SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (IR) AND THE CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONSHIP: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

By

Timothy Walker

Supervisor: Prof P Vale

Rhodes University

Grahamstown

February 2014

ABSTRACT

South African International Relations (IR) is a prominent source of China-Africa research and analysis, producing reports, journal articles and books that seek to illuminate the emerging relationship between China and Africa. It plays an important role in the framing of the relationship, as well as how it is perceived outside of the discipline. However, critical concerns have been raised about the context within which South African IR operates. It is therefore important that IR research, including its assumptions, dominant concepts, professed values and aspirations to studying the China-Africa relationship, be critically examined. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to critical thinking in South African IR by opening up for future discussion the new directions and possibilities for China-Africa IR. Utilising a critique located in Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT), this thesis critically reflects upon both the context of South African IR's China-Africa research and the perspectives it has produced. The thesis argues that in spite of many descriptive and empirical studies, China-Africa research is theoretically underdeveloped in South African IR. Further, it argues that theoretical work is marginalised despite the fact that both historical and contemporary research relies on concepts drawn from IR theory. South African IR's focus on policy relevance is advanced as a reason for the prevalence of theoretical underdevelopment. This thesis concludes by reviewing arguments for the improved use of IR theory in China-Africa IR, which will lead to a better understanding of this important relationship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof Peter Vale for his patience and advice during the writing of this thesis. Additionally, there were a number of people at Rhodes University who either gave me advice or encouragement while writing this thesis, thank you to everyone.

Special thanks must go to Estelle Prinsloo and Varsha Lalla for reading drafts of my thesis and providing valuable feedback and comments. I have treasured our friendship over the past years, which have made the writing of this thesis much easier and more enjoyable.

I also greatly appreciate the support of my family – thank you Mum, Dad and Lucy for all your encouragement and support. Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank Breanne Robb. Thank you for encouraging me to keep writing during the tough times, for being there when I doubted myself and for devoting so much time and effort to reading and commenting right up until the completion of the thesis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLNS	Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland states
CCR	Centre for Conflict Resolution
CCS	Centre for Chinese Studies
CIRT	Critical International Relations Theory
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation (South Africa)
EAP	East Asian Project
FGD	Forum for Global Dialogue
FOCAC	Forum for China-Africa Cooperation
IGD	Institute for Global Dialogue
IR	International Relations
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
ROC	Republic of China
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAIIA	South African Institute for International Affairs
SAJIA	South African Journal of International Affairs
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
SSC	South-South Cooperation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. 1 China-Africa Studies: The State of the Art

In a short space of time, the China-Africa relationship became one of the most talked about topics in the discipline of South African International Relations (IR).[1] IR researchers publish abundant research based on the assumption that the relationship provides "one of the most important developments in the international relations of the post-Cold-War era" (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008: 3). China-Africa analysis also has wider implications and influences academic, business and policy perceptions and decisions.[2] Researchers understand that exploring the various outcomes and shape of China-Africa relations would also be key to understanding and improving Africa's relations with the world. It would be assumed, therefore, that IR scholars would be amongst the first and most comprehensive in their analyses of China-Africa relations.

Commentaries on China-Africa relations are spurred on by the need to understand the reasons behind, and the impact of, the rapid increase in Chinese-African relations. These relations increased as a result of the growth in the trade of natural resources. Impressive trade figures are evident, leaping from a relatively modest one billion US dollars in 2000 to an estimated 100 billion in 2008 (Taylor, 2009). During this time China overtook the United Kingdom (UK), France and the United States (US) to become Africa's largest trading partner.

This is all the more notable given the previously marginal level of China-Africa relations, which meant that these relations seldom received as much interest or analysis within IR. Ian Taylor describes how the subject had previously been a "backwater of academia, with one or two people working on the subject" (2008: 895). Researchers tended to focus on the systematic impact of an expansive and assertive China, the impact on US hegemony, the likelihood of war, peace, and the impact on the Liberal world order (Yee and Storey, 2002; Pan, 2004; Zhao and Guoli, 2009). Yet in a surprisingly short space of time, China-Africa

[1] 'International Relations' (IR) is the academic treatment of international relations, understood in this thesis as referring to relations between nation states and the international organisations and institutions they operate within or around (Brown and Ainsley, 2009). This thesis also adopts, when referring to the discipline itself, the widely used and familiar academic practice of capitalising the abbreviation of (IR).

[2] This thesis uses the term China-Africa as shorthand for the myriad relations occurring between various actors in both China and throughout Africa. This is a disciplinary convention, although simple labels have been recognised as a shortcoming in analysis (Taylor, 2009).

relations rapidly expanded. Accompanying this expansion was such an outpouring of IR that Giles Mohan calls the resulting gush of analysis a "scramble to publish" (2008: 156). While many welcome these developments, substantial disagreement exists over how best to interpret these figures and what direction China-Africa relations will take in the future. This lack of consensus has nonetheless led to a proliferation in analysis and commentary (see Brautigam, 2009).

Many scholars are keen to ascertain the nature of the relationship and Chris Alden identifies an important task for researchers as "pinning down a perspective on this fast-moving, omni-directional relationship" (2007: 128). The response to this task has generally produced two contrasting interpretations that dominate contemporary analysis, illustrating a preference on the part of many researchers to offer framings of the relationship in terms of simple binaries, either as the optimistic 'China as friend' interpretation, or the pessimistic 'China as foe/threat' interpretation. This is emphasised by Garth Le Pere who states that renewed interest affords "an opportunity for an appraisal in terms of a simple binary: predator or partner?" (2007: 14). This phenomenon is further illustrated by research titles that juxtapose these two opposing perspectives of China: *China in Africa: Mercantilist Predator or Partner in Development* (Le Pere 2007), *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon?* (Alden, 2007) and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon? Africa and China* (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008). This debate over China's nature has yet to be satisfactorily resolved, with many repeating basic and simple questions over the essential identity of China, and of a China-Africa relationship. Sanusha Naidu reaffirms the continuation of this approach, where, despite the opportunity for more complex research and engagement, her argument returns to a central factor for resolution, namely that "the conundrum [for researchers] remains whether China is 'Africa's new partner in development' or if it is 'Africa's neocolonialist'" (2010: 32).

Of interest to this thesis is the view that analyses such as Naidu's have marginalised one of its key components – theory itself. Scholars who hold this view are troubled by how little effort has been made to comprehensively and theoretically engage with the relationship. As Daniel Large states, "the most recent phase of Chinese engagement in Africa has… remained curiously immune to theoretical consideration" (2010: 9). This ambivalent attitude to theory is surprising and accounting for the theoretical absence is difficult. Moreover, this attitude might hinder future efforts at theorising the relationship and producing different and richer interpretations.

It could be reasonably assumed, at first glance, that the increase in China-Africa research would generate rich sources of empirical data, case studies and grounds for IR theoretical development and testing. Moreover, some expected to see a bewildering amount of interpretations given that IR offers a plural approach to theorising (Burchill and Linklater, 2009; Lawson, 2012). James Rosenau suggests that a vast array of commentary should be expected as "there can be as many Chinas in world politics as there are theories of China and theories of world politics" (1994: 526).

While Large suggests that "new scholarship seeks to deploy more explicitly theoretical frameworks", he concludes that scholars have not been rigorous enough in their analysis, and finds that "coverage has been imbued with an empiricist reflex" (2010: 10). Large defines this as "a prevailing tendency to empirically chart – often on the basis of weak evidence or secondary sources – general themes or country case studies" (2010: 10). He implies that researchers should pay heed to questions arising from their curiosity as to why there is a lack of commitment to producing theoretical work in China-Africa IR. Despite the prevalence of binaries, researchers like Chris Alden and Daniel Large (2011) expected the field to mature. They suggest, however, that studies of China-Africa relations are undergoing an improvement, as "scholarly analysis of China-Africa has become more sophisticated and progressed beyond what was formerly a narrow and frequently binary subject" (Alden and Large, 2011: 22). While Alden and Large are referring to China-Africa relations in IR around the world, this thesis will critically explore the current state of these relations in South African IR. In the following section we will see that this is precisely the type of research that many China-Africa researchers critique in IR.

1. 2 The Need for Critical Reflection

This section marshals the calls expressed by a number of authors to better understand how we frame the China-Africa relationship and why we understand it the way we do. These authors also identify gaps in current knowledge and useful future directions for research. These concerns have yet to receive adequate responses from within South African IR and thus form the departure point for this thesis in relation to South African China-Africa IR.

Giles Mohan offers one of the first invitations for critical reflection in this field, advising future researchers to "examine the geopolitical, economic and ideological contexts in which knowledge about China in/and Africa is being produced" (2008: 156). Daniel Large echoes this call, suggesting that "the subject and the analytical construction of 'China in Africa' should additionally challenge the way in which the predominant approach to studying China, Africa and their growing interrelations have been developed" (2008b: 60-61). Large also expresses a wish that future researchers contribute to the maturation of this field of study, hoping that "beyond the initial wave of interest, the study of Chinese engagement throughout Africa will develop into a fully-fledged subject of inquiry in its own right and produce in-depth, more theoretically rigorous research to inform debate and deepen understanding" (2008b: 61). Julia Strauss and Martha Saavedra also advocate for the importance of acquiring knowledge of "how Chinese knowledge of Africa and African knowledge of China is produced and assimilated in the coming years" (2009: 561). Research on these implicit frameworks and influences is identified as crucial for the advancement of knowledge in this field and for improved understanding of how China-Africa research is produced.

China-Africa knowledge has also been called into question on the basis that it might deliberately mischaracterise the relationship. Mohan and Power assert that Critical researchers have a responsibility to seriously consider and reflect on their research, as "it is vital for critically engaged scholars, activists and policymakers to properly analyse these unfolding relationships in order to guide action rather than continually rely on half truths and impressions" (2008: 38). At the same time Chris Alden and Ana Alves suggest that knowledge is incomplete, as the "forging of this new relationship between China and Africa" is a process resulting in the marginalisation of knowledge and research as "the rhetoric of mutual benefit requires some form of mutual amnesia" (2008: 56). Ampiah and Naidu make a similar observation regarding liberation movements stating that "in cases where any meaningful relationship between Beijing and the liberation movement of choice was minimal, there seems to be some form of selective amnesia in the current buoyancy of relations" (2008: 8). These suggestions and invitations reflect deeper concerns that the process of research itself was both poorly understood and, at the same time, subject to external pressures and interests. These are epistemological questions, as they revolve around questions about knowledge and around reservations that there is too much ignorance of the contexts in which knowledge is produced. In other words, researchers also call for China-Africa IR to become an object of study.

1. 3 Why South African IR?

In this section we will see why South African China-Africa IR makes a good case study and why it deserves to be critiqued. South African IR now possesses a sizeable community of enquiry for China-Africa research. South African China-Africa IR has proliferated in the form of papers, research reports, monographs, books and journal articles. Yet, for all this interest there is an observable deficiency in South African IR in terms of theoretically derived and theoretically informed analysis. While US and European capacity and output – measured by total number of researchers, the quantity of papers and the number of publication outlets such as think tanks – easily surpasses the quantity of South Africa's IR output, two outstanding qualitative advantages are observable in South African IR.

Firstly, South African IR on China-Africa relations had a head start over other countries as "interest ignited in South Africa significantly before the more prominent global coverage of today" (Large 2008b: 56). Many contemporary South African IR scholars and research institutes make China and China-Africa relations the object of scrutiny, analysis and research (see Taylor, 1998, 2000b; Shelton, 2001; Cornelissen and Taylor, 2000; Alden and Davies, 2006; Naidu and Davies, 2006; Sidiropoulos, 2006; Le Pere, 2007; Le Pere and Shelton, 2007; Manji and Marks, 2007; Ampiah and Naidu, 2008; Habib, 2008; Le Pere, 2008; Shelton, 2008, Harneit-Sievers et al., 2010). Large also argues that China-Africa IR's major disadvantage is "the relative paucity of Chinese and African perspectives […] with the exception of South Africa where the subject has been experienced and considered for some time" (2008a: 373). South African scholars have also analysed the rich social history of Chinese people living in South Africa (Accone, 2004; Accone and Harris, 2007). We will return to this point in Chapter Three, where we will explore the historical interest and impetus for South African IR developing China-Africa expertise and analyse the types of output generated.

Secondly, research sponsors clearly have seen great value in funding and enabling the production of knowledge through the South African IR community. Giles Mohan implies that South Africa is favoured due to "the level of economic development in that country and concomitantly the quality and marketing reach of its book-publishing industry" (2008: 158). As a result, South African IR contains dedicated China-Africa research organisations,

projects, researchers and research outlets. As revealed in a mapping exercise, carried out by Tatiana Carayannis and Nathaniel Olin (2012), there are two dedicated South African centres. Both are located within South African universities that make a major African contribution to China-Africa research. The first is the Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS) at Stellenbosch University. The second is the China-in-Africa Project, a joint initiative of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the University of the Witwatersrand. Both of these centres receive funding from a wide variety of donors in order to maintain their independence. While both are not strictly IR in terms of theoretical output, given the expanded definition of IR they can be acknowledged as primary contributors to South African IR output on China-Africa relations.

These observations of South African IR on China-Africa relations have a dual effect. Firstly, they imply that those interested in China-Africa relations should become acquainted with and explore South African IR on the subject. In so doing, South African IR can influence future thinking around the world. Secondly, when combined with the critical contextual observations of South African IR researchers, the concerns voiced in the previous section show why South African IR can be critiqued (Taylor, 2000a; Vale, 2004; Schoeman, 2009; Smith, 2013). This will be explored in Chapter Three. The discussion now turns to detailing the purpose of this study and outlining the research aim and research questions.

1. 4 Purpose of this Research

Thus far this chapter has noted that South African IR on China-Africa relations provides a productive case study for a critically reflective analysis. It has noted, too, that significant concerns over the current state of South African IR should warrant the critical assessment of its contributions. It is hoped that this thesis will provide, through a method of critique, a starting point for further theoretical research and critical reflection in South African IR on China-Africa relations. It is therefore crucial to understand the current role of IR theory in analysis. Its desired outcome is to contribute towards future research that is marked by greater theoretical competency, explication and discussion throughout China-Africa IR.

1.4. 1 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to understand the part played by theory in South African IR on China-Africa relations, and to explore how theory informs analysis and is regarded in the literature. The aim will be reached through the exploration of three research questions.

1.4. 2 Research Questions

1. What IR theories are being used in analyses of the China-Africa relationship?
2. What do the choices of theories and frameworks tell us about the interests that shape and influence research in this field?
3. Why has South African IR produced so few efforts at systematically theorising the China-Africa relationship?

1. 5 The Scope, Methodology and Theoretical Framework of the Research

The aim and research questions will be answered through the use of critique drawing upon the assumptions of Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT) (Devetak, 2009a). It is clear that, given both the observations in this chapter from the critical review and from looking at the perspectives of researchers, the China-Africa relationship has yet to receive adequate theoretical coverage. CIRT enables a researcher to understand why this might have occurred. It is situated within the Post-Positivist and Critical movement within IR, which has tried to ensure that "the politics of knowledge would be taken seriously in the study of international relations" (Devetak 2009a: 140). Meryvn Frost refers to this as the "'unmasking' role of critical theory" (1996: 32). This accords with the gaps identified by researchers, and is a topic South African IR scholars have expressed an interest in seeing more prominently in research. CIRT possesses a meta-theoretical and interpretative focus that is well suited for answering the research questions. Mark Neufeld argues that a good reason for focusing on meta-theory is that it comprises "the indispensable foundation of competent scholarly activity and the basis of the adequacy of the explanatory accounts, which are developed" (1995: 3).

