

# **Old Comrades and New Brothers: A Historical Re-Examination of the Sino- Zanzibari and Sino-Tanzanian Bilateral Relationships in the 1960s**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## Abstract

This thesis makes a contribution to the study of Sino-African relations by analysing the bilateral relationship between the People's Republic of China and the United Republic of Tanzania during its formative period in the 1960s. Tanzania was the largest recipient of Chinese aid during this period, which also marked the height of European decolonisation in Africa. As a work of international history, the thesis combines the analysis of the relevant secondary literature with extensive research using archival sources in Tanzania, China, the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), as well as oral history interviews. It links Tanzanian political developments with China's African policy in the 1960s. The Sino-Tanzanian relationship was complex and multi-faceted; it was affected by external as well as local African factors. Indeed, as the thesis shows, its development owed much to African political actors and especially to President Julius Nyerere's gradual consolidation of power and Tanzania's relative political stability.

The study begins by tracing the contact between Chinese officials and the Zanzibari and Tanganyikan nationalists in the late 1950s, which set the stage for the strong bilateral relations that emerged after independence. Chinese military assistance to Tanzania and Chairman Mao Zedong's offer to construct the Tanzania-Zambia rail link buttressed these ties at the highest levels of government. This was further complemented by the nature of the Chinese aid programme, which contrasted starkly with Western aid. The resilience of the bilateral relationship was demonstrated most clearly by its continued resilience in the face of the destabilising effects of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that were manifested in Tanzania from 1966 to 1968. Publicly, the Tanzanian government remained a stalwart supporter of the Chinese government, as shown by the Tanzanian delegation's support for the "restoration" the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the China seat at the United Nations.

## **Declaration of authorship**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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I confirm that selected sections of Chapter Three were part of a study commissioned by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2009 as part of the Hashim Mbita Project for the documentation of the southern African liberation struggles, a forthcoming publication. Parts of Chapter Four were published by the LSE's IDEAS Centre in 2009 (working paper), as were sections of Chapter Five in the Journal fuer Entwicklungspolitik in 2010. I undertook these publications and projects during my doctoral programme at the LSE.

I confirm that my thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by my husband, Dr. Stefan Altorfer-Ong.

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

Alicia N. Altorfer-Ong

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## Abbreviations

AAPC	All Africa People's Congress
AAPSO	Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation
AASC	Afro-Asian Solidarity Council
ADB	African Development Bank
ALC	African Liberation Committee
ANC	African National Congress (in Tanganyika)
ASP	Afro-Shirazi Party
ASPYL	Afro-Shirazi Party Youth League
ASPYU	Afro-Shirazi Party Youth Union
ASU	Afro-Shirazi Union
CAASC	Chinese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee
CAFA	China-Africa Friendship Association
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCRG	Central Cultural Revolution Group
CCYL	Chinese Communist Youth League
CFMA	Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive
Chicom	Communist China
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Coremo	Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
Frelimo	Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Guomindang (Kuomintang)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICCOMM	Institute for Commonwealth Studies
IMC	Inter-Governmental Ministerial Committee
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NARA	National Archive and Records Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCNA	New China News Agency
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PAFMECA	Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa

PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TAA	Tanganyika African Association
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TANUYL	Tanganyika African National Union Youth League
TNA	Tanzania National Archive
TPDF	Tanganyika People's Defence Force
UAR	United Arab Republic
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNIP	United National Independence Party
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
URMF	United Republic Military Force
URTZ	Union Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTP	United Tanganyika Party
VOA	Voice of America
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WPC	World Peace Council
YOU	Youth's Own Union
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZFTU	Zanzibar Federation of Trade Unions
ZNA	Zanzibar National Archive
ZNP	Zanzibar Nationalist Party
ZPLA	Zanzibar People's Liberation Army
ZPPP	Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party
ZRC	Zanzibar Revolutionary Committee

## Introduction

### I. The historical importance and context of Sino-Tanzanian relations in the 1960s

International relations underwent a seismic shift in the 1960s with the entry of a slew of newly independent states onto the world stage, created by European decolonisation and, in particular, the dismantling of the British empire. The fledgling governments were immediately confronted with urgent political, economic and social demands for change by their people. Tanganyika and Zanzibar, in East Africa, were at the forefront of these dramatic processes, as their respective nationalist movements had gained momentum from the mid-1950s. Tanganyika was the first territory in British East Africa to be ‘granted’ independence on 9 December 1961 under Julius Kambarage Nyerere, leader of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU).<sup>1</sup> Nyerere worked quickly to establish his government’s credentials domestically and internationally, but those plans were thrown into disarray by a series of tumultuous events in January 1964.

A revolution broke out in neighbouring Zanzibar on 12 January 1964. Both the independence government – a coalition between the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) and the Zanzibar and Pemba People’s Party (ZPPP) – and the constitutional monarchy of Sultan Seyyid Jamshid bin Abdullah bin Khalifa were ousted by a self-proclaimed revolutionary government, the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council (ZRC).<sup>2</sup> The timing of the Zanzibar Revolution, barely a month after the British authorities granted

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<sup>1</sup> Iliffe 1979; Nnoli 1978; Smith 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Hunter 2010; Burgess 2009.

independence on 10 December 1963, threw it into the international spotlight as a potential flashpoint for regional instability and as an example for failed decolonisation.<sup>3</sup> Just days after the coup, the Tanganyika Rifles mutinied, followed by similar mutinies by the Ugandan and Kenyan armies, which together had formed the former colonial King's African Rifles.<sup>4</sup> The security crisis eroded Tanganyika's reputation as a successful case of decolonisation and called into question the plausibility of Nyerere's aspirations for his government to play a central role as a defender of African liberation.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the events in January 1964 not only exposed the inherent weaknesses of both the Tanganyikan and Zanzibari governments, but also precipitated a shift in external evaluations of the political situation in East and southern Africa.<sup>6</sup>

In a Cold War context which clearly distinguished political friend from foe, the ZRC appeared bent on fostering close ties with one camp by requesting development aid from the Eastern Bloc rather than the West.<sup>7</sup> Among the Communist governments which responded was the People's Republic of China (PRC), much to the consternation and chagrin of many Western governments.<sup>8</sup> In the face of accumulating domestic and external pressures, Nyerere and the ZRC leader Abeid Karume established a union between their countries on 26 April 1964 to consolidate their respective political positions. Their decision marked the birth of the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar (URTZ, the Republic of Tanzania from October 1964).

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<sup>3</sup> Petterson 2002; Clayton 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Petterson 2002. Uganda became independent on 9 October 1962 and Kenya the year after, on 12 December 1963.

<sup>5</sup> Legum 1964.

<sup>6</sup> Pachter 1982; Parsons 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Engel 1988; Petterson 2002; Hunter 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson and Babu 1989. Throughout the thesis the term "China" refers to the People's Republic of China (PRC) under the Chinese Communist Party. The "Republic of China" (ROC) is referred to as Taiwan.

At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Chairman Mao Zedong was keen to enhance his government's profile among the newly independent countries and was attracted by the wealth of diplomatic opportunities presented through European decolonisation in Africa. Indeed, Beijing had started cultivating relations with independent African governments and African nationalist groups from the mid-1950s, both at the intergovernmental level as well as through "people's solidarity" – the interpersonal contacts between Chinese and foreign individuals that were funded and actively fostered by various Chinese state-sponsored associations.<sup>9</sup> As this thesis will examine in detail, local African factors – which have generally been neglected in the literature – were integral to the rapid development of Beijing's relationship with the Zanzibari and Tanganyikan nationalists and subsequently the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship.

The research will show that the Chinese government emphasised its relationship with Zanzibar until 1963, when Tanganyika rose in continental prominence as host of the Organisation for African Unity's (OAU) African Liberation Committee (ALC). The Tanganyikan government's support for the southern African liberation struggle combined with the demands of its own post-independence national development made China – an anti-imperialist, third world power – an important partner and donor. These ties were strengthened after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964 and boosted even further by the Chinese offer to construct the iconic, 1860 kilometre long Tanzania-Zambia (TanZam) rail link in February 1965. By the end of that decade,

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<sup>9</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010, p. 41; Yahuda 1978; Yu 1975.

China was Tanzania's largest foreign aid donor and Tanzania was China's most important African ally.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis will demonstrate, however, that the evolution of the celebrated Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s was neither straightforward nor smooth: It was complex and multi-faceted. The Chinese government's motivations at the time were not primarily economic, but political; Tanzania was not a resource-rich country, so the access to African resources that is so crucial in the debate about today's Chinese engagement in Africa was not a key factor in the 1960s. For Tanzania, the connection yielded Chinese aid monies, military and economic assistance, as well as mutual political dividends.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the Sino-Tanzanian relationship held immense symbolic value as a great Afro-Asian, South-South and East-South connection that fired the imaginations of third world leaders who ruminated upon the potential for change in the post-independence period. China's political, economic and ideological profile made its foreign aid an interesting alternative to Western aid and offered African governments a useful bargaining chip in addition to its ostensible developmental benefits. Conversely, Western leaders rued Communist China's entry into Africa and contributed to the hostility and suspicion that greeted Beijing's diplomatic overtures towards certain governments.<sup>12</sup>

To better understand the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, the context of its development in the 1960s needs to be fully appreciated. This context has three threads: Firstly, decolonisation and Afro-Asianism;

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<sup>10</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010; Yu 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Niblock 1981.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson and Babu 1989; Petterson 2002.

ssecondly, the potential fragility of the post-colonial state; and thirdly, Chinese diplomacy in the “third world”.<sup>13</sup> These themes will be explained in the remainder of Part I of this introduction, before the focus of the thesis is set out in Part II. Finally, a discussion of the literature can be found in Part III.

### i) Decolonisation and Afro-Asianism

Decolonisation bestowed political independence on new governments which were keen to establish themselves as legitimate stewards of their respective countries’ destinies. Afro-Asianism was the rousing concept around which the aspiring nations of the heavily colonised regions of Africa and Asia gathered to express their support for shared issues.<sup>14</sup> The spirit of Afro-Asianism was given a clearer definition through the Asian-African Conference for International Order in 1955 held in Bandung, Indonesia, from 18 to 24 April 1955 (more popularly referred to as the Bandung Conference). As Mayall has argued, “Afro-Asian revisionism” was based on three objectives shared by most of the third world leaders: Non-alignment in the Cold War; the elimination of all forms of colonialism and racism; as well as modernisation and economic development.<sup>15</sup> Prashad has similarly posited that “unity for the people of the Third World came from a political position against colonialism and imperialism, not from any intrinsic cultural or racial commonalities.”<sup>16</sup> However, Afro-Asianism itself presumed a certain non-white solidarity that was derived from the victims’ backlash to colonialism,

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<sup>13</sup> The meaning of “third world” has been debated: See Wolf-Phillips 1987, pp. 1311-1327 and Worsely 1984 for the specific arguments. That debate should not be confused with Mao’s “three worlds” theory, an attempt to create an international united front against the Soviet Union, which was announced later, in 1974: See Wang 1998, p. 485. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “third world” is used in the context of the 1960s, referring to those countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which bore some or all of these characteristics: Formerly colonised, non-aligned and economically impoverished.

<sup>14</sup> Mackie 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Mayall 1990, pp. 126-127.

<sup>16</sup> Prashad 2007, p. 34.

racial subjugation and discrimination – an initially implicit assumption on which the Chinese government later capitalised to shut the white Soviet government out from Afro-Asian affairs.

Indeed, the expansion of diplomatic opportunities as a result of decolonisation led to an intense rivalry between the Eastern and Western political blocs for the political allegiance of the newly independent governments. The diplomatically isolated Chinese government, in particular, was eager to cultivate ties with the Afro-Asian governments in order to establish itself as a credible power in the third world. Meanwhile, the Sino-Soviet dispute created an additional political dynamic, as the Chinese escalated their diplomatic efforts in Africa between 1960 and 1964 to position Beijing as the leader of the third world.<sup>17</sup> The Soviet Union convened the Asian committees of its World Peace Council (WPC) at a conference in New Delhi in April 1955 to prepare the delegates for the Bandung Conference later that month. Significantly, the delegations in New Delhi agreed to create a “broad front organisation” for Asia and Africa that would also include the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> Although the WPC’s efforts had minimal impact on the proceedings in Bandung, as will be discussed further along, they later facilitated Soviet attempts to co-opt the Afro-Asian movement. Be that as it may, the Bandung Conference is remembered for a number of other, more significant, factors.

The Bandung Conference’s political importance lay primarily in its potent, yet generally intangible, value. Indeed, as Shimazu has contended, the event was “replete

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<sup>17</sup> Goh 2005, pp. 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> Hutchison 1975, pp. 37-38.

with symbolic meanings.”<sup>19</sup> To begin with, the conference was helmed by three of the independent third world’s most recognised political heavyweights: Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, India’s Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesia’s Sukarno. Sukarno himself captured the implicit racial dimension of the gathering when he declared the event “the first intercontinental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind.”<sup>20</sup> In the uphill struggle for diplomatic and political legitimacy, many of the newly independent governments benefitted from the Afro-Asian promise of third world solidarity by emphasising their common experience of colonial exploitation, as well as drawing on a more visceral, racial backlash against white colonial power. The most striking outcome of the Bandung Conference was, arguably, Premier Zhou Enlai’s personal diplomacy. Zhou’s conciliatory manner and attempts to demystify his government’s foreign policies impressed many of the delegates.<sup>21</sup>

For all the expectations and fanfare that surrounded the conference, however, it ended on an ambivalent note and bequeathed what Acharya and Tan have described as a “contested legacy.”<sup>22</sup> The delegations that were perceived as being more Western-oriented came head-to-head with the more fervently anti-Western elements, so that by the end of the event no serious plans had been made to institutionalise the Afro-Asian momentum. Within half a decade, the “Bandung spirit” had lost its shine to more pressing geopolitical demands, not least because the conflicts between major Afro-Asian governments wiped out the brown and yellow glow. Moreover, the smaller Afro-Asian countries were increasingly focused on the urgent needs of the post-colonial

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<sup>19</sup> Shimazu 2011, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Acharya / Tan 2008, pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Shao 1996.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

period and, in Africa in particular, on major challenges to the new states' fragile sovereignties.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the fundamental essence of the Bandung Conference remained relevant as a reference point that delineated subsequent discourses on Afro-Asianism and third world solidarity. It laid the foundations for the Afro-Asian and Afro-Asian-Latin American groups in the United Nations (UN) reinforced the existing trend which later led to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961.<sup>24</sup> As will be shown in this thesis, this legacy was evident in the rapid development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s.

## **ii) The potential fragility of the post-colonial state**

The second theme that influenced the context in which the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was forged was the potential fragility of the post-colonial state. European decolonisation in Africa peaked in 1960, with sixteen countries having gained their political independence from France, the United Kingdom and Belgium that year.<sup>25</sup> The newly installed governments found themselves confronted with the pressing demands of their citizens for the fruits of independence, most broadly defined as economic development, even as they were burdened with depleted human and infrastructural resources because of prolonged colonial neglect. Indeed, although the African leaders now had full control of the bureaucratic apparatus, the system had been structured to “exploit and not to liberate.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, with such an imperfect arrangement, the African

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<sup>23</sup> Brennan 2010a.

<sup>24</sup> Prashad 2007, p. 41; Acharya / Tan, p. 9; Neuhauser 1968.

<sup>25</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Prashad 2007, p. 191.

leaders were charged to deliver on the people's expectations for change and development, whilst many Western leaders had very low expectations.

The formal retreat of empire shaped the way in which the new African governments' fledgling foreign relations were conducted. The developments and circumstances that produced the celebrated third world friendship between Tanzania and China owed much to the recession of European – and specifically, British – imperial power. Indeed, the Sino-Tanzanian friendship was a product of European decolonisation in Africa and was given even greater impetus by the partial decolonisation that persisted in the white minority racist regimes. The Chinese government was able to fill the resource and aid vacuums created by British decolonisation, as well as to take on an important role as a supporter of African liberation.<sup>27</sup>

In Tanganyika, Nyerere's foreign policy strategy had three clear dimensions. Firstly, he strove to validate his government's position as a responsible member of the international community through the UN. Secondly, he embarked on a non-aligned foreign policy and established relations with the Communist bloc and socialist governments upon independence in 1961. His intention was to usher in international assistance from a range of bilateral donors; what Mayall has described as realising the "latent economic potential of a non-aligned foreign policy."<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, Nyerere pledged to support the southern African liberation struggles.<sup>29</sup> This brought Tanzania into a direct conflict of interest with the UK, its former colonial power and a major donor,

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<sup>27</sup> Niblock 1971; Ogunsanwo 1971.

<sup>28</sup> Mayall 1990, p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> Bjerk 2008.

which had vested interests in preserving the settler-dominated status quo in southern Africa.

Nyerere's three-pronged coping strategy was intended to help the new government establish its legitimacy and win the people's loyalty, but it was an imperfect tool in practice. Tanganyika's foreign policies, such as its support for African liberation struggles, complicated its bilateral relations with its major donors and gave it a more radical reputation at the UN. Moreover, the country's heavy reliance on foreign aid and assistance created practical problems in harmonising the kind of assistance it was given by the various donors. The People's Republic of China was a *very* valued foreign partner in this regard.<sup>30</sup> Amid these competing pressures and demands, both internally and externally, it was not surprising that Western governments might have observed the third world leaders as having "a somewhat schizophrenic attitude."<sup>31</sup>

### iii) Chinese diplomacy in the third world

The third theme to be considered for the context of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship is the role of Chinese diplomacy in the third world. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) had been in power since its victory over the Republic of China (ROC) led by Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek) in 1949.<sup>32</sup> The Communist Chinese government adopted a more outward-oriented foreign policy following its diplomatic debut at the Bandung

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<sup>30</sup> Yu 1970; Yu 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Mayall 1990, p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> After their defeat at the hands of the CCP, Jiang and his followers from the Guomindang (GMD, also Kuomintang, KMT) party fled across the Taiwan Strait, where they consolidated their rule as the government of the Republic of China (ROC). In this thesis, to avoid confusion, "China" and the "PRC" are used interchangeably to mean mainland China; "Taiwan" and the "ROC" are used interchangeably to refer to GMD's island stronghold.

Conference in 1955.<sup>33</sup> Its main foreign policy objectives were centred on political legitimacy and internationalism. The PRC leaders considered the ROC their main political rival and insisted on their allies' official recognition of "One China" led by Beijing. Chinese intergovernmental diplomacy in Africa was more flexible and pragmatic in the first half of the 1960s, in line with its objectives for enhancing its profile in the third world.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Chinese foreign policy was greatly affected by its triangular relationship with the US and the USSR; Mao's government made attempts to ameliorate the diplomatic isolation by shoring up support against the US policy of containment as well as against the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup>

Propaganda was a major part of what the Chinese government called its "people's diplomacy". The Chinese state-run press drummed up solidarity by extolling the similarities between China and the African countries. Moreover, Chinese delegations were dispatched to many newly independent African countries to seek official recognition and to offer aid packages. These representatives would emphasise the shared history of imperialist and colonial oppression, as well as the condemnations of the US and the former colonial states as neo-colonialists who undermined revolutionary and nationalist activities. By the late 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split had intensified to the extent that Mao had declared the Soviet Union China's main political foe for preaching "peaceful coexistence"; he declared China's support for armed struggle and revolution instead.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Armstrong 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Segal 1982; Lin 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Chen 2002; Neuhauser 1968.

Although – or maybe because – the Chinese Communists were shut out of the United Nations (UN), they were extremely active in other multilateral organisations. Many of Beijing’s most substantial early contacts with African nationalists took place within the Afro-Asian movement and, as the decolonisation process progressed, relations were intensified in East Africa. The Afro-Asian Solidarity Council (AASC, Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation from 1960) was an important vehicle for Chinese diplomatic outreach to the third world generally and Africa specifically.<sup>37</sup> The AASC was established in 1957 with primarily Soviet, United Arab Republic (UAR, the union of Egypt and Syria which lasted from 1958 to 1961) and Chinese patronage.<sup>38</sup> It formalised Soviet, Egyptian and Chinese efforts to shape third world post-colonial political allegiances. The Zanzibari Marxists, who were active in AASC and Communist front organisations, used China as their model and reference point for the “usable future” of their country’s political and economic development.<sup>39</sup> Borrowing Darwin’s concept of the *bridgehead* – the important “interface” between Victorian Britain’s metropole with the colonial periphery – Zanzibar was effectively Beijing’s bridgehead onto mainland Tanganyika. Chinese influence was “transmitted” through official and personal channels in Zanzibar, a development which was further reinforced by the creation of the union in April 1964.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Tanzania’s central role in supporting the southern African liberation struggles made it an important partner for China, both politically and symbolically. The converse was also true: Chinese military assistance was especially

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<sup>37</sup> Neuhauser 1968.

<sup>38</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Burgess 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Darwin 1997, p. 629.

valuable because of the reluctance of Western governments to assist the armed liberation struggles. Moreover, the Cold War milieu and Western unease with Communist activities in Africa meant that any major change made by the independent governments was seen by the West as a defection or orientation towards the Eastern bloc.<sup>41</sup> When the Tanganyikan government's diplomatic relations with West Germany and the United States became strained from 1964 (both governments were major aid donors), an alternative source of assistance was needed.<sup>42</sup>

It was against this backdrop of imperial recession, the rise of Afro-Asianism and the immense needs of the newly independent African governments that Beijing was able to expand its own role. Moreover, as Liu has posited, Beijing's Africa policy was "a calculated self-serving policy catered to appeal to the fervour of African anti-colonialism during that period."<sup>43</sup> The Chinese leaders were critical of aid from the former colonial powers. Western bilateral aid had played a vital role in the post-war world as a means of promoting post-colonial development in the newly independent nations. However, foreign aid served as a tool for both Communist and non-Communist powers alike in their attempts to influence the political direction taken by the new governments.<sup>44</sup> The Chinese political authorities went further by criticising Western aid for perpetuating the exploitative political and economic relationship between the former coloniser and its colony.

The Western view of development aid, in comparison, was overtly less political in its presentation, being broadly structured along the lines of the prevailing theories of

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<sup>41</sup> Schatten 1966.

<sup>42</sup> Niblock 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Liu 2001, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> Schatten 1966; Bartke 1975.

development that did not threaten the international economic order of the time.<sup>45</sup> As this thesis will show, Beijing designated its limited resources towards its foreign aid programme and emphasised its trade and economic relations with African countries in order to create and enhance opportunities for greater political, economic and cultural connections.<sup>46</sup> Once again Chinese flexibility and pragmatism saw it undertake a broad range of projects requested by the recipient governments and, in some cases, stepping in to complete the projects where the original donors had withdrawn. Hutchison, too, described China's African policy as "schizophrenic", for its simultaneous "constructive" and "disruptive" elements: Subversion and revolution from below; cooperation and aid from above.<sup>47</sup> Yet it was precisely this contradiction that allowed the Chinese government to simultaneously juggle its multiple roles as Communist donor, anti-imperialist power and militant revolutionary.

However, Beijing suffered major diplomatic setbacks in Africa from 1965 to 1968, as official relations with Burundi, Dahomey, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ghana and Kenya deteriorated.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese government's position was further weakened by its failure to convene a second Afro-Asian conference (touted as a "second Bandung") in 1965 in Algiers, Algeria. The cancellation of the conference in spite of intense Chinese lobbying efforts revealed the extent of the Afro-Asian countries' disillusionment with the divisive effects of the Sino-Soviet dispute on a purportedly Afro-Asian event.<sup>49</sup> Beijing eventually withdrew from AAPSO in 1967

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<sup>45</sup> Bobiash 1992; Law 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Niblock 1971; Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Hutchison 1975, p. 86.

<sup>48</sup> Burundi suspended its ties with the PRC in January 1965; Dahomey and the CAR expelled the PRC mission in January 1966; Ghana suspended its ties with the PRC in October 1966, Kenya declared the Chinese *Chargeé* persona non grata in June 1967: Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Neuhauser 1968.

when it was marginalised by the stronger, pro-Soviet group. Why then did the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship not only continue, but intensify and flourish in that decade? This thesis will show that local African factors made all the difference.

## **II. Focus of thesis: Tanzania, China's closest African friend in the 1960s**

As a result of Nyerere's non-aligned foreign policy, China was only one of Tanzania's many bilateral donors in the 1960s. While certainly not in agreement with all of China's policies, Nyerere saw a useful blueprint for a politically-charged, national development model in the Chinese system – not so much in economic terms, but as one that drew on mass mobilisation and party organisation. Nevertheless, China's inclusion in the list of Tanzanian sponsors caused great alarm amongst the Western donors and increased the political stakes of foreign aid.

This thesis explains the features of the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship through a re-appraisal of the factors which contributed to its rapid development in spite of generally sceptical African attitudes towards Communist China in the 1960s.<sup>50</sup> In the existing scholarly literature about the topic, external factors (such as the Cold War) and Chinese factors play a predominant role. While these factors are necessary to interpret Chinese motivation, this thesis focuses on the local African factors and the way the Chinese government engaged with Tanzanian institutions, government and people differently from the donors who preceded it. As this thesis will show, the rapport that was forged between the governments of China and Tanzania at the highest levels in the

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<sup>50</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010.

first half of the 1960s provided a solid foundation for their closer collaboration subsequently. Nyerere's preference for a socialist development path for Tanzania bolstered the relationship further. In addition, the culturally-embedded factors, such as frugality and diligence, had particular resonance for the understated president. In 1968 the Tanzanian president famously described the Sino-Tanzanian relationship as "a friendship between most unequal equals."<sup>51</sup> Nearly three decades later, when asked by his private secretary why he was so keen on visiting China, Nyerere replied, "I want to go to China now and then to be inspired."<sup>52</sup>

Beijing's eventual entry into the UN in 1971 underscored the importance of the African governments and the Afro-Asian movement at large to its international standing. That outcome relied on the effective collaboration between China and Tanzania that had been built and facilitated through personal relationships and a high level of trust between their leaders. More importantly, the bilateral relationship was particularly impressive for having surmounted the immense obstacles and challenges that had threatened to thwart its development.

Indeed, to understand more fully the growth and development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s, it is the contention of this thesis that the key phases and themes be discussed in relation to each other. As a work of international history, the thesis links Tanzanian political developments with China's African policy in the 1960s by adding a historical dimension to political science approaches. It also explores the important role of African factors, ranging from the active participation of

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<sup>51</sup> Nyerere 1973, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> According to Charles Sanga, Nyerere had been to China fourteen times in his lifetime. Sanga himself spent a total of nine years in China, first as a junior embassy officer (1985-88) then as ambassador (2000-2006): Interview with Ambassador Charles A. Sanga, Dar es Salaam, 7 December 2006.

individuals, to local political dynamics, as well as the interaction between the local context and external factors. The three main themes mentioned at the start of this introductory chapter – decolonisation and Afro-Asianism, the fragility of the post-colonial state and Chinese diplomacy in the third world – will be further developed across all the chapters.

Chapter One analyses the development of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship as being distinct from the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship. It demonstrates how the islands functioned as a bridgehead for the extension of Beijing's soft power onto mainland East Africa through the intervention of key Zanzibari nationalists in the early 1960s. In those early years, African agency took the form of individuals who seized the chance to further their connections with the Chinese government and played a crucial role in anchoring Beijing's interest and presence in East Africa. Surprisingly, the role of Zanzibar and the Zanzibari nationalists as the initial link between Beijing and East Africa has been widely neglected in the existing literature, along with the important dynamics between Zanzibar and Tanganyika that facilitated the subsequent development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. Moreover, while it was true that Zanzibar retained a high level of autonomy until 1972, this thesis demonstrates that the islands' relationship with Beijing relied on African agency – exercised through individual *African* political actors who later played a central role in shaping the Sino-Tanzanian relationship.

Chapter Two examines the parallel development of the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship in the early 1960s through the nationalist and post-independence periods, until the union with Zanzibar in April 1964. Nyerere successfully cultivated Tanganyika's international profile and gained a reputation as a respected founding

leader. This thesis provides a more complete international history perspective of the Sino-Tanganyikan (and later the Sino-Tanzanian) relationship through demonstrating how decolonisation – and incomplete decolonisation – affected the speed and substance of that connection throughout the 1960s. It argues that local responses to the challenges of post-colonialism influenced Tanzania's foreign relations. Additionally, it suggests that Afro-Asianism helped many newly independent third world governments create some international legitimacy and foster transnational solidarity in their vulnerable post-colonial period.

Chapter Three moves on to explore how the militant Sino-Tanzanian friendship was forged and discusses the challenges that arose as a result; an area that has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. The combination of both governments' anti-imperialist agendas and Tanzania's post-independence military vulnerability provided the initial impetus for closer bilateral relations. However, much as Chinese military assistance was intended to strengthen Tanzanian military capacity, it became a double-edged sword when it fuelled the rapid build-up of arms in Zanzibar and thus negatively affected local politics.

Chapter Four examines the politics that surrounded Beijing's offer to sponsor the Tanzania-Zambia (TanZam) rail link, its largest overseas aid project at the time. The precariousness of the TanZam project throughout 1965 had much to do with the processes of political change in independent Africa in the 1960s, while the Sino-Tanzanian collaboration broadened traditional conceptions of aid and sovereignty. Indeed, a significant point that has been neglected in the literature is that the Tanzanian government appreciated the politically-charged development model offered by the Chinese that emphasised the consolidation of state power and mobilisation of the people.

Chapter Five assesses the practical strengths and limitations behind the rhetoric of third world solidarity employed by China and Tanzania. Chinese medical assistance is the chosen case study for this chapter, which argues that China was able to make significant gains from a relatively modest aid programme because of the legacy of colonial neglect in Tanzania as well as the specific qualities of the Chinese medical system itself. The disjunction between Beijing's solidarity rhetoric in policy and in practice is examined through the distinctive aspects of Chinese aid policy and implementation; the evolution and politicisation of the Chinese healthcare system and Beijing's health diplomacy; and finally, the convergence of these two factors in Tanzania's contested aid market and Nyerere's own drive for African socialism.

Finally, Chapter Six argues that Sino-Tanzanian ties at the highest levels were strengthened during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, in spite of the ultra radical wave that engulfed the Chinese foreign ministry. It also explains how the bilateral relationship remained resilient throughout that period, as demonstrated by Tanzania's unwavering support for the PRC until the latter finally gained membership at the UN in 1971.

In identifying and assessing the major factors which affected the development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, the concluding chapter discusses what made the Sino-Tanzanian case unique amongst China's relations with other African states in the 1960s. It suggests a greater role played by the interaction of local African factors and post-colonial challenges, such as Nyerere's foreign policy approach and the vulnerability of the post-colonial state, moving away from the existing emphasis on the dynamism of Chinese foreign policy.

### **III. Key arguments of the thesis**

The thesis highlights the importance of the long history of contacts between African nationalists and Communist China, dating from the Bandung Conference in 1955 and lasting well into the 1960s, the decade of European decolonisation in Africa. It argues that while the recession of colonial rule created opportunities for Chinese diplomacy and foreign aid to take root on the continent, local African factors were also crucial to the steady development of Sino-African relations.

Moreover, the existing historical literature on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship has tended to emphasise the period from 1967 until the mid-1970s, when the Chinese government formally committed itself to construct the iconic TanZam rail link. The thesis will break new ground by examining in detail the pre-history of that bilateral connection; it will demonstrate that Zanzibar and Tanganyika's nationalist and immediate post-independent phases (from the late 1950s until the formation of the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964) provided a fertile ground for the development of relations with the Chinese, revise when the height of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship took place, as well as redefine the indicators of the bilateral relationship. Additionally, the thesis will address a gap in the historical scholarship on the expansion of Chinese diplomacy in East Africa by pointing out the contribution of Zanzibar and the work of the pro-Chinese Marxist cadres there.

Building on the aforementioned arguments, the thesis will also analyse the extent to which Chinese military assistance to the southern African liberation movements and to Tanzania itself, as well as the Chinese government's offer to construct the TanZam rail link, cemented the bilateral relationship. It will also argue

that Chinese responses to the upheavals in 1964 – the Zanzibar Revolution, the mutiny of the Tanganyikan Rifles and the formation of the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar – facilitated Julius Nyerere and Abeid Karume's consolidation of power in Tanganyika and Zanzibar respectively.

As has been highlighted in the existing literature, Chinese aid was different from the traditional Western aid programmes in its ethos, design and implementation. The thesis will examine its distinctive aspects and the extent to which it conformed to Beijing's solidarity rhetoric in practice, using the example of medical assistance. It will be argued that Nyerere's socialist vision for Tanzania drew inspiration – although not exclusively – from the Chinese development experience. The combination of Nyerere's personal appreciation, Tanzania's need for aid and the deteriorating political situation in southern Africa are examined as the key factors which converged and sealed the Sino-Tanzanian relationship from 1965 until the end of that decade, in spite of the trials that were caused by the Chinese Cultural Revolution (particularly in its early phase from 1966 to 1968).

Finally, based on these arguments, the thesis will draw a broader conclusion about the importance of African agency in the successful development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. It posits that Nyerere's consolidation of his political authority in Tanzania from 1964 was crucial for allowing the Sino-Tanzanian relationship to flourish between 1966 and 1971.

## **IV. The historiographical background and literature review**

This thesis adds to the analysis of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s by taking into account the larger body of historical literature on related themes, such as Chinese and Tanzanian foreign policy, political studies and development studies. The historical literature on these complementary areas has provided the basis for analysing the gap between the official Chinese or Tanzanian pronouncements and the realities of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in practice. It has been divided into four categories of secondary literature: Firstly, Chinese involvement in Africa; secondly, Tanzanian non-alignment and foreign aid; thirdly, Chinese publications; and fourthly, development studies and social history.

### **i) Chinese involvement in Africa**

The literature on Sino-Tanzanian relations in the 1960s and, more broadly, Sino-African relations has evolved alongside the major narratives in international relations. Scholars who observed Communist China's diplomatic foray into Africa from the late 1950s and its subsequent overtures to the growing number of black African governments had extremely limited primary sources at hand, since very little was known about Beijing's foreign policy objectives or policymaking processes. The literature on Sino-Tanzanian relations of the time tended to emphasise the role of the Chinese government, with the assumption that the fledgling and naïve African governments were incapable of managing their relations with the cunning Chinese. Liu has described a similar exaggeration of Chinese influence, this time by a Chinese diplomat, Zeng Tao, whose incomplete and inaccurate accounts of the Sino-Algerian

relationship created a “fictional vacuum” in which the Chinese appeared to be the only influential foreign power in Algeria.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the exaggerated statements and militant propaganda produced by the Chinese state media appeared to validate concerns about Beijing’s primarily antagonistic behaviour and destabilising activities. Hevi’s personal account of his eighteen month-long experience as an African student in China described the prevalent racial discrimination and rigidity of a Chinese society that clearly ran counter to the official Chinese pronouncements of Sino-African solidarity.<sup>54</sup> In his second book, published four years later, the Ghanaian pushed his argument further and warned of China’s sinister, self-serving objectives in Africa and its support for “indiscriminate revolution.”<sup>55</sup> Financial and military data were also used as primary indicators of the extent of Chinese engagement in Africa, which framed Chinese and Communist aid in more confrontational (military) terms.<sup>56</sup> These publications are clearly products of their time and, in spite of their obvious limitations, can be considered important primary sources for study in and of themselves.

Scholars of international relations struggled to put forward a theory that could encompass the diverse range of Chinese activities in Africa.<sup>57</sup> Taylor criticised the studies that focused on China’s ideological motivations for being generally “obsolete”, although the literature on Beijing’s foreign policy continues to underscore the importance that revolutionary diplomacy had for the Chinese leaders, as well as certain

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<sup>53</sup> Zeng was the Chinese ambassador to Algeria from 1962 to 1967: Liu 2001, p. 82.

<sup>54</sup> Hevi 1963.

<sup>55</sup> Hevi 1967, p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> SIPRI 1971; Greig 1977; Lawson 1980; Smaldone 1980.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor 2006.

African leaders and nationalists.<sup>58</sup> Armstrong, for example, argued that Beijing's foreign policy objectives were determined primarily by the African countries' revolutionary potential.<sup>59</sup> However, the extent to which that revolutionary potential was determined by African dynamics and realities, rather than by big power geo-political factors, has received considerably little attention.

With the completion of many Chinese aid projects and Beijing's offer to construct the Tanzania-Zambia rail link, first expressed to President Nyerere in 1965 and completed in 1975, the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was thrust into the international spotlight. This led to a shift in the literature which saw the potential of Chinese aid as a credible alternative to traditional Western donors.<sup>60</sup> The growing scholarly interest in the Chinese model ran in tandem with the paradigm shift that occurred in the development discourse. Dependency theory, which had its conceptual genesis in the third world, was beginning to eclipse modernisation theory, which had hitherto been used to validate much Western development assistance.<sup>61</sup> An alternative current emerged in the historical scholarship and shifted away from what Hutchison termed the "Chinese bogey" school of thought, towards a more evidence-based analysis of Sino-African relations.<sup>62</sup>

Four authors stand out among the China-Africa scholars from that period, for being the most frequently referenced in the contemporary literature: Yu, Larkin, Hutchison and Ogunsanwo. George Yu's political science monograph *China and*

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Armstrong 1977, p. 217.

<sup>60</sup> Niblock 1971; Ogunsanwo 1971.

<sup>61</sup> Leys 1996.

<sup>62</sup> Hutchison 1975.

*Tanzania: A study in cooperative interaction* was the pioneer for having concentrated specifically on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship.<sup>63</sup> He described it as a “partial informal alliance” which allowed both governments to foster closer political and economic ties without compromising on their freedom in political decision-making.<sup>64</sup> Yu subsequently expanded on this analysis in a series of publications.<sup>65</sup> His model for the Sino-Tanzanian relationship explains its resilience in the face of changing internal and external circumstances well, but understates the important effects that Tanzanian factors had on Chinese foreign policy.

Bruce Larkin examined the evolution of Chinese foreign policy and its response to the diplomatic opportunities in *China and Africa, 1949-1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*.<sup>66</sup> For him, Chinese actions in Africa were distinct from its actions elsewhere and, through its form of diplomacy and aid policy, China had established a significant niche for itself in Africa with unique qualities of its own.<sup>67</sup> Alan Hutchison in *China's African Revolution* demonstrated that the Chinese filled the vacuum left by decolonisation in Africa and that, contrary to earlier accounts which had discounted the ability of African leaders to deal with the Chinese, argued that the Africans were astute and were thus able to reap the benefits of bilateral relations.<sup>68</sup> Alaba Ogunsanwo's doctoral thesis *China's Policy in Africa 1958-1971* was published as a book in 1975 and was most recently re-published in 2010. The author presented a comprehensive

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<sup>63</sup> Yu 1975; Yu 1970.

<sup>64</sup> Yu 1970, p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> Yu 1975; Yu 1971; Yu 1970.

<sup>66</sup> Larkin 1973.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Hutchison 1975.

analysis of Beijing's "revolutionary pragmatism" and policy of "united front from above and disruptive policy from below" in the diverse African political landscape, with a convincing array of case studies.<sup>69</sup>

Set in context, the four books were all researched and published during China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that lasted from 1966 to 1976; a period of intense domestic upheaval within China that had severe repercussions on its foreign relations and the already limited external access to current information. Strikingly, these authors went beyond the usual stable of journalistic sources and conducted research in Africa, including Tanzania.<sup>70</sup> The authors' access to local interviewees and personal observations informed their perspectives on the topic and pushed the understanding of Sino-African relations further. However, while these works remain important studies on the evolution of China-Africa relations, they lack the depth and perspective that a single historical case study can offer about how the higher-level dynamics actually played out.

As outlined by Alden, the studies on contemporary Sino-African relations generally fall into one of three main categories: China as an economic competitor, a development partner or coloniser.<sup>71</sup> The evolution of China's status – from that of an isolated Communist state in the 1960s to an ascendant *de facto* economic powerhouse in the 2000s with huge investments in African commodities and markets – grew in tandem with the country's development path and is clearly reflected in the literature. In all three categories China and Chinese factors, rather than African ones, were the main

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<sup>69</sup> Ogunsanwo 1975; Ogunsanwo 2010.

<sup>70</sup> However, this did not necessarily enjoy the support of the local authorities: Two of the authors – Alaba Ogunsanwo, a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics at the time, and Alan Hutchison, a Reuters correspondent – were detained while conducting their research. The Tanzanian government was acutely sensitive to the possibility of foreign sabotage because of its support for the southern African liberation struggles; the Chinese-sponsored TanZam rail link was considered especially vulnerable to foreign sabotage: Ogunsanwo 1975; Hutchison 1975.

<sup>71</sup> Alden 2007, p. 5.

interest and dominated the inquiry. In reality, China in the 1960s had neither the means nor the interest to exploit its relationship with African countries economically; its political interest was to be seen as willing to help others in spite of its own limited means. Studies which cast China as a development partner are relatively new and tend to focus on the post-1971 period, after China officially joined the UN. The category of literature that brands China as a colonialist can be considered the consistent thread that links the 1960s to the present day.

## **ii) Tanzanian non-alignment and foreign aid**

Nyerere's foreign policy has received its fair share of scholarly attention from political scientists and development experts alike. Its professed non-alignment resulted in relations with a range of bilateral donors from across the political spectrum which made Tanzania a popular case study for the effects of foreign aid.<sup>72</sup> However, very little research has been done from a historical perspective. This thesis, as a work of history, adds new information about the role of individuals to the existing Sino-Tanzanian literature and delves much more deeply into the disparate ways in which Chinese aid interfaced with Tanzanian institutions, individuals and the community. It addresses the persistent gaps in the scholarly literature on China and Tanzania which has, for the most part, concentrated on the political and economic aid aspects of the relationship.

Bilateral aid has both political and moral aspects and has spawned completely separate discourses in the literature. In general terms, the political and development branches of the literature on aid differ on four points: The definition of aid; its context; its sources and how aid effectiveness is determined. The political science scholarship

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<sup>72</sup> Niblock 1971; Nnoli 1978; Bailey 1981.

approaches aid as a tool for soft power that enhances the donor's influence in the bilateral relationship. Hence a number of the earlier works show a clear ideological division along East-West lines.<sup>73</sup> Specific to Tanzania, the country was a popular academic case study for many left-leaning foreign academics, a "condition" which Ali Mazrui referred to in 1967 as "Tanzaphilia".<sup>74</sup> This scholarly interest was a reflection of the intellectual community's generally deep respect for Nyerere. As the progenitor of Tanzania's most seminal policies and an inspiring orator whose speeches were regularly compiled and published, Nyerere was the subject of many academic studies in that period.<sup>75</sup>

Wolfgang Bartke has established the difficulty in obtaining exact figures for Chinese aid, particularly in the 1960s, because of the lack of comprehensive Chinese sources, currency conversion rates and the fundamental differences between Western and Chinese aid projects.<sup>76</sup> A collection of essays on the US, Swedish and Chinese aid programmes in Tanzania published in 1999 offers what was possibly the earliest study of Chinese assistance from a development studies – and not political science or international relations – perspective.<sup>77</sup> According to Ai Ping, who authored the chapter on the Chinese aid programme in Tanzania, Beijing's original objective for providing overseas aid was to support "proletarian internationalism."<sup>78</sup> The author concluded that the Chinese agencies had brought with them their own experience and, thus,

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<sup>73</sup> Mueller 1967.

<sup>74</sup> Mazrui 1967.

<sup>75</sup> Some of Nyerere's publications, including speeches, are listed here: Nyerere 1967; Nyerere 1968; Nyerere 1969a, 1969b, 1969c; Nyerere 1970; Nyerere 1971; Nyerere 1973. A list of sympathetic books on the Tanzanian leader: Pratt 1976; Hatch 1976; Smith 1973.

<sup>76</sup> Bartke 1989.

<sup>77</sup> Hyden / Mukandala 1999.

<sup>78</sup> Ai 1999.

constrained their flexibility in aid delivery because they did not fully appreciate the specific African conditions and local factors.

Menghua Zeng's doctoral thesis, *An Interactive Perspective of Chinese Aid Policy: A Case Study of Chinese aid to Tanzania*, analysed the reasons behind the shift in the Chinese government's foreign aid policy from political internationalism to mutual economic development.<sup>79</sup> Although Zeng called the 1960s the "development period" of Chinese aid policy, there is very little discussion of the important formal and informal ties which were forged in that period, which continued to influence Chinese aid policy (as well as Tanzanian perceptions of Chinese aid policy) in subsequent decades. Moreover, Zeng's study sheds little light on how the evolving Chinese foreign policy interacted with the dynamic Tanzanian situation.

### iii) Chinese publications

The Chinese literature on Africa can be considered a distinct category in itself as, for the most part, it remains a reflection of the government's interest in promoting awareness amongst the people and hence complements its overarching diplomatic objectives. Chinese professor Li Anshan has suggested a periodisation of the Chinese discourse on Africa into four chronological parts: "sensing Africa" (1900 to 1949), "supporting Africa" (1949 to 1965), "understanding Africa" (1966 to 1976) and "studying Africa" (1977 to 2000).<sup>80</sup> These categories are valuable for providing the context to the study of Africa in Chinese scholarship. The second period of "supporting

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<sup>79</sup> Zeng 1999. Zeng's thesis was done under the supervision of Tanzanian expert Goren Hyden. Hyden himself had been a Research Associate at the University of Dar es Salaam's Department of Political Science from 1964 to 1965 and later Professor in Political Science and Public Administration at the same institution from 1971 to 1977.

<sup>80</sup> Li 2005.

Africa,” for instance, illuminates the state-determined directives and the Chinese leaders’ desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of developments on the continent. The literature at the time had political rather than academic aims, such as the use of anti-imperialist lessons from Africa to rally the Chinese people in support of African liberation groups and, by extension, for Mao’s continuous revolution. For example, Gao Liang’s *Notes on Tanzania*, authored by the New China News Agency representative, is a part-travelogue and part-political educational piece based on Gao’s observations in anti-imperialist Tanzania.<sup>81</sup>

The period of “understanding Africa” encompasses the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 and Beijing’s entry into the UN in 1971. It was significant for the Chinese government’s concerted push to translate contemporary African publications into the Chinese language, fuelled by the leaders’ recognition that a broader knowledge base was necessary for Beijing’s enhanced international stature. Xue Fei’s *Tanzania*, for example, published under Xinhua Bookstore’s range of geography studies, presents a brief historical overview and expounds on the country’s physical and human landscape, resources and infrastructure.<sup>82</sup>

The “understanding Africa” phase has been credited by Li as having provided the basis for subsequent Chinese scholarly studies on Africa. The final period from 1977 saw a renaissance of sorts for African studies in China, with numerous publications appearing on China-Africa relations or purely African topics. As an illustration, three publications were produced in the late 1980s which covered maritime

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<sup>81</sup> Gao 1965.

<sup>82</sup> Indeed, it was likely to have been one of the studies of Tanzania that was commissioned by the Chinese government: Xue Fei 1973.

relations, contacts and the history of overseas Chinese communities in Africa.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, few Chinese scholars have conducted fieldwork in Africa, which underscores the relevance of the official memoirs by former Chinese diplomats. In particular the essay by the first Chinese ambassador to Tanganyika, He Ying, offers anecdotal accounts of the relative inexperience and unfamiliarity of the diplomats with the local situation and highlights the importance of personal diplomacy.<sup>84</sup>

Zhou Boping's memoir gives a more personal account of Chinese diplomacy in action than is discernible from media accounts.<sup>85</sup> His career with the foreign ministry was largely in Africa, with three of his four overseas appointments having been in Tanzania, Algeria and Zaire respectively.<sup>86</sup> Zhou was appointed consul of the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam from the spring of 1967, where he served continuously until July 1971. More significantly, these accounts clarify the main priority of Chinese diplomacy at the time: The recognition of One China and, from 1968, a more pragmatic approach that strove to expand its official ties with more independent African governments rather than one which highlighted revolutionary prospects.

The memoirs of two more senior Chinese diplomats, Qian Qichen and Huang Hua, offer insights into the higher-level dynamics of Chinese policymaking and, usefully, span across the decades of Chinese revolutionary policy.<sup>87</sup> Qian was a member of several delegations to African countries from 1964 and was appointed Ambassador to Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in July 1974. He encountered the complexities of the

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<sup>83</sup> Fang Jigen 1985; Zhang Jun 1986; Ai Zhoucang 1989.

<sup>84</sup> He Ying 1993; Zhou 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Zhou 2004.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>87</sup> Qian 2005; Huang 2008.

liberation struggle in southern Africa and the fallout from Chinese support to all three liberation groups in Angola, which was largely a result of Sino-Soviet competition. He was later closely involved in long-drawn out discussions with the South African government on recognition for the PRC. Huang had a unique vantage point as a veteran “Africa hand” and observed his government’s African policy at close quarters. He was a member of the Chinese delegation to the Bandung Conference and was appointed his country’s ambassador to Ghana on 5 August 1960, then to the United Arab Republic from March 1966. Huang also assisted Zhou Enlai in discussions with US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger during the latter’s secret visit to China in July 1971.

#### **iv) Development studies and social history**

More nuanced social histories on Sino-African relations began to appear after the Cultural Revolution.<sup>88</sup> These set the tone for the recent development studies literature which offers a richer understanding of the trends in development, more generally, and specifically in African development. Nevertheless, as Thandika Mkandawire has pointed out, the discourse on African post colonial development and on the “developmental state” in Africa has been “rarely based on analysis of actual experiences, but merely on first principles, ideological conviction or faith.”<sup>89</sup> This shortcoming has not, unfortunately, been addressed by historians and remains a blind spot in the historical understanding of the foundational period of Sino-African relations as separate from the contemporary political and economic aspects, as will be shown.

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<sup>88</sup> Bailey 1981; Snow 1988.

<sup>89</sup> Mkandawire 2001.

Indeed, the recent studies on China and Africa relations gradually reflect the mixed outcomes of Chinese re-engagement with Africa, for both Chinese and Africans.<sup>90</sup> As mentioned earlier, China's role as a development partner is one of the three categories described by Alden in the literature on contemporary Sino-African relations.<sup>91</sup> Ian Taylor's 2006 study attempted to dispel the myth of Beijing as a latecomer to Africa and offers a general overview of Sino-Tanzanian relations that is based on secondary sources until 2000.<sup>92</sup> More comprehensive and current is David H. Shinn's bibliography on the China-Africa literature from 2008, accompanied by an addendum from 2010 that includes scholarly work from various disciplines – including history – on China-Africa relations.<sup>93</sup> While Shinn's articles do not assess the trends in the literature, they show the spike in contemporary media and scholarly interest in the topic, which was sparked off by the first Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in October 2000. Beijing's bold economic engagement with the continent from the 2000s has led to concerns of a “yellow peril” – reminiscent of similar fears in the 1960s – because many third-party governments feel threatened by Beijing's huge financial capacity and its poorly articulated (and understood) ventures in Africa.<sup>94</sup>

Deborah Brautigam draws on her earlier work on the impact of Chinese agricultural assistance to Africa in a rigorous study of the evolution of Beijing's aid to

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<sup>90</sup> Alden / Large / Soares de Oliveira 2008; Raine 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Alden 2007, p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor 2006

<sup>93</sup> Shinn, D. H. China-Africa Relations: A Bibliography [Internet]. Available from <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/22380157/China-Africa-Relations-a-Bibliography>> [Accessed 9 April 2012]; Shinn, D. H. China-Africa Relations: A Bibliography Addendum [Internet]. Available from <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/68705195/China-Africa-Relations-Bibliography>> [Accessed 9 April 2012].

<sup>94</sup> Alden 2007.

Africa from the Maoist period until the present day.<sup>95</sup> Jamie Monson's publications on the TanZam railway, in particular, use the advances in the field of social history and development studies to examine the railway's effect on the livelihoods of those living along its route.<sup>96</sup> This fleshes out our understanding of the complex histories that unfolded amidst the process of decolonisation. Two large-scale research projects have produced historical studies on Chinese contributions to the South African and southern African liberation struggles from the 1960s to 1990s: Zhong Weiyun and Xu Suijiang's book chapter on China's support for and solidarity with South Africa's liberation struggle, published by the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) and this author's chapter on Chinese support for the southern African liberation struggle commissioned by the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>97</sup>

Finally, this thesis strives to broaden the historical discourse that informs contemporary analysis of China-Africa relations. As Alden and Alves have argued, the Chinese government's use of history in the construction and presentation of its African policy is "aimed at drawing lines of continuity that paper over [its] shifts and breaks". The authors posited the particular importance of history, because it is "called upon [...] to provide assurances that budding commercial ties will not result in exploitation or even some form of colonialism" by China.<sup>98</sup> By examining the development of the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship in the 1960s, the thesis will demonstrate the complexity of those ties, which was affected by numerous internal and external pressures.

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<sup>95</sup> Brautigam 2010; Brautigam 1998.

<sup>96</sup> Monson 2004; Monson 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Zhong / Xu 2008; Altorfer-Ong (forthcoming).

<sup>98</sup> Alden / Alves 2008, p. 55.

As this section has shown, the literature on a very important period of Sino-African relations – its inchoate phase in the 1960s – has its limitations and consist of a very narrow range of publications that are, for the most part, not themselves historical studies. This gap in the historiography is the main motivation for this thesis.

## **V. Note on primary sources and conventions**

The use of multiple archival sources, oral history, as well as period and contemporary literature has allowed for the illumination of the multiple facets of the Afro-Asian collaboration in this thesis, demonstrating that a more thorough historical analysis of the “complex and uneven geographies of the postcolonial Cold War world as seen from outside the US” is indeed possible.<sup>99</sup> A few notes on the sources used are necessary at this point.

The Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA) in Beijing has, at the time of writing, released documents until 1966 and selected ones from 1967. The material pertinent to Sino-Tanzanian relations suggests the existence of a strong mutual regard and desire to understand world issues from the other’s perspective. The deleterious effects of the Cultural Revolution on the Foreign Ministry make the interpretation of the material less straightforward. Similarly, the Tanzania National Archives (TNA) in Dar es Salaam and the Zanzibar National Archives (ZNA) in Stone Town are the main archival resources in Tanzania, but the material from the late colonial and immediate post-independence periods in the 1950s and 1960s is comparatively limited. Indeed, much of the relevant diplomatic material remains classified. The Institute for Commonwealth

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<sup>99</sup> Burton 2010, pp. 352-353.

Studies (ICOMM) has a small, but useful, collection of the Chinese-sponsored Zanzibari bulletin, *Zanews*. The published memoirs by Zanzibar minister Ali Sultan Issa and the works of Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu complement the material on Zanzibar and are supplemented with oral history interviews.<sup>100</sup> These interviews were conducted between 2007 and 2009 with former Tanzanian officials, including ambassadors and former employees of the Foreign Languages Institute in Beijing.

However, there are the usual caveats to the oral history interviews with the Tanzanian elite, such as an interest in presenting the official Tanzanian line, as most of the interviewees still worked for the government during the time of the interviews. For example, after having completed his term as the Tanzanian ambassador to China, Charles Sanga returned to Dar es Salaam in 2006 and was appointed presidential advisor. This was a clear sign of the Tanzanian government's emphasis and importance placed on Sino-Tanzanian relations. Moreover, in comparison to the interviews by Ogunsanwo and Hutchison from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, those that were conducted for this study were cast against the backdrop of an ascendant and economically more powerful China. The officials were presumably more inclined to speak of earlier Sino-Tanzanian relations in a positive light.

The British government archives are another valuable source for understanding the developments in post-colonial Tanzania in the 1960s. As the former colonial administrator for East Africa, the records are comprehensive across the pre-independence and post-independence periods. Moreover, they offer a regional overview of British colonial policy in East Africa, revealing the concerns about the end of empire and the recession of their influence, while being defensive about any British neglect.

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<sup>100</sup> Burgess 2009; Babu 1981; Babu / Wilson 2000.

Her Majesty's records also reflect the post-colonial challenges faced by the metropole and the struggle to preserve its vested interests. The British sources further offer useful firsthand accounts of many Tanzanian officials, with whom they had cordial relations. The records of meetings between Nyerere and British diplomats in particular reflect the personal affinity that the Tanzanian government and its officials had throughout the 1960s. Nevertheless, the records also show British priorities and distractions by the Rhodesian problem. In a similar vein, the private papers of journalist, newspaper editor and academic Alistair Hetherington, housed in the London School of Economics' (LSE) Archive, were particularly useful for their firsthand record of interviews with Nyerere and other senior Tanzanian and Zambian officials.

The US governmental records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) are a foil to the British colonial perspective. The US government was not as deeply engaged in mainland Tanganyika as it was in Zanzibar in the early 1960s. Indeed, its primary focus in Africa was on the Congo and later southern Africa after Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965. A CIA report on the Zanzibar revolution, originally written in 1965 and published in 2010, together with the published memoirs of US consul Donald Petterson and medical doctor Charles Swift, has been a useful third party primary source.<sup>101</sup>

In sum, this thesis discusses and analyses the existing literature against the findings from research that has been conducted using a wide range of primary sources. While each category of sources has its own practical limitations, the volume and array

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<sup>101</sup> Hunter 2010; Petterson 2002; Swift 2002.

of primary material currently available on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s makes this study possible and particularly timely.

Finally, a note on currencies: All currencies mentioned in this thesis are referred to in the original currency and converted to US Dollars (\$) for easier comparison. The Dollar was the lead currency under the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates that lasted until 1971.<sup>102</sup> In Tanzania, the currency used was the East African Shilling, issued under the East African Currency Board from colonial times until 1966, when the newly established Bank of Tanzania issued the Tanzanian Shilling.<sup>103</sup> Both were convertible to the Pound Sterling, although the Tanzanian Shilling kept de facto a stable exchange rate with the US Dollar when Sterling was devalued on 17 November 1967. In the PRC, the Yuan (or Renminbi) also had a fixed exchange rate to the US Dollar, although it was not freely convertible.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Eichengreen 2008, ch. 2. I thank Dr. Stefan Altorfer-Ong for his advice on currency conversions.

