China’s adherence to corporate social responsibility in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo: A comparative analysis

Background: China’s international relations with Africa have recently received much attention from the community of international relations scholars and practitioners. Even though such a scholarly conversation has become a hot topic, little attention has been paid to the Chinese multinational corporations’ (MNCs) adherence to and practice of corporate social responsibilities in African countries like Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Aim: This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of China’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagements in both Angola and DRC.

Setting: Based on historical sensibility, this research article uses Zambia’s political and economic fertile grounds to revisit what drives the Chinese engagement in Zambia within a historical context.

Methods: Methodologically, this research article has deployed the use of document review to assemble the data used.

Results: This article has discovered that China has not been adhering to the international norms and expectations of CSR in both countries.

Conclusion: China’s international relations with Africa, Angola and the DRC in context do not at all serve the interests of Africans but those of China.

Contribution: This article has contributed in terms of bringing an awareness among Africans about the conduct of China and her multinational corporations in the continent. This will then deepen the current scholarly conversation on an urgent need for policy transformation in Angola and the DRC when it comes to matters of CSR.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; Angola; Democratic Republic of Congo; China; adherence; practice.

Introduction

There are very limited studies conducted on the subject of China–Africa relations in respect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) adherence in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Such studies may include those conducted by both Liu (2021) and Timokhina (2014). We need to acknowledge the study by Liu (2021) titled ‘China’s State-Centric Approach to Corporate Social Responsibility Overseas: A Case Study in Africa’, which critically reflects on this subject. From comprehensively looking at Chinese conduct about CSR matters in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, and discovering that it has not been adhering well to CSR, Liu has demonstrated that CSR is traditionally comprehended as marked-based corporate and voluntary behaviour of multinational corporations (MNCs) in their host countries without direct governmental involvement. To Liu, the CSR development in China has challenged this broader comprehension in light of the expanding role of government in promoting it. Over the past decade (2010–2020), China has exemplified a state-centric approach towards the promotion of CSR. Liu has touched based on the rise of Chinese MNCs in the African continent through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and argued that the close relational, institutional and bureaucratic ties between the business community and state gave China the powers to influence the CSR practices of China overseas through the facilitation, mandating, endorsement and partnering to minimise the negative externalities of the MNCs’ overseas activities. Liu though highlights that this state-centric approach internationally has limited the space for civil society engagement, and
the potency of the approach internationally is strained by different corporate ownership models and institutional contexts. As important as it is to the current research article, Liu’s study did not touch on China’s CSR engagements in Angola and the DRC.

There is also a study that was conducted by Timokhina (2014) titled ‘Chinese foreign direct investment in Africa in corporate social responsibility context’, which reviewed the foreign direct investment of China in Africa in the past decade through the context of CSR. Timokhina first explains how the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries have proactively invested abroad to lead Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) exporters between emerging economies and China has since dominated the outward FDI of BRICS. Timokhina interjects that China has been leading as an FDI exporter since the 1990s through the use of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private enterprises. This has presented a challenge to the predominant institutionalisation theories which are premised upon the view of traditional FDI from developed countries that are economically, institutionally and historically dissimilar to China. Timokhina’s study has had a special focus on how Chinese MNCs in Africa have been engaging CSR. He adds that the strategic significance of CSR is not at all times recognised by the Chinese MNCs, thus leading to a shortage of capacity for the incorporation of CSR into corporate management. China sees itself as a significant economic partner in Africa’s development and has invested in six Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of the African continent, and this impacts the Chinese image as an investor in African economies rather than a donor. In the current research article, Timokhina’s study did not touch on China’s CSR engagements in Angola and the DRC.

Methodological framing

This article has adopted a desktop research method and/or approach that is often understood as a document review method of data collection. This principally involves the review of journal articles, policy and official documents, periodical articles, books, websites and media reports including popular literature. The combined number of documents that were used totalled 40 documents that were retrieved from Google Scholar, EBSCO Information Services, JSTOR, Open DOAR and ResearchGate. A snowball sampling method was adopted because of its ability to allow for a chain-referral of non-probability sampling of all pertinent materials. The collected primary documents were used in a linear technique of snowball sampling to provide and give the author directions to even more relevant data that were used. In addition, the applied methodological technique was used because of the unavailability of the pre-calculated list of documents targeted in focus. The collected data from the documents were organised, themed and interpreted to explain the general meaning and results, and the biasness was arched out. The reliability and validity issues were ensured through the use of data triangulation.

