

THE EFFECT OF CHINESE FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA ON INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHINA

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Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) into Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has increased drastically in the past two decades from 464 million to 18.5 billion dollars. This study examines how Chinese FDI into SSA influences individual attitudes towards China. I run statistical regressions of data from the PEW Global Attitudes Project survey and bilateral FDI stocks in ten nations across SSA in 2007 and 2013. I find that individuals who perceive China as having “a great deal” of influence on their country were nine times more likely to have a “very favorable” view of China than a “very unfavorable” view.

INTRODUCTION

As Chinese influence in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) becomes more apparent, individuals in the region express conflicting attitudes about the impact they believe China is having on their country. Some see Chinese influence as harmful to their country, while others believe it will bring economic benefits that outweigh any negative impacts. In October 2018, The New York Times quoted David Kinyua, a manager of an industrial park in Kenya, as saying “[the Chinese] are the ones with the capital, but as much as we want their money, we don’t want them to treat us like we are not human in our own country.” Only a few months later, CNN quoted a Kenyan student with a much more favorable attitude towards China: “I chose to learn Chinese first because... I would want to travel and do business in China.” These cases demonstrate both opposition to and support for Chinese influence within SSA. This contentious debate is especially apparent when considering the impacts of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region as it has resulted in more visible economic impacts in recipient countries, and few attempts have been made to systematically study its effect on individual attitudes in SSA.

Chinese stocks of FDI in SSA have increased in the past two decades from \$464 million in 2005 to \$18.5 billion in 2012 (UNCTAD 2014). In comparison, US stocks of FDI in SSA over the same time period increased from \$10.3 billion in 2005 to \$30.9 billion in 2012 (UNCTAD 2014). However, unlike US FDI, which is typically privately owned, the Chinese government is actively involved in and the owner of much of the Chinese FDI in SSA. To begin, many of the Chinese enterprises investing in SSA are state-owned (Pigato and Tang 2015). Additionally, the Chinese government promotes FDI from privately-owned, Chinese enterprises. In 2006, China began the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation Summit (FOCAC), which drove the increase in FDI into SSA that began at the time (UNCTAD 2014). Wang and Elliot identify how, as a result of the intentions set by FOCAC, “the Chinese government actively finances, encourages and organizes Chinese business ventures into Africa” even

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when the businesses are not state-owned (2014, 1016). Consequently, Chinese FDI into SSA has political motives and consequences, such as increasing Chinese soft power in the region, distinctive from FDI that originates in other countries (Brautigam and Xiaoyang 2012). Since individual attitudes towards a foreign nation can be used to measure the strength of that nation's soft power, it is important to determine how Chinese FDI affects individual attitudes in SSA in order to understand the influence China has gained in the region.

In addition to measuring soft power, understanding how Chinese FDI affects individual attitudes towards China is valuable as voter preferences affect government policy, and individual attitudes determine the internal stability of a recipient country. Despite these widespread implications, FDI into SSA has not been given significant attention in studies on FDI preferences because it has historically received a small percentage of global flows of FDI.¹ As the earlier quotes from Kenyans demonstrate, this absence of systematic studies results in ambiguity surrounding individual attitudes in SSA towards China. My study will fill this gap by examining individual attitudes towards China and how these attitudes are affected by changing Chinese influence in the region as represented by FDI. This will provide important insight into the strength of China's soft power in SSA. If China can become the most favorably viewed foreign country in SSA by increasing its FDI in the region, then it can quickly become the dominant power across the globe supplanting Western powers that have long held that position.

Upon assessing the determinants of individual attitudes towards China in SSA, I argue that individual attitudes are more likely to be influenced by the publicized economic improvements resulting from Chinese investment rather than any less visible social or environmental injustices that result from the investment. Therefore, as Chinese FDI increases in a country, individuals in that country should have more favorable attitudes towards China. To test this argument, I run a statistical regression of data from the PEW Global Attitudes survey and bilateral FDI stocks in ten nations across SSA in 2007 and 2013. As predicted, Chinese FDI has a significant effect on individual attitudes towards China: as Chinese FDI increases, individuals view China more favorably. Additionally, the level of influence an individual perceives China to have in their country is also a significant predictor of how favorably that individual views China. These findings, when combined with how the media in SSA publicizes the benefits of Chinese FDI (Wu 2012; Skjerdal and Gusu 2016), support the burgeoning work on the sociotropic determinants of attitudes towards globalization (Mansfield and Mutz 2009). In this instance, individuals will develop their attitude towards China based on their sociotropic perception of Chinese FDI—how Chinese investment is helping or harming their country as a whole.