<sup>103</sup> Schuler 1997-2004.

<sup>104</sup> Leong / Wu 2007.

## Chapter One – China and Zanzibar, 1950s to 1964

This chapter will demonstrate how Zanzibar played an unparalleled role in Beijing's fledgling diplomatic venture into East Africa. The existing literature emphasises the Sino-Zanzibari connection in the aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution of January 1964 and is strongly shaped by the dominant narrative of the Cold War rivalry.<sup>105</sup> However, such an approach neglects the important ties which were forged between the Chinese and Zanzibaris before the revolution through Communist bloc activities in the late 1950s. From 1959, those contacts intensified and were cultivated further by the Zanzibari Marxist elite, for which Maoism offered a nationalist mantra and development strategy. The Secretary General of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu (1924-1996) and a close circle of ZNP colleagues were instrumental in the rapid growth of Sino-Zanzibari ties before the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar.<sup>106</sup> This chapter argues that the little known period of intense collaboration in the early 1960s was the crucial foundation upon which Sino-Tanzanian relations were eventually anchored after the union.

Some recent publications are particularly relevant to this discussion of Sino-Zanzibari relations during the nationalist period. Of these, two works by Burgess are the most topical.<sup>107</sup> The first, *Race, Revolution, and the Struggle for Human Rights in Zanzibar: The Memoirs of Ali Sultan Issa and Seif Sharif Hamad* presents a valuable Zanzibari narrative and counter-narrative through contrasting the profiles of two prominent local politicians. The first memoir (of Ali Sultan Issa) is a particularly important and rare historical source for this thesis, as Ali Sultan was a close colleague

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<sup>105</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989; Mwakikagile 2008; Hunter 2010; Petterson 2002.

<sup>106</sup> Burgess 2009; Burgess 2010.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

of Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, the main broker of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship. In addition to providing a perspective on Babu, Ali Sultan had also personally contributed to the development of the relationship by his own accord.<sup>108</sup> Equally useful is Burgess' article *Mao in Zanzibar: Nationalism, Discipline, and the (De)construction of Afro-Asian Solidarities*, which examines the “material, discursive and imagined relationships” between the Zanzibaris and Chinese through the Zanzibari Marxists’ embrace of the Chinese model as a “usable future”.<sup>109</sup> In addition to these works, a CIA report on the Zanzibar Revolution has been declassified and published; it is a useful third-party source that reflects the US administration’s discomfiture about the Communist threat in the third world, although the lines between analysis, speculation and official observations are blurred.<sup>110</sup>

Some stones remain unturned in the historical understanding of Sino-Zanzibar relations. Burgess’ description of Tanzania as China’s bridgehead for spreading Maoism across the continent is not entirely accurate, because Zanzibar had performed that function even before the union was formed, as this chapter will describe and demonstrate. Indeed, Zanzibar specifically connected China and Africa from as early as 1961. This chapter will explain why developing such a bridgehead was vital for the Chinese government’s policy in East Africa and will demonstrate that African factors and individual Zanzibaris were integral to the development of Sino-Zanzibari relations in four phases: Firstly, the confluence of objectives between Beijing and the Zanzibari nationalists before 1960; secondly, Zanzibaris as Beijing’s gateway to accessing Swahili East Africa between 1960 and 1963; thirdly, local developments in Zanzibar

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<sup>108</sup> The second memoir featured in Burgess’ book provokes insights into Zanzibar’s more recent political evolution through Seif Sharif Hamad’s eyes. Seif Sharif was a reformist minister from the 1980s: Burgess 2009.

<sup>109</sup> Burgess 2010, p. 197.

<sup>110</sup> Hunter 2010.

which buttressed the Sino-Zanzibari relationship between 1963 and 1964; and finally, the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, which paved the way for greater Chinese engagement on the mainland.

## **I. Beijing and the Zanzibar nationalists: A confluence of objectives**

To understand the role of Zanzibar as a Chinese bridgehead, it is necessary to appreciate the territory's modern history. The islands of Zanzibar, comprising of Unguja (Zanzibar) and Pemba, lay on important trade routes linking the Middle East with East Africa. Portugal was Zanzibar's first colonial authority from 1505 to 1698, followed by the Omani Al-Busaidi dynasty which shifted their capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1832. Zanzibar became a British protectorate from 1890, with funds from London channelled through the Sultan. The domestic political arena was quickly polarised with affiliations that were dangerously pegged to ethnicity as only a minority of the people – predominantly those of Arab ancestry – had access to these resources.<sup>111</sup> The bitterness of the indigenous Zanzibari African population at Arab dominance was compounded by the influx of Africans from the mainland. The brewing tensions came to the fore when discussions on Zanzibar's independence began in the 1950s.

Zanzibar's pre-independence period was dominated by three political parties: The Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), the ZNP and the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP). The ASP was renamed after the 1957 elections in which it stood as the Afro-Shirazi Union (ASU). The ASU was formed in 1957 through an alliance between two informal groups with primarily social rather than political agendas: The African

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<sup>111</sup> Horowitz 2001, p. 302.

Association on Unguja and the Shirazi Association on Pemba. After winning a majority of seats in 1957, the ASU reinvented itself as the ASP and fostered strong links with the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU).<sup>112</sup> The ZNP was founded by the Arab radical Ali Muhsin Barwani in December 1955 as a non-racial Muslim party that supported pan-Africanism.<sup>113</sup> Most of its members had fairly affluent backgrounds and hence could participate in politics without sacrificing their livelihoods. Most notably, there was a well-connected and organised Marxist elite within the ZNP that had benefitted from overseas education and training. The third political force, the ZPPP, spun off from the ASP in late 1959 and took a moderate stand on African representation in discussions of the post-independence government.

Zanzibari nationalists actively participated in the numerous international platforms that were formed to foster political solidarity in the era of decolonisation. The earliest official contact between Chinese and Zanzibari representatives took place through the trade union movement, at conferences organised by the Moscow-led World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and, from 1957, through similar events by the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO). This contact marked the start of the first phase of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship. Beijing was not initially in a rush to establish diplomatic relations because of its own limited diplomatic capacity.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, Chinese representatives took great pains to explain their government's One China policy to the African governments and nationalist groups.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> NA, DO185/7. EP.27/33/1. Pritchard to Chadwick, 5 April 1963.

<sup>113</sup> Before slavery in the region was finally abolished at the end of the nineteenth century, Zanzibar was an important point in the regional transhipment of human cargo; Clayton 1981, p. 39.

<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Premier Zhou Enlai had advised the Chinese diplomats to wait for "the right moment" to establish formal relations; Liu 2001, p. 59.

<sup>115</sup> As China's first ambassador to Tanganyika, He Ying, has recounted in an essay: He 1993, p. 302.

At the same time, the Chinese government used its media as a channel for communicating its policies. An article on Zanzibar first appeared in the state-run newspaper, the *People's Daily*, in March 1958. The article described Zanzibar's history and the islands' mention in ancient Chinese records from the Song dynasty (which ruled China from 960 to 1279). But the objective of the article – and many similar ones on the other African colonies which appeared in the Chinese press – was to draw the Chinese people's attention to the evils of colonialism, the local people's fight for freedom and to emphasise the Chinese government's solidarity with them.<sup>116</sup> The newspaper article was also a signal of the Chinese leaders' interest in forging closer ties with Zanzibar. For this Cairo, the capital of Egypt (the United Arab Republic, or UAR at the time) played an essential role.

**i) The ZNP and Chinese representatives converge under Nasser's Afro-Asian banner**

In step with the wave of European decolonisation in Africa, Beijing's diplomacy gained ground in West Africa as its embassies in Ghana and Guinea – both countries led by prominent, black African leaders with strong anti-imperialist positions – broadened the possibility of Chinese contact with African liberation movements elsewhere on the continent.<sup>117</sup> For East Africa, Cairo was the focal point from which Chinese influence first emanated, via the personal connections that were made through key individuals such as Babu and Ali Sultan.

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<sup>116</sup> *People's Daily*, 5 March 1958.

<sup>117</sup> As an illustration, a group of labour union leaders, which included the Zanzibar and Pemba Federation of Labour's General Secretary Hassan Nassor Moyo, called on the Chinese embassy in Accra in November 1960 to explain that "imperialist obstructions" threatened their visit to China for the 1 May celebrations and the CAFA's inaugural meeting: CFMA, 108-00222-05 (1), 19 November 1960.

Egypt held great historical, political and diplomatic significance for the Chinese government. Aside from having been the first Middle Eastern country to establish official ties with Beijing, the UAR was also a political heavyweight in Africa. Cairo was the centre for Afro-Arab and Afro-Asian debates on current issues and a haven for many African nationalist groups. The Chinese government opened its first African embassy in Cairo in 1956, which allowed its diplomats to monitor regional events and establish direct contact with the various anti-colonial groups.<sup>118</sup> The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Council (AAPSC, later the Afro-Asian People's Organisation, AAPSO), headquartered in Cairo, had national committees comprised of representatives from Afro-Asian governments, opposition parties and nationalist groups. The organisation's spirited denouncement of colonialism and imperialism won it a reputation as a militant solidarity organisation, especially among Western governments. Both the ZNP and ZPPP regularly sent representatives to AAPSO conferences, which offered ample opportunities for interaction with Chinese officials eager to foster links with friendly nationalist groups. Indeed, the ZNP's secretary general Babu soon emerged as the lynchpin connecting China and Zanzibar. To understand how Babu came to play this important role, it is necessary to examine his background and political thought.

Babu had the prestige and intellectual exposure derived from an overseas education, a rare opportunity for most Zanzibaris. As a student in London in the 1950s, he was active in various pan-African organisations and jointly edited an anti-colonial,

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<sup>118</sup> The Chinese ambassador in Cairo, Chen Jiakang, served there for nearly a decade, ending his term in 1965. Huang Hua took over from Chen in January 1966: Burgess 2009, p. 64.

socialist journal, the *African, Asian and Latin American Revolution*.<sup>119</sup> A CIA report suggests that Babu was contacted by the Chinese in London at around that time because of his high visibility and relationship with the Soviets.<sup>120</sup> Babu accepted Ali Muhsin's invitation to become the ZNP secretary general after the party's embarrassing defeat in July 1957 – during the territory's first elections – and returned to the islands at the end of that year to resuscitate the party.<sup>121</sup> Ali Sultan observed that Babu quickly proved to be “the brains of our political struggle here in Zanzibar” and both men actively cultivated ties with the Communist bloc countries.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, under Babu's direction, the ZNP quickly outpaced the ASP's international connections.<sup>123</sup>

The Chinese embassy in Cairo was an accessible source of foreign assistance and patronage, particularly because there was no countervailing Soviet presence there. Indeed, the Chinese records show that various groups approached the embassy with requests for assistance, including those from Cameroon, Congo, Algeria, as well as a representative from the ZNP's youth wing, the Youth's Own Union (YOU) in May 1960.<sup>124</sup> The evidence suggests that the ZNP representatives actively courted the Chinese for assistance. Ali Sultan was director of the ZNP's international department in Cairo and was tasked with establishing contact with foreign sponsors. According to Chinese reports from August 1959, Ali Sultan had approached the Chinese embassy

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<sup>119</sup> NA, CO822/2166, Abdulrahman Mohamed Shariff Abubaker bin Ali alias Babu, 23 February 1962. Abdul-Raheem, 2001, pp. 136-7; Hunter 2010, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Hunter 2010.

<sup>121</sup> The ASP won five out of the six seats and the last was won by the Muslim Association, dominated by ethnic Indians: Lodge / Kadima / Pottie 2002, p. 409.

<sup>122</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 37.

<sup>123</sup> For example, he led Zanzibar's delegation to the April 1960 Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Guinea and spoke about the struggle in Zanzibar, using the opportunity to appeal for moral and material support: Burgess 2009, p. 60.

<sup>124</sup> This was the first request that the Chinese had received from the group and the YOU's appeal for the production of 3,000 party badges was approved, along with a cash donation of 1,500 Yuan (\$610): CFMA, 108-0223-03 (1), 6 May 1960.

twice for assistance: He requested a short visit to Beijing to meet with representatives of the Chinese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (CAASC) and the China Africa Friendship Association (CAFA), and voiced his intention to discuss the party's other appeals for support.<sup>125</sup> Babu also called at the embassy soon after, in late November, with a similar request to visit China to appeal for financial assistance, including scholarships for ten Zanzibari students to study in China, and a lino type machine.<sup>126</sup> The Chinese embassy reported to its foreign ministry that Babu was a valuable local contact, citing his extensive experience with the workers' movement in Zanzibar, as well as an invitation from the British government for him to join an East African delegation of journalists to the UK. Hence the embassy suggested that the foreign ministry approve the ZNP's appeals for assistance, as that would facilitate Chinese diplomatic efforts in East Africa and, at the same time, benefit Zanzibar.<sup>127</sup> For these compelling reasons, Babu became the first liberation fighter from East and Central Africa to visit China in 1959.<sup>128</sup>

Babu was thrilled to meet the most senior leaders and heroes of the Chinese revolution in Beijing and genuinely appreciated their style of personal diplomacy. He later described the trip as:

An opportunity for me to see this great country and meet its revered leaders [...] to deepen my knowledge of the Chinese revolution, especially its theoretical and practical foundations. The meetings with the Chinese leadership and late night

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<sup>125</sup> CFMA, 108-00064-01(1), 11 August 1959; CFMA, 108-00064-01(1), 27 August 1959.

<sup>126</sup> CFMA, 108-00064-01(1), 25 November 1959.

<sup>127</sup> CFMA, 108-00064-01(1), 9 December 1959.

<sup>128</sup> Wilson 2007.

discussions with them on all questions of anti-imperialist struggle were most inspiring and helped to mould my world outlook.<sup>129</sup>

If Babu was deeply affected by the combination of independence struggle with socialist revolution that he had seen in China, these impressions were not unique, as other Africans were also similarly awed by the progress that they witnessed.<sup>130</sup> Babu also remarked about non-white solidarity with China, a country which had soldiered through a prolonged revolutionary war and risen up as “a very powerful, though underdeveloped, non-European country.”<sup>131</sup> To some Africans and people of African descent, China with its “people of colour” generated feelings of solidarity: Its Marxist, developing country model countered the dominant “white and Western” vision of class struggle.<sup>132</sup>

Ali Sultan visited China in April 1960 for a trade union conference and, typically for African delegations, was brought to various sites of historic importance to the CCP, including an excursion that retraced the Long March.<sup>133</sup> Like Babu, Ali Sultan had a positive impression and he claimed to have “personally found the Chinese the most compelling of the Communist countries”, which he explained in the following words<sup>134</sup>:

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<sup>129</sup> Babu / Wilson 2000, p. xv.

<sup>130</sup> Amongst these was the black American civil rights leader and Pan-Africanist W. E. B. Dubois (1868 to 1963): Wilson 2001, pp. 37-39.

<sup>131</sup> Babu 1981, pp. 96-97.

<sup>132</sup> Kelley / Esch 1999. Although, as discussed in Chapter Six, many of the Africans who were non-diplomats complained of racism and discrimination in China: Hevi 1963.

<sup>133</sup> Burgess 2009, pp. 60-61.

<sup>134</sup> Burgess 2010, p. 207.

I had not been as impressed by the greatness of the Russians as I was with the Chinese. In China, I was deeply impressed by the vast and formidable country, by the people's sacrifice and their achievements, so upon my return to Zanzibar, I was in complete agreement with Babu about China, that this was the ideological line to follow.<sup>135</sup>

Yet Babu was unique in having quickly been offered the role of principal East Africa correspondent for the New China News Agency (NCNA) during his visit, which he accepted immediately. The assignment tapped on Babu's gift for political writing and, as Burgess has posited, Babu gave the ZNP a clear stance on important continental issues such as the Algerian War and the Congo crisis.<sup>136</sup> This internationalist outlook – a Communist hallmark – framed local dynamics as part of capitalist evolution and a manifestation of larger class forces at work. The NCNA assignment placed Babu in a strategically important position by formalising his close links to the Chinese establishment: He was required to dispatch regional news to the NCNA headquarters in Beijing regularly and occasionally briefed Chinese officials. Hence the arrangement was a good match of Babu's capabilities and political objectives, with the Chinese government's fledgling ventures into the region.

The ZNP opened an office in Cairo later that year (1960) to raise its new international profile and expand its network. As Cairo was the transit point for delegates travelling to the Communist bloc, along the Cairo-Moscow-China or Cairo-Pakistan-China routes, the ZNP's formal presence in Cairo helped it to overcome the poorly developed air travel routes between African countries and facilitated direct

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<sup>135</sup> Burgess 2009, pp. 60-61.

<sup>136</sup> Burgess 2010, p. 206.

contact with the Eastern bloc. The party benefitted from Gamel Abdel Nasser's support for African liberation and was one of many groups which received the monthly allowance of £100 (\$280) and gratis air travel from the Egyptian Ministry of Information's African section.<sup>137</sup> Ali Sultan was, by then, also very diplomatically savvy. He successfully approached the Chinese, North Koreans, Czechs and other socialist embassies in Cairo for material aid, scholarships, literature or "whatever else they could give" towards the ZNP's cause, as well as training in intelligence, sabotage and weaponry.<sup>138</sup> According to Ali Sultan's memoirs, the Chinese had trained him in the use of firearms, hand grenades and plastic bombs over the course of one to two weeks, and a labour movement sent him £100 (\$280) monthly.<sup>139</sup> Ali Sultan and Babu were, thus, well-placed and sufficiently resourced to further the party's nationalist agenda through their promotion of closer ties with the Chinese.

## ii) Chinese propaganda and closer ties

The second phase of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship consisted of a quick solidifying of Beijing's relationship with the ZNP from 1960 to 1963. One avenue that was used was the Chinese government's official news agency, the NCNA, also known as *Xinhuashe*, which supplied news reports to other official Chinese publications. Upon establishing diplomatic relations with the independent African governments, the Chinese government quickly based NCNA representatives in the major countries: Cairo (UAR), Rabat (Morocco), Accra (Ghana), Conakry (Guinea), Tunis (Tunisia), Addis

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<sup>137</sup> Brennan 2010a, p. 175. The ZNP office was located in Zamalek district, along with other liberation movements like the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), both from South Africa.

<sup>138</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 63.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Ababa (Ethiopia), Bamako (Mali), Algiers (Algeria), Mogadishu (Somalia) and Nairobi (Kenya). In Dar es Salaam, the NCNA representative was Gao Liang.

The NCNA representatives were officially tasked to gather and disseminate information, report their findings to the Chinese government and support official Chinese policy through propaganda. Western governments generally believed them to be intelligence agents who incited unrest and anti-Western sentiment. The NCNA's African network was expanded and deepened through the addition of local African correspondents, such as Babu, who specialised in interviews with exiled politicians or leaders of liberation movements. The correspondents' contribution to Chinese news should not be underestimated, as many of their reports reached a wide audience, being first aired by *Radio Peking* or carried in the Chinese press, then subsequently re-printed in local African newspapers.<sup>140</sup>

Evidence from British intelligence suggests that Chinese propaganda was well-received by trade unions in Zanzibar.<sup>141</sup> The islands' trade unionists were among the delegates who attended a reception given by Mao in Zhengzhou in 1960, at which he called for Afro-Asian solidarity in their common struggle against American imperialist policies. Articles in the *Adal Insaf* newspaper on 21 May 1960 and the 5 May edition of *Kibarua*, the Zanzibar trade union publication, carried Beijing's warning to African workers about American penetration in East and Central Africa through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) as well as their stooges in the African trade union movement. Chinese propaganda was supplemented with

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<sup>140</sup> Schatten 1966, p. 218; NARA, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Memorandum: Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, OCI No. 1211/65, 30 April 1965.

<sup>141</sup> NA, CO822/2061, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, June 1960.

sponsored visits to China which promoted the growth of personal connections and rapport between the leaders in Beijing and emerging African nationalists.

The testimonies and personal accounts shared by Zanzibaris who had visited China helped to reinforce the official Chinese propaganda and diplomatic manoeuvres. Much was made of what they had seen in China. The YOUNG held a rally in June at which the delegates who had visited China described the great progress their Chinese compatriots were making in socialist construction.<sup>142</sup> These activities prepared the ground and allowed the Chinese press to carefully cultivate popular local sentiment, as in the case of the US satellite tracking station (Project Mercury) in Zanzibar, which later erupted into anti-American protests. The Chinese solidarity groups worked in tandem with official Chinese foreign policy and organisations ranging from the Chinese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, to the Women's Federation and the Youth Federation to send telegrams expressing moral support and solidarity for the Zanzibari people and protestors.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, it is very likely that Chinese support went even further: The CIA alleged that the top twenty-five ZNP officials had been offered a trip to China as a reward for their support for the Project Mercury protest, a proposition which twenty-three officials reportedly accepted.<sup>144</sup>

While individuals such as Babu and Ali Sultan had “put Zanzibar on the socialist map of the world”, they were also helping to develop much-needed skills in the process.<sup>145</sup> An important part of Ali Sultan's work was to garner scholarships for Zanzibaris at overseas colleges and universities. Most of these educational

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<sup>142</sup> *People's Daily*, 18 June 1960.

<sup>143</sup> *People's Daily*, 10 July 1960.

<sup>144</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 27; *People's Daily*, 26 July, 17 and 20 September 1960.

<sup>145</sup> *Zanews*, 7 May 1962; Campbell 1962; Burgess 2009, pp. 8-9.

opportunities were in the Eastern bloc countries, as the few which were offered in the West tended to be exclusively available to the elite.<sup>146</sup> As Ali Sultan complained to British officials, the “unrealistically high academic standards” of their institutions invariably made those in the socialist countries more accessible to Zanzibari students.<sup>147</sup> However, overseas education was a failure in Sino-African relationships overall. The number of student delegations from Zanzibar to China grew from just two in 1960 to twelve in 1963, but by the middle of 1962, a mere twenty-two of the initial 118 African students remained. Nevertheless, as Ali Sultan has argued, this “exposure” made it possible to politicise the island and prepare it for the revolution and, hence, its influence on Zanzibari thought during the revolutionary period was “profound.”<sup>148</sup>

In spite of its wide network and the cooption of local African expertise, Chinese propaganda was still, at times, a bluntly constructed and executed instrument, especially pertaining to Sino-Soviet rivalry. According to Ali Sultan, a speech he made on socialist liberation was appropriated by the Chinese without his knowledge for their own purposes. The text of his speech was featured on the *People’s Daily* front page and his statements lambasting Tito’s revisionism in Yugoslavia were used by the Chinese in their rhetorical battle with the Soviets.<sup>149</sup> In a similar example, the Chinese Communist Youth League’s (CCYL) International Department reported discontent amongst African youths over Soviet policies in April 1960.<sup>150</sup> Cameroonian and Zanzibari youths had called on the Chinese embassy in Guinea, reportedly to describe their disillusionment with socialism in the Soviet Union. The Zanzibari delegate claimed to have been

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<sup>146</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 65.

<sup>147</sup> NA, DO185/54, Greatorex to Zanzibar, 7 January 1965.

<sup>148</sup> Burgess 2010, p. 208 and p. 211.

<sup>149</sup> Burgess 2009, pp. 60-61.

<sup>150</sup> CFMA, 108-00223-07 (1), 29 April 1960.

disappointed by the hordes of starving people he had seen and said ruefully that a capitalist system was probably still at work in the USSR. The visitors described Soviet suspicion and indignation at Africans travelling to China, as well as the obstructive measures which were taken to inconvenience them, such as delaying transit stops. All this was undoubtedly music to Chinese ears, as the PRC was eager to solidify relations with friendly groups through aid and rhetorical support. On the other hand, the Sino-Soviet rivalry created opportunities for African nationalist groups to gain some advantages by playing one sponsor off against the other. The visits by Zanzibari delegations, most commonly the trade unions, to China and the Soviet Union suggest that the Chinese concentrated on the ZNP and the Soviets on the ASP.<sup>151</sup>

Consequently, the Chinese embassy in Cairo was visited by various individuals and groups – legitimate or otherwise – who sought financial, material or moral support.<sup>152</sup> The Chinese foreign ministry, on the recommendation of its diplomats in the field, generally took an open approach as it was interested in learning about the local political situation. The establishment of the ZNP's outpost in Cairo was fortuitous insofar as it facilitated the party's contact with the Chinese embassy there and corresponded with Beijing's interest in increasing its understanding of newly independent African governments and nationalist movements. The low-level connections which started in 1959 were the bedrock on which future relations were anchored. The following section shows how Zanzibaris played a special role in Beijing's African policy in the next phase.

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<sup>151</sup> The ZFTU, for instance, was regarded as pro-Chinese.

<sup>152</sup> In April 1963 a man approached the Chinese embassy for support. Ahmed claimed to be Chairman of a Zanzibari Communist group and friend of a Radio Peking employee. The embassy official noted wryly in his report to the foreign ministry that Ahmed exaggerated the extent of his group's support and that they sent him off with a set of books on anti-revisionism. Citing the unfamiliarity of the local situation in Zanzibar, the Ministry instructed that any replies to further requests for assistance be delayed until more information was known: CFMA, 108-01271-01, 9 and 17 April 1963.

## II. The integral role of Zanzibaris and China's soft power in East Africa

Nye's concept of soft power provides the most suitable explanation of China's influence on Zanzibar. Soft power has been defined as a combination of intangible resources such as "culture, ideologies, institutions combined with values" and the ability to "make others want what you want".<sup>153</sup> As in the other Communist countries, the Chinese media was an extension of the state's political and social control of information. No stranger to large-scale propaganda campaigns, the Chinese government quickly supplemented its overt diplomatic efforts in East Africa with the injection of soft power. With Uganda and Kenya still under colonial rule, Babu's enthusiasm for cultivating closer ties in China made Zanzibar Beijing's main entry point into the region. Thereafter Beijing enlisted the efforts of Zanzibaris to enhance its understanding of regional affairs, build up its diplomatic capacity through training a corps of Swahili language interpreters and project Chinese soft power in the region. This section examines the vital role that Zanzibaris played in facilitating the rapid extension of Chinese influence in East Africa through the key media of radio and press.

### i) *Radio Peking*

The use of shortwave radio broadcasting as a tool of foreign policy was not new and radio was already a popular medium for mass communication in colonial East Africa. In Tanganyika, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, which broadcasted in English), "Calling East Africa," Radio Cairo, as well as services from Nairobi,

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<sup>153</sup> Nye 2004; Zahran / Geraldo / Ramos 2010, p. 13.

Lusaka, Kampala and All India Radio were all available.<sup>154</sup> China's state-run overseas radio service, *Radio Peking*, launched its first English-language broadcasts to Egypt and Central Africa in 1956, with 3.5 hours of weekly programming.<sup>155</sup> This was in addition to its existing broadcasts in French, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese and Arabic. Shortwave radio bridged the geographical and cultural gulf between China and Africa by giving the former a *voice*, in countries where most people had only limited impressions of China. Compared to Radio Cairo, which promoted an Arab-centric and Islam-centric view, *Radio Peking* was less concerned with local intra-ethnic politics. Instead, it focused more on the dissemination of Chinese policies and the export of its official versions of news, while legitimising the CCP's narrative of revolutionary struggle.

In 1959 *Radio Peking*'s English-language service was extended further to include southern and eastern Africa and its weekly programming was increased to seven hours. As an indication of the continent's growing importance to the Chinese leaders, West Africa was incorporated the following year (1960) and weekly programming was increased to fourteen hours. Additionally, *Radio Peking* began reaching out to Lusophone Africa through Portuguese-language broadcasts from October 1960.<sup>156</sup> In East Africa, *Radio Peking* (as well as Radio Moscow) was reportedly received clearly in most parts of Tanganyika, in some places even more clearly than the local broadcasting station. The content of the radio programmes continued to focus almost exclusively on decolonisation, the Chinese people's

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<sup>154</sup> NA, CO1053/22, Tanganyika, 1954-56; Nasser's government similarly targeted its radio service (Radio Cairo) to promote a vision of third world solidarity centred on Cairo, as Brennan's study shows: Brennan 2010a.

<sup>155</sup> Schatten 1966, p. 216.

<sup>156</sup> Jarman 2001, p. 628.

solidarity with African liberation struggles and New China as a model to be emulated.<sup>157</sup>

British observers criticised the Chinese broadcasts for being repetitive – they were based on a single tape with modifications made to suit the target audience – with an insignificant following among the locals.<sup>158</sup> The rudimentary quality of *Radio Peking*'s initial English service in Africa was due in part to budget constraints, as it had “always worked on a shoestring”.<sup>159</sup> *Radio Peking* recruited foreign linguists to overcome the language barriers which confronted Chinese propaganda efforts overseas. As of October 1960, three of the four announcers in the English-language section were overseas Chinese who hailed from the United Kingdom, South Africa and Canada. This was a promising policy at the onset, but quickly proved stillborn once the ideological criteria for the selection of foreign staff were tightened. An anecdote in British records describe how the editor in the *Radio Peking* English department was apparently someone whose sole qualification was a good proletarian background rather than an adequate command of English or any relevant technical knowledge.<sup>160</sup>

The evidence shows that the Chinese government decided to reach out to East Africa more directly at around the same time. In April 1960 the Chinese embassy in Cairo reported a meeting with some Zanzibari students in which the latter expressed their dissatisfaction with the content of Egyptian broadcasts about East Africa.<sup>161</sup> Soon after, Babu and Ali Sultan facilitated the recruitment of Swahili-language speakers for

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<sup>157</sup> Schatten 1966, p. 218.

<sup>158</sup> NA, CO822/2061, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, August 1960, Synopsis. NA, FO371/15047, Comments of a member of the Peking Radio staff, 16 October 1960.

<sup>159</sup> NA, FO371/150472, 1436/8/60.

<sup>160</sup> NA, FO371/150472, Comments of a member of the Peking Radio Staff, 16 October 1960.

<sup>161</sup> CFMA, 108-00223-07 (1), 29 April 1960.

*Radio Peking*. The Zanzibari candidates were educated, bilingual (at least in English and Swahili) and generally sympathetic to the Communist cause. Many were attracted by the promise of overseas employment combined with tertiary study. The first Zanzibaris to visit China arrived in Beijing in August 1960 and were possibly the first Africans sent there to work in a non-diplomatic capacity. Three were assigned to *Radio Peking* to present news commentaries and translate material from English into Swahili for broadcasting.<sup>162</sup> The Chinese officials also considered them area experts who could be consulted for information pertaining to East Africa.

*Radio Peking* was thus able to launch its Swahili service in 1961. Brennan notes that the station entered a contested market, with other new Swahili-language services including those by Moscow, Ghana and the Voice of America (VOA), which displaced the “Swahili language anti-colonial monopoly” that Cairo had enjoyed for six or so years.<sup>163</sup> It is difficult to measure the success of propaganda efforts with any degree of accuracy, but the Swahili service clearly added to *Radio Peking*’s overall broadcasting output to Africa.<sup>164</sup> The Chinese government probably considered it a success, as the NCNA reported in May 1963 that Hausa language broadcasts would soon be started for West Africa.<sup>165</sup> By 1964 *Radio Peking*’s programming had increased to 71 hours per week and targeted the entire African continent.<sup>166</sup> It boasted the loudest and clearest signal of any foreign station and grew in sophistication – it now had selected programmes catered for the ethnic Chinese communities in Zanzibar, Madagascar,

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with the late Professor Haroub Othman, Dar es Salaam, 14 November 2006.

<sup>163</sup> I thank James Brennan for this point: Brennan 2010a.

<sup>164</sup> Brennan noted the drop in Radio Cairo’s broadcasting and influence after the Zanzibar election riots in June 1961. Furthermore, Cairo had reappraised its policy towards sub-Saharan Africa following Syria’s withdrawal from the UAR: Brennan, 2010a, p. 184.

<sup>165</sup> *People’s Daily*, 28 May 1963. Hausa is the *lingua franca* of West Africa, as Swahili is for East Africa.

<sup>166</sup> Schatten, 1966, p. 218. NARA, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Memorandum: Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, OCI No. 1211/65, 30 April 1965, p. 4.

Mauritius and Reunion. In comparison, the Soviet and East European broadcasts, although amounting to 267 hours a week, were reportedly less clear. Nevertheless, the total radio output generated by the Communist bloc countries outstripped the BBC's output, which only amounted to 180 hours per week.

As mentioned earlier in this section, three of the four Zanzibaris sent to China in 1960 worked at *Radio Peking*. The fourth was assigned to the Foreign Languages Institute in Beijing to teach Swahili to student translators and to translate Mao's treatises.<sup>167</sup> The Chinese foreign ministry took language training very seriously and had an ambitious plan to train 1,067 interpreters for 56 foreign languages in five years; by 1961, over 1,500 students had been chosen across China to either study in a foreign language school, or to be sent for overseas study.<sup>168</sup> These Chinese students, and subsequent batches of their colleagues, assisted the Chinese leaders in their official interactions with Swahili-speaking visitors, or were despatched with teams of experts to East Africa. The interpreters played a crucial role during the early years of Chinese diplomacy in Africa, when most senior Chinese diplomats did not speak a foreign language, and were vital in creating a positive impression of China.<sup>169</sup>

Chinese diplomacy benefitted greatly from this Swahili-language capability as a former Tanzanian ambassador to China recalls:

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with the late Professor Haroub Othman, Dar es Salaam, 14 November 2006.

<sup>168</sup> Liu 2001, pp. 65-66.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

The Chinese had some first class diplomats [...] people who were familiar with Africa, who took the trouble to understand Africa, and [...] also took the trouble to know the language [...] so there was that sense of familiarity.<sup>170</sup>

Indeed, the mere presence of the Zanzibaris in Beijing fulfilled the latter's symbolic and practical objectives of third world solidarity and support for anti-imperialism.

## ii) NCNA and *Zanews*

The second main area in which Chinese soft power was felt was the press, in which Babu once again played a major role. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Babu was the NCNA correspondent for East Africa. Additionally, in a separate but related venture, Babu founded the Zanzibar News Service (*Zanews*) in 1961 with NCNA support. According to the CIA, the Chinese paid Babu over \$20,000 a month for the operating costs of the (Chinese-sponsored) printing presses, as well as a large personal retainer.<sup>171</sup> *Zanews* was the written voice of the ZNP's youth movement and operated out of the ZNP office in Darajani, Stone Town. The newsheet was published in English with a print run of 1,000 cheap-to-free copies per edition. The paper contained an eclectic mix of international and domestic topics, as well as occasionally disseminated information on Chinese policy; the local news articles were inserted by Babu and his editorial team. Babu's close ties with the Chinese were viewed negatively

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, 17 November 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>171</sup> Hunter, 2010, p. 85.

by the British colonial authorities, which cited them as evidence of his being “bought and sold” by Beijing and “a menace to the peaceful development of Zanzibar”.<sup>172</sup>

Yet *Zanews* appealed to an important segment of the local population. To understand the attraction that *Zanews* held for many locals, a brief look into the history of the press in Zanzibar is necessary. Under the British colonial authorities, African Zanzibaris had no access to newspaper production and the press was exclusively operated by the Arab and Asian communities. The publications were largely trade and community-focused papers which reflected the higher levels of education, organisation and social cohesion within these groups.<sup>173</sup> As the independence movement gained momentum, the rapid politicisation of the people generated many roughly printed political leaflets in the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>174</sup> These newspapers, perhaps more accurately described as partisan pamphleteering, were read and disseminated along party lines. They had a symbolic function rather than being channels for communication and current news.<sup>175</sup> According to Ali Nabwa, who was an editor with the paper in 1964, *Zanews* was the only locally produced publication that had a firm anti-imperialist stance and presented Marxist interpretations of international affairs.<sup>176</sup> *Zanews* articles were unique in being current and also regularly covered the conflict in Indochina and revolutionary events elsewhere. Hence the newsheet was generally popular among the intellectual elite who were literate in English and interested in international news.

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<sup>172</sup> Petterson 2002, p. 30; NA, DO185/59, Zanzibar Revolution: A report by Mr. A. A. E. Forsyth-Thompson, Ex-Permanent Secretary, PM's Department, Zanzibar, 10 February 1964; NA, DO185/65. Report. ‘Zanzibar Personalities.’

<sup>173</sup> Sturmer 1998, p. 299.

<sup>174</sup> Glassman 2000.

<sup>175</sup> Lofchie 1965, p. 210.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with the late Ali Nabwa, Zanzibar, 28 November 2006.

Chinese support for *Zanews* also marked Beijing's first direct intervention in local Zanzibari politics, which caused some political ripples. The newspaper was derided by British observers as "a scurrilous pro-Communist news sheet [...]" completely taken up with Chinese agitation and propaganda" with the objective of keeping Africans "steadily supplied with Chinese propaganda material."<sup>177</sup> The Americans believed that a majority of the *Zanews* staff received their wages and expenses from the Chinese Embassy in Dar es Salaam. Babu's fiery *Zanews* editorials did little to endear him to the British authorities. His report of the election riots in Zanzibar alleged that the Americans and British had instigated the violence and that most of the casualties were ZNP supporters. The colonial government's patience ran out when Babu claimed in another article, published on 29 December 1961, that the June riots were masterminded by the ASP with the connivance of the colonial government and he was charged in court.<sup>178</sup>

The YOU general secretary Salim Said Rashid Mauly, a student at the London School of Economics at the time, appealed to the Chinese embassy and NCNA office in London for getting legal assistance for Babu.<sup>179</sup> *Zanews* decried Babu's arrest as a set-up made with the knowledge of the ZNP-ZPPP alliance. The *People's Daily* followed suit and condemned the British for their persecution of patriots and for the arbitrary arrests that were made under the pretext of emergency law. Zanzibari students in China also sent a message to the Chief Minister protesting against Babu's arrest and called for

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<sup>177</sup> NA, CO822/2166, Abdulrahman Mohamed Shariff Abubaker bin Ali Alias Babu, 23 February 1962; Schatten 1966, p. 213; Hunter 2010, pp. 27-28.

<sup>178</sup> *People's Daily*, 7 June 1961; Campbell 1962.

<sup>179</sup> Salim Rashid later became Secretary of the Revolutionary Council following the Zanzibar revolution in early 1964. NA, CO822/2166, Extract from Supplementary to Zanzibar Special Branch Intelligence Summary, 25 January to 25 February 1962; DO185/56, British High Commission, Zanzibar, to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 22 July 1964. The militant YOU, with its links to the Communist bloc governments, was banned by the colonial Zanzibari government. Hubbard 2011, p. 317.

the government's resignation if he was not released.<sup>180</sup> Throughout this time, Babu reportedly maintained contact with the NCNA and despatched cables to its London office and kept them apprised of the case against him, including his belief that the whole affair was engineered to detain him while constitutional talks went on in London.<sup>181</sup> In spite of these travails, Babu was still able to travel intermittently and carry out some of his political work, albeit to a lesser degree.<sup>182</sup> Babu was released in 1963 and the net effect of his incarceration was an even more compelling reputation amongst African nationalists as a political martyr.<sup>183</sup>

As this section has shown, the development of Chinese soft power was possible through the cultivation of low-level Sino-Zanzibari contacts, Babu's efforts in the stewardship of *Zanews* and the employment of Zanzibaris at *Radio Peking*. These measures built up mutual trust and support for the rapid growth of Beijing's information campaign. Coupled with the Zanzibari nationalists' impatience for change, local developments in Zanzibar strengthened the Sino-Zanzibari relationship even further and laid the ground for closer ties, the topic of the next section.

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<sup>180</sup> NA, CO822/2166, Inward Telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies from Zanzibar (Acting British Resident), 5 April 1962; CO822/2166, Extract from Supplementary to Zanzibar Special Branch Intelligence Summary, 25 December 1961 to 25 January 1962.

<sup>181</sup> NA, CO822/2166, Outward Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Zanzibar (Acting Resident), 3 April 1962; NA, CO822/2166, Sav:41, EAF34/8/04, 1 February 1962; NA, CO822/2166, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Zanzibar (Acting British Resident), 15 March 1962.

<sup>182</sup> Babu applied to the colonial authorities for permission to attend the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMeca) meeting in Addis Ababa in early February 1962, followed by visits to some Eastern bloc countries. He was allowed to leave the country on a £250 (\$700) bond and the case was put down for hearing on 15 January.

<sup>183</sup> But not before being nominated as advisor to the ZNP for a conference. The minister attending the conference sent an inquiry to the British as to whether the sedition case could be postponed: Babu was first released, then arrested again on 5 May along with two colleagues, Ali Jaffer and James Bungeng: *Zanews*, 8 and 19 May 1962. Indeed, seven other individuals – all ZNP members – were also arrested: Muhsin Abeid, Issa Mohamed Issa, Ahmed Lamki, Amar Salim, Ali Ismail, Suleiman Badr and Hassan Gulamali: *Zanews*, 4 and 7 May 1962.

### **III. Local developments in Zanzibar and the buttressing of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship**

The third phase in the evolution of the Zanzibari bridgehead for Chinese diplomatic expansion into East Africa developed alongside three major political events between 1963 and 1964, namely the formation of the Marxist Umma Party, the Zanzibar revolution and the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. This phase helped to push the Sino-Zanzibari relationship forward and demonstrates that local African politics played a bigger role in the decolonisation vacuum than Cold War fault lines. This section examines each of these political events in detail to highlight its role in buttressing the Sino-Zanzibari relationship.

#### **i) The Umma party**

Zanzibar was granted self-governing status by the British on 23 June 1963. Favouring moderate nationalists in the decolonisation process, the British authorities attempted to impress their political vision in the run-up to the Legislative Council elections in July 1963.<sup>184</sup> They also warned the ZNP leader Ali Muhsin that power would not be handed over to his party unless it was rid of socialists.<sup>185</sup> Throughout this time, the ZNP was torn by increasing factionalism and some members' consternation at Babu's flirtations with Communism. The situation was exacerbated further by Ali Muhsin's appeals for Egyptian assistance, which gave the party an image of Arab dominance and disconcerted the African Zanzibaris in turn.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> PRO, DO185/7. EP.27/33/1. Pritchard to Chadwick, 5 April 1963.

<sup>185</sup> Campbell 1962; Burgess 2009, p. 70.

<sup>186</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989, p. 145; Interview with the late Ali Nabwa, Zanzibar, 28 November 2006.

Babu and his circle of comrades subsequently resigned from the ZNP and established the Umma party in June 1963, after his release from gaol. The split took place along ideological lines and reconfigured Zanzibar's political groupings, with the Umma party being a merger of the ZNP left-wing – the backbone of the ZNP's mass work – and the ASP left-wing. This combination made the new party particularly attractive to the trade unions and the militant ASP youth wing; the overseas exposure that many Zanzibari youths had experienced in the Communist bloc countries made the mobilisation process much easier.<sup>187</sup>

Significantly, the more well-travelled members in the Umma party's executive committee – Badawi, Khamis Ameir, Babu and Ali Sultan – were pro-Chinese. The executive committee comprised of fifteen members but, as Ali Sultan insisted, “the leader was clearly Babu.”<sup>188</sup> However, because of their ethnicity, Babu and the Umma members lay open to criticism that Umma was Arab-dominated, even though their own platform was a non-racialist, class-centred one.<sup>189</sup> The party did not subscribe to a racialist or religious platform for national unity and, probably as a result of that, had little appeal in the rural areas.<sup>190</sup> Ali Sultan contended that Umma was exceptional in his country's history because “we were a tiny seed, but a very good seed.”<sup>191</sup> Sensing a

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<sup>187</sup> Burgess 1999; Burgess 2009, p.80; *People's Daily*, 30 September, 24 November 1963; Chase 1976; Wilson 2007. Subscribing to a Marxist ideology and its explicit call to internationalist duty, the Umma party also made important ideological works accessible to the local community through its bookshop in Stone Town, where works by Mao, Stalin, Lenin as well as a range of Chinese books could be purchased. Interview with Khamis Abdallah Ameir and Shaban, Zanzibar, 28 November 2006.

<sup>188</sup> Burgess 2009, p.80.

<sup>189</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 64.

<sup>190</sup> Burgess 2010, p. 213.

<sup>191</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 29.

potential political threat, the British authorities banned *Zanews*, as well as the ZNP's party paper *Sauti ya Umma* (Voice of the Masses).<sup>192</sup>

The Umma party itself did not field any candidates in the Legislative Council elections in July 1963, but threw its support behind the ASP. The election results were, as before, a ZNP-ZPPP victory in the legislature because of the first-past-the-post system, with the ASP polling a majority of the votes but a minority of seats. The system of political organisation led to a great deal of disgruntlement among the African Zanzibaris. Between July and December 1963, the ZNP-ZPPP coalition government undertook strategic measures to extend its control over important ministries through the recruitment of party loyalists and a policy of "Zanzibarisation" was announced.<sup>193</sup> The African Zanzibaris saw this as a demonstration of the government's plan to create an Arab-run police state.<sup>194</sup>

Although personal diplomacy had served Babu and the Chinese government well until that point, its limitations were quickly outweighed by the real political gains that Chinese support for the incumbent government would bring. The Sino-Zanzibari relationship was exceptional in another respect: China had a stronger position than the Soviet Union in Zanzibar compared to elsewhere in Africa.<sup>195</sup> Beijing's position was based on the assessments of its diplomats in the field and, in spite of its earlier support for Babu, the Chinese government fully intended to work with the ZNP-ZPPP government. Central to all of this was the coalition government's position on the One

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<sup>192</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989, pp. 11-12.

<sup>193</sup> Clayton 1981, p. 4. For example, a police repatriation programme antagonised the mainlanders who made up almost one-tenth of Zanzibar's population and more than half of its police force: NA, DO185/59. Letter ZAN.75/18/5, Eccles to Chitty, 13 February 1964.

<sup>194</sup> Lofchie 1965, p. 268.

<sup>195</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 51.

China policy. The Chinese ambassador in Cairo, Chen Jiakang, met the coalition leaders Mohamed Shamte and Ali Muhsin before independence in October. Both sides publicly expressed their mutual wish to develop strong bilateral ties.<sup>196</sup> Ambassador to Tanganyika He Ying sent his colleague Zhou Nan to Zanzibar immediately after, in November 1963. He Ying deftly managed the rivalry between Shamte and Ali Muhsin – both of whom wanted to capitalise on Chinese influence and resources – to his advantage and quickly obtained Zanzibar's diplomatic recognition for China. In spite of attempts by the Republic of China (ROC) to woo the ZNP-ZPPP government by dispatching its Vice-Foreign Minister Yang Xikun and a delegation to Zanzibar, the Taiwanese were excluded from the independence celebration.<sup>197</sup>

Beijing officially recognised the constitutional monarchy under Sultan Seyyid Jamshid bin Abdullah bin Khalifa and the ZNP-ZPPP coalition when Zanzibar became independent on 10 December 1963.<sup>198</sup> The Chinese press made it a point to emphasise that a long friendship had existed between their peoples before the disruption caused by imperialist aggression and colonialism oppression.<sup>199</sup> The Umma party was unable to gain a formal political foothold. The ZNP-ZPPP victory and wavering Chinese support put Babu's group in a weak position. Its fate plunged even further when the new government banned the party within three weeks of independence. A police search on the Umma Party headquarters in January turned up a large number of documents, including a diary written in Beijing containing a full description of the methods for a violent revolution. At around the same time, rumours spread in Zanzibar of the

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<sup>196</sup> *People's Daily*, 15 October 1963.

<sup>197</sup> He 1993, p. 305.

<sup>198</sup> *People's Daily*, 10, 11 and 13 December 1963.

<sup>199</sup> *People's Daily*, 9 December 1963.

government's plan to carry out a mass arrest and purge of ASP leaders on 13 January.<sup>200</sup> The police searched Babu's house and reportedly found a pistol – which he claimed had been planted – and indicted him.<sup>201</sup>

The political situation in Zanzibar was unstable and tense in early January 1964. The coalition government enjoyed the support of the wealthy Arab segment, while the ASP appealed to poor Africans, to the extent that the British observed disgruntled Zanzibaris referring to their independence as *Uhuru wa Waarabu* (Arab Independence Day).<sup>202</sup> This “Arabisation” was pushed even further by Ali Muhsin immediately after independence, when he signed an agreement to have Egyptian teachers sent to Zanzibar to replace the departing British staff.<sup>203</sup> The threat of continued Arab domination and closer alignment with Egypt heightened the sense of urgency felt by the African Zanzibaris. Days later, a revolution broke out in the early hours of 12 January 1964.

## ii) The Umma cadres and the Zanzibar Revolution

The confusion and lack of information in the immediate aftermath of the coup was stoked by the fanatical and, at times, blood-curdling radio broadcasts against the Sultan and Arab community made by the self-declared Field Marshal John Okello. Okello was actually only a minor ASP official who had managed to manoeuvre himself quickly into the limelight during the revolution.<sup>204</sup> Shamte's government had in fact

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<sup>200</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 6.

<sup>201</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 84.

<sup>202</sup> NA, DO185/59, Zanzibar: background to the revolution, 7/2/1964.

<sup>203</sup> NA, DO185/59. Letter ZAN.75/18/5, Eccles to Chitty, 13 February 1964.

<sup>204</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 58.

been overthrown by members of the ASP Youth League (ASPYL), who had secured firearms from police stockpiles and overran security installations across Stone Town.

The British and Americans misread the situation as a foreign, Communist-sponsored revolution and their initial reaction was to point to the Chinese as one of the prime suspects. Premier Zhou Enlai's remark that "revolutionary prospects were excellent throughout Africa," uttered during his tour of African countries that began in December 1963, appeared to be adequate proof of Chinese ill intent.<sup>205</sup> The Western perception of Chinese involvement in the coup was suggestive of their paranoia about the latter's influence on the decolonising African continent.

Still smarting from its confrontations with Communist forces in Southeast Asia and Cuba, the US Department of State circulated a report titled "The Communist Spectre Looms in Zanzibar" a day after the coup.<sup>206</sup> The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Trimble, even cited NCNA representative Gao Liang's cagey behaviour as compelling evidence: Gao had been overheard making telephone calls in Chinese while in Zanzibar.<sup>207</sup> This was one of a number of inaccurate field analyses which fanned the anti-Communist paranoia and was not particularly illuminating, as Gao presumably spoke Chinese to his colleagues all the time. Trimble extrapolated his speculation into a possible Chinese entry into Zanzibar via Kenya, where the pro-Chinese Minister Oginga Odinga could ensure their smooth passage through immigration.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Gleijeses 2002, p. 57.

<sup>206</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 39.

<sup>207</sup> NA, DO185/59, Washington to FO, 29 January 1964.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

The British government, as the former colonial power in East Africa, had a large vested stake in the region. Whitehall initially suggested that Babu had received a subsidy from the Chinese towards financing the coup, an allegation which was later rejected by the High Commission in Zanzibar.<sup>209</sup> In the House of Lords, Conservative peer Lord Colyton alleged that Babu had precipitated the coup and that Beijing had clearly planned everything to transform Zanzibar into “the advance post of the Chinese Communist penetration into Africa.”<sup>210</sup> He substantiated his case by drawing a causal link between the revolution and Zhou Enlai’s visit to Africa; Zanzibar’s transformation was later described as “a sort of Chinese Cuba threatening directly Kenya and Tanganyika”.<sup>211</sup> Moreover, it was held that any externally sponsored security threats in former British East Africa might quickly inflame the lucrative but tenuous situation in southern Africa, as the nationalist movements there gained momentum. Similarly alarming references to the Zanzibar Revolution were uttered by Winston Joseph Field, the Prime Minister of the Rhodesian Front, who called post-coup Zanzibar a “bridgehead for the infiltration of East Africa where the shaky new governments stood little chance in warding off a well-planned and well-endowed campaign to replace them with regimes unsympathetic to Western democracies.”<sup>212</sup>

Once the dust had settled, it was evident that there was no Chinese involvement in the revolution: Rather, it was carried out by ASPYL members of their own accord.<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, Babu had returned from Dar es Salaam two days after the revolution and

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<sup>209</sup> NA, DO185/59, ZAN.75/227/1, Hickman to Crosthwait, 27 February 1964.

<sup>210</sup> Hansard 1963-1964, p. 537; also cited in Hutchison 1976, p. 69.

<sup>211</sup> This may have seemed entirely plausible to Colyton, whose earlier portfolio as Minister of State for Colonial Affairs (from 1952 to 1955) was a tumultuous time in the colonies and included the Malayan Emergency (1948 to 1960) in Southeast Asia. The Malayan Emergency involved ethnic Chinese Communist guerrillas who fought for their ideology and political independence: Hansard 1963-1964, p. 537.

<sup>212</sup> Wood 2005, p. 196.

<sup>213</sup> Mwakikagile 2008, p. 58.

the Umma cadres had taken good advantage of the turn of events, so well in fact that they quickly manoeuvred themselves into key positions within the new administration. The British observed that the entire operation appeared to have been executed in a “well planned and reasonably disciplined fashion [...] by people possessing a fair knowledge of military tactics”.<sup>214</sup>

The Umma cadres saw their contribution as the transformation of an unfocused unrest into a revolution along Marxist lines that injected the ideological and strategic grounding necessary to revamp the existing political structure.<sup>215</sup> Their visible positions within the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council (ZRC) alarmed the British, who described Karume as being in the hands of the extremists after having quarrelled with the ASP “intellectuals” led by Othman Shariff, Hasnu Makame and Idris Abdulakil.<sup>216</sup> Although the ASP had provided the largest base of political support for the new regime, the British guessed that Karume would stay in power for as long as the “balance of suspicion” within the Council lasted and that the communists would benefit from all the confusion.<sup>217</sup> In contrast to neighbouring Tanganyika where “nationalism had to be engendered by imperial sponsorship,” the decolonisation process in Zanzibar was more traumatic by far.<sup>218</sup>

The ZRC announced a new constitution on 22 January. On 30 January, the ZRC declared Zanzibar a one-party state under the ASP and the Umma party was officially dissolved. This second “death” of the Umma party was viewed quite differently from

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<sup>214</sup> NA, DO185/59, ZAN.75/227/1, Hickman to Crosthwait, 27 February 1964.

<sup>215</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989, p. 13.

<sup>216</sup> NA, DO185/56, ZAN.012/18/1, Crosthwait to Sandys, 22 July 1964, p. 7; NA, DO185/59, A Note on the Zanzibar Revolution.

<sup>217</sup> NA, DO185/59, Note on the Zanzibar Revolution.

<sup>218</sup> Darwin 1991, p. 102.

the ZNP-ZPPP government's ban just weeks earlier. According to Ali Sultan, "we socialists had to work in whichever way possible [...] the merger was permissible since the Chinese Communist Party had once joined with the Guomindang, although they remained separate."<sup>219</sup> In this way, the Chinese were able to make inroads with the ZRC through the Umma cadres who had joined the ASP. The newly-assembled government found itself in similarly choppy waters as its ZNP-ZPPP predecessor, but faced an additional challenge in the form of the maverick "Field Marshal" Okello and his pack of over five hundred armed followers.<sup>220</sup> The latter group was responsible for the nearly two months of violence, intimidation and terror which spread in the countryside after the revolution. The main target of the violence was the Manga Arab community, many of whom were small-scale shopkeepers and small landowners living in the countryside in the north and east of Unguja. A large proportion of this group had their homes destroyed and an estimated 1,800 were interned in refugee camps in Zanzibar, although the number of victims may have been greater.<sup>221</sup> Whatever symbolic gains had been made by the revolution were threatened by Okello's maverick actions.<sup>222</sup> Okello was finally removed with help from the Tanganyikan government.

The existing literature suggests that Chinese recognition of the coup government came hot on the heels of the revolution. However, the exchanges between the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam and its Foreign Ministry reveal a rather more cautious stance.<sup>223</sup> As mentioned earlier, Beijing's ties with the ZNP-ZPPP coalition government were cordial and Chinese records show that the coup created a period of uncertainty in

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<sup>219</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 92.

<sup>220</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 59.

<sup>221</sup> NA, DO185/60, ZAN.75/18/9, Crosthwait to Bushell, 7 February 1964.

<sup>222</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 61.

<sup>223</sup> CFMA, 203-00410-02, 12 January 1964.

bilateral relations, as the Foreign Affairs Ministry assessed the complex situation. He Ying identified two challenges facing Chinese diplomacy in Zanzibar following the revolution: The demonstration of the ZRC's authoritarianism through the banning of the Umma party and the continued British military presence in the region.

The Chinese ambassador concluded that the coup government was in control of the situation and was likely to consolidate its power further, although the former ZNP-ZPPP government might still have some influence with Western (mainly American or British) supporters.<sup>224</sup> He Ying recommended to his government that they observe the situation a little longer, while paying particular attention to the responses of the East African governments and other important Afro-Asian governments. If they recognised the new regime, Beijing could do likewise, although there would be no need for official congratulations to be sent.<sup>225</sup> This was presumably to keep recognition low key, lest any further upheavals occurred in the Zanzibari government.

Babu called on the embassy the following day and, exercising his new appointment as Zanzibari Foreign Minister, extended an invitation for Premier Zhou Enlai to visit Zanzibar. He Ying appeared convinced by Babu's explanation of the situation and advised the Foreign Ministry that they should accept Babu's invitation if asked again, pending the Premier's time commitments and the regional situation.<sup>226</sup> The Foreign Ministry approved these suggestions and advised the Ambassador not to broach the issue of recognition, but to keep it appraised should the Zanzibaris press for an

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> CFMA, 203-00410-02, 14 January 1964.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

answer.<sup>227</sup> This hesitation reflected the high emphasis that the Chinese government placed on the opinions of the other East African, African and Asian governments.

