysias Gilbert, "The United States Africa Command: Enhancing American security or fostering African development?" *African Security Review* 17 no. 1 (2008): 35.

¹⁴ Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, "Friends and Interests: China's Distinctive Links with Africa," *African Studies Review* 50 no. 3 (2007): 75–114.

¹⁵ Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?" *Journal of Economic Growth* 5 no. 1 (2000): 34.

altruistically) guided development efforts varies directly with the donor's level of open-market capitalism.¹⁶ When synthesized, it seems that the United States wants to secure both political and economic interests in Africa. This project seeks to pinpoint US interests within the context of Cameroon and hypothesizes that US interests are mainly political because the United States, compared with France or China, is not one of Cameroon's main trading partners. In 2011, Cameroon was the United States' 107th largest imports supplier and the United States' 128th largest export market.¹⁷

In 2011, the United States was Cameroon's sixth largest imports partner compared to the People's Republic of China, which took the number one spot as Cameroon's largest partner.¹⁸ Cameroon established relations with China on March 26, 1971. The two countries signed a trade agreement in 1972, and China started sending medical teams in 1975.¹⁹ In 1982, China enacted one of its trademark foreign policies, "mutual-benefit cooperation."²⁰ Today, China has become one of Cameroon's preferential development, political, and business partners. There is no one agency responsible for foreign aid, but a Department of Foreign Aid in the Ministry of Commerce is the main coordinator.²¹

In Cameroon, the Chinese government is celebrated for its grandiose infrastructure projects. Major Chinese development in the country took off in 1982 with the construction of the Palais des Congrès. Other well known projects include the Lagdo Dam (1984), the Gyn-Obstetrics and Pediatric Hospital in Yaoundé (2002), and the Palais des Sports (2009).

¹⁶ Peter Blunt, Mark Turner, and Jana Hertz, "The Meaning of Development Assistance," *Public Administration and Development* 31 (2011): 172-87.

¹⁷ "Cameroon," Office of the United States Trade Representative, accessed December 10, 2012, <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/cameroon>.

¹⁸ "Cameroon," CIA World Factbook. However, in his email, Mr. Li reported that China was Cameroon's third largest trading partner only after Nigeria and France in 2011. These discrepancies contribute to the ambiguity of China's development aid allocation figures and foreign relations. Ziliang Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 29, 2012.

¹⁹ Nordtveit, "An emerging donor," 102.

²⁰ "China and Cameroon," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, accessed November 30, 2012, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjw/zjg/fzs/gjlb/2949/t16478.htm>.

²¹ Liz Voeller, "Japanese and Chinese Development in Cameroon" (ISP, Students in International Training: Cameroon, 2006), 14; Nordtveit, "An emerging donor," 99.

Currently, the Chinese government is working with the Cameroonian government to complete a deep-water port in Kribi, two stadiums in Limbe and Bafoussam, and another gyno-obstetric and pediatric hospital in Douala.²²

According to the Chinese Embassy in Yaoundé, during its 41 years of “*flourishing*” cooperation, China has provided development aid “*in the form of humanitarian assistance, assistance without compensation, interest-free loan, low-interest loan, preferential buyer credit and commercial lending.*”²³ The Chinese government also executes smaller development projects, like constructing wells, improving the water supply, and donating anti-malarial and school supplies.²⁴ China’s focus on education in Cameroon has also been well received. In 2007, the Chinese established a Confucius Institute at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC). In 2009, the government built three primary schools and offered Cameroon the most scholarships for Cameroonian students to study in China.²⁵

These examples show that China has donated much to Cameroon. However, it is difficult to gather concrete data. Mr. Ziliang Li, an employee of the Economic and Commercial Bureau of the Chinese Embassy, gave generic answers about China’s efforts in Cameroon. He also directed me to the website of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to learn more about Sino-Cameroonian relations. Last updated in 2011, the website contained information about relations in 2010. China limits access to governmental information even outside of its borders.

A leading development donor, China has earned a relatively positive reputation with recipient country’s governments. In contrast to the Post-Washington Consensus, scholars say China is following the Beijing Consensus. Officially, the Chinese government calls their development strategy the Xiaokang Path, which focuses on the quality of life and “*sufficient*

²² “40^{ème} Anniversaire des Relations Sino-camerounaises,” Chinese Embassy of Cameroon, 2011.

²³ Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 17, 2012.

²⁴ Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 17, 2012.

²⁵ Nordtveit, “An emerging donor,” 102.

prosperity, rather than limitless economic growth.”²⁶ Compared to Western aid, China offers three attractive conditions to developing countries: practicality of aid, win-win cooperation, and non-interference.

Based on the existing literature and the Chinese government’s foreign policy rhetoric, China’s interests in Africa appear mostly economic. China has found a new market for its textile and other consumer goods exports and simultaneously receives oil and minerals.²⁷ Its commercial desires are no different from any Western country’s desires, but what sets China apart is its lack of intervention in recipient countries’ political affairs.²⁸ Furthermore, it attaches no political conditions to its aid other than asking recipient countries not to engage in relations with Taiwan.²⁹ To the Chinese government, aid and economic development go hand in hand as Chinese foreign assistance figures include supporting Chinese businesses in Africa.³⁰ In 2009, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said, “*The focus of our diplomatic work...should be to directly serve the economy.*”³¹ However, with increased interest in the Cameroon-Chad pipeline and a military plane donation to the Ministry of Defense in November 2012, the Chinese government may desire more political influence in Cameroon.

China’s interests in Africa appear economic in nature for the time being, while the United States has dominantly political interests. What Cameroonians think of these development partners remains unclear. Bjørn Nordtveit cites examples of the varying views of Cameroonian politicians towards China, but he does not ask the citizens, the people who could benefit the most from international development aid. This paper will present a portion

²⁶ Nordtveit, “Western and Chinese development discourse,” 160.

²⁷ Isike et al., “The United States Africa Command.”

²⁸ Giles Mohan and Marcus Power, “Africa, China and the ‘new’ economic geography of development,” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 30 no. 1 (2009): 24–28.

²⁹ Sautman and Hairong, “Friends and Interests,” 87.

³⁰ Nordtveit, “An emerging donor,” 101.

³¹ “China’s diplomacy economy,” *Xinhua (news.xinhuanet.com)*, March 7, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/07/content_10961803.htm.

of the opinions of the residents of Yaoundé, Cameroon towards Chinese and American development.