Existing studies have determined key individual-level variables that influence

¹ Moyo (2009) suggests widespread corruption, large bureaucracies, and a lack of infrastructure in the region as reasons that more FDI is not directed to SSA, even with its low cost of labor.

attitudes on FDI to include education and skill level (Pandaya 2010; Kaya and Walker 2012). Other studies have also completed country-level analyses on the benefits and costs of Chinese investment in SSA (Moyo 2009; Pigato and Tang 2015). However, limited studies focus on individual attitudes towards Chinese FDI in SSA (Hanusch 2012; Rebol 2010). This research concludes that individuals in SSA tend to have positive attitudes towards China, but there is no consensus on the factors that influence these attitudes. My study investigates the intersection of individual attitudes on FDI and Chinese investment in SSA to determine the influence of Chinese FDI on individual attitudes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese FDI is linked to many visible economic activities in SSA, including new infrastructure and an influx of Chinese workers in the region (Adisu, Sharkey, and Okoroafo 2010). Individuals in the region likely determine the magnitude of Chinese influence in their country through these conspicuous impacts of FDI. Therefore, individual attitudes towards China in SSA, the focus of my study, may have similar determinants as those identified by a small group of existing studies on individual attitudes towards FDI in general. Kaya and Walker (2012) find that individuals with higher levels of education have a more positive view of FDI and multinational corporations, viewing them as a positive influence on local businesses. Pandaya (2010) determines that higher skilled workers are more likely to view FDI as beneficial. However, the applicability of these studies on FDI in SSA may be limited. Kaya and Walker (2012) include over thirty countries in their data set, with South Africa being the only country in SSA. Pandaya (2010) focused exclusively on countries in Latin America.

Limited research exists on individuals' attitudes towards Chinese FDI in SSA. Rebol (2010) reviews multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data and concludes that individuals in SSA generally have favorable attitudes towards China. Hanusch (2012) concludes, based on the 2008 Afrobarometer survey, that these favorable attitudes stem more from trade with China than FDI from China. However, Rebol (2010) is less quick to dismiss the explanatory power of Chinese FDI, arguing that FDI captures the large infrastructure projects being undertaken by the Chinese in SSA, an important determinant of individual attitudes. Rebol (2010) argues that these projects are both a catalyst for further economic development and a fulfillment of unrealized promises for infrastructure by colonial powers and the country's own government.

Rebol (2010) and Hanusch (2012) use surveys conducted in 2008 to reach their conclusions. However, Chinese FDI in SSA began to skyrocket at this time from \$6.5 billion in 2008 to \$18.5 billion in 2012 (UNCTAD 2014). This increase has made the impacts of Chinese FDI more apparent to residents and garnered coverage in national media, both of which may have caused individual attitudes towards China to change. Therefore, my study closes a gap by examining Chinese FDI in SSA from the perspective of previous studies on FDI preferences in other regions while also con-

sidering the new developments in Chinese–African relations in the past decade.

ARGUMENT

Building on these studies, I argue that the economic improvements resulting from Chinese FDI are more likely to be publicized than any negative impacts and will be influential in shaping individual attitudes towards China because of the importance of sociotropic determinants in FDI preferences. Therefore, as Chinese FDI increases in a country, individuals in that country should have more favorable attitudes towards China.

Studies have found that sociotropic factors are influential when determining individual perceptions of globalization.² Mansfield and Mutz (2009) concluded that, in the US, attitudes towards trade are formed by perceptions of how the nation as a whole is affected rather than how trade personally influences the individual. Therefore, the visible effects of FDI on an individual's country, and whether they are positive or negative, are expected to be influential determinants of individual attitudes towards China in SSA.