By the end of January 1964 the PRC, along with East Germany, North Vietnam, Israel, Egypt and Yugoslavia, had formally recognised the ZRC. Babu specifically highlighted Chinese recognition as an encouragement to the Zanzibari people and a blow to American-led imperialism.<sup>228</sup> The British and American governments delayed their recognition of the ZRC and were penalised by Karume. That lapse allowed the Communist bloc countries unobstructed access to the ZRC through their attractive offers of aid and diplomacy. Yet it was true that the Umma cadres' subsequent political manoeuvring into power greatly facilitated the Sino-Zanzibari relations. Therefore, although the space that was opened up by the departure of the British colonial authorities allowed new entrants – specifically the Chinese – into Zanzibar, the actual scale and speed of Beijing's engagement in Zanzibar can be attributed more accurately to the political divisions and powers struggles between key members of the ZRC. Hence Clayton's analysis that "the foundations of the TanZam Railway, between the Zambian Copperbelt and Dar es Salaam, were laid in the streets of Zanzibar City early in 1964" is inaccurate insofar as neither the Chinese nor the Umma members had a direct hand in the Zanzibar revolution.<sup>229</sup> Rather, it could be more accurately said that those foundations were laid by the strategic manoeuvring of the Umma cadres in the immediate aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution.

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<sup>227</sup> CFMA, 203-00410-02, 15 January 1964.

<sup>228</sup> *People's Daily*, 21 January 1964.

<sup>229</sup> Clayton 1981, p. 154.

### iii) Communist countries and the aid vacuum

The literature on Zanzibar's post-coup period until the union with Tanganyika in April 1964, tends to focus on external relations, implying that the surge in the Communist bloc presence was the main influence in the shaping of the ZRC's domestic development strategy. However, the evidence strongly suggests that Zanzibar's domestic policies were not necessarily indicative of the Communist sympathies of the majority of leaders in the ZRC.<sup>230</sup>

Rather, it was the combination of in-fighting within the ZRC and its financial needs which led to a foreign policy heavily tilted towards the Communist powers, particularly in the early days of its administration. The ZRC embarked on the nationalisation of industry, as well as drives to improve education and the encouragement of self-reliance. The irony, as a CIA report pointed out, was that "certain of its leaders who were the most radical in their domestic policies were not anti-West, while others who furthered Communist bloc interests at the sacrifice of Western interests were more moderate in domestic policy."<sup>231</sup> In that early post-colonial period, the fight for executive power boiled down to a negotiation between personalities.

Karume lacked formal education, but had risen through his own efforts from "a humble, able seaman to the acknowledged leader of Zanzibari Africans."<sup>232</sup> Karume's interests were more focused on consolidating his personal power and, when the

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<sup>230</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 72.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>232</sup> NA, DO185/65, Zanzibar Personalities.

Western governments delayed recognition of the ZRC, he reacted with a heavy hand. Babu, on the other hand, was regarded by the British as “the only intellectual” in the Cabinet whose strengths as a revolutionary leader gave him a significant advantage over the “slow, unsure, indecisive” Karume. Babu was – accurately – believed to have played a key role in “the international Communist build-up.”<sup>233</sup> His objective for the ZRC’s new economic policies was for a clean break from the colonial system and to install a self-reliant, internally integrated economy based on a mix of local resources and foreign assistance.<sup>234</sup> For that purpose, he advised Karume to embark on a socialist development path and to bring in experts from the Communist bloc.<sup>235</sup>

The existing cleavages within the ZRC were reinforced by Sino-Soviet rivalry; even after Zanzibar was declared a one-party state, the two Communist powers still vied for the loyalties of various Zanzibari politicians. The Chinese government threw its support behind the leftist Arab elements – the former Umma comrades – while Moscow backed the radical African elements, including Prime Minister Abdullah Kassim Hanga from the ASP.<sup>236</sup> As mentioned, the protracted delay in the US and British governments’ recognition of the ZRC disappointed Karume, who, after waiting agitatedly for some weeks, decided to close the US Embassy and British High Commission, expelling their respective *Chargé d’ Affaires*.<sup>237</sup> Communist aid to Zanzibar seemed all the more dramatic when viewed against the concurrent exodus of British advisers and civil servants. The British High Commissioner Crosthwait’s

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<sup>233</sup> Legum 1964, quoted in Schatten 1966, p. 214; NA, DO185/56, ZAN.012/18/1, Crosthwait to Sandys, 22 July 1964.

<sup>234</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989, p. 58.

<sup>235</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 22.

<sup>236</sup> Hunter 2010, pp. 91-92.

<sup>237</sup> *People’s Daily*, 23 February 1964.

valedictory letter from Stone Town described the “almost complete elimination of British influence here – a decline which, like many other recent events in Zanzibar, must be without parallel in Commonwealth history.”<sup>238</sup> The scene that he described contrasted starkly with the enthusiastic arrival of the Soviets, Chinese, and East Germans in Zanzibar from February 1964 – “like the Three Kings, bearing gifts of economic and military aid and opening embassies.”<sup>239</sup> Beijing bestowed the timely gift of a \$500,000 untied grant in hard currency for the ZRC that month.<sup>240</sup>

The Sino-Zanzibari relationship grew robustly in this political climate and was featured in Chinese information campaigns. The *People’s Daily* extolled the success of the Zanzibar revolution in liberating the impoverished Zanzibari masses, while carefully validating Mao’s continuous revolution.<sup>241</sup> Yet the outcome of closer political ties between Zanzibar and Beijing would probably not have differed dramatically if the previous ZNP-ZPPP government had still been in power. The Chinese government was intent on fostering strong ties with whichever was the incumbent African government in Zanzibar. The Chinese paid little attention to the actual racial and ethnic tensions in Zanzibar and, as the CIA observed, “Communist propaganda was at pains to demonstrate that the division in Zanzibar was essentially a class one, with Arabs representing feudal landlords and the Africans the working population.”<sup>242</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>238</sup> NA, DO185/56, ZAN.012/18/1, Crosthwait to Sandys, 22 July 1964.

<sup>239</sup> Gleijesus 2002, p. 60.

<sup>240</sup> The credit facility was formalised in an agreement that was announced in June 1964 and was for supporting Zanzibar’s economic development. The interest-free loan to Zanzibar of \$14 million had a repayment period of ten years beginning in 1975 and roughly \$2.8 million was to be disbursed in cash for development purposes, with the remainder going towards the financing the import of Chinese machinery, equipment and technical aid: Hunter 2010, p. 84.

<sup>241</sup> A series of eight feature articles on Zanzibar appeared in the *People’s Daily* in early April to commemorate Sino-Zanzibari ties. Styled as the travel log of two NCNA journalists’ impressions as they travelled around the islands, the articles’ overall thrust was to present the success of the revolution to a domestic Chinese audience: *People’s Daily*, 1-7 and 9 April 1964. The articles were later published as a monograph on Tanzania: Gao 1965.

<sup>242</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 75.

the Chinese sources usually referred to the racial issues in Zanzibar in their criticisms of the colonial British policy of divide and rule between Arab and African Zanzibaris.<sup>243</sup> The Chinese emphasised the militant element of the revolution as being indispensable to the fight for national liberation – versus the Soviet stance of peaceful coexistence – and also identified the Umma party members who were represented in the new government.<sup>244</sup> In response to the British and American governments granting diplomatic recognition to the ZRC on 23 of February, the *People's Daily* published an article warning the people and government of Zanzibar to be vigilant against imperialist plots. The article cautioned that the American and British diplomatic representatives were engaged in subversion, interference and corruption.<sup>245</sup> The feeling was mutual.

After the Chinese government formally recognised the ZRC and the ZRC appeared to establish itself as a stable government, the Chinese started to highlight the symbolism and importance of the Zanzibar Revolution. Chinese media portrayed the Sultan of Zanzibar less favourably than it had done earlier. An official expression of Chinese solidarity with the people of Zanzibar, targeted at a Chinese audience, was published in the *People's Daily* three months after the Zanzibar Revolution.<sup>246</sup> The song, *Spring wind blows to the Land of Cloves – dedicated to Zanzibar*, published in full as Appendix I on page 332, was intended to celebrate and communicate the currency of revolutionary struggle around the world. Composed by Zang Kejia (1905-2004) a celebrated Chinese poet, writer and editor who was an important proponent of

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<sup>243</sup> Gao 1965, p. 121.

<sup>244</sup> Hunter 2010, p. 76.

<sup>245</sup> *People's Daily*, 26 February 1964.

<sup>246</sup> The original piece was in Chinese, the English translation was done by the author with kind assistance from Xiao Li. Two other songs that were published in the same section of the paper ("Songs in support of the African peoples' struggles") were about the revolutionary spirit in the Congo ("The waves of the Congo River embrace the day") and Guinea ("Wildfires burn"): *People's Daily*, 15 April 1964.

socialist literature in the 1960s, the song transposed the events in Zanzibar into the CCP's revolutionary template that emphasised the rural areas as well as armed uprising. It was a romantic – yet revealing – account of the Chinese perspective on Zanzibar's transformation from “ancient slave market” to an idyllic workers' haven; it also proclaimed Chinese solidarity and support for the armed revolution. The Chinese media did not waste any opportunity to decry “Western weakness” and cravenness in the face of the Africans' revolutionary and anti-colonial spirit.<sup>247</sup> These versions did not mention the attendant chaos, inter-racial tensions and violence which followed the coup. But the fact that the ZRC, with the visible former Umma cadres in its ranks, had taken over from the ZNP-ZPPP government intensified Western paranoia and increased the external political pressure on Nyerere to take action.

This section has shown that Karume's frustration with the US and UK governments' delay in recognizing the ZRC, Babu and Hanga's connections with Beijing and Moscow respectively, led to an influx of aid and experts from the Communist bloc countries. Although initially cautious about the ZRC and irrespective of its lack of understanding of the racial complexities of the local situation, the Chinese government quickly strove to make Zanzibar a revolutionary, anti-imperialist success through its aid policy. The new Chinese ambassador, Meng Yinghe, presented his credentials to Karume on 9 April 1964, but these events were soon affected by another major political development in East African history: The union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

#### **IV. The union and China's entry onto mainland Tanganyika**

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<sup>247</sup> Gao 1965, pp. 126-127.

The union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar was formed on 23 April 1964 through an agreement between Nyerere and Karume. Although some scholars have suggested that it was solely a product of the Cold War, it was also the attainment of African political objectives.<sup>248</sup> Nyerere and TANU had close ties with the ASP. In his memoirs, Chinese diplomat Zhou Boping quoted Nyerere as having identified the Zanzibar question as Tanganyika's biggest problem because of its British-backed Arab monarchy and externally influenced politics.<sup>249</sup> After the revolution and the Tanganyikan army mutiny in January, Nyerere thought it vital to preserve stability in Tanganyika by incorporating Zanzibar in its fold. Indeed, he had told the US diplomat Donald Pettersen that "it is more important to me than to you that Zanzibar be non-aligned. The Chinese on Zanzibar threaten me more directly."<sup>250</sup> More accurately, Nyerere was worried by the communist build up and the Western pressure that would ensue. The Tanganyikan leader seized the initiative to broach the matter to Karume.

Karume similarly saw the Union as an excellent opportunity to neutralise his opponents. Some accounts attest to Babu's prior knowledge of and support for the union.<sup>251</sup> Nabwa insisted that Babu supported the idea, because it would be an opportunity to spread Zanzibar's revolutionary spirit to Tanganyika. However, it appears that Babu changed his stance after he left Zanzibar in 1978, criticising the union as "a betrayal of the revolution" because, he argued, it succumbed to Western governmental pressure to stave off Communist influence.<sup>252</sup> This perspective of the union as an American-led imperialist plot to quell the progressive forces in Zanzibar

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<sup>248</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989.

<sup>249</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 118.

<sup>250</sup> Pettersen 2002, p. 154.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30; Interview with the late Ali Nabwa, Zanzibar, 28 November 2006.

<sup>252</sup> Glassman 2011, p. 292.

was shared by former Umma cadres in their interviews.<sup>253</sup> Cold War pressures and the Sino-Soviet rivalry inflamed local tensions and emphasised the East-West ideological paradigm that was being applied to the third world generally, such as in Laos, Vietnam and Cuba.

After the union was formalised, Karume, now the *de facto* ruler of Zanzibar, quickly concentrated all executive, legislative and judicial power in his office. Karume's political rivals were assigned to cabinet positions in the union government based in Dar es Salaam, away from their local support base. After the dissolution of the Umma party, this dealt another serious blow to the left wing as an organised political force.<sup>254</sup> Among Karume's rivals were the Afro-Shirazi intellectuals with whom he had fallen out, such as Abdallah Kassim Hanga, Othman Shariff and Hasnu Makame, as well as the former Umma cadres Babu, Salim Ahmed Salim and Ali Mafoudh. In a significant diplomatic gesture, Beijing supported the union. This decision had a broad impact on the strategic gains that Beijing had made in the region and smoothed the way for its subsequent dealings with Tanganyika. The Chinese believed that Nyerere's support for the Zanzibar revolution and the clear-cut implementation of the union had led to Tanzania's greater stability and national strength.<sup>255</sup>

In contrast to the fracas surrounding the closing of the West German embassy, the Chinese ambassador left Zanzibar on 12 July and the embassy was downgraded to a

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<sup>253</sup> Including Khamis Abdullah Ameir, former ZFTU General Secretary and member of the ZRC after the revolution: Interview with Khamis Abdallah Ameir and Shaban, Zanzibar, 28 November 2006.

<sup>254</sup> Ulimwengu 2008, quoted in Mwakikagile 2008, p. 136; Afro-Shirazi Party, 1974, p. 1; NA, DO185/54, Bourn to Miles, 3 September 1965.

<sup>255</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 118.

consulate under Consul Liu Gan.<sup>256</sup> The transition went ahead without fuss and had little impact on Chinese diplomacy there. To the contrary, the Chinese consulate in Stone Town remained important. In his book, Consul Zhou claimed that the consulate was unique amongst all the Chinese consulates in Africa because it enjoyed a great deal of autonomy; it reported jointly to the home ministry and the embassy in Dar es Salaam.<sup>257</sup>

The British observed that the inflow of advisors from socialist countries made Zanzibar “something of a regional showcase for revolution.”<sup>258</sup> Chinese support for the islands gained momentum in the months after the union. Numerous delegations from Zanzibar also visited China at the invitation of non-governmental organisations, which decried US-led neo-colonialism as “the biggest threat facing independent states in Africa, Asia and Latin America” and heaped rhetorical support on their Zanzibari counterparts.<sup>259</sup> Liu Gan and his deputy Liu Qing had a good relationship with Karume: They managed the “one country, two systems” arrangement in the union astutely.<sup>260</sup>

Again, events were fast-moving with an apparently quick financial reward. On 15 May the *Heping* became the first ship from Communist China to call at an East

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<sup>256</sup> This eventually led to Bonn’s withdrawal of development assistance. Engel has written specifically on the application of the Doctrine in Tanzania: Engel 1988; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Officials in Zanzibar: notes supplied by British Deputy High Commissioner, Zanzibar, for period ending 31 July 1964; *People’s Daily*, 13 July 1964.

<sup>257</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 118.

<sup>258</sup> NA, DO214/116, Tanzania Fortnightly Summary Part II, 21 November to 4 December 1964.

<sup>259</sup> *People’s Daily*, 23 June, 5 and 7 September 1964. In mid-December, the Zanzibar Revolutionary Students’ Union General Secretary Ali Mohammed Ali visited Beijing and at the same time, an exhibition of Chinese books, paintings and photographs went on display in Zanzibar: *People’s Daily*, 15 December 1964; The ASPYU (ASP Youth Union) delegation, together with another visiting group from the Zanzibar Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), presided over the release of two Chinese films – *White* and *War of Youth* – which had been dubbed into Swahili: *People’s Daily*, 8 and 28 October 1964.

<sup>260</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 36. Chapter Five elaborates on the Chinese medical teams.

African port.<sup>261</sup> The Union Republic's first high level economic delegation to China, led by Second Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa and including Babu, stole the headlines in June 1964, not least of all for the Chinese aid package that was granted on extremely generous terms.<sup>262</sup> This was Tanzania's first aid package from China and an Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation was signed on 16 June for a loan of \$28 million, including arms – a figure that was almost twice the amount of Zanzibar's annual revenue.<sup>263</sup> In fact, the sum was large enough to cover the entire Zanzibar development plan until 1966, an indication of the importance that Beijing placed on its ties with the islands and its desire to escalate its engagement in Africa.<sup>264</sup> Cultural and educational exchanges followed.<sup>265</sup>

As part of a larger national entity, Zanzibar's actual political value to Beijing decreased with the creation of the Union as it was Dar es Salaam which carried the mantle of diplomacy. Nevertheless, the Chinese government maintained its ties and continued its assistance to the Zanzibar authorities because of the latter's high symbolic value. The coup of January 1964 had imbued Zanzibar with a revolutionary character that carried enormous weight in Beijing's propaganda.<sup>266</sup> The passionate

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<sup>261</sup> NA, DO214/116, ZAN.195/18/1, 27 May 1964; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Officials in Zanzibar: notes supplied by British Deputy High Commissioner, Zanzibar, for period ending 31 July 1964.

<sup>262</sup> *People's Daily*, 13 June 1964.

<sup>263</sup> NA, DO214/116, Visit to China of Vice-President Kawawa of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, June 10-19; *Daily Worker*, 9 June 1964; NA, DO214/116, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office, No. 399, 16 June 1964.

<sup>264</sup> *Financial Times*, 9 June 1964.

<sup>265</sup> There was at least one further party of youths bound for study or training in China. A series of six Chinese films opened in one of Zanzibar's two cinemas and a forty-five member strong acrobatic troupe from Shenyang province spent a week in Zanzibar: *The Guardian*, 9 June 1964; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Officials in Zanzibar: notes supplied by British Deputy High Commissioner, Zanzibar, for period ending 31 July 1964.

<sup>266</sup> Indeed, the Chinese leaders' attendance of Zanzibar's Revolution Day celebrations in Beijing was a case in point. The protocol-observing Chinese government regarded Tanzania's party day – Saba Saba – very highly. Other special days which the Tanzanian embassy in Beijing observed were Jamhuri (Republic) Day, Revolution Day, Union Day and the anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Tanzanian Friendship Treaty: TNA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estimates 1968-1969 – Peking, Acc. 597, FA/E.110/134, Appendix A – Foreign Service Regulations, Regulation 13(2)(ii).

pronouncements of solidarity and anti-imperialist invectives in the Chinese media could not be more different from the cautious attitude that the British had towards their former protectorate, as reflected in an article from the *Financial Times*:

To an outsider, the earnest committed looks on the faces of the East Germans and Chinese are disturbingly out of place in these indolent, apparently carefree, islands. Most Zanzibaris lead undemanding lives and they are less receptive to ideologies – Marxism, Moral Rearmament or whatever – than most people.<sup>267</sup>

Far from being politically inert and ambivalent, Babu continued to foster close ties with the Chinese after the union.

### i) Babu and China

Babu's close ties with the Chinese are an example of the importance that personal contacts played in the development of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship. Beijing's faith in Babu was well-founded as the Zanzibari's political skill, intelligence and network made him an important ally for the rapid development of Sino-Zanzibari relations. Scholars have tended to emphasise the period of his NCNA connection and work as *Zanews* editor as the peak of his ties with Beijing. However, Babu's contribution extended into the initial years of the post-Union period. Nyerere astutely appointed him head of the trade delegation that preceded the presidential visit to China in February 1965.<sup>268</sup> Babu was already an old friend of China by then, having visited six times. Chinese records mention his inclusion in the delegation favourably: They describe the interaction as positive and the outcome, a trade agreement for £5 million

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<sup>267</sup> *Financial Times*, 26 August 1964.

<sup>268</sup> *People's Daily*, 8 and 10 February 1965.

(\$14 million) a year for five years, mutually beneficial.<sup>269</sup> Babu also seized the opportunity of his February visit to request for Chinese assistance for the Tanzania-Zambia (Tanzam) rail link.<sup>270</sup>

A staunch Marxist intellectual, Babu was charismatic, articulate and affable. He believed that socialist aid had the potential to bring about “a complete and authentic liberation of Africa” and sought lessons from countries which he considered successful socialist countries: North Korea, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and China.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, he thought that Chinese economic assistance, in particular, could help African countries through the coordination of their economies to meet shortages in specific products. This would eventually allow the African countries to attain the goal of independent national economies.<sup>272</sup>

An illuminating account of the importance of the informal diplomacy and personal aspects of the Sino-Zanzibar relationship is given in Zhou Boping’s memoirs. Zhou appeared to have maintained a good relationship with Babu. Babu was interested in meeting Zhou because he was the first Chinese official to arrive in Tanzania after the launch of the Cultural Revolution; the Zanzibari called on Zhou within days of his arrival at the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam.<sup>273</sup> According to Zhou, they had an informal two-hour meeting and conversed over a meal. Babu spoke highly of Nyerere,

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<sup>269</sup> CFMA, 108-00588-04, 7 February 1965. This was separate from the earlier £11 million (\$4.4 million) aid agreement. Under the terms, the Tanzanians were to buy whatever they could afford from the Chinese but the latter had to buy £5 million (\$2 million) worth of goods from Tanzania annually: CFMA, 108-00588-05, 8 February 1965. The Chinese would pay cash for the balance not taken up by purchases from Tanzania; LSE Archives, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, 13 March 1965.

<sup>270</sup> Nyerere discussed this in his meetings with the Chinese leaders later that month. The negotiations pertaining to the Tanzam project are examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>271</sup> Babu 1981, p. 6 and x.

<sup>272</sup> However, reflecting on this approach many years later, Babu accepted that Africa itself was not ready for “that kind of revolutionary strategy” at the time. Babu / Wilson 2000, p. 167; Africa Events 1987.

<sup>273</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 30.

whom he said was widely respected in Tanzania and Africa. In contrast to that glowing account, Babu described Karume as an uneducated, working-class man who did not appreciate learning. However, he acknowledged that although Karume had an aggressive manner, he had popular support and was on good terms with Nyerere. Moreover, Babu insisted, Karume regarded the Chinese as brothers rather than just friends.<sup>274</sup> Babu explained that the most negative element in the Tanzanian political scene was Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona, who had originally been Nyerere's aide, but now acted self-important and arrogant.<sup>275</sup>

However, Karume's true sentiments towards Babu and the other "leftists" were made clear when he effectively removed them from important political positions at the first opportunity.<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, as Glassman argues, Marxism did not lay deep roots in Zanzibar; instead, its main function was as a "language that enabled the ruling party to recast its long standing racial rhetoric in terms of class."<sup>277</sup> Once the Umma cadres were sent away, there was no significant leftist ideological influence in the ZRC. Nevertheless, Zhou felt that Babu's analyses had proven accurate at the time and had contributed to the embassy's research and understanding of local events. Babu made it a practice to call on him (and vice versa) whenever there were new developments and consequently he was the Tanzanian minister with whom Zhou had the most contact.<sup>278</sup> Moreover, Babu was also exceedingly helpful with practical matters like assisting the

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<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> Indeed, purportedly due to differences with Nyerere, Kambona went into self-imposed exile in 1967 and was accused of planning a coup to oust Nyerere in 1968.

<sup>276</sup> Glassman 2011, p. 289.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>278</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 31-32.

embassy with organising the funeral proceedings and reports for a Chinese expert who died in Tanzania.

In spite of his important role in facilitating relations with the Chinese, Babu was frustrated with his new portfolio as Minister of Trade and the limitations he faced within the Union government. He often disagreed with the government's development policies and criticised the delegation of major policy decisions to expatriate advisors. Not one to remain silent on what he viewed as matters of public interest, he aired his opinions in *The Nationalist* newspaper. His weekly column, titled *The Pressman Says*, regularly criticised the government's policies and the fundamental errors in its pursuit of a socialist model; that Nyerere's blend of African Socialism did not go far enough.

However, local rivalries and murky politics in Zanzibar eventually got the better of Babu. The events which led to the decline of the Zanzibari Left are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. Babu's thoughts and insights made him a well-regarded political thinker in Tanzania and beyond, and he was greatly appreciated by the Chinese.<sup>279</sup> This example shows how interpersonal connections and personal diplomacy were an important component that fed into the understanding of African affairs by Chinese officials and policymakers. That strong rapport ensured a relatively smooth transition of Chinese policy amidst the quick and at times tumultuous changes in Zanzibar's political dynamics.

### **Conclusion: Zanzibar as Beijing's fast track into Africa**

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<sup>279</sup> Mwakikagile 2008, p. 48. His former colleague Ali Sultan said of him, "I believe each society creates someone; each society produces one of its own children to become a leader. For us in Zanzibar, it was Babu": Burgess 2009, p. 42.

This chapter has shown that the Sino-Zanzibari relationship would not have accelerated at the speed that it did (nor developed to the extent that it had) were it not for individuals such as Babu and Ali Sultan. At a time when China had limited diplomatic channels and means, Beijing's ties with these Zanzibaris created valuable opportunities for the Chinese government's gathering of information, as well as the proliferation of propaganda.

The stellar rise of Sino-Zanzibari relations from 1960 corresponded with the heightened interest that Beijing had in expanding its formal diplomacy in the third world. Zanzibar played a major role in Beijing's diplomatic venture into Africa by shaping official Chinese perceptions and understanding of local and regional affairs. In this way, the islands were transformed from a neglected British protectorate within a waning global empire into a crucial stepping stone for deeper Chinese engagement in Africa. Babu in particular played a crucial role in cementing Zanzibar's ties with the Chinese. Significantly, he was integral to the projection of Beijing's "soft power" through the facilitation of *Radio Peking* and *Zanews*, which received NCNA support. These channels increased the accessibility of Mao's works and fostered an awareness of Chinese policies in the region. In this way, both Chinese state-run media and propaganda agencies were able to extend their activities beyond Zanzibari shores and throughout Swahili-speaking East Africa.

However, even after Babu was marginalised and possibly set-up – as he claimed – by the ZNP, Beijing took a politically pragmatic position and maintained ties with the ZNP and the ASP simultaneously. The Chinese government also gave immediate recognition to the ZNP-ZPPP coalition when it became the first government after independence, even though Babu had established the Marxist Umma Party that had a strong pro-Chinese membership. The Western paranoia that erupted after the Zanzibar

revolution illustrates the hyper-sensitivity to the possibility of Chinese engagement in Africa.

As the Chinese records show, Beijing took a cautious and measured approach to the newly-installed Zanzibar Revolutionary Council: In considering whether or not to accord the ZRC formal recognition, Beijing prioritised the opinions of the East African governments and important Afro-Asian countries. This demonstrates the importance of Afro-Asian opinion for Beijing. Once recognition was accorded, the Chinese acted quickly to move in and fill the gap left by decolonisation. Ironically, although China did not have a hand in the Zanzibar revolution, its close ties with key Zanzibaris and rapidly growing foothold in revolutionary Zanzibar contributed to Nyerere's decision to form the union. The Chinese media began to cite Zanzibar as a bastion of revolutionary success. Throughout this time, but to a lesser degree during his incarceration, Babu continued to be the main contact point for the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam.

The creation of the Union Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964 altered the form of Sino-Zanzibari relations. With the seat of foreign policymaking relocated to Dar es Salaam and President Nyerere's increasingly visible profile as an anti-imperialist, non-aligned stalwart, who also enjoyed excellent rapport with the Chinese, there was a relative decrease in Zanzibar's importance to Beijing as a political ally. It remained important as a symbol, however. The union also allowed Karume to consolidate his power; his subsequent persecution of political opponents scattered the Umma cadres and led to the decline of the left-wing in Zanzibar. Karume continued to cultivate ties with the bloc countries, but the motivation was more personally than ideologically driven.

Ultimately, to the Chinese, Zanzibar served its purpose as a strategic bridgehead in East Africa through the active cooption of Babu and Umma cadres in the extension

of soft power, through successful Chinese overtures during the crisis of Western diplomacy following the revolution, as well as through the islands' experience of Chinese aid that competed against the Soviets. It appears that Chinese diplomacy in Zanzibar survived the onslaught of major political developments – from independence to revolution and union – and was not beaten off-track. Nevertheless, Beijing's objectives did not address other pertinent issues, such as racial tensions between the local Arab and African communities. It is interesting, therefore, to compare the quick but relatively short-lived intensification of Sino-Zanzibari relations with the more halting start that Beijing had with the Tanganyikan government before bilateral ties burgeoned in the latter half of the 1960s. This is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter Two – China and Tanganyika’s rapprochement, 1961 to 1964

The previous chapter showed that Zanzibar provided China with a rapid entry into mainland East Africa from the late 1950s until 1964. This chapter examines the foundation on which Tanganyika’s relationship with China was forged across three roughly similar phases to Zanzibar: The nationalist phase from the late 1950s to December 1961; the immediate post-independence phase from January 1962 to April 1964 and the immediate post-union phase until the end of 1965.<sup>280</sup> Compared to neighbouring Zanzibar, Tanganyika enjoyed a much smoother transition through every phase.

Tanganyika was annexed by the Germans in 1885, during the period of European colonisation in Africa. The territory was first a British League of Nations mandate in 1922 and later a United Nations trust territory from 1946 under British trusteeship. The decolonisation process in Tanganyika was relatively swift and peaceful. The British authorities granted full internal self-governing status to the government led by the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) on 1 May 1961 and the territory became independent on 9 December that year.

In the existing literature on Sino-Tanzanian relations the foreign policies of both components of the union have mainly been studied separately, with a greater emphasis on Beijing’s engagement with the Tanzanian mainland than on Zanzibar. Moreover, the scholarship has focused on the post-union period (after 1964), to the exclusion of the nationalist and independence periods that preceded the union.

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<sup>280</sup> The main difference between the phases in Tanganyika and Zanzibar is that, in the latter, the first (1950s to 1961) and second (1962 to 1963) phases fall within the pre-independence period and the third (1964 to 1965) saw a series of major political upheavals compressed within a relatively short span of time.

A comparison between the experiences of the two East African countries until the union of 1964 allows us to draw some conclusions about the impact of the Tanganyikan-Zanzibari relationship on relations with third countries, in this case, China. The findings thus promote a fuller understanding of Afro-Asian collaboration and its evolution as a strategy for political survival against the backdrop of European decolonisation. Specifically, as this chapter will show, the pre-union period was important for relationship-building between Tanganyika and China. The period was also directly affected by local African factors, not least of all the complex dynamics between Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

## **I. The first phase of Sino-Tanganyikan relations: The nationalist period (late 1950s to 1961)**

### **i) The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU)**

To understand the specific factors which brought the Chinese and Tanganyikan representatives together in the first phase of their relationship from the late 1950s to 1961, it is necessary to look at the historical background of TANU, the dominant political party. TANU was established on 7 July 1954 as a political reincarnation of a social entity, the Tanganyika African Association (TAA).<sup>281</sup> The party's rise in popularity and importance had much to do with its well-regarded leader, Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Nyerere presented TANU's agenda domestically and internationally with great eloquence. An early example of this was his 1955 address to the UN Trusteeship Council in New York, when he made a thorough argument for the

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<sup>281</sup> The TAA also had a branch in Zanzibar.

Council's members to be mindful of their responsibilities towards Tanganyika.

Nyerere's articulate and persuasive speech impressed the UN delegates and accentuated his reputation as a rising African statesman; in Tanganyika, it won TANU even more supporters.<sup>282</sup>

Among the key issues on TANU's political agenda in the 1960s featured its active support for Pan-Africanism and the anti-colonial struggles on the continent. In September 1958, TANU hosted the first meeting of the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) for nationalist groups from the region, although Tanganyika was technically still a British territory.<sup>283</sup> Nyerere believed in taking a principled position in foreign affairs, although some of these had massive repercussions for Tanganyikan foreign policy. TANU pronouncements at the time were often described as being "that of war", as evinced from Nyerere's declaration at the All-African People's Conference in Accra in December 1963 that "freedom is our natural right, if you do not give us freedom, we will use force to achieve it."<sup>284</sup>

Yet the British colonial authorities considered TANU the forerunner for leading Tanganyika to self-government, in spite of the party's anti-imperialist stance. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, no serious contenders to TANU's political dominance had emerged. Although the British governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twinings, had tried to undermine TANU's dominance of the nationalist movement by establishing the United Tanganyika Party (UTP) in 1956, his efforts failed and TANU's popularity grew from strength to strength. Secondly, from the perspective of the

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<sup>282</sup> Mwakikagile 2010, p. 99.

<sup>283</sup> Mwakikagile 2008, p. 105; NA, FO1110/1231, Communist 'front' organizations in Africa (draft), March 1959.

<sup>284</sup> *People's Daily*, 28 January 1959; Iliffe 2005, p. 309.

departing colonial government, Nyerere was a strong candidate because he was a product of the British colonial system. He completed his tertiary education at the University of Edinburgh and was part of Tanganyika's intellectual elite. In the absence of few "genuinely indigenous political traditions" in Tanganyika – as Mayall has argued, this was the case in nearly all the newly independent countries at the time – Nyerere was likely to put into place policies that were influenced by his Western education and values.<sup>285</sup> Indeed, Nyerere worked well with the British and acknowledged the necessity of the continued presence of British officials after independence, particularly in wooing much-needed Western capital for post-independence development.<sup>286</sup>

By mid-1958, the US State Department observed that a self-governing Tanganyika was "inevitable", as Nyerere was "the only African leader of any importance and TANU faced no serious rivals."<sup>287</sup> The Chinese government observed the political developments in Tanganyika with growing interest, although it had a brief dalliance with the Tanganyika African National Congress (ANC), a little-known splinter group of TANU, which is rarely mentioned in the historical literature.

## ii) The African National Congress (ANC)

The Tanganyikan ANC was founded in January 1958 by a disaffected TANU official, Zuberi Mtemvu, who lambasted TANU for being too soft on racial issues. While he made some headway in raising the party's international profile, the ANC

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<sup>285</sup> Mayall 1990, p. 113.

<sup>286</sup> Hubbard 2011, p. 263.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

alienated a majority of Tanganyikans with its racist agenda.<sup>288</sup> Although the ANC was never a serious political threat to TANU, it warrants some discussion as Beijing initially found Mtemvu's radical Africanism more compelling than Nyerere's embrace of multi-racialism, which gives further insight into Chinese assessments of and interaction with African political parties.

According to British records, Mtemvu contacted the China Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (CAASC) and, with its support, led an ANC delegation to Beijing in January 1961. At a meeting with his hosts, Mtemvu criticised "the agents and stooges of the imperialists" and delivered a "violently anti-British speech and the usual eulogies of China", which echoed Chinese condemnations of the British government for fostering a puppet regime in Tanganyika.<sup>289</sup> Mtemvu himself basked in the attention and took full advantage of the platform provided by his willing hosts. He claimed to represent not just the ANC, but also the "ten million Africans who respected the Chinese people", a canny exaggeration of his actual political influence.<sup>290</sup> The CAASC seemed to view the Tanganyikan favourably and, keen to expand its network in Africa, the Committee agreed to sponsor five senior ANC members to attend further discussions in Beijing that September.<sup>291</sup> Unsurprisingly, Mtemvu was pleased by the outcome of the visit, not least by the publicity that it had generated for the ANC, although he publicly insisted that his acceptance of Chinese aid did not mean that he

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<sup>288</sup> NA, PREM11/3549, CRO Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 15 December 1961; NA, CO822/1370, Tanganyika African National Congress, October 1958.

<sup>289</sup> Mtemvu also brought a message from the Secretary of the African Association in Kenya, Oginga Odinga, that criticised the UN's policy in the Congo. Odinga, a left-wing politician, had visited China in August 1960: Jarman 2003, p. 7; *People's Daily*, 10 January 1961.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> NA, CO822/2062, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, February 1961.

subscribed to Communist ideology. The ANC's moment in the Chinese sun was, however, short-lived.

Within months, Beijing's favour shifted from the ANC to TANU.<sup>292</sup> This shift in Chinese attention was obvious from an article in the *People's Daily* in May, which declared the Chinese people's sympathy with and support for the people of Tanganyika in their independence struggle. Significantly, it described Tanganyika's self-governing status as "an initial victory of the anti-colonialist struggle of the people" and, from that point forward, no longer referred to the ANC.<sup>293</sup> The Chinese government curtailed its support – even rhetorical support – for the splinter party and, on the advice of the Chinese embassy officials in Cairo who were reluctant to recommend any further assistance, official contact was also limited. The ANC was informed to channel all subsequent communication through the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP). This was on one hand a show of Chinese disinterest in the ANC, as well as an indication of the ZNP's role as a broker for Chinese dealings in East Africa.<sup>294</sup> In an interview in 1983 Babu, the ZNP Secretary General at the time, played down the significance of Mtemvu's visit to China and claimed that the ANC leader had only been given "a cool reception."<sup>295</sup> After all, Beijing's earlier contact with the by then politically-defunct ANC was an episode in early Sino-African relations that the Chinese and Tanzanians wished to minimise.

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<sup>292</sup> NA, PREM11/3549, CRO Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 15 December 1961.

<sup>293</sup> Jarman 2003; *People's Daily*, 2 May 1961.

<sup>294</sup> NA, CO822/2062, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, June 1961.

<sup>295</sup> Snow interviewed Babu on 3 August 1983; Snow 1994, p. 304; *People's Daily*, 10 January 1961.

The ANC subsequently floundered on the weakness of its domestic support and Nyerere defeated Mtemvu in the 1962 presidential election, in which the latter obtained only two percent of the votes. Thereafter the Tanganyikan government's determination to create a single-party state made it impossible for other political organisations to be established or to gain a foothold.<sup>296</sup> Compared to the self-professed "radical" and "extreme" ANC, TANU exemplified moderation, which underlined the latter's suitability as the party to take over from the British colonial authorities.<sup>297</sup>

Yet for all the differences that existed between TANU and the ANC, both parties shared a common ground in one striking way: They were associated with the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council (AASC) which offered their representatives numerous opportunities to interact with fellow nationalist groups and potential donors, including the Chinese government.<sup>298</sup>

### **iii) The Afro-Asian Solidarity Council and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation**

In the years after the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, the Chinese government established more channels to facilitate its growing contact with African representatives. However, by the end of 1958 it was apparent that "anti-imperialism" was not a monolithic or unified force, as Chinese relations with the UAR became rocky.<sup>299</sup> Beijing's need for reliable and unwavering African allies was, thus,

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<sup>296</sup> Cliffe 1967, p. 10; NA, DO185/49, Tanganyika – an assessment of the state of security, 13 February 1964.

<sup>297</sup> Bates 1962, p. 426; NA, CO822/1370, Letter from Mtemvu to Nyerere, 30 January 1958; Letter from Nyerere to Mtemvu, 31 January 1958.

<sup>298</sup> The ANC had received contributions from the Ghanaian and United Arab Republic (UAR) governments towards its election fund: NA, CO822/1370, Extract from Tanganyika Intelligence Report, September 1959.

<sup>299</sup> Jarman 2001, p. 268.

heightened. The China-Africa Friendship Association (CAFA) was launched at a mass rally in Beijing in April 1960, which also marked the fifth anniversary of the Bandung Conference. These initiatives were highlighted in the Chinese press as evidence of its government's staunch support for African nationalism and served Mao's objective to combat China's diplomatic isolation through fostering closer ties in the third world. A crucial vehicle for Beijing's third world diplomacy was the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council (AASC).

China's membership in the AASC Permanent Secretariat gave it easy access to a platform on which it could express its positions on international issues. Crucially, it also presented opportunities to cultivate contacts with Afro-Asian governments and nationalist groups, which it fully exploited.<sup>300</sup> According to British records, "well and eloquently represented" Chinese delegations were sent to the Afro-Asian events, which ranged from the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference at Tashkent (October 1958), to the All-Africa People's Conference in Accra and the Afro-Asian Economic Conference in Cairo (both in December 1958).<sup>301</sup> These meetings led to Chinese support for a number of the southern African liberation movements, as has been discussed by the author elsewhere.<sup>302</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis, Chinese anti-imperialist rhetoric extended beyond the political independence of the colonial territories. In fact, it had a strong racial element which aligned it closely to black versus white racial conflicts, such as the US civil rights movement. Hence Mao was respected as one of the great,

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<sup>300</sup> Larkin 1971, p. 46; Jarman 2003, pp. 10-11.

<sup>301</sup> Jarman 2001, p. 268.

<sup>302</sup> Altorfer-Ong (forthcoming).

successful revolutionary leaders, with even the great American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois having paid tribute to the transformation in New China.<sup>303</sup> Mao later used this subtle approach to appeal to Africans as well as African Americans, who faced civil rights discrimination in the US, by emphasising China's non-white solidarity with oppressed peoples everywhere. It was also a backhanded criticism of the Soviet leaders who "[consorted] with their American opposite numbers".<sup>304</sup>

News stories about Tanganyika and its nationalist struggle appeared in the *People's Daily* from early 1959, a sign that the East African territory had a rising profile in the Chinese government's assessments.<sup>305</sup> At the same time, Chinese propaganda literature was sent to Tanganyikan organisations. In one example, a pamphlet titled "Shining Example of the Afro-Asian Peoples" carried the key messages that Beijing shared a closer affinity with the Afro-Asian peoples and that the Soviets were not suited to lead them to Communism.<sup>306</sup> The pamphlet was circulated just ahead of the Second Congress Meeting of the AASC in Conakry in April 1960, as cracks in the Sino-Soviet relationship became more pronounced.<sup>307</sup> Domestic propaganda in China supported this message with a surge in the number of Africa-related news articles that month. The Conakry Conference was covered extensively and included the Chinese delegate's anti-US speech, in which he alleged that the superpower intended to use its

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<sup>303</sup> As earlier mentioned, Du Bois first visited China in 1936, before the CCP's revolution in 1949, and then again in 1959. Impressed by the transformation that had taken place in those years, he later wrote that he had "never seen a nation which so amazed and touched me as China in 1959". He believed that China could be a role model for African countries and encouraged the exchange of Chinese experts and African students: Wilson 2001, pp. 37-39.

<sup>304</sup> Jarman 2003, pp. 168-169.

<sup>305</sup> *People's Daily*, 17 February 1959.

<sup>306</sup> NA, CO822/2061, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, April 1960.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.* The organisation was reorganised at the Conakry meeting as the AAPSO.

political, economic and military presence in Africa to replace the departing colonial systems.<sup>308</sup>

However, the Chinese government was not the only promoter of AAPSO. Smaller third world countries, such as Tanganyika, considered it an important organisation that provided fertile opportunities to foster closer ties with the Communist bloc countries and other like-minded nationalist groups. Tanganyika was particularly well-positioned in its diplomacy, as Nyerere had promoted a non-aligned foreign policy – which was articulated even prior to independence – that broadened the possibility of bilateral aid, as well as via multilateral agencies such as the UN. In an assertion of its political independence, just two months before Tanganyika's independence, TANU launched an initiative to shore up support from the Eastern bloc countries in 1961, beginning with its Publicity Secretary Rowland Mwanjisi's tour of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, as well as China, from October that year.<sup>309</sup> The Tanganyikan government's openness to forging closer ties with Communist China was only one factor that precipitated the development of bilateral relations. Compared to the Sino-Zanzibari relationship in the same time period, the first phase of the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship progressed gradually. However, its rapid growth ensued in the face of events which gave the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship new meaning.

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<sup>308</sup> Jarman 2001, p. 578.

<sup>309</sup> NA, CO822/2062, Tanganyika Intelligence Summary, October 1961. Of the three countries, only Yugoslavia signed an agreement with Tanganyika, but discussions were deemed successful overall: Nyerere 1964.

## **II. The second phase: The immediate post-independence period, 1962 to April 1964**

The second phase of the development of the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship commenced with Tanganyika's independence on 9 December 1961 and lasted until the union with Zanzibar in April 1964. Tanganyika's independence had come peacefully and quickly – unexpectedly so, in fact – when the British granted the TANU-led government self-governing powers in May 1961, ahead of its East African neighbours Kenya and Uganda. Yu's seminal monograph on China and Tanzania attributed the development of a strong bilateral relationship to events in the latter half of the 1960s, such as Nyerere's articulation of a socialist development path through the Arusha Declaration (1967) and the signing of the first tripartite agreement for the Tanzania-Zambia rail link(1967).<sup>310</sup> However, archival evidence suggests that two earlier events were actually responsible for cementing the Sino-Tanganyikan ties: Nyerere's support for the Chinese government's One China policy and the establishment of the Organisation for African Unity's African Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam in May 1963 (the latter point is discussed in detail in Chapter Three on Chinese military support to Tanganyika).

### **i) Tanganyika and the PRC's One China policy**

Nyerere's acceptance of the One China policy as the central tenet of Chinese foreign relations ensured that the bilateral relationship began on a high note. Indeed, Nyerere had been unabashed in his support for the PRC even prior to Tanganyika's

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<sup>310</sup> Yu 1970.

independence, to the extent that Tanganyika's impending independence caused consternation among those UN governmental delegations which opposed mainland China's bid for membership.<sup>311</sup> The British delegation believed that the Republic of China (ROC) – which occupied the China seat in the Security Council (UNSC) – was likely to veto Tanganyika's entry because it feared that the African government would immediately vote for the expulsion of the ROC. As things turned out, the veto was not enacted and Tanganyika became the 104<sup>th</sup> member of the UN on 14 December 1961, leading the British delegation to comment that the growing Afro-Asian bloc at the UN had the potential to be a powerful diplomatic force if the respective delegations worked cohesively.

On the eve of Tanganyika's independence, the incoming Prime Minister told an NCNA reporter that he firmly supported Beijing's One China policy.<sup>312</sup> Nyerere and Huang Hua, the Chinese ambassador to Ghana who attended Tanganyika's independence ceremony in December 1961, formally agreed that the bilateral relationship would be based on mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, as well as peaceful coexistence. The publicly agreed guidelines were important rhetorical support as they were in full accord with China's foreign policy mantra, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.<sup>313</sup> Although Tanganyika did not open an embassy in Beijing at that time due to funding and manpower constraints, the establishment of official relations between the governments was still an important

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<sup>311</sup> Interview with Ambassador Paul Rupia, 14 November 2006; NA, PREM11/3549, CRO Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 15 December 1961.

<sup>312</sup> *People's Daily*, 9 and 10 December 1961.

<sup>313</sup> This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

milestone in Chinese diplomacy, as Beijing only had diplomatic ties with nine African countries until that point.

Nyerere's appreciation of the importance that the One China policy had to the Chinese government formed a strong basis for the smooth development of bilateral relations and set the positive conditions for China's eventual relations with other East African governments. This point was emphasised in Ambassador Huang Hua's memoirs. During Huang's meeting with Nyerere at Tanganyika's independence celebrations in December 1961, the latter insisted that the UN would be "a laughing stock" if it turned away the PRC, which represented 600 million people.<sup>314</sup> Later that month the NCNA representative, Gao Liang, was despatched to Dar es Salaam. His presence ensured that there would be a steady stream of information and intelligence for the Chinese leaders, as well as topical news material for the NCNA.

International support for Beijing at the UN General Assembly grew slowly but steadily throughout the 1960s, buoyed by the entry of the newly-independent, Afro-Asian governmental delegations. The Chinese leaders continued to emphasise their African policy, which was closely tied to their aid programme for friendly third world governments and stepped up the deployment of its diplomatic corps, as well as personal diplomacy. The PRC kept a close eye on the situation at the UN, with its foreign ministry actively soliciting reports from its ambassadors on their respective host governments' position on the issue.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Huang 2008, pp. 181-182.

<sup>315</sup> CFMA, 113-00448-01, 31 July 1963.

The Chinese *Chargé d’ Affaires* Li Jun arrived in Tanganyika on 24 January 1962 and was followed by Ambassador He Ying two months later.<sup>316</sup> He Ying was particularly well-qualified for the job, having worked in the foreign ministry since 1950 as consul-general (1950 to 1952) in Jakarta, Indonesia; deputy director-general of the Asian department (1952 to 1954); ambassador to Mongolia (1954 to 1958) and director-general of the foreign ministry’s Department of West Asian and North African affairs (1959 to 1962) just prior to his assignment in Tanganyika. He Ying quickly settled into his new post and began his diplomatic work in Tanganyika, as well as in the region, where there were generally more cautious attitudes towards Communist China.

He Ying produced a great deal of analysis and astute observations for the foreign ministry. He stressed the importance of reiterating the “restoration” of the PRC’s UN seat to the friendly Afro-Asian countries, and to discredit all other strategies of entry into the organisation, such as the “Two China” position supported by the US.<sup>317</sup> The ambassador was impressed by the Tanganyikan government’s support for the liberation struggles in southern Africa, which he believed was evidence of the country’s crucial contribution to African politics. Chinese hopes appeared well-placed when the Tanganyikan government quickly demonstrated its active support – as opposed to merely passive acceptance – of the One China policy at the UN.<sup>318</sup> Conversely, it was precisely the Tanganyikan delegation’s harsh stance on resolutions involving

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<sup>316</sup> *People’s Daily*, 26, 28 January and 2, 8 April 1962. He Ying also served as Ambassador to Uganda from 16 April 1963.

<sup>317</sup> Although in 1962, the diplomatically insecure Chinese still questioned the extent of the Tanganyikan government’s understanding of the One China policy and the importance that Beijing placed on the UN seat: CFMA, 113-00448-01, 31 July 1963.

<sup>318</sup> CFMA, 110-01125-01, 7 June 1962.

colonialism, the colonial territories and southern African liberation that triggered criticism from the US and British UN delegations.<sup>319</sup>

In spite of the challenges and constraints that Tanganyika faced in its foreign relations, Nyerere still had “a tremendous faith” in the morality of the international community and the UN’s capacity to assist countries in need, if its members behaved responsibly.<sup>320</sup> He thus took pains to demonstrate that Tanganyika would be a principled and engaged member of the global community, despite its own poor financial situation. This principle was put into practice on a number of occasions. In 1963, the Tanganyikan government authorised its UN Permanent Representative to purchase of \$2,800 worth of UN bonds as a token of its support. The donation was intended as “a stimulus to others who could afford to pay better than her, but did not do so.”<sup>321</sup>

Additionally, the Tanganyikan government made bilateral contributions towards disaster relief, such as a \$8,400 donation for the Skopje earthquake in Yugoslavia in August, \$8,400 for relief work in Italy’s Longarone disaster and, some days after, \$11,200 for relief work in hurricane-struck Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Cuba and Haiti. The contributions were modest in value, but rich in symbolism, as Nyerere reiterated a similar moral message each time a donation was made, that “giving is mercy in the spirit, it is not in wealth” or that “the value of the gift is in the spirit behind it.”<sup>322</sup> Hence the Tanganyikan government built up its image as a principled and moral

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<sup>319</sup> NA, FO371/178221, Performance of the Afro-Asian Delegations at the Eighteenth Session of the General Assembly, 24 January 1964.

<sup>320</sup> Niblock 1981, pp. 37-39.

<sup>321</sup> TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, B/1152/63, Financial Assistance to Other Countries. Document 6A, 17/7/63.

<sup>322</sup> TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, B/1269/63, Financial Assistance to Other Countries. Document 7, 2/8/63; TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, F1/5/6, Financial Assistance to Other Countries, Document 11, 21/10/63; TNA, Habari, Acc. 593,

actor, a reputation which was reinforced further by its participation in the Afro-Asian circuit.

## ii) Tanganyika and Afro-Asian activities

As Sino-Tanganyikan ties were strengthened through the Tanganyikan UN delegation's active support for the PRC's One China policy, Tanganyika's participation in AAPSO activities strengthened the bilateral relationship through their shared emphases on anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. 1960 was a milestone in African history, as European decolonisation accelerated across most of the continent. The preponderance of nationalist movements agitating for independence at the time meant that AAPSO had "reached its zenith at Conakry."<sup>323</sup> The delegations decided to convene a second Afro-Asian conference, a decision that was especially important to the Chinese, who had made a tremendously successful diplomatic debut in Bandung in 1955. Unlike AAPSO which was comprised of non-governmental delegations and was thus politically less prestigious and effective, a "second Bandung" would be attended by governmental delegations.

Beijing's rivalry with Moscow drove its active participation in the AAPSO in the early 1960s, so that Chinese behaviour at AAPSO events, according to British officials, increased in "hostility and intransigence" as polemical arguments were volleyed between the two Communist powers.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, building on their argument that the Soviet Union was not a genuinely Asian country and thus was not entitled to be

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B/1752/63, Financial Assistance to Other Countries, Document 8, 12/10/63; TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, B/1756/63, Financial Assistance to Other Countries, Document 9, 14/10/63; TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, B/1763/63, Financial Assistance to Other Countries, Document 10, 15/10/63.

<sup>323</sup> Larkin 1971, p. 49.

<sup>324</sup> NA, FO1110/1730, Chinese disruption of Soviet front organizations and founding of rival organizations (draft); NA, FO1110/1790, FO to Beijing, 28 October 1963.

included in Afro-Asian affairs, the Chinese delegates emphasised the racial element in private conversations with other delegates. They argued that the Soviet Union would never genuinely be on the side of the anti-imperialist struggle because it was a “white” country.

The political differences between Beijing and the other Afro-Asian governments were plainly visible on this issue and the preparation for the “second Bandung” was mired in Cold War politics and political rivalry.<sup>325</sup> Many of the newly-installed independent governments that were represented in AAPSO were frustrated by the political manoeuvrings of the larger powers, which overran the third world countries’ concerns of domestic development. These open disagreements left many AAPSO events in “disarray.”<sup>326</sup> Beijing’s anti-Soviet activities from autumn 1962 were “intense, uncompromising and unrelenting,” to the displeasure of many of the Afro-Asian delegates, who had their own interests and agenda.<sup>327</sup>

Nyerere was fully aware of the potentially explosive problems that the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet rivalry might bring to the event. Tanganyika hosted the third Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference in February 1963 in Moshi, a town in the Kilimanjaro region. In his opening speech, Nyerere tried to set the tone for the conference by criticising both the capitalist and socialist powers for reducing the weaker states to pawns in Cold War conflicts.<sup>328</sup> The Chinese government placed great importance on the conference and on AAPSO events. He Ying was instructed to

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<sup>325</sup> Jarman 2001, p. 578.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*; Neuhauser 1968; CIA, 1964.

<sup>328</sup> AAPSO 1963, pp. 10-11.

organise a number of important international conferences in Africa and work with the host governments to carry out diplomatic operations.

In his memoirs, He Ying explained that he and his colleagues would focus their diplomatic efforts strategically, often using a careful division of labour to ensure that Chinese participation was maximised, because each conference only lasted a few days.<sup>329</sup> The Chinese press covered the Moshi Conference in detail, with full texts of all the major documents adopted being printed in the *People's Daily*. This included the complete text of a speech by the leader of the Chinese delegation, Liu Ningyi, on 5 February. Li put forward a number of proposals, the most significant of which were that the conference should:

Appeal to the peoples of Asia and Africa to support the just struggle for national independence of the peoples who have not yet attained it, and adopt concrete measures to support their struggle;

Declare that all countries large and small are equal and that their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are sacred and inviolable; and

Strengthen cooperation and mutual assistance among the Afro-Asian countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Ten Principles of the Bandung conference.<sup>330</sup>

For the very first time at an AAPSO event, the Chinese delegation dominated the proceedings and appeared to gain ground at the expense of the Soviet Union. The

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<sup>329</sup> He 1993, p. 310.

<sup>330</sup> Jarman 2003, p. 22 and p. 33.

CIA attributed the outcome at Moshi to three factors. Firstly, the delegation's "careful preparation", which reportedly included the distribution of money and other favours to African delegates in exchange for their support during the conference sessions.<sup>331</sup> Secondly, the conference chairman and Tanganyikan foreign minister Oscar Kambona's ruling in favour of Chinese motions, such as a resolution condemning the ongoing American occupation of Taiwan and "restoration" of the PRC as the legitimate representative of China at the UN.<sup>332</sup> Thirdly, the fruition of Chinese efforts to countervail Soviet-backed international fronts, such as the World Peace Council and the World Federation of Trade Unions, through the establishment of rival organisations.<sup>333</sup> One such group was the Afro-Asian Trade Union Organisation that was launched at Moshi, which received statements of support from trade unionists in Zanzibar, Tanganyika and Angola.

The Moshi conference was an opportunity for trade unions to formalise their overseas links and the Chinese trade unions came in full force to sign communiqués with the Tanganyika Labour Federation as well as other groups.<sup>334</sup> However, a purely geo-political analysis of the conference proceedings tends to minimise an important point: Although it appeared that Tanganyika was voting with the PRC on many issues, this was more a reflection of the common ground and shared interests, rather than China's swaying of votes or a by-product of the Sino-Soviet competition. The Chinese were particularly supportive on issues that were of great interest to Tanzania, such as the liberation struggles in Mozambique and Angola, as well as the challenges of

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<sup>331</sup> CIA 1964; NARA, RG59, Bureau of African Affairs, Country Files 1951-1965, Box 5, Communist Bloc Assistance in Establishing TANU English Language Newspaper, 5 December 1962.

<sup>332</sup> CIA 1964; Neuhauser 1968, p. 41; AAPSO 1963, p. 72.

<sup>333</sup> CIA 1964.

<sup>334</sup> NA, FO1110/1730, Chinese Disruption of Soviet Front Organisations and Founding of Rival Organisations (draft).

economic development in the global South. Moreover, the conflict in Vietnam generated a lot of empathy from African governments who supported the revolutionary struggle and, as Chinese embassy records show, a great many discussions took place between Chinese diplomats and Tanganyikan officials on the situation in Indochina.