Data identification

The identification of the needed data is always a challenge in studies of this kind. The author has utilised several search engines in order to find the relevant documents although such were very much limited. Both Google Scholar and ResearchGate came out very helpful in identifying the relevant research papers that assisted in the study. Keywords like China’s Foreign Policy in Africa; Corporate Social Responsibility and China’s international Relations with the DRC and Angola were used. This implies that the main search operation was limited to the keywords and title of the papers. The primary search throughout the databases revealed 59 papers with a combination of keywords.

Inclusion criteria

The principal aim of the article was to review the research articles that address China’s international relations with Angola and the DRC, especially on corporate social responsibilities (CSR) subject matter. To realise the objective of the research article, the author came up with special selection criteria that included reflecting on the (1) titles that address CSR Angola and DRC, (2) China’s general interrelations with Angola and the DRC, and lastly, (3) China’s adherence to CSR in DRC and Angola, including the year of publication which needed to meet the criteria, if not, then they will be excluded and not analysed.

Screening the data

The author had screened the data from several publications including those from journals, conferences, proceedings, book chapters and books. The author did this by keeping in mind the inclusion criteria and what types of documents will not be used. The publications that were excluded were those that were published in other languages except English. Screening by the author was done in line with the titles and keywords. In short, the author has investigated the titles and keywords which needed to be added, and those close to analysing China’s adherence to CSR in Angola and the DRC. The papers that were screened on this subject amounted to 59, and after removing the repeated records, the final number came to 40. The author would like to categorically confirm that all research articles were sourced from reliable sources, which included Taylor and Francis, Adonis and Abbey Publishers, Wiley Publishers, Palgrave Macmillan, and Greenleaf Publishing.

The concept corporate social responsibility in the global context: An overview of the true agenda

Contextually, CSR can be understood broadly as a method of conducting affairs that applies to all global companies in their practice and/or conduct to produce and manage total positive results in the areas and communities they are operating (Baker 2004). This method of conducting affairs should cover ethical practices, social impact and
sustainability and, if correctly practised, could be all in the name of doing business and how it manages to realise profits and not all concerning charitable engagements (Rapanyane 2020). Corporate social responsibility has over time changed to be one of the most important elements recognised by the MNCs who pursue profits, and as such, its application and adoption is a comparison affair in various global countries. Even if they vary from one country to the other, there is an agreeable view that CSR ought to be a mastery code of all various corporate citizens in various countries. Within the context of this study, all mining companies found in different host countries globally are anticipated to engross CSR as a fundamental norm of practice. In both Angola and the DRC, the CSR practice is not only an issue of Chinese mining companies or alternative MNCs but a standard practice of every business entity encompassing those of the banks, telecommunications and hotels that are expected to recognise CSR in various ways (Womba 2014). While in this debate, it is significant to take note that this concept can be adopted in different ways.

That is why it remains a phenomenally debatable international topic as it has different connotations and interpretations that are conditioned to different global countries (i.e. Angola and the DRC) and, to some extent, economic and political affairs of a country. Cramer (2006) reminds us that the concept of CSR is always conditioned to the political conditions of a certain transparent host country. As it was introduced ages ago, its explanations have frequently been exerted to the companies’ collaborations in their host countries, more particularly in the areas they are operating. The underlying factor would be that the company affairs may even be widened to appear divergent in their business engagements in all these host countries. A relevant example in this study would be both the developing countries of Angola and the DRC which would certainly expect all the companies to be more concerned with philanthropy and socially giving back to the communities than about profit (Rapanyane 2020).

It is Cramer (2006) who argues fundamentally that philanthropy is not so significant when it comes to most Chinese mining companies. The underlying reason behind this would be that most Chinese employers often hire on short-term periods and/or contracts. To Chinese employers, only food supply and a place to sleep for their employees are only important and relevant. This assertion has been advanced in this study because the researcher was more concerned with to what extent these could be realities and myths of the Angolan and the DRC employees. In the interconnection of the real difference in the CSR context in various countries, one could argue that social programmes consolidating both social and economic policies are important as endorsed by De-Haan (2007).