Macro-level studies of Chinese FDI in SSA determine that Chinese FDI does have positive economic benefits for the region through job creation and economic growth (Moyo 2009; Pigato and Tang 2015). However, Moyo (2009) also identifies the negative externalities of Chinese FDI to include human rights violations and environmental damage. While both the positive and negative impacts described here are possible sociotropic determinants, I argue that individual attitudes on China should be primarily influenced by the positive economic improvements because they are more publicized than any negative social or environmental injustices. Skjerdal and Gusu (2016) found that Ethiopian newspapers tended to show Chinese involvement in the country as favorable. Even when being critical, these newspapers did not discuss any relevant human rights issues. Similarly, Wu (2012, 5) finds that as a part of “the [Chinese] leadership’s emphasis on soft power... Chinese broadcasting is finding a new voice in Africa.” If the aim of Chinese-backed media is to increase the country’s soft power, the presence of this media in SSA will increase the general public’s awareness of the benefits of Chinese investment. In their study on the importance of sociotropic determinants on individual attitudes towards globalization, Mansfield and Mutz (2009) found media to be one of the main factors that influence national perceptions and the resulting individual attitudes. In the context of Chinese influence in SSA, Rebol (2010, 179) concurs with this assessment, stating that “opinions of China are mainly formed on national levels through media.”

Additionally, Wang & Elliot (2014, 1018) explain that individuals in SSA view China “as a non-confrontational political and ideological partner, in sharp contrast to the old Western relations.” Given the importance of sociotropic determinants, individuals in SSA may prefer Chinese investment to other international sources be-

² Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 432) define sociotropic determinants as those that “[rely] on collective-level information rather than personal experience.”

cause of similarities between their national identity and China, even if they would derive greater personal benefit from other sources.

Therefore, since the economic improvements derived from Chinese FDI are publicized at a national level, individuals will see China as a positive influence in their country, and any negative effects they experience themselves or witness happening to others are anomalous. Furthermore, Chinese influence is portrayed as a departure from traditional colonialism and, thus, beneficial for countries in SSA. Consequently, as Chinese FDI increases in a country, these sociotropic factors will cause individuals in that country to have more favorable attitudes towards China.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

DATA

To test the hypothesis and assess the determinants of attitudes towards China in SSA, I employ data from the 2007 and 2013 PEW Global Attitudes surveys. In 2007, 13,004 respondents were surveyed in SSA in the countries of Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. In 2013, 5,043 respondents were surveyed in the countries of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. PEW Global Attitudes conducts interviews either on the telephone or face-to-face. Nationally representative samples of the adult population were used for all countries except for South Africa and the Ivory Coast in 2007, where urban populations were over represented. PEW Global Attitudes ascribes a margin of error ranging from 3% to 5%, depending on the country and the year.

The dependent variable is an individual's opinion of China in the PEW Global Attitudes survey. This variable is operationalized as: "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China?" The dependent variable measures how favorable of an opinion of China an individual has on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is very unfavorable and 4 is very favorable. Therefore, higher values of the dependent variable are associated with more positive attitudes toward China.

The first independent variable of interest is Chinese FDI into the country where the individual resides. Data on Chinese FDI into SSA was taken from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which provides data on stocks and flows of FDI organized by the host country and recipient country in US dollars. This data is available from 2003 to 2012 for Chinese FDI in most countries in SSA. UNCTAD gathers data from national sources, which could be associated with an underestimation of Chinese FDI (Pigato and Tang 2015). I used FDI stocks rather than FDI flows, as this variable aims to capture Chinese influence in a country. This influence may be significant even if no new investment, the only investment captured by FDI flows, occurs in a given year. Additionally, the value of Chinese FDI is divided by the recipient country's GDP to control for the different size economies within SSA. This variable is a proxy for the actual influence that China has in a country, compared to the amount of influence an individual in that country believes China to have.