Yet Chinese gains at Moshi were fleeting, as the AAPSO Executive meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus, from 9 to 12 September 1963, was attended by a better prepared and organised Soviet delegation. Chinese officials continued to hail the success of the Moshi conference and, consequently, the Chinese concentrated their energies on cultivating the Afro-Asian groups that it had established beyond the AAPSO's purview. During Tanganyikan National Speaker Adam Sapi Mkwawa's visit to China in October, the National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Zhu De declared that the Conference had made big strides against "old and new imperialism" in the developing world.<sup>335</sup> Mkwawa reciprocated positively, adding that the Moshi conference had benefited from the Chinese delegation's contributions.<sup>336</sup> The Moshi conference may have been a considerably minor event in the overall effect of the Sino-Soviet dispute on the Afro-Asian movement, but it took place at a crucial point in the development of the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship.

### iii) Tanganyika's rising diplomatic importance

Chinese foreign policy was not primarily economically driven in the 1960s. On the contrary, as the preceding sections have demonstrated, Beijing's emphasis was on diplomatic and political support. Tanganyika had little to offer in economic terms, as it

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<sup>335</sup> *People's Daily*, 10 October 1963.

<sup>336</sup> *People's Daily*, 13 October 1963.

was by no means as rich in resources or commodities as many other African countries were. With the exception of diamond mines in the northwest, there was extremely limited foreign investment in the country's economy and infrastructure during the colonial period.<sup>337</sup> As a new entrant to the African scene and to differentiate itself from Western colonial engagements in Africa, the Chinese government portrayed itself as a benign power with a common historical experience of imperialist domination and oppression. Hence, contemporary bilateral relations were explained as a long-awaited resumption of contacts that were prematurely and abruptly disrupted by colonialism.

The Chinese government took concrete measures to foster the budding Sino-Tanganyikan relationship. Its priorities were laid out by Foreign Minister Chen Yi, who briefed He Ying in April 1962 before his departure for Dar es Salaam as head of the first Chinese embassy in East Africa. Chen communicated to He Ying that his role was especially important because Tanganyika was in the vicinity of many independence struggles and, thus, there was much work to be done. He Ying's tasks would primarily be to consolidate Beijing's position in Tanganyika and to approach the neighbouring governments to establish ties. Moreover, Chen reiterated the importance of China's relations with Egypt, Ghana and Tanganyika, because their leaders were influential in Africa and also supported the nationalist struggles. In this way, the Chinese government hoped to develop ties with other countries and nationalist groups.<sup>338</sup>

Chen Yi went on to instruct He Ying not to write off those African governments which had recognised Taiwan, as the situation of the newly-independent governments was challenging and dynamic. Instead, He Ying should try to influence those countries

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<sup>337</sup> Cited in Kilford 2010, p. 173.

<sup>338</sup> He 1993, pp. 301-302.

to switch their support to Beijing. The ambassador worked hard to fulfil these objectives and, according to his memoirs, made it a point to acquaint himself with the leaders of countries on the cusp of independence, in the hope that they would recognise Beijing. For example, he would think of a way to meet with Kenyan officials or to invite them to the embassy whenever they visited Tanganyika. He at times even provided officials with petty cash assistance upon request.<sup>339</sup>

The Tanganyikan initiative also drew China further into the mainland, as higher-level relations were fostered through the frequent meetings between Nyerere and Ambassador He Ying in Dar es Salaam.<sup>340</sup> Nyerere proved to be a valuable connector who facilitated He Ying's contact with other African leaders. On one occasion, for example, Nyerere arranged for a meeting between Hastings Banda, prime minister of Malawi, and He Ying at the latter's request. The meeting took place during Banda's visit to Dar es Salaam, although Sino-Malawian relations remained distinctly cool. Nevertheless, Chinese diplomacy in Africa benefitted from Nyerere's regional stature.<sup>341</sup>

Tanganyika quickly became the testing ground for China's new tools of diplomacy. Beijing intended to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of China by its African ally, as well as to educate itself about the political situation in Africa through mid- and low-level interactions. Tanganyikan officials involved in trade, agriculture, national development, culture, labour unions, as well as special interest groups such as women or youths, visited China between 1962 and 1963.<sup>342</sup> Chinese and

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>340</sup> As reported in the *People's Daily* on 4, 9 April, 14 May, 11 July and 6 August 1963.

<sup>341</sup> He 1993, p. 307.

<sup>342</sup> *People's Daily*, 13 and 30 May 1962, 15, 17 August and 9, 10 September 1962.

Tanganyikan press coverage of these events jointly fostered an awareness of the otherwise abstract Afro-Asianism by emphasising the delegates' shared stance against imperialism and sympathy for the African liberation struggles.<sup>343</sup> These visits incrementally shaped the Tanganyikan government's attitude towards national development policies, mass mobilisation and rural development along socialist lines through excursions to famous historical and political sites, as well as to productive factories and agricultural communes. Furthermore, in contrast to the inequalities which pervaded the interactions between the former colonial governments and African leaders, the personal style of the Chinese diplomacy was a strong indication of the priority Beijing placed on relations with its new friends.

The Sino-Tanganyikan relationship reached a new level with an announcement in the *People's Daily* on 3 December that Nyerere would visit China in February 1964. The Tanganyikan government issued a formal invitation on 27 December for Zhou to make a reciprocal visit in January 1965.<sup>344</sup> These plans clearly showed the good rapport between the highest levels of the Tanganyikan and Chinese governments; they were the result of Tanganyikan support for the fundamental tenets of Beijing's One China policy both at the UN and the AASC (most notably in Moshi). Thus, for the reasons discussed in this section, Tanganyika increasingly became friendly ground from which Chinese diplomacy could secure a firmer foothold in the region. This complemented the concomitant extension of Chinese soft power through the participation of Zanzibaris that was discussed in Chapter One.

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<sup>343</sup> *People's Daily*, 29 and 30 September, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 24 October 1963.

<sup>344</sup> CFMA, 203-00409-05, 24 December 1963; Jarman 2003, p. 262.

### **III. The third phase: The post-union period, 1964 to 1965**

The third phase in the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship was the cementing of ties through high-level visits between 1964 and 1965. This phase was actually kick-started by the Zanzibar Revolution and mutiny of the Tanganyikan Rifles which both occurred in January 1964.

#### **i) Zhou's first Africa trip and the 1964 testing of Nyerere**

Premier Zhou Enlai and Foreign Minister Chen Yi embarked on an ambitious tour of Africa from the end of 1963 until February 1964 to shore up its foreign relations and to rally support among the African governments. One of Zhou's objectives was to build a united international front against imperialism, including both Africa and Latin America. The high-level Chinese entourage travelled to Egypt, Sudan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Algeria, Morocco, Mali, Guinea, Tunisia and Somalia. Among the themes that were consistently emphasised were anti-imperialism, the support for nationalist movements fighting for freedom, Afro-Asianism, as well as the shared experience of suffering at the hands of imperialist and colonial aggressors. The historic relations that had existed between China and Africa were also revered.<sup>345</sup>

The Chinese delegation's visit to East Africa in January 1964, but was thwarted at the eleventh hour by the outbreak of the Zanzibar Revolution and the East African army mutinies. Although it was not strictly a Tanganyikan event, as Chapter One has demonstrated, Zanzibari politics and national security issues had a great impact on mainland Tanganyika. Sino-Zanzibari ties which developed during the Zanzibar

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<sup>345</sup> NA, DO195/200, Chou En-Lai's Tour of Africa, 17 January 1964.

Revolutionary Council's embrace of Communist Bloc assistance were further strengthened by the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964. The Tanganyikan army mutiny will be examined separately in Chapter Three, under Chinese military support.

At the time, the Chinese government's prompt and timely support of the union – unlike the rumbles of discontent which emanated from its Soviet and East German counterparts – allowed Beijing to consolidate its influence on Zanzibar as well as to extend its activities in Tanganyika.<sup>346</sup> Moreover, Zanzibar's presence in the union gave Beijing the opportunity to laud its revolutionary success as it filled the vacuum that was left by the departing Western powers. The low-level visits by Tanganyikans to China that had started in 1961 and Babu's appointment to the union government in 1964 paved the way for high-level visits. These interactions quickly resulted in mutual dividends.

Although Zhou did not visit Tanganyika or Zanzibar on the occasion of his 1963 and 1964 trip to Africa, it warrants discussion, because for the first time a Chinese leader visited Africa. As such, Zhou's trip had great repercussions for international perceptions of Beijing's diplomacy. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter One, Western perceptions of Chinese machinations in Zanzibar as part of a grand strategy coloured the East African security situation for some months.<sup>347</sup> Chinese records suggest that Beijing had a flexible approach to Zhou's visit and prioritised the opinions of friendly African governments: His itinerary was largely determined by the advice given by the

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<sup>346</sup> Bailey 1975, p. 40.

<sup>347</sup> See the discussion in Chapter One.

African leaders whom he met.<sup>348</sup> Zhou was generally well-respected and was seasoned in diplomatic affairs; his trip put Beijing on the African geopolitical map.

The media accounts of Zhou's manner and personal diplomacy varied from cautionary to celebratory: Some African leaders remained sceptical of Chinese motivations, while the *People's Daily* emphasised the Premier's disarming blend of humility and modesty, along with the warm welcome that awaited him in each location. In Egypt, Nasser hailed Zhou as a great Afro-Asian leader, while the latter explained apologetically at a press conference that the "visit is not too early, rather it was long overdue."<sup>349</sup> Zhou was met by the revered revolutionary leader Ben Bella in Algiers, where he commended the Algerian people for their success in overcoming the colonial rulers.<sup>350</sup> In Ghana, the first former British colony in Africa to have established diplomatic relations with the PRC and China's important West African partner, Zhou called on Kwame Nkrumah. However, Zhou's visit occurred at an awkward time as Nkrumah had just closely escaped an assassination attempt on 2 January.<sup>351</sup>

According to the Chinese diplomat Huang Hua's memoirs, Zhou's Ghana visit went ahead despite the security concerns, because it was intended to demonstrate Chinese support for Nkrumah. After all, Nkrumah had been the second African head of state to visit China after Guinean president Sekou Toure. A Chinese account described a rather more festive welcome in Accra where "the market women and students danced and sang with great joy."<sup>352</sup> Yet the British records describe a less than enthusiastic

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<sup>348</sup> CFMA, 203-00409-01, 28 December 1963.

<sup>349</sup> Communist Party of China Research Division (CCP) 1997, p. 603.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*; Yu 1975, pp. 18-19.

<sup>351</sup> Huang 2008, p. 167.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179; NA, DO195/200, Chou En-Lai's Tour of Africa, 19 January 1964.

affair, with Zhou and his entourage receiving a decidedly cool reception, comprised of scattered groups of people rather than the hordes that had packed the streets during Nkrumah's visit to Beijing in August 1961.

The British observed that “the Chinese bored the Ghanaians” because they took their ideological argumentation too seriously. The Soviets were already deeply entrenched in Ghana, which was likely to have had a dampening effect on any Chinese motivation for closer cooperation. Local African factors also influenced the reception and there appeared to be “a certain contempt for Chinese ‘backwardness’”, as Ghana was a relatively advanced country, so that the Chinese government could offer nothing substantial in terms of aid.<sup>353</sup> Nonetheless, in what the British described as “one of the few successes of Zhou’s visit,” Nkrumah agreed to support the call for Latin America to be included in an international front.<sup>354</sup> Nevertheless, Chinese diplomacy still faced an uphill struggle. Many suspicious governments gave China more credit for its destabilising potential than the latter actually had the capacity to carry out. The Nigerian Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa lamented to British officials that “Ghanaian relations with Russia had cooled and had been replaced by a new and even more dangerous liaison with the Chinese” and that his country was faced with the prospect of having a “Cuba on her doorstep.”<sup>355</sup>

With Zhou’s African itinerary leaving East Africa out because of the Zanzibar revolution, Nyerere’s visit to China, originally scheduled for February 1964, was now also postponed. But the Chinese were still able to seize another timely opportunity to

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<sup>353</sup> NA, DO195/200, Visit of Mr. Chou En-Lai, 22 January 1964; NA, DO195/200, Chou En-Lai’s Tour of Africa, 19 January 1964.

<sup>354</sup> NA, DO195/200, Chou En-Lai’s Tour of Africa, 19 January 1964.

<sup>355</sup> NA, DO195/200, Nigeria and Ghana, 16 March 1964.

engage with the Tanganyikan government. In the aftermath of the mutiny of the Tanganyika Rifles, Nyerere overhauled the military and made strides in diversifying the sources of his country's military aid. This created a window of opportunity for the Chinese to increase their engagement with Tanganyika. The Sino-Tanganyikan relationship was buttressed further by Babu's appointment to the URTZ cabinet. In what proved to be an astute diplomatic move by Nyerere, Babu accompanied all the important high-level visits to China, such as that of Second Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa in June 1964. Babu's existing rapport with the Chinese leaders and his revolutionary stature made him the ideal candidate for the role. Kawawa's delegation was received with great pomp and circumstance in Beijing and, according to the Chinese press, ten thousand people "from all walks of life" gathered to welcome him.<sup>356</sup>

Kawawa successfully negotiated an aid package worth £16 million (\$44.8 million) for his government. Additionally, he requested military assistance, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. Unlike the Tanganyikan government's post-independence discussions with the former colonial powers, in which its military and political development were not prioritised as highly as economic development, the Chinese attitude to post-colonial development was the government's overall consolidation of power. Hence, alongside senior military officials, Vice-President Kawawa also met Beijing's Mayor Peng Zhen, who lauded the "excellent revolutionary situation" in Africa and declared the Chinese people's support for the armed liberation struggles on the continent.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> *People's Daily*, 15 June 1964.

<sup>357</sup> *People's Daily*, 20 June 1964.

Kawawa's departure from Shanghai was equally grand, with a high-profile send-off by senior Chinese officials and their national flags flown at Hongqiao airport. To the visually compelling scenes of Afro-Asian and, specifically, Sino-African solidarity was added a farewell song played by a band, creating a heady atmosphere of pounding drums, bouquets, and the shouting of slogans: "Long live the Chinese people and Tanganyika and Zanzibar!" and "Long live the great unity of people of the world!" The Chinese government offered military aid and officer training for as many cadets as needed and Kawawa was reportedly so impressed that he returned with what British officials noted wryly as "some rather grandiose ideas."<sup>358</sup>

Indeed, the intensification of official Sino-Tanganyikan contacts was viewed sceptically by the British government. Britain retained an influence out of proportion to its economic strength, as Whitehall did not plan for "the *substance* of their relationships to vanish with the trappings of colonial rule."<sup>359</sup> The British viewed the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar (URTZ)'s relationship with China as a disturbing indication of the dangerous, growing Afro-Asian solidarity, that "dissolved [the countries'] individual personalities and identities," causing them to toe the group line and follow the extremists.<sup>360</sup> Yet the British government's intransigence on important issues, such as decolonisation in southern Africa, contributed directly to its strained ties with nearly all the other groups in the UN.<sup>361</sup> Indeed to the British, Tanganyikan officials were causing much irritation in New York. After the 1963 UN General Assembly, the British UN Permanent Representative Sir Patrick Dean described the

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<sup>358</sup> Bailey 1975, p. 40; *People's Daily*, 16 June 1964; NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

<sup>359</sup> Darwin 1991, pp. 74-75.

<sup>360</sup> NA, FCO371/178221, Performance of the Afro-Asian Delegations at the Eighteenth Session of the General Assembly, 24 January 1964.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

Tanganyikan delegation as “quite the most objectionable of all African delegations including Ghana and Guinea.”<sup>362</sup> He complained to the Foreign Office (FO) that:

They seldom missed the opportunity to attack us [...] they could easily have passed for one of the ‘Communist Satellites.’ Though Chief Mang’anya, the Tanganyikan Permanent Representative, came to New York with a very good chit from those who knew him, he has turned out to be a negative cipher who exercises no influence whatever over the members of his delegation and who simply delivered what was written for him by the immature semi-Marxists who make up his junior staff.<sup>363</sup>

To the British delegation, Nyerere and his Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona appeared as extreme as the other African politicians on the subject of colonialism; they did not change the strong anti-Western direction of the Tanganyikan delegation’s performance. Coming shortly after the formation of the union in April 1964, the acting British high commissioner suggested that Kambona had probably not yet learnt to control his ministry, much less his delegation in New York, even if he had wanted to. This was purportedly exacerbated by the appointment of Waldon Ramsey, a West Indian known for his Communist sympathies, to draft many of the URTZ delegation’s speeches. The acting permanent secretary Chief Lukumbuza, explained to the British that Ramsay only worked for them in a research capacity and that “the fact that he might have Communist sympathies was not a great concern as long as he did his job properly.”<sup>364</sup> Nevertheless, the Tanzanian delegation’s behaviour and positions at the

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<sup>362</sup> NA, FO371/178221, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1964 – background notes, 10 July 1964.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> NA, FO371/178221, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, IP152/27/1, 13 May 1964.

UN, as well as Nyerere's non-aligned foreign policymaking continued to worry Western governments.

Those negative sentiments were compounded further by reports from their colleagues at the UN, that the URTZ delegation was prone to dichotomous behaviour because of the demands of Tanganyika's anti-imperialist role. "Nyerere and Kambona have often shown themselves in private discussions as helpful and understanding, even over some of our most difficult problems, [...] Tanganyika [...] cannot afford to display in public any sign of being 'soft' on colonial matters, particularly in the highly competitive atmosphere of New York."<sup>365</sup> In fact, British officials had urged the URTZ ministers to ensure that their delegation in New York took "a less deliberately hostile" attitude, particularly on matters of the remaining British colonial territories.<sup>366</sup> Nyerere remarked to UK Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home that the URTZ's policy of anti-colonialism made it inevitable that they should at times disagree, adding that he did not believe that the "lack of unanimity on world affairs indicates a lack of friendship" between them.<sup>367</sup>

The evidence suggests that Nyerere was equally candid in his discussions with the Chinese as he was with British officials. After another unsuccessful UN General Assembly (UNGA) vote on the PRC's entry into the UN in late 1965, Nyerere suggested to He Ying that the Chinese government consider a change of tack. Explaining that the problem for most of the African delegations was the linking of the PRC's representation with the ROC's expulsion, Nyerere suggested that Beijing pursue

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<sup>365</sup> NA, FO371/178221, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 1964.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> NA, FO371/178221, Reply from President Julius Nyerere to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 4 June 1964.

a strategy of first getting voted into the UN as a legitimate representative of the Chinese people, and then focus on the Taiwan issue on a separate occasion. Nyerere's idea caused the Chinese to question his understanding of the One China policy. In response, He Ying insisted that the URTZ government should not be taken in by US machinations by splitting the issues, as that would essentially mean recognising the existence of "Two Chinas". The Chinese position was non-negotiable and the ambassador insisted that, despite being excluded from the UN, the PRC could still take on the US. He added that friendly Afro-Asian countries had already voiced their condemnations of American aggression.<sup>368</sup>

The Chinese government acknowledged the difficulty that an aid-dependent Tanzania had in taking a tough stance in foreign affairs.<sup>369</sup> Their unanimous agreement on issues was not deemed necessary and the incident did not appear to hinder the importance that both parties placed on the bilateral relationship. Meanwhile, Tanzanian officials continued to call on the Chinese embassy to exchange their assessments on international issues, including the American aggression in Vietnam, the Afro-Asian movement, the situation in the Congo, and later, Southern Rhodesia.<sup>370</sup> As shown in Chapter One, Babu was a key facilitator in this regard.

## **ii) Babu and the Tanzanian economic delegation to China, February 1965**

The high-level Tanzanian delegations to China publicly reinforced the Tanzanian government's independent policymaking from the West. Shortly after the first Tanzanian ambassador to China arrived in Beijing in February 1965, Nyerere sent

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<sup>368</sup> CFMA, 113-00485-15, 27 November 1965.

<sup>369</sup> CFMA, 106-01164-13, 14 August 1964.

<sup>370</sup> CFMA, 106-01164-13, 8 August 1964; CFMA, 106-01169-04, 15 August 1964.

an important economic delegation to garner more assistance and support for his government's development plans. Until that point, Beijing had only committed modest amounts of aid to Tanzania through the loan of \$0.5 million in February 1964 and another loan of \$28 million, half of it in free currency, as part of the agreement on economic and technical cooperation in June 1964.<sup>371</sup> The economic delegation was also charged with another important mandate: To prepare the ground for the first visit by the Tanzanian head of state at the end of February 1965.

Nyerere had – naturally – appointed Babu as head of the economic delegation in early February, with the knowledge that the latter had a good rapport with the Chinese and that a successful discussion would set a favourable tone for the presidential visit.<sup>372</sup> Not surprisingly, the trade negotiations went very smoothly and the Chinese records noted that both parties reached an agreement in half an hour, “faster than a business deal.”<sup>373</sup> The trade agreement was for \$14 million a year for five years, under which the Tanzanians were to buy whatever they could afford from the Chinese and the Chinese were to buy \$14 million worth of goods a year from Tanzania. The Chinese would pay cash for the balance not taken up by purchases from Tanzania.<sup>374</sup> Such a positive outcome suggests that both sides shared similar expectations and objectives, and that Beijing was very supportive of the Tanzanians’ requests.<sup>375</sup> This view is supported by a report from the Chinese External Liaison Office in early March, which cited as the

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<sup>371</sup> Bartke 1989, p. 126.

<sup>372</sup> *People's Daily*, 8 and 10 February 1965.

<sup>373</sup> CFMA, 108-00588-05, 8 February 1965.

<sup>374</sup> LSE Archives, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, 13 March 1965; NA, DO214/177, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to CRO, Arrival of First Consignment of Chinese “Grant in kind”, 26 January 1965.

<sup>375</sup> CFMA, 108-00588-05, 8 February 1965. According to Zhou’s official diary, the most significant issues discussed with the Tanzanians were the Chinese government’s quest for real equality, fraternity and mutual respect in relations with Afro-Asian countries, as well as the principle that their trade should be founded on equality and be mutually beneficial: CCP 1997, pp. 707-708.

factors contributing to Beijing's favourable attitude to the trade talks: The invigoration of Tanzania's anti-imperialist stance after the union, the improvement of its domestic policies, and a strengthening of the government's left-wing faction (which Babu represented). Therefore the Chinese were willing to accede to Tanzanian requests for as long as they were within reasonable limits.<sup>376</sup>

The greatest outcome and tangible legacy of Babu's meetings with the Chinese leaders was in laying the ground for Nyerere's discussion of the Tanzania-Zambia (TanZam) rail link. Various foreign and institutional donors had rejected Tanzania's request to sponsor the project. Babu inquired about the possibility of Chinese support during his trip, to which his hosts replied that the matter would be raised at the Politburo.<sup>377</sup> Thereafter Babu returned to Tanzania and was reportedly confident in having found a sponsor for the project.<sup>378</sup> In conversation with a British journalist, he insisted that funding was no longer an obstacle and that the political value of the railway as a form of African unity had been emphasised to the sponsor. He added that they had promised support, but that he was not at liberty to reveal their identity.<sup>379</sup> Chapter Four will discuss in greater detail the events leading to the formal Sino-Tanzanian (and Zambian) agreement on the TanZam rail link.

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<sup>376</sup> CFMA, 108-00588-06, 3 February to 1 March 1965 (the exact date is unclear from the document).

<sup>377</sup> Although the CIA later speculated that the Tanzanian government's appeal might have been made as early as July 1964, during Second Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa's visit to Beijing, that appears unlikely: NARA, CIA Records, The Tan-Zam Railway, September 1971.

<sup>378</sup> Interested in finding out official African sentiments towards the Rhodesian situation for himself, *The Guardian* editor Alistair Hetherington travelled to Africa and met with Tanzanian and Zambian leaders. Hetherington spoke to Babu, who had recently returned from China: LSE, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, 13 March 1965.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.* The TanZam railway is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

### iii) Nyerere's state visit to China, February 1965

On the back of the strong footing established by Babu's economic delegation in early February, the Chinese press emphasised the significance of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, quoting various Tanzanian and African representatives' expressions of support for Nyerere's visit. The speaker of the Tanzanian National Assembly, Adam Sapi Mkwawa, for example, said that Nyerere's visit to China was important for Tanzania as both countries were akin to brothers; they were on the same side in the struggle against imperialism and that China's experience would help to guard against colonialism in its various forms, especially the American's united front. Senior TANU official Bibi Titi Mohamed assured that Nyerere would convey the Tanzanian people's warm regard for the Chinese on this visit.<sup>380</sup> Undoubtedly Babu's stewardship of the economic delegation's discussions and its successful outcome paved the way for the first visit by Tanzania's head of state to China.

Nyerere visited China later that month. The president was keen to speak to the Chinese leaders about their experience because he genuinely felt that their government had "found its cause" and owned its development agenda. According to Charles Sanga, who served as Nyerere's private secretary from 1992 to 1999, Nyerere did not see such a high degree of "ownership" when he visited Russia.<sup>381</sup> Nyerere arrived in Beijing on 17 February to great acclaim and pageantry. President Liu Shaoqi and Premier Zhou received him at the airport and thousands of people lined the streets in Beijing.<sup>382</sup> A photograph of the visit reproduced as Appendix II on page 333 shows the entourage

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<sup>380</sup> *People's Daily*, 17 February 1965.

<sup>381</sup> Interview with Ambassador Charles A. Sanga, Dar es Salaam, 7 December 2006.

<sup>382</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 86.

entering the capital amid cheers, dancing and fanfare. It was a spectacle that attested to the Chinese government's effectiveness at mobilisation. More importantly, it was through such strong visual images that an international audience could witness Sino-African solidarity in practice. The visit was widely reported in the international press, not least because of Tanzania's role as an important frontline state in the African liberation struggle and Beijing's militant anti-imperialist stance, a point which was underscored by the messages of support sent by friendly African liberation groups. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) leader Sam Nujoma said that the warm welcome Nyerere received proved that China and all of Africa were determined to resist American subversion. The South African Pan-Africanist Congress' (PAC) Central Committee Member Niaosi pointed out that the joint Chinese-Tanzanian communiqué that was issued during Nyerere's visit was a significant milestone and filled with revolutionary spirit.<sup>383</sup>

The Chinese offer to construct the TanZam rail link was made by Mao during his meeting with Nyerere on 19 February. Although the offer was not announced publicly at this stage, the bilateral negotiations in 1965 and 1966 eventually led to Beijing's construction of the railway. In the days after that discussion, Nyerere travelled to the southern cities of Nanjing and Shanghai, where he observed the Chinese people's work ethic and diligence; he spoke often – both publicly and privately – of how the leaders' modesty and austerity impressed him.<sup>384</sup> The president himself was well-known for his austerity and modest lifestyle, so that leadership was untainted by self-

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<sup>383</sup> *People's Daily*, 1 March 1965.

<sup>384</sup> Nyerere would later say, "The thing which impressed me most of all when I was in China in 1965 – and the thing which impresses Tanzanians about the Chinese workers who are now in our country – is their hard work": Nyerere 1973, p. 38.

aggrandisement and the accumulation of personal wealth.<sup>385</sup> Nyerere's own faith in the necessity of culturally appropriate development appeared entirely feasible when he observed that the basic family unit in China appeared to be very strong; just like Chinese culture it seemed not to have been negatively affected by the country's development.<sup>386</sup>

Nyerere's trip was a resounding success for the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. It culminated in the signing of a ten-year Sino-Tanzanian Treaty of Friendship and a joint communiqué on 20 February which was made public, as well as the Chinese leaders' tacit commitment to undertake the construction and funding of the TanZam rail link, which officially remained secret.<sup>387</sup> Calling on He Ying in Dar es Salaam shortly after his return from China, Nyerere expressed his satisfaction with the trip and shared that he was impressed by the country.<sup>388</sup> According to Pius Msekwa who was a TANU official at the time, Nyerere implemented some changes based on the observations he had made in China.<sup>389</sup>

According to Msekwa, the President believed that China offered useful lessons in party organisation and governance and that the Chinese leaders were "keeping the country together" with a single ideology and understanding of nationhood. For example, there was a clear distinction between government and party work in China. The former funded projects and focused on national development, while the latter communicated the leaders' messages to the people. In the Chinese system, Msekwa

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<sup>385</sup> Campbell 2000, p. 72; Iliffe, 2005, p. 335.

<sup>386</sup> Interview with Ambassador Charles A. Sanga, Dar es Salaam, 7 December 2006.

<sup>387</sup> *People's Daily*, 24 February 1965.

<sup>388</sup> CFMA, 106-01254-05, 22 March 1965.

<sup>389</sup> Interview with Pius Msekwa, 6 December 2006, Dar es Salaam.

explained, “one word from either Chairman Mao or the Prime Minister and everybody would follow.”<sup>390</sup> Some of these communication strategies and techniques were quickly applied: TANU adopted the CCP’s method of organising and mobilising people which, in Msekwa’s opinion, had proven very effective. Nyerere also believed that the Chinese leaders genuinely wanted to make a change for their people, their country and the world; in this process, Tanzania and all countries of the South stood to benefit. Nyerere’s deep impressions from his China visit were partly responsible for the subsequent boost in Sino-Tanzanian relations and more Tanzanian officials were sent on study tours to “see China doing wonders” in the months and years that followed.<sup>391</sup>

Throughout the mid-1960s, Nyerere publicly expounded on the usefulness of the Chinese example for development. His radio address to the nation on the first anniversary of the Union Republic on 26 April 1965 highlighted, amongst other things, that the Chinese government and people were able to provide the funds and technical personnel to help Tanzania carry out its national development plan because of their frugality.<sup>392</sup> Having an actual reference and model made the lesson easier to communicate, as the goal then appeared achievable. Nyerere also appealed to the people’s sense of national pride and urged them to adopt a similarly frugal attitude as the Chinese, because “borrowing money from other countries to carry out what can be done by ourselves is very foolish”. Referring to the diplomatic wrangles with the West German and British governments, Nyerere reminded the listeners pointedly that “of this danger, we are already aware.”<sup>393</sup> At the highest levels of government, the Sino-

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<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> Nyerere mentioned this publicly upon his return to Tanzania – in two radio broadcasts (February 1965) and two speeches (March and April 1965): Armstrong 1977, p. 228.

<sup>393</sup> *People’s Daily*, 28 April 1965.

Tanzanian relationship appeared poised for even greater things to come. By April 1965, US State Department appeared to confirm this when they observed ruefully that Dar es Salaam had become the centre of Chinese activity in East Africa.<sup>394</sup>

#### iv) Zhou's "voyage of reconnaissance"

The diplomatic stage was finally set for Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to Tanzania, which the British embassy called a "voyage of reconnaissance."<sup>395</sup> An article in the *Daily Mail* titled "Tanzania puts out the flags as Chou [i.e. Zhou] goes wooing" described Zhou's trip as being "far bigger than any he has made abroad" and reported that he would be accompanied by an enormous entourage numbering nearly one hundred officers. It went on to describe Tanzania's strategic importance to China as being "her most important sphere of influence in Africa" because of the pro-Communist Zanzibar revolution and highlighted that militant figures in the ZRC with extensive contacts to China held high positions in the new government. Not surprisingly, Babu was singled out for his NCNA connection as well as for being "one of the cleverest politicians in East Africa."<sup>396</sup> The anticipation surrounding the trip was marred somewhat by the interception by Kenyan forces of a truck convoy of Chinese and Soviet arms. The cargo was reportedly bound for Uganda and sparked a minor outcry about China's destabilising influence in Africa, but Zhou's itinerary continued as scheduled.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> NARA, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Memorandum: Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, OCI No. 1211/65, 30 April 1965.

<sup>395</sup> The term "voyage of reconnaissance" was used in a cable from the British Embassy in Peking to the Foreign Office. NA, FO371/184291, From Peking to Foreign Office, No. 453, 6 April 1965.

<sup>396</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 3 June 1965.

<sup>397</sup> Poole 1966, pp. 622-629.

Zhou arrived in Dar es Salaam on 4 June 1965 and was received by the most senior Tanzanian politicians and officials. Over a hundred thousand people reportedly lined the streets from the airport to State House, in a scene reminiscent of the welcome that Nyerere received in Beijing four months earlier.<sup>398</sup> The national media on both sides worked hard to publicise the event and successfully captured Zhou's personal diplomacy at its best. The Chinese press lauded the leaders' interactions and the Tanzanian people's enthusiasm about Zhou's historic visit. The local Tanzanian media constantly reported about the Chinese premier's itinerary on the radio and played songs welcoming him to Tanzania. NCNA correspondent Gao Liang's monograph on Tanzania quotes an example:

Today is an unforgettable day for the Union Republic  
A world famous luminary is visiting our home  
We welcome you to see our sisal  
We welcome to try our rice gruel  
We invite you to drink the sweet coconut juice.<sup>399</sup>

Zhou addressed a mass rally at Dar es Salaam's 65,000 seat national stadium that was filled to maximum capacity and used the rhetoric of the Afro-Asian peoples' shared experience of several centuries of enslavement, oppression and colonisation, as well as how they had since wrested control over their own destinies. He rallied that, "Africa must belong to the Africans [...] Africa must become an independent, free Africa."<sup>400</sup> A similarly warm welcome greeted Zhou in Zanzibar, where five thousand

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<sup>398</sup> *People's Daily*, 8 June 1965; Gao 1965.

<sup>399</sup> Gao 1965, pp. 4-6. Translated from Chinese. I am grateful to Xiao Li for helping to verify my translation.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

people showed up to listen to him.<sup>401</sup> Zhou also took the opportunity to meet with the Chinese personnel and experts working in Tanzania.<sup>402</sup>

When images of his meeting with Nyerere's elderly mother at State House were broadcast on Tanzanian national television, this was a poignant and compelling image that resonated on many levels, brimming with the symbolism of mutual respect, family ties and friendship. These themes were emphasised by the Chinese press throughout Zhou's trip, which ended in a similarly evocative way – the elderly lady sent him off at the airport, but not before presenting him with some African gifts.<sup>403</sup>

Aside from the significant gains from publicity, there were important strides made in formal bilateral relations from the visit. Zhou and Nyerere held five meetings which touched on the challenges facing developing countries, the establishment of the Sino-Tanzanian joint shipping company and the TanZam rail link. The Premier shared some advice on pro-development policies based on his government's experience. He insisted that frugality was important and that developing countries should not compare their situation and standard of living with that of the developed countries. Secondly, urban-rural disparity should be minimised by dispersing industries throughout the country. Zhou also extended an invitation to those Tanzanian ministers who had not yet been to China to visit, because 'seeing something once is better than hearing about it a hundred times.'<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to Tanzania, 1965, in Kiswahili: Television ya Taifa (TVT), National Film Library and Archive, Dar es Salaam, [viewed at TVT on 17 April 2007].

<sup>402</sup> Zhou also informed Nyerere about the arrival of the comprehensive study group in August or September to survey the main rail route: *People's Daily*, 8 June 1965.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> CCP 1997, pp. 735-736.

Nyerere himself was, by then, more personally convinced of the potentially larger role that Chinese aid could play in Tanzania's development. Following from Nyerere's trip and the signing of the Friendship Treaty, the Chinese presence in Tanzania grew steadily, with the arrival of arms, equipment and instructors for Nyerere's newly created Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF), along with the construction of various productive facilities, such as a large textile mill, irrigation and agricultural projects. Contrary to the donor vacuum that was created by the revolution in Zanzibar – and which was then swiftly filled by the Communist bloc governments –Tanzania attracted bilateral donors from across the political spectrum, which created a contested aid market. The Scandinavian countries, for example, were drawn to Tanzania's strong anti-apartheid stand and non-alignment, which made them give impressive volumes of aid.<sup>405</sup> The perceived increase in Chinese influence at the time, fuelled by the Western press, contrasted with the quick recession of British influence in its former territory. In reality, Chinese aid to the Tanzanian government by the end of 1965 was still “dwarfed” by the total volume of Western aid.<sup>406</sup>

Aside from being a major diplomatic milestone in the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, Zhou's visit was also part of Beijing's efforts to marshal support for the upcoming second Afro-Asian Conference in Algiers, Algeria, in late June. Reflecting on the situation, the valedictory letter from the departing British *Chargé d'Affaires* in Beijing referred to Zhou and Chen Yi's visit to Africa as “the main thrust” of Chinese diplomacy, which was “directed at Africa.” The *Chargé* ruminated upon these activities which were “preliminaries to the impending Second Afro-Asian Conference” at which Beijing wanted to transform its leadership of “the poor man's world from a dream to a

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<sup>405</sup> Gordon 1994, p. 241.

<sup>406</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 3 June 1965.

reality.” He regarded Chinese activities for this purpose as “her greatest disservice to humanity and her greatest threat to Western interests.”<sup>407</sup>

The Chinese government was keen to have the Soviets excluded from the conference and emphasised the racial and geographical elements of Afro-Asianism to cut Moscow out of the planned “second Bandung”. It was finally the divided Afro-Asian opinion which led to the indefinite postponement of the conference, which will be discussed further in Chapter Four. As the British foreign office observed, AAPSO’s attempt to “usurp the tradition of Bandung” stirred suspicions in “responsible Asian circles” but was more effective in the Arab world.<sup>408</sup> From that standpoint, Zhou’s tour of Africa in June 1965 had failed, but in the specific case of Tanzania, the bilateral relationship blossomed.

### **Conclusion: Tanganyika and China as anti-imperialist allies**

This chapter elaborates on the existing literature to demonstrate how the foundation of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was laid in three distinct phases: The nationalist phase from the late 1950s to December 1961, the immediate post-independence phase from January 1962 to April 1964 and the immediate post-union phase from April 1964 to the end of 1965.

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<sup>407</sup> Quoted in Jarman, 2003, pp. 27-28. The Second Afro-Asian Conference was originally scheduled for June 1965 in Algiers, but was disrupted because of a military coup that ousted Algerian leader Ben Bella. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>408</sup> NA, FO1110/1231, Afro-Asian Influence on Africa (draft), March 1959. As evidence of the growing European interest in this, the British Foreign Office called for an internal circulation of draft papers from relevant departments on Communist front organisations in Africa, Pan-African movements, Afro-Asian influence on Africa and trade unions in preparation for another round of Anglo-French talks.

The Sino-Tanganyikan relationship developed gradually in the nationalist period, compared to the rapid development of the Sino-Zanzibari relationship which provided the Chinese with a smooth and quick entry into East Africa. In Tanganyika, the Chinese government initially had exploratory contacts with the ANC, which ceased when TANU was slated to head the first independent government. This was facilitated by the important role that the Tanganyikan government – and Nyerere in particular – played in international organisations, such as the AASC (later AAPSO). At the AAPSO-sponsored events, the Tanganyikans often shared similar positions with their Chinese counterparts on issues like anti-imperialism and colonialism. However, the polemical conflicts between the Communist powers meant that the Afro-Asian solidarity associations were less effective sources of economic and development assistance than bilateral aid agreements.

In Tanganyika's immediate post-independence period, Nyerere built up the government's diplomatic strengths which allowed his country to punch above its weight internationally. At the United Nations, the Tanganyikans consistently agitated for the restoration of Beijing's seat on the Security Council. Tanganyika's non-aligned foreign policy allowed it to maintain amicable relations with the UK and other Western countries, as well as to extend its contacts to the Eastern bloc governments, including China. Moreover, the Chinese delegation to the 1963 AAPSO conference in Moshi was buoyed by their positive experience, which reinforced their high regard for the Tanganyikan hosts. All these reasons *quickly* made Tanganyika a good African ally for the diplomatically isolated Chinese government.

Finally, from 1964 to 1965, the Sino-Zanzibari connection which had been the bridgehead for the Chinese into mainland Tanganyika and Swahili East Africa

remained constant, but decreased in its relative importance as the mainland's diplomatic and political value to Beijing heightened. Nyerere also cannily built on existing Sino-Zanzibari ties to accelerate the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. The numerous visits made by Tanganyikan and URTZ officials to China in those years set the stage for the high-level diplomatic visits by Nyerere and Zhou in 1965. Both governments fully exploited the symbols of good partnership by making visibly grand events of their respective state visits, and personal diplomacy between the elite played an increasingly important role.

As this chapter has shown, each phase of the Sino-Tanganyikan relationship built upon achievements from the earlier phases and bilateral ties were mutually beneficial. While Tanganyika (and later Tanzania) welcomed the immediate inflow of tangible assistance, in exchange it was able to support Chinese influence on the international stage without necessarily compromising on its own political objectives. In this way, the Tanzanian government successfully augmented Beijing's engagement in Africa in particular. Yet of all the factors mentioned in this chapter, one in particular – China and Tanzania's shared anti-imperialist stance – warrants closer attention and is the focus of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three – Tanzania’s post-colonial vulnerabilities and the Sino-Tanzanian relationship: The construction of a militant friendship, 1963 to 1969**

An inevitable tension existed between Nyerere’s desire to support African liberation struggles and the obvious weakness of his country’s military capability. However, this tension helped the nascent development of Sino-Tanzanian relations, described in Chapters One and Two, to move to the next level. The expansion of violent protests in the south, towards the South African, Rhodesian and Portuguese colonial governments in southern Africa, increased the demands of African nationalist groups for military aid. The members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the British Commonwealth were prevented from making significant contributions of military assistance because of objections by the Portuguese and South African governments. The Chinese and other Communist governments responded to this call.

As the host country of the Organisation for African Unity’s (OAU) Liberation Committee (ALC), Tanganyika – and from 1964, Tanzania – was poised to play a crucial role in the facilitation of military support to the liberation movements. Chinese military assistance to the liberation movements quickly led to similar assistance to the Tanganyikan government, which formally began in the wake of the Tanganyika Rifles mutiny in early 1964. As Beijing’s earliest bilateral military transaction in Africa, it redefined Chinese strategic engagement on the continent.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> NA, DO216/60, Chinese interest in Tanzania, 1 February 1965; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania. Economic Intelligence Group. Chinese Economic Penetration Activities in the Underdeveloped World with Special Reference to Africa.

As a background to this topic, it is useful to note that the literature on Chinese military assistance to African countries in the 1960s generally falls into one of two categories. The first category consists of the political science studies from the 1970s which viewed China as a belligerent, destabilising factor in the post-colonial African context, not least because of the potential for militarisation through the Sino-Soviet rivalry. These studies were mainly based on journalistic sources and reports from agencies like the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). While useful as primary sources of that period, their disproportionate emphasis on the geo-political forces that determined Beijing's military support overlooked the African factors which shaped the Sino-African engagement.

The second category in the literature on Chinese military assistance to Africa is recent historical studies written in the last decade, which draw on a broader range of sources that were previously unavailable. These works have shifted the emphasis from seeing military assistance as a tool of foreign policy to highlighting its function as a pillar for nationalist struggles and post-colonial national security. Westad has demonstrated robustly how the “processes of change” in the third world created openings for superpower interventions, particularly military ones.<sup>410</sup> Historical works by Gleijeses and Shubin have also argued that the Cuban and Soviet governments' broader political objectives of Communist internationalism and anti-colonialism were subjugated to local political dynamics in their African encounters.<sup>411</sup> Not surprisingly, this category of work has developed apace with the growing interest of the former

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<sup>410</sup> Westad 2005.

<sup>411</sup> Gleijeses 2002; Shubin 2008.

colonies in compiling and shaping versions of their own national histories, as being distinct from colonial and imperial history.<sup>412</sup>

This chapter falls into the second category of literature and takes into account the important local African factors. This chapter will show that Chinese military assistance to Tanzania met mutual needs, but was not a straightforward development. While intended to strengthen Tanzanian military capacity and reduce its dependence on British colonial forces, the PRC's military aid also contributed directly to the militarisation of Zanzibar by altering the internal balance of power which, in turn, complicated relations with mainland Tanganyika. Yet that difficulty was not insurmountable. The militant Sino-Tanzanian friendship was successfully forged in three main ways: Firstly, through a shared anti-imperialist agenda that translated into practical support for liberation struggles; secondly, by Tanganyika's post-colonial military vulnerability which allowed the Chinese government to deepen its bilateral engagement at a critical juncture of Tanganyika's national-building; and thirdly, against a situation of narrowing donor options, Chinese military aid appeared to have the most promise for addressing the operational challenges faced by the post-colonial Tanzanian army.

## **I. A shared anti-imperialist agenda**

African decolonisation in the 1960s was a chequered process that complicated foreign aid policies for donor and recipient countries alike. As the sobering demands of the post-colonial phase set in, the vestiges of colonial governance structures persisted in

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<sup>412</sup> Zhong / Xu 2008; Altorfer-Ong (forthcoming).

the newly independent countries, especially in the areas of technical expertise and economic influence. At the same time, nationalist groups in the non-liberated colonial territories sought external patrons to support their respective struggles. As this section will show, Chinese military support for the African liberation movements preceded its bilateral military assistance to the Tanzanian government. This chronology strongly suggests a causal relationship, in that Beijing's prior access to those nationalist groups was a crucial factor in the development of its military relations with Tanzania. A brief overview of the historical background is therefore necessary to better understand the pivotal role that Tanzania played in supporting the southern African liberation struggles.

### i) **Tanganyika, Nyerere and the African liberation struggles**

Nyerere had been the driving force behind Tanganyika's support for liberation movements since the 1950s. He led the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), formed on 17 September 1958, which strove for a common, non-violent strategy for the nationalist movements in British East and Central Africa. Furthermore, his political party, TANU, had pledged to support anti-colonial struggles even prior to Tanganyika's independence. The country's geography and political stability made it a good rear base for liberation groups and their military training camps. This was particularly true for the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo), as Tanganyika shared an 800 kilometre-long border with Mozambique. Tanganyikan borders were also close to South Africa's *cordon sanitaire*, which included Southern Rhodesia. As a former Tanganyikan diplomat recalled, "we were the only independent country closest to the theatre of war. [...] We literally had to shoulder the responsibility for being the vanguard and spokesperson for the liberation of

Africa.”<sup>413</sup> Tanganyika’s role was boosted by the OAU’s selection of Dar es Salaam as the venue for its *de facto* war office, the ALC, in February 1963. The Committee’s mandate was to coordinate the liberation struggles in all non-independent African territories, manage the various groups’ funds and training, as well as to provide logistical support.<sup>414</sup> As the wave of African decolonisation moved southwards, Tanganyika assumed the role that Algiers had previously played as the haven for the African liberation movements.

Nyerere’s decision to support the liberation movements had a direct impact on Tanganyika’s security situation. It immediately opened the country to potential domestic instability and security risks, as well as militarisation from the influx of arms. Yet the president was firm in his support and, through the Tanganyikan government’s policies, created a conducive setting for the various groups to operate on Tanganyikan soil. Shortly after the ALC was established in Dar es Salaam, the Tanganyikan government set up an independent Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The host government took its role very seriously and was one of the few African governments to have honoured its £30,000 (\$84,000) contribution to the ALC’s special fund for material and financial aid. Tanganyikan officials were appointed to key positions in the ALC, thus creating a very close connection between the host government and the organisation’s decision-makers. Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona was the first chairman of the ALC and Sebastian Chale, Tanganyika’s representative in the UN, was seconded to the committee to establish its secretariat.<sup>415</sup> In addition, the Tanganyikan bureaucracy provided essential administrative support, training and, where necessary,

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<sup>413</sup> Interview with Ambassador Paul Rupia, Dar es Salaam, 14 November 2006.

<sup>414</sup> Interview with the late Brigadier General Hashim I. Mbita, Dar es Salaam, 27 April 2007.

<sup>415</sup> It was located at Ingles House, Dar es Salaam: TNA, Habari, Acc. 593, B/963/63. Financial Assistance to Other Countries. Document 3, 12/6/63, press release.

official travel documents that allowed the representatives of the liberation groups to go abroad. This mobility was vital for the groups' efforts to increase awareness and generate more support for their activities.

Tanganyika's union with Zanzibar in April 1964 further reinforced its strategic frontline role. The inclusion of Zanzibari representatives, considered "successful revolutionaries" by the liberation forces, in the URTZ Cabinet boosted the host country's credibility as a beacon of anti-imperialism.<sup>416</sup> At the same time, Nyerere added a moral dimension to his government's support by providing the intellectual and spiritual grounding for African liberation, which went beyond armed struggle itself to incorporate the concepts of freedom from hunger, disease and poverty.<sup>417</sup> The liberation leaders benefitted from the intellectual climate and political debates about development that took place in Tanzania.<sup>418</sup> Tanzanian support extended into the field of education and offered the liberation forces the possibility of enrolling in academic or general education up to secondary level. Officer cadets from the liberation forces were given specialised training at the military academy in Mondoli and the General Military Hospital in Lugalo offered medical training. Tertiary education was offered at local colleges or at overseas universities in friendly countries, such as the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow and institutions in Cuba, Algeria or China.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Wilson / Babu 1989, p. 60.

<sup>417</sup> Shamuyarira 1985, p. 40.

<sup>418</sup> This was according to Nathan Shamuyarira of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), a group which had benefitted from Nyerere's support. Nyerere ensured that ZANU's self-reliance projects were furnished with the necessary facilities: Wood 2005, p. 191.

<sup>419</sup> Mwanakatwe 2006.

Tanzania quickly became a “safe and dependable sanctuary” where the liberation fighters could recuperate and re-establish themselves after fleeing from “various detention centres and jails.”<sup>420</sup> These individuals were given formal protection under Tanzanian law and were free to organise rallies to promote their respective causes.<sup>421</sup> As Saul has shown, the leaders of the liberation movements enjoyed the status of governments-in-exile as a “league of African presidents” that put them on equal footing with leaders like Nyerere and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda.<sup>422</sup>

Thus Tanganyika’s support for the African liberation movements came from the highest level and complemented the country’s geographical location on the frontline of the anti-colonial struggle. This was further enhanced by the ALC’s role as one of the main suppliers of arms and assistance to the liberation forces. Nevertheless, the procurement of weapons was a constant challenge – even for the ALC – because of the limited donor alternatives. In this situation, Chinese military assistance presented a very desirable option.

## ii) Chinese military support for the African liberation movements

In China, the government’s shift in emphasis from rural development to the heavy industry and military-related sectors was kick-started by the intensification of the Vietnam War in late 1964. This “profound transformation” of the national economy fostered what Chen Jian has described as “a broad-reaching and intense revolutionary popular mentality in Chinese society and politics.”<sup>423</sup> As in Vietnam, the Chinese

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<sup>420</sup> Shamuyarira 1985, p. 39.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>422</sup> Saul / Leys 1995, p. 43.

<sup>423</sup> Chen 2001, p. 215.

government's material support to the African liberation groups was used "instead of direct military presence to demonstrate to their comrades [...] their solidarity."<sup>424</sup> This section shows how Beijing developed its initial contacts with African liberation movements through political platforms such as the Afro-Asian Solidarity Council (AASC, re-named the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, AAPSO, from 1960) into military support channelled via the ALC and the Tanganyikan government.

One of the earliest opportunities that the Chinese government had to gain influence within AAPSO came through the creation of the Solidarity Fund that year, to which a Chinese delegate was elected second deputy to the Fund's Committee President.<sup>425</sup> The Chinese contribution in early 1961 was a donation of \$40,000 worth of materials that included scholarships for students, residency for the liberation fighters' medical care (and treatment in sanatoria), as well as visits to China.<sup>426</sup> The Chinese embassy in Cairo also actively cultivated connections with the representative offices of liberation movements that were based there, reportedly entertaining them lavishly and publicising their activities on *Radio Peking*.<sup>427</sup>

In China, the Foreign Ministry, Defence Ministry and People's Liberation Army coordinated the government's military assistance to African governments and liberation groups.<sup>428</sup> A dense network of solidarity organisations and associations supported the government's military assistance and relations with the liberation movements. A major part of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) activities was to educate the Chinese

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<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>425</sup> Taylor 2006, p. 24.

<sup>426</sup> Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation 1961, p. 64.

<sup>427</sup> NA, DO216/41, Tanganyika and the liberation of Africa, 5 December 1963.

<sup>428</sup> Zhong / Xu 2008.

people about the situation in Africa through the state-run media, mass demonstrations and declarations. In this way, the party underscored its legitimacy and rallied popular support for its “honourable and internationally acknowledged” battle against imperialism.<sup>429</sup> By late 1963, the Chinese leaders believed that the US and Soviet Union had entered into an unholy alliance and, as a result, Beijing considered itself the undisputable leader of the revolutionary world.<sup>430</sup> As the Sino-Soviet rivalry intensified within the AAPSO and its related Afro-Asian groups, the Chinese government shifted its attention to the ALC as a more appropriate vehicle for its support of the African liberation movements. Compared to the AAPSO, which included representatives from across the third world, the ALC focused specifically on African issues and had not, at that point, been encroached on by the Sino-Soviet dispute.

### **iii) China, Tanzania and the Mozambican liberation struggle**

Senior party officials in Beijing recognised Tanzania’s important frontline role and directed the embassy in Dar es Salaam to prioritise the task of organising support to the southern African liberation movements.<sup>431</sup> The achievement of that goal was entirely contingent on maintaining good relations with Nyerere’s government in order to improve China’s ability to reach out to the nationalist groups. It should be mentioned, however, that the sensitive and confidential nature of military assistance meant that there was no single, comprehensive record of the transactions. The ALC’s meetings and agreements were carried out with the utmost secrecy to avoid sabotage by spies from Portugal or South Africa. This chapter draws on recent work by the author to

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<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> Segal 1982, p. 70 and p. 73.

<sup>431</sup> He Ying 1993, p. 309.

piece together the important history of international solidarity with the African liberation struggles.<sup>432</sup>

Chinese support for the Mozambique Liberation Front, or Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), the dominant nationalist group in Mozambique, was a good example of the close cooperation between the Tanzanian and Chinese governments.<sup>433</sup> Frelimo received Chinese assistance from its formation in 1962 until Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975.<sup>434</sup> A Frelimo representative first called on the Chinese embassy in Cairo in February 1962. Although the Chinese mission reported that it had not encountered the Mozambicans before and thus did not have a clear understanding of the situation there, British sources estimated Chinese assistance at around \$3,000 in Frelimo's first year of existence. Zhou Boping, Consul in Tanzania in the 1960s, recalled that the first Chinese military training team sent to post-coup Zanzibar was for Frelimo and that the team included a military affairs specialist to help with Zanzibar's military development as well, at Karume's request.<sup>435</sup> Chinese military assistance contributed significantly to the overall readiness of the Frelimo forces, which traversed the Rovuma river on the Tanzanian border with Mozambique on 24 September 1964 and began their armed struggle against the Portuguese.<sup>436</sup>

#### **iv) The Zanzibar Revolution and the Tanganyikan Army Mutiny**

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<sup>432</sup> Altorfer-Ong (forthcoming).

<sup>433</sup> Frelimo was formed in June 1962 after three Mozambican liberation movements merged. *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> CFMA, 110-01125-01, 24 February 1962; NA, FCO45/422, China/Portuguese Africa.

<sup>435</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 105-106; NA, DO216/60, Chinese interest in Tanzania, 1 February 1965.

<sup>436</sup> Frelimo was only one of two major Southern African nationalist groups – the other being the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) – which successfully balanced support from both the Soviet Union and China. From the mid-1960s however, because of Beijing's rivalry with Moscow, the bulk of Chinese military assistance and press coverage was concentrated on Coremo, a splinter group. Eventually, Frelimo's victory in constituting the Mozambican transitional government and with the resumption of a more moderate Chinese foreign policy led to exclusive Chinese support for the movement: Kilford 2010, p. 172.

Rather than provide large amounts of military equipment or advanced technology to create a modern army, Beijing's production capacity at the time limited its contributions to arms, light and medium ground force equipment, which had a greater political and symbolic effect.<sup>437</sup> These supplies were welcomed by the ALC all the same. Playing down the importance of their vintage and level of sophistication, the Committee's longest serving Executive Secretary, Brigadier General Hashim Mbita, insisted in an interview that "guns were guns."<sup>438</sup> Although the secondary sources suggest that the arms initially sent by the Chinese government were quite old, the range and quality began to improve in tandem with the modernisation of the Chinese military industry from 1964, after which light and medium artillery were sent.<sup>439</sup> The transhipment of military supplies via Dar es Salaam reflected the push of the decolonisation process in Africa southwards, and hence the city became the main port of entry for Easter bloc arms, replacing the traditional hubs of Algiers and Cairo.<sup>440</sup>

The first shipment of Chinese arms to Tanganyika arrived in January 1964, via Algeria, and reportedly included some military supplies bound for Zanzibar as well.<sup>441</sup> The fragmented archival and published sources suggest that this shipment was the result of a deal brokered between Kambona and the Algerian government for the ALC's purchase of £250,000 (\$700,000) worth of arms, to be paid in part with coffee, sisal and cotton. A British report dismissed the "Algerian arms dump" and its "archaic, large quantities of junk", although it noted the presence of a few more modern and

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<sup>437</sup> Gilks / Segal 1985, p. 32.

<sup>438</sup> Interview with the late Brigadier General Hashim I. Mbita, Dar es Salaam, 27 April 2007.

<sup>439</sup> Gilks / Segal 1985, pp. 37-38.

<sup>440</sup> Greig 1977, p. 87.

<sup>441</sup> Cited in Bailey 1975, p. 40; International Institute for Strategic Studies 1973, p. 42; SIPRI 1973, p. 330; NA, DO216/60, Chinese interest in Tanzania, 1 February 1965.

sophisticated weapons from diverse sources, such as 81mm mortars, 60mm Chinese mortars and Czechoslovakian rocket launchers.<sup>442</sup>

Two dramatic events in January 1964 exposed serious gaps in Nyerere's power, by threatening Tanganyika's national security and thus the government's ability to properly support the African liberation struggles. The first event was the Zanzibar Revolution which, because of the islands' geographical proximity to Tanganyika, had tremendous ramifications on mainland security, as was discussed in Chapter One. In response to the coup, Nyerere dispatched his police to stabilise the situation in Zanzibar, which inadvertently reduced Tanganyika's own domestic security forces during the second event, the mutiny of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions of the Tanganyika Rifles on 20 January, discussed in Chapter Two. The combined effect of the events caused Nyerere to reconsider his initial reluctance to maintain a national army.