METHODOLOGY

This project was completed over four weeks between November and December, 2012. It was set in Yaoundé, Cameroon because American, Chinese, and Cameroonian governmental organizations are based in the capital. The project aims to measure what the target population, Cameroonian citizens, think of American and Chinese development projects based on a sample population of residents of Yaoundé. Although Cameroon is a culturally diverse state, based on personal observation, many Cameroonians in Yaoundé grew up in other parts of the country. Therefore, the opinions of residents of Yaoundé adequately represent the country as a whole. Additionally, Yaoundé is the country's seat of institutions and hosts a wide array of governmental resources.

In order to understand governmental strategic interests and Cameroonian perceptions, I interviewed American, Chinese, and Cameroonian government institutions and two sectors of the Cameroonian population, which I term the “formally educated” and the “informally educated.” The formally educated are those Cameroonians who have studied at a higher education institution. The informally educated are those Cameroonians who have not studied at a higher education institution but who may or may not be self-informed. I decided to use interviews to collect data because they allow more time for clarifying questions. Since the goal was to understand Cameroonian perceptions, it was necessary to spend time with interviewees so that they would divulge their opinions.

To establish rapport with governmental organizations, I visited or called each organization several times so that the interviewees would be familiar with me. I also brought a letter stating my personal goals to accompany the letter provided by the Academic Director. To reach formally educated Cameroonians, I visited professors' offices and explained my

project. I also asked Cameroonian students for suggestions, and they gave me names of professors willing to talk to students. With informally educated Cameroonians, I built up relationships with the people I interacted with on a daily basis. I explained I was staying in Yaoundé to study Chinese and American development projects. At the end of the conversation, I asked if I could come back another day to ask them about their experiences. This method gave interviewees time to reflect and decide if they would like to participate.

The research questions that guided the research were: How do Chinese and American strategic interests affect the quality of development aid in Cameroon? How do Cameroonians perceive these countries' projects and, by extension, the donor countries? To collect data from the four sample groups – the Cameroonian government, the Chinese and American governments, formally educated Cameroonians, and informally educated Cameroonians, I used four sets of interview questions (for the interview questions in full, see Appendix 1).

Interviews with the Cameroonian government

I planned to interview the American and Caribbean Affairs Department and the Asian Affairs Department of the Ministry of External Relations (MINREX). I completed a formal interview only with the American Affairs Department, but the Asian Affairs Department gave me a booklet on Sino-Cameroonian relations between 1971 and 2011. However, it was produced by the Chinese Embassy. For Cameroonian government officials, I had 13 questions. The first seven were designed to learn more about how the Chinese and American governments work with the Cameroonian government on development projects. The next five were designed to determine what the Cameroonian government thinks are China's and the United States' strategic interests. The last question asked about Cameroon's needs so that the answers could be compared to the answers of the Chinese and American governments.

Interviews with the Chinese and American governments

I planned to interview officials from the Chinese and American embassies. When I called the Chinese Embassy, I was directed to Mr. Ziliang Li who works in the Economic and Commercial Bureau. Because he wanted to answer my questions by email, I tailored the questions. I asked about the relations between China and Cameroon, what kind of development projects China finances, how China knows what Cameroon needs, and who executes the development projects.

At the US Embassy, I interviewed the sole representative of USAID. Eight questions directed this interview. I asked about the kinds of projects USAID implements, what other development work the US government does, how USAID measures effectiveness, its relationship with the Cameroonian government, and whether it considers Cameroon's needs before determining development projects. I also interviewed the Peace Corps. I gathered information on their development goals, which are apolitical.

Interviews with formally educated Cameroonians

I completed interviews with professors, students, and SIT advisors. Seven questions guided these interviews. The main goal was to determine whether these Cameroonians were aware of Chinese and American development projects, what they considered Chinese and American strategic interests, and how, if at all, these interests reduced the quality of development projects. They answered most of the other questions within their responses.

Interviews with informally educated Cameroonians

With informally educated Cameroonians, I introduced my topic and then asked five general questions about their experience with Chinese and American development projects. I asked if they knew of any projects, how they had heard about them, if they had affected their or their families' lives, and about the needs of Cameroon.

After collecting all data, I separated the interviews into their respective groups. I read through each one and coded it for themes that appeared in all interviews. I also noted what

contradictions arose between interviewees' responses and the existing literature. I grouped the responses of similar questions and extracted the themes that emerged from the data. Finally, I used these findings to answer my research questions and hypotheses.

To validate my findings, I cross-checked public documents against officials' words, checked what Chinese, American, and Cameroonian officials said about each other, checked what these officials said against existing scholarly literature, checked governments' interviews against public's interviews, and checked the public's interviews against each other. To make my results as reliable as possible, I reviewed my research questions before each interview and used the same interview questions as a base for each type of interview. I had originally planned to interview government agencies first to gather as much background research as possible and then to move onto formally and informally educated Cameroonians. However, I was unable to schedule interviews with government agencies until later in the project, so I educated myself on current American and Chinese development projects before interviewing the population.

To avoid any ethical concerns, I announced the goal of my research before each interview and asked if I could record the conversation. At the end, I asked if I could use the interviewee's name. All data is stored on my personal laptop, and the names of the individuals who want to remain anonymous are not connected to their interview.

The greatest limiting factor of this project was time. At the beginning, I wanted to focus mainly on US-Cameroonian and Sino-Cameroonian relations. However, I was met with many time-consuming and bureaucratic demands by the Cameroonian government. Furthermore, researching both American and Chinese projects in less than four weeks is a huge undertaking. I believe I would have gathered more information if I had chosen to investigate one country's development efforts. Another limitation was the structure of the interviews. Because everyone is involved in a different area of development, I had to tailor

my interview questions for each respondent. While the questions attempt to measure the same concept, not all interviewees received the same ones.

Despite these limitations, the project uncovered information about US-Cameroonian and Sino-Cameroonian relations that might never have come to light otherwise. Furthermore, the bureaucratic demands forced me to refocus the project more in terms of Cameroonian citizens, who rarely have a voice in development research. Finally, each interview became a conversation that allowed me to consider things that I would have overlooked with my much narrower research questions.

DATA PRESENTATION

The following section presents the data collected from the four interview groups: the Cameroonian government, the Chinese and American governments, formally educated Cameroonians and informally educated Cameroonians. I used the same set of questions for interviewees of the same group. However, based on the flow of the conversation, some interviewees answered my questions before I had asked them, and some questions were not relevant to the interviewee. Thus, the data represents answers to similar questions.