The second independent variable of interest is how much influence an individual perceives China to have on their country. This variable is based on the following PEW Global Attitudes survey question: “How much influence do you think China is having on the way things are going in our country? Would you say it is having a great deal of influence, a fair amount, not too much, or no influence at all?” This variable is measured on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is an individual who believes China has “no influence at all” on their country, and 4 is an individual who believes China has “a great deal of influence” on their country. Therefore, the higher the value of this independent variable, the more influence an individual perceives China to have on their country. This variable measures perceived influence, but when considering individual attitudes, perceived influence functions as the actual influence of China for that individual. Additionally, this variable is a sociotropic measure of Chinese influence since it specifically asks about how an individual believes China is influencing their country rather than their own life.

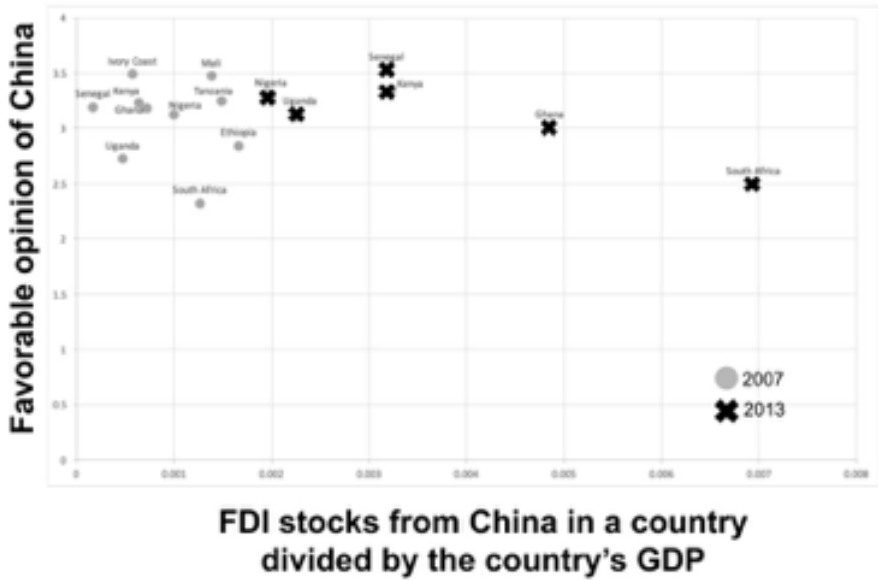
Individual-level control variables are age, gender, wealth, education, opinion of the US, and view of the economic situation in their country. Pandaya (2010) and Kaya and Walker (2012) identify education and wealth as key determinants of individual attitudes on FDI. Additionally, following Hanusch’s (2010) findings, I included variables representing the opinion of the US, view of the economic situation in one’s country, and imports from China. At the country-level, I control for GDP per capita. A country’s level of democracy was highly correlated with GDP per capita ($r=.719$), so it was omitted from the regression, although results also held when the measure of democracy was substituted for GDP per capita. I considered GDP per capita and a country’s level of democracy as control variables based on Kaya and Walker (2012), who found the political and economic circumstances of a country to be significant. Country-level data is taken from the United Nations Statistics Division (2017), UNSD Comtrade (2017), the World Bank (2017), and the Economist Intelligence Unit (Kekic 2007). With the omission of the measure of democracy, there is no multicollinearity between independent variables. For a list of all variables, their sources, and possible values, see the appendix.