Nyerere did not initially consider British military assistance, but with the mutineers still in control after he emerged from hiding on 22 January, the president sent an appeal to London two days later.<sup>443</sup> Six hundred Royal Marines arrived from Kenya the very next day and successfully disarmed the mutineers in the Colito, Tabora and Nachingwea barracks, with minimal casualties.<sup>444</sup> The events in Tanganyika portended the eruption of discontent in neighbouring East African countries and within a week, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions of the Uganda Rifles and the 11<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Kenya Rifles succumbed to mutinies as well.<sup>445</sup> The region was paralysed by these national security

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<sup>442</sup> NA, ADM202/510, Report on the activities of 41 Commando, Royal Marines, 1st January 1964-10 April 1964, 11 May 1964, Annex 'B'.

<sup>443</sup> NA, DO185/59, Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee, JIC/92/64, 26 January 1964.

<sup>444</sup> Parsons 2003, p. 127.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

crises and, having erupted so soon after the Zanzibar Revolution, some observers were quick to point to Communist bloc machinations behind the unrest.<sup>446</sup>

However, as early as 31 January, the British High Commission confirmed that there was no evidence of any Communist country involvement in the mutiny, although it highlighted the Chinese “campaign of systematic subversion” and anti-imperialist propaganda in Tanganyika for having stirred anti-British feelings amongst the soldiers.<sup>447</sup> Mazrui has argued that the British military intervention that Nyerere resorted to was based on a misreading of the situation, as there was no external instigation for the mutiny.<sup>448</sup> Indeed, the British forces not only disarmed the African troops, but went further to forfeit the weapons and ammunition that were collected. The British discovered the cache of arms and ammunition purchased from Algeria, bound for the Frelimo forces, and stationed a permanent guard over it.<sup>449</sup> The incident was a terrible embarrassment and loss for both the Tanganyikan government as well as the ALC, as the materiel had been so hard to obtain.

Nyerere immediately called for an emergency meeting of the OAU’s Foreign and Defence ministers on 27 January to explain the situation to the other African governments and to reassure the liberation movements. Not surprisingly, the latter were alarmed by the intervention of a colonial power with deeply entrenched interests in southern Africa.<sup>450</sup> In his dual role as Tanganyikan Foreign Minister and ALC

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<sup>446</sup> Hunter 2010; Hansard 1963-1964, p. 537.

<sup>447</sup> NA, DO185/46, The causes and inspiration of the Tanganyika Mutiny, British High Commission, Dar es Salaam, 31 January 1964.

<sup>448</sup> Mazrui / Rothchild 1967.

<sup>449</sup> NA, ADM202/510, Report on the activities of 41 Commando, Royal Marines, 1st January 1964-10 April 1964, 11 May 1964, Annex ‘B’

<sup>450</sup> NA, DO216/47, Foreign Office to certain of HM’s representatives, East Africa: Meeting of the OAU, 19 February 1964.

Chairman, Kambona assured the attendees that his government enjoyed mass support and that there should be no doubt about the government's stability. He affirmed that the government's immediate aim was to replace the British troops with those from East African countries, as that would put into place an African solution to post-colonial instability and ensure that the integrity of the liberation struggle could be preserved, in what he called "the right kind of solution to this problem."<sup>451</sup> To reinforce that policy, Kambona announced that a new national army would be formed.<sup>452</sup> All at once the Tanganyikan government was in urgent need of a non-colonial source of military support for its domestic needs, as well as to secure its commitment to the ALC's mission.

The Chinese government's military support was framed in terms that justified its collaboration with nationalist groups. The Zanzibar Revolution and the Tanganyikan army mutiny occurred just as Mao reiterated the salience of his intermediate zone theory at the 10<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee. This was publicised in a *People's Daily* editorial on 21 January 1964, which explained the theory as it applied to the prevailing global landscape: The intermediate zone had two parts. The first was composed of the independent countries and those fighting for independence in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The second part included Western Europe, Canada and other capitalist countries. These latter countries had a "dual character" because even though their ruling classes were exploiters and oppressors, the countries themselves were prone

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<sup>451</sup> NA, DO216/47, OAU Provisional Secretariat, Addis Ababa, Council of Ministers Extraordinary Meeting, Dar es Salaam, 12 February 1964.

<sup>452</sup> Organisation for African Unity, Resolutions and Recommendations of the Second Extra-Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from 12 to 15 February 1964, ECM/Res. 2 (II), ECM/Res. 4 (II).

to US control, from which they were trying to extricate themselves. US hegemony was, thus, a common threat shared with the socialist countries.<sup>453</sup>

In practise, this translated into political and ideological training offered to African nationalists at military academies in Nanjing, Wuhan and Shanghai. The political and ideological training covered aspects of Mao's works and Communist ideology; it underscored the most potent aspect of Chinese guerrilla training – the importance of politicising the people prior to launching armed struggle.<sup>454</sup> The military programmes emphasised tactical rather than theoretical training, covering topics such as building up a militia and guerrilla warfare, which could be put into practice quickly after the trainees returned to the frontline.<sup>455</sup> The presence of these African nationalists in China allowed their perspective on the liberation struggles to be featured in the Chinese media.<sup>456</sup> A number of these trainees taught alongside Chinese instructors when they returned to Africa, as they were better able to translate the lessons to their local context.<sup>457</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar enhanced the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. Dar es Salaam became the departure point for Africans from the region to travel to China. The city quickly became the operations centre for the largest Chinese presence in the region, as illustrated by the arrival of the 6,000 tonne Guangdong-registered freighter *Heping* at the ports of Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar

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<sup>453</sup> Segal 1982, pp. 73-74.

<sup>454</sup> The trainees came from all over Africa, as noted by a press report circulated in West Berlin in June 1964 about young Africans from Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cameroon and Congo who were being trained in guerrilla warfare in China: Greig 1977, p. 146.

<sup>455</sup> Lin 1978; Zhong / Xu 2008.

<sup>456</sup> For example, Viriato da Cruz worked at the Afro-Asian Journalist Association after his dismissal from the MPLA. The Chinese media carried many of his criticisms of the group: Shubin 2008, p. 11.

<sup>457</sup> Gilks / Segal 1985, pp. 39-42.

twice in 1964 (May and September).<sup>458</sup> The shipments were bound for the Tanzanian government and it can be assumed that a portion was for the liberation movements. Once again the Tanzanian army played an integral role in providing logistical support by unloading and transporting the ship's cargo to the various destinations. Tanzanian port authorities confirmed that ninety percent of the cargo was comprised of military arms and equipment, with the balance being agricultural implements, a number of civilian vehicles and commercial goods, as part of the £15 million (\$42 million) agreement on economic and technical cooperation. Part of the cargo was also shipped to Zanzibar on a chartered vessel on 8 September, containing a consignment of two trucks and 296 cases of medical equipment.<sup>459</sup> By 1965 there were more than fifty staff at the Chinese embassy and roughly ninety economic technicians, a clear reflection of how rapidly the breadth and depth of Chinese engagement in Tanzania had grown.<sup>460</sup>

#### v) Chinese military support and African liberation movements

Tanzania's acceptance of Chinese aid and military support for the liberation movements put Nyerere's government in a politically compromising position vis-à-vis the colonial powers. The Portuguese government attempted to exploit the situation to its own ends by directing the release of two letters in Tanzania in November 1964: The first claimed that the Americans and Portuguese were collaborating to bomb the Chinese training camps in Tanzania and the second alleged that the US State

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<sup>458</sup> Greig 1977; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania. 10 September 1964, No. 1374, Chinese Military Assistance.

<sup>459</sup> NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania. 15 September 1964, No. 1403, Chinese Military Assistance.

<sup>460</sup> NARA, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Memorandum: Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, OCI No. 1211/65, 30 April 1965, p. 9.

Department was planning to overthrow Nyerere.<sup>461</sup> The “Western plot” surfaced at the same time as the dramatic Stanleyville incident in neighbouring Congo, in which a joint Belgian-American task force rescued Western hostages held by Congolese *Simba* rebels, and so the passionate Tanzanian response to these “Western plots” reflected the general suspicion amongst African governments that “the West could not be trusted.”<sup>462</sup> This extreme caution contrasted with observations from some Western powers. A British diplomat attributed the tightening of security arrangements in Dar es Salaam to the “post-plot neurosis or spy fever, a xenophobia of a particularly virulent form.” His report described the “political schizophrenia” that had “reduced diplomats here almost to the role of child psychiatrists, trying to cope with African inferiority complexes and persecution manias.”<sup>463</sup> Although Nyerere later accepted that the letters were forgeries, he stood his ground and did not issue an official apology for his government’s reactive accusations, letting the furore gradually subside.

Instead of the intended effect of causing the Tanzanian government to veer away from the Chinese, the “Western Plot” invariably brought both governments closer by driving a wedge deeper into Tanzania’s strained relations with the US and British governments. On 1 February 1965, Ambassador He Ying proclaimed that China and Tanganyika were “forging a militant friendship” that reflected their common military support for the liberation struggles.<sup>464</sup> At the same time, similar sentiments were voiced by the newly arrived Tanzanian ambassador in China, Tewa Saidi Tewa, who declared that his government was committed to helping those who still suffered under colonial

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<sup>461</sup> Bjerk 2008, p. 443; AAPSO 1964, pp. 139-147.

<sup>462</sup> NA, DO185/8, Tanzania: the alleged ‘Western Plot’ against Tanzania, 12 March 1965.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> NA, DO216/60, Chinese interest in Tanzania, 1 February 1965.

oppression, until they too become independent. Significantly, he added that the present challenge was the risk of “new colonialism”, an unmistakeable stab at the Soviet Union that would have been appreciated by the Chinese.<sup>465</sup>

Western government officials discussed the reasons for the insidious appeal of Chinese assistance – specifically military aid – and its mixed effect on Chinese diplomacy in Africa. As a new revolutionary actor entering a decolonising Africa, the Chinese government chose to target its assistance strategically. The British High Commissioner in Dar es Salaam observed that the Chinese were listened to because they were willing to help in areas that the Tanzanians cared about, “particularly arms for the Congo rebels and the Mozambique people.”<sup>466</sup> This view was reinforced by the US embassy’s First Secretary Terry McNamara, who complained that while the Ford Foundation shouldered the cost of schooling Mozambican refugees in Tanzania, the Chinese and East Europeans overshadowed them because they were supplying arms to the Mozambican, Congolese and Tanzanian forces. He added wryly that, “education doesn’t rate with machine guns.”<sup>467</sup>

In addition, Western concerns about the growing Chinese engagement in Africa were fanned by rumours that Beijing had offered to sponsor the Tanzania-Zambia (Tanzam) rail link, the massive project which intended to strengthen Zambia’s frontline role.<sup>468</sup> During his stop-over in Zanzibar in June 1965, Zhou Enlai praised the islands’ role in the pursuit of anti-imperialism and national liberation, calling the January 1964

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<sup>465</sup> *People’s Daily*, 7 and 10 February 1965.

<sup>466</sup> LSE, Hetherington/9/14, Tanzania – miscellaneous points from Dar es Salaam, March 12-14, 1965.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>468</sup> Chapter Four deals specifically with the negotiations and events surrounding the Chinese offer to sponsor the Tanzam rail link.

revolution a “marvellous achievement.”<sup>469</sup> These comments unleashed further British criticism of Nyerere’s special relationship with China, in spite of the Tanzanian president’s insistence that his country was non-aligned. He found it increasingly difficult to reconcile non-alignment with the need for military assistance in a climate of general domestic and regional insecurity.

Yet Chinese military assistance and support for the African liberation groups elicited mixed reactions elsewhere in Africa and the Chinese government suffered a number of diplomatic crises in 1965. The government of Burundi declared Beijing’s support for the Congo rebellion interference in its internal affairs and expelled all Chinese diplomats and NCNA staff from the country, which had been the base for Chinese aid operations to the Congo in February 1965.<sup>470</sup> The severance of its supply channel to the Congo was a disappointing setback for the Chinese government. The Sino-Soviet dispute also took a toll on China’s relations with the liberation movements and is discussed further in Chapter Six.

At the same time, Nyerere successfully consolidated his political power through instituting a single-party system. The Chinese looked favourably upon these and other developments in Tanzania. Consul Zhou Boping listed seven positive steps taken by the Tanzanian president: The first three were the installation of an incorrupt style of governance, the promotion of better inter-racial relations, and the abolition of tribal privileges (Zhou had likened black Africa’s tribalism to Chinese feudalism). More significant were the fourth to seventh measures: The abolishment of the multi-party system for a single-party one; the enactment of laws to prohibit strikes and to prevent

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<sup>469</sup> NA, DO213/224, FE/1879/A5/2, Chou Enlai’s Speech at Zanzibar Rally, 7 June 1965.

<sup>470</sup> The PRC, along with the Soviet Union and radical African states, supported the Congo rebellion in early 1965: Poole 1966.

malcontents from seizing power; Nyerere's appointment of two faithful aides – Kawawa and Sarakikya – which allowed him to eliminate threats from Oscar Kambona and the army, the two “concealed dangers”. Finally, Nyerere had improved stability and national strength by supporting the Zanzibar revolution and implementing the union.<sup>471</sup>

In contrast, Nyerere's consolidation of power has been criticised by some authors. Saul argues that Nyerere's political primacy and the low tolerance for debate in Tanzania led to authoritarianism in its handling of the liberation movements as well. The Tanzanian state's imprisonment of SWAPO members who “dared to ask embarrassing questions of their leaders at Kongwa” in the mid-1960s laid the ground for SWAPO's authoritarian practices and draconian treatment of its dissidents in later decades. Indeed Saul coined the term “club of presidents” to describe the group of national leaders and liberation movement leaders whose common objective was to “stifle, often in the most brutal possible way, the seeds of any dissent that could grow outside a very limited circumference of acceptable discussion.”<sup>472</sup>

Moreover, it appears that the Tanzanian government treated its favoured liberation movements preferentially: In the 1960s and early 1970s, only a small percentage of the arms that were allocated to Zimbabwe's African People's Union (ZAPU) and South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) were actually handed over to them, as the bulk of weapons were distributed to the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the PAC and the Revolutionary Committee of Mozambique

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<sup>471</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 115-118

<sup>472</sup> Saul / Leys 2005, p. 150.

(Coremo), which were groups that Beijing also supported.<sup>473</sup> The Chinese were not unhappy.

## **II. Tanganyika's post-colonial vulnerability**

Running parallel to Nyerere's support for the southern African liberation struggle was the development of the Tanganyikan armed forces and military capacity, the urgency for which was made clear by the army mutiny in January 1964. Nyerere appealed for foreign assistance to build up a stronger military that would preserve domestic stability and security, as well as assist the liberation forces in their cause. This section examines how Chinese military assistance was incorporated as part of Nyerere's attempt to control domestic unrest and external threats.

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<sup>473</sup> Shubin 2008, p. 167.

### i) The army mutiny and Nyerere's fundamental insecurity

To better understand the military context in Tanganyika prior to the mutiny, a brief overview of its history is necessary. The colonial Tanganyikan army originally functioned as a component of the King's African Rifles and included battalions in Uganda and Kenya. The Tanganyika Constitutional Conference decided in March 1961 that the country should have its own army after independence.<sup>474</sup> It also recognised, however, that the army's supporting units could not be assembled in time for independence at the end of 1961. Hence the cost of maintaining those units thereafter was left open to further discussion, a reflection of the British and Tanganyikan governments' perception of the low level of threat to the territory's national security. Moreover, Nyerere wanted to maintain the possibility of a future federal arrangement with Kenya and Uganda at the time and thus did not commit to any specific defence policy arrangements. It was only during the National Assembly's budget session in mid-1963 that the Tanganyikan government's defence policy and military budget were revealed for the first time, presumably driven by the country's importance as a haven for African liberation movements.<sup>475</sup>

Prior to the mutiny, Nyerere had been confident about the loyalty of his British-led soldiers. After the Congolese army mutiny on 5 July 1960, he declared that the Congo did not have TANU's strength and organisation, adding that there was "not the slightest chance that the forces of law and order in Tanganyika [would] mutiny."<sup>476</sup> That faith was misplaced. The generally accepted cause among scholars of the

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<sup>474</sup> NA, T317/583, On Tanganyika: cost of military forces after independence.

<sup>475</sup> TPDF 2001, p. 33.

<sup>476</sup> Pachter 1982, p. 597.

Tanganyikan Rifles mutiny was the soldiers' frustration with the slow rate of Africanisation in the army, which was outpaced by changes in the police force and civil service. The King's African Rifles was re-named the Tanganyikan Rifles but, in reality, only one rifle company at Colito Barracks had an Africanised command structure.<sup>477</sup> Another contributing factor was Kambona's portfolio at the Ministry of Defence. The Minister had locked horns with the departing Commander of the Tanganyika Rifles, Brigadier Patrick Sholto Douglas, on the changes within and future direction of the army.<sup>478</sup> The High Commission criticised Kambona's policies which undermined the army's discipline; records show that the mission believed that his abolishment of the Special Branch ultimately led to a dangerous combination of discontent and a governmental lack of intelligence about developments on the ground.<sup>479</sup> Yet it did not appear that British influence would be entirely removed.

A significant British presence remained in the Tanganyikan army, with the High Commission's Defence Advisor continuing to play an important role after Douglas' departure in May 1964. Moreover, Tanganyika was still heavily reliant on Britain for supplying the backbone of its officer corps.<sup>480</sup> This situation coloured the Chinese embassy's perception of Nyerere's leadership, as the latter's "slow action in cutting out British influence in the Tanganyikan army after independence created the conditions for the mutiny, a mistake which very nearly cost him party and country."<sup>481</sup> Thereafter Nyerere's strategy to consolidate his power and minimise the threat of military

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<sup>477</sup> Gutteridge 1967.

<sup>478</sup> Parsons 2003, p. 103.

<sup>479</sup> NA, DO185/46, The causes and inspiration of the Tanganyika Mutiny, British High Commission, Dar es Salaam, 31 January 1964; NA, ADM202/510, Report on the activities of 41 Commando, Royal Marines, 1 January 1964-10 April 1964, 11 May 1964, Annex 'B'.

<sup>480</sup> NA, DO213/13, Military Aid for Tanganyika, 10 August 1964.

<sup>481</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 123.

insubordination initially had two prongs: First, the restructuring of the army and training for Tanzanian troops and, second, the enhancement and expansion of the army's military arsenal.<sup>482</sup> Foreign assistance was necessary for both.

## ii) The Tanganyika People's Defence Force (TPDF)

To achieve the first aim of restructuring the army and training the URTZ troops, Nyerere first disbanded the army to start on a clean slate. He then structured its successor along the lines of a limited national service programme. Nyerere envisioned a politically-rooted vanguard for nation-building purposes; a loyal and efficient “development militia” that could be trained to meet the special circumstances of the country, be integrated into national life and attuned to the political system.<sup>483</sup> This organisation was clearly inspired by the Chinese People’s Army. TANU political officers were assigned to positions in the hierarchy and the army would also be represented in the TANU National Executive.<sup>484</sup> The eligibility criteria for recruits included Swahili and English language literacy in addition to the standard physical fitness test.<sup>485</sup> There was a preference for candidates who were members of TANU, ASP and their respective Youth Leagues, the last being a measure to redress the earlier situation when soldiers were barred from political party membership.<sup>486</sup> The training plan for recruits involved a three-month period of nation-building activities, followed by six months of training in the army or police.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>483</sup> Quoted in Pachter 1982, p. 598; Mazrui / Rothchild 1967.

<sup>484</sup> NA, DO213/13, Press Release: Mr. Kawawa Addresses New Army, 24 June 1964.

<sup>485</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 175

<sup>486</sup> NA, DO213/13, Press Release: The United Republic's Military Forces, 18 June 1964.

<sup>487</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 175.

The Tanganyika People's Defence Force (TPDF) was officially established on 1 September 1964 with 1,300 recruits.<sup>488</sup> Brigadier General Mirisho Sam Hagai Sarakikya, a trusted and loyal aide to Nyerere, was appointed to head the new army. Significantly, the new army's mandate was to preserve domestic and national security, which was a pressing concern because of the high concentration of freedom fighters in Dar es Salaam and refugees from the Congo and Mozambique. Thus a strong army was needed because the deluge of people across those borders attracted spies from the hostile governments of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Portugal.<sup>489</sup> Furthermore, the TPDF played a major role in supporting the liberation movements. The TPDF was tasked with training the liberation forces, ensuring their security and at times even escorting soldiers into the liberated zones to fight alongside them in combat zones.<sup>490</sup>

Nyerere actively approached various donors to achieve the second objective of building up the army's military hardware. The Chinese offer of military assistance for the TPDF was the first to be publicly accepted.<sup>491</sup> From 1963 until 1965, the country's list of military donors included Israel, Canada, West and East Germany, the Soviet Union, Nigeria and Ethiopia, as well as China. Nyerere's attempts to create a non-aligned framework of military assistance raised many practical problems, not least of all political disagreements between the donors and differences arising from their military systems, which determined the leadership, discipline, training, equipment and culture of the national army.<sup>492</sup> Sarakikya's own military training at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst meant that he was more familiar with and inclined towards

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<sup>488</sup> The figure given by Legum is 1,000: Legum 1964; A more recent figure of 1,300 is used: Kilford 2010.

<sup>489</sup> NA, DO216/41, Tanganyika and the liberation of Africa, 5 December 1963.

<sup>490</sup> Mwanakatwe 2006.

<sup>491</sup> Bailey 1975, p. 40.

<sup>492</sup> Parsons 2003.

British military assistance in the first instance, as the British records show. Zanzibar's autonomous military development posed a further challenge to the uniformity of Tanzanian military development, a situation that was worsened by the high and oppressive cost of maintaining the Nigerian battalion and the Ethiopian air contingent, which were the “African solution” to Tanganyikan military weakness after the mutiny of the Tanganyikan Rifles in January 1964.<sup>493</sup>

### iii) Chinese military assistance to Tanzania

As discussed in Chapter Two, Second Vice President Rashidi Kawawa visited China in June 1964. In addition to negotiating with the Chinese for development aid, Kawawa appealed for military assistance for the URTZ. Premier Zhou Enlai responded with the advice that although military materiel was necessary, it was the government's political power that was paramount.<sup>494</sup> Kawawa left Beijing with an offer of military aid and officer training for any number of URTZ cadets, which pleased him greatly.<sup>495</sup> Throughout his visit the Chinese press lauded the “excellent revolutionary situation” in Africa and declared the Chinese people's support for the armed struggles for national liberation in Angola, Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique.<sup>496</sup>

Soon after Kawawa's trip, Sarakikya made a fact-finding tour to China in July 1964. Despite his initial scepticism, as he toured factories, communes and military establishments, the Tanzanian commander was impressed by the industriousness of the Chinese people, the scale of activity and the massive size of the Chinese army. He later

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<sup>493</sup> NA, DO213/13, Re-Organisation Tanzan Army, 27 May 1964.

<sup>494</sup> CCP 1997, p. 647.

<sup>495</sup> NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

<sup>496</sup> *People's Daily*, 15 June 1964.

told British officials that the Chinese standard of military training was roughly equivalent to the basic training standards in Western armies, but that he considered its political background unsuited for Tanganyika, because of the lack of distinction between officers and other ranks.<sup>497</sup> As had been promised to Kawawa a month earlier, the Chinese government was prepared to “offer the moon” and train up to 2,000 Tanzanian military cadets.<sup>498</sup> This overwhelming Chinese offer would make it difficult for Nyerere’s government to reject Chinese help, especially as there were few donor options and growing military needs. Sarakikya intimated to the British that he was compelled to accept some form of Chinese military aid, a point that Kambona also reiterated, because “the Tanganyikan government regarded the Chinese as friends and could not reject their help without causing offence.”<sup>499</sup> Sarakikya eventually requested British support to minimise any threat of Chinese military interference by helping to develop a corps of well-trained, loyal Tanganyikan officers through availing more places at England’s Mons Officer Cadet School.<sup>500</sup>

Nyerere pursued Chinese military assistance and approached the Chinese ambassador directly with an ambitious request to send all Tanzanian army officers to China for training. In response, Zhou Enlai suggested that sending Chinese instructors to Tanganyika instead would be more appropriate and easier to coordinate.<sup>501</sup> In August, Nyerere announced that an eleven-man, six-month Chinese military training

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<sup>497</sup> For instance, Chinese officers shared sleeping quarters with their men at the platoon level, a practice that ran contrary to the British system of segregation between officers and other ranks: NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

<sup>498</sup> NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

<sup>499</sup> NA, DO213/13, Military Aid for Tanganyika, 10 August 1964.

<sup>500</sup> Sarakikya mentioned a shortfall of some 60 in officer ranks. The High Commission supported his proposal and strongly suggested to the CRO that this matter be taken up with the Ministry of Defence, as the lack of vacancies at British military training institutions would oblige Sarakikya to look elsewhere: NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, IP.100/104/7, 25 July 1964.

<sup>501</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 105-106.

mission was planned.<sup>502</sup> The Chinese viewed the refashioned Tanzanian army led by the party as having essentially adopted the direction taken by the Chinese people's army.

#### **iv) The Western response to Chinese military assistance**

The US State Department's Bureau of African Affairs was caught by surprise by this move and quickly urged the British and Commonwealth countries to offer Tanzanian officers places at their military academies; it also encouraged the West Germans to expedite their contributions to the police training programme.<sup>503</sup> In fact, only Canadian military assistance was offered as the British and American governments impelled Ottawa to countervail the growing Chinese presence in Tanzania.<sup>504</sup> The East African governments had mixed reactions to Nyerere's announcement. Martin Kaunda, a distant cousin of the Zambian president, was concerned that a significant physical presence of Chinese military personnel would provide a base for operations to influence or overthrow existing governments.<sup>505</sup>

When Nyerere commented on the reports of Chinese military assistance to Tanganyika in an interview, he explained to visiting journalist Colin Legum that the Chinese were "so much more understanding" to Tanganyikan sensitivities than other

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<sup>502</sup> Legum 1964, p. 16; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania, Economic Intelligence Group, Chinese Economic Penetration Activities in the Underdeveloped World with Special Reference to Africa. This was the second group of Chinese trainers sent; the first had been sent to train the Frelimo forces in Pemba (Zanzibar): Zhou 2004, p. 106.

<sup>503</sup> NARA, RG59, Lot 69D72, Entry 5235, Box 5, Bureau of African Affairs, Significant Current AFE Items.

<sup>504</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 183. A Canadian military survey team arrived the following month, on 23 September 1964: *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>505</sup> Martin Kaunda later joined the Zambian Ministry of External Affairs: NARA, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 66D104, Box 47, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs 1958-1966, Zambia, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation: Chinese Communist Activities in Africa, 18 August 1964.

donor countries like the Soviet Union, Poland and East Germany.<sup>506</sup> The president added that the Chinese did not try to drive “too hard a bargain” and, on the contrary, were quick to respond to Tanzanian requests. They were generally more positive than the West in helping in the areas that the Tanzanians wanted.<sup>507</sup> This point was raised by Sarakikya, who confessed to being “astonished” by the speed at which the Chinese could respond to requests for aid, often within a month, while Western countries generally took at least half a year or more.<sup>508</sup> Such a quick response time was particularly important for the liberation forces battling at the frontline.

Furthermore, Nyerere complained to Legum that he was annoyed by the brouhaha surrounding his acceptance of Chinese help and the insinuation that the Tanzanian government would somehow become a Chinese pawn or satellite as a result.<sup>509</sup> He felt justified in approaching the Chinese for specialist military training in the face of limited alternatives.<sup>510</sup> The departure of the Nigerian battalion, scheduled for September, was imminent. At a hurriedly summoned press conference on 30 August, Nyerere was observed to have been “particularly vociferous” in registering his anger publicly, especially at Western countries, for attempting to arm-twist his government into rejecting Chinese military aid.<sup>511</sup> He emphasised that the Communist countries had

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<sup>506</sup> Legum (1919-2003) was a South African journalist and anti-apartheid activist. He lived and worked in the UK during his political exile: Legum 1999.

<sup>507</sup> Legum 1964, p. 16.

<sup>508</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 184.

<sup>509</sup> Legum 1964, p. 16.

<sup>510</sup> NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania, 1 September 1964. No. 1701, Chinese Military Assistance to United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

<sup>511</sup> NARA, RG59, Lot 69D28, Entry 5520, Box 1, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Chinese Communist Efforts in Africa, 6 October 1964; NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania, Extract from Tanganyika and Zanzibar Fortnightly Summary No. 19/64. 11-29 August 1964.

never attempted to dissuade his government from accepting Western aid and stated his objection to any interference in his government's business.<sup>512</sup>

Nyerere finally confirmed publicly that the Chinese team would comprise only seven instructors and four interpreters, and that the contract was for a limited period of six months. He insisted that Beijing had no intention of encouraging military dependency or of entrenching itself as a major, long-term military donor. In fact, Nyerere added, it was the Chinese themselves who had insisted on the maximum training period, with no provision for either an extension or enlargement of their role. Moreover, the President insisted that the mission's task was based on existing commitments and was limited to instruction in the use of Chinese and similar pattern weapons which had arrived even before the Zanzibar revolution.<sup>513</sup>

Meanwhile, ships from the Eastern bloc and China continued to unload arms and military supplies in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar through the remainder of 1964.<sup>514</sup> Excluding Western donors, very substantial quantities of small arms and ammunition and some heavier military equipment were given by Algeria, the Soviet Union, East Germany and China that year.<sup>515</sup> In addition to the *Heping*, another Chinese ship, the *Laodong*, docked in Dar es Salaam in November 1964. Its cargo was conveyed to the nearby Colito barracks under strict security.<sup>516</sup> The Chinese contribution was restricted to training missions and the supply of relatively small amounts of infantry weapons,

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<sup>512</sup> NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania, Extract from Tanganyika and Zanzibar Fortnightly Summary No. 19/64. 11-29 August 1964.

<sup>513</sup> NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania. Extract from Tanganyika and Zanzibar Fortnightly Summary No. 19/64. 11-29 August 1964.

<sup>514</sup> Greig 1977, p. 151.

<sup>515</sup> NA, DO216/41, Extract from Joint Intelligence Committee Weekly, Review of Current Intelligence, 27 October 1964.

<sup>516</sup> NA, DO216/60, Further Chinese interest in Africa for the month of November 1964.

ammunition and military stores.<sup>517</sup> British estimates put the total value of Chinese military aid at the time at under \$15 million, as no sophisticated equipment, heavy weapons or large military missions were provided.<sup>518</sup>

Yet at more than six hundred tonnes, the shipments were the most substantial deliveries made by China to any African country. Sarakikya observed that, unlike the Soviet government, which had supplied vintage weapons to Zanzibar, the Chinese government provided new weapons, uniforms and webbing equipment.<sup>519</sup> The shipment supported the commander's plan to incorporate elements of different military systems to suit his army's needs as an extension of Nyerere's non-alignment policy. For this, the standardisation of vehicles would follow the advice from a Canadian military survey team and be along British lines. Hence the Tanzanian government submitted a request to the British government in September for a list of vehicles for the army, which they hoped would be financed by a grant or loan, at the cost of £300,000 (\$840,000).<sup>520</sup> Of the Western governments, the Canadians were particularly supportive of the URTZ's military development process. Canadian Colonel Price was an important advisor to Sarakikya, so much so that his training team drafted the new Tanzanian Defence Act.<sup>521</sup> Moreover, the Canadians helped to address the practical limitations to Chinese military aid, such as in the drafting of English-language drill manuals for Chinese weapons. Sarakikya planned for one battalion to be armed and equipped entirely on Chinese lines,

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<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> NA, DO214/116, Chinese Aid to Tanzania. Economic Intelligence Group. Chinese Economic Penetration Activities in the Underdeveloped World with Special Reference to Africa.

<sup>519</sup> NA, DO213/14, Tanzanian Request for Grant or Loan for Purchase of Vehicles for Army, February 1965.

<sup>520</sup> NA, T317/583, CRO to the Treasury, 2-EA32/22/1B, 10 November 1964; NA, DO213/14, Tanzanian Request for Grant or Loan for Purchase of Vehicles for Army, February 1965.

<sup>521</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 197.

although he admitted to being sceptical of the quality of Chinese arms in comparison to British ones.<sup>522</sup>

**v) Tanzania's limited alternatives**

Although Tanzania looked increasingly to China for sophisticated military equipment and training, there were never any Chinese officers in the TPDF or the Tanzanian Army. Instead, the Chinese government sent military trainers to instruct the local instructors on the use of Chinese-made weapons. A team of Chinese military instructors arrived in Tanzania in October 1964 and were later sent to Frelimo camps in southern Tanzania; the Portuguese government was aware of their presence from 1965.<sup>523</sup> The trainers taught military tactics, technical planning, guerrilla warfare, the use of Chinese weapons, the establishment of rural revolutionary bases and ambush techniques.<sup>524</sup>

The Tanzanian government's diminishing budget ran counter to its increasing military needs. Whatever materiel was received was quickly absorbed into the army, such as the majority of the Soviet and Chinese military, comprised of twenty armoured personnel carriers, a small number of field and air defence guns, small arms, mortars and ammunition.<sup>525</sup> Tanzania's relations with its key Western donors became increasingly strained and the already limited sources of military assistance shrank further. The formation of the union had a direct and immediate impact on Tanganyika

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<sup>522</sup> NA, DO213/14, Tanzanian Request for Grant or Loan for Purchase of Vehicles for Army, February 1965.

<sup>523</sup> NA, FCO45/858, Visit to Mozambique: Call on General de Arriaga, 20 October 1971.

<sup>524</sup> Lin 1978; NA, DO213/101, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to East Africa Political Department, CRO, 7 December 1964.

<sup>525</sup> NA, CAB163/69, Supply of Soviet bloc and Chinese Arms to New Commonwealth Countries, Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, 10 August 1965.

and Zanzibar's relations with West Germany, which was one of Tanganyika's major donors. The West German government's Hallstein Doctrine barred it from having official relations with third countries that recognised East Germany. Up until that point, the West Germans had demonstrated their support for Nyerere and independent Tanganyika, with assistance including a variety of economic, cultural, science, trade institutes and scholarships for local students.

Yet Nyerere stood his ground in response to the West German government's threat to withdraw its military assistance, because of the establishment of an East German consulate in Dar es Salaam. He went further by demanding that all West German projects be terminated. The withdrawal of Bonn's support from Tanzania was a considerable loss, as West German military support included assistance to the air force that amounted to £4 million (\$11.2 million), as well as personnel for the air force and navy. NCNA correspondent Gao described this as the bullying of weaker countries by stronger ones.<sup>526</sup> In April 1965 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) concluded that in order to reinforce Nyerere's position by keeping the communists at bay, the best way to support him and prevent the Chinese from making influential inroads was to provide expatriate staff and aid for the army and, to a lesser degree, the air force.<sup>527</sup> But it was the Canadians, not the British, who provided that assistance.

Nyerere's decision to reconstruct the Tanzanian military was a political one intended to safeguard the country's national security at a time of incomplete decolonisation in Africa. Despite having fallen back on British forces during the

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<sup>526</sup> Gao 1965, p. 86.

<sup>527</sup> NA, DO 214/128, Proposed visit to Tanzania by Mrs. B. Castle, Minister of Overseas Development, April 1965. Document 17. Personal and secret letter to Mr WBL Monson, from ND Watson, Commonwealth Relations Office, 5 April 1965.

mutiny, Nyerere acknowledged that bilateral assistance could only be a temporary measure at best, because it impinged on the recipient government's sovereignty.<sup>528</sup> There were a number of complicating factors due to the few donor options, the political repercussions which each new donor entailed, as well as the long shadow of Britain's post-colonial legacy in East Africa, which had defined the structure and organisation of the army until that point and affected practical considerations in re-vamping military hard- and software. The end result of Nyerere's efforts in reconfiguring the army was a politically embedded, Chinese-inspired people's army.

### **III. The union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar**

Nyerere's staunch support of the African liberation struggles opened the country to the risk of rapid militarisation, as Dar es Salaam became an important centre for the transhipment of arms. On the mainland, the comparatively more disciplined and well-managed TPDF proved able to manage the logistics required of their role. In Zanzibar, however, there was a significantly different outcome. At the same time as Nyerere sought foreign assistance to intensify his government's support for the liberation movements and to develop the Tanzanian military capacity, a serious problem arose on the islands.

First Vice President Abeid Karume's power in Zanzibar was boosted by the creation of the union in April 1964 and he quickly embarked on a rapid build-up of the Zanzibar People's Liberation Army (ZPLA)'s arsenal. Although the Zanzibari troops were nominally under the Ministry of Defence in Dar es Salaam, they were *de facto*

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<sup>528</sup> LSE, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, on March 13, 1965.

under Karume's control. Karume used the arms and supplies from Communist bloc sources to buttress his rule, which brought him into inevitable conflict with Nyerere. The Sino-Tanzanian connection, a growing "military friendship", contributed to these tensions and the militarization of Zanzibar through Chinese competition for influence with the Soviet Union and East Germany. This section examines the three specific issues which led to the Chinese monopoly of military training in Tanzania from 1969: Firstly, Nyerere's challenge of how to manage the clash between the mainland and Zanzibar without undermining the cohesiveness of the union; secondly, Karume's exploitation of the Sino-Soviet rivalry for his personal ends; and thirdly, Nyerere's search of a single, integrated source of reliable military aid.

**i) A clash between Nyerere's and Karume's plans for military development**

In contrast to the challenge that Nyerere faced in breaking the mainland army's inherited British military hierarchy by constructing an entirely new armed force, the military development in Zanzibar was markedly different, both in form and objectives. The ZPLA was created by the ZRC almost immediately after the Zanzibar Revolution in January 1964 and was styled along Communist lines rather than the British military system of the colonial East African armies. The ZPLA's recruits were trained locally, except for a handful who was sent to the Soviet Union, Indonesia and China.<sup>529</sup> The ZPLA's hardware was confined to mainly Soviet- and Chinese-supplied anti-aircraft guns and some small arms, although a steep increase in the supply of arms into Stone Town harbour was noted in March, large quantities of which originated from China. In accordance with the Articles of the Union, the Tanganyikan and Zanzibari military

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<sup>529</sup> TPDF 2001, p. 42.

forces were merged in April, and defence matters were put under the jurisdiction of the Parliament and Executive in Dar es Salaam. Significantly, the union government announced that it would honour all the existing military agreements that the ZRC had made with Eastern bloc countries. This policy would have serious repercussions on the islands' political and military development for years to come.<sup>530</sup>

Instead of dampening Zanzibar's very separate military development trajectory, the union hastened it by protecting Karume's political position and personal fiefdom. Military materiel from the Communist bloc governments streamed into Zanzibar and the prevalence of these arms gave rise to lawlessness and an arbitrary judicial system. In a stunning display of its newly-acquired weaponry and mobilising power, the ZPLA marched at Zanzibar's May Day parade in 1964 brandishing Soviet arms. Zanzibar appeared promising a Communist foothold in East Africa. The North Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese government delegations were also present, to demonstrate their governments' solidarity and support for the Zanzibari authorities.<sup>531</sup>

The official merger of the Tanganyikan and Zanzibari armed forces only officially took place on 14 July and formed the United Republic Military Forces (URMF), nearly three months after the union itself was created. Sarakikya's plan for the integration of the two armed forces ran against the currents that were taking place in Zanzibar. The General intended to enforce uniformity by standardising the military equipment and mixing the recruits from across the union. Additionally, he wanted a reasonable military presence stationed on the islands and one joint training depot in Dar es Salaam. Roughly one third of the nine hundred to a thousand Tanzanian recruits

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<sup>530</sup> Legum 1964, p. 16.

<sup>531</sup> *People's Daily*, 30 April 1964.

would be former ZPLA personnel from Zanzibar; the recruits would undergo training for three months and subsequently form the core of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the Tanzania Rifles in Dar es Salaam. Indeed, Sarakikya wanted the bulk of the joint army to be stationed on the mainland, to be eventually deployed with the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion in Dar es Salaam and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion in Tabora, leaving only around four hundred troops in Zanzibar.<sup>532</sup> In theory, it seemed a rational and straightforward means to create a new national army that would represent both components of the union. However, the military integration process faced insurmountable obstacles in Zanzibar.

Sarakikya was not unaware of the difficulties that he would face in trying to implement changes in Zanzibar. In a meeting with Defence Advisor Colonel B. G. Pugh in July, the URTZ Commander criticised the ignorance of local Zanzibari politicians in military matters, citing the latter's determination to raise a brigade of three infantry battalions as quickly as possible. Karume had no regard for the long-term consequences of such actions, which would greatly compromise standards and result in an inadequately trained officer corps. Moreover, Sarakikya was not impressed by the calibre of the individual ZPLA soldiers and considered their officers "a lot of lazy, drunken layabouts." He informed Pugh that a number of mainland officers were with the ZPLA on Zanzibar being trained in the use of Soviet and Chinese weapons. The mainland officers had an additional purpose, which was to maintain the URTZ's close link with the ZPLA. Sarakikya joked that, given the opportunity, "the fifth column could, with the assistance of the visiting Ethiopian air contingent, take Zanzibar within a fortnight!"<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> NA, DO213/13, Re-Organisation Tanzan Army, 27 May 1964.

<sup>533</sup> NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

## ii) Sino-Soviet competition and the militarisation of Zanzibar

Zanzibar enjoyed a high degree of military autonomy. Observing the situation in Zanzibar closely, the British noted in November 1964 that the ZPLA seemed to be under Chinese and Russian influence. The consulate warned that a complete Communist take-over was close, which could possibly oust Nyerere and the moderate elements in his government or force them onto a more radical track. The Soviet rationale for availing military support was Zanzibar's strong anti-imperialist stand, with the Sino-Soviet competition being a contributing factor.<sup>534</sup> A few months later, another report indicated that Moscow's main objective was to disrupt Chinese influence through its military assistance in Zanzibar.<sup>535</sup> The Canadians, likewise, observed that unless ways could be found to meet at least the most serious deficiencies of the Tanzanian army from Western sources, there was the danger of a drift towards standardisation along Communist lines, which would erode the effectiveness of any future Western military assistance.<sup>536</sup>

However, Karume's plans were narrow and appeared to revolve around the fortification of his leadership in Zanzibar, rather than any closer engagement with the mainland. His policies show mainly a domestic interest and, as one unimpressed British official commented, "the problems of Rhodesia, arms for South Africa [...] that affect United Kingdom relations with Nyerere so vitally,

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<sup>534</sup> Author's correspondence with Professor Vladimir Shubin, Soviet scholar and former Secretary of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and Head of the Africa Section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) International Department, 18 May 2010.

<sup>535</sup> CFMA, 109-03645-10, 11 August 1965.

<sup>536</sup> Note from the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs on 9 December 1964, quoted in NA, DO213/14, Tanzanian Request for Grant or Loan for Purchase of Vehicles for Army, February 1965.

passed [Karume] by.”<sup>537</sup> The ZPLA only formally changed its name to TPDF in March 1965, almost a year after the union. Karume tried to exploit the Sino-Soviet rivalry to his personal benefit. During Ambassador He Ying’s visit to Stone Town in April 1965, the First Vice President appeared receptive to Beijing’s policies and was critical of the Soviets. He insisted that he had little confidence in Moscow’s words and deeds, adding that the Soviet Union opposed China because it was threatened by the latter’s development and rise as a great power. Moreover, he added, the Soviets were afraid to confront American imperialism for fear that it might benefit China.<sup>538</sup>

Yet the Chinese consul in Zanzibar was quick to report that Karume had neither a clear pro-Chinese nor pro-Soviet position. The consul closely monitored the activities of the Soviets and East Germans, noting that Soviet activity was concentrated in the army through Yusuf Himid, the ZPLA Commander, and Ali Mafoudh.<sup>539</sup> Both men were still open and responsive to Chinese overtures, although Karume himself was inscrutable and appeared undecided. The consul concluded that the East German areas of greatest influence were in the news media, public finance and trade; their main proponents included Abdul-Aziz Ali Twala, Ahmed Badawi Qullatein and perhaps Karume. Chinese relations with these individuals were good overall and the consul speculated that their ties would not be compromised simply because of connections with East Berlin.<sup>540</sup> The former Umma comrades such as Ali Sultan were more obviously amenable to

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<sup>537</sup> NA, DO185/69, Letter from H. Philipps to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 18 April 1972.

<sup>538</sup> CFMA, 106-01254-05, 19 April 1965.

<sup>539</sup> CFMA, 109-03645-10, 17 May 1965. The document mentions a “Yusuf,” probably a reference to Yusuf Himid.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

Chinese support, having established close relationships from before. Ali Sultan, who was Minister of Education, Youth and Culture at the time, recalled that:

Here the Chinese were backward, they wanted to develop their country first, but still they helped. Here the Russians were advanced with Sputnik and everything, and yet they were meagre. They were very mean and arrogant, I can say.<sup>541</sup>

Karume managed his relations with the Chinese and Soviet governments shrewdly, using the Sino-Soviet rivalry as a catalyst for the solidification of his absolute power in Zanzibar. To avoid any messy confrontations, the respective military instructors from the Soviet Union and China were assigned to work with different segments of the ZPLA.<sup>542</sup> Thus Zanzibar successfully received military assistance from both Communist powers.<sup>543</sup> The islands' rapid militarization and the ZPLA's more modern and sizeable army than the TPDF, resulted in “an army within an army.”<sup>544</sup> The disparity was untenable.

By August 1965 there were between one and two thousand recruits in the Zanzibari army, far surpassing the four hundred that Sarakikya had originally planned for.<sup>545</sup> Nyerere was certainly aware of these festering tensions between the mainland and Zanzibar, which was a topic of discussion during his meeting with the Nigerian Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in June 1965. Nyerere explained that Zanzibar posed a special problem which required “delicate manoeuvring” and too anti-

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<sup>541</sup> Burgess 2009, pp. 106-107.

<sup>542</sup> NA, CAB163/69, Supply of Soviet bloc and Chinese Arms to New Commonwealth Countries, Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, 10 August 1965.

<sup>543</sup> CFMA, 109-03645-10, 17 May 1965.

<sup>544</sup> NA, DO213/13, British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25 July 1964.

<sup>545</sup> NA, CAB163/69, Supply of Soviet bloc and Chinese Arms to New Commonwealth Countries, Report by Joint Intelligence Committee, 10 August 1965.

Chinese a line might lead to the islands' secession.<sup>546</sup> Nyerere acknowledged that the developments in Zanzibar were not ideal, but that the preservation of the union – a higher goal for national and regional stability – was at stake. Hence his hands were tied when it came to dealing with domestic issues within Zanzibar.

On a different occasion, the Tanzanian leader illustrated the deep-seated problem of Karume's arbitrary and authoritarian rule to Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson by way of an “incredible story”: Following the diplomatic disagreement between the Tanzanian and American governments over the “Western plot,” Tanzanian ambassador Othman Shariff was recalled from Washington D. C. in February 1965. After the dust had settled in June, Nyerere wanted to improve relations with the Americans and issued a directive for Shariff to return to his post. However, the diplomat had been arrested and imprisoned by the Zanzibari authorities for being one of Karume's detractors; Shariff's assignment in the US was intended to exclude him from domestic politics. The ZRC only agreed to Shariff's release after Nyerere had negotiated with them for “two days and two nights” and on condition that he did not return to Washington.<sup>547</sup> Despite the serious domestic constraints that were illustrated by this anecdote, Nyerere insisted that the “process of gradualism”, his preferred approach to the situation in Zanzibar, was taking effect, albeit slowly.<sup>548</sup>

Nevertheless, Nyerere's non-action in regards to Zanzibar's rapid militarisation resulted in serious repercussions there. The presence of such a large stockpile of arms beyond the union government's control posed a dangerous internal security problem.

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<sup>546</sup> NA, DO195/323, British High Commission Lagos, Despatch No. 10, Visit of President Nyerere, 29 June 1965.

<sup>547</sup> LSE, Hetherington/10/16, Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister on June 28, 1965.

<sup>548</sup> NA, DO185/4, Hugh Cudlipp on Nyerere, Kambona, the Chinese and the Railway, 4 August 1965.

Consequently, there was a pervasive atmosphere of distrust and fear; even government officials were not immune to arbitrary punishment or execution at Karume's behest.<sup>549</sup> Part of Nyerere's solution to the problem was to engage more deeply with the Chinese. The evidence bears this out.

### iii) The search for a single source of military aid

From Nyerere's perspective, he had few choices for military donors as the Western governments were not willing to support the liberation movements. As noted earlier, West German military assistance was withdrawn in February 1965, following the application of the Hallstein Doctrine. Therefore, the Communist governments were the main options for arms and training; according to Kilford, they were "welcome [...] out of pure necessity".<sup>550</sup>

The Canadians had expected that the Tanzanian government would request an extension of their military training mission which had nearly ninety advisors and which had progressed smoothly since inception. But Canada's refusal to provide the Tanzanian government with fighter aircraft, which Nyerere wanted against the Portuguese, ushered in the end of its military assistance.<sup>551</sup> Although the Canadians surmised that "little by little, the Chinese would also chip away at [their] military assistance efforts", it still came as a surprise when Nyerere terminated the programme in 1968.<sup>552</sup> The Canadian Military Assistance Committee concluded that, in spite of not

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<sup>549</sup> Burgess 2009.

<sup>550</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 202.

<sup>551</sup> At that point, Beijing stepped in once again and constructed an air base at Ngeregere near Dar es Salaam, trained fighter pilots in China and provided a squadron of 12 MIG-17 planes for the air force in 1974: Kilford 2010, p. 202.

<sup>552</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 198.

having kept the Chinese out of Tanzania, they had kept a Chinese military monopoly at bay until the Tanzanian forces were stronger, better organised and more able to manage any potential subversion.<sup>553</sup> The last bastion of Western and Commonwealth military assistance to Tanzania had fallen.

Compared to the other bilateral donors, the Chinese government appeared more willing to help the Tanzanians with the requested military hardware, which the TPDF deemed necessary to defend its borders from Portuguese or South African attacks. Beijing assisted with the organisation of a tank squadron and gave fourteen T-62 light tanks with maintenance support. The problem of military standardisation and integration between the mainland and Zanzibari armed forces persisted. Nyerere told a visiting Chinese naval study mission in April 1969 that the Tanzanian military faced many problems because of its multiple supply sources. He therefore proposed to solve this by integrating military development according to Chinese standards. Moreover, Nyerere said he was pleased with the police and military training by Chinese instructors, expressing his hope that naval and, potentially, air force training would proceed as smoothly.<sup>554</sup>

Shortly after, China donated two patrol boats and prepared the ground for the establishment of a navy trained by Chinese instructors, “thereby putting an end to Tanzania’s lack of navy capabilities.”<sup>555</sup> Beijing sent a training team led by Deputy Commander of the 42<sup>nd</sup> army Maoshe and Military Political Commissar Xunli, both of whom had extensive military experience and were respected veterans who had

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<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>554</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 106.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.* .

participated in the CCP's anti-Japanese resistance. China later gave air defence weaponry and training of the mainland army by the third batch of military instructors pushed Tanzanian military capacity another step ahead. Thus the Sino-Tanzanian bond was further sealed through China's response to Tanzania's post-colonial weakness on the military front in the context of ongoing liberation struggles.

The Chinese army's lack of hierarchy that Sarakikya had observed during his trip to China was also evident in the trainers' residential compound.<sup>556</sup> In their leisure time the experts cultivated vegetables and fruit trees. The team leader worked alongside everyone else and carried out duties such as collecting manure (which was used as fertiliser), fetching water and other manual tasks. That scene of an economically productive army resonated deeply with Nyerere's own wish for an army that could participate actively in nation-building. Indeed, prior to the mutiny of the Tanganyikan Army, he too had planned to have soldiers cultivate their own food and help with public works projects.<sup>557</sup> When the Tanzanian soldiers reported to Nyerere what they had seen their Chinese instructors do in their spare time, the president surprised them all by joining in. He subsequently asked his senior generals and government ministers to participate in the training when they had the time. Therefore Nyerere's decision to rationalise military development along Chinese lines eliminated any further, uncontrolled accumulation of arms on Zanzibar and smoothed the way for more standardisation between the mainland and Zanzibari armed forces.

Nyerere also prioritised highly his country's non-alignment, explaining in an interview some years later that, "I couldn't ask the West [...] I was trying to rig out the

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<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>557</sup> Kilford 2010, p. 175

British. So I got the Canadians. I trusted the Chinese, they could train our army which would be ours.”<sup>558</sup> With the departure of the Canadians from mainland Tanzania and the cessation of the Soviet and East German presence in Zanzibar, China became the sole provider of military aid and training to Tanzania in 1969.<sup>559</sup> Nevertheless, local power structures in Zanzibar persisted until Karume was assassinated in 1972.

Continued pronouncements by Chinese and Tanzanian officials affirmed the militant friendship publicly. At the celebration of the Union Republic’s fifth anniversary in 1969 in Beijing, Tanzanian ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim emphasised that:

In our struggle against imperialism and colonialism, old and new, the African people have constantly enjoyed the firm and solid support of the great Chinese people and their government. This support has been of singular importance and has tremendously assisted in accelerating the liberation process of our continent. The African people are sincerely grateful to their Chinese friends for their valuable support.<sup>560</sup>

Chinese military assistance had increased Tanzanian military capability, confidence and reputation. This was clearly demonstrated when the ousted Ugandan leader Milton Obote – a respected friend of Nyerere’s – sought Tanzanian assistance for the removal of Major General Idi Amin who had led the military coup in January 1971. Confident of a military victory against the Ugandans because his troops had been well-trained and equipped with Chinese assistance, the Tanzanian president approached

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<sup>558</sup> From an interview with Nyerere on 27 July 1987, quoted in TPDF 1993, p. 151.

<sup>559</sup> Bailey 1975, p. 40.

<sup>560</sup> NA, FCO31/441, Address by HE Salim Ahmed Salim, Tanzania’s Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China on the occasion of the Fifth Anniversary of the United Republic, Peking, 26 April 1969.

Consul Zhou Boping to request that the Chinese instructors join the troops at the frontline. But Zhou was less than enthusiastic about Chinese participation. He replied that although Obote's return to power would benefit the other countries in Africa, it would be inappropriate for Chinese trainers to participate in a mission that was beyond their agreed scope of duty.

Still Nyerere insisted that the matter be raised to Premier Zhou Enlai. But the premier declined Chinese participation in the military venture, citing the possibility that it would provoke a retaliatory attack from the British air force stationed in Nairobi. The premier reiterated that the protection of Tanzania's stability was paramount. By that time, the Chinese government was recovering from the devastating Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and had already committed to constructing the Tanzania-Zambia rail link. Nyerere finally accepted Zhou's advice and abandoned the plan, offering Obote sanctuary instead.<sup>561</sup> That incident was a prelude to the Uganda-Tanzania war (1978 to 1979), which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

### **Conclusion: The consequences of Chinese military aid**

Chinese military assistance to Tanganyika from 1964 was a breakthrough in bilateral relations which, as Chapter Two has demonstrated, was limited to ministerial visits until that point. As this chapter has shown, the growth of the committed Sino-Tanzanian militant friendship can be attributed to a convergence of three factors. First, Tanganyikan (and Tanzanian) support for the African liberation struggles, as well as the country's key role as host of the OAU's ALC. Tanzanian support came from the

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<sup>561</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 107.

highest levels of government, with policies that ensured the liberation groups would be protected and have a conducive environment to carry out their respective missions.

The second factor which contributed to the growth of the Sino-Tanzanian militant friendship was the erosion of the colonial military legacies in both Zanzibar and Tanganyika following the outbreak of the Zanzibar Revolution (discussed in Chapter One) and the mutiny of the Tanganyika Rifles in January 1964. The mutiny and its subsequent suppression by British Royal Marines exposed the fundamental vulnerability of Nyerere's government and posed grave security risks for the liberation movements in Tanganyika. Western military aid was constrained in both of these instances because the process of European decolonisation in southern Africa was incomplete. China, in particular, was timely and strategic in its response to the Tanzanian government's military requests.

Moreover, Beijing recognised that good bilateral relations were of paramount importance in order to facilitate its military assistance to the liberation groups that were based in mainland Tanzania. Hence, the Chinese government's provision of arms, military supplies and training to the Tanzanian government had the dual purpose of supporting the southern African liberation movements based in Tanzania, as well as strengthening Tanzanian military capacity to maintain national security. These objectives were mutually reinforcing, as a better trained and equipped Tanzanian army was better able to protect and train the liberation troops, while safeguarding the country's internal stability. They also redefined Chinese engagement in Africa's geopolitical landscape by linking Beijing directly to the anti-colonial armed struggles in southern Africa.

From the perspective of military development, the creation of the union introduced the problem of standardisation between the armed forces. Karume successfully exploited the Sino-Soviet rivalry and there was an impressive build-up of arms on the islands. The military stockpile buttressed his personal power and, at the same time, stonewalled Zanzibar's military integration process with the mainland. With the options for military assistance quickly narrowing, the third contributing factor to the Sino-Tanzanian militant friendship was the high potential that Chinese military aid presented for solving the challenges of military standardization, minimising the Sino-Soviet rivalry in Zanzibar and learning from the nation-building qualities of the Chinese people's army. Moreover, Nyerere was inspired by elements such as the army's embeddedness within the political party, as well as the protection and support of liberation groups in Tanzania.