In applying this approach, the scope of this thesis limits its focus to the contribution of South African IR to understanding China-Africa relations. China-Africa IR researchers accredited with having the greatest impact on the shape and direction of China-Africa IR traditionally originate in IR's 'core' countries of the US (Snow, 1994; Johnston, 2003; Johnston and Ross, 2006; Brautigam, 2009; Rotberg, 2009; Shinn and Eisenman, 2012), or the UK (Snow, 1988; Alden, 2007; Taylor, 2009; Power and Mohan, 2010). However, this thesis neither critiques the abundant research produced in IR's core countries such as the US or UK (see Gallagher, 2011 and Pan, 2012), nor Chinese sources of IR theory on the relationship. Global literature is only referred to when it is directly relevant to South African analysis or offers practical examples of critiquing perspectives (Shambaugh, 1993; Rosenau, 1994; Saunders, 2000; Pan, 2004, 2012). Furthermore, South African media analyses are not critiqued; these have already been interpreted in South Africa (see Wasserman, 2012 and 2013. Additionally, see Mawdsley, 2008 for an earlier critique of the UK media). Instead, this thesis focuses on the contribution of South African China-Africa IR, critiquing the treatment of theory and the influence of context. It will not suggest which interpretation of the nature of China-Africa relations is correct. Therefore, this thesis provides a CIRT-based critique of China-Africa IR, rather than a CIRT-based theorisation of China-Africa relations.

In doing this, the outputs are examined of South African researchers who have, either individually or in collaboration, significantly contributed to the field. The major sources for analysis are journal articles, papers and books dealing with the theme of China-Africa relations. Many of these contributions are produced by a number of research-oriented organisations, such as the Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS), South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD); the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), the Brenthurst Foundation and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The CCS is not immediately obvious as an IR institute, as it has been described as "largely, but not exclusively, orientated towards high-level exchanges around business and market-development issues" (Harneit-Sievers et al., 2010). However, by launching a revitalised and expanded journal-length publication of its *China Monitor* in August 2012 it has sought to take an academic turn and provide "a balanced and in-depth picture of China, fundamentally rooted in academic standards and analysis" (Grimm, 2012: 1). SAIIA publishes IR research, alongside a variety of other political analyses, in its journal the *South African Journal of International Affairs* (*SAJIA*). Other South African produced or orientated publications that have contributed to China-Africa IR include *Politikon*, the journal of the

South African Association of Political Studies (SAAPS). While *SAJIA* and *Politikon* have produced issues of their respective publications dedicated to analysis of aspects of China-Africa relations, at the outset of the thesis it must be noted that neither have to date published an article offering an especially rigorous or dedicated theoretical or conceptual treatment of the relationship of the China-Africa relationship, or of the place of IR theories in analysis.

1. 6 Conclusion

This chapter opened with an outline of the state of China-Africa studies internationally and in South Africa. Long considered a marginal object of study, in recent years China-Africa relations have been the subject of a plethora of IR analysis. Following this, the need for critical reflection in the discipline was explicated. This need stems from the observation that while China-Africa IR has grown, many researchers have called into question the lack of accompanying contextual knowledge of the research process. The chapter then justifies why South-African IR forms an important and significant case study in this regard. The discipline has heavily criticised by many of South African IR researchers for its lack of theoretical engagement and yet the field of China-Africa IR it produces is widely acknowledged as an important source of China-Africa research. Once the context had been established, the discussion then set out to delineate the scope of the research and to justify why CIRT is a valuable approach to achieve the research aim and questions.

There are three components in applying a CIRT framework to this study. The first component is the establishment of a critical framework for analysis. Chapter Two outlines this framework which is used to explore the research questions and provides a general background of CIRT as well as an overview of the major theoretical schools in IR. The second component is the contextualisation of South African China-Africa IR practice, focusing on the historical context and assumptions that have shaped analysis. This is dealt with in Chapter Three. The third component, comprising Chapter Four, involves a qualitative interpretation of the academic output of South African IR on China-Africa relations, building on past critiques (such as Schoeman, 2009 and Smith, 2013). These will be critically scanned for their theoretical mentions, conceptual explanation and meta-theoretical suppositions. They are critiqued on their theoretical explication and the impact they have for theorising

China-Africa relations. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the thesis by reflecting on the implications of the research findings, as well as possible future research.

CHAPTER 2: APPLYING IR THEORY

2. 1 Exploring Critical IR Theory

The previous chapter introduced the thesis and identified departure points and gaps in South African China-Africa IR. Questions were asked why, despite the vast possibilities for theoretical IR in South Africa, it appears that little effort has been made to research the China-Africa relationship within IR theoretical frameworks? The chapter also introduced the need to explore the context and thoughts on theory. Despite the absence of explicitly theory-orientated China-Africa analysis, this chapter will show that theory always informs research, and will then move on to understand how the interests and values of the researcher inform the choice for, and degree of explication involved in, theorising. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how a Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT) framework and interpretative methodology is appropriate for answering the research questions posed in Chapter One.

The first section will focus on the importance of clarifying why an interpretative methodology is needed for exploring questions of meta-theory, which lie in the realm of epistemology (see Neufeld, 1995). This optic highlights issues in the literature that hinder theoretical analysis. The second section gives an overview of the most common theoretical approaches found in IR. By way of an examination of epistemological ideas that have confused the role of theory in analysis, the chapter concludes by examining the particular theories or conceptual 'schools' we should expect to see in IR analysis.

2. 2 Locating the CIRT Framework in IR

This chapter begins by turning to the idea, offered by Steve Smith, that IR theory "determines the main intellectual fault-lines of the discipline as whole" and no matter which subfield is analysed, "the impact of the core theoretical debates reverberates throughout all of them" (2000: 379). CIRT is both a well-accepted and well-practised approach in IR research (Cox, 1981; Wyn Jones, 2001; Linklater, 2007; Rengger and Thirkell-White, 2007; Leysens, 2008; Devetak, 2009a; Moolakkattu, 2009; Kurki, 2011). While it encompasses many different approaches, all critical scholars locate the origins of CIRT in the Post-Positivist movement of

the 1980s, as part of the broader challenge to 'orthodox' theoretical IR research (Biersteker, 1989; Lapid, 1989). The Critical approach arose in a context where researchers were troubled that "the vast majority of scholarship in international relations…proceed[ed] without conscious reflection on its philosophical bases or premises" (Biersteker, 1989: 265). This movement therefore called for greater epistemological self-consciousness and reflection in IR research (Smith, 1996). Drawing on suggestions from Robert Cox (1981), CIRT's major contributor, as well as contributions of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (see Linklater, 2007), CIRT was developed by researchers keen to explore the relationship between the theoretical nature, interests and implications of IR texts, arguments and perspectives.

At the heart of this movement was a concern that greater attention and awareness was required for ideas about theories, or meta-theories. CIRT accepts the Post-Positivist rejection of mainstream IR's Positivist assumptions such as the assumption of a subject-object distinction – resulting in objective research – and the possibility of value-free research (Linklater, 2007). In Cox's (1981) view, all perception and research is informed by theory, and all resulting knowledge can never be considered devoid of the values and interests that predominate in that particular discipline or context in which the research was conducted. All theories are created in a specific context in which the interests of those who developed the concepts and theory impact upon its shape and form. Because theories are created to bring meaning and understanding to a context in order to accomplish a goal, Cox famously states, "all theory is for someone or for some purpose" (1981: 128). Since all research cannot help but draw on and contain theory, all research inexorably is influenced by the values and interests of the researcher. In this way the aim of CIRT is to "examine how theories are situated in prevailing social and political orders, how this situatedness impacts on theorizing, and, most importantly, the possibilities for theorizing in a manner that challenges the injustices and inequalities built into the prevailing world order." (Devetak, 2009a: 165).

There are many depictions of theory, but CIRT holds that theory can serve two purposes. Research involving traditional theory has a strong problem-solving component, which aims to uphold the status quo (Cox, 1981). This type of theory "takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action" (Cox, 1981: 128). Cox goes onto contrast the idea of problem-solving theory with the idea of Critical Theory:

> "[Critical Theory is] critical in the sense that it stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about . . . It is directed towards an appraisal of the very framework for action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters" (1981: 129).

The notion that we can have objective knowledge is seen as false. CIRT assumes, instead, that research involves the application of resources and analysis to understand an issue, but it does not accept this is a neutral activity. Critical theorists instead assume that "cognitive processes themselves are contextually situated and therefore subject to political interests" (Devetak, 2009a: 164). CIRT holds that understanding is an outcome of interpreting, and interpreting never occurs in an objective or value-free sense, as there are inexorable political interests in having a particular interpretation favoured over another. Indeed, IR takes place in a political context where great interest, resources and energy are expended in having a particular interpretation constructed as legitimate and rooted in objective fact. As Ken Booth asserts, "politically speaking, the power to decide what is real (and what should be forgotten) is crucial. To be able to dominate the defining of reality is a step towards dominating politics" (2007: 184). In raising these ideas to prominence, CIRT compels researchers to "consider how claims about neutrality can conceal the role knowledge plays in reproducing unsatisfactory social arrangements" (Linklater, 2007: 45).

This thought raises disciplinary questions relevant to the thesis, as interests and values exist which affect how such an object of study, like China-Africa relations, is approached, perceived, interpreted, and represented. Many assume that 'correct' interpretations and theories exist because there is an objective reality. However, in the act of interpreting, we realise firstly that objectivity is a fiction, and that interpretations, given their political implications and impact, are not neutral reflections (Linklater, 2007; Devetak, 2009a). By looking at the knowledge production process, a critique reveals for whom and for what purpose research is established and practiced.

A word on methodology is required. This thesis adopts a broader view of IR, as is found in research exploring both the social context within which research occurs and its relationship to epistemological or meta-theoretical ideas about appropriate research (George, 1994; Bell, 2009; Waever and Tickner, 2009). The aim of these researchers is to understand the scholarly production of knowledge on an issue, which requires a dual focus. For example,

Jim George states that such an approach can "illustrate how…textual and social processes are intrinsically connected and [can] describe, in specific contexts, the implications of this connection for the way we think and act in the contemporary world" (1994: 191). Waever and Tickner describe the IR knowledge production process as "both a social and an intellectual phenomenon" (2009: 2). To gain a complete understanding requires researchers to have at their disposal two sets of insights – both on how a text is produced and what ideas informed its production. The required understanding is mutually constitutive, as "the social dimension can be a tool to understanding the intellectual dimension, while conversely, an understanding of the intellectual patterns helps us to clarify the social structure of the IR discipline" (Waever and Tickner, 2009: 2). As Bell states, "[i]n order to analyse the modern social sciences it is essential to pay attention to both dimensions" (2009: 12). Schoeman (2009) adopts such an approach in her critique of South African IR, as will become evident in Chapter Three, the focus of which is the understanding of the context within which South African China-Africa IR is produced. The interpretative frames found in the intellectual products of South African China-Africa IR are critiqued in Chapter Four.

CIRT adopts the following stance: IR theories are ever-present, if implicit, in analyses and they can directly or indirectly maintain unequal power relations by representing the world order and the dominant ideas and actors within the world as immutable (Linklater, 2007). If research is too concerned with being problem-solving and thereby produces unreflective analysis, it effectively legitimises an ideological representation of 'reality' as objective theory (Cox, 1981). CIRT's suggestion, derived from Cox (1981), that the process of creating knowledge must be reflective of the research context will be examined next.

This idea follows from Cox's scepticism of the idea of the existence of objective knowledge; rather he stresses that all understanding is "traceable to a historically conditioned awareness of certain problems and issues" (1981: 128). All knowledge, and the perspectives and theories used, is "history-bound at its origin" (Cox, 1981: 128). Present ideas about the context in which research is located and how it is practiced reinforce and shape future research and assumed research needs and requirements. Context is a crucial influence on research, as researchers cannot distance themselves from all major ideas and pressures that exist during the research process. As Devetak states "knowledge is always, and irreducibly, conditioned by historical and material contexts" (2009a: 161). Therefore, since all knowledge is suspect – given its constructed nature – interpretation cannot be taken as an

objective analysis of a situation or event, because the theories and ambitions of a researcher are tied to the achievement of a political objective.

As has been noted, CIRT is part of a movement that critiqued and rejected Positivist premises for research. Adopting Positivist tenets entails presuming that norms, values and interests, which cause a researcher to observe and frame the object of study in a biased manner, are removable from the research process (Smith, 1996). Therefore, "objective knowledge of social reality is possible insofar as values are expunged from analysis" (Devetak, 2009a: 164). This has the effect of hiding from obvious view the ever-present norms and interests in order to indicate the objectivity of the researcher (Devetak, 2009a). This approach creates an artificial distinction between objective and subjective knowledge that is untenable for critical theories like CIRT, as its adoption allows researchers to "smuggle certain disputed values into their supposedly 'objective' research through selectivity of the information they chose to deal with" (Bayliss and Renegger, 1992: 19). In other words, the premises upon which scholars researched are also areas of political contestation and influence, subject to interests.

Instead of producing methods that remove values, CIRT embraces values and aims to "bring to consciousness latent interests, commitments, or values that give rise to, and orient, any theory" (Devetak, 2009a: 165). As a result, CIRT provides "a perspective on perspectives" (Cox, 1981, 128). In the case of this thesis, it will be the reasons for the lack of theory that will be brought to consciousness.

What these comments tell us is that CIRT is concerned with epistemology. Epistemology is defined as "what constitutes legitimate knowledge and how it is legitimately acquired" (Reus-Smit, 2012: 530). Researchers, in attempting to choose a viable course of action, aim to produce an analysis that is designed to reduce criticism of their epistemological choices. The greater the adherence in principle to the predominant methods and ideals of describing reality, the greater the verisimilitude of the resulting analysis and the legitimacy given it by academic audiences and beyond. This is anchored in a belief, illustrated here with an image borrowed from Donald Puchala, that academics, scholars and intellectuals are like competing artists who are "painting for us in their writings bold-stroked pictures of social reality and telling us that the real world is like their pictures" (2003: 24). Representations of this perceived reality are often striking and vivid, but the goal of most researchers is for their depiction to appear as a genuine and useful depiction of reality. The above explanation

clarifies why CIRT perceives the politics of knowledge to be a crucial area of research that requires better explication – because political interests are often exerted on IR so that it presents a politically 'appropriate' representation of an object of study.

CIRT has devoted considerable attention to the level of epistemology in IR, particularly to refuting the idea of Empiricism. IR scholars are keen to impress upon their audiences that they have ascertained facts about the object of study. Facts can be ascertained without theorising or the intrusion of values as "the business of perceiving the facts was taken to be a theory-free and value-free activity" (Frost, 1996: 16). A strict Empiricist epistemology crudely holds that reality is easily perceived and apprehended without recourse to complex theories, frameworks or optics – objects of study can be observed, analysed and revealed in their natural state. The researcher, by consciously suspending their personal or societal values that may influence their perception, assumes they have produced an unbiased representation of reality. The easiest response to claims that a work should be discounted because of questionable values or theory is therefore to counter by arguing that the research deals with plain, observable facts that were "given to the sense[s] independently of interpretation or theory" (Frost, 1996: 23). The cumulative effect of Empiricism in IR is described by Rosenau as a "widespread attitude that theorising itself is at best a luxury and at worst, a silly, counterproductive enterprise" (2003:7).