Down to earth, there is a need for cavernous comprehension of what the latter means to understand what might be happening in both Angola and the DRC. De-Haan (2007) does not shy away from indicating that the combination of both social and economic policies so that a country can have a chance of better growing its economic and social development is one of the key fundamental agendas including education and health for the people. Equally, this is understood to be a forerunner rule for the achievement of economic growth which is more significant than anything else (Zambia EITI 2016). The significance of incorporating this narrative would be to counter-check the balance that exists between economic, social and philanthropic simultaneously with political impacts on the agenda of CSR globally before a deep reflection of the adherence and practice of CSR in Angola and the DRC.

In Africa, the CSR agenda is depicted by the efforts of companies in assisting their host areas and/or communities in various developmental initiatives unlike in the Global North (Canada, UK, USA, etc.; Rapanyane 2020). Haalboom (2012) has argued that this may include building schools, providing local and/or indigenous host people with job opportunities, assisting also with electricity infrastructure and also erecting roads including making available microcredit lending schemes. But essentially, they are agitated with the issues of environmental and social footprints, and basic human rights of the native people including the safety and health of the workers as well as their humane incomes (Haalboom 2012). Within the context of the African continent, the latter is expected to take place almost near the operations of the MNCs in their host communities.

The interjection of profit-making within this context would be to ensure that these companies do not only focus on making profit their central focus. This is as it may promote the sidelining of the host communities and bring about disrespect for the two important practices of transparency and accountability (Kumar 2016). The real driving force of this injection is to highlight that the stakeholders of all businesses from one country to the host country globally can be well enlightened about the various expectations that seek to motivate good economic, social and environmental implications of the proceedings of businesses in the African continent (i.e. Angola and the DRC) (Kumar 2016). Having drawn enough attention to the concept of CSR globally, the next section goes straight to the role and/or expectations of the conduct of all Chinese mining companies in both Angola and the DRC’s mining sectors. The ensuing section shall also broaden a discussion and deep critical analysis of the successes and failures of Chinese mining companies’ operations in both Angola and the DRC as deemed important.

**Corporate social responsibility: Definitions and contours**

As the previous section narrows down the broader CSR agenda in the global context and Africa (cases of Angola and the DRC) deeply for better comprehension, the researcher has deemed it important to revisit the practice and adoption of this concept broadly. This section revisits all the significant aspects, elements and ingredients of the invocation of the CSR practice to assist scholars to understand CSR. There are
indisputably several definitions that have been offered that define the concept of CSR in the past two centuries. Dahlsrud (2006) points out that there was a study (though not specifically named) that discovered that there were 37 definitions of the concept of CSR. Complementarily, both Caroll and Shabana (2010) demonstrated that the 37 definitions did not encompass the strived definitions which if adopted could have given a wrong meaning to the entire subject of CSR practice. In this study, it is significant to underscore that the adopted definition including the principal themes of CSR has been generally borrowed from elsewhere including from the study conducted by Caroll (1991).

Safe to say also that it is not a ‘transversal error’ and/or academic suicide to utilise Google searches and/or exhaust the internet revolution to assimilate the definitions that mostly explain the different organisations in their contexts including concepts such as ‘Corporate Social Responsibility Newswire [CSRWire], Business for Social Responsibility and the Commission of the European Communities’ as examples. The practicalities of what CSR can sideline and include are equally observed in this study. Similarly, Dahlsrud (2006) indicates that CSR in some contexts uses the various categories which include social voluntariness, economic, environmental and stakeholder dimensions which have been google-discovered. Even if they are important, they are irrelevant and inapplicable as they are scientifically inapplicable to assist in the analysis of CSR practice within the mining sector as done under this study. But they still exist in alternative sectors of CSR adoption and application elsewhere (Rapanyane 2020).

The above-mentioned combination, though not applied, can still serve in future Afrocentric studies of comparison with the current elements adopted in this study. The most important step in the identification of what CSR should compose of in Africa is to attempt to check the continental ground conditions first. From there, relevant dimension(s) and/or categories can be placed suitably in the pursuit of convincing MNCs who wish to do business in Africa. Within the context of the invocation of CSR in Africa and/or Angola and the DRC, Caroll (1979, 1991) has contemplated that the four elements and/or dimensions of the classifications of CSR should be made up of the MNC’s actualisation of the ‘legal, ethical and discretionary and/or philanthropic and economic liabilities’ (Caroll & Shabana 2010).