While mainland Tanzania had received military assistance from a number of other governments as part of Nyerere's non-aligned policy, that approach exacerbated the challenge of standardisation. Yet in spite of these difficulties, Nyerere prioritised the preservation of the Union above all, believing that a successful Union would contribute to a broader stability in the region. Later on, the intensification of the liberation struggles in southern Africa led to Nyerere's decision of selecting Beijing as its sole source of military assistance from 1969. Therefore, as this chapter has shown, Chinese military support filled an important gap in Tanzanian military development that would otherwise have been difficult to address in a post-colonial and continuing colonial landscape. With a militant friendship now firmly established, Beijing's most ambitious and visible anti-imperialist undertaking would come next: The iconic TanZam rail link. This is the topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Four – Laying the tracks for the TanZam rail link, 1965 to 1967**

The militant friendship that had steadily developed between the Tanzanian and Chinese governments throughout 1964 prepared the ground for a dramatic demonstration of Beijing's desire to enlarge its role in Africa. The Chinese government made an offer to President Julius Nyerere in February 1965 to construct the Tanzania-Zambia (TanZam) rail link, which would be its largest overseas project at the time. Together with Beijing's military assistance to the African liberation movements that was discussed in Chapter Three, this new development marked a new juncture in the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship and had ramifications on both countries' foreign relations.

The TanZam rail link has mostly been presented as the hard evidence of China's grand African strategy during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, when Chinese foreign policy took an ultra radical turn. But the decision made by the Chinese leaders to sponsor the TanZam rail link took place in early 1965, before the start of the Cultural Revolution. Nyerere and his Zambian counterpart Kenneth Kaunda were at first unsuccessful in their attempts to find a donor for the project. Yet when the Chinese government threw down the gauntlet to the West in February 1965 by offering to make the rail link a reality, it was received hesitantly by both African leaders. The aftermath of the Rhodesian unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in November 1965 set in motion a turn of events and the tripartite (Chinese, Tanzanian and Zambian) agreement on Chinese sponsorship of the TanZam rail link was signed in 1967.

As this chapter will show, there were numerous conflicting currents below the surface which have not been sufficiently taken into account in the historiography of the

TanZam rail link negotiations. It examines the important pre-history of the TanZam rail link from 1965 to 1966 in three parts: Firstly, the new importance and significance of the TanZam rail link; secondly, the distractions and obstacles to Chinese sponsorship; and, finally, the impact of Rhodesia's UDI.

## **I. The new importance and significance of the TanZam rail link**

The history of railway development in Africa is, by nearly all accounts, a history of colonial expansion and incursion into the heartlands. This was certainly the case in German East Africa and in Northern Rhodesia (colonial Zambia), which had their rail infrastructure built to suit colonial German and South African regional mining interests respectively, in the late nineteenth century.<sup>562</sup> The idea of the TanZam rail link between independent Tanzania and Zambia evolved from one that was originally designed to generate colonial profit, to one that would further the cause of African political freedom and economic development.

### **i) A nationalist rail link**

The idea of building a rail artery through central Africa to the Indian Ocean first emerged during the colonial era. The German and British authorities in Tanganyika had ruminated upon the possibility of a dramatic route cutting through mountainsides and large tracts of jungle, connecting the lucrative Northern Rhodesian copper belt to a sea port on Africa's eastern coast. The British colonial authorities combined Northern and Southern Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe) with Nyasaland (colonial Malawi) to form the

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<sup>562</sup> Monson 2009, p. 21.

Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953 in defiance of popular black African opposition.<sup>563</sup> Both the pre-war Labour government and its Conservative successor under Prime Minister Winston Churchill intended for the federation to usher in greater economic advantages for the three colonies, as well as to strengthen relations between the UK government and white settler communities. Northern Rhodesia was mineral-rich, its most lucrative resource being copper exports. However, the landlocked country was heavily reliant on rail and sea trade routes through the neighbouring countries for its exports, as well as for essential imports such as oil and coal.

The colonial railway infrastructure was organised into the southern and eastern African rail networks that functioned on differently sized gauges – the distance between the inside of the rail heads – which determined the direction and destination of trade traffic. The priority was to serve colonial objectives, with little consideration for local economic and social development.<sup>564</sup> The idea of the TanZam rail link took on new significance in the 1960s when the newly independent African governments sought to undo colonial power structures and to solidify their economic independence. In Northern Rhodesia, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), formed in 1959 and led by Kenneth Kaunda, raised the issue of the TanZam Rail link as a major political point in its agenda. Kaunda's reasoning was compelling. Northern Zambia's key export line ran south from Lusaka and kept the country economically integrated with southern Africa.<sup>565</sup> The possible coastal options were Lobito in Angola, Durban in South Africa, Lourenço Marques and Beira in Mozambique – all of which were under

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<sup>563</sup> Murphy 2005.

<sup>564</sup> Monson 2009, p. 21.

<sup>565</sup> Cronje / Ling / Cronje 1976, p. 224.

white jurisdiction. Hence Northern Rhodesia's existing export infrastructure left it vulnerable to the rapidly escalating political and racial tensions in southern Africa.

After the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland on 31 December 1963, Kaunda was elected Zambia's first prime minister in January 1964. He was installed as its first president at the independence ceremony on 24 October 1964. Among his most immediate objectives was to minimise Zambia's dependence on its hostile neighbours. Dar es Salaam held great promise as a major sea port in an independent, stable, African-controlled country. Moreover, Nyerere and Kaunda had a close personal rapport. The Tanzanian leader was extremely supportive of the proposal for the interstate rail link. He believed that it would not only lighten the heavy colonial footprint in African railway infrastructure by promoting domestic development and regional cooperation, but also fulfil the government's promise to the people that was made before independence.<sup>566</sup> Moreover, the rail link would promote development in Tanzania's undeveloped south-western region.

Fronted by Kaunda and Nyerere, the TanZam rail link idea shed its original colonial connections and became instead a symbol of pan-Africanism, black African nationalism and liberation.<sup>567</sup> The newly proposed TanZam rail link promised to strengthen Zambian frontline support to the southern African liberation struggles through protecting the Zambian economy and its precious copper exports from hostile neighbours. The rail link would run along a similar route to the one envisioned in the colonial period, but its new political importance was highlighted by its popular name as the *uhuru* (Swahili for freedom) railway. The UN and the World Bank each conducted

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<sup>566</sup> NA, DO185/5, Note on talk with President Nyerere, held on 29 October 1965.

<sup>567</sup> Bailey 1976, p. 15.

a major survey on the TanZam route between 1963 to 1964. But their reports reflected a strong institutional reluctance to view the project beyond economic terms.<sup>568</sup> In spite of that, both African leaders appealed to the international community for support in 1965, emphasising the broader developmental benefits that the investment in railway infrastructure would generate. But the potential donors divided the issue into the economic and political aspects, what Monson has described as a “false dichotomy” as railway construction was historically driven by a combination of economic and political objectives, particularly because of the high investment of capital, resources and expertise required.<sup>569</sup> They repeatedly emphasised the project’s economic cost and unfeasibility.

The arguments by the newly independent African governments held little appeal for the British, who profited from their dealings with the colonial administrations in southern Africa and were reluctant to upset the existing order. The TanZam rail link idea was perceived as a direct threat to those incumbent political and commercial powers. Zambia’s lucrative commodities in particular were the target of vested Western commercial interests, which responded to the new nationalist climate by cultivating Pretoria’s *cordon sanitaire* – a southern African bloc within which South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia were able to demand black political compromise from the abutting independent governments in return for white expertise and capital.<sup>570</sup> Persuaded by the reports that emphasised rational economic decision-making, in contrast to Nyerere and Kaunda’s more

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<sup>568</sup> For example, the prevailing political realities were not taken into account and the survey assumed that the rail system to the south – through hostile Southern Rhodesia – would remain open to Zambian exports. Monson 2009, pp. 15-16.

<sup>569</sup> Monson 2009, p. 16.

<sup>570</sup> Cronje / Ling / Cronje 1976, pp. 222-223.

political objectives, the British, Soviet, American and Japanese governments, as well as the World Bank, rejected the TanZam rail link proposal.<sup>571</sup> A third survey in 1963 yielded a more optimistic report. The London and Rhodesia Mining and Land Company Ltd. (Lonrho), registered in 1909, had established itself in the metals and mining sector before diversifying its portfolio in subsequent decades. Unlike the two earlier reports, the Lonrho survey was more positive about the rail link's potential economic yield. However, as a profit-based private entity, Lonrho requested a monopoly over Zambian copper movements to the coast and was rejected by the Zambian government.<sup>572</sup>

The TanZam rail link proposal further underscored Tanzania's rapidly changing role from that of a more moderate East African actor to one of prominence in the southern African racial and political conflicts. Racial tensions in southern Africa were exacerbated by the Conservative British government. A high proportion of the Conservative members of parliament had business connections in Africa, which tilted the party towards the private sector.<sup>573</sup> Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home put off making a difficult decision on Rhodesian independence because of the impending UK general election in October 1964, fearing that it would incense the OAU, UN and liberal elements.<sup>574</sup> The Labour party defeated the Tories and won the election by the narrowest of margins – four seats.<sup>575</sup> The Labour party was considered a more likely opponent of white Rhodesia, hence this change in British leadership raised the hopes of

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<sup>571</sup> Mutukwa 1977.

<sup>572</sup> The Lonrho chief executive Roland W. Roland ("Tiny" as he preferred to be called) was well-acquainted with many black African leaders and had reportedly ferried Kaunda to a meeting with Nyerere in his private jet in October 1963: Cronje / Ling / Cronje 1976, p. 17 and pp. 32-33.

<sup>573</sup> Murphy 1999, p. 89.

<sup>574</sup> Wood 2005, p. 233.

<sup>575</sup> Wood 2005, p. 241.

black African nationalist governments who wanted more political pressure put on Rhodesia. Consequently the Tanzanian and Zambian governments also hoped that the new Labour government would be more supportive of the rail link project.

**ii) Tanzania's request and China's response**

The Chinese government was not a preferred donor for the TanZam rail link project. Until early 1965, Beijing had only delivered modest amounts of military assistance and development projects to the Tanzanian government. The Tanzanians were also fully aware that, as a developing country, China's financial, material and technological capacity were very limited compared to that of the affluent countries and multi-lateral organisations. But the combination of very visible Chinese interest, with the narrowing of options because of the palpable Western disinterest in the proposal, led to the Chinese government's entry as the unrivalled sponsor.

Babu was once again an important broker of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, this time by broaching the rail link proposal during the Tanzanian economic delegation's visit to China in February 1965. His exploratory request was received positively and prepared the ground for Nyerere's formal request later that month. Indeed, when Babu returned to Dar es Salaam, he appeared confident that funding for the project was no longer an obstacle. He explained blithely to a British journalist that the political value of the railway had been emphasised to its sponsors, who had promised their support.<sup>576</sup> Although Babu did not reveal their identity, the timing of his statement provoked much well-founded speculation on Chinese interest in the sponsorship of the TanZam rail link.

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<sup>576</sup> LSE, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, 13 March 1965.

Consul Zhou Boping's account of the Chinese government's reaction to Babu's request is illuminating and offers an additional perspective to the less enthusiastic Chinese attitude which Monson describes.<sup>577</sup> Upon receiving the Tanzanian request, the Chinese officials acted swiftly. The matter was dealt with and monitored at the highest levels of government. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Chen Yi sought opinions from the relevant Chinese ministries on the TanZam rail link project. Premier Zhou took great interest in their reports and called a meeting with Chen, representatives from the Foreign Economic Liaison Committee and the Ministry of Railways. Throughout the session, the economic implications of the railway project were not raised as an issue. Indeed, Beijing's priorities in the 1960s were not primarily economic. The TanZam rail link project was an opportunity for the Chinese government to upstage its rivals and detractors, such as the Soviets, who had constructed the Volta dam in Ghana and the Aswan dam in Egypt, as well as the Western governments' aid programmes. The Chinese strove to outshine Taiwanese efforts, which were mainly modest agricultural projects.

The five considerations which were discussed are important in understanding the Chinese government's motivations for offering to sponsor the project. The officials first acknowledged the political impetus and urgency of the rail link project for both the Tanzanian and Zambian governments. Both African leaders supported the liberation struggles in southern Africa in spite of intimidations from the white minority regimes, which made the project a high priority for the Chinese government. Moreover, the officials agreed that Nyerere's request be met as he would be making the appeal in

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<sup>577</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 131-132.

person.<sup>578</sup> The second consideration noted in the report was that the Chinese government was financially and technically capable of undertaking the project. The estimated construction cost of the rail link was several hundred million Yuan – difficult to bear in a lump sum – but, spread over time and taking into account China’s economic growth in those eight to nine years, the annual sum was affordable.<sup>579</sup> The group noted that Kaunda had not decided whether to request Chinese help and so the construction of only the Tanzanian segment of the rail link was definitely feasible.

The third consideration was that the impact of and influence from such a large-scale project would outweigh the effects of many smaller, scattered projects. The Chinese government’s participation in making the black African nationalist railway a reality would visibly demonstrate its commitment to anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, as the route was “not just physical, but also ideological”.<sup>580</sup> Mao’s mantra of anti-imperialism and continuous revolution still had broad appeal in Southern Africa and, if his government undertook the TanZam rail link project, the Chinese government could claim to have consistently supported nationalist struggles against the intransigent racist and colonial regimes.<sup>581</sup>

Nevertheless the officials recognised the challenges of implementing a large, transnational project in a distant, tropical location, the fourth consideration raised at the meeting. They cited the many unfamiliar issues and problems, which ranged from colonial intrigues to practical dangers. Hence, cautioned the report, “we cannot lower our guard” as the management of those issues could be either a sources of great pride or

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<sup>578</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 131-132.

<sup>579</sup> 1 million Yuan was equivalent to 0.41 million US dollars.

<sup>580</sup> Monson 2009, p. 2.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

embarrassment for the Chinese government.<sup>582</sup> The meeting recommended that a survey team be sent to investigate the conditions along the route and to design an implementation plan. Finally, the group predicted that a Chinese offer to construct the rail link would create panic in some Western countries and might even trigger a counter-offer: Nyerere could then use the Chinese offer as a trump card to oppose any conditions that other donors might stipulate.<sup>583</sup> Mao and the Party Central Committee agreed to the five points that were raised by the group. A great deal of effort and political will was directed towards getting an answer that would allow the Chinese leaders to be able to respond to Nyerere positively.

While Nyerere was in Beijing, the tone of the bilateral discussions about the rail link was encouraging and the Chinese leaders appeared sincerely interested in the TanZam project. In contrast to Nyerere's discussions with Western donor governments, his Chinese hosts focused considerably less on the project's economic profitability and appreciated the political underpinnings of the request.<sup>584</sup> President Liu Shaoqi advised that the Tanzanian section be finalised first, after which an implementation plan could be confirmed and, if Kaunda were to request for the Zambian section subsequently, the same process would apply.<sup>585</sup> Consequently the Chinese government made an offer to sponsor the entire rail route, including the Zambian section, and assured that full ownership would be given to both Tanzania and Zambia upon completion, along with the relevant technology and equipment.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 131-132.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>584</sup> Griffiths 1995, p. 104.

<sup>585</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 131-132.

<sup>586</sup> CCP 1997, p. 709.

Yet both the Chinese and Tanzanian governments viewed the TanZam rail link as a huge undertaking and there was a mutual understanding that the Tanzanians would wait to see if other donors might emerge, wanting to outpace possible Chinese influence from such a large project.<sup>587</sup> The evidence suggests that Nyerere intended to use the Chinese trump card quietly, rather than to draw unnecessary attention. Unknown to the Chinese, however, Nyerere had told Kaunda before the trip to China that he would avoid committing Tanzania irrevocably to China, because Kaunda preferred other donor options. Nyerere was fully aware that there was no perfect donor, as the TanZam rail link project was replete with vying political, economic and developmental interests. It was imperative that he appeared independent, because Tanzania was a haven for liberation movements. Upon his return to Dar es Salaam, Nyerere put his trump card to the test. But the bargaining process was a tortuous one and the reasons for the long-drawn-out delay are examined next.

## **II. Obstacles and distractions for the Chinese offer**

The Tanzanian and Zambian governments maintained cordial relations with the British government even after independence. Nyerere acknowledged the necessity of continuing relations with the former colonial power because of their historical ties and the need for British aid. But the Chinese government's possible entry as the sole sponsor of the TanZam rail link increased the external political pressure on both African governments and threatened to fragment the Tanzanian government from within. This research shows that three significant obstacles emerged and prolonged

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<sup>587</sup> NA, CAB148/46, Copy of a letter from Mr. J. O. Wright, Prime Minister's Office, to Mr. C. Adams, CRO, 25 February 1965; NA, CAB148/46, Aid to Tanzania: Note by the Secretaries, 9 March 1965.

Nyerere's deliberation about Liu's offer: Firstly, the Zambian government's constraints, in particular Kaunda's reservations about Chinese involvement in such a strategically important undertaking; secondly, the external pressure on both the Zambian and Tanzanian governments; and thirdly, the divisions within the Tanzanian government.

**i) Zambian constraints**

Unlike Nyerere, who was able to throw his full energies behind the rail link proposal, Kaunda had to moderate his public position on the issue due to a number of constraints. The reason was partly economic. Zambia, with its mineral wealth was considerably more affluent than Tanzania. In 1965, Zambia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was more than double (239%) that of Tanzania. More significantly, Zambia's GDP per capita that year was one-and-a-half times more (162%) than that of China.<sup>588</sup> From that perspective, it followed that China – itself a developing country – was a less attractive donor to the Zambian government for the TanZam project than the technologically advanced and well-resourced Western countries. Hence Kaunda was extremely reluctant to accept the Chinese government's sole sponsorship of the rail link.

Yet Chinese contact with representatives from Northern Rhodesia had begun on cordial terms even before independence, so that by 1964 more than half of the senior UNIP party officials had visited China. Kaunda frequently visited Tanganyika, and Ambassador He Ying claims to have met him nearly every time. Furthermore, the evidence shows that Kaunda was keen to establish good relations with the Chinese. He invited He Ying to visit Zambia in June 1964 and arranged for him to meet ten other

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<sup>588</sup> Based on data from Maddison 2001, p. 304 and pp. 326-327.

department heads, all of whom reiterated their government's recognition of One China.<sup>589</sup> This support was clearly demonstrated by the immediate establishment of official ties and the exclusion of the ROC from the Zambian independence celebrations in October 1964, in spite of a request from ROC Vice Foreign Minister Yang Xikun. Such favourable early developments notwithstanding, the Chinese embassy reported a stagnation of bilateral ties in Zambia's immediate post-independence period.<sup>590</sup> The Zambian government had planned to send a delegation to China in late 1964, which did not take place because of an administrative delay and plans for another visit were put on the backburner.<sup>591</sup> There was a subsequent lull in relations until August 1965.

Vested business interests wanted to preserve the status quo and subvert the proposal for the TanZam rail link. *The Northern News*, a newspaper acquired by Lonrho in 1963 to promote its business agenda, roused popular anti-Chinese sentiment by reporting in February 1965 that the Chinese government would sponsor the Tanzanian segment of the TanZam rail link and was awaiting Kaunda's decision on the Zambian segment.<sup>592</sup> The publication of the article was strategically timed, just ahead of the Tanzanian presidential visit to China. The Zambian government swiftly dispatched foreign minister Simon Kapwepwe to Dar es Salaam, ostensibly to persuade Nyerere against having sole Chinese sponsorship for the project. Kapwepwe held a press conference upon his return to Lusaka to allay any fears about the reported Chinese interest in the rail link and declared that Chinese assistance for the project was impossible. News of the Chinese offer was restricted even within the Chinese

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<sup>589</sup> He 1993, pp. 301-2.

<sup>590</sup> CFMA, 108-01453-02, 12 August 1965.

<sup>591</sup> CFMA, 108-01453-05, 2 August 1965.

<sup>592</sup> Cronje / Ling / Cronje 1976, p. 225.

government, to the point that no official information had been sent to the Chinese Embassy in Lusaka about the matter – the announcement had caught them by surprise.<sup>593</sup>

There were also constitutional constraints which affected Kaunda's show of support for any Chinese sponsorship for the TanZam project. As a joint owner of Rhodesia Railways, a break in the 1963 agreement with Southern Rhodesia would mean a loss of revenue and stiff penalties. Kaunda preferred instead to explore multilateral or Western options. He and Nyerere met with the other members of the East Africa Railways and Harbours Corporation, Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta and Ugandan President Milton Obote, on 12 March 1965 to rally more regional support for the project. The leaders agreed to establish an Inter-governmental Ministerial Committee (IMC) to oversee the project's terms of reference and financing.<sup>594</sup> Once again the Tanzanians appeared to be very interested in going ahead with the project, but the Ugandan and Kenyan governments were undecided. Hence the issue remained unresolved.

The Chinese government correctly observed that the Zambian government's insecurity about its offer for the rail link was due to the looming possibility of Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence.<sup>595</sup> Zambia offered safe havens for the Zimbabwean liberation movements, but walked a tight rope.<sup>596</sup> Tanzania's uncompromising stance on anti-imperialism made that pressure even more acute.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-01, 9 February 1965.

<sup>594</sup> NA, DO185/4, Rail Link with Tanzania, 14 July 1965; Also in Osei-Hwiedie / Osei-Hwiedie 1990, p. 4.

<sup>595</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-01, 25 April 1965.

<sup>596</sup> Wood, p. 326.

<sup>597</sup> Mwyinga shared his thoughts on this with Chinese officials: CFMA, 108-00649-01, 8 April 1965.

Kaunda felt that the TanZam rail link was a strategic project and that it would allow the Chinese access to too dangerous a source of influence.<sup>598</sup> Yet the Zambian government did not dismiss the possibility of other areas of Chinese assistance. In a discussion between Finance Ministry official Mwyinga and the Chinese Ambassador, the former explained that his government wanted to fight imperialism – including American and British colonialism – but was unable to do so at the moment. That was a major reason as to why the two governments differed in their approach to the Chinese offer of sponsorship. When Mwyinga shared that Zambia's biggest problem at the moment was its poorly developed infrastructure, the ambassador interjected that a team would be sent to Tanzania to survey the Tanzanian segment of the rail link and that it could also travel to Zambia, if Kaunda so wished.

Mwyinga deflected the suggestion and asked for military assistance instead, explaining that the Zambian army only had two battalions. But the Chinese ambassador was non-committal and suggested that the Zambian government approach Tanzania and other friendly African countries to provide military assistance instead.<sup>599</sup> The Zambians persisted with courting the Chinese government and a few weeks later, on 12 May 1965, they raised the possibility of Kaunda visiting China in June. This plan did not materialise because allegations of Chinese interference in Zambia's domestic affairs:<sup>600</sup> A Chinese diplomat had reportedly given cash to a local trade union official. This incident pushed the Zambian government to cap the size of all diplomatic missions in Lusaka, a ban on several Communist publications (including the *World Marxist Review*

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<sup>598</sup> NA, DO183/730, Note on a discussion with President Nyerere and Mr. Goundrey, 24 June 1965.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>600</sup> CFMA, 108-01453-05, 2 August 1965.

and those by the British Communist Party) and resulted in Kaunda's subsequent coolness towards overtures from the Chinese embassy.<sup>601</sup>

Meanwhile in Tanzania, He Ying met Nyerere in early May 1965. The ambassador suggested that the rail survey team be delayed until Nyerere decided on the donor and, if Tanzania should decide to go with the West, then the Chinese government would withdraw its offer. The ambassador then added that the withdrawal of China's offer would start rumours about its intentions. Not wanting to put the Chinese government in a difficult situation, Nyerere then decided that they would proceed with the original plan from February, with Chinese assistance for the Tanzanian section of the railway. Nyerere clarified that if any Western governments were interested in making a counter-offer at that point, he would explain to Kaunda to let them carry on with the Zambian segment. Finally, he added his hope that the survey team would come soon.<sup>602</sup>

Kaunda was unabashed in lobbying for British support for the rail link. Zambia was considered an example of successful British decolonisation policy and it maintained friendly ties with moderate Commonwealth governments. Undeterred by Prime Minister Harold Wilson's lukewarm response to his earlier appeals for assistance, Kaunda implored the former to do everything possible to support Nyerere, and to re-consider financial assistance for the TanZam rail link.<sup>603</sup> The Zambian leader

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<sup>601</sup> NA, DO185/4, Zambia: Visit of the Minister of Overseas Development, 3 June 1965; NA, CAB148/21, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations: Tanzania/Zambia Rail Link, 14 June 1965; Bailey 1976, p. 62; See also: Hall / Peyman 1977.

<sup>602</sup> CFMA, 106-02154-05, 10 May 1965.

<sup>603</sup> Castle 1984, p. 18.

even tried to raise the stakes by pleading for a British rescue operation to save Tanzania from Communist Chinese domination.<sup>604</sup>

## **ii) External political pressure on the Tanzanian government**

Another obstacle in the way of Nyerere's acceptance of the Chinese offer to construct the TanZam rail link was external pressure.<sup>605</sup> He recognised that the project was a large commitment and reasoned that, if the British government or a multilateral donor could be found, then the Chinese government could save its scarce resources and assist his country in some other way. However, Nyerere intimated that he still held reservations about "Western sincerity" and requested that the Chinese survey mission proceed; thereafter, should the deal with the West fall through, the decision would be clear.

Anglo-American discussions on the problems of Rhodesia and South Africa centred on how British aid monies could be presented to African leaders, because the US government viewed East and southern Africa as being primarily a British responsibility. Washington was more focused on developments in Vietnam, where they were pitted against the Chinese-supported Vietcong in protracted guerrilla warfare, than on out-bidding Beijing for an expensive infrastructure project in Africa. "The US government doubted the feasibility of the rail link, which could take ten years to build, by which time the Rhodesian issue might be resolved and the efficient southern routes would be open to Zambia, rendering the railway to Dar es Salaam unnecessary."<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> NA, CAB148/46, Copy of a letter from Mr. J. O. Wright, Prime Minister's Office, to Mr. C. Adams, CRO, 25 February 1965; NA, CAB148/46, Aid to Tanzania: Note by the Secretaries, 9 March 1965.

<sup>605</sup> CFMA, 106-02154-05, 10 May 1965.

<sup>606</sup> Wood, p. 326.

Furthermore, the US government preferred a wide consortium approach to joint development in the region, which would get the African leaders to focus on domestic development by “[turning] African minds inward and away from external irritations.”<sup>607</sup> The State Department’s African Affairs Bureau and its portfolio ranked very low in President Lyndon Johnson’s priorities.<sup>608</sup> Hence the impetus for any major assistance or intercession rested on the British government. Its main reason for wanting to minimise Chinese influence in Zambia was to safeguard the substantial British investment in the copper belt, because a spill-over of Chinese influence from Tanzania would weaken Kaunda’s ability to restrain foreign interference in the trade unions.<sup>609</sup>

But the Chinese trump card soon took effect. When fears arose that Premier Zhou would make a formal offer for the rail link project to Nyerere during his state visit to Tanzania in June 1965, the State Department’s African Affairs Bureau was finally given approval to propose a road transport package to the Tanzanian and Zambian governments, a move calculated to countervail the Chinese presence from the “major Chinese Communist bridgehead in East Africa” and affect Western interests”.<sup>610</sup> Zhou visited Tanzania in June 1965 and, as anticipated, discussed the Tanzania-Zambia rail link project. The Chinese government’s commitment to the project was clear, as Zhou informed Nyerere that a comprehensive survey group would be despatched in August or September to survey the rail route.<sup>611</sup> To make full use of its capacity, the team would also take the opportunity to study other geological aspects along the line, such as coal

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<sup>607</sup> NA, DO 214/128, Proposed visit to Tanzania by Mrs. B. Castle, Minister of Overseas Development, April 1965, Document 17, Personal and secret letter to Mr WBL Monson, from ND Watson, Commonwealth Relations Office, 5 April 1965.

<sup>608</sup> NA, DO214/95, British Embassy, Washington D.C., to CRO, 28 May 1965.

<sup>609</sup> NA, DO183/730, From Lusaka to CRO, No. 820, 1 June 1965.

<sup>610</sup> NA, DO183/730, Foreign Office to Washington, No. 4541, 1 June 1965; Wood 2005, p. 326.

<sup>611</sup> *People’s Daily*, 15 May 1965. The other aspects of Zhou’s visit to Tanzania were discussed in Chapter Two.

mines, iron ore deposits and hydrology.<sup>612</sup> Once again there was no official disclosure of the Chinese government's offer to construct the TanZam rail link, although American intelligence knew that the matter had been discussed and that Zhou had offered assistance in building 1,000 miles of the railway, partly with Chinese labour.<sup>613</sup> The Sino-Tanzanian relationship was already proving to be one of the successes of China's African policy, but Chinese diplomacy faltered elsewhere in the region. After Premier Zhou's visit to Tanzania, he was unable to visit the other East African countries. The other East African leaders did not extend invitations for Zhou to visit and gave him the cold shoulder. Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta had gone to the extent of barring Zhou's plane from making an hour-long refuelling break in Nairobi.<sup>614</sup>

Shortly after Zhou's visit, Nyerere attended the 14<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London. Prime Minister Harold Wilson tried to convince the Commonwealth leaders to support a Commonwealth mission to attain peace in Vietnam. Kaunda was supportive of the idea, but Nyerere was the main antagonist of the British position. Observing that Nyerere seemed to argue for the Chinese government's position in Vietnam, Wilson surmised – incorrectly – that Nyerere had “sold himself out to the Chinese” and was too weak to stand up to the strongly pro-Chinese Zanzibaris in his delegation.<sup>615</sup> Barbara Castle also rued that “Julius was either afraid of his own extremists or was not being honest about his own ideologies”.<sup>616</sup> On Rhodesia, Nyerere was the main antagonist of the British position and declared that the

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<sup>612</sup> CCP 1997, pp. 735-736.

<sup>613</sup> NA, CAB148/18, Minutes of a meeting held at 10 Downing Street on 16 June 1965.

<sup>614</sup> NA, DO213/224, From Nairobi to Commonwealth Relations Office, No. 1064, 8 June 1965; Mackie 2005.

<sup>615</sup> LSE, Hetherington/10/16, Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister on June 28, 1965; Castle 1984.

<sup>616</sup> Castle 1984, p. 44; Wilson later went as far as to say that it would not be long before Nyerere was ousted by “some less desirable person”: LSE, Hetherington/10/16, Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister on June 28, 1965.

only condition for independence was universal suffrage.<sup>617</sup> He condemned the UK government's failure to intervene and called for a military intervention to quell the Rhodesian Front rebels.<sup>618</sup> Even Kaunda complained that Nyerere took "too simple and moralistic a view of international relations" when he should be more concerned with the articulation of his policies."<sup>619</sup> Nyerere's presentation of his case may have appeared "naïve", yet he tried to abide by a principled position of non-alignment based on his understanding of what would be acceptable to the Chinese government.<sup>620</sup> After all, he had great access to the Chinese leaders and spent many occasions discussing their analyses of international affairs.<sup>621</sup> Throughout this time, Ian Smith was in the wings, decrying Tanzania as being under the control of Communist China.<sup>622</sup>

However, the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was negatively affected by the Chinese government's response to the coup which ousted Algerian President Ben Bella on 19 June. The Defence Minister H. Boumedienne seized the government on the eve of the Second Afro-Asian Conference, which was to have been hosted in Algiers. Owing to a misreading and poor analysis of the situation by the Chinese ambassador in Algiers, the Chinese leaders pushed for the conference to proceed as planned. The "fatal blunder" caused a backlash among many African governments.<sup>623</sup> Nyerere was unabashed in calling the Chinese response "a betrayal and disgusting"; thereafter, he grumbled bitterly to Kaunda that the Chinese, "like everyone else outside, did not

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<sup>617</sup> Wood 2005, p. 324.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*; Castle 1984.

<sup>620</sup> LSE, Hetherington/10/16, Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister on June 28, 1965; NA, PREM13/611, Tanzania and the Chinese, 8 July 1965.

<sup>621</sup> LSE, Hetherington/10/16, Note of a meeting with the Prime Minister on June 28, 1965; NA, PREM13/611, Tanzania and the Chinese, 8 July 1965.

<sup>622</sup> Wood 2005, p. 326.

<sup>623</sup> Liu 2001, pp. 80-88.

understand Africa.”<sup>624</sup> Nyerere went on to support the proposal by the Commonwealth Afro-Asian prime ministers to postpone the Afro-Asian conference and that delay was a huge diplomatic setback for the Chinese government.<sup>625</sup> At the same time, the Kenyan and Zambian governments were alarmed by the circulation of seditious pamphlets that called for revolution in Africa. These were presumed to be of Chinese origin, but were really produced by a third party to discredit the Chinese at a particularly vulnerable time. He Ying informed the Foreign Ministry and expressed his hope that the Tanzanian and other African governments would not be fooled by those forgeries, but the damage had already been done.<sup>626</sup>

The months following the Algerian coup severely eroded the unity and solidarity of the Afro-Asian countries as the preparatory meetings were beleaguered by politicking between the major Afro-Asian governments and Sino-Soviet tensions. The Chinese lobbied to have the conference in Algiers materialise – it was postponed to November 1965 – and to bar Soviet participation in it.<sup>627</sup> But Nyerere was still affronted by the Chinese government’s attitudes towards the Algerian coup. Nyerere reiterated to He Ying that Ben Bella was a true African revolutionary and that his absence from the Afro-Asian conference would be a huge loss. As such, Nyerere informed the ambassador that there was no reason for a Tanzanian delegation to attend the event.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>625</sup> NA, DO185/4, Letter from Foreign Office to the CRO, 1 July 1965; NA, FO371/184299, The Postponement of the Algiers Afro-Asian Conference, Guidance No. 296, 16 July, 1965.

<sup>626</sup> CFMA, 118-01738-10, 25 June 1965.

<sup>627</sup> Mackie 2005, pp. 121-2; NA, FO371/184294, Bandung II – Afro-Asian Conference, Algiers, 28 April 1965.

<sup>628</sup> CFMA, 107-00939-03, 26 October 1965; Mackie 2005, pp. 121-122.

These sentiments were indicative of the general dissatisfaction that many third world governments felt at being dragged into geo-political rivalries that did not concern them and, worse, which displaced more pressing and relevant issues. In a private meeting with the British High Commissioner to Kenya, Malcolm MacDonald, Nyerere claimed that Zhou had gone much too far with his criticisms of America and the West in his speeches and had “brought the Cold War to Tanzania.”<sup>629</sup> When the Chinese government finally accepted that they had scant support among the delegates, it did a *volte face* by supporting an indefinite postponement and, finally, the Conference was adjourned indefinitely. This huge rebuff for Chinese diplomacy in the Afro-Asian movement was quickly followed by the liquidation of the Indonesian Communist Party, the strongest pro-Beijing Communist party in the world, by President Suharto’s army. The Chinese government’s support and legitimacy within the divided Communist bloc was weakened even further.

The Zambian delegation to the Commonwealth conference was caught off guard by yet another revelation. Kaunda was aware of the Sino-Tanzanian discussions for some months, but only found out then that Nyerere had actually accepted the Chinese offer. Nyerere explained that the Chinese government had only committed to building the railway if their survey indicated that the project was feasible, but Kaunda was livid. With the news of the Chinese government’s offer to construct the TanZam rail link no longer a secret, the media went into a frenzy. The absence of a consensus between the Zambian, Tanzanian and Chinese governments was reflected in the confusing press coverage. *The Guardian* reported on 2 July that the Chinese Government had made a firm offer of tied aid to the governments of Tanzania and Zambia, worth £75 million

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<sup>629</sup> NARA, African Affairs Bureau, Entry 5235, DSLAM JUN9/65; NA, PREM13/614, Note on talk with President Nyerere, 5 August 1965.

(\$210 million) and £150 million (\$420 million) respectively to enable them to build the railway line. The article claimed that Beijing was increasing its pressure on Nyerere, especially after Kaunda had spurned a direct offer from the Chinese embassy in Lusaka. On 3 July, Zambian press and radio carried reports of the Chinese government's offer of a free survey for the Tanzanian section of the rail link and the construction of that section on terms to be negotiated after the Chinese survey. Less than a week later, however, Nyerere reportedly postponed his decision on the Chinese offer.<sup>630</sup>

Nyerere was frustrated by the British and American governments' portrayal of Chinese sponsorship of the rail link as an ideological, Cold War battle. He also bristled at the drama over the Sino-Tanzanian relationship; a fuss that he described as "sometimes funny, sometimes irritating, and always odd." Nyerere complained bitterly to British officials that the Western governments implied that he and Kaunda would be "committing a crime" if they accepted money from the Communist world to build the rail link and yet they themselves presented no alternatives.<sup>631</sup> According to Nyerere, the Chinese and Russian governments were less high-handed in their dealings with African leaders and did not tell him to reject Western funding because "they would not dare say so".<sup>632</sup> Nyerere summed up the unpleasant situation that he faced:

If I had Tanzanian money I would use that. Unfortunately money has taken up a position. There is Red money and there is Blue money – all the money in this world is either Red or Blue. I do not have my own Green money, so where can I get some from? I am not taking a Cold War position. All I want is money to

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<sup>630</sup> NA, DO183/730, *The Observer*, 11 July 1965.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>632</sup> NA, DO183/730, Dar es Salaam to CRO, No. 1089, 3 July 1965.

build [the rail link]. I do not want another survey without an implied commitment to build [it].<sup>633</sup>

Kaunda, on the other hand, remained adamant about establishing an international consortium to fund the project via the African Development Bank (ADB). As the political situation in Rhodesia worsened, the Tanzanian and Zambian governments decided that a feasibility study be commissioned immediately.<sup>634</sup> Nyerere approached the British High Commission on 22 July to request a British-Canadian feasibility study.<sup>635</sup> At an interview with a British newsman, Nyerere revealed how he had approached the Chinese and elicited an offer of a survey. The president appeared pleased at having successfully played off East against West in having elicited the offer of a survey from Britain through revealing his approach to the Chinese.<sup>636</sup> Nevertheless, Cudlipp also believed that Nyerere preferred a railway constructed by the West rather than the East because the former would do a better job.<sup>637</sup> But for all the external pressures that bore down on Nyerere, a major deciding factor which affected his government's capacity to see through the negotiation process were the divisions within the Tanzanian government.

The historiography of the TanZam rail link negotiation process has generally neglected the effect of internal fissures within the Tanzanian government. Coming in

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<sup>633</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>634</sup> The survey was finally conducted by British company Maxwell Stamp Associates and its Canadian partner Canairo; it was intended to be shared with potential donors to provide them with the information necessary for a subsequent decision about the railway and was submitted to both governments in July 1966: Monson 2009, pp. 23-24.

<sup>635</sup> NA, DO185/4, British High Commission, Dar es Salaam, to CRO, 22 July 1965; Mutukwa 1977.

<sup>636</sup> Dudley 2004, p. 335; Hugh Cudlipp was an astute Welsh newsman on his first visit to Africa. As one of the senior members of International Publishing Company, the largest newspaper publishing group in the world at the time, Cudlipp – whose paper had taken a pro-Labour stance in the 1964 general elections – was able to meet with Southern Rhodesia's Ian Smith, Malawi's Hastings Banda, Kaunda and Nyerere: NA, DO185/4, Hugh Cudlipp on Nyerere, Kambona, the Chinese and the Railway, 4 August 1965.

<sup>637</sup> NA, DO185/4, Hugh Cudlipp on Nyerere, Kambona, the Chinese and the Railway, 4 August 1965.

the post-independence phase and so quickly after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, the Tanzanian government was divided on a number of key issues relating to Chinese sponsorship of the TanZam rail link. The First Vice-President Abeid Karume favoured a joint exercise with Zambia in which the Zambian government would be accountable for a higher proportion of the cost; Kambona preferred each country to build its own segment, with China constructing the Tanzanian part.<sup>638</sup> However, Nyerere felt that Kaunda would not agree to either option.

Additionally, Babu was unable to guarantee his government's outright acceptance of Beijing's offer. He met with Foreign Minister Chen Yi in August 1965 and insisted that the rail link would support Zambian policies that would also benefit Tanzania and thus strengthen the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. Furthermore, it would prevent Lusaka's dangerous drift towards Southern Rhodesia, Malawi and South Africa.<sup>639</sup> Those governments viewed the TanZam railway as "the most ominous portent of black aspirations and Communist influence."<sup>640</sup> Babu explained to Chen that the British government was putting pressure on Kaunda to reject the Chinese offer, and that the Zambian government was primarily concerned that Chinese sponsorship would diminish American and British interest in the project, thus running the risk of both African governments being left empty-handed.<sup>641</sup> A lack of consensus within Nyerere's government about the Chinese offer was evident from Tanzanian reactions to the arrival of the seventeen-strong Chinese survey team in mid-August, which was akin to a dramatic comedy.

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<sup>638</sup> NA, DO183/730, Private talk with Kenneth Kaunda in Lusaka, 29 April 1965.

<sup>639</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-03, 3 November 1965.

<sup>640</sup> Cronje / Ling / Cronje 1976, pp. 222-223.

<sup>641</sup> CFMA, 108-00584-03, 18 August 1965.

The objective of the survey team's visit was to provide the Chinese government with a sound basis for evaluating the project, should the Tanzanian government decide to submit a formal request at a later stage. Economic Affairs and Development Planning Minister Paul Bomani informed British officials that he and most of his colleagues at the Treasury had known absolutely nothing about the arrivals; Nyerere had apparently been so livid that he refused the team's courtesy call. The Tanzanian ministers, added Bomani, then rushed to convene urgent meetings to decide on how this embarrassing matter should be handled.<sup>642</sup> The British suspected that the experts had come without a specific invitation from the Tanzanian government and that the "general vagueness" about their activities pointed to Nyerere's own reluctance to close off other alternative offers for rail link sponsorship. Yet Nyerere was fully aware of the Chinese survey team's visit.<sup>643</sup> The terms of the survey been agreed upon with the Chinese, no doubt with his knowledge, and he had mentioned the team's impending arrival to British representatives on a number of occasions.<sup>644</sup> It was also possible that Nyerere did not want to disclose information about the survey team to too many people.

Observing these events from Lusaka, Kaunda believed that Nyerere faced the risk of being removed from office if he did not take a hard line against the West, especially the United States and West Germany. The more he pushed that line, however, the less aid those countries gave and the more attractive Chinese aid became. Kaunda reportedly felt that Nyerere's position was uncertain and that he would be

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<sup>642</sup> NA, DO183/731, Wire from Dar es Salaam, Zambia-Tanzania Railway, 24 August 1965; NA, DO183/730, Dar es Salaam to CRO, No. 1305, 24 August 1965.

<sup>643</sup> A District Traffic Superintendent – a British expatriate – told the High Commission that Makame had instructed his Principal Secretary to invite the Chinese to come although the secretary had refused, because no government decision had been made at that point. Makame was thought to have gone ahead with the request anyway: NA, DO183/730, Dar es Salaam to CRO, No. 1305, 24 August 1965; NA, DO183/730, Dar es Salaam to CRO, No. 1297, 23 August 1965.

<sup>644</sup> NA, DO185/4, British High Commission, Dar es Salaam, to CRO, 22 July 1965; NA, DO185/4, British High Commission, Dar es Salaam, to CRO, 30 July 1965.

“very lucky” to remain in control much longer, particularly as Babu as “the ideas man” was entirely pro-Chinese. Furthermore Babu’s growing influence on Kambona made it imperative for Nyerere to go along with both Tanzanian officials, in order to keep the government united.<sup>645</sup> Therefore Kaunda hoped that the British government would initiate a private dialogue with Nyerere. The Zambian leader looked to Whitehall to support a Tanzania-Zambia development project in order to create a zone of stability between the two countries. This would have the additional benefit of giving Kaunda the means to exert more effective influence over Nyerere and divert attention within Tanzania from external political problems to domestic economic ones.<sup>646</sup>

However, Kaunda had overestimated the effect that his appeal would have on the British government. The latter was thoroughly absorbed by its balance of payments crisis; the ongoing debates about aid in parliament; and the thorny situation in Southern Rhodesia. The CRO considered the effect that an increase in British aid to Tanzania would have on the other East African countries and warned that that would antagonise Kenya and Uganda while providing no guarantee against the Tanzanians’ continued cultivation of the Chinese. The report argued that the best way to support Nyerere and prevent the Chinese from gaining any influential inroads was to provide expatriate staff and aid for the army and, in lesser measure, the air force.<sup>647</sup> However, as Chapter Three has shown, Nyerere turned down any further military support from the British in favour of reconstructing the army as a politically embedded people’s militia, organised along similar lines to the Chinese army.

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<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>647</sup> NA, DO 214/128, Proposed visit to Tanzania by Mrs. B. Castle, Minister of Overseas Development, April 1965. Document 17. Personal and secret letter to Mr WBL Monson, from ND Watson, Commonwealth Relations Office, 5 April 1965.

The British government's strategy vis-à-vis the rail link was to manage the African leaders' expectations and to use delaying tactics in the hope that the demands would run out of steam. In this way it would help Kaunda hold onto the situation without implying any commitment. The objective was to minimise political repercussions in the region in the short run that might further complicate British interests there. Hence, the Minister for Overseas Development, Barbara Castle, was sent to Tanzania in response to Kaunda's plea, with a limited offer in hand. She explained to Nyerere that the British government's proposal to finance £10 million (\$28 million) until 1970 was as much as the Treasury would allow because of its own balance of payments problems. But, she added, there was the possibility of a £75,000 (\$0.21 million) contribution towards a joint British-Canadian feasibility study – known as the Maxwell Stamp survey – for the railway. Thus, the Chinese trump card was having some effect and Nyerere now had a possible survey on the table.

Nyerere did not mention Zhou's offer in any of his discussions with Castle, because he did not want to be seen as blackmailing the British into making a counter-offer. Nevertheless, Nyerere's non-disclosure later led to criticisms of his underhandedness, compared to Kaunda who, in Whitehall's eyes, had "played the game straight."<sup>648</sup> The British noted that if Nyerere accepted the Chinese offer, the left-wing elements in Zambia would have grounds to exert pressure on Kaunda to demonstrate comparable support for Zambia from the West.<sup>649</sup>

Nyerere had to play his cards well, as the Tanzanian national election was on 30 September. Although he was popular with the masses, his supporters were relatively

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<sup>648</sup> Castle 1984, pp. 29-30. NA, DO185/4, Meeting with Zambian Ministers on 29 April 1965.

<sup>649</sup> NA, DO214/95, British Embassy, Washington D.C., to CRO, 28 May 1965.

under-represented in TANU's Central Committee. The disagreements within the Tanzanian government, together with Kaunda's intransigence on the Chinese offer, made it crucial for him to solidify his position before raising the matter with the cabinet. Hence the election outcome was decisive for Nyerere's strategy and solidified his position through the nationwide referendum. A positive outcome empowered Nyerere to act more decisively.<sup>650</sup>

As this section has shown, although the Chinese government offered to finance and construct the rail link, numerous obstacles hindered Kaunda and Nyerere's wholehearted acceptance of that proposal. These were the Zambian government's constraints and preferences for a multilateral donor, the external political pressures on the newly independent African governments and the divisions within the Tanzanian government.

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<sup>650</sup> NA, DO185/4, British High Commission, Lusaka, to CRO, 16 July 1965.

### **III. Acceptance of the Chinese Offer**

This section sets out the main factors that finally pushed through the tripartite agreement on the TanZam rail link signed in 1967. The argument is presented in three sections: Firstly, the thaw in the Sino-Zambian relationship from August 1965; secondly, Southern Rhodesia and the unilateral declaration of independence; and thirdly, the tripartite agreement on Chinese sponsorship of the TanZam rail link.

#### **i) A thaw in Sino-Zambian relations**

The protracted negotiation process with the African governments about TanZam frustrated the Chinese diplomats. On one occasion, the Chinese embassy in Lusaka reported sardonically that China's foreign exchange situation was difficult enough as it was, so that forking out such a large sum for the project was well nigh impossible.<sup>651</sup> Kaunda's stance on the Chinese offer remained unclear in August. The embassy observed drily that, "for the sake of domestic development, Kaunda is even willing to reach for the unattainable ('things on Mars'), although he is still undecided as to the source of that assistance."<sup>652</sup> Although Kaunda continued to pursue the British-mediated option for as long as possible, there was nonetheless a perceptible thaw in Sino-Zambian relations. This took place behind the scenes and the Chinese embassy in Lusaka reported Zambian efforts to rally support against Rhodesia. The Zambian government also requested economic assistance and – in a conciliatory move – indicated their willingness to discuss

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<sup>651</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-02, 2 July 1965.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*

significant international issues such as the Afro-Asian conference, the African Union and the southern African liberation struggle.

In addition, the Zambian government acceded to a number of requests that had been raised by the Chinese embassy, and Kaunda twice expressed his intention to visit China. The Zambian media increased its reporting on China and even broadcasted Beijing's condemnations of British policy on Vietnam and American imperialism. The Chinese embassy attributed the Zambians' more amenable attitude, in part, to Nyerere's influence, Tanzania's positive experience with Chinese aid and Nyerere's ability to communicate its merits to Kaunda. The embassy concluded that, although both African leaders had expressed their determination for the TanZam rail link, they did not intend for it to be done with Chinese help alone.<sup>653</sup> But the Chinese rejected any suggestion of joining an international consortium. It viewed the Zambian government's emphasis on it as simply "playing for time"; to obtain a token Chinese offer as a fall-back option should Western aid fall through.<sup>654</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese embassy acknowledged that the other TanZam projects (the highway and pipeline) would increase much-needed opportunities for Zambia.<sup>655</sup>

Indeed, Chinese records suggest that the government prioritised its relationship with Tanzania, a proven partner, and had only a moderate level of interest in deepening its relationship with Zambia, until the latter was deemed a genuine ally. Even though Zambia was a mineral-rich country, Chinese records show that the Chinese government

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<sup>653</sup> CFMA, 108-01453-02, 12 August 1965.

<sup>654</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-02, 8 October 1965.

<sup>655</sup> CMFA, 108-01453-02, 12 August 1965.

considered Tanzania's financial position stronger. Beijing assisted Zambia through practical projects such as water irrigation and pest eradication, but trade relations remained a low priority because of the Zambian government's close relationship with Britain. The Commercial Representative of the Chinese embassy appeared "obviously embarrassed" when approached by a British representative on 2 October about the status of the Chinese offer for the rail link. Li Feng, the Chinese official, denied any firm commitment and the Chinese ambassador gave a similarly non-committal reply, adding that his government was willing to build the railway if they were asked to do it, but emphasising that "we are not a rich country like [Britain]."<sup>656</sup> In its correspondence with its embassy in Lusaka, the Chinese Foreign Ministry continued to emphasise the vital political value of the rail link in enabling both African governments to resist imperialism and consolidate independence, as well as its potentially significant contribution to promoting economic development.

The embassy postulated that Zambia's strategy might result in Chinese sponsorship of Tanzania's railway, with perhaps a highway from the US, while Zambia would be left "with both hands empty".<sup>657</sup> In its analysis that reflected the prevailing Cold War *realpolitik*, the West might intentionally delay a decision on the highway if Zambia was given Chinese help; conversely, should Beijing not assist Zambia, Lusaka could then tell its people that it was not seeking Chinese assistance and justify its continued appeal to the West. In order to "further Zambia's independent development and economic nationalisation," the Chinese embassy and foreign ministry agreed to approach this challenge by letting Kaunda know that Zambian requests were being

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<sup>656</sup> NA, DO183/730, Tanzania Railway, 20 October 1965.

<sup>657</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-02, 19 October 1965.

seriously considered and any further action would then be up to them.<sup>658</sup> An indication of its inability to influence Zambian opinion on the matter, the Chinese foreign ministry resigned itself to the fact that the negotiations would continue and the project would be difficult to implement, at least in the short run.<sup>659</sup>

Unfortunately Nyerere's gamble did not yield immediate results and, by September, no counter-offers for the rail link had been received beyond the British-Canadian feasibility study, leading him to vent that "there [was] more talk about the railway, more political hot air, more Cold War rubbish than actual development."<sup>660</sup> On 21 September, Nyerere confirmed that the Chinese offer to construct the TanZam rail link was the only definite one that had been received. To add some political weight to that otherwise disappointing news, the Tanzanian leader added that if the British negotiated an independence deal with the white minority in Southern Rhodesia, Tanzania would withdraw from the Commonwealth.<sup>661</sup> This pronouncement pointed some international attention to British inaction and passivity on the explosive political, economic and human rights situation in Southern Rhodesia.

## ii) Southern Rhodesia and the UDI

The external pressure on Zambia mounted as Anglo-Rhodesian discussions on the conditions for Rhodesian independence proved intractable. Ian Smith, representing the white settler Rhodesian Front, reminded Prime Minister Harold Wilson of the failure of British decolonisation in the region, which had resulted in Tanzania becoming

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<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>659</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-03, 3 November 1965.

<sup>660</sup> NA, DO185/5, Interview with President Nyerere by Joseph MacSween, Canadian Press, 31 July 1965.

<sup>661</sup> Wood 2005, p. 356.

“little more than a Chinese puppet” and Zambia’s similarly “worrying” situation.<sup>662</sup>

Smith ranted that “any premature hand-over to African rule would be to Communism, because [...] there was no doubt from where the money, training, ideas and planning of the African nationalists was coming from.”<sup>663</sup> Indeed, Soviet, Cuban and Chinese military support was being channelled to the liberation groups including ZANU and ZAPU.<sup>664</sup>

A Zambian cabinet meeting was convened on 15 October to explore other major infrastructural options, such as an upgrade of the Benguela railway through Angola, but the ministers decided not to antagonise Rhodesia by taking any drastic measures.<sup>665</sup> Although there was always the possibility that Rhodesia could unilaterally declare itself independent, Kaunda believed that the British would intervene decisively in that event. However, Wilson’s apparently weak and vacillating stance towards Ian Smith’s “government” was proof enough that the Zambians could not count on the British to put down the rebellion. Indeed, a month later, at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in Lagos, Nigeria, Wilson capitulated and declared that the use of force could not be ruled out. Without a firm British stance on UDI, Kaunda knew, the problem was likely to be a protracted one. The Chinese government observed these developments closely and noted that, unlike the Tanzanian government which was more outspoken in its foreign relations and was a reliable ally, Zambia did not want to escape from the British “hook”.<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202; Altorfer-Ong (forthcoming).

<sup>665</sup> Wood 2005, p. 401.

<sup>666</sup> CFMA, 108-00649-03, 3 November 1965.

Rhodesia unilaterally declared itself independent on 11 November 1965.<sup>667</sup> The event was the main “catalyst for [Zambian] disengagement” from southern Africa, because it triggered the progressive invalidation of factors that had delayed Kaunda’s decision on the Chinese offer.<sup>668</sup> Predictably, Rhodesia stopped Zambian oil imports through its territory and ceased coal shipments soon after. The effects were felt immediately in Zambia, as emergency supply lines were set up via airlift and along the treacherous roads and terrain through southern Tanzania to the copper belt – the aptly named “hell run”.<sup>669</sup>

Keen to underscore the robustness of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship at this particularly tense moment, He Ying invited First Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa to visit China after the latter’s trip to North Korea later that month.<sup>670</sup> The Tanzanian vice-president arrived in Beijing on 22 November and was greeted with a characteristically rousing welcome from hordes of Chinese workers, the People’s Liberation Army and students, all in a grand show of mass solidarity. Premier Zhou thanked the Tanzanians for their delegation’s support to restore Beijing’s seat in the UN; more importantly, he reiterated their close bilateral ties and pledged China’s ongoing support, specifically after Rhodesia’s UDI. Kawawa complimented the Chinese experts for their principled behaviour (especially in mentoring their Tanzanian charges) and requested for more assistance with factories and experts.<sup>671</sup> Although these requests were considerably small in value, they were important for building mutual confidence in the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship, particularly at a tumultuous time in southern Africa.

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<sup>667</sup> Wood 2005, p. 209.

<sup>668</sup> Mutukwa 1977, p. 61.

<sup>669</sup> Griffiths 1995, p. 104

<sup>670</sup> CFMA, 106-00841-11, 9 and 12 November 1965.

<sup>671</sup> He also suggested increasing the imports of selected Chinese products: CFMA, 204-01595-02, 23 November 1965.

### iii) The tripartite agreement

The Chinese government's sole sponsorship of the TanZam rail link appeared less "dangerous" to the Zambian government in the post-UDI context. Although the external political and economic factors promoted closer Sino-Zambian ties, more work needed to be done to nurture the bilateral relationship. This time, however, it was the Zambian government which took the initiative to create opportunities for more frequent contacts with the Chinese, through requests for general economic assistance and small-scale projects. The Zambians sent a governmental delegation to China in July 1966 to study China's experience with large-scale national projects, followed by some lessons in credits and loans for infrastructural projects, the development of bilateral trade and an exchange of thoughts on international issues, such as the situation in Rhodesia and Vietnam.<sup>672</sup> A high-level Zambian delegation led by Vice-President Reuben Kamanga visited Beijing shortly after, in mid-August 1966, in another important step towards building up mutual trust and rapport. His trip was also a test for the Zambian government to gauge Western reactions to the Sino-Zambian rapprochement.<sup>673</sup> Indeed, Zambia's needs were urgent. Kamanga requested help to fill the vacuum left by the 800 of the 1,400 British railway personnel who had left for Rhodesia. Premier Zhou replied that China would try its best to assist and would send personnel who could speak English.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> CFMA, 204-01155-02, 25 and 30 July 1966. The list also included the issue of the PRC's seat in the UN. The Zambian government supported the PRC position but wanted to clarify its understanding of Beijing's precise conditions: CFMA, 204-01155-02, 1 August 1966. Coincidentally, while the Zambian delegation visited China in July 1966, the Maxwell Stamp report was submitted to the Zambian and Tanzanian governments. The study assessed the rail link project positively, but its circulation was delayed by bureaucratic disorganisation within the Zambian government: Monson 2009, p. 24.