Empiricism obfuscates the intersubjective and interpretative nature of knowledge through reification. Alex Wendt defines reification as the process in which a researcher "objectifies social structures without recognizing that only human action instantiates, reproduces, and transforms those structures" (1987: 345). Objectivity grants power, prestige and influence for those researchers and those methods and approaches associated with objective 'common sense'. Theories are also contested and whoever can lay claim to common sense gains great power in shaping perceptions. This also has disciplining effects for, as Steve Smith suggests, "once established as common sense, theories become incredibly powerful since they delineate not simply what can be known but also what is sensible to talk about or suggest" (1996: 13). Since this is an epistemological move, it is on this level that contestation is often fiercest and most influential. The same applies to IR theories as it becomes easier to shape and influence the perceptions of others if a particular theoretical approach is thought of as objective or common sense. It involves presuming that social constructs come to possess an inherent, fixed nature that would exist even if they were not being observed or if they were to

completely disappear and then reappear without human observation or input. However, their very creation as constructs is hidden by their repetition as fact or reality, which gives them analytical currency. To forego reflection is to reify an interpretation into an irreproachable reality.

The common IR concepts we have at hand are often inadequate, reifying beliefs as natural or immutable. This causes us to overlook ideas that lie outside of the theories' parameters as they are discounted as theorised knowledge. This arises from the assumption that, as David Dunn suggests, "to see aspects of the world is not the same as attaining a systematic and thorough knowledge of it" (1995: 38-39). Conceptual development therefore becomes an important activity, as new concepts are required all the time for new observations and perspectives (Cox, 1981). This lack of finality to theoretical work, along with the substantial reflection and self-consciousness of epistemological bases, complicates the work of those seeking quick, simple solutions to the problems of policy and governance.

At its core, IR has historically been understood as a theory-centric discipline, and its aim has been to use its theoretical frameworks to contribute towards grasping the ontology of IR. Ontology is defined as "what we take to be real" (Booth, 2007: 187). These are the key objects, actors or ideas that researchers seek to discuss. Researchers thus have to become well acquainted with the key ontological objects of their research in order to theorise and be aware and understand how they theorise and conduct research. This chapter now turns to an exploration of how Critical researchers have described prevalent assumptions about the relationship between IR and policy relevancy.

2. 3 IR: A Policy Relevant Discipline

The dangers of such a policy relevancy approach have been noted in the past, and future research should be fully mindful of the risks to research in taking such an approach. Booth states, "if the search for policy relevance and policy involvement on the part of academics becomes all-embracing, then they become little more than the scribes of whatever is the prevailing idea or policy of the moment" (1995: 334). Once academia accepts this role for itself, it acquiesces in the construction of a future polity and perception of the world that serves the interests of those who are already in power, reducing the capacity of people to

critically reflect because "simpleminded constructions of political events and change, crafted in the language of progress and celebration, close even the most inquisitive of minds" (Vale, 2003: 185).

Critical IR theorists prefer to depart from similar premises to Fred Halliday who, referring to the work of Ralf Dahrendorf, idealises a healthy scepticism and ability to reflect in relation to the theory-practice debate, arguing that "it is both inevitable and desirable that this relation, of reflection to practice, should be one of tension" (1995: 734). This is undertaken in the assumption that the credibility of research efforts is jeopardised if the relevance debate is marginalised. Christopher Hill writes, for example, that "[t]he more we strain for policy relevance, even if only to justify our existence in the eyes of society at large, the more difficult it becomes to maintain intellectual integrity" (1994: 16). China-Africa scholars are advised to pay greater attention to the discourse on theory-practice in IR and how it influences what counts as acceptable perception.

Stephen Walt also remarks upon the paradox that this produces in analysis: "Policymakers pay relatively little attention to the vast theoretical literature in IR, and many scholars seem uninterested in doing policy-relevant work. These tendencies are unfortunate because theory is an essential tool of statecraft" (2005: 23). Researchers should be aware that in seeking to become more relevant, they must not remove theory from analysis, for in so doing they render subsequent efforts irrelevant due to the loss of intellectual credibility. Waever affirms this notion by arguing "the ideal in the discipline is relevance through theory, not excessive policy orientation" (2007: 306).

2. 4 IR: A Theoretical Discipline

The preceding sections suggested that theories have a significant political aspect to them, that they are found and in operation because they are expected to confer benefits upon the researcher that are not simply related to ideas about objectivity and truth. Having explored the significant component of meta-theory and epistemology that anchors CIRT critiques of research, we now look at the explicit guiding optics – some of the major IR theories.

This thesis adopts the view that an IR theory clarifies and illuminates, providing the optic through which we can achieve a better understanding of international relations. Ken Booth suggests that "we are all theorists now, whether or not we recognise it, whether or not we like it" (1997: 377). James Rosenau (2003) labels this as IR's 'theoretical imperative'. This echoes an earlier statement by Robert Keohane, who states "to purge oneself of all traces of theory would be impossible, since even our intuitions about world politics are deeply affected by how the subject has been thought about in the past" (1986: 3).

Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater offer a clear outline of this presumption: "the events and issues which comprise international relations can only be interpreted and understood by reference to a conceptual framework" (2009: 16). This is based on similar assumptions held by some of IR's pioneers such as Hans Morgenthau, who suggests that IR theories "bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible" (1985: 3). Keohane adds "no one can cope with the complexities of world politics without the aid either of a theory or of implicit assumptions and propositions that substitute, however poorly, for theory" (1986: 4). Rosenau additionally suggests that any antipathy towards theory is unjustifiable, given that "the very process of engaging in observation requires sorting out some of the observed phenomena as important and dismissing the other as trivial" (2003: 8). Rosenau also outlines this view in regards to China, stating that "only through a resort to theorising can we begin to sort out the competing dynamics that differentiates the important from the trivial dimensions of China's role and thereby clarify the interplay of the sources which underlie its conducts" (1994: 528). A clear understanding of China-Africa relations therefore involves an understanding of IR theories – but what theories are prominent in IR?

2. 5 IR: Perspectives and Theoretical Frameworks

This section now looks at the types of established IR theories we are referring to when we talk of perspectives and theoretical frameworks. There is no shortage of IR theory books and authors who frame and outline these 'schools' and theories (McGowan et al., 2002; Sterling-Folker, 2006; Brown and Ainley, 2009; Burchill and Linklater, 2009). This chapter draws on Stephanie Lawson's (2012) typology of IR theories. Unfortunately, capturing the full nuance and complexity of IR's established theories is a challenging task, given both the limited space

afforded by the scope of this chapter and the contested nature of IR theory itself. As Chris Brown notes "mastering much of contemporary IR theory is a complex and daunting task, involving learning a distinctive language, or possibly several distinctive languages" (2006: 686). Despite the desire to avoid caricaturing the vast corpus of work that constitutes each school, the scope of this chapter results in each theory being succinctly summarised in one or two paragraphs that introduce but cannot hope to do justice to the complexity within the discipline.

2.5. 1 Realism

The Realist IR School is the most well-known and popular IR theory (Walt, 1998). Many of its tenets such as anarchy, sovereignty and power are shared by other theories. Realism is a state-centric school of thought and sovereignty is vital as a basis for relations, guaranteeing autonomy and freedom from interference from any external actor who can imperil or deny decision-making and authority in a state (Krasner, 1999). Realism also provides the easiest set of assumptions for understanding the observed behaviour of states, yet there is no widely agreed upon definition of Realism in IR. As a result Benjamin Frankel thinks of Realism as possessing "a common centre of philosophical gravity" (1996: x).

There are a number of different variants of Realist theory, some of which will be described briefly here. Firstly, Classical Realism explores international relations based on an understanding that the selfishness, greed and fear located in human nature influences the behaviour of states (Morgenthau, 1973). A second variant is Structural Realism, otherwise known as Neorealism. We should note that the majority of South African IR is criticised for drawing on Neorealist assumptions (Taylor, 2000a). Kenneth Waltz (1979), its major contributor, developed Neorealism in the hopes of placing Realism on a surer scientific basis. Neorealism is based on two assumptions. Firstly, that acquiring power is the best means for a state to pursue and advance its national interests. The greater a state's power – usually understood as military capacity – the more likely it will be that it can achieve its national interests, because this power can force other states to accept the interests and behaviour of the powerful state. Secondly, Neorealism assumes that the permanently anarchic nature of the international system encourages this self-seeking behaviour amongst states (Waltz, 1979). Realists go on to presume that all states have the same interest – to survive – as they are similar and single-minded entities pursuing power, which reduces international relations to an

essential notion – namely, that states are involved in a game of the "survival of the fittest within a hostile environment" (Naidu, 2008: 189). A third branch of Realism, called Offensive Realism, proclaims that states measure their power relative to other states, but no sufficient level of power can be reached which guarantees a feeling of safety or security. Le Pere elaborates how

> "in a unipolar system and in theory, states that are growing and expanding economically tend to become ambitious and dissatisfied with the status quo, more defensive about their established international interests and commitments to the point where they are prepared to disrupt the dominance of the world's major power" (2008: 25).

Offensive Realism posits that there is no authority to arbitrate between states, and no one state can possess all power in the system – consequently if a state possesses too much power it creates insecurity in others, who will engage in balancing behaviour and combine their power to keep them safe from aggressive behaviour.

2.5. 2 Liberalism

In IR, Realism's major opponent as a theory is often stated to be Liberalism (Walt, 1998). The two schools share many assumptions, but it is erroneous to think that Liberalism is largely synonymous with Realism, because adherents find it offers a different and nuanced perspective (Burchill, 2009). Liberal IR precepts work from the same presumption as Realism, namely that states are the major actor existing in an anarchic system. States can, however, engage in activity and behaviour which over time lessens the threat of anarchy and induces cooperative and eventually peaceful relationships. It is assumed that this builds an ever increasing and dense series of links and relations that influence state behaviour over time to such a degree that states are constrained – institutionalising them and developing peaceful cooperative behaviour. This cooperative behaviour and interdependence is underpinned by Multilateralism. Here Multilateralism is understood as "an institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct." (Ruggie, 1993: 11).

While Liberalism also takes the state as its central focus, it examines the behaviour of states within institutions, as part of a world of complex interdependence that includes many important non-state actors and organisations such as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the African Union (AU). States do form a central component of thinking, but they are not granted the same determinative power that Realists ascribe to the state. Instead there is scope for non-state actors, or organisations composed of states to influence action and behaviour (Nye and Keohane, 1977).

States increase interdependence with each other through multilateral institutions and organisations such as the UN, where multiple topics are discussed by states that are seeking an agreeable, binding and common position on issues, for which they have insufficient power to address alone in an anarchic and changing world. As a result, finding a way for all to gain and profit in the system is not only seen as an escape from Realist-based insecurity (Jervis, 1978), it is also seen as a means of eventually establishing perpetual peace (see Bull, 1977).

Liberal theory advocates the idea that economic interaction should be focused upon as a key determinant in analysis (Burchill, 2009). States seek to improve mutual gains in trade and economic activity, which fosters deeper cooperation. Sustaining and consolidating relations and links grows ever more fundamental for all states, increasing the level of interdependence. There is some confusion in IR about the difference between Liberalism and Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism here refers to the gradual movement away from Mercantile economic behaviour by emphasising that a global economy, built upon free trade and a free market, as well as the creation of institutions to govern and consolidate such behaviour amongst states, will deliver far greater benefits than a world order in which states remain predominant (Burchill, 2009).

2.5. 3 English School

The English School of IR also shares a number of assumptions with Realism (see Bull, 1977). Proponents argue that in spite of the pressures of anarchy the state is capable, and has made efforts to attempt to, mitigate the worst effects through the construction and constitution of stable institutions – predictable platforms or mechanisms for interaction, forming what amounts to a 'society' amongst the participating states over time (Buzan, 2004; Linklater and Suganami, 2006). The steady acceptance and observance of the norms associated with

institutions of war, diplomacy, and the Balance of Power help create international order (Bull, 1977). States perceive that, since they share interests and values, the institutions they create are better at bringing about order, and that the furtherance of these institutions increases peace. As Bull puts it "when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" (1977: 13). This leaves such states less inclined to fight each other, as they rather seek further forms of cooperation to maintain order and stability.

Common values and norms are particularly important for state interaction, institutionalising these norms and values so that interaction is said to occur in a 'society of states', which is a key phrase in the thinking of the English School. Philip Snow draws a parallel with the society of states, descended from the British Empire, when he states that through the expansion of relations in Africa, it is "hard not to think in terms of something resembling the emergence of a Chinese Commonwealth" as a result (2008: xvi).

2.5. 4 Constructivism

Constructivism originates from within the Critical IR movement of the 1980s that also gave rise to CIRT (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998). It is now widely acknowledged as one of the key schools in IR (Walt, 1998). It arose largely thanks to the research of Alex Wendt (1999) and offers IR an alternative understanding of the world to Realism and Liberalism. Realist and Liberalists emphasise the importance of material factors such as power and resources, but overlook the importance of ideas in IR.

Through positing that international relations occurs in an inter-subjectively constructed world of ideas and concepts that influence perception and policy, analytical focus is turned towards that process of construction of what is assumed to be reality. Rather than the world existing of things that have an inherent material identity and reality, humans ascribe value and meaning to objects through an inter-subjective process of understanding (Wendt, 1999).

Sterling-Folker states that "what we take as immutable structures in International Relations are actually embedded social relationships that are contingent to a large extent on how nation-states think about and interact with one another" (2006: 118). Interests are largely defined by

identity and how a state wishes to be perceived and how it perceives itself (Reus-Smit, 2009). By focusing on the power of ideas and how they shape worldviews, it points out that material considerations for behaviour do not alone determine state behaviour.

2.5. 5 Critical Perspectives: Feminism and Post-Modernism

Alongside CIRT, Feminism and Post-Modernism provide the major critical perspectives in IR. Historically these perspectives were seen as alternative or marginal. However, the critical value of these perspectives is to encourage researchers to interrogate research to reveal the hidden interests guiding analysis.

Many CIRT ideas resonate with the Feminist IR School, which does not employ one approach, but is based on assumptions that research should oppose the reification and entrenchment of concepts and values – particularly objectivity. Feminist IR holds that objectivity privileges and normalises a male-dominated and profoundly frustrating and harmful international order (True, 2009). The critique departs from the premise that ideas and values are 'constructed' and through their unreflective repetition are cast as normal or objective. This has the dual effect of both reifying a Masculine order and silencing and marginalising Feminist insights, voices and theory that exposes the contradictions and harmful aspects of this construction (True, 2009).

For many scholars, the pathway to a framework for understanding these questions began with Post-Modernist accounts of those texts and arguments that can deconstruct the knowledge/power nexus (see Devetak, 2009b). This also resonates with Feminist thought, which is another pathway, sharing a meta-theoretical position and frustrated with contemporary approaches, aiming for the inculcation of reflection as important in and for IR.

2. 6 Conclusion

The chapter departed from the premise that, in light of Critical observations of China-Africa IR and South African IR, a novel and illuminative perspective was required. This is provided by a CIRT derived critique of South African IR on China-Africa relations. CIRT was chosen, as it is capable of discerning theoretical and meta-theoretical values, which can be linked to

the interests of researchers. This chapter then moved to outline some of the different IR schools, showing that there is a wealth of IR theories available for analysing in IR. In Chapter Three focus now shifts towards the context South African China-Africa IR context within which research has occurred, so as to reveal the latent values and interests that have guided China-Africa IR.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3. 1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the historical context and development of South African IR on China-Africa relations. It is important to study the historical context in which research occurs as understanding how this context influences research is an important facet of the Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT) approach, which was discussed in Chapter Two (see Devetak, 2009a). Additionally, CIRT recognises that social, political and economic conditions and interests exert considerable influence over the choice of theory applied in research and, therefore, the type of research produced. Furthermore, Ian Taylor (2000a), a prominent China-Africa researcher and significant contributor to South African IR, suggests that CIRT provides a means of overcoming deficiencies in the discipline. These deficiencies will be outlined in this chapter.