What then this means is that special attention should be afforded to the ‘Social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary [later referred to as philanthropic] expectations that society has of organisations at a given point in time’ (Caroll 1979:500, 1991:283). The study of Caroll and Shabana (2010) has revealed that there had been more studies that have invoked the four elements as indicated above and the four have been in existence for almost 25 years as active, used and cited to date. Drawing from this analysis, the researcher saw it fit first

place attention on the broader discussion of the two categories and/or dimensions to appropriate them to the role expected to be placed by the Chinese mining companies in Angola and the DRC (Caroll & Shabana 2010).

Economic and legal responsibilities

In line with the economic operations of any business, there is a justified need to produce ‘goods and services that society desires and to sell them at a profit’ (Carroll 1979:500). In the interim, the whole process will ensure that all business operations fulfil the predominant economic goal of their host societies. Importantly, there should not be any confusion about the extent a business operation should go beyond to realise its profit margins. In dealing essentially with this, the researcher has been able to appreciate that all businesses are driven by the principles of profit margins as indicated and/or argued to be something that can be sustainable for as long as a business exists and that is ‘profit maximisation’ (Caroll 1991). The maximisation of profit elements is still relevant in the current period of the context of the study. Intrinsically, when these businesses are after profit, they are then highly motivated by the classical economic liberalism advocated by Hill (1964) which is alluded to by Caroll (1991:41) to indicate that:

There is one and only one social responsibility of a business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud. (Caroll 1991:41)

The above argument advanced by Hill (1964) has been incorporated and used by scholars such as Drucker (2006) who recognises the role played by the classical economic perspective, although highlights even more suggestions to make it seem comprehensive to the community of scholars. Rapanyane (2020) opines that even if businesses are solely driven by profit, they ought to at least subsume and fulfil the three rudimentary responsibilities of calculating the efficacy of their engagements, bequeathing greatly to the so-called risk premium obligatory for all companies and/or businesses to remain unsathed in all of the engagements and corroborating that there is successive consolation for all the capital flows. By doing this, ‘a profitability objective, therefore, measures not the maximum profits the business can produce but the minimum it must produce’ (Drucker 2006:76–77).

Alternatively, the business’ legal responsibilities are to liaise both the negative and positive agreements set down on the businesses and/or companies by regulations and laws of the host communities and/or countries in which they are operating in. By merely admitting to the little knowledge of what constitutes the context of the legal responsibilities, Caroll (1991) further argued that the host communities should be in charge of imposing the rules and laws that govern the CSR operations of the businesses. Additionally, the views incorporated on legal agreements of the owners of businesses should forever be recognised as they related
straight to the influence of their businesses on the host countries and/or communities. Essentially, this implies that the laws drawn should have 10% views from the owners of the businesses who are directly influencing their operations (Rapanyane 2020).

The key point to draw from the above would be a view that both parties should be recognised from the initial drawing board, in the legal responsibilities of any companies in the host communities. Caroll (1991:41) further reminds us of the clear and relevant example by demonstrating that ‘both regulations and laws are the codified ethics of any society. And as such, should depict partial fulfilment of the social contract between business and society’. The operational framework and/or scope of the legal responsibilities of any business or company may be broader to the inclusion of extended commands. Scholarly debates have confirmed that regulations are pertinent to the businesses conducted with the purpose of meeting CSR requirements. De-Schutter (2008) gives us a better understanding by pointing out that CSR in all businesses and/or companies ‘rests on certain presuppositions about markets and the business environment, which cannot be simply assumed, but should be affirmatively created by a regulatory framework for CSR’.

Within this context, the castigated assertions are open for debate and, to some extent, opposed even in the case of De-Schutter (2008). The point raised earlier by Phillips, Freeman and Wicks (2003) cannot be avoided who have projected their broader understanding of the context of CSR engagement that should then have management stakeholder interactions to enable the continuity of the voluntarism prevalence. Phillips et al. (2003) dissolved the earlier perspective which revealed that ‘business performance is highly influenced by the stakeholders in their relationship with management, which then changes the transformation of regulations and laws and promotes expansion’, as informed greatly ‘by the stakeholder theory advocates’. The trio of authors has also quantum-leaped their perspective on the stakeholder theory to indicate that it ‘does not require a change in the law to remain viable’ (Phillips et al. 2003:491). The ensuing scholarly debates on the CSR context of the legal framework to this day continue from all these camps through various argumentative presentations to defend the materiality of the legal demands to be earmarked to all businesses and companies. From a divergent perspective, there are also the regulation advocates such as Valor (2008) and Williamson, Lynch-wood, and Ramsay (2006) who questioned the capacity of the ‘free-market apparatus’ in endorsing the application and adoption of CSR engagements with host communities.