TRENDS

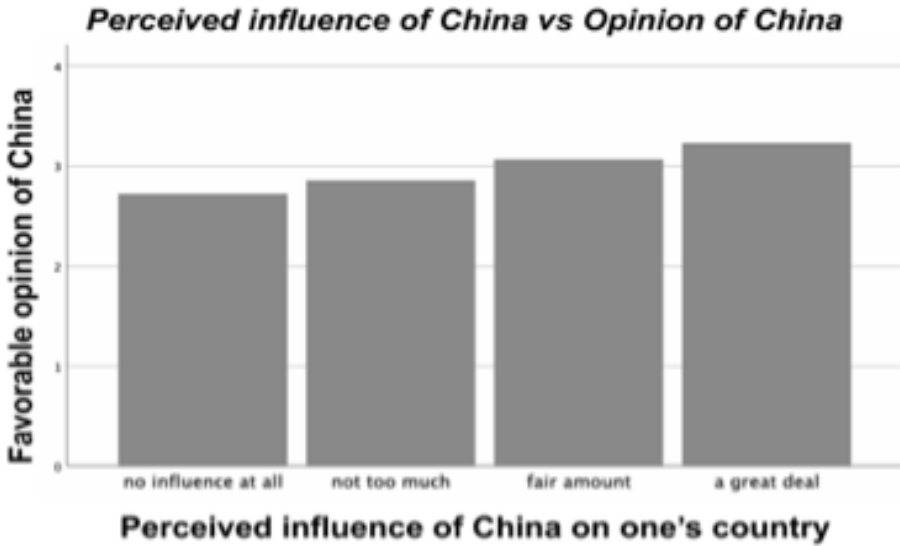
Regardless of how much influence China had in their country or how much influence they perceived it to have, 79.3% of respondents had either a “very favorable” or “somewhat favorable” view of China. This aligns with previous studies (Hanusch 2012; Rebol 2010) on individual attitudes towards China in SSA, which found that the majority of individuals in this region view China favorably.

However, as shown in Figure 1, there is no clear positive or negative trend in the relationship between FDI stocks from China in a country divided by the country’s GDP and individual attitudes. This counters my hypothesis, as it suggests that FDI stocks from China in a country may not influence individual attitudes towards China in that country.

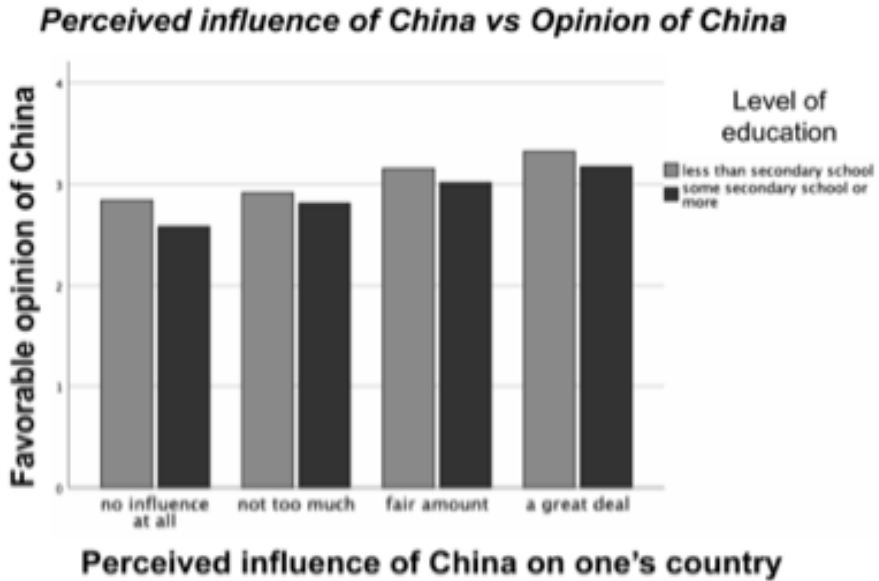
Figure 1

FDI stocks from China vs Opinion of China

In contrast to Figure 1, Figure 2 reveals a positive relationship between an individual's perceived influence of China on their country and the individual's favorable opinion of China. Therefore, the more influence an individual believes that China has on their country, the more favorably they will view China. The discrepancy between perceived influence, which has a positive relationship with individual attitudes, and actual influence through FDI stocks, which has no clear relationship, is further demonstrated through the low correlation between the two variables ($r=.010$). As a result, while Figure 1 counters my hypothesis, Figure 2 demonstrates a link between the influence of China and individual attitudes towards China. This suggests that the actual amount of FDI is less important than an individual's awareness of Chinese investment in their country.