The Cameroonian Government

Within the Cameroonian government, Joseph Nzume, the head of the American Affairs department at the Ministry of External Affairs, was the only official interviewed. When asked what development was, Mr. Nzume did not give a concrete answer. Instead, he did not think it was necessary to define development because “*the same person who is involved in development is the same person who is involved in democracy.*”³² It is difficult to say that governments execute an action solely for development purposes or solely for strategic interests. As a follow-up question, when asked if American interests affect their development efforts, Nzume alluded to the mismatch between what Americans think is useful

³² Nzume (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

for the Cameroonian public and what Cameroonians think. He used the example of political awareness, which Americans deem important but which Cameroonians may view as a push to support opposition parties and unseat President Biya. According to Nzume, the United States works through innumerable channels within the Cameroonian government and opened its embassy in Yaoundé three years before independence because of American missionaries already in Cameroon and the United States' desire to stop French exploitation.

Nzume continued by saying that today the United States' goals are transformative in nature and that Americans do not listen to Cameroonians' needs. While other countries like Brazil, France, and Nigeria participate in joint and mixed commissions with Cameroon, the Americans "*don't have such a mechanism...America only tells you, 'I want to give you this.' And on the surface, it sounds as though he is really giving you. But when you study it well, in fact, in giving you, he wants to transform you.*"³³ The American government will not give Cameroon everything it wants. For example, the United States has criticized the state of Cameroon's prisons. To protect its image, the United States will not build prisons but instead only train guards. Ultimately, Nzume conceded that all powers give to dominate, including the Chinese and French. In its transformative nature, the American government insists on political conditionalities. For example, after the American government promises to build a road, they say, "*For us to fix that road, you promised to change the political system.*"³⁴ Although the American government is more concerned with human dignity than the Chinese, it does not recognize that Cameroon cannot evolve to attain the level of respect for human rights at the rate that the United States demands.

The American Government

After this one-sided but informative interview with the American Affairs Bureau of MINREX, I focused on my interviews with the American and Chinese governments. Within

³³ Nzume (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

³⁴ Nzume (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

the US government, I interviewed Aisatou Ngöng, a Cameroonian who received her undergraduate degree in the United States and who is the only USAID representative in Cameroon. Ngöng explained that no mission directs USAID's work in Cameroon. When asked what development projects it carries out, she said that USAID currently works on HIV/AIDS prevention with at-risk populations, pharmaceutical providers, orphans, and the Global Fund. There used to be a good governance program, but it was cancelled after the 2012 parliamentary elections were postponed. Each branch of the US government in Cameroon (the DoD, DoS, CDC, USAID, and Peace Corps) seems to work at one point or another with all of Cameroon's ministries. Ngöng listed the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

To evaluate their projects, USAID hires an external evaluation team if the project lasts more than three years. According to Ngöng, in terms of its HIV/AIDS work, USAID has been successful. They have reached 22,000 people through six community drop-in centers in Yaoundé, Douala, Bertoua, Garoua, Bamenda, and Kribi. Although USAID constitutes only part of US governmental development efforts, Ngöng said, "*The United States is not doing major infrastructure development.*"³⁵ Infrastructure is one of Cameroon's main priorities, but donors like the United States execute mainly qualitative, "touchy-feely" development projects. According to Ngöng, the United States understands Cameroon's needs because it initiates studies and negotiations and meets with civil society representatives. When asked if US strategic interests affect development projects, she said that USAID employees' work is limited to certain categories of development because of US government missions.

The second US development agency interview was with James Beighle, the Director of Programming and Training (DPT) of Peace Corps Cameroon and a longtime resident of the country. From the beginning, most of my interview questions were not relevant because

³⁵ Ngöng, (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

Beighle explained the Peace Corps is completely apolitical. Instead, Beighle commented on the inherently political nature of the US Embassy. While the Embassy executes “get out the vote” campaigns, the Peace Corps focuses on “*education that is at the bottom level of all that is really good and positive without being explicit about politics.*”³⁶ According to Beighle, the Peace Corps was started to expose Americans to other cultures and because Americans believe they can make a difference in the world. Specifically, the Peace Corps remains apolitical to avoid suspicion and to continue to operate within countries that need volunteers. When asked if this suspicion of the Peace Corps comes from its connection to the Embassy, Beighle replied that it is likely because Americans are often viewed as “*sowing seeds of change and revolution.*”³⁷ For the most part, the Peace Corps and the US Embassy work well together. However, Beighle said that the Peace Corps tries to distance itself from DoD projects because the lines quickly become blurred within the communities where the Peace Corps works to build trust. The DoD has good intentions, but the organization focuses on macro-level projects and has not had as much development experience as the Peace Corps.

According to Beighle, Cameroonians in Yaoundé might not even be aware of Peace Corps efforts because the organization is based in smaller towns which have traditionally more need and more security. The Peace Corps works on a grassroots level and leaves it to the DoD and to the US Embassy to change Cameroon’s government.

The Chinese Government

Compared to the Peace Corps, the Chinese government in Cameroon has taken a completely different approach to development. I tailored my questions for Mr. Li, my contact in the Economic and Commercial Bureau of the Chinese Embassy, because he preferred to answer via email. Most of the questions received three or four sentence responses. According to Li, Sino-Cameroonian foreign relations are flourishing with annual diplomatic exchanges.

³⁶ James Beighle (US Peace Corps Cameroon Director of Programming and Training), in discussion with author, November 28, 2012.

³⁷ Beighle, (US Peace Corps DPT), in discussion with author, November 28, 2012.

Chinese development projects are meant to improve the “*livelihood and development conditions for Cameroon.*”³⁸ The Chinese government determines what projects to finance based on requests from Cameroon and works with a large number of ministries. Li asserted, “*China and Cameroon execute together the assistance projects in friendly consultations.*”³⁹

When asked how the Chinese government evaluates the effectiveness of development projects, Li responded that China and Cameroon hold a mixed trade and economic committee every three years to discuss the success of bilateral trade and economic cooperation and that Cameroon participates in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. He also said that only Cameroonians can say whether these projects have improved the quality of life. Relations with Cameroon are win-win for both countries because Cameroon needs “*capitals, technologies, industrial products, and raw materials export market,*” while China needs to “*import raw materials, export industrial products, and transfer capitals and manufacturing technologies.*”⁴⁰ The Economic and Commercial Bureau links trade and development by fighting against poverty, encouraging economic growth (although it was not clear whether this was for Cameroonians or for Chinese), and facilitating the establishment of Chinese businesses in Cameroon.

The publication the Asiatic Affairs bureau of MINREX gave me, entitled “40^{eme} Anniversaire des Relations Sino-camerounaises” and produced by the Chinese Embassy, also provided insight into the Chinese government’s development strategy. In an interview with Xue Jinwei, the Chinese ambassador to China, he emphasized the increased commercial exchanges between the two countries. Furthermore, he added, “*La coopération sino-camerounaise mutuellement avantageuse s’étend dans tous les domaines,*” including infrastructure, agriculture, energy, telecommunications, education, culture, health, sciences,

³⁸ Ziliang Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 17, 2012.