Valor (2008) and Williamson et al. (2006) extend their views by indicating that they have discovered ‘that the business environments and market failures’ prohibit the rewarding of committed businesses even if they complete CSR engagements. Alternatively, it is the rejectionists of regulation who point out that societal and individual interests are magnanimously rewarded by the free market apparatus in those who practise the CSR modus operandi1 which is favoured individually (Caroll & Shabana 2010). A point to take home would be that there are specific CSR activities that are taken for granted because of their valuelessness, and most people are blinded to see the significance of endorsing them. Hence, all CSR credit activities should forever be considered relevant in the free market apparatus (Caroll & Shabana 2010).

**Ethical and philanthropic responsibilities**

As already stipulated, the second of the foursome part of the simplification and/or interpretation of CSR is the ethical and philanthropic duties that are some of the requests handed down to the company bosses by the host communities as well as the stakeholders of the company. The inclusion of this part is advantageous in the sense of the categorisation found within the considerable analysis of McGuire (1963:114) who has interjected and placed this on record that the ‘purpose of social responsibilities presumes that a business does not only have legal and economic obligations but also irrefutable obligations to the host society which go beyond the former responsibilities’.

Informed by the above assertion, it is then obvious that the four-part definition provided by Caroll has played an important role in the reconstruction of the researcher’s broader understanding of the study conducted by McGuire. This is because Caroll is the one who managed to commence the development of the ethical or philanthropic and discretionary constituents of CSR to broaden it. Rigorously, this is discovered within the explanation that they are allowed to go beyond economic duties (Caroll & Shabana 2010). For that reason, the researcher in this study is of the understanding that whatever is broadly discussed here as an extension of the views advanced by Caroll can best be deployed beyond philanthropic responsibilities. Equally, the legal and economic functions that are applicable necessitate the obligation of the inclusion of all philanthropic duties that are caved. The central narrative drawn out by the researcher would be that the combination of the modern and traditional functions in the block always accentuates the best of what one could be.

Glancing at both the classical notions of economic and legal responsibilities, it became clear that the classical companies have had a considerable fair share of their splendid social contract with their host countries. A precise argument is that the demonstrated brand-new functions in the disposition of philanthropic responsibilities now showcase the modern reality of what the contemporary social contract in the form of CSR should appear like. Both Caroll and Shabana (2010) have pointed out that in the current period, more particularly within the incorporation of the expanding CSR interpretations, there is a clear emerging perspective that scholars ought to go beyond these two obligations. Practically, as of today, both Angolans and Congolese ought to ask all the Chinese MNCs operating in both countries the question of what

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1. A particular way of doing something.
extent are their companies going to respect and honour themselves to both philanthropic and ethical responsibilities and even go beyond. Kotler and Lee (2005) narrate the same perspective that CSR ought to be discovered within the inspiration to improve the lives of the people of the host countries through the invocation of ‘philanthropic practices and donations by using business resources’.

The context of Chinese adoption and practice of corporate social responsibility in Angola

In the context of the case study designs, it is also significant to comprehend the context of the case of Angola (Yin 2014). As an African country that is mineral-rich with an abundance of gas and oil that relies heavily on resource extraction and has unfortunately turned its economy mostly dependent on revenues generated from the extracting industry. Eventually, Angola has embarked recently on the path of economic diversification. In the year 2008, the oil and gas share in the African country’s GDP accounted for almost 57% and declined to 46% by the year 2012, permitting the construction sector to rise from 5% to 8% as per the findings of the African Economic Outlook (2014). Recently, the construction industry of Angola has depicted important growth, and government officials hope that this shall be the normal trend.

The reconstruction process has been there in the past two decades with Chinese companies also partaking alongside the long-term players of the Brazil corporation such as Oderbrecht and the Portuguese corporations such as Soares da Costa, Mota Engil, and Texeira Duartes in the African country’s construction market (Centre for Chinese Studies 2006). The favourable oil-backed loans of China have formulated a framework for all Chinese leading role players in this sector and have made China seem as much an expedient partner to the government in Luanda, although its practice is popularly criticised by the Angolans. This is because they still attribute low CSR practices that should be discussed in a detailed format. Following several credit lines approved by the Exim Bank for the reformation of Angola’s infrastructure, there are several Chinese MNCs including SOEs which entered the Angolan market.