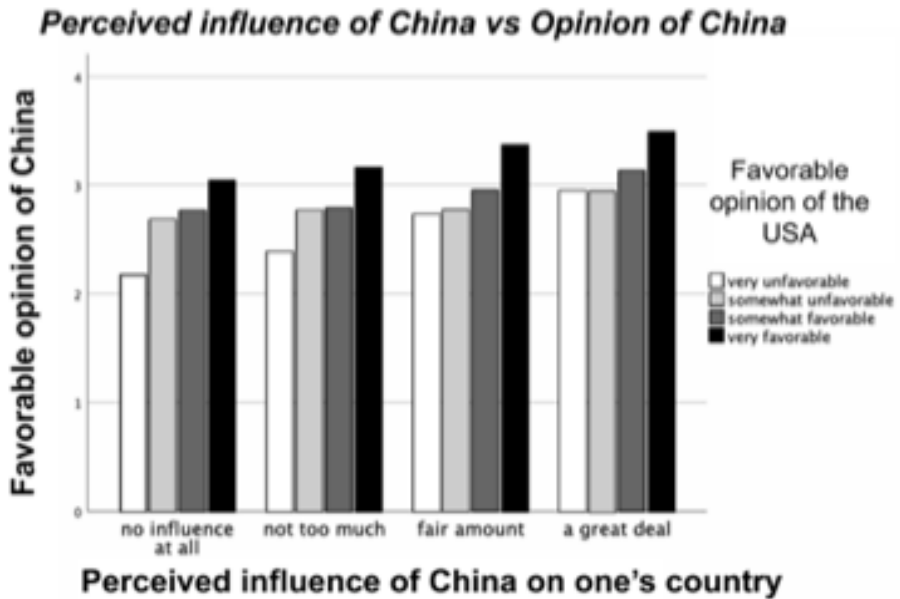
Figure 1

Existing studies on individual attitudes towards FDI identify an individual's level of education as an important determinant of individual preferences for FDI. Kaya and Walker (2012) found that individuals with more education view FDI more favorably. Diverging from this conclusion, Figure 3 shows that individuals in SSA with higher levels of education tend to have less favorable opinions of China than their peers with lower levels of education, but perceive China to have the same amount of influence. One possible explanation for this divergence is the difference in dependent variables. Here, the dependent variable does not directly ask about FDI, but instead asks for opinions on a specific country that is known for high levels of FDI. Therefore, while education may still influence preferences for FDI in SSA, higher levels of education may make an individual more aware of the negative aspects of Chinese influence, such as social and environmental injustices, leading to a decreased preference for Chinese FDI.

Figure 3

Based on Hanusch (2012), who found a significant, positive relationship between an individual's attitude towards China and their attitude towards other international investors, I included an individual's attitude towards the US as a likely determinant of an individual attitudes towards China. Figure 4 shows that individuals with a more favorable opinion of the US also have a more favorable opinion of China when compared to their peers who perceive China's influence on their country similarly. This trend is consistent with Hanusch (2012), as it suggests a positive relationship between individual attitudes towards the US and attitudes towards China. In contrast, some studies argue that individuals support China because they do not like the US and former colonial powers investing in their countries (Wang and Elliot 2014). The trend in Figure 4 suggests this dichotomy between the US and China is not a reality in SSA.

Figure 4



EMPIRICAL TEST: ORDERED LOGIT REGRESSION

In order to test my hypothesis, I ran a statistical regression of the data described. An ordered logit regression is used because the dependent variable is on an ordinal scale. The ordered logit estimation is given by this equation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{FavorableOpinionofChina}_i = & \alpha_i + \beta_1 \text{FDIStocksfromChina} + \\
 & \beta_2 \text{PerceivedInfluenceofChina}_i + \beta_3 \text{Age}_i + \beta_4 \text{Gender}_i + \beta_5 \text{Education}_i + \beta_6 \text{Wealth}_i + \\
 & \beta_7 \text{Economy}_i + \beta_8 \text{FavorableOpinionofUS}_i + \beta_9 \text{GDPPerCapita}_i + \\
 & \beta_{10} \text{ImportsfromChina}_i + \varepsilon_i
 \end{aligned}$$

The ordinal logit estimation in Table 1 reinforces the trends seen in the previous graphs. An individual's perceived influence of China is positively related to their favorable opinion of China. This relationship is statistically significant. There is also a positive, statistically significant relationship between FDI stocks from China and favorable opinion of China.