³⁹ Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 17, 2012.

⁴⁰ Li (Economic and Commercial Bureau, Chinese Embassy), email correspondence, November 17, 2012.

technology, information, and youth.⁴¹ The three political principals that China has applied to Cameroon are equality, mutual benefits, and practicality of aid “*destinée aux secteurs liés au bien-être du peuple camerounais...*”⁴² In the 42 page document, 20 pages were dedicated to Chinese accomplishments in Cameroon, including the construction of the Palais des Sports, partnering with Camwater to complete a water supply project in Douala, the construction of a deep-water port in Kribi, and six highways projects currently underway.

Formally Educated Cameroonians

I completed six interviews with formally educated Cameroonians. The interviewees were: Professor Jean-Emmanuel Pondi, a political science and international relations professor at IRIC; Professor Armand Leka, a sociology professor at the University of Yaoundé I; Mr. Moussa Njoya, a political analyst with the Institut pour la Gouvernance en Afrique Centrale; an anonymous professor and an anonymous student at L'école des postes et des communications; Claude Nzouer, a sociology student at the University of Yaoundé I; and Mr. David Tiomajou, the Peace Corps Training Manager.

The first question asked, “What American and Chinese development projects can you name?” The following table presents the responses.

⁴¹ “Sino-Cameroonian cooperation extends to every domain.” “40^{eme} Anniversaire des Relations Sino-camerounaises,” Chinese Embassy of Cameroon, 2011.

⁴² ...practicality of aid for sectors connected to the well-being of the Cameroonian people.” “40^{eme} Anniversaire,” Chinese Embassy.

Table 1. Formally Educated Cameroonians' Awareness of Development Projects

	American Projects	Chinese Projects
Professor Pondi	Peace Corps, Special Self-Help Fund	Dams, Palais des Congrès, Palais des Sports
Professor Leka	<i>“Les Américains, comme un sujet, je ne me suis pas beaucoup intéressé.”</i> ⁴³	Deep-water ports, Palais des Congrès, Palais des Sports
Mr. Njoya	USAID, National Democratic Institute, Freedom House	Ports, Palais des Sports, Palais des Congrès, Lagdo Dam, roads
Anonymous	Small projects in villages	Grandiose projects
Mr. Nzouer	Roads, health centers, schools, hospitals	Lagdo Dam, Palais des Congrès, deep-water port in Kribi, Palais des Sports, dams
Mr. Tiomajou	Peace Corps	Palais des Congrès, schools

From the data, it appears that formally educated Cameroonians are aware of a wide range of development projects. There was no common thread among American projects, but every interviewee mentioned large Chinese infrastructural projects.

Pondi, Leka, and Nzouer answered the question, “Do these governments’ development projects target Cameroon’s poorest population?” The first two said development projects are a tool of governments and only help an elite part of society. Nzouer said that China funds development projects that align with the aspirations of Cameroon. All six respondents alluded to the economic interests of China in Cameroon. They also responded that although Chinese political interests are unclear today, it is likely that in the future China will demand compensation for the loans and gifts it has afforded Cameroon. The Chinese government flatters Cameroon today so that it can influence Cameroon tomorrow.

No general consensus emerged about American interests, although all responses alluded to political interests. One interviewee mentioned the American desire for world stability, one mentioned good governance, and two mentioned securing Cameroonian oil and a military base of operations in Central Africa. Every interviewee mentioned the

⁴³ “I am not very interested in the Americans as a subject.” Armand Leka, (Sociology professor at the University of Yaoundé I), in discussion with author, November 15, 2012.

transformative nature of American interests. The US government executes development projects to capture the hearts and minds of the recipient population. However, Pondi, who studied at Johns-Hopkins University in the United States, recognized the normalcy of strategic interests in foreign relations, including development work.

Another relevant question explored perceptions of the United States' and China's awareness of Cameroonian needs. Njoya said the United States in particular does not understand Africa because it has never had a presence here, and Tiomajou responded that grand organizations engage only in "podium development," or development projects that raise the opinion of the government but only benefit an elite few. Nzouer initially said that both governments ask Cameroon about its needs but later admitted that the United States only executes projects of their own desire. Leka said that governments understand needs if they take the time to study the recipient culture, which does not happen often. Pondi asserted that China understands Cameroon's needs because it was in the same situation very recently.

Three interviewees were asked directly if strategic interests affect the quality of development projects, but there was no consensus. Two respondents repeated their perceptions of the United States' and China's strategies – that the United States tries to influence the recipient government and culture and that China is interested in economic resources. Leka said that in theory interests do not affect quality. However, interests influence a donor government's priorities, which are to apply its strategies of international marketing, and do not always align with the recipient country's or recipient population's priorities.

Finally, the interviewees were asked to describe Cameroon's developmental needs in order to cross-check their criticism or praise of the United States and China. Leka mentioned that Cameroonians need prosperity and democracy, i.e. a good standard of living and a freer political environment. Pondi said that Cameroon needs to strengthen its own base by providing food, housing, and basic infrastructure, which will enable it to work with Africa as

a whole. Njoya also mentioned infrastructure and technology. The anonymous professor mentioned Cameroon’s business environment, which deters investors. Nzouer did not name concrete things but said that Cameroonians need to direct their own development.

Informally Educated Cameroonians

I interviewed eight informally educated Cameroonians: Julius Munah, a taxi driver; Faustin Happi, a young man who works for a travel agency; a tailor; two security guards who answered together as they seemed more comfortable that way; a woman who works in the informal sector; two local supermarket employees; and a teacher.

The first question recorded whether they were familiar with any American or Chinese development projects. The following table summarizes their responses.

Table 2. Informally Educated Cameroonians’ Awareness of Development Projects

	American Projects	Chinese Projects
Mr. Munah	Special Self-Help Fund, jobs for security guards, US lottery system for visas	Palais des Sports, roads, sponsor orphans, health clinics in Yaoundé, Limbe, Bafoussam, Bamenda, and Buea
Mr. Happi	Scholarships to study in the US, lottery system for visas, American cultural schools	Fabrication of vehicles, schools, factory
Tailor	Buildings, employ gardeners, chauffeurs, guards, schools, Peace Corps	Dam at Lom Pagnar, new CNPS building in Yaoundé, Palais des Congrès
Security guards	Peace Corps (but unsure how it works)	Roads, schools, hospitals
Informal sector	None	None
Supermarket employee A	Work with the poorest sectors	Well-publicized projects
Supermarket employee B	AGOA, democracy consultations	Infrastructure, agriculture, Lom Pagnar dam, sell Chinese cars, donate airplanes
Teacher	None	None

Like the formally educated Cameroonians, the informally educated Cameroonians named large, infrastructural Chinese projects. Only the tailor mentioned by name any of the American developmental organizations; the security guards mentioned the Peace Corps after

being prompted and admitted that they were unfamiliar with how it works. The woman in the informal sector attributed her unawareness any projects to the fact that she works from 6am to 10pm and has no time to watch television which is how most people she knows receive their information. The security guards attested that they receive information from television and from newspapers. The two supermarket employees also have access to newspapers at work. Finally, the tailor has a television in her house.