The historical context of South African IR on China-Africa relations will be described through a review of key publications and research, as well as contemporary and reflective analyses conducted in hindsight (see as examples Alden, 2001 and Taylor, 2006a). While this chapter will not be an exhaustive description of all the literature produced, it aims to describe the major factors that have combined to produce a China-Africa IR research community in South Africa. The discussion in this chapter, however, will be limited to South African IR research on China-Africa relations produced since the 1960s and will not provide an exhaustive historical account of governmental, societal or business relations between China and South Africa.

The chapter initially describes the overall context of South African China-Africa IR and the lack of theoretically informed research within the discipline. Following this, China-Africa analysis in South Africa is divided into three historical periods. The first period deals with research and analysis produced prior to the 1994 democratic election in South Africa, which is important in order to contextualise later research. The second period – dubbed the 'Two Chinas Debate' – covers the period from 1994 until 1998 when South Africa recognised the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the 'legitimate China' instead of the Republic of China

(ROC), otherwise known as Taiwan.[3] This section focuses on scholarly texts produced during this time and the South African IR-orientated events and academic conferences that led to their production, as well as external events such as South African diplomacy and decision-making. The third period examines the context of China-Africa analysis after 1998, which is of significance as it demonstrates that values and interests have influenced China-Africa IR.

3. 2 The Overall Context of South African China-Africa IR

Running through critiques of South African IR is the assumption that it is a theoretically underdeveloped discipline. In his review of the state of South African IR, Ian Taylor suggests that the majority of research has brought the discipline to a "theoretical impasse" (2000a: 207), which derives from a preference among researchers for the "specious reporting of 'facts' and the 'realistic' descriptive approach that bedevils IR in this country" (2000a: 217). The continued existence of this theoretical impasse grants an important premise to depart from in a critique of China-Africa IR. This impasse explains why South African IR – despite its history, prominence, output and capacity – has not become a hub of theoretical China-Africa IR analysis. Therefore, it becomes essential that the predominant analytical approaches and context of research be critiqued in an attempt to rectify the current theoretical dearth in the discipline.

Karen Smith (2013) and Maxi Schoeman (2009) lament the absence of South African IR theory as a topic or activity in both research and dissertations, implying that its very absence raises significant disciplinary questions about the value attached to it by IR practitioners. Both Smith's and Schoeman's critiques are anchored by earlier critiques of South African IR (Vale, 1989, 2002, 2004; Taylor, 2000b; Van der Westhuizen, 2005) and in reflections and surveys on the state of the discipline in the country (Du Pisani et al., 1991; Booysen and Van Nieuwkerk, 1998). The fundamental criticism that had first been raised in 1989 by Peter Vale, that "South Africa's contribution to the development of International Relations [IR] has been poor" (1989: 201), maintains a great deal of validity today. Departing from this statement, the credibility of South African IR as a discipline is called into question. Ian Taylor suggests that "reflections on the role and status of theory lie at the heart of

[3] "Republic of China", "ROC" and "Taiwan" are used interchangeably in this thesis.

International Relations (IR) as a credible discipline" (2000b: 207). Taylor also remarked that "the field of International Relations in South Africa is largely underdeveloped at a theoretical level" (2000a: 207). Vale further criticises South African IR for an "absence of daring", arguing that it "displays little imagination and almost no conceptual adventure" (2004: 240).

The corrective that South African IR has implemented in this regard has been to increase its relevancy to policymakers; in the case of China, this has been to recapture relevancy and influence. Some, such as Smith, critique the prominence of the value of relevancy, labelling it as the "curse of policy relevance" (2013: 538). However, the 2012 Teaching, Research and International Policy (TRIP) reports show that policy relevance is highly ranked as a key issue in South African IR, with 35% of responses saying it was the main aim of their research (Maliniak et al., 2012: 38).

As the thoughts of new contributors were incorporated into South African IR and the subsequent cacophony of voices and theories emerged, alongside the emergence of a new government in South Africa, it was ensured that "the policy questions that were asked at the time reflected both bewilderment and befuddlement" (Vale, 2004: 240). Smith emphasises this, stating that "with a new political dispensation, came new issues and challenges, all of which required urgent policy solutions" (2013: 538). In Schoeman's contextual reflection, the ANC (African National Congress)-led government of national unity is seen to have opened up decision-making space for intellectual debate, ostensibly as the "idea of participatory democracy was very strong" (2009: 59). However, she argues that a better explanation for the new space was that the government "lacked research capacity within its own ranks and, therefore, was very much dependent on the scholarly community for input into policy development" (Schoeman, 2009: 59).

Sven Grimm's (2011) argument is indicative of an as yet unresolved tension in South African IR over the relationship of policy to theory and research. Grimm posits that China-Africa research "should…encourage researchers to look behind the rhetoric and challenge the assumptions, be they simplistically optimistic or unduly sceptical" (2011: 3). This is a reflection on the responsibility of researchers – as knowledge producers – to undertake critique and reflection against the need to produce practical and useful knowledge. Grimm proceeds to call into question the salience of continual reflection, suggesting that "research on China is no luxury for 'ivory tower academics' in Sub-Saharan Africa; there is a need for

policy-relevant research to better understand an emerging partner to the continent" (2011: 3). This does not dissuade theory per se, but the first and only move to discuss the purpose of research can have a disciplining effect against those (nameless) 'ivory tower academics'. This fails, however, to explain exactly how relevancy will be legitimately assessed, nor how this contributes to a better understanding of China. This section has examined the context of South African China-Africa IR's turn to policy relevancy and the dearth of theory in analysis. The following section will discuss the historical context of China-Africa studies in South Africa including the thorny foreign policy decision of which China the post-1994 South African government would choose to recognise.

3. 3 Historical Context of China-Africa Studies in South Africa

3.3. 1 China-Africa Research and Analysis Prior to 1994

Before focusing on the Two Chinas Debate, we must first understand the early history of South African China-Africa analysis. Two China-Africa articles were the topic of the earliest featured issues of the two major South African IR publications, *Politikon* and SAIIA's (South African Institute of International Affairs) *International Affairs Bulletin* (which was replaced with *SAJIA* in 1992). The second edition of *Politikon* in 1975 contains an article by the Australian academic WAC Adie (1975: 63), outlining how China regarded apartheid South Africa as the 'common enemy' and how this was the focus of Chinese supported revolutions and political movements in Africa. In response, South African understanding of China was unfavourable; Adie mentions a common perception held that "the Chinese consistently prophesy war, revolution and the collapse of the international system as we know it" (1975: 62). The first issue of SAIIA's *International Affairs Bulletin* contains an analysis of Soviet and Chinese foreign policy by British scholar James Mayall (1977). Despite these early publications, interest was not sustained, resulting in a patchy history of analysis, usually focusing on China's role in the Angolan civil war (Barber and Barratt, 1990). Commentary was perhaps limited because of the embarrassing situation where both ROC (Taiwan) and the PRC were supporting the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The limited study of China in these articles is indicative of a broader disinterest and subsuming of China within a broader threat.

What is clear from a critique of apartheid-era analysis is how interest groups and think tanks dominated output. Hendrik Reitsma (1976: 62) points out that apartheid ideology exerted a dysfunctional influence on South Africa analysis and created an extreme aversion to the establishment of a Chinese presence in Africa. Almost all of the latter analysis was characterised by misperception, which he describes as a clinical problem, given that so many South African scholars were so convinced of the existence of such a threat that:

> "When considering South Africa's fear of a possible Chinese attack and its inclination to interpret every Chinese activity in Africa as evidence that such an attack is imminent, an outsider might well conclude that South Africa suffers from hysteria or paranoia" (Reitsma, 1976: 62).

Reitsma felt "fairly certain that it [South Africa] perceives the Red Dragon's presence in Africa as the gravest of dangers for its existence" (1976: 62). He also identifies a preference for an easy and ideologically derived explanation that served the ideas of the apartheid government. The lack of reflection in South African IR at that time helped to reify the idea of a unified state and a strategy of conquest based on race and anti-South African feeling. Yet this was contingent on the assumption that the character of China was based on a broader Cold War challenge of a communist threat to Africa that was often dubbed the 'Rooi Gevaar' (Red Danger) (Metrowich, 1967; Grieg, 1977). The ideological predisposition ensured that analysts confidently claimed that "there is no proof that the Communists are really split over their campaign for Africa" (Metrowich, 1967: 30), contrary to the overwhelming evidence of Sino-Soviet antagonism since 1966. Ironically, research at the time and subsequent reviews find strong evidence of clandestine South Africa-Chinese relations – something yet to receive adequate treatment in the major analyses, but one that does reinforce a Realist interpretation (Larkin, 1971; Southall, 2006).

The 1960s and 1970s became crucial periods for the legitimising efforts of the apartheid government who, in concert with propaganda and friendly interest groups, secretly channelled government resources into increasing South African research capacity (Kalley et al., 1999). The outcome of this sponsorship was a notable outlay that was directed towards establishing the PRC as a component of the great communist penetration and threat facing Africa (see Grieg, 1977). This time saw the emergence and growing impact of interest groups upon research and perception, but not necessarily SAIIA and others, as they pursued a

more independent position relative to the government under the leadership of John Barratt (Vale, 2008; Schoeman, 2009). The most prominent outputs came from the South African Freedom Foundation (SAFF) – a South African research institute, headed by Fred 'Red' Metrowich – with the aim of shaping and framing Chinese-Africa relations as part of a single communist threat to South Africa (Metrowich, 1967). SAFF was exposed in 1977 as a government-funded entity set up to legitimise and promulgate official thinking, despite claims of independence and objectivity, whose output was committed to promoting free market policies (Kalley et al., 1999). Its exposure as a government funded propaganda group is a sign of the money spent on establishing enemies of the South African state, such as China, through 'legitimate' knowledge. Raymond Ackerman (2004), a prominent South African businessman and a trustee of SAFF, describes how Metrowich was ruined by this exposure and how the SAFF was forced to urgently rebrand itself so as not to damage its primary objectives of promoting free market policies in South Africa. The intertwining of accepted, or authoritative, knowledge with presumed business and national interests (economic) played a part in constructing policy regarding China. Here the image of China was one serving interests, and there was no interest in discerning a deeper or more complex perspective or image of China.

Later analysis removed much of the ideological optics. Chris Maritz (1987: 321) largely neglected China in his analysis, continuing instead the trend of subsuming China within a broader Soviet/communist threat. He did, however, interject an important point, arguing that South Africa's "reactions to the role of Moscow and Peking [Beijing] in Southern Africa must be seen as emanating directly from her understanding of their motives, objectives and strategies" (Maritz, 1987: 321). This can be seen as a move to bring in more reflective research and a better degree of explication in analysis.

The end of both the Cold War and the cessation of apartheid policies brought a new freedom and curiosity for South Africans. The country's academics were being welcomed back to the global scholarly community in the 1990s, as South Africa was itself readmitted to many international organisations from which it had been previously banned or had withdrawn. Those who were keen to explore China in this new period enjoyed the increased opportunities to travel and conduct research. Almost immediately, SAIIA published a report by Colin Elgin and Ebbe Domisse (1991) called 'The China Orange'. In their report, Elgin and Domisse (1991) mention the crucial question that would preoccupy many South African IR

commentators for years, namely, whether South Africa could or should establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. This would necessitate the cessation of official diplomatic relations with Taiwan which were, according to Suttner (1995), an apartheid-era foreign policy 'anachronism'. However, this did not occur easily and the decision triggered two years of arguments and debate, the results of which still impact upon research to this day.

Thus far, this section has shown how, prior to 1994 and the country's first democratic elections, South Africa's China-Africa IR ideologically framed China as part of a communist threat. It drew upon Realist ideas and was fairly typical for IR of the time, which Peter Vale suggests was informed by "an abstruse conjuncture of social science, racial ideology and antiquated strategic logic" (1989: 101). Few studies presented an in-depth or systematic analysis of either China, or China-Africa relations, outside of apartheid ideology and the imagined threat to the South African state.

Subsequent research has shown that South African IR has failed to capitalise on China's links with South African liberation movements (Taylor, 2000a). For instance, Taylor (2000b) criticises the assumption of China as a prominent supporter of liberation movements in Southern Africa, on the grounds that, in South Africa, it was limited to support for the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), at one time a major liberation party in South Africa, seeking the expulsion of foreigners. Roger Southall describes how this "contradicted China's commitment to the liberation struggle" (2006: 442). Certain framing techniques and contextual factors remained and grew in the period that followed, namely, a reluctance for nuanced analysis, a preference for Manichean and zero-sum framing, the presence and importance of interest groups in knowledge production, and, most importantly, a dearth of research grounded in IR theory.

3.3. 2 The Two Chinas Debate: The Legacy of Isolation Politics in Apartheid

The immediate post-1994 period is referred to by its popular characterisation, as the 'Two Chinas Debate'. It is difficult to find who should be credited with first using this name for the dilemma. However, based on accessible research, Willie Breytenbach (1994) seems to have been the first South African researcher to use the phrase. Given the pressing domestic issues facing the country at this time, such as economic policy, the future of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the consolidation of a democratic South African society,

the issue of China relations was not immediately reconsidered. Moreover, it was assumed that South Africa would immediately recognise the PRC, yet this process in fact took about three years. However, a decision in this regard was necessary and, briefly put, the three options that South Africa debated for its foreign policy regarding the 'two Chinas' were:

1. Whether South Africa should continue to recognise Taiwan, with whom it had established political and economic links during apartheid, as the legitimate China and forego establishing relations with the PRC (see Sono, 1995);
2. Whether South Africa was capable of attempting an unprecedented dual recognition relationship with both the PRC and Taiwan (see Breytenbach, 1994; Daniel, 1995; Geldenhuys, 1995); and
3. Whether South Africa should choose to recognise the PRC in line with the majority of countries in the world and end relations with Taiwan (see Mills, 1995; Suttner 1995).

These three options will be elaborated on later in this section. First, the historical context of the time will be briefly outlined. South Africa and Taiwan had initially established diplomatic links in 1976 (Wolvaardt et al., 2010). By 1994, Taiwan had constructed a dense network of economic links and diplomatic relations with South Africa (Hart, 2002), and, at first, enjoyed the advantage of near universal recognition as the legitimate Chinese government, often underpinned through offers of investment and using "its economic resources to lubricate the granting of diplomatic recognition", in what Taylor (2002: 138) terms 'dollar diplomacy'. Throughout the Cold War, China and Taiwan sought to best the other in multilateral settings and bilateral deals through diplomacy and trade, particularly amongst African states. However, from 1976 Taiwan and apartheid-South Africa found themselves increasingly isolated in the world; the PRC was determined to have global acceptance of its 'One China Policy' thereby marginalising Taiwan, whilst South Africa was shunned around the world for its apartheid policies (see Geldenhuys, 1984; 1990). Deon Geldenhuys (1984) offers an important exploration of the relationship within a framework of isolated states. Arguing that such states were bound to ally with each other given foreign hostility, Roger Southall describes their existence as life "in a half-world of political isolation" (2006: 421).

Any decision appeared to inexorably jeopardise economic investments established during apartheid, as well as the political importance Taiwan attached to maintaining diplomatic links

and recognition from South Africa. Wolvaardt et al. (2010: 163) estimates that Taiwan's substantial economic wealth approximated over US$80 billion in foreign reserves – at the time the largest in the world. They also estimate that Taiwan was South Africa's fifth largest trading partner offering many existing investments and opportunities for investment. This total, plus promised future investment, ensured that Taiwanese influence lasted well into Nelson Mandela's presidency, which started in 1994. Politically, Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's presence at Nelson Mandela's inauguration, one of the most high profile days in South African history, was taken as an important indication to the watching world that established relations were expected to endure, even expand (Taylor, 2006a).