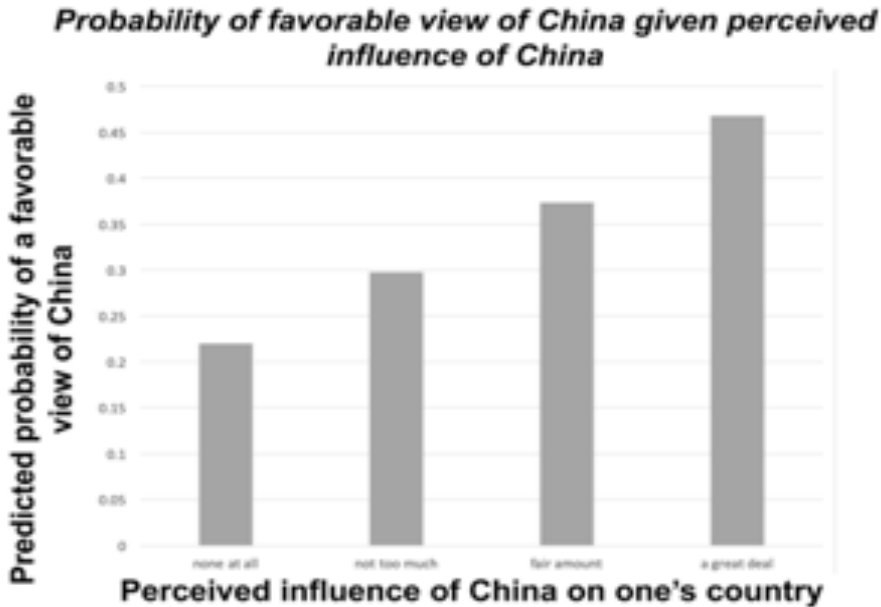
Table 1: Ordered Logit Estimation of Favorable Opinion of China	
FDI stocks from China	40.781*** (13.505)
Perceived influence of China	.374*** (.021)
Age	.000425 (.001)
Gender	-.275*** (.037)
Education	-.061 (.042)
Wealth	.005 (.021)
Economy	.102*** (.020)
Favorable opinion of US	.542*** (.020)
GDP per capita	-.000241*** (.0000125)
Imports from China	-.018*** (.004)
Pseudo R-Square = .156	N= 10,708
Standard errors in parentheses	***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Consistent with Hanusch (2012), Pandaya (2010), and Kaya and Walker (2012), males have a more favorable opinion of China than females. Also consistent with the aforementioned studies, age is statistically insignificant. Wealth did not have a statistically significant effect on attitudes towards China, which is accordant with Kaya and Walker (2012). As seen in the model created by Hanusch (2012), imports from China negatively affect individual attitudes towards China, while good economic performance of an individual's country positively affects their attitude towards China.

Using the ordered logit regression, I found the predicted probabilities of an individual having a favorable or unfavorable opinion of China, given their perceived influence of China. Figure 5 shows the probability of a favorable opinion, and Figure 6 shows the probability of an unfavorable opinion. As hypothesized, individuals who perceive China as having "a great deal" of influence on their country were nine times more likely to have a "very favorable" opinion of China than a "very unfavorable" opinion. These graphs reinforce the conclusion that an individual's perception of Chi-

nese influence in their country has a statistically significant effect on how favorably they view China.

Figure 5



While the actual amount of influence, as measured by FDI stocks from China, is also statistically significant, these two measures must not be equated as they have a low correlation ($r=-.010$). This low correlation suggests the importance of media in determining individual attitudes since this affects how an individual perceives Chinese influence, thus, causing it to differ from the actual influence China exerts. Wu (2012) describes this considerable presence of Chinese-backed media in SSA. Furthermore, even independent media in the region tends to highlight the benefits of Chinese FDI over the negative impacts (Skjerdal and Gusu 2016). Therefore, since sociotropic determinants shape individual attitudes towards international issues such as trade (Mansfield and Mutz 2009), the positive portrayals of Chinese FDI in the media will be influential in determining individual attitudes towards China in SSA. This is consistent with my findings that individuals tend to have a favorable attitude towards Chinese influence in their country, despite the negative impact of Chinese investment on human rights and the environment.