From the long list of those who entered, the trio Duarte, Santos and Tjonneland (2014) mention the following companies: Jiangsu Company, China State Construction Engineering Corporation, Guangxi International Construction, and China Road and Bridge Corporation. These Chinese companies now have operations in all levels of construction, from building housing units in Luanda and 17 other provinces to repairing roads, constructing schools, hospitals, stadiums and condominiums, and also repairing railways and airports (Corkin 2012a). Most of these Chinese companies are competitive in the construction sector partially because their construction business practices keep prices of construction low, accompanied by long workdays.

Equally, their equipment and movement of material costs to new sites are lower compared to others (United States Government Accountability Office 2013). Part of the reason would lie in the need to directly support the government in Beijing together with their SOEs that have operations in the construction projects encompassed by specific preferential terms. Corkin (2012b) has drawn one significant disparity between the SOEs and the private investment regime in Angola. Private investments of up to $5 million plunge boundary to a special contractual regime that is superintended by the Angolan National Investment Private Agency (ANIPA), and there is no longer a requirement under the Angolan law for global investors to set up collaborations with local companies.

Alternatively, investments above $5m require the Council of Ministers’ approval. This is through projects that are financed by the China Exim Bank credit lines (bilateral government-government agreements and/or partnerships) that do not tumble within the ANIP authority. Such agreements also do not need the utilisation of 70% of the local labour force as antipathetic to the private investment regime, which is principally attributed to the SOEs and does not encourage their Chinese companies to utilise the Angolan labour force.

As such, one may argue that the investment of China in Angola unmistakably proclaims the existence of multidimensional and multiple problems in overseas projects. These vary between control and maintenance, and project management to the failure to appreciate, as Jovanovic (2009) demonstrates the significance of a definite cross-cultural approach in social integration, cooperation and project management in the local host communities. This is a significant aspect that ought to be a constitutive part of a well-elaborated strategy of CSR. Crucial problems in project investments in Angola have been anthologised and are presented in a ‘problem-consequence relation’ (Macauhub 2015).

What needs the attention of scholars is the expanding concern of Angolans with the several Chinese people who enter Angola. There are only estimations without exact data, while other sources claim they are more than 200 000 (CNTV 2014). The general view from the Angolans has been that there are more Chinese than predictions, and this has been a ‘labour export’ strategy of the Chinese companies and SOEs leading to further growth of a disregard for the CSR trend. This, combined with the Chinese SOEs’ unwillingness of employing the Angolan local people, has resulted in the rising hatred of the Chinese people who are considered to not take some of the important internal elements shaping the CSR approaches (Mihić et al. 2019).

The context of Chinese adoption and practice of corporate social responsibility in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Most of the Chinese companies with operations in the Province of Katanga employ local DRC workers and also expatriate
Chinese workers. The working conditions diverge between the two groups, as most of the workers from China are paid generally more and furnished with accommodation (Jansson 2010). It has been well known that ‘even if, by Western standards, the conditions for Chinese expatriate staff are tough, they are distinctly superior to those of the Congolese workers’ (Rights & Accountability in Development [RAID] 2009), as the conditions of working for the latter are mostly understood as second-rate. In a survey that was carried out earlier in 2009 by the RAID, a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) that examined job security, primary remuneration, freedom of safety, health, association and social benefits, ‘only a few respondents had anything positive to say about conditions in Chinese companies’ (RAID 2009). This finding is endorsed by the experiential research encompassed by the DRC NGO, Action Against Impunity for Human Rights (ACIDH) (Jansson 2010).

There are also undeviating acts of criminality instigated by the Chinese employers against the DRC workers that have been reported too. These include physical abuses of some of the DRC workers at the hands of the Chinese companies’ representatives and the liquidation of hospital bills of some of the local workers who have buttressed injuries at work. These are accompanied together with the various incidents that have been reported to the Congolese NGO ACIDH that pertained to Chinese companies and are mostly related to the problems of illegal retrenchments of workers affiliated to trade union activities, outstanding indemnities for injured workers and the various workplace accidents (Jansson 2010). Additionally, the issue of child labour when it comes to the criticisms levelled against the Chinese companies cannot be avoided too as the latter has been accused of buying goods from artisanal miners including children. When it comes to environmental management, not a lot of initiatives have been delineated on the Chinese companies’ side.