No American or Chinese development project had personally affected any interviewees or their families. Each person had a slightly different perspective of the Chinese and American governments. It was difficult to separate opinions of the Chinese government from Chinese immigrants. The tailor lambasted the Chinese government and said that it purposefully hides its technology and that China has not built any schools in Cameroon. Furthermore, with regards to infrastructural projects like the Palais des Congrès, she said, “*Ce n’est pas un don qu’ils font – ce n’est pas gratuit.*”⁴⁴ She, supermarket employee A, and Happi do not believe the Americans execute a lot of efforts on the ground in Cameroon. Both supermarket employees were suspicious of the Chinese government’s efforts, whereas the security guards thought that China is in Cameroon to aid Cameroonians.

When asked about Cameroon’s developmental needs, two respondents said first and foremost that the government has to change. No one can find any work because government officials only give jobs to their families. The security guards said that Cameroon needs water, schools, and roads. The tailor said, “*Nous avons besoin de soutien et pas seulement d’argent,*”⁴⁵ and thought Cameroonians needed help finding opportunities.

Each interviewee contributed a different perspective to the research. At the same time, many of their frustrations were the same and can be grouped into broader generalizations about American and Chinese development efforts and perceptions in Cameroon.

⁴⁴ “It’s not a donation they give – it’s not free.” Interview with tailor, November 19, 2012.

⁴⁵ “We need support and not only money.” Interview with tailor, November 19, 2012.

EMERGING THEMES

Several pertinent themes emerged from the data and can be grouped by research question and furthermore by country, the United States or China.

The United States: Giving “Tablecloths without Tables”

The first group is the effect of American strategic interests on Cameroonian development. After analyzing the responses from Cameroonians and from government organizations, three themes pertinent to this research appeared: the American government either does not understand or does not respond to Cameroon’s needs, its political rhetoric is contradictory, and it does not execute infrastructural projects as development aid in Cameroon.

First, the Cameroonians interviewed agreed that the American government, specifically the US Embassy, donates to Cameroon without asking what Cameroon wants. The head of the American Affairs Bureau said, *“If I give you a table cover when you don’t have a table, it is wrong. Give the needy what the needy needs...The Americans don’t ask you what you want. We have tablecloths without tables.”*⁴⁶ Professor Leka supported this argument by describing foreign organizations that construct shower houses with individual stalls without first studying the culture. In reality, no one in the village will use these shower houses because showering is communal in certain cultures.⁴⁷

Even the representatives of the Peace Corps, which reports to the Embassy, were skeptical of what its partners – the DoS, DoD, CDC, and USAID – do. Tiomajou described the Peace Corps as the *“humanitarian face of America. USAID is the ugly face, the gendarmes, the straitjacket.”*⁴⁸ Based on Cameroonians’ lack of knowledge of American development projects or their disdain for these projects in Cameroon, it would appear that America’s development is divorced from the needs of Cameroonians. Njoya, Tiomajou, and

⁴⁶ Nzume (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

⁴⁷ Leka, (Sociology professor), in discussion with author, November 15, 2012.

⁴⁸ David Tiomajou, (US Peace Corps Training Manager), in discussion with author, December 1, 2012.

the tailor mentioned that Cameroon is hardly even on the United States' radar and that France is still largely in charge of Cameroon.

While the US Embassy received criticism, the Cameroonians interviewed had positive feedback about the Peace Corps but recognized that its volunteers only work in small villages. While their work is deep, it is not broad.⁴⁹ It profoundly impacts the lives of villagers, but it is not meant to transform Cameroon's political or economic environment. In fact, Peace Corps is completely apolitical by nature.⁵⁰ This aspect may contribute to the Peace Corps's success, as the second emergent theme was the dubious nature of American politics. Two interviewees mentioned America's love for war, and, from personal observation, when Cameroonians meet Americans they ask why Americans fight so many wars. America's democratic rhetoric does not match up with its actions in Cameroon. Ngöng of USAID and Tiomajou mentioned the close of USAID after Cameroon's 1992 elections. However, USAID reopened under same president – what message does that send to Cameroonians about America's commitment to democracy? Furthermore, as the United States negotiated with Paul Biya's government, it is unclear who USAID serves, the administration or the citizens.

When compared to China, it appears that the United States is not giving Cameroon what it wants. Every formally educated Cameroonian interviewed who mentioned the United States said it works on the ground but at the grassroots level. The United States is not involved in large-scale infrastructural projects. Ngöng confirmed this when she said that the United States government engages in more “touchy-feely” projects.⁵¹ Based on the responses from all groups, Cameroonians are interested in infrastructure whereas the American government has its own strategy for improving Cameroonian lives. According to Beighle, “[Americans] hate corruption, they hate dictatorships. That's not where we come from, we

⁴⁹ Tiomajou, (US Peace Corps Training Manager), in discussion with author, December 1, 2012.

⁵⁰ Beighle, (US Peace Corps DPT), in discussion with author, November 28, 2012.

⁵¹ Ngöng, (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

don't accept that."⁵² The American government has its own idea of development which relates to its desired international image. The American government has criticized the state of Cameroon's prisons but refuses to help build new ones.⁵³ Perhaps its desire for a positive international image dictates USAID's involvement in HIV/AIDS prevention.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ambiguous: Perceptions of the United States

Although several distinct themes emerged about America's development strategy, the Cameroonian perceptions of the United States were more diverse. First, it is necessary to note that personal experiences influenced Cameroonians' perceptions of both donors. For example, Pondi, a Johns-Hopkins University graduate, asserted that the United States has a very good reputation in Cameroon. The tailor in Bastos said that she used to make clothes for a former Peace Corps director, which helped feed her family. Second, whether an interviewee had a positive or negative opinion of the United States, all interviewees acknowledged that the United States does not publicize its efforts or is old news in Cameroon. Nzouer said, "*Effectivement, dans l'information concernant les États-Unis et la Chine, il y a une priorité. Parce que depuis un dernier an, on a constaté, ce n'est plus les États-Unis.*"⁵⁴ In Cameroon, American development is second fiddle to China's efforts.