It is commonly suggested that Taiwan contributed to the election campaign of Nelson Mandela's party, the ANC, hoping to retain some influence once the party came to power. The precise figure, as well as the influence it brought, is unclear: Garth Shelton suggests "Taipei made a very substantial contribution (an estimated US$25 million) to the African National Congress' (ANC) election campaign" (2008: 259). Taylor (2006a) and Wolvaardt et al. (2010) also speculate as to the size of the Taiwanese contribution to the election fund, most settling for US$10 million. A key pillar of Taiwanese interaction was its dollar diplomacy and its foreign reserves to dissuade South African overtures and retain an active part in the Debate and decision-making. It did not just focus on government and parties – intellectual interest was also stimulated.

Important intellectual links also existed between South African and Taiwanese IR epistemic communities. Chris Alden (2001) remarks that Taiwan attempted to win support for its relations with South Africa by funding prominent intellectuals and sponsoring conferences and trips abroad to Taiwan in order to influence the Debate. Scholars were later accused of being unduly influenced by Taiwanese funding and it has subsequently been argued that this endangered South African interests (Alden, 2001).

In South Africa, too, there is evidence of the efforts scholars went to in order to influence the decision. In 1995 two conferences were held where major stakeholders were observed. The first was called *The Taiwan Experience* – a conference held at the University of Pretoria and sponsored by the Taiwanese consulate general. Researchers presented and discussed a number of papers aiming to clarify and, implicitly, give vital support for either the continuation of Taiwanese relations or dual recognition (Geldenhuys, 1995). The second

meeting was convened by SAIIA and the Forum for Global Dialogue (FGD), later the IGD (see FGD/SAIIA, 1995). Both conferences contributed to the Debate, and the resultant publications provide important insights into the assumptions underpinning South African IR on China and Taiwan at the time. Very little IR theory explicitly figures in framing these arguments. Moreover, the authors do not reference a specific IR orientation in the construction of the argument. The three options facing the South African government are now outlined in more detail.

Themba Sono (1995) outlines the first option, that is, the continuation of the status quo and growth of Taiwanese relations. This was an unpopular option and few other researchers explicate how this might occur and, importantly, what it would entail. Sono (1995) points to a presumed Chinese predilection for warfare, its human rights abuses and lack of democracy to dissuade readers from thinking relations with China were a viable option. He also asserts that, if South Africa could not continue to recognise Taiwan because of suspicions over Chinese intentions, it should also try force both to allow dual recognition.

The second option heavily relied on the notion that "Mr. Mandela's towering stature" enabled South Africa to pursue a hitherto unique and unprecedented solution to the dilemma – that of dual recognition (Breytenbach, 1994: 53). South Africa might be able to persuade the PRC to break its avowed 'One China Policy' and thereby permit South Africa a dual recognition option. Willie Breytenbach (1994) and Deon Geldenhuys (1995) were proponents of this position and argued that the pursuit of the dual recognition position was in South Africa's best interests. Moral considerations informed the perception of these interests, rather than being extrapolated from economic arguments. John Daniel (1995) explicated the case for dual recognition based upon three criteria. Firstly, given that Taiwan fulfilled the criteria of international law for statehood, Daniel could not identify sufficient grounds for dismissing this option as "the obstacle is not legal, it is political" (1995: 42). Secondly, Taiwan and China were tacitly and implicitly acknowledging that they were separate and distinct entities between which relations were increasing; given time, South Africa would not have to make a choice in any case. Thirdly, Taiwan's considerable resources qualified it as a powerful state in global politics. Daniel went on to suggest that even if China continued to grow so that relations became increasingly tempting, the moral implications deterred such a switch; dual recognition was dually appealing as it was "both the morally correct position in human rights terms as well as, conveniently, the one in South Africa's best economic interests at the

present time" (1995: 48). The qualifier of 'at the present time' is an acknowledgment of the tenuousness of arguing for future economic interests given China's rapid growth.

Greg Mills (1995; 1997) outlines the third and ultimately successful option. Utilising the concept of national interest, Mills argued that South Africa should recognise the PRC. He based his argument on the assumption that China inevitably aligned its national interests with those of other states who prized the continual stability of the current world political and economic order. Chinese economic growth meant it needed to become an important stakeholder in the world system. Moreover, it was argued that any losses incurred by the withdrawal of Taiwanese support and investment could easily be matched or exceeded by Chinese deals (Mills, 1995).

3.3. 3 Analysing the Outcome and Impact of the Debate

President Mandela's announcement in November 1996 that South Africa would henceforth recognise the PRC instead of the ROC (Taiwan) both shocked and infuriated many IR observers, who had spent three relatively fruitless years of debate and were left in the dark as to the issues and factors and expectations that ultimately determined the decision. In the aftermath scholars sought to find what had determined South Africa's choice (Geldenhuys, 1997; Taylor, 1997). Nevertheless, the hasty, secretive and uncoordinated manner of the announcement and decision seemed to reflect the majority of analysts' expectations and arguments of a switch to China. Both Ian Taylor (2006a) and Sanusha Naidu (2008) suggest that the decision to recognise China over Taiwan was determined by economic interests. South Africa stood to gain from access to the Chinese market and trade, which was expected to offset and exceed and losses incurred by Taiwanese withdrawals from South Africa.

South Africa's domestic economic interests were also influenced by the looming issue of the handover of Hong Kong to China given the substantial level of South African trade that had been established (Geldenhuys, 1997; Singh, 1997). Wolvaardt et al. (2010) suggest that Taiwan's preparedness to accept a dual policy (and the encouragement this gave South Africa) lay in the unclear outcomes of Hong Kong's handover. This would, it was hoped, put the PRC in an awkward position. Chinese pressure and intransigence likely played a part in ensuring this did not occur. Politically, a trigger for the announcement occurred after

Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's announced his intention to visit South Africa, which would have ensured the issue dragged on further.

Foreign commentators have criticised the handling of the Two Chinas Debate and the manner in which the decision was made, but South African IR has avoided similar critiques. British commentators such as David Ryall describe the Debate as "agonised" (1997: 397); the Indian researcher Swaran Singh (1997) describes the historical significance and impact of the switch in diplomatic relations and recognition, which had, like so many of South Africa's diplomatic relations, come 'full circle'. Singh nevertheless argues "the long-drawn inaction and lack of clarity on the part of the South African government ensured that the issue was blown out of all proportion" (1997: 54). Later scholars such as Anthony Lemon describe the mood of the time as fraught with uncertainty and anxiety, concluding, "no foreign policy has caused Pretoria such anguish as the 'two Chinas' question" (2000: 36). James Hamill and Donna Lee also characterised the Debate as "a long, convoluted and highly unsatisfactory episode" (2001: 38). South African scholars have not demonstrated the same level of self-criticism when examining this process and outcomes of this Debate. This reflects an interest in depicting the outcome of the Debate as the eventual realisation by the government that the option chosen represented the rational decision. Sanusha Naidu (2008) offers the most recent reflection, briefly describing the dynamics of the Debate. While both Mills (1997) and Naidu (2008) offer an account of the major actors and events, only two analyses – those of Ian Taylor (2006a) and Chris Alden (2001) – offer deeper insights into the impact of the Debate.[4]

One significant outcome of the Two Chinas Debate was the introduction of a whole range of new stakeholders and interlocutors, which was to impact on future studies (Alden, 2001: 124). The question "preoccupied the foreign policy-making establishment, the unfettered press, the business community and, for the first time, a number of emergent interest groups for more than two years" (Alden, 2001: 124). At this time SAIIA, the FGD/IGD and the East Asia Project (EAP) emerged as major contributors to the discourse. Alden suggests that China-Africa researchers proved adept at taking advantage of the opportunity of "the open environment to contribute to the debates on foreign policy questions to a degree unheard of in the recent past" (2001: 126).

[4] Taylor's article was first published while he was based in South Africa, whilst Alden's first appeared in SAJIA, before it was revised and published in 2001.

The Debate also had great significance for the direction of South African IR and major theories such as Realism, where Chris Alden noted that "fundamentally, at the heart of the debate on foreign policy in the new South Africa was a question as to what is national interest, how it is determined and who should determine it" (2001: 125). Many accounts prefer to focus on how the relationship would serve South Africa's 'National Interest'. This appears as a key concept used in its traditional Realist theoretical sense. John Daniel argues that the outcome of the Debate became one of the defining debates for the country itself, as "its resolution will provide a clear indication of which factors are primarily driving South Africa's 'new' foreign policy" (1995: 36). Many were also concerned that if South Africa were to offer the PRC diplomatic recognition it would "send out the wrong message internationally concerning South Africa's foreign policy" (Southall, 2006: 422).

These contributors to the Debate seldom included an explicit or systematic theoretical explication of the relationship. This reflects how South African IR approached the analysis of China according to the values of policy relevance, and adopted what it thought of as the best way to frame such research. This was not conducive to nuanced or deep analysis. Deon Geldenhuys (1997) argues that the options in the Debate between a 'Beijing lobby' and a 'dual recognition lobby' represented an unfavourable framing given that they were presented in a zero-sum manner. Chris Alden also notes how researchers sought to accentuate their arguments by framing it in dichotomous terms:

> "…these issues [the options in the Two Chinas Debate]…were often juxtaposed against one another, creating the impression that pursuing one objective would necessarily negate the ability to pursue simultaneously the other objective. This had the effect of adding urgency to the [D]ebate as it took on the dimensions of a zero-sum game" (2001: 124).

Scholars such as Alden (2001) recognise that the manner of the Debate and its major outcome was the narrowing of the terms of research and debate. What is interesting is that the Debate represented an opportunity to utilise all IR theories in analysis and in contributing to the government's decision. Yet we have seen that policy-relevant perspectives were sought and these were generally not theoretically informed in an explicit sense. A brief qualification is required at this point. The chapter does not claim that the Two Chinas Debate determined the South African government's final choice, nor the timing of the decision. Ultimately, it is

more prudent to say that looming international events influenced the decision. Ian Taylor (2006a) does, however, credit SAIIA's Greg Mills with playing a notable role regarding the modalities of the switch and how future Taiwanese relations would be shaped.

The major theoretical outcome was the re-establishment of Realism as a means of explaining why South Africa failed to either achieve a policy of dual recognition or to opt for Taiwan. For instance, South Africa's international and middle power ambitions were jeopardised by its continual recognition of Taiwan. China could, given its possession of a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, easily hinder South African ambitions to play a greater international role (Taylor, 2002: 128). James Barber implies that South Africa's foreign policy became Realist, and argues that a foreign policy based on a principle of "'universalism' foundered on the rocks of 'the two-Chinas policy'" (2005: 1086). Adam Habib also suggests the outcome of the Debate was "an early indication of the importance of power in conditioning foreign policy" (2013: 183).

Yet critics warned of the narrowing of imagination and limited approaches occurring elsewhere in South Africa. They cautioned scholars to bear in mind how it was common "in times of flux for agendas to stay entirely in the hands of traditional approaches, and how quickly it is that those with political power come to rely on the established canon of realist axioms" (Booth and Vale, 1995: 289). Despite being a time of great promise and possibility, the Debate should be situated in a context where the predominant assumptions of thought and analysis were ending. The chapter now turns to understanding how South Africa IR proceeded to establish itself and proceed with research in the post-1998 period.

3. 4 The Consolidation of China Relations

If the previous period can be characterised as a relatively vibrant debate (Daniel, 1995), eliciting contributions from such a broad swathe of South African IR, the immediate period after 1998 was relatively silent. The priorities of South African IR reverted to other issues and the preference became to outline political solutions and policy advice for the construction of links to the broader East Asian region, then going through an impressive growth period. Although research continued to be produced, the levels of China-South Africa and China-

Africa trade and interaction remained relatively low and seldom figured in analysis apart from the work of Ian Taylor (1998; 2006a).

Taylor's (1998) point of view from the beginning was sceptical of what China relations had to offer Africa, most of his writing at the time perceiving Chinese attempts at building relations with Africa as an attempt to secure resources while it simultaneously secured a friendly and supportive diplomatic ally to protect itself in multilateral organisations. Moreover, Taylor (1997) explored Chinese relations with the BLNS (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland) states in Southern Africa. Thus China's attempts at building a network of partners to provide political support in multilateral organisations was taken as a sign of a state unlikely to abide by international conventions and more interested in conducting relations that served its national interests – which were threatened by numerous international and multilateral initiatives (Cornelissen and Taylor, 2000).

Increased research capacity was provided with increased levels of investment in institutes, which complemented existing sites. The University of the Witwatersrand's East Asian Project (EAP) offered China analysis (Geldenhuys, 1995; Taylor, 1997; Davies, 1998). It also undertook studies of Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan, as East Asia assumed prominence in South African foreign policy. In addition, a Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS) was created at the University of Stellenbosch. The creation of this centre ensured that South Africa possessed a dedicated China-Africa research centre – the first and only university research centre in Sub-Saharan Africa devoted to the study of China (Carayannis and Olin, 2012: 22).

3. 5 China-Africa IR's New Approach: Mapping the Landscape of the Field

This section examines the intentions and interests of the South African China-Africa IR epistemic community. Every major South African research institute – the CCS, the University of the Witswatersrand/SAIIA, the CCR, IGD, Brenthurst Foundation and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) – has, since 2006, convened meetings or published research on the China-Africa relationship. The resurgence of interest is marked by scholarly gatherings, echoing the FGD/SAIIA conference (FGD/SAIIA, 1995) and the Taiwanese forum during the Two Chinas Debate (Geldenhuys, 1995). The CCS and SAIIA established dedicated research projects; other institutes have included China-Africa studies as a vital part

of emerging power projects, or in projects studying natural resources, South-South Cooperation and Multilateralism.

Before the outpouring of analyses around 2006 occurred, Garth Le Pere, the then Institute for Global Dialogue's (IGD) Executive Director, pointed out that a novelty was evident as "new, different, and refreshing appraisals began to emerge on the basis of different conceptual frameworks, assumptions, base knowledge, and political perspectives" (2004: 10). Le Pere also suggested that understanding needed to be broad, given that "a focus on leadership and elite-driven processes…conceals the larger and complex environment in which Chinese politics unfolds" (2004: 8). Taylor (2008) observes of Le Pere's claims that too many assumed this was a completely new field, divorced from the past and devoid of its inadequacies. Thus, the early promise of these suggestions was lost. According to Taylor, scholars easily succumbed to a "bandwagon effect…whereby academics with no known prior interest or knowledge vis-à-vis Sino-African ties (or China in general for that matter) grandly announce that all previous work on the subject is deficient and worthless" (2008: 895).

Knowledge production in South African China-Africa IR has been driven by underwhelming, foreign-sponsored, policy-orientated conferences. A series of these conferences, organised by the CCR (in 2007) and the CCR and IGD (in 2009) culminated in two publications – Ampiah and Naidu's (2008) edited collection and a joint IGD/CCR policy brief (Adebajo and Fakier, 2009). Despite the promise of explication and development, the use of theory has been marginal in the output of these conferences.

The outcome of CCR-IGD seminars can be read, in part, as events that reified policy-relevant ideas and interests for shaping analysis and framing research. Here we can observe how the consolidation of analysis and the main approaches to the relationship have been more or less determined – IR theory once again was not to play any major guiding role. Such seminars, sites of the gathering together of many of the most influential and well placed 'experts and pundits', represents a missed opportunity on the part of South African IR. Theoretical analyses are a low priority, and methodologies are limited to data acquisition through description. This had an important dissuading effect that made theory less attractive, and seemingly inconsequential.