<sup>673</sup> CFMA, 201-01626-02, 19 August 1966.

<sup>674</sup> CFMA, 201-01626-02, 22 August 1966.

The Chinese survey team finally submitted its report on the Tanzania-Zambia rail link project in October. It was a purely technical report which concluded that the construction of the rail link was feasible from an engineering perspective. There was no mention of the project's economic prospects.<sup>675</sup> The post-UDI context, coupled with the judicious encouragement of personal diplomacy and small-scale engagements (through the Chinese development projects) by the Tanzanian, Zambian and Chinese governments finally brought all three parties to the table. All three recognised that the TanZam rail link was, above all, a project of political necessity.<sup>676</sup>

Indeed, throughout the entire process – from President Liu Shaoqi's verbal offer in February 1965 until the signing of the preliminary tripartite agreement in 1967 – “only principles were discussed”.<sup>677</sup> It was a level of commitment to a project of unprecedented scale that could only have been possible with a high level of political trust between the leaders; an impressive step forward in Sino-African relations overall. Nevertheless, the Zambian and Tanzanian governments still kept up their efforts to contact other potential donors, hoping that the Chinese trump card might still garner other options. They circulated the Maxwell Stamp report after the agreement with Beijing was signed in 1967, announcing publicly that offers for the project were “still open.”<sup>678</sup>

No other offers came, however, and the Chinese government eventually granted 988 million Yuan (\$401 million) in interest-free loans to finance the railway. By the

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<sup>675</sup> Hall / Peyman 1976.

<sup>676</sup> Interview with Ibrahim Kaduma, Dar es Salaam, 28 May 2007.

<sup>677</sup> Kaduma was involved in the rail link discussions from 1967: Interview with Ibrahim Kaduma, Dar es Salaam, 28 May 2007.

<sup>678</sup> Monson 2009, p. 25.

time construction began in 1970, Nyerere had successfully consolidated his political power on the mainland and in the union's foreign affairs. He managed to successfully overcome the fragility of the post-colonial African state, which allowed the Sino-Tanzanian relationship to flourish in the late 1960s, in spite of external pressures from the Western countries and the radicalisation of Chinese diplomacy through the Cultural Revolution, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.<sup>679</sup> The rail link was completed in 1975 and was the most impressive of China's projects in Africa. PRC officials and media emphasised the Chinese thread that ran through the history of Tanzania's rail infrastructure, which dated back to the German colonial era when indentured labourers were brought in from Qingdao, Shanghai, Fujian and Guangzhou to toil alongside the local African workers who constructed the first German East Africa railway.<sup>680</sup> That shared historical experience of colonial exploitation provided the useful, moral ammunition for the Chinese government in the 1960s, which underscored the country's long-standing ties with Tanzania.

At the inauguration of the rail link, Nyerere highlighted the positive aspects of Chinese assistance:

To say the very least, the Chinese people are not planning to make a profit from this railway. Indeed, they are making a gift to us, for it would be very expensive to borrow this amount of money at commercial rates of interest [...] and – I repeat – the Chinese have not asked us to become communists in order to

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<sup>679</sup> In Mali, domestic instability led to the shelving of a Chinese railway project that had initially been requested for by the Guinean and Malian governments after the Chinese offer for the TanZam was made. The proposed project in Mali and Guinea was on a smaller scale than the TanZam (estimated at \$20 million) and a Chinese team was despatched to survey the proposed route in November 1968. However, a few days after their departure from Mali, the Malian government was overthrown by a military coup and, due to its deteriorating relations with Guinea, the project never materialised: Ogunsanwo 2010, p. 216.

<sup>680</sup> Li 1998; Gao 1965, pp. 9-10.

qualify for this loan! [...] they have never at any point suggested that we should change any of our policies – internal or external – because of their help with this railway. They have simply offered us generous terms in money and in men.<sup>681</sup>

Most accounts of the TanZam rail link as a natural symbol and easy development in a deepening Sino-Tanzanian friendship begin from this point but, as this chapter has shown, the journey to the tripartite agreement was not a straightforward one. The lack of enthusiasm, the long months of bargaining and uncertainty about the TanZam project owing to the precarious domestic position of the nationalist leaders have remained unmentioned in much of the literature.

### **Conclusion: The Tanzanian-Zambian consensus on Chinese sponsorship for the TanZam rail link**

This chapter has explained the new importance and significance of the TanZam rail link project, from that of colonial control and profit, to one of African freedom and development. The rail link promised to strengthen Zambia's capacity as a frontline state in the southern African liberation struggle. But sponsorship for the rail link was hard to come by and the Chinese government presented the only offer to finance and construct the project.

The second section in this chapter showed that there were numerous distractions and obstacles surrounding the Chinese offer to sponsor the rail link. The Chinese offer to the Tanzanian government was genuine; however, it was a loaded proposition for

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<sup>681</sup> Nyerere's speech at Kapiri Mposhi on 28 October at the inauguration of the building of the railway: Nyerere 1973, p. 235.

Nyerere, because accepting it entailed high political risks for his country. Beijing's offer to undertake the massive project was ostensibly an ambitious demonstration of its principles as a revolutionary force, and a strategic move by a diplomatically isolated, third world power. The Chinese leaders and Nyerere were aware that an offer from Red China would provoke international attention on the region and inject momentum into the search for a serious sponsor. Nevertheless, when it became clear that there would be no other donors for the project, the Chinese government started to question the delay in the Tanzanian and Zambian decision.

As the chapter has shown, the Zambian government was bound by constitutional constraints. Additionally, as a newly independent government under increasing pressure from Rhodesia, it was insecure and did not want to further complicate the regional situation by agreeing to sole Chinese sponsorship of the project. The Tanzanian government was not spared from the intense external pressure from the Western powers, but Nyerere continued to pursue a non-aligned policy based on principles. Moreover, the diplomatic path to the decision was long and complex, as this research has shown. The Chinese offer of assistance also led to divisions within the Tanzanian government over the kind of trilateral arrangement that would be required. These internal difficulties were mitigated to an extent by Nyerere's successful re-election.

Finally, the third section of this chapter demonstrated that the Chinese government's offer to sponsor the TanZam rail link finally came through a convergence of important internal and external factors. Kaunda's reluctance to accept Chinese assistance for the rail link remained the most intractable obstacle, but things finally came to a head with Rhodesia's UDI on 11 November 1965. In the post-UDI landscape, the factors which had made Kaunda reluctant to accept the Chinese offer were no

longer valid. A progressive thaw in the Sino-Zambian relationship prior to Rhodesian UDI set the stage for an accelerated rapprochement post-UDI, and the signing of the tripartite agreement in 1967. The negotiation process for the TanZam rail link had a combination of reinforcing factors: external pressures, internal consolidation and bilateral engagement through personal diplomacy and foreign aid.

The Chinese trump card eventually worked: While there was no counter-offer for the TanZam rail link, the Western powers pulled together to deliver two additional projects, a highway and an oil pipeline, which plied generally along the same route. Certainly the impetus for their construction would not have arisen – at least not as quickly – in the absence of a Chinese-constructed railway. The Sino-Tanzanian relationship that began modestly at the start of the 1960s had, by the middle of the decade, attained the character of a militant and anti-imperialist friendship that yielded developmental, political as well as diplomatic dividends for both governments. The rhetoric of solidarity that bolstered the bilateral relationship was intensified further by the increase in Chinese development aid to Tanzania, as demonstrated most clearly by the arrival of the Chinese medical experts, the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter Five – Chinese medical teams in Tanzania, 1964 to 1970

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that the Sino-Tanzanian relationship had, overall, generated mutually beneficial dividends. Chinese aid differed from other governments' foreign aid at the very fundamental levels of political ideology, foreign policy objectives and historical experience. These differences determined the structure and implementation of the Chinese aid programme, as well as influenced how it engaged with the Tanzanian bureaucracy, local power structures and communities.

Using Chinese medical aid as a case study, this chapter builds on the argument that European decolonisation in Africa allowed China to make significant gains from a relatively modest aid programme because of the legacy of colonial neglect. This chapter has been informed by the literature on European-African colonial encounters in healthcare, such as Iliffe and Vaughan's works on the socio-political factors that shaped the healthcare systems of the East African countries.<sup>682</sup> More importantly, the study pushes further the analysis of the theory and implementation of Chinese aid.<sup>683</sup> It does so in three areas: Firstly, the geopolitical, ideological and historical context which shaped Chinese aid policy; secondly, the link between the politicisation of the Chinese medical system in the 1960s and China's health diplomacy in practise; and thirdly, how the combination of the first two factors converged with local African factors – such as Nyerere's emphasis on self-reliance and socialism – to make possible the positive outcomes of Chinese medical aid, especially in the rural regions of Tanzania.

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<sup>682</sup> Iliffe 1998; Vaughan 1991.

<sup>683</sup> First discussed in Altorfer-Ong 2010.

## **I. Chinese aid policy**

The earlier chapters have shown in detail the geopolitical context surrounding Chinese engagement in Africa in the 1960s: The continent was under great political pressures from European decolonisation (Chapters One and Two), incomplete decolonisation and Cold War rivalries (Chapters Three and Four), as well as post-independence economic pressures (Chapter Four). The African environment was generally hostile and wary of the Communist Chinese government. Yet where the PRC was able to make diplomatic inroads, it strove to strengthen those fledgling ties through the commitment of aid monies and development projects.

This section sets out the background and context to Chinese foreign aid in three parts: Firstly, China's own experience as a formerly aid-dependent, developing country. Secondly, the aid rivalry between the PRC and the ROC governments and, thirdly, the essence of Chinese aid policy as spelled out in the Eight Principles Governing China's Economic and Technical Aid to Other Countries.

### **i) China and foreign aid**

The Communist Party of China (CCP) came to power in 1949, but remained on the periphery of international diplomacy well into the next decade. Beijing's priority in those initial years was to consolidate its power and closely align itself with the Soviet Union, which provided valuable industrial and economic assistance. Beijing's inchoate conception of development operated within the communist framework of internationalism and solidarity. China had

benefitted greatly from foreign aid, which came mainly from the Soviet and Eastern European countries. According to Cheng, it constituted one of the largest technology transfers ever and rivaled the American Marshall Plan which assisted Western Europe after the Second World War.<sup>684</sup> Soviet assistance enabled the Chinese to develop a sizeable domestic metallurgical and machine-building capacity.

Nevertheless, the Chinese leaders felt that the Soviet government used the provision of aid as a tool to control their decisions. Most of the Soviet projects in China were financed by low interest loans, although the Chinese government was under pressure by the Soviet government to repay them for items which it felt should have been free. The repayment of the Soviet loans began in 1954 and payments came to \$200 million per year between 1955 and 1960. Chinese dependence on Soviet assistance lasted until the Sino-Soviet dispute finally erupted and 1,390 Soviet specialists were recalled from China in July 1960.<sup>685</sup> The effect of that human, financial and technical drain on China was immense, as 343 contracts and supplementary agreements concerning experts, as well as 257 scientific and technical cooperation projects were all annulled within a month.<sup>686</sup> When relations turned icy in 1962, the Chinese government pushed ahead and settled their repayments worth about \$1.75 billion. The Sino-Soviet dispute and the withdrawal of Soviet experts from China poisoned official memories of bilateral relations for years.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>684</sup> Cheng 1981.

<sup>685</sup> Larkin 1971, p. 42.

<sup>686</sup> Low 1976, p. 118.

<sup>687</sup> China finally settled its financial indebtedness to the Kremlin in 1965: *Ibid.*

The negative experience with Soviet aid left the Chinese leaders very bitter. The rhetoric of third world solidarity replaced that of Communist solidarity and was consistently used by the PRC officials to third world governments, along with references to their shared history of colonial subjugation and exploitation. Hence the precepts of national sovereignty, reconstruction and socialism were anchored deeply in the ethos of Chinese aid and, from this perspective; Chinese military assistance to the African liberation movements validated the government’s “principled” approach to international relations.

Chairman Mao’s assurance given to Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda during the latter’s first state visit to China in June 1967 is typical of the way PRC aid was presented and also emphasised the important contributions that Tanzania and Zambia made to anti-colonial struggles:

When Tanzania and Zambia gained independence, both countries supported the liberation struggle in southern Africa. China became independent more than ten years earlier, so when Tanzania and Zambia encounter difficulties, China has an obligation to assist. This is also a support for China herself, so there is no need to speak of thanks.<sup>688</sup>

The Chinese government thus presented its foreign aid as influenced by its ideological motivation of internationalism, as well as its bittersweet experience as a recipient of Soviet bilateral aid. Both factors distinguished the PRC government from the other bilateral donors.

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<sup>688</sup> Translated from Chinese: Zhou 2004, pp. 91-92.

## ii) PRC aid and ROC aid

The Chinese government's main political rivals in Africa were the Soviet Union, Western donors (the US and the former colonial powers) and the Republic of China (ROC). The Sino-Soviet rivalry was discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three; the Chinese government's competition with the Western donors was examined in Chapter Four. To understand the PRC-ROC rivalry in foreign aid provision, a brief discussion of the background to the ROC's aid programme is necessary.

The ROC's aid programme was on a significantly smaller scale than the PRC's and was mostly limited to agricultural assistance. Nevertheless, as the ROC presented itself as the sovereign government of China, this made it the PRC's prime adversary in the battle for legitimacy and international recognition. The ROC launched its International Cooperation Programme in Africa in 1959 with a focus on agricultural assistance and small peasant farming systems. These ventures were part of the ROC's aid projects that operated in tandem with its diplomatic outreach to the newly independent African governments.<sup>689</sup>

However, the ROC aid programme was not purely a bilateral transaction, as its source of funding flowed from the US government, through an arrangement called Operation Vanguard.<sup>690</sup> The US government's interest in subsidising the ROC's technical programmes was a means of diluting mainland Chinese influence. It was "indirect and disguised to avoid giving ammunition to the Chicom [Chinese Communist, PRC] propaganda machine" and to provide "a useful contrast with the Chicom warlike

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<sup>689</sup> Lin 1990, p. 148; Van 2007, p. 10.

<sup>690</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Promotion of Chinese Nationalist Aid in Africa, 6 October 1965.

activities.”<sup>691</sup> The programme was initially a success and was extended in 1961 to encompass the Middle Eastern, Asian and Latin American countries, but this success also was contingent on keeping the US support a secret.<sup>692</sup> Between 1961 and 1970 a total of 922 ROC technicians were sent to Africa on 23 missions; while over 400 African technicians travelled to Taiwan.<sup>693</sup> These programmes successfully boosted the ROC’s stature amongst its allies and sustained its participation in international organisations, much to the chagrin of the PRC government.<sup>694</sup>

Nevertheless, ROC funds were far surpassed by the PRC’s resources overall. As an illustration, Operation Vanguard’s budget in the 1964 fiscal year was \$1.4 million, in contrast to the PRC’s loan offer of \$4 million to the Central African Republic (CAR) alone. The ROC’s Operation Vanguard received US funding for its local currency expenses, which were partially met from counterpart grants generated by US economic assistance to Taiwan. The Taiwanese government provided the requisite foreign exchange.<sup>695</sup> This huge discrepancy in financial capacity led to the ROC government’s attempt to negotiate for greater US financial support in the mid-1960s. The former argued that the increase was necessary so that it could position itself more directly against the PRC by assisting the Africans in areas such as industry, in which its Communist rival was active.<sup>696</sup> However, foreign aid did not necessarily guarantee

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<sup>691</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Use of Korean and Chinese Nationalist Aid Programs - Democratic Republic of the Congo (Leopoldville), 2 March 1965. The same principle also applied to Washington’s support for the South Korean aid programme.

<sup>692</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Promotion of Chinese Nationalist Aid in Africa, 6 October 1965.

<sup>693</sup> Lin 1990, p. 151.

<sup>694</sup> Van 2007, p. 10.

<sup>695</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Promotion of Chinese Nationalist Aid in Africa, 6 October 1965.

<sup>696</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Call of the Chinese Ambassador, Briefing Memorandum, 28 July 1965.

political loyalty from the recipient government. As was the case with the TanZam railway project, discussed in the previous chapter, the African governments had their own political agenda and developmental priorities, which they sometimes furthered through playing off the PRC and ROC against each other – or against Western donors – to increase the contribution of foreign aid.

The US government considered Operation Vanguard's programmes "helpful, but not decisive" in achieving its foreign policy objectives.<sup>697</sup> Its ultimate objective of keeping the PRC's influence at bay became dramatically less important when eventually the international political climate changed and sobering of the PRC's foreign policy position in the late 1960s – after the initial years of the destabilising Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six – led to the installation of the PRC government as the legitimate China representative at the United Nations at the ROC's expense.

### iii) The Eight Principles

The ideological foundations for the Chinese aid policy were officially articulated as the Eight Principles Governing China's Economic and Technical Aid to Overseas Countries (for short, the Eight Principles). Unveiled by Premier Zhou Enlai during his tour of Africa from December 1963 to early 1964, the policy presented the broad mission and overall objective of its assistance in an instructional and contractual way:

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<sup>697</sup> NARA, NND989548, RG59, Entry 5235, Lot 68D245, 68D269, Box 3, Call of the Chinese Ambassador, Briefing Memorandum, 28 July 1965.

1. The Chinese government always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other countries. It never regards such aid as a kind of unilateral alms, but as something mutual.
2. In providing aid to other countries, the Chinese government strictly respects the sovereignty of recipient countries, and never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges.
3. China provides economic aid in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans, and extends the time limit for the repayment when necessary so as to lighten the burden on recipient countries as far as possible.
4. In providing aid to other countries, the purpose of the Chinese government is not to make recipient countries dependent on China but to help them embark step by step on the road of self-reliance and independent economic development.
5. The Chinese government does its best to help recipient countries complete projects which require less investment but yield quicker results, so that the latter may increase their income and accumulate capital.
6. The Chinese government provides the best-quality equipment and materials manufactured by China at international market prices. If the equipment and materials provided by the Chinese government are not up to the agreed specifications and quality, the Chinese government undertakes to replace them or refund the payment.
7. In giving any particular technical assistance, the Chinese government will see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master the technology.

8. The experts dispatched by China to help in construction in recipient countries will have the same standard of living as the experts of the recipient country. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities.<sup>698</sup>

Emphasising equality, development through self reliance and mutual benefit were terms that appeared very equitable to the recipient countries; as such, the Eight Principles were a strategic diplomatic tool. They leveraged on the areas of concern to the developing governments and offered a pragmatic, alternative foreign aid relationship, one that did not perpetuate the north-south, colonial relationship. This was in stark contrast to the policy prescriptions offered by the Western and more affluent countries in the 1960s, many of which were anchored on the precepts of modernisation theory, where the preference was for an apolitical process of development rather than nation-building, a financial burden and the requisite application of the prevailing development ideologies of the day.<sup>699</sup>

The Chinese aid programme was articulated in political terms. The principles were provocative – even revolutionary – for declaring the donor-recipient relationship as one between equals, as well as for committing the Chinese government (and its experts) to what it perceived as a fair and correct code of conduct. For example, the Eight Principles did not advocate or make provisions for Chinese advisors or consultants within the host country's ministries. Although that was an indication of Chinese respect for its partner governments' sovereignty in decision-making, it also

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<sup>698</sup> Zhou Enlai 1964.

<sup>699</sup> This can be gleaned from discussions between the UK's Minister of Development Barbara Castle and Tanzanian officials in 1965, in which she explained her government's limited resources and inability to extend additional financial succour to Tanzania. See also the more detailed discussion in Chapter Four. For a discussion on modernisation theory: Leys 1996.

limited the extent to which the Chinese aid projects or any lessons could be integrated into existing policy. In the case of Tanzania, it was the visits by official delegations to China and the demonstration effect of the Chinese experts in the field which contributed to ordinary Tanzanians' perceptions of Chinese aid. They also covered the technical form and administration of that aid, such as the procurement and handing over of equipment, as well as the remuneration of the Chinese experts.

The Eight Principles were articulated in a way that positioned Chinese foreign aid in direct opposition to Western aid, which it criticised for being an extension of the post-colonial relationship that perpetuated the discriminatory international economic order.<sup>700</sup> Unlike aid from other Communist governments, Chinese aid promoted self-reliance and not primarily the export of capital goods.<sup>701</sup> Additionally, the Chinese government offered grants and loans with relatively long repayment periods with no interest and the additional flexibility of loan extension without penalty. The funds could be used for local costs within the supported project, an arrangement which few other donors allowed to the same extent. These differences were highlighted by Chinese officials more frequently as the Sino-Soviet rivalry worsened.

Chinese aid had a very strong symbolic value because of its own successful national liberation struggle and socialist revolution. Moreover, the country's difficult economic situation and immense capital needs made it clear that any diversion of its resources was a direct sacrifice and was marshalled domestically, relying heavily on the use of Chinese workers. Labour-intensive methods were necessary because of China's lack of capital funds, which was both a strength and weakness. The level of technology

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<sup>700</sup> Bobiash 1992, p. 1; Law 1984, p. 20.

<sup>701</sup> Pratt 1976, pp. 161-162.

and skills transfer was appropriate for a developing country context, but the influx of Chinese labour gave rise to concerns amongst recipient countries which preferred staffing projects with locals.

The Chinese government was quick to mobilise its internal resources and personnel for its overseas projects, but at times it took up to two years before the protocol to an aid agreement was signed if there was a delay on the recipient's side.<sup>702</sup> The Chinese government placed only minimal administrative requirements on the recipient governments. There was considerably less paperwork and reporting than what was needed by the Western and institutional donors. These multiple bureaucratic requirements from a myriad of donors using different systems further strained an overstretched Tanganyikan civil service. As Nyerere shared with a visiting British journalist in March 1965, "Tanzania [was] not good at answering questionnaires" and its officials were not entirely familiar with the techniques of securing aid and so the country was getting less than it might have otherwise.<sup>703</sup> Furthermore, most donors did not finance the local project costs, which then added to the Tanzanian government's financial problems.

This section has shown that the Eight Principles addressed the key areas in which Chinese aid was different from that of other donors. As a policy, the Eight Principles were intended to achieve political aims by portraying the Chinese government's aid regime as being fair and practical for its recipients. Hence Part I has demonstrated how the ethos and presentation of the PRC aid policy had been influenced by China's own experience as an aid recipient, as well as the political competition

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<sup>702</sup> Hutchison 1975, p. 57.

<sup>703</sup> LSE Archive, Hetherington/9/14, Note of a meeting with President Nyerere at State House, Dar es Salaam, on March 13, 1965.

between the PRC government and its rivals in Africa. An important component of Chinese aid policy was medical assistance, which will be discussed next.

## **II. Chinese Health Diplomacy**

This section will show that Chinese health diplomacy was an essential component of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. The main studies on Sino-African and Sino-Tanzanian engagement in medicine are by Hsu, whose work focuses on the effect of Chinese medicine in East Africa.<sup>704</sup> This chapter focuses primarily on clinically trained doctors who were sent on state-sponsored overseas missions; traditional Chinese medical practitioners were sometimes included in the group, but were in the minority. This section will demonstrate the importance of local African factors in three areas: Firstly, the domestic revolution in Chinese healthcare; secondly, a historical assessment of the Tanganyikan healthcare system; and thirdly, Zanzibar and Chinese medical aid, which facilitated the extension of Chinese health diplomacy to the mainland.

### **i) China and the revolution in healthcare**

The ideological foundation for the PRC healthcare system had been spelt out by the National Health Congress in the early 1950s. This was the basis for the country's medical strategy and health policy, summed up as four priorities: Firstly, to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers; secondly, to focus on preventive medicine over curative medicine; thirdly, to promote the collaboration between practitioners of traditional

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<sup>704</sup> Hsu 2007a; Hsu 2007b.

Chinese medicine and practitioners of Western medicine, and fourthly, to integrate health work with mass movements.<sup>705</sup>

However, the government was unable to address the growing inequality between health service provision in the rural and urban areas, a trend which was further reinforced by Soviet medical assistance, which weighed in heavily with consultants, technology, hierarchical structure and urban focus.<sup>706</sup> Public health issues in rural China were overseen by fairly autonomous and self-supporting units, the CCP union clinics. These clinics were responsible for preventive medicine, maternal and child health, health training, as well as the training of health workers and midwives.<sup>707</sup> The two separate but related medical systems were hard hit in the late 1950s. The Great Leap Forward (1958 to 1961) campaign depleted the communes' resources and the withdrawal of Soviet assistance in 1960 worsened the brain drain from the cities. This took a severe toll on the Chinese healthcare system. Rural incomes gradually recovered after the economic catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward and peasants were soon able to allocate a small sum of earnings to medical care, which enabled the rural healthcare system to regain its footing.<sup>708</sup>

Mao's increasing emphasis on ideological loyalty and the deepening of societal control after the loosening up during the economic recovery years resulted in the incorporation of socialist lessons into the medical physicians' training in early 1965, the objective of which was to mobilise and politicise the medical profession by reducing the rural-urban gap. The *barefoot doctor* policy was launched and had political, social

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<sup>705</sup> Sidel / Ruth 1973, pp. 21-22.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>707</sup> Fang 2008.

<sup>708</sup> Lampton 1977, pp. 229-230.

and educational objectives. The CCP used political education repressively, as “the most important and effective way to reshape educated youth ideologically and morally; the first few months were spent studying Mao’s works on serving the people.”<sup>709</sup> It was a governmental effort to re-organise the medical system in order to stir and mobilise the population for “revolutionary” action: In essence, to nurture good citizens who were not just healthy in body, but productive, community-minded and above all, politically loyal.

A barefoot doctor trainee recalled from his lessons that:

We would rather have a doctor with a Red heart and little skill than a doctor with a White heart and better medical skills. A Red heart will take care of everything else. You must be revolutionaries first, doctors second. You must never forget this.<sup>710</sup>

In the rural areas, the barefoot doctor programme mobilised medical teams, trained youths from the communes for between three to six months in the treatment of minor illnesses, immunisation, sanitation, maternal and child health services.<sup>711</sup> They were generally primary school leavers who received identical wages to the peasants and juggled their work in the fields with medical tasks. Medical education in the cities was radicalised. At the universities, medical students underwent the same compulsory political education as other students and were required to do manual labour while living and working with the peasants.<sup>712</sup> This process of integration between the urban youths and peasants through physical work had the explicit rationale of helping the medical trainees better connect theory with practice, as well as to spread medical knowledge

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<sup>709</sup> Fan 2004, p. 96.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>711</sup> Fang 2008.

<sup>712</sup> *Peking Review*, 13 November 1964.

among the masses. Moreover, those sent to the countryside were usually intellectuals – the strata of the population for which Mao had the strongest disregard. The immediate result of that migration of expertise was a strain on human resources at the hospitals and medical schools which, from 1966, was exacerbated by factionalism and the departure of numerous highly trained overseas Chinese physicians to their home countries. The combination of these factors wrecked the Chinese urban healthcare system.<sup>713</sup>

Although the barefoot doctors were a domestic phenomenon driven by factors very particular to the local political dynamics in China, the policy still had an important role in foreign perception and understanding of Beijing's health diplomacy. Furthermore, it had practical value as a usable model for extending basic preventive medicine and healthcare provision to remote rural areas. The domestic revolution in Chinese healthcare and education coincided with a great need for medical expertise in the developing world.<sup>714</sup> Thus the Chinese government had an important resource at its disposal. Fully qualified medical personnel gave it the means to embark on health diplomacy in 1963 as a less contentious way to fulfil its third world policy and internationalist duty.<sup>715</sup>

Once the Chinese government signed a bilateral agreement with a recipient country, a provincial health ministry was delegated the responsibility for overseeing and executing the project. Hence the coordination of Chinese medical projects was not centralised within the Ministry of Health, which concentrated more on overseeing

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<sup>713</sup> Lampton 1977, p. 226 and pp. 419-421.

<sup>714</sup> Thompson 2005.

<sup>715</sup> Sun 1985, pp. 166-167.

domestic health policy and setting the more politicised tone for its operations. Rather than emphasising ideology as it did in the domestic medical system, the PRC sent qualified doctors of urban extraction to treat their third world brethren.

These medical professionals were clinically-trained, with tertiary qualifications, good professional recommendations and at least four to five years' relevant experience.<sup>716</sup> The ideological precept of equality, laid out in the Eight Principles, was reflected in their salaries, which were equivalent to the wages of their local counterparts of a similar grade. Hence the Chinese physicians were comparatively cheaper to engage than other foreign personnel. Unlike in the Cuban government, which also sent medical personnel to Africa in the 1960s, the Chinese medical system did not train a surplus of physicians to be sent overseas to generate foreign exchange. Hence the departure of Chinese medical personnel on these overseas missions was a real loss to China.

At a personal level, the overseas assignment was attractive to some of the Chinese experts, as life in China at the time was not necessarily any easier and the opportunity to "serve the country overseas" came at a time when travel to Africa (and other parts of the world) was rare. The physicians themselves volunteered for these overseas assignments because they were aware of the recipient country's need and wanted "to do something for China" by participating in a humanitarian mission which demonstrated the spirit of internationalism.<sup>717</sup> Nevertheless, the overseas assignments were not without risk.<sup>718</sup> There were casualties from tropical diseases to attacks from

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<sup>716</sup> Interview with Prof. Gan, Leader of Chinese Medical Team, 14 December 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>717</sup> Interview with Professor Gan, Leader of Chinese Medical Team, 14 December 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>718</sup> According to the team head and medical coordinator based in Dar es Salaam, who is in charge of team leaders in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Tabora and Musoma, the main worry today is the contraction of HIV/AIDS in the course of their work, in contrast to the 1960s: Interview with Professor Gan, Leader of Chinese Medical Team, 14 December 2006, Dar es Salaam.

wild animals. But for the most part the Chinese medical personnel carried on with their tasks without undue interruption. They provided medical consultation, worked alongside the local staff and also carried out more elementary tasks such as injecting patients, administering medication, folding gauze and cleaning. Compared to the Soviet and Western medical systems, there was very little hierarchy within the Chinese team.

The Chinese experts tried to minimise their linguistic handicap through translators who travelled with the teams. The experts spoke little English and even less Swahili, and Chinese (or any of its dialects) was an incomprehensible foreign tongue for the locals. In an anecdote from mainland Tanzania, British records describe one instance disclosed to them by Minister for State Development and Planning Nsilo Swai. During the bilateral negotiations with the Chinese about the construction of the Friendship textile mill, discussions apparently stretched on for weeks on end before an agreement was reached. Swai complained that, by that point, “[his] Chinese was nearly perfect.”<sup>719</sup> A British finance manager at the Tanzanian National Development Corporation similarly found his interactions with the Chinese ponderous and time-consuming because “not only did the Chinese speak no English, but the English of their interpreter had been barely adequate.”<sup>720</sup> Yet the evidence suggests that the Chinese medical experts were effective and strategic in meeting these local challenges.

Chinese medical aid, as guided by the Eight Principles, was an effective instrument to further Beijing’s foreign policy. The politicization of the Chinese healthcare system along ideological lines from 1965 produced a hybrid barefoot doctor model for reaching out to poorly resourced rural areas, which converged with the

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<sup>719</sup> NA, DO214/117, From British High Commission in Dar es Salaam to the East Africa Political Department, CRO, 16 January 1965.

<sup>720</sup> NA, FO371/181899, Chinese Aid to Tanzania (Mainland), 11 November 1965.

demand for medical expertise in the developing world. Health diplomacy, as a far less contentious form of foreign aid because of its direct humanitarian impact, was thus a very natural evolutionary path for Chinese foreign policy in Tanzania. In this way, the PRC government was able to differentiate itself from its key political rivals as it carved out a niche area through its foreign aid. Once again Zanzibar played an important role in bringing the Chinese and Tanzanian governments together. However, from 1966, the Chinese were entirely preoccupied with the effects of the Cultural Revolution as Mao intensified his efforts to flatten the medical hierarchy and dispatched physicians to the rural areas in China. Political loyalty and trustworthiness became additional criteria in the selection of the medical experts bound for projects overseas, such as whether a physician came from a “good family” – that is, a politically reliable one.<sup>721</sup> The overall effect of that campaign on the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship will be examined in detail in Chapter Six.

## ii) Zanzibar and Chinese medical aid

Zanzibar’s healthcare system was heavily dependent on foreign assistance and funding. The Zanzibar Revolution in January 1964 sparked an exodus of local doctors to the Middle East and the UK. Nearly all of those who fled were of Arab descent and had been disproportionately targeted during the unrest because of their ethnicity. In response, the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council (ZRC) actively sought the assistance of the Eastern Bloc countries to fill the vacuum in its healthcare system.<sup>722</sup> This was in line with the ZRC’s overall approach to the Eastern bloc countries and included military assistance and development aid, as the previous chapter showed. The islands

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<sup>721</sup> Interview with Mr. Xiu, First Secretary of Chinese Embassy, Dar es Salaam, November 2006.

<sup>722</sup> Although, in reality, ethnic distinctions in Zanzibar were often far from clear: Iliffe 1998, p. 200.

retained much of their autonomy and kept their own Ministry of Health after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964.

From 1964 the provincial authorities of Jiangsu province were tasked to manage and provide medical aid to Zanzibar.<sup>723</sup> Soon after, the arrangements were finalised during a visit to China by senior physicians from the V. I. Lenin Hospital (Stone Town) in 1965 and the first Chinese medical team arrived in Zanzibar shortly after. In line with the Eight Principles, the Chinese government paid for the team's salaries, including travel expenses, from its loan amount, while the local government was responsible for the experts' food expenses, pocket money, accommodation, medical expenses, local transportation, facilities and stationery.<sup>724</sup> The team's entitlement during their period of service was a month's leave following eleven months of uninterrupted work, plus official local and Chinese public holidays. The Chinese experts and technical personnel were also legally obliged to observe the local laws and regulations, as well as keeping work-related data confidential. Upon the completion of their assignments, certificates were issued by the Zanzibari government stating their period of service and their work performance.

The Chinese medical team was divided into two groups: The first was stationed at the Lenin Hospital and the others were assigned to Mkoani Hospital on Pemba Island.<sup>725</sup> In addition to sending medical personnel, the Chinese government also allocated funds for the establishment and equipment of a small facility that

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<sup>723</sup> The terms of their contract were laid out in a letter from Consul Liu Gan to the Minister of Finance Abdul Aziz Twala dated October 1964: ZNA, Misaada – China, Wizara ya Kazi, Ministry of Communications and Works, DL1/80, 26/10/64.

<sup>724</sup> ZNA, DL1/80: 26 October 1964.

<sup>725</sup> The delegation included the Health Ministry secretary and hospital head, a hospital director, a secretary, an anaesthetist and a radiologist, amongst others: CFMA, 108-01095-08, 1965.1.1-1965.12.31.

manufactured a variety of injections. This helped to promote self-reliance at the institutional level by reducing the need for imported drugs. By July 1965, the injection preparation room – the first of its kind in Zanzibar – had produced nearly one million cubic centimetres of over thirty kinds of injections and solutions for use at hospitals and clinics across the islands.<sup>726</sup>

Although the Chinese were only one of many donors of medical aid to Zanzibar, the latter's pressing needs gave the Sino-Zanzibari (and later Sino-Tanzanian) relationship new importance. The vacuum created by the departure and shrinkage of Western sources made other options necessary. The Chinese medical team operated within local administrative structures and with local professionals. Anecdotal accounts suggest that the doctors were reputed for their expertise, reliability and diligence.<sup>727</sup> Ali Sultan Issa, Minister of Education, Youth and Culture, insisted that the Chinese doctors were “more akin to us” and were therefore more easily accepted than the Soviets.<sup>728</sup> East Germany contributed a substantial amount of medical assistance, including staffing the Lenin Hospital and a number of new health clinics. In his memoirs, US doctor Swift recalled that a Zanzibari health official found the East Germans arrogant in their dealings with local Pemba staff and behaved like “prima donnas”.<sup>729</sup> Yet the competition and animosity between various medical teams was a considerably small price for the Zanzibari authorities to pay for the valuable services and skills they received. The problem was mitigated by assigning the various groups to different regions and projects to minimise the chance of any direct confrontations.

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<sup>726</sup> *People's Daily*, 20 July 1966.

<sup>727</sup> Oral history interviews by Hsu suggest that the Tanzanians and the Zanzibari spoke highly of the expertise of the Chinese medical teams: Hsu 2007b.

<sup>728</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 106.

<sup>729</sup> Swift 2002, p. 94.

The generally positive effect of Chinese medical aid to Zanzibar from 1965 made the Chinese government a serious option when Nyerere considered alternative sources of foreign support for mainland Tanzania's healthcare system. In addition to the pressures of the external environment in the post-UDI period (discussed in detail in Chapter Four), the changes in the Chinese healthcare system, the deepening of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in other important areas (such as military development) the amenable terms of the Eight Principles and the availability of highly qualified Chinese medical personnel created a fortuitous situation for this new aspect of the bilateral relationship.

### **III. Tanzania and Chinese medical aid**

The development of the Tanganyikan healthcare system is important in understanding the way in which Chinese medical assistance was later able to intervene. This section will show how the combination of external factors, discussed in the earlier sections, converged with local African factors to make possible the positive outcomes of Chinese medical aid, especially in the rural regions of Tanzania. The argument is developed in three parts: Firstly, the colonial legacy in mainland Tanzania's healthcare; secondly, socialist aid and the Chinese experts; and thirdly, the effects of Chinese medical aid in Tanzania.

#### **i) Colonial legacy and healthcare in Tanganyika**

Colonial medicine in British East Africa underscored methods and practices that were crucial to the workings of colonial authorities, including “constructing ‘the

African' as an object of knowledge".<sup>730</sup> Colonial Tanganyika had no real rural healthcare system at the national level and the extent of colonial neglect meant that even modest amounts of foreign assistance could be absorbed by the local system. Most existing rural hospital and dispensary services were run by missionary societies and voluntary groups, while some mine and plantation owners with vested economic interests in their workers' productivity also offered rudimentary medical services.<sup>731</sup> Moreover, the access to education was race-based, so when independence was granted in 1961, few black Tanganyikans possessed the necessary educational qualifications to staff the government administration. Only a small percentage of youths went to school, which did not even offer a medium-term solution to the shortage of skills.<sup>732</sup> At independence, Tanganyika only had seventeen African doctors (twelve registered doctors and five interns). The situation was exacerbated by the high global demand for qualified healthcare personnel, as well as the long training period and highly specialised nature of the field.<sup>733</sup> Moreover, the Tanganyikan system was an extension of the colonial medical system that was heavily weighted towards curative medicine, with a strong urban bias.

To chart the way forward, Tanganyikan Health Minister Derek Bryceson commissioned a study by social policy expert Richard Titmuss in 1964. The Titmuss report recommended that the focus of health policy be on preventive medicine, rural health centres, the training of rural medical aides and shorter doctor training by creating

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<sup>730</sup> Vaughan 1991, p. 8.

<sup>731</sup> Titmuss 1964, p. 33.

<sup>732</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Information and Broadcasting 1979.

<sup>733</sup> Loxley 1973, p. 66.

new category of doctors, amongst other things.<sup>734</sup> Yet the Tanzanian government was acutely aware that the result of the colonial legacy on its healthcare system necessitated foreign assistance for staffing, as well as the provision of medication and equipment. It was a situation that would continue for some time. The absence of a national integrated healthcare structure meant that the country was able to absorb a large amount of assistance from various donors but, as was the case with military aid, the government's challenge would be to standardise the diverse medical treatments and healthcare systems nationally.<sup>735</sup>

Coming at a time of Tanzania's budget crisis due to diplomatic fall outs with its major donors – West Germany, the UK and the US – between 1964 to 1966, Nyerere observed the positive impact of the Chinese medical team in Zanzibar.<sup>736</sup> On 1 June 1966 the Tanzanian Minister of Economic Affairs and Development Planning, Paul Bomani, requested assistance from China to replace the medical support that the UK had withdrawn.<sup>737</sup> Ambassador He Ying supported the minister's request and explained to the Foreign Ministry that Tanzania was having a difficult time economically and was under great pressure from the West because of its nationalisation policies and growing ties with China. He Ying recommended that the Chinese government approve the request, as it would achieve a number of important aims: To support Tanzania's anti-imperialist stand, help it withstand Soviet overtures, keep it on its socialist path and further develop bilateral ties.<sup>738</sup> The request was approved and showed that Tanzania

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<sup>734</sup> Iliffe 1998, p. 201.

<sup>735</sup> Turshen 1984, p. 199.

<sup>736</sup> Zhou 2004.

<sup>737</sup> CFMA, 204-01414-01, 1 June 1966.

<sup>738</sup> He Ying noted that the Soviet overtures included the sending of Vice Foreign Minister Yakov A. Malik, the initiation of some "infiltration activities" and loan agreement for £7.5 million (\$21 million): CFMA, 204-01414-01, 3 June 1966.

was indeed “Africa’s foremost nationalist, Leftist country that has good relations with Beijing”.<sup>739</sup> Bomani emphasised at a press conference that the Chinese loan and grant had no conditions attached: It was interest free and would help Tanzania to initiate or bring to completion a number of development projects, most of which the British government had promised to help build, but which had never materialised.<sup>740</sup>

Nyerere sent some officials to China to study the healthcare system there. A goodwill mission visited China in September 1966 to learn from the government’s development experience and, in particular, its health ministry’s management of illness and disease prevention.<sup>741</sup> The delegation was led by Junior Health Minister Lucy Sellina Lameck, who had trained as a medical nurse before her appointment. Lameck was one of two female cabinet ministers after independence and her experience was an example of China’s personal diplomacy. She had visited China once before, in May 1960, and so was familiar with the Chinese system and style. She made two requests to her hosts: Firstly, for Tanzanian students to study in China to learn how the authorities had managed the colonial medical system’s legacy with traditional Chinese medicine and contemporary clinical practices. Secondly, that China sends doctors to Tanzania to help with the treatment of illness and share their experiences.<sup>742</sup> She also commented that Chinese medical policy was entirely suitable and applicable to Tanzania.

However, after the mission, Chinese medical aid to Tanzania was stalled because the British-born and Cambridge-educated health minister Bryceson was

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<sup>739</sup> However, parts of the document are censored, which may suggest that He Ying might have mentioned some shortcomings of Chinese support for Tanzania, as well as the ongoing sensitivity about preserving the image of fraternal relations: CFMA, 204-01414-01, 5 June 1966.

<sup>740</sup> NA, DO214/117, (11239/66), 22 June 1966.

<sup>741</sup> CFMA, 204-01421-05, 26 September 1966; Bjerk 2008, p. 303.

<sup>742</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-01, 30 September 1966.

extremely sceptical of the quality of Chinese doctors.<sup>743</sup> Moreover, the Cultural Revolution was causing radical outbursts at Chinese communities and embassies globally, eroding the strides that had been made in Beijing's diplomacy. But a single event eventually changed Bryceson's mind: Wu Jieping, a visiting Chinese medical professor, made a presentation on medical services in China at the University of Dar es Salam's medical faculty. Wu was well qualified, having studied at the University of Chicago from 1947 to 1948, just prior to the CCP's victory in 1949, and hence spoke English fluently. He hailed from Jiangsu province and worked at Beijing's No. 2 Medical Institute, where he attended to many of the senior Chinese leaders.<sup>744</sup> Wu's lecture made Bryceson revise his opinion of what the Chinese could offer. This was consistent with what another member of the audience described. Charles Swift, an American doctor who worked at the faculty, observed that the first part of Wu's presentation was contrived and the text, brimming with "Mao-isms and political aphorisms", had clearly been drafted by someone else. However, during the interactive question and answer period, the entire tone and mood changed:

The speaker became a different person, talking directly with warmth and humour and showing keen interest in medical progress elsewhere. The give and take was spontaneous and relaxed. He received a standing ovation in the end.<sup>745</sup>

Ironically, the Chinese professor's presentation had been a boon for Chinese health diplomacy, although not in the way that his government had originally intended. Witnessing Wu's presentation firsthand made it clear to the audience that there was a

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<sup>743</sup> Zhou Boping's memoirs refer to Bryceson incorrectly as a doctor: Zhou 2004.

<sup>744</sup> Swift 2002, p. 56.

<sup>745</sup> Swift 2002, p. 56. For the ideological baggage related to the Cultural Revolution, see also Chapter Six.

disjuncture between the ideological emphasis of the Cultural Revolution with the reality of capable, engaged, knowledgeable and well-qualified medical experts that China could potentially offer through its aid programme. Nyerere only spoke to Consul Zhou Boping about the possibility of Chinese medical assistance in September 1967, a year later.<sup>746</sup> Nyerere commented to Consul Zhou that Wu had “opened [their] eyes” and they now wanted to formally request Chinese doctors. Consul Zhou subsequently invited eight Tanzanians to the embassy to brief them on the medical situation in China. Zhou explained that China was itself short of doctors, but as Tanzania’s needs were greater, his government would help as much as it could. None of the Tanzanians gathered had been to China before and they raised many questions during the session.<sup>747</sup>

The commencement of the Chinese medical project in Tanzania took place at an important juncture in both Tanzanian and Chinese politics, as will be shown below.

## ii) **Tanzania and socialist experts**

This section will show that Nyerere’s promotion of self-reliance and socialism created a very specific and conducive setting for the work of the Chinese medical teams. The Arusha Declaration that was adopted by the Tanzanian government at the TANU national conference in February 1967 relied on the two tenets of socialism and self-reliance. It was, as Rugumamu has argued, “a bold, assertive policy action against the received Western development orthodoxy.”<sup>748</sup> The Declaration contained the criteria for Tanzania’s acceptance of foreign aid: That it should be in line with socialism and self-reliance, in no way threaten independence in policymaking, and that the debt burden

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<sup>746</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 97.

<sup>747</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 97-98.

<sup>748</sup> Rugumamu 1997, p. 121.

should be seriously considered.<sup>749</sup> The Tanzanian government demonstrated its commitment to a transformation of society by giving priority to the development of the rural areas. Although health strategy was not explicitly reflected, the Declaration created opportunities for foreign socialist medical systems to establish their influence in the country nonetheless.<sup>750</sup> Indeed, the country's main health challenges – the shortage of doctors and ancillary staff, epidemic infections, highly prevalent chronic infections and parasitic diseases, malnutrition, high infant and child mortality rates, as well as inadequate health facilities, especially in rural areas – made foreign medical aid imperative.<sup>751</sup>

Significantly, Nyerere elaborated on the government's preference for socialist aid and experts in his address to the TANU national conference in October 1967. The president spoke of the desired "socialist experts" who would be dedicated and effective people with the correct attitude to support Tanzania on its chosen socialist path:

Ideally we also need socialists in every job – which is not necessarily the same thing as wanting a citizen for every job, because not all Tanzanians are socialists. But if a competent doctor also has socialist attitudes, then he is surely an especially great asset to us.<sup>752</sup>

Nyerere's speech emphasised the importance of developing self-reliance and reiterated that none of Tanzania's political, economic or social policies would be

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<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>750</sup> Iliffe 1998, p. 202.

<sup>751</sup> This trend persisted after 1972, and the amount of foreign contributions increased, even though the specific type of assistance had changed: Tanzania Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1973/4, p. 2.

<sup>752</sup> Nyerere 1967a.

compromised just to secure foreign funding.<sup>753</sup> Nyerere's stated ideological affinity for socialist, community-minded doctors created a positive setting for the further development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship through medical aid from 1967 until the end of the decade. As a result, the Scandinavian and Eastern bloc countries were implicitly favoured. China, with focus on rural development and emphasis on self-reliance, appeared particularly well-placed to provide the desired type of foreign assistance. Nyerere had seen the Chinese development model firsthand during his visits to the country. The president reportedly took a great interest in the local medical system and saw the potential for the applicability of the barefoot doctor scheme in rural Tanzania, how temporary clinics were set up and farmers trained to assist medical workers. Through his interactions he noted that "the Eastern countries have African needs: A stress on duty" and were able to "shape people's minds and uplift their morality" to convert them into "well-organised manpower" for the purpose of national development.<sup>754</sup>

A Tanzanian delegation travelled to Beijing on 21 November 1967 and it was decided that a medical survey group would be quickly despatched, followed later by thirty-five to forty Chinese doctors.<sup>755</sup> The Tanzanian delegates were impressed by what they observed and noted that the Chinese medical system had various levels of doctors, ranging from those who were university-trained to medical school graduates, to the barefoot doctors at the other end of the spectrum.<sup>756</sup> They also noted that the concept of combining traditional with modern Chinese medicine was useful to the

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<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>754</sup> Cheng 2009, p. 210-213.

<sup>755</sup> The delegation also met Premier Zhou, who voiced his support for the arrangement, before travelling to Wuhan, Guangzhou and Shanghai: *Ibid.*

<sup>756</sup> Iliffe 1998, p. 201.

Tanzanian situation.<sup>757</sup> In a demonstration of responsiveness to the Tanzanian request, the Shandong provincial medical authorities sent a medical survey team to Dar es Salaam four weeks later, in January 1968, for a month-long tour of healthcare facilities. Based on the survey team's recommendations, an actual medical team was despatched to Tanzania in April 1968.

The group of sixty-four doctors and supporting staff was led by Dr. Cao Yue Zhong, who was the deputy leader of the survey team; it included experts in general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, otolaryngology, paediatrics and pharmacology. The medical team made the journey to Tanzania on the ship *Yaohua* together with the first group of technical personnel of the TanZam rail link survey team, as well as 12,000 tonnes of cargo.<sup>758</sup> The arrival of the Chinese medical mission was timely and complemented the Tanzanian government's broader health policy of creating a static elementary medical service at the grassroots level.<sup>759</sup> The team's two-year tenure was agreed upon in a cultural cooperation protocol signed on 6 May 1968, subject to renewal.<sup>760</sup> The medical personnel were organised into eight teams which were then deployed to eight districts. In his welcome address to the medical team, Nyerere cited Zanzibar's positive experience with Chinese medical aid when he stressed that their doctors were appreciated for carrying out all the necessary tasks in the hospital, even the menial ones which Western doctors would not deign to do.<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> Hsu 2007a.

<sup>758</sup> Their orientation programme included a meeting with the Minister for Health, a talk on medical services in Tanzania by the Assistant Chief Medical Officer, a visit to Muhimbili Hospital and a dispensary in the city: *People's Daily*, 23 January and 20 June 1968; Yu 1970, p. 71; Monson 2009, p. 44.

<sup>759</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1969, p. 3.

<sup>760</sup> Bartke 1992, p. 184; *People's Daily*, 8 May 1968; Zhou 2004, p. 99.

<sup>761</sup> Zhou 2004. The Chinese were dispatched to Musoma and Tarime in the Mara region; Dodoma, Mpwapwa, Kondoa in the Dodoma region; and Mtwara, Nachingwea and Lindi in the Mtwara region.

The eight teams of Chinese medical personnel operated in a circuit system, with each assigned to a particular area and for a set length of time in a particular village that ranged from a few days up to a month. This arrangement enabled the team to treat “hundreds of thousands” of patients across the eight counties, as well as to conduct health education classes which emphasised disease prevention. The Chinese medical teams improvised when there were no suitable clinical facilities and would operate from a school classroom or even “under large trees.”<sup>762</sup> During his second state visit to China a month later, Nyerere reiterated that both governments wanted people who would use their knowledge and abilities in service of the people. Just as Mao called for the “red expert” – the skilled person devoted to the country’s political creed – Nyerere insisted that Tanzania was searching for its “committed expert”.<sup>763</sup>

The Chinese experts taught through demonstration and by working alongside their local counterparts. These methods mitigated any linguistic difficulties and, together with their high level of personal conformity, discipline and diligence, the experts had a “strong personal influence as models”.<sup>764</sup> Indeed, diligence was a coping strategy for China’s difficult socio-economic situation and was effectively reinforced by Maoist discipline and the Confucian stricture that emphasised the importance of collective good over individual benefit, the appreciation of individual sacrifice and one’s contributions to society.<sup>765</sup> These less technical lessons were incorporated by the Chinese experts as counterpart training and coaching in work ethics. The long hours the experts spent working were marvelled at by their local colleagues. The differences in

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<sup>762</sup> *People’s Daily*, 31 March 1969.

<sup>763</sup> Nyerere 1973, p. 37.

<sup>764</sup> Yu 1975.

<sup>765</sup> For a comment on Confucianism and the Protestant work ethic: Lim / Chua 2003.

attitudes to work and cross-cultural issues also meant that the Chinese projects were sites of cultural conflict, however.<sup>766</sup>

The Chinese experts were not free to do as they pleased in the host country. Indeed, there was a high level of discipline which was then manifested as conformity among them. The Chinese government had vested interests in these informal ambassadors and expected them to abide by many of the same political and social norms as in China. For example, the Chinese medical experts were required to complete their assignments, which they tended to complete, in contrast to the Soviet physicians who often left prematurely. As Zanzibari records show, this created a positive impression on the host government.<sup>767</sup> But on a less positive note, their simple dressing and almost identical deportment was at times seen as backwardness and worked against local perceptions of Chinese professional credibility. In some instances, it gave rise to rumours among the locals that the Chinese teams were convicts or conscripted labour.<sup>768</sup> The Chinese physicians were often mistaken for the barefoot doctors from the Chinese communes, who had received much coverage in the local media.

The Chinese experts faced challenging and risky conditions in the field. In specific circumstances, the rigidity of the Chinese aid programme and the experts' professional pride were detrimental to the individual experts. For example, when a Chinese irrigation engineer was attacked by a swarm of bees and went into anaphylactic shock, a team from China was sent to treat him. In spite of the urgency, the Chinese refused help from the Western doctors and wanted to fly the victim to Zanzibar to be

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<sup>766</sup> Brautigam 1998, p. 158.

<sup>767</sup> ZNA, Misaada – China, Wizara ya Kazi, Ministry of Communications and Works, DL1/80.

<sup>768</sup> Interview with the late Ali Mohamed Nabwa, Stone Town, 28 November 2006.

treated by their own physicians. In the end, the patient's serious condition resulted in the doctors flying in from Zanzibar instead.<sup>769</sup>

Coming from a developing country, the Chinese experts' expectations for their living environment were neither grandiose, nor were their material demands extravagant, as the Eight Principles pegged their packages and living standards to local African terms. This forced equality between donor country experts with local experts was a hallmark of Chinese development aid and won it much admiration because of the element of personal and national sacrifice, with no obvious or visible signs of personal gain. Instead, it can be argued that the Chinese experts were the ones who bore a disproportionately high financial and personal pressure, compared to other aid workers. In 1970 the Chinese government sent a letter to Abeid Karume (who was also Zanzibar's Chairman for Finance), requesting a reduction in the salaries of its advisors and the abolition of grades in the hierarchy. This was a remarkable and unheard of request, especially because the Chinese experts were already on local salary scales. The Chinese counsellor's letter stated that Mao's teachings on plain living and hard struggle had to be preserved, and that the reduction would ease Zanzibar's economic burden.<sup>770</sup>

Nyerere complained that the projects sponsored by the Western countries always involved the preparation of the experts' houses, in particular the installation of air-conditioning, then the construction of facilities which were contrary to the austerity that the president wanted to instil in his people. The blatant inequality in lifestyle and that "pleasure-seeking mindset" were criticised by Nyerere for its insidious effect on the people – Nyerere told Consul Zhou that it had to be stopped and he hoped that the

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<sup>769</sup> Professor Wu, who spoke at the University of Dar es Salaam, was part of the medical team dispatched from China to treat the engineer: Swift 2002, p. 56.

<sup>770</sup> *The Standard*, 20 November 1970.

Chinese experts' diligence, modesty and frugality would be transmitted to his people instead.<sup>771</sup>

The Chinese experts lived in dormitory-style sleeping quarters with communal cooking facilities. They prepared their own food, did their own chores (unlike Western expatriates who usually hired servants) and spent their leisure time engaged in free recreation activities among themselves, such as table tennis.<sup>772</sup> In contrast to the Cubans, who mixed easily with the Zanzibaris because of their greater cultural affinity and active participation in local social activities, the Chinese did not integrate as well.<sup>773</sup> A contributing factor was financial, as the Chinese experts' modest salaries limited the kinds of activities that they could indulge in. The perceived absence of virility or visible signs of masculine assertion amongst the Chinese men and the androgynous look of the few women, usually the interpreters, in their unisex garments was perturbing and gave the experts an unnatural, almost monastic, quality.<sup>774</sup> This element of Confucian moderation and self-restraint was a double-edged sword and ran contrary to local expectations in other ways, such as feelings that the Chinese were extremely secretive and formal.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 95.

<sup>772</sup> Hsu 2007b.

<sup>773</sup> Interview with Prof. Haroub Othman, 14 November 2006 and 17, 18 February 2009, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>774</sup> Tanzanian interviewees insisted that the male Chinese experts, unlike those from Western countries, did not get involved with local women nor leave "a trail of children behind": Interviews with Professor Geoffrey Mmari, Dar es Salaam, 7 November 2006; Ambassador George Kahama, May 2007; the late Professor Haroub Othman, 14 November 2006.

<sup>775</sup> Hsu 2007a; Brautigam 1998, p. 158.