Five interviewees reported positive opinions of the United States vis-à-vis its development efforts. Pondi, Nzouer, and Tiomajou mentioned that the United States' governmental system is a role model for Cameroon. Cameroonians admire America's development history: how the country enjoys smooth transitions of power and a representative democracy. In a newspaper article entitled "*Obama peut contribuer à faire supprimer la présidence à vie,*" the author writes that Cameroonians are optimistic that the

⁵² Beighle, (US Peace Corps DPT), in discussion with author, December 1, 2012.

⁵³ Nzume, (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

⁵⁴ "Effectively, in the news concerning the United States and China, there is a priority. A year ago, one noticed that it is no longer the United States." Claude Nzouer, (University of Yaoundé I student), in discussion with author, November 21, 2012.

United States can pressure the Cameroonian government to change.⁵⁵ The other interviewees, while they also had criticisms, recognized that American officials attempt to integrate into Cameroonian culture, especially when compared to Chinese officials, by employing Cameroonian guards, gardeners, and chauffeurs.

On the other hand, one of the most unsettling criticisms of the United States was its tendency to impose transformational conditions on the Cameroonian population. Three interviewees specifically mentioned that the United States demands that Cameroon change its political environment or its definition of human rights. Although many Americans accept homosexuality, it does not fit into Cameroon's culture. Forcing the government to jump through hoops in order to receive development aid not only detracts from citizens' needs but also angers the recipient country. The anonymous professor asserted this is why America experiences terrorist attacks.⁵⁶

Overall, Cameroonians are unaware of the majority of US developmental efforts. Some citizens recognize the most famous projects, but it is difficult for the people who could benefit most from these development projects to access their services if they cannot even access general news information. Furthermore, American efforts in Cameroon have the potential to backfire against the American strategy of "winning the hearts and minds" of the people.⁵⁷

China: Friend or Foe?

When the interviews were analyzed, three major themes appeared about China's interests and its development projects: China donates visible infrastructural projects, its target population and intentions are unclear, and it does not impose political conditionalities. Based on the projects that interviewees named, the most obvious Chinese development has occurred

⁵⁵ Augustin Fongang, "Retour annoncé de USAID," *Cameroon-Tribune*, April 26, 2012.

⁵⁶ Interview with professor at L'école des postes et des telecommunications, November 20, 2012.

⁵⁷ Stephen A. Emerson, "The Battle for Africa's Hearts and Minds," *World Policy Journal* 25 no. 4 (2008): 53-62.

in the realm of infrastructure – dams, buildings, and ports. According to Pondi, “[The Chinese government] tend[s] to select projects that people can see right away, can feel right away.”⁵⁸ He compared this strategy to what Cameroonians are used to – the bureaucratic and long-term strategies of European powers. With Chinese projects like the Palais des Sports, all Cameroonians can benefit by watching the Lions, Cameroon’s soccer team. Even the security guards, who were unable to name specific projects, said, “*Ces projets sont pour la réalisation dans notre pays.*”⁵⁹ The Chinese government’s projects have won over many Cameroonians.

Although the Cameroonian population may appreciate the Palais des Congrès, which allows their heads of state to greet other country leaders in style, the benefits of this building seem limited mostly to Cameroon’s elite. In November 2012, the Chinese government started construction on a car factory in Kribi.⁶⁰ While this might please the portion of the population looking to purchase a car, I overheard one Cameroonian say, “*La maman au Nord-Ouest n’a pas besoin d’une voiture.*”⁶¹ To this young woman, new cars are not the solution to Cameroon’s development needs. In general, it is unclear what Cameroon’s most pressing development needs are. The younger interviewees fear the country’s staggering unemployment rate, while parents are concerned with staggering medical costs for their families.

Those interviewed also think China’s intentions in Cameroon are unclear. Two formally educated interviewees mentioned their fear of being indebted to China in the future, and one mentioned that Cameroonians have not considered the consequences of receiving gifts and loans from a rising power. While all interviewees agreed that China wants resources to fuel its growth, several wondered what it really wants from Cameroon and if it can be

⁵⁸ Jean-Emmanuel Pondi (Political science professor at IRIC), in discussion with author, November 15, 2012.

⁵⁹ “These projects are for the achievements of our country.” Interview with security guards, November 19, 2012.

⁶⁰ “Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon,” Republic of Cameroon, accessed December 9, 2012, http://www.prc.cm/index_en.php?link=le_mag/lecture_mag_search_en&id=797&lang=en&pos=2.

⁶¹ “Mothers in the Northwest do not need a car.” Personal observation, November 9, 2012.

trusted. In contrast, Cameroonians are aware that the American government hopes to install a functional democracy in Cameroon.

Finally, the Chinese government does not attach political conditions to its development aid. Those interviewed admitted it was a welcome change to the American government's strategy. However, two interviewees recognized that the Chinese government is not concerned with human dignity.⁶² Therefore, it may send medical teams to Cameroon or invite Cameroonian students to China, but it has no interest in changing Cameroon's current political environment. Cameroonians appear to appreciate China's respect for their sovereignty, but, based on personal observation, many Cameroonians feel the government needs to change in order for their country to develop.

Winning Hearts and Pockets: Perceptions of China

Cameroonian interviewees can be separated into two camps: those who accept Cameroon's foreign relations with China and those who are suspicious. The four youngest interviewees, Nzouer, Happi, and the security guards, had positive outlooks on Chinese involvement in Cameroon. Nzouer asserted, "*Quand les Chinois font le développement au Cameroun, on leur dit ce qu'on veut. C'est ce qu'on appelle le développement participatif. Ils participent avec nous à la réalisation du projet.*"⁶³ This younger generation also named large-scale Chinese infrastructural projects, meant to be visible to the public. Perhaps these donations have succeeded in wooing younger generations who think visible change is necessary for Cameroon's development.

On the other hand, Chinese development efforts have not completely seduced the older generation. Despite the Chinese government's non-interference policy and its dedication to giving Cameroon the things the Cameroonian government asks for, its target

⁶² Nzouer (University of Yaoundé I student), in discussion with author, November 21, 2012; Interview with supermarket employee B, November 26, 2012.

⁶³ "When the Chinese do development work in Cameroon, one says to them what one wants. This is what one calls participatory development. They participate with us to accomplish a project." Nzouer (University of Yaoundé I student), in discussion with author, November 21, 2012.

population and intentions for the future are unclear. Munah reported good treatment at a Chinese hospital in Limbe, but Tiomajou was skeptical about the number of Cameroonians who can afford to visit Chinese hospitals. There was not enough time in this study to observe who uses Chinese development projects. However, the author hypothesizes that Cameroonians who benefit from the Chinese government's large-scale infrastructure projects are within the upper echelons of income and education because Cameroon's poor have no time or money to attend soccer games at the Palais des Sports.