At present, SAIIA has continued to contribute a wide range of China-Africa empirical case studies where the objects of enquiry are broad, ranging from Chinese provinces, telecommunications, minerals and community support (see Alves, 2013). The majority of sources remain research institutions or think tanks with varying degrees of theoretical inclination – the 2010 CCS analysis of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)'s methodology consisted of observations drawn from policy and did not seek to utilise theory or reflect on theory in analysis (CCS, 2010). Rather, such research is undertaken and published with a specific purpose in mind – to provide for policymakers, businesses and all manner of recipients in a manner that does not 'confuse'. This accords with the idea of policy relevance, as we saw in the earlier sections, where the aim is to offer simple, relevant, evidence-based and value-free analysis on China-Africa relations.

3. 6 Conclusion

This chapter has located the history of South African China-Africa IR within a CIRT framework on research. It demonstrates that South African IR possesses a deep history of engagement and development with theories of China-Africa relations. These should also form an important backdrop to contemporary research. The Debate offered little theoretical analysis, and damaged the role of theory in analysis outside of Realism.

China-Africa analysis in the context of South African IR consists of the outputs of interest groups and think tanks – where relevancy to Government policy has been the greatest influence. Framing techniques, such as the use of zero-sum framing, ideological arguments and a lack of theoretical development have shaped the context within which IR is located. The chapter went onto examine how events in South African IR and South Africa have influenced and affected China-Africa IR in the country. South African IR, if it had been more reflective, could have built upon this early work. Chapter Four now turns to a critique of the major interpretations produced in contemporary South African IR on China-Africa relations.

CHAPTER 4: INTERPRETING CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN IR

4. 1 Introduction

As shown in the previous chapters, South African IR is well positioned to contribute to China-Africa knowledge given the advantages of a long historical interest in studying China. It also possesses relatively well-capacitated research institutes and an interest in shaping policy on China (Carayannis and Olin, 2012). Chapter Three revealed that producing research relevant to looming or on-going policy decisions was the departure point for past phases of China-Africa IR in South Africa. The creation of research on China was propelled by the need for either South Africa, or other African states, to make important foreign policy decisions regarding the scope of their relations with China. The outcome in South Africa has been the creation of competitive and specialised centres of research, or projects, devoted to studying China and the elicitation of a wide range of contributions and discussions from the South African IR community (Daniel, 1995). This chapter now asks of the literature – in the context of South African IR – what theories inform analysis? How are they used? And what does this tell us about the intentions of the researchers?

This chapter will identify three major interpretations produced in South African China-Africa IR. These interpretations are heuristic descriptions and their purpose is to draw attention to the major assumptions about theory in the literature. In this thesis these are labelled, heuristically, as the Mercantile interpretation, the Neoliberal interpretation and the Multilateral/South-South Cooperation (SSC) interpretation. Additionally, this chapter will critically explore the concepts and theories used to inform analysis and frame China-Africa relations. In doing so, it will briefly discuss how South African IR uses meta-theoretical ideas to substantiate perspectives when interpreting China-Africa relations. The intention is to draw out the values and interests that have orientated these interpretations, and account for the theories used and their degree of explication. This reveals the political nature of the knowledge produced. Finally, the chapter discusses the possible interests that underlie research that should be the subject of further critique.

4. 2 Three Interpretations of South African China-Africa IR

Disagreement exists on how China should be characterised, yet this chapter will show that an analysis of the South African IR literature (focussing mainly on literature produced since 2001) shows that scholars have produced three major interpretations (or characterisations) of both China and the China-Africa relationship. The Mercantile and Neoliberal interpretations focus on salient economic factors, which are held to be the most important determinant of Chinese relations with Africa, for informing understanding. It must be noted that contributors to these two perspectives are prone to what Alden and Large describe as "economic reductionism – ascribing motivations exclusively to resource-diplomacy or material motivation" (2011: 22). As IR theories have struggled to adequately contribute to economic understanding, we will see that concepts from the discipline of International Political Economy (IPE) were drawn into analysis (see Lawson, 2012). The third interpretation, the Multilateral/South-South Cooperation interpretation, is more politically orientated, yet adherents also look to IPE, in addition to IR, for concepts to inform their interpretation of China-Africa relations.

4.2. 1 Mercantile Interpretation

Contributors to the Mercantile interpretation base their analysis upon the assumption that the extraction and trade of natural resources reveals the underlying interests and aspirations of China-Africa relations. Robert Gilpin defines Mercantilism as "the attempt of governments to manipulate economic arrangements in order to maximize their own interests, whether or not this is at the expense of others" (1975: 45). Jonathan Holslag advances a Mercantilist framing of China-Africa relations, which he defines as an approach in which the key assumption is that "governments should maintain a pivotal role in the development of a strong national economy" (2006: 135).

China's presence in Africa is compelled by Chinese National Interests. Because it relies on imports of natural resources, it has positioned itself to access these with greater security and surety to safeguard its prolific economic growth (Schoeman, 2007). The primary assumption is that the Chinese state's main National Interest is to engage in behaviour that strategically positions its State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to have direct access to African natural

resources, while also conducting infrastructural deals and diplomatic relations that ultimately support and serve this interest (Taylor, 1998; Cornelissen and Taylor, 2000; Herbst and Mills, 2009). These assumptions have consistently appeared in South African IR. Garth Shelton describes the movement of China's approach to relations with Africa as being from "a more pragmatic stance during the 1980s and distinctly mercantilist approach, prioritising trade and investment, during the 1990s" (2001: 111). Sanusha Naidu and Martyn Davies suggest that the China-Africa relationship is Mercantile in nature and "must be seen through the prism of the need to secure access to oil and natural resources" (2006: 69). The primary assumption of such an analysis is that states like China are engaged in a 'scramble' with other global powers for access to African resources. The term scramble is important as it implies continuity with the past and emphasises the competitive manner in which foreign actors are engaging with Africa (Southall and Melber, 2009). Such states compete with each other to gain influence with African states and access to their resources (Stephan et al., 2006). This contest for influence and power is vital to the economic security and growth of the states involved, as "the first prize is oil" (Daniel and Lutchman, 2006: 492). Ian Taylor echoes this sentiment, arguing that the increased presence of China is "driven by a desire to obtain sources of raw materials and energy for China's continuing economic growth and open up new export markets" (2006b: 937). Describing what she takes to be the predominant view, Maxi Schoeman observes an

> "agreement in the literature and amongst analysts and political commentators that Chinese growth is dependent both on export markets and on access to natural resources and primary commodities required for fuelling the Chinese economy" (2007: 79).

Other African scholars, publishing in South Africa, also apply this prism to study relations between China and individual African countries. Lloyd Sachikonye finds the optic, in regard to Zimbabwe, to be useful as he finds the "mercantilist instincts of China are fairly obvious" (2008: 132). Adekeye Adebajo uses the concept of Mercantilism to frame and compare China's Africa relations with South Africa's relations with the rest of Africa (2010). Alden and Schoeman also extend the label to their description of the behaviour of international organisations in Africa, such as the organisation known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) which has adopted an "unashamedly mercantilist approach to foreign and economic diplomacy" (2013: 119).

Researchers are able to characterise China as Mercantilist because their primary assumption is that China is a typical Realist state responding to the pressures of an anarchic world order (Naidu, 2008). In IR the concept of Mercantilism is held to be largely synonymous with Realism (see Mingst, 2008; Lawson, 2012; O'Brien and Williams, 2010). Stephanie Lawson argues "mercantilism is often seen to bring power politics and economics together in a dynamic and symbiotic relationship, making it a natural ally of Realist IR" (2012: 123). Mercantilism therefore is utilised, as it provides a framework for describing economic processes in IR.

The assumed predominance of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) lends itself to the argument that the Chinese state is directing activities according to a strict agenda or strategy. Naidu and Davies, for instance, state that China's "mercantilist approach to business in Africa is being led primarily by its state-run corporations" (2006: 81). The responsibility of the state is to secure resources to continually drive growth and the state is assumed to determine the behaviour of all Chinese actors present in Africa. Therefore, China is assumed to have tasked its SOEs to engage in deals within African states to seek out and secure access to resources where it is able to or where it is best serving its national interests of natural resource access and energy security.

This reading is contingent on assuming China is a monolithic state. Moreover, this perspective depends on assumptions of state centrality and the accrual of economic resources as part of a strategy to give the Chinese state the necessary power to continue to expand its economy. Yet the Mercantile assumptions of Chinese intentions based on observing SOEs requires further debate, as SOEs appear to often contain divergent interests that determine their behaviour and often leads to contestation with the government (Gill and Reilly, 2007). Refusing to analyse them as simple tools of the state and rather as a Multi-National Cooperation (MNC) offers a different approach, as is SAIIA research suggesting the significance of Chinese provinces (see Alden and Davies, 2006 and Zhimin and Junbo, 2009 respectively).

A Mercantile or Realist reading also suggests that China, whilst engaging with other states and non-state actors, as a member of global organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), or encouraging Multilateralism through the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) continues to maintain effective control over their

economies and economic activity around the world. Yet a Realist explanation for the creation of institutions such as FOCAC and the effect of WTO membership and engagement cannot adequately explain why so much effort has been expended on creating or joining these organisations. Moreover, the proposal that FOCAC and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) can be aligned ignores both the Neoliberal origins of NEPAD – an African initiative to secure development through observance of good governance (Taylor, 2005) – and the state-centrism of FOCAC gatherings (Shelton and Paruk, 2008). This critique of the Mercantile optic shows it to be increasingly untenable if it is unable to offer an explanation for China's activities and relations in global economics, or for the interest shown in Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with China (Draper and Le Pere, 2005).

In this section we have seen how many researchers, well beyond Shelton's (2001) initial use in reference to China-Africa relations in the 1990s, continue to rely upon the Mercantilist concept for their optic through which contemporary China-Africa relations is viewed. We have seen that China's African engagement may seem essentially Realist, based on state-centric assumptions and observations focusing on SOEs, yet it cannot adequately explain why China is also committed to multilateral institutions. As we shall now see, some researchers prefer instead to explore China-Africa relations from a different perspective based on the Liberal school of IR.

4.2. 2 Multilateral Cooperation: A Neoliberal Interpretation

In the following section research that examines China-Africa relations in multilateral and global institutions, that draws upon Liberal thinking, is explored. This reading takes a narrow view of Chinese behaviour as it does not contextualise it the context of globalisation and Neoliberal ideology that has dominated international relations since the end of the Cold War (Burchill, 2009). As Liberalism assumes that other non-state actors can be influential in international relations, this framework can also show that Chinese engagement is not determined by the state alone. Observations of the existence of multiple Chinese actors with competing interests and multiplicity of voices and interests render an interpretation of a monolithic approach as "untenable" (Gill and Reilly, 2007: 39).

Therefore, another interpretation of China-Africa relations can be found that suggests China is incrementally adopting Neoliberal economic policies as China seeks further integration

into the global Liberal economic order (Clapham, 2006; Ampiah and Naidu, 2008). This points to a Liberal interpretation of the future global balance of power and the role China will play in shifting that balance – meaning that China would become a 'co-manager' of the Liberal economic order alongside the US and other global powers.

Analysis is usually conducted so as to give a wider view of China's economic opportunities – Greg Mills and Elizabeth Sidiropolous analyse China's 'global offensive' examining how "South Africa-based business might best take advantage of the opportunities generated" (2004: 16). Sidiropoulos later suggests "effective long-term engagement with China requires African countries to adopt initiatives that will help position them to meet more easily the challenges of globalisation" (2006: 113). The challenges would be overcome once policymakers "determine more clearly where their individual economies fit into the global production chain, for instance whether their strengths are in resource beneficiation, manufacturing or services" (Sidiropoulos, 2006: 113). This implies the centrality of international markets as a consideration for the creation and implementation of domestic and foreign policy.

Sidiropoulos further suggests that the outcome of these actions by both China and African countries is that "China will invariably take on global responsibilities" (2006: 9). Moreover, she points out that "China's perspectives and stance will be critical drivers in these debates and may have a profound impact on the future of the institutions of global governance" (Sidiropoulos, 2006: 8-9). Yet Sidiropoulos (2006) does not clarify what sort of responsibilities China will take on, nor if the current institutions of global governance will remain the same, with China as a major stakeholder. Schoeman observes instead that this interpretation focuses on "attempts by China to bring its engagement with Africa more in line with international (read: Western) norms on governance, economic and political issues" (2007: 92).

Yet this position is also unable to explicate the logic where China engages in multilateral and free trade behaviour in organisations such as the WTO, nor why it is at pains to claim it offers a 'win-win' partnership whereby all states stand to gain benefits from interaction. In particular, despite the state-centric nature of the previous two interpretations, a looming contradiction between Mercantilism and free market economics requires a more nuanced framework, because, as we have seen, China is not heading in one particular direction but is

seen to be acting pragmatically. The third alternative perspective that frames China-Africa relations therefore needs to be explored: an interpretation that explains it as pragmatically benign and beneficial for Africa. This interpretation is a Multilateral interpretation based on the concept of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and is the focus of the following section.

4.2. 3 Multilateral Interpretation: South-South Cooperation

As we have seen, China-Africa relations have been interpreted in different ways, with a Liberal interpretation perceiving China as a multilateral actor seeking to contribute to a world order based on multilateral forums and decision-making. While China, therefore, accedes to forums (such as the United Nations (UN) and WTO), it is also involved in the creation of new ones and its strategic outcome is globally reformed institutions-for-states. Given its behaviour it is seen as unlikely that China will simply become a stakeholder or co-manager, instead, in joining and becoming a powerful state in the present order, it will eventually reform international relations for the betterment of the people and countries of the Global South. As a result, these scholars support closer and expanded partnerships into the future to consolidate and continue these achievements. Naidu and Davies advocate the adoption of a Chinese model, as it offers "a refreshing alternative to the traditional engagement models of the West" because "African governments see China's engagement as a point of departure from Western neo-colonialism and political conditions" (2006: 80).

The popularity of the concept of South-South Cooperation helps it to be "an important methodological approach and heuristic device for shaping our thinking, perspective and orientation" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 14). This is undertaken in the hope that it "offers a more nuanced assessment" (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008: 4). China therefore engages with Africa because it seeks out like-minded states or partners for a coordinated programme of global reform for developing more mutually beneficial international relations (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007; Shelton, 2008; Shelton and Paruk, 2008). Central to this line of argument is the conception of a world system, which is structurally debilitating for African development and which sees relations with China as a vital means to "eliminate the iniquities of the existing out-dated economic and political system of global governance" (Shelton, 2008: 273). In so doing, China facilitates the emergence of a group of states with aligned and common interests and values that aim at overcoming historical and contemporary injustices that are inflicted by the current international order.

SSC scholars prefer to draw on an analysis of history and identity to inform their ideas about the nature of the state. It takes Realism, Liberalism and thoughts from Dependency Theory and idealistically amalgamates them into an optic that promises a brighter future for Southern states by reducing the dominance of Western states and increasing development. Sidiropoulos finds that China-Africa relations are a vital part of a movement that is an "illustration of the erosion of the developing world's ties of dependence to the West and the former colonial powers" (2012: 2)

SSC analysis infers that China and Africa are constructing a beneficial relationship with great implications. This is "a new form of South-South cooperation which could be very effective in advancing African interests and reforming the existing global political and economic order" (Shelton, 2008: 273). Le Pere and Shelton go on to argue that Africa's best interests lie with China, suggesting that China, either because of a sense of historical injustice has made a "generous offer to develop a process to further the restructuring of restrictive global financial institutions and ameliorate the worst aspects of globalisation" (2007: 139).