CONCLUSION

While Chinese FDI into SSA has increased substantially since 2005, there is no consensus about individual attitudes towards Chinese investment in the region. Macro-level studies tend to focus on the negative social and environmental effects of Chi-

nese investment in SSA, but survey data shows that individuals in SSA generally view China favorably. My empirical findings confirm that individuals in SSA have positive attitudes towards China. I argue that these attitudes stem more from the publicized benefits of Chinese FDI for a country than any injustices individuals experience because of the importance of sociotropic determinants and the role of media in publicizing benefits. Chinese-backed media and local media that favors China focus on promoting the benefits of Chinese FDI in a country to the masses. This plays a greater role in determining individual attitudes than the negative impacts that individuals personally experience do. Media also likely causes the discrepancy between the actual magnitude of Chinese influence as measured by FDI and the influence an individual perceives China to have because the media emphasizes the benefits of Chinese influence. Therefore, this is not simply a gap in magnitude between perceived influence and actual influence but a divergence in what positive and negative impacts are attributed to Chinese FDI in the minds of individuals in SSA.

These findings have consequences that are relevant to the global political economy as China and the US compete for influence worldwide and especially in SSA. I conclude that individuals who see China as having a significant influence on their country are nine times more likely to have a favorable opinion of China than an unfavorable one. Therefore, China is growing its soft power in SSA through not only large amounts of FDI but also a concerted effort to publicize the benefits of this investment to the population in the region. Currently, individuals in SSA view both the US and China favorably. However, if Chinese FDI and concomitant Chinese-backed media can alter this equilibrium so that individuals view Chinese influence more favorably than US influence, this will tip the balance of power in the global political economy to benefit China. To better understand China's growing soft power in SSA and the role of FDI in this development, further studies should determine how this relationship varies between countries, as well as examining actions by China, in addition to the use of media outlets, that can account for the discrepancy between perceived and actual Chinese influence.

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APPENDIX

Variable	Data Source	Values
Favorable opinion of China (Dependent variable)	“Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of: c. China?” PEW Global Attitudes Q16c in 2007 and Q9c in 2013	1: Very unfavorable 2: Somewhat unfavorable 3: Somewhat favorable 4: Very favorable
FDI stocks from China (First independent variable of interest)	- FDI stocks from China from UNCTAD - Country's GDP (purchasing power parity, current international dollars) from World Development Indicators	FDI stocks from China divided by the country's GDP in that year
Perceived influence of China (Second independent variable of interest)	“How much influence do you think China is having on the way things are going in our country? Would you say it is having a great deal of influence, a fair amount, not too much, or no influence at all?” PEW Global Attitudes Q84 in 2007 and Q79 in 2013	1: No influence at all 2: Not too much 3: A fair amount 4: A great deal of influence
Age	How old were you at your last birthday? PEW Global Attitudes Q108 in 2007 and Q165 in 2013	
Gender	PEW Global Attitudes Q107 in 2007 and Q164 in 2013	1: Male 2: Female
Education	PEW Global Attitudes Q118 in 2007 and Q180 in 2013	0: Less than secondary school 1: Some secondary school or more
Wealth	“Have there been times during the last year when you did not have enough money a. to buy food your family needed? b. to pay for medical and health care your family needed?” PEW Global Attitudes Q121 a and b in 2007 and Q182 a and b in 2013	Range from 2 to 4 where 4 is the wealthier individuals
Economy	“Now thinking about our economic situation, how would you describe the current economic situation in (survey country) – is it very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or very bad?” PEW Global Attitudes Q11 in 2007 and Q4 in 2013	1: Very bad 2: Somewhat bad 3: Somewhat good 4: Very good
Favorable Opinion of US	“Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of: c. the United States?” PEW Global Attitudes Q16a in 2007 and Q9a in 2013	1: Very unfavorable 2: Somewhat unfavorable 3: Somewhat favorable 4: Very favorable
GDP per capita	Per capita GDP at current prices - US dollars from United Nations Statistics Division	
Democracy index	Democracy index from the Economist Intelligence Unit	Scale of 1 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy)
Imports from China	Imports from China as a percent of all imports from UN Comtrade	Between 0 and 1