All formally educated interviewees of the older population and both supermarket employees mentioned the fear of being controlled by China in the future. These interviewees have seen how other foreign governments have interacted with Cameroon. While China may have adopted a different strategy with Cameroon, it has a long-term plan and does not divulge its strategy to the rest of the world.⁶⁴ A journalist expressed the same sentiment in an article about China's recent airplane donations. In *La Nouvelle Expression*, David Nouwou reported that the Cameroonian government allotted 61 billion F CFA for the purchase of two Chinese airplanes which should only cost six billion F CFA each.⁶⁵ The relationship between Cameroon and China is ambiguous, and the two countries may not have all citizens' best interests in mind.

Finally, several of the Cameroonian interviewees criticized the actions of Chinese immigrants along with those of the government. For example, the tailor was most enraged over the Chinese buying land and using pesticides on Cameroonian soil. The first supermarket employee mentioned that Chinese immigrants do not make any efforts to integrate into Cameroonian culture. While these comments do not reflect China's

⁶⁴ Pondi (Professor at IRIC), in discussion with author, November 15, 2012; Tiomajou (US Peace Corps Training Manager), in discussion with author, December 1, 2012.

⁶⁵ David Nouwou, "Incertitudes et controverse autour des avions chinois," *La Nouvelle Expression*, November 9, 2012.

development, Cameroonians' perceptions of Chinese immigrants may affect how they accept Chinese efforts in Cameroon.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the data gathered, it appears that in Cameroon, bilateral aid is a tool of foreign policy, a relationship defined by personal interests. In regards to the question of whether American and Chinese strategic interests affect the quality of development aid, both powers certainly have objectives in Cameroon that distract them from the population who could benefit most from development aid. The United States and China operate with different motives and through different strategies, but it is difficult to find Cameroonians who have benefited directly from their development projects.

Because of its current hegemonic status, the United States is blind to the needs and desires of developing countries. It has enjoyed prosperity and militaristic dominance for such a long time that it cannot fathom any other way for countries like Cameroon to develop other than to follow in the footsteps of US liberal democracy and liberal economics.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the United States is most interested in domestic security, which it has attempted to attain by eradicating extremist groups or leaders from the rest of the world.⁶⁷ Because US citizens enjoy relative peace and prosperity, the United States does not realize when it steps on others' toes, including in its developmental efforts in Cameroon.

China has adopted a different foreign relations policy. During its rapid economic growth, China has maintained friendly partnerships with many other developing countries. However, these relationships are almost purely government-to-government. In fact, no Chinese nongovernmental organizations exist.⁶⁸ The Chinese government has given the Cameroonian government what it wants, but, from personal observation, it is obvious that the Cameroonian government does not care or listen to what its people desire. Therefore, the

⁶⁶ Nzume (American and Caribbean Affairs Department), in discussion with author, November 19, 2012.

⁶⁷ Pondi (Professor at IRIC), in discussion with author, November 15, 2012.

⁶⁸ Voeller, "Japanese and Chinese Development in Cameroon," 18; Nordtveit, "An emerging donor," 102.

Chinese government's economic interests affect the quality of the development aid that Cameroonians need.

Bilateral aid has failed as an effective development tool in Cameroon because it has not reached the sectors of society who could benefit most from foreign aid. The United States (with the exception of the Peace Corps) and China do not donate to Cameroon out of humanitarian interests. However, it is impossible to say that development aid has done nothing in Cameroon. The Lagdo Dam brings both electricity and hope to people looking for changes to occur in their country, and USAID's HIV/AIDS prevention programs have reached over 22,000 Cameroonians.⁶⁹

In relation to what Cameroonians think of foreign development projects and their donors, Cameroonians' opinions are divided. The United States' political and cultural influence in Cameroon is undeniable, and many view the United States as a good role model. However, when compared to China, its efforts are not visible, which Cameroonians may interpret as disinterest. Furthermore, the United States' efforts to transform Cameroon into a representative democracy have stirred anti-American sentiments in Cameroon's traditional and more conservative culture. In contrast, the Chinese government has given Cameroonians many things from which many citizens can benefit, including dams, ports, and roads. However, Cameroonians are beginning to realize that a true friend would also transfer the necessary technology to be able to build roads by themselves.

While this project did not gather enough data to formally reject the first null hypothesis, there is significant support for the first alternative hypothesis that the political and economic strategic interests of the United States and China, respectively, reduce the potential impact that these governments' development projects could have in Cameroon. When USAID

⁶⁹ Pondi (Professor at IRIC), in discussion with author November 15, 2012; Ngöng (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

closed its doors in 1994, the Cameroonian government lost important US funding.⁷⁰ The United States' commitment to democracy is admirable, but in trying to influence the Cameroonian government, the United States turned its back on Cameroonian citizens unable to unseat a corrupt president. The Peace Corps is the United States' humanitarian form of development aid, but their success comes from their apolitical nature. According to the Cameroonians interviewed, China has strengthened its relationship with Cameroon for economic resources. While China calls this a win-win strategy, it is unclear what Cameroon will win in the future.

The second hypothesis stated that the more aware Cameroonian citizens are of Chinese and American development projects, the more successful the projects have been. There is not enough data to reject the null hypothesis because the interviewee's awareness of projects did not correlate with his access to these projects. For example, the tailor knew of many development projects but said she was unable to leave her young son at home during the day to find these projects. Additionally, the Peace Corps's success in villages does not reach people in Yaoundé, but it has existed without interruption in Cameroon since 1962.⁷¹

When analyzed in the context of existing literature, this research supports the concept of US political interests in terms of democracy promotion, securing oil, and establishing a Central African military base. However, the literature leaves out the success of the Peace Corps's apolitical strategy and the danger of transformative development strategies in Cameroon.

This research also supports Chinese economic interests and its strong friendship with other developing countries. The Chinese government has won the hearts and minds of many recipient citizens by supporting the bank account of the Cameroonian government. It

⁷⁰ Ngöng (Program Management Specialist, USAID), in discussion with author, November 26, 2012.