Howbeit, all-inclusive information is not yet availed on this issue, it has been propounded that the Chinese MNCs and SOEs with operations in the mining sector of the DRC have neither concluded the needed environmental impact assessments nor the compulsory environmental management plans for the projects of mining, as outlined in the article 15 of the DRC mining code. It has additionally been proposed that the Chinese MNCs and SOEs disregard the regulatory conditions relating to the transport, storage and sales of mineral products. Within the context of governance, it has been revealed that in the complex environment of Katanga, ‘Chinese companies are both the beneficiaries and victims of this system’ (Jansson 2010). While the representatives of the Chinese companies have demonstrated their despair at the persecution directed at them by the dishonourable local government officials, disgruntlement has been demonstrated by the DRC civil society representatives and workers over the Chinese company representatives’ tendency of recompensing bribes to ‘get out of situations’ and this has intensified their CSR problems. It is in this context that the RAID as quoted by Jansson (2010) indicated:

Congolese workers spoke about the complicity between the Congolese authorities and Chinese companies and denounced the widespread practice among Chinese managers of bribing labour inspection agents, security services, and members of the judiciary as a means of settling labour disputes to their advantage. (Jansson 2010:4)

One of the driving forces is the issue of language barriers which is mostly recognised in terms of the relations of Chinese companies with local community stakeholders and employees enlarge. The combination of communication problems and residential segregation is found to be collectively reinforcing factors within this context. Chinese managers and workers do not feel safe in the DRC environment and, on that account, barely leave the compounds where they are accommodated, which simply implies that they then have limited subjection to the local culture and languages (RAID 2009). Likewise, most Chinese company representatives are mostly distinguished as reluctant highly to participate in dialogue with the DRC stakeholders such as community and trade union representatives. This is a by-product of the four principal drivers: cultural differences in attempts to avoid the costly execution of the improvement of working conditions and alternative CSR initiatives, language barriers and the experience of the corrupt activities within the DRC government making the Chinese stakeholders wary of unnecessary engagements (Jansson 2010).

One of the critiques relates to the difficulty to validate although it has to do with Chinese ethical conduct in the extractive sector of the DRC. Squarely, there is a piece of evidence that proclaims that Chinese influence in the DRC has back-pedalled a positive trend. While the DRC mining practices have had a trajectory that is positive since the dissolution of the civil, Premicongo (Lubumbashi-based NGO) released a report in November 2018 detailing socially and environmentally unscrupulous conduct by the Huachin (China Nonferrous Metal Mining Corporation) with operations in the Mabende found in the Haut-Katanga region. This report catalogues various issues that relate to waste-water land pollution, deforestation, restricted movement of the local people and contamination of the drinking water. More or less, the 2017 Amnesty Report detailed adults and children mining cobalt in the tapered man-made tunnels at the DRC mine sites that are interlinked to the Huayou Cobalt (Chinese Processing Company).

The 2017 International Amnesty Report assessed the development that the other 28 mining companies together with Huayou Cobalt had made since the 2016 child labour risks emerged, and it had initially concluded that not much has been done by the companies to take sufficient action for compliance with the global standards (Karlsson 2019). Antithetical to this, there are several indications that China made progress in accountable sourcing and production beyond several areas. The China Chamber of Commerce of Metals Minerals and Chemicals Importers and Exporters (CCCMC) instituted the Chinese Due Diligence Guidelines for accountable supply chains of minerals in the year 2015, and it was also influential in initiating the 2016
Responsible Cobalt Initiative (RCI). In line with RCS Global, there are an escalating number of Chinese processors and producers who strive to bring company enactments in line with global standards (Karlsson 2019).

**Compare and contrast: Overall low environmental and social standards in Africa**

The above assertion is true even if it may be transforming. In the year 2006, Philippe Maystadt (Former President of the European Investment Bank) popularly complained to the Financial Times that the Chinese policy banks had ‘snatched projects from under the EIB’s nose’ with the continued lack of environmental and social conditions. Most Chinese MNCs are mostly known to lack the practice of global labour standards. Concessions for tropical hardwood and big rainforest plantations, roads, hydropower dams and large-scale mining all constitute a huge risk to the African environment. All of the above need that the affected people by the various projects be consulted, recompensed and resettled properly, and most of the investors from China are way behind the curve on all of the above. So are most African countries: *China Lets Child Workers Die Digging in Congo Mines for Copper* alleged one headline.