It also depicts the China state as a committed multilateral state, whose behaviour is shaped by its historical experiences and has identified its interests as best served through reforming the world political and economic system (Van Beek, 2011). These generalised principles of conduct are presumed to be qualitatively different from Western states such as the US, France or the UK. This approach emphasises the importance of common principles and beliefs in conducting relations in a common, cooperative way within regular forums and forms. Chinese interest in establishing itself as a key player in multilateral institutions has recently become a key factor in analysis of its foreign policy as evidenced by its increased participation in the UN, its ascension to the WTO and its (co-)founding of FOCAC (Shelton and Paruk, 2008; Sohn, 2011).

Common to many histories of China-Africa relations, the concept of SSC is traced back at least to the Bandung Conference of 1956, which established the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Taylor, 2004; Le Pere and Shelton, 2007). A central component of this ideational approach is the use of a common history of overcoming the injustices and oppression of Western states. The result is that the structure of international relations and global order and the nature of states within the system compel poorer states with similar historical experiences of colonialism to band together in multilateral forums and organisations so as to strategically

improve their position in the global order. Therefore, China engages willing African states to participate in these activities; states highly amenable to talk of such a partnership and sharing strategic goals; and together they show an 'unhappiness' with the structure of the global system. Muekalia was amongst the first to express this view, stating "China is engaging Africa in a long-term strategic partnership for international leadership, markets, energy and space" (2004: 11).

The increase in Chinese trade and associated aids and loans, along with the lack of conditions, is the primary evidence for these interpretations (Le Pere, 2007). The increase is held to widen African options, decrease dependency on previous powers and, in the process, increase the bargaining power and leverage power of Southern states. SSC states are expected to attain significant rewards and benefits, yet SSC primarily draws upon theories outside of the traditional IR theories or alternatives, as discussed in Chapter Two. Again we have to look outside of IR, as Moore has suggested, to IPE so that we see that SSC is "inspired by dependencia perspectives advanced by South American scholars" (2012: 2). Dependency Theory is a marginal approach to understanding IR, favoured in the 1970s but seldom beyond (see Amin, 2006). It assumes that the world has been divided into a system of key core countries (commonly understood to refer to the US and Western Europe) that unfairly benefit from structurally fixed relations with periphery countries (particularly those in Africa) through oppressive trading relationships (Graaff and Venter, 2004). Core states contrast and reinforce the rules and patterns of trade to reflect their own interest and use their power to maintain these systems. They import raw materials from peripheral countries, and manufacture products which are sold to periphery countries at high prices, resulting in negative balances of trade that help determine a country's place as either a core or periphery state (Graaff and Venter, 2004). Africa's relationships are largely read as the reason for its lack of development, as states are locked into unfair arrangements that benefit the West at great cost to African states. Drawing on a view of history informed by Dependency knowledge, scholars sought to theorise how the world worked and what could be done to reduce the dependency of peripheral states, concluding that peripheral states should interact and prioritise links with each other (Amin, 2006). In so doing, both China and Africa benefit at the expense of Western states' interests, forcing Western states to alter their approach to one that is more accommodating and adapting to the needs of Africa and China if they are to preserve access for themselves to African resources and economies.

SSC therefore offers a basis for understanding a positive perception of China-Africa relations. It sees a world of Realist-minded states in the West who exploit Africa, whereas China can offer an alternative partnership and, eventually, a world order that is not so structurally oppressive to African states. As we shall see, however, SSC incorporates elements of Realism into its analysis, but excuses China from a Realist analysis. The role of Realism as an applicable theory for analysing the behaviour of states therefore needs to be better understood.

4. 3 The Role of Interests in South African China-Africa IR

Critics of SSC are accused of letting their own values and interests influence their analysis. Le Pere and Shelton (2007) ascribe unfavourable responses to China-Africa relations to a pro-Western bias. These researchers, they argue, "contend that China's engagement with Africa should be guided by Western values and should conform to established patterns of Western involvement on the continent" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 123). Le Pere also implies that China should not be subjected to a comparative analysis: as such an approach runs the risk of falling "prey to lazy caricature and crude stereotyping" which might result in researchers falling "into a trap of moral relativism where the West is held to one set of standards and China to another" (2008: 27). As we have noted, such a reading is contingent on the acceptance of Realist thinking, but only amongst Western states.

A further observation of the literature, a result of creating a zero-sum depiction of China-Africa research, has been the allegation of both implicit and explicit racism. This is typically observed of critics of China-Africa relations who "analyse Beijing's economic ascendancy within the context of a 'threat theory' or 'yellow peril', and typically view China's initiatives toward Africa as having an imperialist agenda" (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008: 4). They add that "this view portends that China's engagement in Africa is purely exploitative, extractive and destructive, and will perpetuate Africa's underdevelopment" and argue that such scholars have a perspective in which they are "perturbed by the colonialist resonances", as they further "visions of a 'Second Scramble', resulting in yet another impending round of foreign plunder of Africa's natural resources" (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008: 4).

Unpacking statements on the weakness of other research shows how stridently many sought to further separate their analysis from most of the literature of the time on the basis that:

> "the vocabulary, concepts, and analytical constructs are part of an ideological agenda to discredit, obfuscate and misconstrue China's intentions and further distort the prism through which it is viewed and understood" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 14).

In Chapter Three it was illustrated that Reitsma (1976) suggests that a pathological paranoia inflicted South African analyses of China. Here we can observe that Le Pere and Shelton (2007) suggest a similar paranoia often afflicting critics of China-Africa relations. Whereas prior to the end of apartheid this was ideologically derived from a hatred of communism and a desire to be incorporated into the Western world and thereby gain legitimacy, now paranoia over China-Africa relations occurs because the West is losing its sphere of influence and grip over the world. As we shall see, there is an interest in having others perceive the relationship in either a cautious or celebratory manner which influences both choices of theory and their degree of explication. They have, or aim to have, an impact and thereby influence perceptions and, hence, policy.

4. 4 What Theories are Evident?

Realism is prevalent throughout analysis. Naidu, for instance, concludes her analysis by asserting that "China conducts its current international relations according to its self-interest and pursues its foreign policy with aggression and on its own terms", concluding that "the realist interpretation of China's behaviour holds true" (2008: 189). Le Pere also states that this view has validity, as "China is simply pursuing its national interest and is acting rationally and pragmatically in seeking business and investment opportunities where they exist in Africa" (2008: 35). He offers the most thorough outline of the Realist position, suggesting that "in such an 'anarchic' environment, a country such as China will tend to balance its position against the dominance of the hegemonic power as states become more enmeshed in what is after all a zero-sum game of winners and losers" (Le Pere, 2008: 25-26).

Le Pere and Shelton (2007) do not dismiss the applicability of a Realist reading in IR for states such as the US, but deny that it applies to China or African states. Implying that a

Realist reading of China is untenable, they withhold a similar characterisation of Chinese behaviour as inaccurate: "the suggestion of a 'China threat' to the world reflects a Realist fear of China's relative gains, but it is inaccurate in terms of Beijing's intentions and capabilities" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 26). While Realism is considered important in explaining the actions of some states such as the US, China is excused from any threat or fear on the basis that it is moving the world away from the current world order towards one more amenable to African development. The approach also attaches an essential identity to China – commonly referred to as 'Chinese exceptionalism' (Suzuki, 2013). As we saw in Chapter Two, a Constructivist approach is based on the idea of identity informing interests and behaviour, rather than systemic influences as in Neorealism, yet Constructivism is not, as of yet, thoroughly explicated in identity-focused research.

SSC proponents concur on the centrality of the state, in line with most IR thinking. The primary difference with Realism concerns whether China can be adjudged as a typical state whose behaviour is shaped by the shape of the international system (see Amin, 2006; Le Pere and Shelton, 2007; Shelton and Paruk, 2008; Moore, 2012; Sidiropolous, 2012). If it is, it will either aggressively of defensively position itself to take advantage of gaps and weaknesses and secure itself a better share of the balance of power. This position has been described as a "realist preoccupation with relative gains [which] only perpetuates mutual suspicion about which state will gain more from cooperation, and how China might use its enhanced capabilities to dominate other states" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 26).

A keen interest for many is increasing the number of foreign actors in Africa – especially though the creation of trilateral dialogues between Africa, China and the US (Brenthurst Foundation et al., 2007). This particular Trilateral Dialogue was comprised of three groups of experts organised into African, Chinese and US delegations. In addition to China are other foreign stakeholders and their interests, ostensibly to ensure that African development is handled in a global and integrated fashion, but most often perceived as means of preventing a widespread embrace of China at the expense of existing economic partners such as the US. For some, China alone is a preferable partner to anything proposed by Western powers (Adebajo, 2008). Other researchers therefore hope that a government will recognise, as Habib states, that "Chinese behaviour is greatly conditioned by the nature and character of United States' involvement in the continent" (2008: 269). Habib is concerned with avoiding "both Chinese and United States' dominance in their engagement with Africa" (2008: 269).

Africa would, in his view, remain too weak and passive given the proposed recommendations of Le Pere and Shelton (2007). These recommendations, "located mainly at the level of managerial processes, really do not go far enough in creating the conditions for a more equitable Sino-African relationship" (Habib, 2008: 270). In response he advises balancing against both China and the US whilst increasing the power of Africa as a whole, possibly being led by a hegemonic African state such as South Africa or Nigeria (Habib, 2008). The result has been a more Realist interpretation of South Africa's foreign policy that has, according to Habib, "used its relations with China as a counterweight to both the United States and Europe and tried to wring political, economic and diplomatic concessions from all parties" (2013: 183).

Taking as their context the rise of Neoliberalism and growing interdependence, rather than the Neorealist idea of states in anarchy, a few scholars discuss how China's rise has been facilitated and enabled by Neoliberal globalisation, rather than self-seeking and serving economic forays into Africa and elsewhere (Clapham, 2006). As a result, its interests are being well served within such a system, meaning China is increasingly drawing itself into this system so as not to disturb it (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008). Yet, China as a Mercantile actor is still popular. This is arguably because such a characterisation can compel others to pressure China, and China to realise that it should aim to integrate into this system.

Some South African IR researchers respond by describing this seeming 'paradox' – offering the explanation that China can act in a dual fashion – retaining a Mercantilism aspect to its engagement, yet nevertheless also embracing Neoliberalism (Ampiah and Naidu, 2008). Draper and Le Pere (2005) are able to state without a sense of contradiction that China is both communist and capitalist. This suggests that, theoretically, China will become a key stakeholder, yet it will retain sovereignty and aloofness in its embrace of the Neoliberal global system (Clapham, 2006). To make sense of the claim that China and the idea of SSC can explain relations, researchers seek to show how China acts as an agent of globalisation, yet is a qualitatively different state from other stakeholders in globalisation and should not be viewed through the same critical perspective reserved for Western states and companies (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007). Therefore, "in this Darwinian race, and as an essential element of its 'opening', China has embraced globalisation" (Le Pere, 2008: 25-26).

Others adopt a Realist view of China in order to encourage scepticism, wariness and an increased propensity to 'balance' any potential Chinese threat by bringing in or aligning with the US or European states. This explains the emphasis in the Trilateral Dialogue that there was no clash of strategic interests between the US and China (Brenthurst Foundation et al., 2007).

While this perspective can account for the accession of China into global Neoliberal institutions, it has been criticised. Adam Habib argues that a more complex situation exists where "China's success emanates not simply from freeing the market, but also from manipulating the market for its own developmental ends" (2008: 267). In so doing, Habib (2008) retains an element of Realism in his analysis and implies that China employs a dual approach and that it is best to characterise China's Neoliberal embrace as illusory, as eventually all states retain the power to break with the institutions created in this order. This is a view at odds with that of Clapham (2006) and researchers who see China becoming a stakeholder in the current world order. States ultimately have to rely upon their own abilities, in an uncertain world, rather than on the goodwill or trust of other states, to safeguard their national interests.

This can also explain why China has joined the WTO and engaged in FTA discussions (Draper and Le Pere, 2005). These would see the reduction and eventual end of barriers to trade such as tariffs that states create to prevent others gaining advantage or being overwhelmed by the products of others. Seeing accession as simply a ruse or that it is not accompanied by sincerity, cannot explain why so much effort is expended upon joining, nor that the necessary adjustments to economies was performed. Each step has further integrated China and others with China, and the question of complete sovereignty becomes more untenable.

Habib makes a convincing case for the universal application of Realist frames and idea for a critique of both the Liberal and SSC interpretation, as "ultimately it would be prudent for advocates of African development to recognise that all countries involved in Africa are here to advance their own national interests" (2008: 268). Furthermore, he criticises the narrowness and limitations that idealism contains, as "any harbouring of contrary illusions can only result in future disappointment" (Habib, 2008: 268).

Realism, therefore, in addition to its place in the Mercantile interpretation, is playing a part in a critique of SSC. A Realist informed wariness did not inform the assessments of early SSC adherents, who reserved judgement on China and retained an optimism that the relationship would lead to widespread global reform (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007; Shelton, 2008). Realists such as Naidu argue that given the state-centric and anarchic nature of order, traditional patterns of rivalry based on power and gains will not be as easily overcome as SSC assumes, suggesting it retains the Realist potential to become hindered as "the south is a diffuse bloc with competing interests" (2010: 28). Realists suggest that SSC has not properly considered the place of power and national interests in analysis. Such wariness is now apparent in later research, suggesting "Southern solidarity and exhortations to that remain useful rhetorical devices, but amount to very little in substance" (Sidiropolous, 2012: 3). Furthermore, it has been speculated that "[t]he rising powers pursue their own particular interests, which may from time to time reflect those of the rest of the developing world, but not at the expense of what they understand as their national imperatives" (Sidiropolous, 2012: 3). Early analysis posed essential interpretation based on Realist and Dependency assumptions. Later analysis is more questioning: "While trade partners like China leave no doubt that they can surpass traditional trade partners from the developed world, it is certainly still an open question whether this latest incarnation of South-South Cooperation will be less exploitative and more relevant to development needs" (Landsberg and Moore, 2013: 7). This is not examined within a perspective yet, leaving Realism and Liberalism as the more thorough theoretical treatments in the literature.

4. 5 Confusion over Globalisation

SSC has identifiable assumptions located in Dependency Theory, yet this interpretation as it stands is more a cobbling together of plural theoretical concepts and ideas in what Cox (1981), referring back to Chapter Two, would label as an ideological project designed to give an unchallengeable legitimacy to Chinese behaviour. Such an account depends upon the concept of globalisation, in this case that the China-Africa relationship, founded on SSC, can be seen as "antithetical to the Western-centric globalisation process" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 122). Globalisation is not explicated, despite IR concerns over the appropriate usage of the concept in analysis (Vale, 2008).

This particular reading holds that China plays a neutral or even beneficial role in globalisation. Padraig Carmody has identified such a tendency on a more general level as indicative of "an implicit Eurocentrism, where the processes of Globalisation are only perceived to originate in the West" (2010: 3). Carmody also points to an absence of rigorous analysis, suggesting "much of the work on China in Africa is curiously silent on debates about Globalisation, despite it being a significant feature of it" (2010: 3). In South African IR, proponents of this approach proposed a favourable reading of a Chinese-led globalisation process, which is vastly more beneficial than the Western notion of globalisation. Taking these as givens means that the main depiction is set within the consensus, rather than radically altering it, it is set to improve it. In the language of CIRT: By accepting the concepts of the state and of globalisation as a given, this research is "value-bound by virtue of the fact that it implicitly accepts the prevailing order as its own framework" (Cox 1981: 130). It is suggested that this curious silence reflects the limits of the theoretical choices of researchers, who cease to analyse China and globalisation through a Realist optic if it threatens the interpretation that can be established of a new order based on SSC.