⁷¹ Beighle, "US Peace Corps Director of Programming and Training" (lecture, SIT, Yaoundé, Cameroon, October 17, 2012).

enhances its publicity by providing loans and, later, by relieving the debt.⁷² What scholars have not yet studied is Cameroonians' growing skepticism of Chinese aid.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned above, the goal of this research was to determine the effects of US and Chinese strategic interests on the quality of development aid in Cameroon. The project sought to include the necessary but often forgotten voices of Cameroonian citizens. After four weeks of interviews with Cameroonian, American, and Chinese governmental organizations and with formally and informally educated Cameroonians, this study argues that US and Chinese bilateral aid does not deliver quality development projects to the sector of the population who could benefit most. The United States and China use Cameroon for political and economic interests, respectively. However, the United States' saving grace is the Peace Corps, and China's infrastructural projects may provide indirect benefits to Cameroonians.

If foreign relations between Cameroon and the United States and China continue in this fashion, there are implications for both the donor and recipient countries. It is undeniable that Cameroon has appreciated China's donations. At the same time, as Professor Leka pointed out, when one person extends his hand to give a gift, the hand of the person who receives the gift is always below that of the donor. China can continue to give to Cameroon, but it cannot be considered a win-win situation if Cameroon never learns how to manufacture its own cars or fix its own roads. China did not become an economic powerhouse because it has goods but rather because it makes goods. In order to develop, several Cameroonians in this study indicated the necessity of technology transfers.

The United States and China are not completely to blame for inefficient or misdirected development aid. Cameroon's government is also partly at fault because it is not responsible to its constituents. Cameroonian government officials will never refuse airplane

⁷² Ngairé Woods, "Whose aid? Whose influence? China, emerging donors and the silent revolution in development assistance," *International Affairs* 84 no. 6 (2008): 1209.

donations, sports stadiums, or HIV/AIDS prevention funding, especially if they involve a banquet at the Hilton in downtown Yaoundé. It is possible that Cameroon will see growth in the next few years thanks to the United States' and China's donations. However, it will be difficult under Cameroon's current corrupt administration where government officials only give jobs to their family members.⁷³

This study reports the Cameroonian perception of American and Chinese development efforts in Cameroon. It relies on information from only a handful of government officials and from many Cameroonians found in Bastos, a neighborhood not representative of the city as a whole. Furthermore, four weeks is an insufficient amount of time to contact governmental organizations and to conduct necessary follow-up interviews with all interviewees. Regardless, this project presents the critical voice of a population often overlooked.

In the future, other researchers could compile a more complete list of Chinese and American development projects and visit each one. Observing and interviewing people who use these projects would provide a better comprehension of Cameroonian perceptions. Secondly, it would be useful to talk to more governmental organizations to understand the process of bilateral aid transfers. Finally, other researchers could distribute surveys to obtain quantitative data on Cameroonians' awareness of American and Chinese development projects. More country-specific research is needed to avoid giving tablecloths without tables or feeding Cameroonians without teaching them how to fish.

⁷³ Julius Munah (taxi driver), in discussion with author, November 13, 2012; Faustin Happi (travel agency employee), in discussion with author, November 13, 2012.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

A. For the Cameroonian government:

1. Comment est-ce que le gouvernement américain/chinois définit le développement ?
2. Qui détermine les projets dont la population a besoin ?
3. Quels sont les types de projets développementaux est-ce que le gouvernement chinois/américain finance ?
4. Qui exécute ces projets?
5. Qui est-ce qui soumet une demande pour l'aide développementale du gouvernement chinois et du gouvernement américain ?
6. Qui reçoit les subventions ou les dons ?
7. Qui évalue la réussite de ces projets ?

8. Quelles sont les différences entre les projets du gouvernement chinois et celles du gouvernement américain ?
9. Quelles sont les difficultés que vous rencontrez en travaillant avec chaque gouvernement ?
10. Quels sont les buts stratégiques des Etats-Unis/de la Chine par rapport à leurs/ses relations extérieures avec le Cameroun ?
 - a. Quelles sont les stipulations que ces gouvernements imposent quand ils donnent l'aide développementale ?
11. Quand est-ce que les relations extérieures avec les Etats-Unis/avec la Chine ont commencé ?
12. Comment est-ce que ces buts stratégiques affectent l'aide développementale ?

13. De quels types de projets développementaux est-ce que le Cameroun a besoin ?

B. For American/Chinese embassies/organizations:

1. Décrivez la définition du développement. (What is the definition of development?)
2. Le gouvernement américain/chinois finance quels types de projets développementaux ? (What sorts of projects does the Chinese/US government finance?)
3. Comment est-ce que le gouvernement décide de financer un projet ? (How does the government decide to finance a project?)
4. Avec qui dans le gouvernement camerounais est-ce que vous travaillez? (Who do you work with in the Cameroonian government?)
5. Qui exécute ces projets? (Who implements these projects?)
6. Comment est-ce que vous évaluez le succès ou l'efficacité de ces projets ? (How do you measure the effectiveness of these projects?)
 - a. Quels sont les problèmes ? Les solutions? (What problems have you encountered? Their solutions?)
7. Quel est l'impact de l'aide développementale pour le Cameroun? (What effect has development aid had on Cameroon?)
8. Quel est l'importance stratégique d'avoir les relations extérieures avec le Cameroun ? (What is the strategic importance of working with Cameroon?)

C. Formally educated Cameroonians:

1. Quels projets développementaux chinois ou américains est-ce que vous pouvez identifier ?
2. Ces projets aident quelle partie de la société au Cameroun ?
 - a. Cette partie représente les gens avec les besoins les plus graves ?
3. A votre avis, avant que la Chine/les Etats-Unis fassent un don, ils connaissent bien les besoins des Camerounais ?
4. Quels sont les buts stratégiques de la Chine/des Etats-Unis pour faire des dons au Cameroun ?
 - a. Ils sont politiques ? Economiques ? Pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a une ambassade américaine/chinoise au Cameroun ?
5. Comment est-ce que ces buts stratégiques affectent la qualité ou l'efficacité des projets développementaux ?
6. Qu'est-ce que vous pensez des relations entre le Cameroun et les Etats-Unis/la Chine ?
7. Quels sont les avantages de l'aide internationale pour les Camerounais ? L'aide internationale est nécessaire pour le Cameroun ?

D. Informally educated Cameroonians:

1. Connaissez-vous des projets développementaux qui sont financés par le gouvernement américain ou par le gouvernement chinois ? (Do you know of any development projects financed by Chinese or American governments?)
2. Comment est-ce que vous avez entendu parler de ces projets ? (How did you hear of them?)
3. Est-ce que vous utilisez ces projets? Ou est-ce que ces projets affectent votre vie ? (Do you use them?)
4. Quel gouvernement finance les meilleurs projets ? (Which government finances better development projects?)
5. Quels sont les besoins développementaux du Cameroun ? (What does Cameroon need in terms of development?)

Appendix 2

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