This is to communicate the message of Chinese smelters with operations in the DRC’s Katanga province who purchase copper ore from the middlemen who alternatively collected it from children (responsible for digging in extensively precarious circumstances). Neither the middlemen nor the Chinese smelters feel morally accountable to ensure that their copper and/or cobalt is produced under bearable conditions. The emotive afar the dissonant realities of poverty within the Katanga Province will need the resolution of the dilemmas that are much more impenetrable than easily enforced labour laws. With that said, one of the most long-lasting critiques of the Beijing government in Africa relates to the underhanded labour practices.

For example, a carefully conducted study on Chinese construction companies in Namibia discovered that they continuously contravened the local minimum wage laws including the affirmative action training preconditions, while also failing dismally to recompense the social security and allowances. There are also complaints about the African workers in most of the Chinese factories, shops and construction sites that have become a brigade, and it is not only African workers with such issues. Part of the issue lies in the ignorance of the Chinese MNCs of the local labour regulations. But more usually, one has been able to understand that most of the Chinese MNCs in Africa have a history of applying low standards even back parts of China, especially in the ‘town and village enterprises’. Some of the Chinese MNCs have also gotten around their worker obligations by shifting contracts to local companies that can provide temporary labour services, moving the accountability to the broker to recompense benefits needed under the local law. In this instance, not only the Chinese are involved. This problem is called sub-contracting and is a common practice in alternative non-Chinese companies including the mining areas of Zambia, Angola and DRC. Observably, the non-Chinese MNCs and SOEs such as the Mopani Copper mines have frankly subcontracted far more Zambian local workers under ‘unacceptably poor conditions’ than did the company of China at the Chambishi mine.

On the one side, one might argue that the tolerance of Chinese officials of most of these practices is a reflection of the stark difference in the evolution models – what scholars should understand as the ‘Beijing Consensus’ and the ‘Trade Union consensus’. One of the motivating factors for the continuation of this injustice is the fact that China’s economic development success started with comparably low wages that allowed most Chinese people to find jobs. This is based on the advice of Liu Kungyuan (China’s Economic and Commercial Counsellor) who advised the African countries to ‘sacrifice on labour costs now for future generations’ arguing also that ‘Let people be paid lower wages now and attract more FDI and set up manufacturing so that the future generation will reap the benefits of the sacrifices’. Within the environmental sphere, most of the Chinese companies have been accused and implicated in unauthorised harvesting of ‘old-growth’ timber and illegal fishing and in attaining concessions without respect for the rights of the local host communities.

**Conclusion**

In the previous two decades (2000–2020), China has been battling the human rights core of the CSR issues while focusing on building clinics and schools. Chinese MNCs and SOEs equally are taking time to understand the need to engage with their host communities abroad for permission matters. As they are struggling heavily with this, their attitude has been that they will bring jobs and build schools and clinics. This is an out-of-depth desperate attempt at wanting to always do the right thing. Corporate social responsibility can come in handy to them in avoiding exorbitant reputational risks. Rio Tinto and Anglo American with satisfying high environmental, social and governance standards as partners of some of the Chinese multinational mining companies have repeatedly offered to assist Chinese MNCs and SOEs to maintain similarly high standards and working the latter to assist them in various ways of maintaining all CSR requirements. The interest of China in collaborating with these companies that are more experienced and better technologically equipped with more assets makes these areas of collaboration promising, as long as the international expectations for better environmental and social performance remain strong through these complicated social and environmental challenges.
Policy recommendations

Policy recommendations are as follows:

- Chinese MNCs in both Angola and the DRC need to traverse the B Corp Certification – a tool of the minimum score on an assessment online for both environmental and social performance.

- A good business charter of morality combined with a transformation of the policies of Chinese MNCs to include dedicated environmental and social goals (e.g. protecting the environment) is necessary for addressing the issues of ethics, values and diversity, and employee respect including the environment and their host societies.

- The host communities should also ensure that they adopt stricter social and environmental regulations (e.g. no dumping, pollution monitoring laws, giving back to the community employing building schools, hospitals and awarding of bursaries in both countries) to monitor Chinese MNCs’ compliance with CSR practices.

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