While we have now observed the prevalence of Realism in analysis, as well as Liberal perspectives and SSC, we have not yet found a sustained analysis drawing on an IR school. It is rare to find research on China in Africa in which an analytical framework is derived from a specific theoretical position or one that reflects or acknowledges its theoretical lineage. Naidu et al. correctly argue that the China-Africa relationship "cannot be dichotomised by simple theoretical persuasions" (2009: 88). While this statement makes eminent sense in terms of dissuading theoretical reductionism, more concerning is that it contains an implicit discouragement of theoretical explanation on the basis of its simplicity and impracticality. It implies that IR theories cause problems and it fails to encourage new theoretical development, leaving theory to be considered a hindrance rather than the means by which researchers can improve understanding of issues that emerge from the China-Africa relationship.

Most damning of all is the lack of critique of the core assumptions concerning the state and globalisation. As Schoeman observes, "the core assumption is still that of a consumption-driven, capitalist growth model dependent on industrialisation and the need for natural resources to fuel the growth" (2011: 36). A state's identity may mean, as Le Pere and Shelton (2007) claim, that its intentions are different from others, but it leaves in place a

problem-solving approach to research. This can explain why Schoeman suggests, "[t]he difference between Africa–South relations and Africa–North relations lies largely in the discourse framing these relations and not so much in the type, or scope, of relations" (2011: 36). In drawing attention to the framing of relations, Schoeman (2011) also calls into question the nature of ideas about globalisation. This arguably should compel many researchers, but especially SSC focused scholars, to incorporate greater critical and reflective thinking into their research. The final section of this chapter now reflects on the meta-theoretical aspects contained in the literature. What observations can we make in the literature that point to the choice of school to theorise and could explain a reluctance to explicate the theory?

4. 6 What was Studied and How?

On the basis of the critique in the preceding sections, this chapter now suggests that the depiction and place of theory in China-Africa research is questioned, misrepresented and threatened. CIRT assumes that interests existing prior to research affect the choice and use of theory – no observations that might alter or destabilise the reading are undertaken, and disputes are often quickly dismissed.

The increased research output on this key topic has not reflected or embraced alternative means for analysing the relationship. Alternative theoretical perspectives drawing on Feminism and Post-Modernism have yet to appear in published China-Africa IR. The majority of researchers continue to draw upon conventional IR approaches. Sanusha Naidu observes that "[t]he unfolding debate reflect[ed] a growing concern in academic circles to contextualise China's behaviour across the African continent within the theoretical frameworks that have guided most of our thinking about how states act and behave in international politics" (2010: 25). The continued use of traditional state-centric theories, as well as the absence of critical theories, is failing to advance new understandings of the relationship. This thesis does not deny that states retain significance in IR, nor that theoretically traditional frameworks will not deliver important insights, but rather the continued and unquestioned dominance of these traditional frameworks represents a failure of South African IR to engage with alternative theoretical perspectives and produce critical and interrogative analysis. This is largely because it would be deemed irrelevant for

policymakers – which we have seen is considered paramount in contemporary South African IR (Smith, 2013). As a consequence, historical and contemporary China-Africa IR has been located within and largely shaped by the long South African interest in policy relevance.

The interpretation of China and China-Africa relations is already formed and informed by interests. The willingness to accept as immutable or to reify an interpretation without deeper reflection is a sign of interest-driven research. Theory informs analysis, but only to the degree that it can enable a required reading or be used to critique others. This thesis identifies two interests in the literature. The first can be called an interest in a cautious policy towards China, while the second encourages an 'embrace' of China. This means that the same events can be observed and interpreted in different fashions, with varying degrees of critiques and reflection on key concepts such as the state or globalisation.

The first interest accords with Habib's suggestion that there is an underlying interest for "a pragmatic engagement with China driven by the United States and by policies inspired by structural adjustment" (2008: 267). Emphasising the importance of the US and incorporating it into decision-making through trilateral dialogues, echoing those of the EU, China and Africa is meant to dissuade "simple involvement with the superpower" (Habib, 2008: 267).

Because the same evidence can produce different interpretations, in South Africa an extra degree of legitimacy is typically sought to mark it out as preferable for informing policy and removing any perception of the work as ideological (Reitzes, 1993). This is the identification of research with Positivist tenets of research. This is a central issue that Post-Positivism has with research that uses Positivist tenets, a sign of the scientism, where the only legitimate knowledge is assumed to be that written in the language of Positivism (Reitzes, 1993). South African scholars were aware of this danger; Reitzes contends that "[o]nce knowledge has been identified with science, its value appreciates, greater importance is attached to it and it is seen as more credible and legitimate than other forms of discourse" (1993: 36). However, from a Critical perspective, which sees a world consisting of competing interpretations, this shows it, as we saw in Chapter Two, to be an intensely political action, designed to equate a particular position or theory with either common sense or objectivity. A perspective secures ascendency by allegation, framing and false claims to get ahead of other views, rather than conversation and critique.

On notable occasions, claims are made that research is the product of value-free and objective analysis. This is most visible in the SSC perspective where some have striven to promote their interpretation by aligning it their discussion with meta-theoretical ideas about ontology, epistemology and Positivism in order to give them the edge. The most obvious example comes from Le Pere and Shelton's introduction as they claim a value free and objective approach in their writing:

> "we bring a commitment to evaluating and assessing the facts as we find them without being blinded by whichever prejudices might otherwise emerge from our reading and interpretation of them" (2007: 14).

This statement shows that researchers attach enormous power towards having their research construed as objective and providing "an objective account of China's engagement in Africa" (Le Pere and Shelton, 2007: 135). A further example comes from the description of Rampa et al. of SSC as "value-neutral, although rhetorically reflecting the principles of solidarity and mutual benefit" (2012: 248). This suggests self-awareness of the importance of thinking about research and theory and that describing research as objective affects the way the argument will be perceived by readers. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that epistemological factors play an important, unacknowledged and underappreciated role in research.

In addition, there are claims that perspectives are occluded because ideology is alleged to play a major part in analysis. Le Pere and Shelton (2007) argue that Taylor (2006b) views China-Africa relations through a Neoliberal lens. Habib (2008) responded by criticising the appellation as inaccurate and a sign of the authors aspiring to denigrate the work of others and in so doing embellish their own. Taylor's warning, issued whilst reviewing the state of South African IR, therefore becomes prescient: "by appealing to 'reality' and querying and/or rejecting alternative projects, a particular discourse is promoted and embedded, making criticism of the 'accepted' project appear as an illegitimate activity in itself" (2000a: 214).

As we draw to the end of this chapter, a technical note must be made, which is that reviewers have criticised the lack of primary data and analysis in research. Taylor criticises scholars who "proceed, citing and utilizing this very same work, with the addition of material mined from the Internet (including in some cases, Wikipedia), to put forward their novel

interpretations" (2008: 895).[5] Large also observes "a prevailing tendency to empirically chart – often on the basis of weak evidence or secondary sources – general themes or country case studies" (2010: 10). In addition, the fact that various scholars' names reappear in different schools also reflects that many are prepared to take the context as their influence and produce research that accords with the dominant ideology or ideas of the time, accompanied by the claims of objectivity which have gone uncriticised.

4. 7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined a number of interpretations of the China-Africa literature and explored them for their informing theories. None are explicitly theory-orientated, as the degree of explication is lacking, but each draws from schools of IR. Policy relevancy is posited as accounting for the type and manner of theorising that is present in the literature. The chapter then progressed to understand why this is the case by focusing on the underlying values and interests – both alleged and determined by the framework. It found that as policy relevance was the aim, theory was chosen if it could confirm or legitimise a position or interest – here seen as either to accommodate and embrace China, or else to induce a cautiousness toward China-Africa relations. The chapter then focused on claims of objectivity, and found SSC contributions to embrace this tenet. This can arguably be interpreted as a way of getting research favourably received within policy circles.

[5] The enmity between Taylor and Le Pere may result from unfavourable reviews of each other's research. Taylor is accused of adopting a Neoliberal optic in his analysis, while Taylor (2008) states that Le Pere and Shelton's (2007) research is highly ideological and biased.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5. 1 Research Aim and Questions

This chapter returns to the research questions and answers it in light of the analysis. The aim of the study was to understand the part played by theory in South African IR on China-Africa relations, and to explore how theory informs analysis and is regarded in the literature. Three research questions were explored, these were:

1. What IR theories are being used in analyses of the China-Africa relationship?
2. What do the choices of theories and frameworks tell us about the interests that shape and influence research in this field?
3. Why has South African IR produced so few efforts at systematically theorising the China Africa relationship?

5. 2 Summary of Main Arguments

The introductory chapter identified the gaps in China-Africa IR as contextual knowledge and the need for knowing more about knowledge as a result of the reported amnesia and the need to prevent half-truths guiding research. It then moved on to clarify why South Africa was a suitable case study and why the best approach for answering the research questions was a critique of knowledge and research, focusing on theory. As this was the case, it identified CIRT as a suitable framework to use in a critique. It was noted that a CIRT critique is an important step towards emancipatory theories in IR, but this lay beyond the scope of the thesis. However, a critique is considered appropriate for answering the research questions.

Chapter Two clarified what was entailed in a CIRT critique and the necessary framework was outlined. It noted too that mainstream IR theories are traditionally state-centric. In Chapter Three, South Africa's rich history of China-Africa IR and interest was explored, focusing on three historical eras and drawing out the salient values and interests that historically informed research. It found that a historical focus revealed how policy relevance became, and was confirmed, as a key value influencing South African IR

Chapter Four explored the use of theory in analysis. It identified three schools in the literature for critique – the Mercantile, Neoliberal and SSC interpretations – and found that each was informed by theory, but often in an implicit and unsatisfactory manner. It found that Realism was the preferred theoretical approach, and that latent values and interests had converged to give this theory prominence.

The opportunity to engage in theory building is overlooked, as well as the opportunity to theorise Southern development relations. This critique has demonstrated the importance of the following: well-considered and understood theoretical schools are fundamental to any account of international relations. Instead, in practice theories tend to be drawn from a toolbox without addition or enhancement.

5. 3 Conclusions of the Study

While the thesis critiqued the relationship between research and the assumption of policy relevance, it did not explore the process of foreign policy and decision-making in South Africa or elsewhere in Africa. Instead it looked at how the intellectual products of South African IR scholars and institutes, in taking a policy focused approach, has limited the use of IR theory in analysis and research. This has hindered both a rigorous or systematic theorisation of the relationship from a more mainstream IR school, be it Realist or Liberal. Moreover, it has not produced a more Critical theorisation. Alternative perspectives are seldom found, attributable to the assumption that they are not relevant to policy. This accords with the concerns of scholars in South Africa and around the world where theories that are assumed to be more relevant are adopted, but in a limited fashion here. A policy focus marginalises the role theory, giving a lot of the work an Empiricist appearance. Karen Smith's conclusions are prescient in this regard: "the contention is not that there is no place for policy-focused research, but instead that this should not be at the expense of theoretically informed work" (2013: 539). The majority of reviewed research departs from the premise that its purpose is to reveal the true nature, or ontology, of China-Africa relations. The justification for this focus on what is reality, rather than reflecting on the assumptions and interests that influence analysis, is largely due to the strong Empiricism that exists within IR.

Moreover, a widely held assumption which remains largely undebated in South African IR is that simple interpretations – and hence a simple ontology – are required for the primary audience of policymakers so that they can be easily understood and, additionally, to inform decision-making. The key ontological assumption was that to simply grasp and predict China-Africa relations and behaviour the state should retain a central place in analysing the shape, behaviour and nature of China-Africa international relations. The typically state-centric nature of China-Africa theoretical analysis is increasingly seen to obfuscate a complex and multi-actor series of relations and events. Key ordering concepts such as China itself are already the subject of reflection as it becomes "less and less plausible to speak of the area it ostensibly covers as some sort of monolithic entity" (Taylor, 2009: 3). Studies are increasingly cognisant of the myriad actors involved in activity that often is analysed as China. This is a promising development, welcomed by Alden and Hughes who point out that "the tendency to take the state as the main unit of analysis can rightly be criticised for neglecting that 'China' is anything but a unitary actor" (2009: 564). Collectively IR as practiced is failing to recognise that concepts once considered immutable in research are changing rapidly and being replaced by a more complex and complicated world order. As a start, it is necessary to stress that China is a complex object of study. The solution suggested here is that researchers should delve into their theoretical backgrounds and engage in debate about policy relevance in South African IR.

Already, reflective conceptual research that examines the applicability of concepts such as 'hegemony' is visible in South African IR (Schoeman, 2007). Schoeman argues for a return to the conceptual 'drawing board' regarding hegemony, as it inadequately encapsulates China-Africa relations and Chinese intentions towards Africa after finding that "there is not sufficient evidence for perceiving China's role in Africa as that of an emerging hegemon" (2007: 74). This represents an important initial effort at reflection, which can form the basis for subsequent research and, in so doing; open up IR's ontological and epistemological assumptions and interests to further scrutiny.

This thesis aimed to contribute answers to the questions and concerns that have been posed in both China-African IR and in South African IR. It finds that the suggestion that South African IR remains mired in a theoretical impasse, to borrow Taylor's (2000a) useful concept again, suggests that the problems long noted in South African IR are likely to persist. A way forward for transcending this impasse is to inculcate reflective thinking and debate the

concept of policy relevance as well as the theory/practice gap in IR (for a UK debate on the relevancy of IR theory and its relationship to policy see Wallace, 1996; Booth, 1997; Smith, 1997; Weber, 2000).

This compels us, as IR researchers, to engage with meta-theoretical ideas, for if we are to better understand the world we should bear in mind the suggestions of critically minded scholars that "the relative neglect of meta-theoretical questions in the discipline of International Relations accounts for a good many of the serious limitations to which contemporary theorising about world politics is presently subject" (Neufeld, 1995: 3). For the majority of IR researchers, however, the challenges posed by meta-theoretical analysis will likely remain daunting and both unpopular and unwelcome.

5. 4 Recommendations for Future Research

This chapter, and thesis, concludes by suggesting there is scope for analysing SSC from an English School perspective – this is because China and African states claim to be institutionalising norms and values that will construct a society of states in order to better pursue common interests. Moreover, the emphasis SSC places on identity should encourage Constructivist research.

Furthermore, there is ample space for Critical Discourse Analysis – beyond theoretically focused critique - for the linguistic evidence and instances of framing and denoting that serves the interest of the researcher or power in a particular interpretation. Linguistic framing is an important tool for future research. Words accompanying descriptions of China, such as 'rapacious', and the consistent use of zoomorphic names, are important to understand in terms of their intended effects. A language that does not inscribe prejudices is crucial for better understanding, but so too is being able to reflect and acknowledge this.

The results though, suggest thinking will remain orthodox, with most researchers looking to analyse China from a Realist framework or a framework containing Realism, or else an SSC perspective. However, Realism can be used to build a richer picture, so long as it is not practised in a rudimentary fashion. The preceding chapters show both the wisdom and application of the suggestion that "Realism must be a part of the analytical toolkit of every

serious student of international relations" (Donnelly, 2005: 54). However, Jack Donnelly presciently warns that "if it is our only tool – or even our primary tool – we will be woefully underequipped for our analytical tasks, our vision of international relations will be sadly impoverished, and, to the extent that theory has an impact on practice, the projects we undertake in the world are liable to be mangled and misshapen" (2005: 54). In conclusion, CIRT provides an insightful theoretical framework for supplying concepts for the critique of South African China-Africa IR. The next step in CIRT-informed research would be an emancipatory theorisation, which takes into account critiques of the research.

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