### iii) The effects of Chinese medical aid in Tanzania

Even as the Cultural Revolution raged on in China, the Chinese medical teams continued their assignments in Tanzania. The two governments publicly demonstrated their mutual support at such a politically difficult time. Following the death of a Chinese irrigation expert in September 1967, Premier Zhou and President Nyerere agreed that the man's remains be interred in Tanzania.<sup>776</sup> That symbolic gesture was intended to transmit the importance of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship at the personal level. Additionally, Nyerere reportedly felt that the victim's burial in Tanzania would have an effect on the other Chinese experts, as well as on the local people.<sup>777</sup> Two months later, a forty-two year-old doctor died from a brain haemorrhage while working in Zanzibar. His funeral was attended by no less than Karume, Zanzibari government ministers, ASP leaders and mass organisations, Chinese embassy and consulate officials, doctors, nurses as well as "hundreds of people".<sup>778</sup> The victim was affiliated to Nanjing Hospital's College of Medicine and a Tanzanian delegation to Shanghai subsequently visited the "martyr's" widow to pay their respects in November 1967.<sup>779</sup>

The Chinese team helped to run the regional and district hospitals, and visited the rural health centres and village dispensaries regularly. The Tanzanian Health Division's 1968 Annual Report noted a "significant improvement" in the medical services of those regions served by the Chinese teams, noting that they ushered in new

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<sup>776</sup> Consul Zhou Boping's memoirs describe Premier Zhou's reference to a poem which celebrated loyalty to the country, stating that patriots could be buried anywhere, because their bodies and souls would always be with their country: Zhou 2004, pp. 96-97.

<sup>777</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 96-97.

<sup>778</sup> *People's Daily*, 31 May 1965.

<sup>779</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 97-98

health opportunities for the people.<sup>780</sup> The rural communities of the South and North Mara districts were highlighted. By March 1969, the number of Chinese medical personnel in mainland Tanzania had increased to 80 and the Chinese government had donated three X-ray machines, drugs and equipment.<sup>781</sup> Part of the group established a health centre in Mkoko village, fifty kilometres from Mpwapwa town, and another established a surgical station in the district hospital of Nachingwea in the Mtwara district.

One of the most significant achievements of Chinese medical assistance was its alignment with and support for the Tanzanian government's efforts to extend medical care to the rural areas.<sup>782</sup> The government's *ujamaa* programme attempted to organise (but later forced) communities in the remote rural areas into villages, to facilitate the provision of state-sponsored amenities and services. The Chinese medical teams in Mtwara, Lindi and Nachingwea hospitals paid twice-weekly visits to dispensaries and *ujamaa* villages to conduct child welfare clinics, seminars, health demonstrations, vaccinations and treatment. In some cases, they even stayed with the rural communities for several days at a stretch.<sup>783</sup> The team in Mtwara reportedly attended to a total of 2,013 patients in five villages of the Nachingwea District, an impressive achievement.<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>780</sup> Tanzania Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1969.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>782</sup> Bartke 1992, p. 131.

<sup>783</sup> Between 1970 and 1971 the Tanzanian government's Operation Dodoma, a villagisation initiative, saw the number of *ujamaa* villages in the region increase from 75 to 246: Hyden 1980, p. 102. The Chinese teams had visited several of these villages and, in one instance, stayed on for ten further days to participate in village life and work, which the local press cited as evidence of the "strongest and warmest friendship" between the countries: TNA, Ministry of Health, HEA/90/50/405, 20 March 1973.

<sup>784</sup> Press Release issued by Information Services Division, Ministry of Information and Tourism, Dar es Salaam, A/1724/69, 3 July 1969.

The Chinese team's tours in the Mtwara rural areas were later extended to the Newala district, which made a region-wide medical service available to those remote areas without hospitals. The Chinese team also made another important contribution by boosting the morale of local staff in the rural healthcare system. The experts' "spirit of devotion to duty" and "hard devoted work," was "invaluable in stimulating and supplementing the efforts of the health division" to extend health services to the rural communities through their mobile medical services.<sup>785</sup> Indeed, the arrival of the first Chinese medical team provided the impetus for the increased frequency of Tanzanian staff visits to rural communities and made it a common feature of the health service.<sup>786</sup>

By 1968, inexperienced army representatives had been installed in place of officials who were purged from the Chinese Ministry of Public Health. The entire ministry was sidelined, while Chinese propaganda became more extreme and distracted popular attention from the important work that was being done by the Chinese medical team at the community level. The Chinese experts were repeatedly hailed by the press as selfless heroes on perilous humanitarian missions in conditions of adversity in an ironic echo of the colonial missionaries in Africa. Incredible accounts of the miraculous effects and potency of Mao's teachings appeared. One such effusive article in the *People's Daily* alleged that a Tanzanian patient had placed a specially labelled photograph of Mao next to his bed and told his roommates that the Chairman was the Chinese people's great leader who had sent the good doctors.<sup>787</sup> A similar article from July 1968 reported that a Tanzanian woman with an abdominal tumour who had been

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<sup>785</sup> Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1969, p. 36.

<sup>786</sup> As reported by Chief Medical Officer Ben Akim to Nyerere's personal assistant in 1971: TNA, Dar es Salaam. HED/50/1 (Part III), Ministry of Health, Medical Development Plan 1964-1969, document 318, from N. B. Akim for Principal Secretary to Ms. Joan Wicken, Personal Assistant to the President, State House, 9 August 1971, Questionnaire relating to health development 1961-1971.

<sup>787</sup> *People's Daily*, 25 February 1967.

turned away by a missionary hospital, was successfully treated by the Chinese medical team, but only after the team reviewed Chairman Mao's brilliant book in close coordination with local medical personnel prior to surgery.<sup>788</sup> This propaganda held little value to Tanzanians and only drew criticism and suspicion about Chinese motivations in Africa.<sup>789</sup>

Yet when Chinese medical aid is compared to other aid projects, the medical teams were generally less politicised by the Cultural Revolution. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. Indeed, as Wu's lecture at the University of Dar es Salaam had demonstrated to the audience, while most Chinese people went through the basic motions of validating their political loyalty (or rather, proving the absence of disloyalty), the medical professionals as intellectuals were generally marginalised by the revolution in the Chinese healthcare system. The medical teams in Tanzania were comprised of fewer experts and the groups were scattered in the remote areas of the country, compared to the more densely concentrated community of Chinese experts on other projects. Furthermore, the nature of medical procedures – which mostly involved personal consultation – did not lend itself easily to the politicisation of work processes on a significant scale, as a factory or construction project would. Hence the Cultural Revolution did not seriously disrupt the medical projects in Tanzania.

The practical value of the Chinese medical teams' efforts bore modest fruit and was recognised at the highest level. While on his inspection tours of the country, Nyerere met with the Chinese medical teams in the rural Mara and Dodoma regions in

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<sup>788</sup> *People's Daily*, 31 March 1969.

<sup>789</sup> The effect of the Cultural Revolution on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

early August 1969 and July 1970, in a demonstration of support for their work.<sup>790</sup> In addition to treating the remote rural communities, the Chinese team was also tasked to administer medical services (such as immunisations) to the growing number of Chinese experts on other aid projects. Their presence was complemented by the physicians who were specifically assigned to the estimated 25,000 Chinese personnel on the massive Tanzania-Zambia rail link project from 1970, who also treated the locals living in the vicinity of the project sites.<sup>791</sup> These doctors were likely to have been trained in specialised centres for particular branches of medicine, for example in the treatment of coalminers or rail workers. Furthermore, it can be argued that the Chinese medical teams also tended to wounded Frelimo combatants involved in the Mozambican liberation struggle: By 1969 the Tanzanian government had set up four hundred villages in the Lindi and Mtwara regions to fortify Tanzania's southern border with Mozambique.<sup>792</sup> The Newala and Mtwara stations were close to the border and were served by the Chinese medical team.<sup>793</sup>

Tanzanian health policy adopted a number of other lessons from the Chinese experience, when another early TANU visitor to China, Lawi Sijaona, became minister for health in the late 1960s. Sijaona advocated free mass immunisation, an essential drugs programme, the expanded training of medical auxiliaries and the training of villagers to provide elementary healthcare in areas where dispensaries were lacking.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> *People's Daily*, 16 July 1970; 5 and 16 August 1969.

<sup>791</sup> TNA, Acc. 450, HEA/90/5/II.

<sup>792</sup> Hyden 1980, p. 102.

<sup>793</sup> The presence of the Chinese doctors was observed closely. The Malawian Ministry of External Affairs approached the British High Commission in Blantyre for information on the presence of Chinese in the area. A letter was sent to Lusaka and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, reporting that forty-six Chinese "doctors" arrived here in September to supplement 36 others already in Tanzania. They were scattered around the country and a number of them – precise number not known – are scheduled to work in villages in the Mbeya region: NA, FCO31/690, Chinese in Zambia and Tanzania, 10 December 1970.

<sup>794</sup> Iliffe 1998, p. 202.

Although the Chinese medical team was able to make important strides because of the relatively low base of the healthcare system in post-colonial Tanzania, there were serious constraints to its efforts to promote change. The difficult conditions and limited resources meant that the Chinese teams were unable to address the broader questions of institutional sustainability in a major way. For example, Nachingwea (in southern Tanzania) was the largest district with the smallest population in the region. In 1969 it was the only unit outside of Dar es Salaam which had a surgeon, a Chinese expert and a rural medical aide.<sup>795</sup> Ten rural health centres were subsequently opened in 1971, but the shortage of trained medical personnel made it impossible to staff them adequately.<sup>796</sup>

From 1970 the Tanzanian government allocated one-third of the health budget to rural health services.<sup>797</sup> The system was anchored on the village health service that aimed to offer elementary medical and health care in *ujamaa* villages. It was a model that drew heavily from the Chinese commune health scheme staffed by barefoot doctors.<sup>798</sup> The medical helpers were recruited from within the village on the recommendation of villagers and worked part-time to address similar social concerns in Tanzania. At the TANU party conference in September 1971, it was decided that rural health services would have top priority in the government's socio-economic plans, a major advance in health policy.<sup>799</sup> The Chinese medical team was commended by the

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<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>796</sup> Yu 1975, p. 110; TNA, Technical Assistance China, Acc. 450, HEA/90/5/II, 12 May 1972.

<sup>797</sup> Turshen 1984, p. 200.

<sup>798</sup> Etten 1976, p. 49.

<sup>799</sup> As an anecdotal indication of the success of Chinese health diplomacy, a number of parliamentarians made requests for Chinese doctors to work in their respective constituency hospitals: Iliffe 1998, p. 203.

Minister for Health in his budget speech to the National Assembly in 1971/2 for their active participation in the promotion of rural health services in Tanzania.<sup>800</sup>

Thus Chinese medical aid was particularly suited to the Tanzanian government's priorities for national development because of its rural focus, as well as the willingness of the Chinese personnel to work in the remote areas. Furthermore, it deepened Beijing's level of engagement in Tanzania by bringing its experts in direct contact with large numbers of ordinary Tanzanians – aside from the officials, workers or soldiers – and was, for the Chinese, an effective practical demonstration of the value of their Eight Principles. The medical teams' work and their relationships continued to grow in spite of the tumultuous Cultural Revolution that was rapidly unfolding in China. Nevertheless, in spite of some changes to the Tanzanian medical manpower system, financial constraints meant that its health system continued to be predominantly funded by foreign sources between 1962 and 1972.<sup>801</sup>

The effect of Chinese medical aid in Zanzibar was similarly positive. Its emphasis was more customised to the situation, with more focus on direct service at the medical institutions, rather than a mobile medical team strategy. Chinese resources were concentrated on developing Zanzibar's physical infrastructure, such as the previously mentioned vaccination facility or a pharmaceutical workshop, also the islands' first, that was inaugurated in September 1968 under the auspices of the Lenin Hospital.<sup>802</sup> In addition to those medical production facilities, the Chinese government supported the construction of a new maternity hospital (estimated to cost £20,000 or

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<sup>800</sup> TNA, Dar es Salaam. HEA/90/50/405, Ministry of Health, Principal Secretary to Chinese Medical Team Leader, *Bwana Mzee Mohamedi Swala*, 20 March 1973; TNA, Dar es Salaam. HEA/90/5, Ministry of Health, from Raza Fazal to Chinese Embassy, 2 January 1974.

<sup>801</sup> Etten 1976, p. 99; Turshen 1984, p. 199.

<sup>802</sup> *People's Daily*, 3 September 1968.

\$56,000), a new specialist hospital in Chake, Pemba (£51,000 or \$142,800), as well as the equipment of the Zanzibar Hospital's operating theatre (£26,000 or \$72,800) and dental clinic (£5,702, or \$15, 966).<sup>803</sup> The Lenin Hospital in Stone Town continued to be plagued by a shortage of skilled local staff: Of the nearly four hundred Zanzibaris who worked there, only eleven were physicians. The majority of medical personnel were members of the Chinese medical team stationed there.<sup>804</sup>

On Pemba island, the Chinese supported the construction of the Abdullah Mzee Hospital in Mkoani in 1970 as an “ultra modern hospital” with a new capacity of seventy-five beds, which was significantly larger than the old hospital which could only hold twenty.<sup>805</sup> The Chinese team’s efforts were acknowledged and after more than two years in Zanzibar (by February 1967), one medical team had treated over 230 critically ill patients.<sup>806</sup> When the East German doctors left Pemba in 1970, the Chinese were the sole foreign medical group remaining on the islands to provide specialised and community-based healthcare services. However, Zanzibar’s great shortage of trained medical staff remained intractable and there was no formal training institution for health professionals. A number of Zanzibari students were being trained in various colleges on mainland Tanganyika and the Chinese medical team at the Lenin Hospital conducted training for rural medical assistants.

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<sup>803</sup> ZNA, Misaada – China, Wizara ya Kazi, Ministry of Communications and Works, DL1/80.

<sup>804</sup> A third group of Chinese medical personnel arrived in Zanzibar in April 1969, replacing the second group: *People's Daily*, 12 April 1969. The staffing problems persisted well into the next decade, as a report commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) published in 1979 showed that nearly all of the estimated twenty-five practicing locals at the time were trained overseas in the Soviet Union or China: USAID 1979.

<sup>805</sup> Maelezo Feature Service, Dar es Salaam, B/99/69, 31 May 1969, “Pemba Island makes impressive progress in all spheres of activities.”

<sup>806</sup> *People's Daily*, 3 September 1968.

The Chinese would later boost Tanzanian self-reliance by collaborating with the Tanzanian government on two important projects. The first concerned vaccine production at an institute in Mabibo, Dar es Salaam, which had the objective of producing vaccines for tuberculosis and smallpox. It was estimated that Tanzania had the potential to be self-sufficient in the production of those vaccines. The second project was a pharmaceutical plant at Gerezani, Dar es Salaam, which produced tablets and infusions.<sup>807</sup> The Chinese government promised to supply chemicals to the plant gratis for the first year of operation and provide technicians, while the Tanzanian government invested 3 million Shillings (\$420,000).<sup>808</sup>

Hence the developments in the Chinese healthcare system made it particularly attractive to the Tanzanian government, which wanted a rural-focused, mobilised, community-based medical system. The combination of colonial neglect, Zanzibar's positive experience with Chinese medical aid and Nyerere's pursuit of African socialism allowed Chinese medical aid to perform a much-needed function.

### **Conclusion: The overlap of Chinese medical assistance and Tanzania's developmental agenda**

This chapter has demonstrated another facet of the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship through the example of China's health diplomacy. It has shown that Chinese aid as spelled out by the Eight Principles was unique in having delineated a more equitable donor-recipient relationship than the traditional Western aid

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<sup>807</sup> TNA, Dar es Salaam. Acc. 450, HEA/90/5/II, Technical Assistance China, document 393, Chinese Medical Assistance to Tanzania, 12 May 1972.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.* In reality, however, a lack of funds on the Tanzanian side has made this impossible, in spite of the vigour invested in the project by the Chinese.

arrangements. Chinese medical assistance to Tanzania was timely, as the Tanzanian government's relations with its major donors were strained. More importantly, Chinese medical aid was unique in the way that it engaged with Nyerere's policies of self-reliance and socialism. Specifically, it provided an added emphasis to the Tanzanian government's ambition to extend medical care to the rural areas.

The evidence has shown that Chinese aid to Tanzania was intended to support Nyerere's position, as well as his government's developmental plans. Chinese physicians brought healthcare services to the remote rural communities, as well as selected *ujamaa* villages, thereby strengthening Nyerere's villageisation programme. Although Mao's objectives in launching the barefoot doctor scheme in China had the primary purpose of providing elementary healthcare to rural communities as well as mobilising the corps of barefoot doctors domestically, the policy gave much inspiration to the design of the Tanzanian rural medical assistants programme.

The Chinese government dispatched clinically-trained and well-qualified medical personnel to Tanzania and not the less rigorously-trained barefoot doctors. Yet despite both governments' emphasis on socialist development and mutual pronouncements of support and solidarity, there remained significant cross-cultural differences at the inter-personal level. The Chinese medical personnel appeared radically different from popular perceptions of Western development experts who lived lavishly and were perceived as not having broken out of the colonial mould. At the personal level, the Chinese medical experts embodied some important qualities in Nyerere's definition of the *committed expert* and achieved impressive professional results while maintaining their cultural discipline. But the personal encounters between the Chinese experts and Tanzanians were also sites of cross-cultural conflict.

Ultimately, Chinese medical aid to Tanzania was on too limited a scale to have a major impact on the healthcare system, both in terms of the medical teams' reach as well as the changes it might have brought about within the Tanzanian health ministry. The Tanzanian healthcare system remained heavily dependent on donor funding well into the 1970s. Nevertheless, Chinese medical assistance has continued to be a significant area of collaboration for both countries and successive medical teams have been sent to Tanzania virtually uninterrupted since the 1960s. While the supply of medical experts overseas seemed little affected by the Cultural Revolution, the latter's overall effect on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was more marked and less positive, as the final chapter will show.

## **Chapter Six – The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as a test of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, 1966 to 1971**

Domestic political developments in China after 1966 impinged upon the steady development of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship that had been taking place until that point. Chairman Mao Zedong launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 which only officially ended with his death a decade later. The movement destabilised the highest echelons of the Chinese government and rippled through every corner of society and was by far the most turbulent and violent period of modern Chinese history.<sup>809</sup> It derived its strength from the Red Guards, led by university and secondary school youths in the larger Chinese cities who carried out politically-motivated purges and denounced those whom they identified as disloyal to Mao. The human toll from the Cultural Revolution was staggering, with one recent estimate linking nearly 1.5 million deaths to the campaign alone.<sup>810</sup>

The impact of the Cultural Revolution overflowed into the sphere of foreign relations as well. In the words of Jan Myrdal, Chairman of the Board of the Sweden China Association, “friendship with China” at the time:

Does not only signify an interest in classical Chinese culture, the Chinese language, Chinese life: Today friendship with China means taking a stand against imperialism and its anti-Chinese campaign, to stand in favour of the

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<sup>809</sup> Barnouin and Yu 1998; Chen 2001.

<sup>810</sup> Yang 2011, p. 38.

Chinese people's revolution. An important task will be to spread knowledge about the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Mao Tsetung's thought.<sup>811</sup>

The most dramatic effects of the Cultural Revolution on foreign policy took place from 1966 to 1968. Yet considerably little research has been done on the campaign's international effects, with the exception of a few studies on leftist groups in Malaya and Cuba.<sup>812</sup> A major obstacle to the historical scholarship on this phenomenon is the lack of primary sources from that sensitive period of Chinese political history. Hence this chapter draws on a combination of historical publications, archival sources, as well as oral history interviews to address the gap of research on the impact of the Cultural Revolution on Sino-African relations from 1966 to 1971. The analysis is presented in three sections: Firstly, Tanzania and the Cultural Revolution; secondly, how the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was tested by the Cultural Revolution; and finally, Tanzanian diplomatic support for PRC admission at the UN.

## **I. Tanzania and the Cultural Revolution**

The 1960s began on a catastrophic note for the Chinese people. Mao's ambitious Great Leap Forward campaign in the two years prior had intended to jumpstart Chinese industrial development, but was an unmitigated economic disaster instead. The Great Leap Forward resulted in an estimated twenty-five million deaths, mostly from famine.<sup>813</sup> Mao subsequently retreated backstage and, for a short time,

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<sup>811</sup> Johansson 2010, p. 226; Cheng 2009b; Rothwell 2010.

<sup>812</sup> Cheng expounds on this in his study of the Cultural Revolution's significant effects on the left-wing Barisan Socialis in Singapore: Cheng 2010.

<sup>813</sup> Grain production levels had fallen so drastically that Beijing had no choice but to seek assistance from Western nations. It imported six million tonnes of grain in 1961. This dependence on foreign imports persisted for a decade: Clements 2006, p. 123.

only participated indirectly in the government's policymaking. In those interim years, more liberal economic measures were taken. Zhou Enlai was also able to pursue a moderate foreign policy. In June 1965 the premier advised all Chinese representatives not to be pushy with their political beliefs, as a diversity of perspectives was encouraged because both Marxism-Leninism and *Mao Zedong Thought* allowed for debate.<sup>814</sup> But Mao re-emerged on the political stage when the economy showed signs of recovery in 1962, emphasising that "the party should not forget class struggle".<sup>815</sup> He criticised the measures that had been implemented as signs of "capitalist restoration".<sup>816</sup>

Thus Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in May 1966, ostensibly to transform state and society through strengthening ideological unity, but also to re-consolidate his personal power by eliminating political opposition.<sup>817</sup> As the movement gained momentum, it broke free of the government's decision-making mechanisms. Even senior government officials were not spared from successive waves of political purges. The crippling of the foreign ministry seriously disrupted its diplomatic relations and aid policies.<sup>818</sup> Indeed, in the first year of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government had diplomatic spats with over thirty of the roughly forty countries with which it had official ties.<sup>819</sup> But Tanzania was not amongst them. This section discusses in detail the effects of the Cultural Revolution on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship between 1966 and 1971 in three areas: The initial Tanzanian enthusiasm for the

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<sup>814</sup> Zhou accompanied Mao to meet the Chinese representatives who were bound for the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference: CCP 1997, p. 163.

<sup>815</sup> Chen 2001, p. 210.

<sup>816</sup> Garver 1993, p. 154; Brady 2002, p. 100.

<sup>817</sup> Chen 2001, p. 243.

<sup>818</sup> Westad 2005, p. 58.

<sup>819</sup> Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 66.

Cultural Revolution; the surge of ultra-radical propaganda; and finally, the recall of Chinese ambassadors.

### i) **Initial Tanzanian interest in the Cultural Revolution**

As earlier chapters have shown, by 1966 the Tanzanian and Chinese governments enjoyed a close diplomatic relationship. This was the result of mutual interest, Chinese aid and personal relationships between senior government officials, set against the backdrop of post-colonial pressures. The Tanzanian government initially viewed the Cultural Revolution positively, as an important undertaking that would have some relevance to their own efforts to mobilise the people. According to the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam in September 1966, the Tanzanian press followed closely the events taking place in China. Local Tanzanian youths reportedly praised Mao and *Mao Zedong Thought* – the Chairman’s collated works which formed the basis of the Chinese Communist orthodoxy – and lauded the Red Guards’ revolutionary activities. The embassy also cautioned, however, that other sources were spreading “slanderous information” about the Cultural Revolution, alluding to the generally anti-Chinese stance of many Western and African governments.<sup>820</sup>

A Tanzanian goodwill mission was sent to China shortly after the launch of the Cultural Revolution, one of the first foreign delegations to visit during that period. The Tanzanian government had high hopes for the outcome of the visit, as the mission was staffed by representatives from a broad range of government ministries, from transportation, planning, land, settlement and water development, to education, finance, agriculture and forestry. In line with what Nyerere felt that he had learned and observed

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<sup>820</sup> CFMA, 204-01421-01, September 1966. For more on Mao Zedong Thought, see: Ip 2010, p. 169-170.

the main objective was not only on international donor funding, but also to learn from the Chinese experience of industrial development. Prior to the trip, the group requested to view models of cultivation, harvesting and farm implements, to meet leaders in the Ministry of Agriculture as well as to learn from the Chinese experience of bridge-building, road construction and infrastructure development using labour-intensive methods.<sup>821</sup>

The earliest Chinese reports of the Tanzanian delegation's visit described the delegates' keen interest in the events connected with the Cultural Revolution. The visitors were reportedly enthralled by the rousing propaganda performance *The Congo is Rising*, even suggesting that it be made into a film for release in Tanzania to counter negative US influence. The group also requested that visual images of China's development – such as factories and cooperatives – be documented in order to increase the Tanzanian people's awareness of developments in China. One Tanzanian official reportedly understood the movement better after having witnessed it firsthand; he dispelled the Western criticisms of the Cultural Revolution and Red Guards as "imperialist attitude".<sup>822</sup> These archival records are useful primary sources because they show how quickly the Cultural Revolution radicalised the government bureaucracy. Subsequent Chinese reports of the group's six-week stay emphasise ideology and are more strident in tone, suggesting an acceleration of the pace of the campaign. One report highlighted a consensus among the delegates that Mao's impressive achievements and good leadership made him "the world's greatest leader".<sup>823</sup> These

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<sup>821</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-91, 29 September 1966.

<sup>822</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-01, 4 October 1966. The 16 Point Decision was adopted by the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth CCP Central Committee on 8 August 1966: Li 1995, p. 411.

<sup>823</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-01, 1 October 1966.

superlative statements should not be taken at face value because, as earlier chapters have shown, the Tanzanian government was hardly a Chinese mouthpiece.

Rather, the delegation appears to have taken a candid approach and questioned the situation that was unfolding around them. Team leader Lucy Lameck submitted to Chinese officials a list of questions about the Cultural Revolution. The inherent contradictions of the movement were readily apparent to China's closest African ally:

- (i) Do the Red Guards ever raise objections to the Cultural Revolution? Do they ever commit negative acts; what about self-criticism? Does the government still have control of them on the streets?
- (ii) Since China has already had one revolution, why is the Cultural Revolution necessary?
- (iii) Why have big character posters<sup>824</sup>? Why highlight other people's shortcomings in such a public way? Would it not be better to sort these issues out internally first?
- (iv) At the moment, there is a Mao quotation inserted at every occasion. What purpose does this serve? Will this practice be continued?
- (v) Each nation has its own culture. Once the old culture has been destroyed, does that not mean that you will have lost its special points too?<sup>825</sup>

It is unclear from the Chinese records if these questions – prescient as they were – were addressed by the Chinese leaders during the visit. But the questions do reveal the yawning gap between the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution and its

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<sup>824</sup> These were large, hand-written posters made by individuals which were mounted in public places. They were commonly used for propaganda and protest purposes during the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>825</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-01, 2 October 1966.

translation into often humiliating or inexplicably brutal actions on the ground. Subsequent Chinese reports continue to play up Tanzanian enthusiasm for the Cultural Revolution. In one example, Ambassador Waziri Juma expressed his interest in facilitating Tanzanian access to Mao's works and his hope that the Chinese government would make more material available. He reportedly even suggested that if the Chinese government did not have the manpower or capacity to broadcast news to Africa, his government would be happy to send personnel to China to carry out the task.<sup>826</sup> The Tanzanian delegation insisted that the West was trying to use negative reports of the Cultural Revolution to turn others against China. It supported the *16 Point Decision* that outlined the objectives of the Cultural Revolution and agreed that no other country should interfere with an internal Chinese matter.<sup>827</sup>

Platitudes about Chairman Mao aside, the delegation did, overall, have a positive impression of the Cultural Revolution. Another member of the delegation, TANU Regional Secretary for the Coast Region S. J. Kitundu, sent a letter to the TANU Secretary General of the Central Committee dated 29 October 1966.<sup>828</sup> In it he reiterated that the Tanzanian government appreciated the underlying objectives of the Cultural Revolution. He noted that the Chinese people had developed very quickly because of their politics, in particular their politics of self-reliance, which he explained as the political faith and understanding at all levels of society. Chinese students from primary to tertiary levels were required to study the collected works of Mao and this exposure was required in the police force, army and unions as well. Kitundu explained

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<sup>826</sup> The delegation also requested a copy of Mao's works for Nyerere, Karume and Kawawa: *Ibid.*

<sup>827</sup> CFMA, 204-01629-01, 4 October 1966.

<sup>828</sup> TNA, Acc. 589, BMC/11/04/D, S.J. Kitundu, MP, Regional Secretary TANU Coast Region, Dar es Salaam to Secretary General of TANU Central Committee, 29 October 1966. I thank Paul Bjerk for this reference and Doreen Broska Hashemi for the translation from Swahili to English.

that the strong link between personal development and national development spread Mao's influence to every corner of the country, reinforced further by political appointments that were contingent on the candidates' political education and familiarity with Mao's treatises:

If someone gets sent to study without being given this foundation, it would be like he was only using his work to get money and not for his country – something [the Chinese] say was brought by the colonisers.<sup>829</sup>

Kitunda also shared his doubts about the applicability of the Chinese system in Tanzania, as TANU's efforts to develop self-reliance and *ujamaa* (familyhood) required a large investment of the leaders' time. Moreover, the Red Guards' growing influence in China had led to a political party that was bigger than the government – the CCP Central Committee took the lead on all matters, which should not be the case. These observations and concerns proved correct, as the CCP was subsequently subjugated under Mao's personality cult. State-generated propaganda was a key tool in the perpetuation of that personality cult.

## ii) Chinese propaganda and Africans

State-generated propaganda was used as an important tool for national education and social control in China since the CCP's victory over the Guomindang in 1949. The use of propaganda was consistent across the Communist bloc countries. The CCP government also used culture and the arts – encompassing literature, plays, songs or acrobatics – as propaganda channels. These activities provided entertainment for the

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<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*

Chinese masses and fulfilled a more crucial, instructive objective: The Chinese government's positioning of itself at the core of the international revolutionary movement.

The Chinese government churned out copious amounts of propaganda that described the support of the millions of Chinese people for anti-imperialist struggles the world over.<sup>830</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, the news propaganda broadcasted by *Radio Peking* was a major part of China's African policy from the early 1960s. At the same time as China extended its soft power through propaganda, domestically the message of third world solidarity was reinforced through the depiction of Africans in Chinese plays, songs and in print. Posters of Chinese people standing alongside their African brethren, many of which had the subjects bearing arms and poised for combat, were a visual testament to Beijing's support for African liberation struggles. One such example was a poster with a self-explanatory and compelling title:

People of the world unite and defeat the US aggressors and all their running dogs! People of the world, be courageous and dare to fight defy difficulties and advance wave upon wave. Then the whole world will belong to the people. Monsters of all kinds shall be destroyed.<sup>831</sup>

China's Africa policy had a racial element which cut across political ideologies to foster a more visceral solidarity among non-white people. This was done through emphasising their shared experience as victims of colonialism. Indeed, the fact that China itself was a large, non-white power which owned its own development agenda

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<sup>830</sup> Chen 2008, pp. 139-140.

<sup>831</sup> Poster published in Chinese Propaganda Posters: Min et. al. 2003, p. 119.

was an inspiration to disenfranchised groups, including many key figures within the American civil rights movement.<sup>832</sup> As shown in Chapter Two, the Chinese government played the racial card strategically in the AAPSO when it argued for the ineligibility of Soviet participation because the latter was neither African nor Asian. Chinese visual propaganda in the 1960s also depicted Chinese workers shoulder-to-shoulder with their non-white brethren.

During the Cultural Revolution, the stewardship of the key instruments of state propaganda and communication – the New China News Agency (NCNA) and the *People's Daily* – was taken over by the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG). The nationalistic and revolutionary tone in Chinese broadcasts brimmed with “rhetoric and revolutionary belligerence” and took Sino-centric attitudes “to new heights”.<sup>833</sup> From April 1966 to April 1968, the *People's Daily* published a section containing international praise for *Mao Zedong Thought*.<sup>834</sup> These developments were all part of the broader move to reinstall Mao at the helm of the government, as he positioned himself as China's moral and ideological mentor.<sup>835</sup> *Mao Zedong Thought* was lauded with an almost religious ferocity and was supported by a deluge of publications. According to the *Peking Review*, between June 1966 and June 1969 Mao's little red book of quotations was translated into twenty-five different languages and circulated in as many countries and regions.<sup>836</sup> This was further supplemented by a dizzying array of Mao paraphernalia that was handed out by Chinese representatives on their trips

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<sup>832</sup> Killens, an African American writer, was one such visitor who was impressed by his experience in China, underscoring the intrinsic value of non-white solidarity: “Perhaps the Chinese come by this more easily than the Western nations, good intentions notwithstanding, because the Chinese people, like people of colour all over the world, have felt the yoke of Western colonialism and white racism”: Killens 1975, p. 17.

<sup>833</sup> Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 7 and p. x; Westad 2005, p. 163.

<sup>834</sup> Brady 2002, p. 103.

<sup>835</sup> Cheng 2009, p. 56.

<sup>836</sup> *Peking Review*, 3 October 1969.

overseas, ranging from badges, books and photographs to postage stamps.<sup>837</sup> From September 1966, the campaign had a direct and detrimental impact on the Chinese government's foreign relations because of the large-scale recall of Chinese diplomats.

### **iii) Chinese diplomats and the Cultural Revolution**

The radical currents of the Cultural Revolution emanating from Beijing had a direct bearing on foreign relations and leached Chinese embassies of experienced staff. Triggered by the criticism that certain Chinese diplomats were living extravagantly at their overseas stations, Mao called for all embassy staff to be revolutionised on 9 September 1966. Ambassador He Ying was recalled from Dar es Salaam in January 1967. The extreme insularity of the Chinese government during the Cultural Revolution cannot be overstated. On 7 February 1967, every Chinese embassy received a telegram from the Foreign Ministry informing them that the vast majority of diplomatic staff had to return to China to participate in the Cultural Revolution. With an estimated 2,000 people recalled from its embassies, the disengagement and disjunction in Chinese diplomatic affairs was drastic.

In May 1967, the British *Chargé d’Affaires* observed that “the feverish adulation of Mao and the widespread vituperation of his opponents left an impression of almost total concentration upon the immediate needs of the Cultural Revolution, to the complete exclusion of international affairs.”<sup>838</sup> His assessment was taken even further a mere two and a half months later, when he complained that “pragmatic and

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<sup>837</sup> NA, FCO31/441, Chinese diplomatic representation, 5 August 1969; Lin 1990, p. 150; Yu 1975, p. 101; Cheng 2010. Nevertheless, there were still some sources which were purportedly spreading “slanderous information”: CFMA, 204-01421-01, September 1966.

<sup>838</sup> NA, FCO21/10, Office of the British *Chargé d’Affaires*, Beijing, to Far Eastern Department, 2 May 1967.

logical judgments based on long range Chinese interests and historic realities and relationships with other countries are increasingly being replaced by frenzied posturing and sloganeering.”<sup>839</sup> The Red Guards overran the Chinese Foreign Ministry in July 1967, which effectively emasculated Beijing’s foreign policymaking mechanisms.

As the earlier chapters have demonstrated, the Chinese ambassadors and NCNA representatives were instrumental to the development of Chinese foreign relations, particularly at the higher and middle levels of government. The recall of ambassadors to China immediately diminished Beijing’s diplomatic capacity. The outbursts of violence in Cairo reflected the explosive conditions at Chinese embassies around the world and, more importantly, the great extent to which the authority of the Chinese government (and its Foreign Ministry) had been compromised. With Cairo being a historically important Chinese diplomatic outpost for the Middle East and Africa, the events which unfolded there had repercussions on Beijing’s broader African engagement and hence warrant mention. Chen Jiakang, China’s first ambassador to Egypt, had been stationed in Cairo for ten years and was an early victim of the Cultural Revolution because of his alleged neglect of ideology in his work, as well as for having a “bourgeois lifestyle.”<sup>840</sup> The Chinese embassy came under attack by some younger staff members who put into practice Mao’s condemnation of “the four olds”: Old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas. The youths rallied together with some twenty Chinese students (who were in Egypt to study Arabic) and stormed the embassy compound. They destroyed

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<sup>839</sup> NA, FCO21/56, British embassy, Washington D.C., to Far Eastern Department, 14 July 1967.

<sup>840</sup> Chen was one of two Vice-Ministers to have been recalled. The other was Wang Bingnan, who was a former ambassador to Poland: Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 5.

items of antiquity – such as statues of Greek goddesses – and left the ambassador’s residence in ruins.<sup>841</sup>

Ambassador Chen was replaced by Ambassador Huang Hua in late March 1966. The latter was the sole ambassador who was allowed to remain at his post in the initial years of the Cultural Revolution; his presence created a semblance of stability in China’s African and Middle Eastern engagement. Huang belonged to the category of Chinese ambassadors who were experienced “Africa hands”, seasoned in the continent’s issues and who took the trouble to understand Africa.<sup>842</sup> Huang’s dispatch to Cairo was a minor victory for Premier Zhou, as the latter had insisted on the Chinese government’s need for an ambassador overseas to handle important negotiations and diplomatic activities. Nevertheless, the Chinese embassies and NCNA outposts in Africa were staffed by more radical individuals during that period.<sup>843</sup>

The resulting leadership vacuum at the Chinese embassies allowed for excessively radical behaviour by the remaining diplomats. Inevitably the skeletal staff that was left behind to manage the mission’s day-to-day affairs had their attention tuned to the rapidly changing situation in Beijing.<sup>844</sup> Moreover, compared to the ambassadors who preceded them, the newly dispatched diplomats were “monolingual, xenophobic ... [and] were less concerned to win African trust than to win merit at home for their revolutionary zeal.”<sup>845</sup> The detrimental effect that the recall of higher-level Chinese diplomats had on China’s international diplomacy was compounded by the increasingly

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<sup>841</sup> Huang 2008, p. 193.

<sup>842</sup> Huang returned to China in September 1969, after the height of the campaign had passed: Interview with Salim Ahmed Salim, 17 November 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>843</sup> Snow 1988, p. 100.

<sup>844</sup> Huang 2008, p. 197; Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. viii.

<sup>845</sup> Snow 1988, p. 100.

hostile situation that faced the foreigners who lived in China. Few foreign observers – diplomats included – could make sense of the rapidly shifting political landscape. The individuals who were sympathetic to the CCP's cause were referred to as “foreign friends”; this group included individuals from Western countries or from Asia, such as the “hardcore communists” from Malaya, who flocked to China in the early 1960s when Beijing had emphasised its people's diplomacy.<sup>846</sup> To many of these visitors, Communist China (“New China”) represented a socialist paradigm that contrasted favourably to the “corruption, decadence and abuse of political power” in the West.<sup>847</sup> The Chinese government allowed them to reside in China and employed them as propagandists, translators, teachers and technicians.<sup>848</sup>

However, the accounts from African students and non-diplomatic Africans who resided in China show that there was a high level of xenophobia amongst the Chinese people and racism against those of African origin. In many instances, the students found it difficult to establish closer relationships with the local people, especially romantic relationships. The twenty Tanzanian youths who were sent to Wuhan in central China for acrobatic training under the Sino-Tanzanian cultural agreement signed in 1965 complained of racism and discrimination.<sup>849</sup> Although the trainees had made impressive progress in learning the art – so much so that the Tanzanian government sent a further ten youths in 1968 to study musical accompaniment to the acrobatic shows – their compelling firsthand experiences debunked the myth of solidarity which had been played up by both governments. For African students, the East Asian

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<sup>846</sup> Interview with the late Ali Mohamed Nabwa, Stone Town, 28 November 2006.

<sup>847</sup> Brady 2002, p. 130.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>849</sup> Edmonson 2007, pp. 23-26; However, it was not cross-cultural differences, but the factionalism that broke out during the Cultural Revolution which eventually led to the termination of the training programme: Cheng 2009b.

countries (China and North Korea) were the least popular destinations in the Eastern bloc. Ali Sultan described the unattractiveness of Chinese austerity:

Our boys could not take to the Asiatic lifestyle. Chinese society was too monolithic. We sent eighteen students there and I think all except one left early; it was the same in North Korea and Albania [...] the society was too tough, and the social life was very bad; the students were not allowed to mix with the Chinese. Our boys wanted the freedom to drink and have sex, but in China, everyone's eyes were watching you, as if asking, 'Why do you want to fornicate?' Also some students did not want to study Marxism-Leninism.<sup>850</sup>

The tensions were especially acute during the Cultural Revolution, when the movement turned the country against its "foreign friends".<sup>851</sup> Foreigners in China had their access to information on local developments stringently regulated, especially in the provinces: Poster reading was prohibited, as was the purchase of *Red Guard* newspapers.<sup>852</sup>

Ali Nabwa, a Zanzibari who worked at the Institute of Journalism in Beijing from 1965 to 1967 described the experience as living in a "golden cage". He was generally safe from the unrest, but at a cost. Although all his daily necessities were provided for, he had to adhere to a regimented daily routine and was forbidden from mingling with the locals. Nabwa explained, "we felt like we were not really wanted, we were just being used [...] moreover, if you asked ten Chinese people the same question,

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<sup>850</sup> Burgess 2009, p. 66.

<sup>851</sup> This is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>852</sup> NA, FCO21/11, China: Recent Internal Events and Foreign Policy Developments, 24 July 1967.

you would get the same answer.”<sup>853</sup> The cross-cultural difficulties that these foreigners faced upon arrival worsened when they were formally barred from participating in the Cultural Revolution. Chinese nationalism overtook claims of an internationalist struggle and many of the former “friends” of the Chinese people were now cast in a sinister light. They ended up as scapegoats and were exploited as “a means to reunite the country”.<sup>854</sup>

The foreign diplomatic corps was also affected by the unrest of the Cultural Revolution period, as the example of the Kenyan embassy shows. Relations between Nairobi and Beijing were rocky from 1965 and a series of diplomatic retaliations finally led to a mutual expulsion of diplomats by the middle of 1967.<sup>855</sup> What happened next was clear evidence of the weight that Tanzanian opinion held for the Chinese government even in the latter’s fractured state. When the time came for the two remaining members of the Kenyan embassy to leave Beijing in September 1967, they were caught in a bureaucratic wrangle and unable to leave. In spite of the Chinese government’s explicit reluctance, a visiting joint Tanzanian-Zambian economic delegation insisted that their Kenyan compatriots be invited to their banquet.<sup>856</sup>

The majority of foreign students left China from late September 1966 and were followed by an exodus of foreign residents between 1967 and 1968. At its lowest point, there were only fifty-nine foreign residents left in the entire country, a further sign of China’s international isolation. This was mirrored in Beijing’s huge diplomatic failure

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<sup>853</sup> Interview with the late Ali Mohamed Nabwa, Stone Town, 28 November 2006.

<sup>854</sup> Brady 2002, pp. 94-97 and p. 123.

<sup>855</sup> The sequence of events which led to the deterioration of Sino-Kenyan relations include: The expulsion of Chinese diplomats, the Red Guard attack on the Kenyan embassy in Beijing (August 1966), the recall of the Kenyan ambassador, retaliatory action by Kenyan African National Union (KANU) youths on the Chinese embassy in Nairobi, the declaration of the Chinese *Chargé* as *persona non grata* (June 1967) and reciprocal action by Beijing (July 1967): Chege 2008, pp. 21-22.

<sup>856</sup> The Sino-Kenyan relationship remained in diplomatic limbo for eleven years: Chege 2008.

at the February 1967 AAPSO conference that saw it exit from active participation in the group, which had previously played such an integral role in China's third world policy.<sup>857</sup> The immediate result of China's withdrawal from AAPSO was the exclusion of those African liberation groups which had received predominantly Chinese support – ZANU, PAC, South West African National Union (SWANU) and Coremo – in favour of the Moscow-backed groups. Thus the influential position that Zhou Enlai and his Foreign Ministry had so carefully fostered at the AAPSO in the years preceding the Cultural Revolution were dealt a mortal blow. Subsequently the Chinese government had more direct dealings with the liberation groups. Official Chinese pronouncements began to laud *Mao Zedong Thought* and armed struggle as the liberation groups' strongest weapons to gain true independence in Congo (Kinshasa), Mozambique, Angola and Portuguese Guinea.<sup>858</sup> Moreover, the Africans who were being trained at Nanjing military academy were instructed to attribute their successes to the effectiveness of *Mao Zedong Thought*.<sup>859</sup> The Chinese government's relationship with its most important African ally, Tanzania, was also put to the test.

## **II. The Sino-Tanzanian relationship put to the test**

The initial effects of the Cultural Revolution on the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship soon gave way to more direct and overt manifestations of the unrest. The repercussions of the Cultural Revolution overseas were most visible in two specific groups: Overseas Chinese communities and Marxist groups.<sup>860</sup> This took place at

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<sup>857</sup> Brady 2002, p. 111 and p. 124.

<sup>858</sup> *People's Daily*, 9 December 1967.

<sup>859</sup> Snow 1988, p. 100.

<sup>860</sup> Cheng 2009.

various levels, which will be discussed in three sections: Firstly, Chinese aid projects and the transmission of radicalism; secondly, Tanzania and the Chinese government's "great power chauvinism" in its bilateral relations; and finally, the Tanzanian government's own Cultural Revolution with a focus on soft power.

### i) Chinese aid projects and the transmission of radicalism

The Chinese government's relations with overseas Communist parties, particularly those in neighbouring countries were enhanced by the "profound internationalist content" of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>861</sup> An important factor which affected how quickly and dramatically the Cultural Revolution was exported to particular countries was the size of the overseas Chinese community there. These groups were vital to the propagation and sustenance of the radical outbreaks throughout the campaign. As host to a sizeable number of Chinese projects, Tanzania was particularly susceptible to the effects of the Cultural Revolution transmitted through the Chinese experts. Three cases are discussed here: The Ruvu irrigation project, the first trilateral agreement on the TanZam rail link and the Friendship Textile Mill.

Nyerere requested an irrigation project from the Chinese leaders during his first state visit to Beijing in February 1965. He explained the developmental benefits of such a project, because irrigating the Ruvu river would open up the uncultivated land further downstream. A Chinese survey team conducted a detailed study in the field that lasted from August 1966 until October 1967. However, the survey concluded that it was unadvisable to carry out the project, mainly because the local farmers were reluctant to be relocated from their existing fertile farmlands. The report also noted that the farmers

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<sup>861</sup> Yahuda 1978, p. 202.

would be unwilling to put in the hard work necessary to transform the wasteland into productive plots of land, a factor which the team believed would not change in the short term. Yet the rational basis for not recommending the project was met with resistance within the group.

Some members of the group felt that the project should proceed, as its rejection might be construed as “revisionist” if it went against Zhou and Nyerere’s original agreement and affect bilateral relations negatively. The dissenters criticised the survey team leader and appealed to the embassy staff in Dar es Salaam to change the conclusion of the feasibility report. According to Consul Zhou, the embassy officials were confident of the report’s accuracy, but the report was temporarily put aside because the team leader became a victim of the Cultural Revolution, was arrested and publicly criticised. Extreme political sensitivity pervaded the entire Chinese establishment at that time and any allegation of being “revisionist” was extremely dangerous. This matter was finally resolved during Nyerere’s second visit to China in June 1968, when both governments agreed that the project would not be pursued and the matter was settled amicably.<sup>862</sup>

The second case where the effects of the Cultural Revolution were visible in Tanzania was the TanZam rail link, which has already been discussed in Chapter Four. When the Tanzanian and Zambian leaders signed the first trilateral agreement with the Chinese in September 1967, two senior Chinese officials were unable to participate in the meetings because they had been arraigned by the rebels, yet the project progressed. The second trilateral meeting for the TanZam rail link was held in Tanzania in April 1968 to resolve questions related to the survey design. On the Chinese side, only four

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<sup>862</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 39-40.

experts were sent and Consul Zhou from the embassy was appointed the head of the delegation.<sup>863</sup> It was evident that the Chinese government was still undergoing internal turmoil and, according to Tanzanian delegate Ibrahim Kaduma, the Chinese delegates involved in the discussions kept changing.<sup>864</sup> Nevertheless, the meeting went ahead because the same Tanzanian and Zambian delegates from the first meeting were present and the TanZam project proceeded smoothly.

A full year and a half passed between Ambassador He Ying's departure and his replacement's arrival, during which the *Chargé d'Affaires* Zhou Boping headed the Chinese mission.<sup>865</sup> Yet that hiatus did not hinder important bilateral developments. On the contrary, it was precisely between 1967 and 1970 that the key tripartite agreements were signed which committed China to the construction and sponsorship of the TanZam rail link.<sup>866</sup> This phenomenal undertaking by Beijing underscored the priority of the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship to the Chinese leaders, who gave it their political support in spite of the dire state of China's domestic agriculture and industry. In 1967, for example, the value of Chinese production fell by 9.6%, with urban areas the hardest hit whilst the state coffers were 2.25 billion Yuan (\$0.91 billion) in deficit.<sup>867</sup>

The main site of Chinese unrest in Tanzania that was linked to the Cultural Revolution was Chinese-sponsored Friendship Textile Mill. Located in Ubungo, close

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<sup>863</sup> Zhou 2004.

<sup>864</sup> Interview with Ibrahim Kaduma, Dar es Salaam, 28 May 2007.

<sup>865</sup> He stayed on as counsellor after Ambassador Zhong Xidong arrived: Yu 1975, pp. 58-59. Zhong's successor was Ambassador Li Yaowen, who served in Dar es Salaam from 1972 to 1976.

<sup>866</sup> A trilateral agreement between the governments of Zambia, Tanzania and China for the rail link construction was signed in Beijing on 5 September: Monson 2009, pp. 24-25. This was followed by a formal agreement signed on 12 March 1968 which formed TAZARA, the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority: *Ibid.*, p. 31; In November the next year, a supplementary agreement was signed in Lusaka confirming the rail route from Dar es Salaam, via Tunduma, to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. The final trilateral agreement was signed in Beijing on 12 July 1970: *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>867</sup> MacFarquhar / Schoenhals 2006, p. 268.

to Dar es Salaam, the mill is generally cited as a positive example of Communist Chinese aid in the literature. At full capacity, the textile mill could train thousands of skilled workers and provide jobs for nearly half of all the employees in Tanzania's textile sector in 1968.<sup>868</sup> The Chinese press described the textile mill as "a shining monument to China's aid and presence", which garnered much more national attention than Beijing's more modest agricultural endeavours.<sup>869</sup> The construction of the industrial facility was completed in July 1968, six months earlier than planned, at an estimated cost of \$7 million. It was the biggest fully integrated textile mill in East Africa that used local cotton as the raw material.<sup>870</sup> Over 130 Chinese advisors provided technical training for the local workers at both the staff and managerial levels and around 3,000 Tanzanians were employed there.<sup>871</sup>

Yet an important aspect of the mill project is neglected in the literature: It was also a site of internal dissent and a major trial for the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship. The fault line between a group of Cultural Revolution rebels with the more moderate workers and embassy staff escalated into a matter that reached the leaders of both countries.<sup>872</sup> Consul Zhou Boping's memoir offers a particularly illuminating version of how the Cultural Revolution was manifested in the Friendship Textile Mill project.<sup>873</sup> Published in 2004, his account is part of a subtle yet significant shift in the

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<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>869</sup> *People's Daily*, 8 May 1968.

<sup>870</sup> Ogunsanwo 2010, pp. 201-202.

<sup>871</sup> The main criticisms that have been raised about the mill after its construction were centred on its comparatively outdated technology and inadequate emphasis on theory. The mill ran a loss, as the project eventually suffered – among other factors – from a lack of coordination between the Chinese and Tanzanians in the utilisation of facilities, marketing of products, as well as the unregulated establishment of other local textile factories: Yu 1975, pp. 80-81.

<sup>872</sup> Yu 1975, pp. 80-81.

<sup>873</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 100.

official Chinese representation of the events and especially its effects on foreign relations. In it, Zhou cited two problematic issues that arose in the project.

The first stemmed from Ambassador He Ying's misunderstanding of the Chinese government's aid policy. According to Consul Zhou, in April 1966, He Ying suggested to Nyerere that China also construct a workers' dormitory at the mill, to which Nyerere agreed. However this proposal was rejected by the Chinese State Council Foreign Liaison Committee which contended (in line with the Eight Principles) that Chinese aid should not be used for living facilities, but rather for promoting self-reliance in economic development. This internal disagreement was raised to the chief administrative body of the Chinese government, the State Council, which declared the matter an exception and overrode the Foreign Liaison Committee's decision. The State Council stated that any change in aid policy would run the risk of eroding bilateral ties by putting Nyerere in an awkward position if things fell through.<sup>874</sup> Moreover, the decision also recognised that China's enemies might use the opportunity to sabotage the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, as well as to damage its reputation as a donor. Consul Zhou explained the situation to Nyerere, who agreed that the dormitory be scaled down.

The second problematic issue relating to the Friendship Textile Mill was the outbreak of radicalism. The Chinese experts assigned to the project first arrived in Tanzania shortly after Nyerere had laid the foundation stone for the ambitious project in July 1966. Most of the experts at Ubungo hailed from the Textile Industry Department in Shanghai, the second vanguard city for Cultural Revolution rebels after Beijing.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> The Committee cited the "correct" procedure as having been for the Chinese embassy to contact Minister Paul Bomani, who held the housing portfolio: Zhou 2004.

<sup>875</sup> MacFarquhar / Schoenhals 2006, p. 141-142, p. 167, p. 162, p. 473. It was where the firebrand Wang Hongwen had put up the first workers' big character poster in June 1966. In the months which followed, Wang rode the wave that saw the control of the Cultural Revolution transfer from the Red Guards to the workers.

Hence the project site quickly became a microcosm of the developments which were taking place in China. The radical experts armed themselves with Mao's quotations and chanted revolutionary verses. They demanded that the PRC flag and a large portrait of Mao be erected, so that the work site would be transformed into an overseas node and "second front" of the campaign.<sup>876</sup> Additionally, they tried to establish a group along the same lines as the Red Guards and, most contentiously, instigated local Tanzanian workers and the TANUYL to revolt against Nyerere's government in 1968.<sup>877</sup>

The disturbance occurred at a politically sensitive time for Nyerere. The president had consolidated his power in the September 1965, laid down a one party state (under TANU on the mainland and ASP in Zanzibar), embarked on major economic restructuring and adopted the Arusha Declaration (1967).<sup>878</sup> As has been discussed in the earlier chapters, Nyerere took great pains to defend his acceptance of Chinese military, economic and developmental support against the advice of Western sceptics. Hence any domestic unrest sparked off by the Chinese experts would leave Nyerere open to criticisms from political opponents and undermine his authority. Events in China did not help his case. The Red Guards' attack on the British Embassy in Beijing in August 1967 caused huge international outrage. Premier Zhou had been unable to implement any restraint on the extremists and the extent of his helplessness surfaced in his conversation with Shirley Graham, the widow of eminent black American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois. Speaking about the mayhem that was unfolding around him, Zhou expressed the possibility that the Chinese revolution might be lost, adding that "if we are defeated here, you in Africa will learn from our mistakes, and

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<sup>876</sup> Cheng 2009.

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>878</sup> Bakar 2000, pp. 133-148; Nyerere 1973, p. 283.

you will develop your own Mao Zedong, and you will learn to do it better. And so, in the end, we shall succeed”<sup>879</sup>

Nyerere decided to raise his concerns about the disruptive experts at the Friendship Mill during his second visit to China in June 1968. He raised the matter directly to the Chinese leaders even though the mill project was nearly completed. Chairman Mao was the quintessential statesman, and although he was the progenitor of the Cultural Revolution, he successfully addressed Nyerere’s concerns by condemning the rebels’ actions in Tanzania. He assured the president that the perpetrators would be recalled immediately. Premier Zhou Enlai emphasised that the Chinese government did not condone anarchists abroad and that Chinese aid projects should be appropriate to the host country’s specific conditions and safeguard local institutions.<sup>880</sup> Nyerere was reassured that the Chinese leaders would prevent any further unrest from spreading to Tanzania. Moreover, the Tanzanian government was in need of further military and economic assistance, which Nyerere had requested and Zhou guaranteed.<sup>881</sup>

The three incidents of the Ruvu irrigation project, the TanZam rail link and the Freedom Textile Mill show that the radicalism from the Cultural Revolution was transmitted through a small group of Chinese experts sent to Tanzania for the aid projects. Due to the rapport and mutual need at both the inter-governmental and personal levels, the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was resilient and successfully withstood the trial of the Cultural Revolution.

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<sup>879</sup> MacFarquhar / Schoenhals 2006, p. 229.

<sup>880</sup> Cited in Cheng 2009.

<sup>881</sup> Zhou 2004, pp. 100-102; Cheng 2009.

## ii) Nyerere's concerns about the Cultural Revolution

The Chinese government could not avoid the diplomatic embarrassment and damage caused by the Cultural Revolution. In 1967, Mao and Zhou were compelled to apologise for various diplomatic incidents, as well as to personally vouch for the credibility of China's overseas experts. The Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda had already lodged a similar complaint with the Chinese leaders even before Nyerere's second trip to China.<sup>882</sup> Premier Zhou responded by reiterating the experts' role: To serve the local people wholeheartedly; and not interfere in the domestic situation; to quickly return to China after transferring knowledge to their local counterparts; and not to enjoy privileged treatment or show "big country chauvinism."<sup>883</sup>

The Chinese leaders gave explanations and apologised to some African governments for the Chinese embassies' breaches of diplomatic etiquette, which included official correspondence that brimmed with Mao's quotations. Premier Zhou recalled these incidents in his address to an audience of Chinese diplomats who had been recalled to Beijing on 12 December 1967 and gave an account of Mao's apology to the prime minister of Congo (Brazzaville), during which the Chairman had thanked the Congolese for their criticisms and for having corrected China's own "great power chauvinism."<sup>884</sup> Significantly, the PRC's political rival, the Republic of China (ROC), was able to gain precious diplomatic ground through obtaining official recognition by many African governments between

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<sup>882</sup> Cited in Cheng 2009.

<sup>883</sup> CCP 1997, p. 163.

<sup>884</sup> NA, FCO21/13, Office of the British *Chargé d'Affaires*, Beijing, to Far Eastern Department, 23 January 1968.

January 1966 and mid-1968. Mao finally took steps to curtail his personality cult from 1968.<sup>885</sup> Chinese foreign policy became “less revolutionary, more sober and increasingly determined by concerns of national security” in the late 1960s.<sup>886</sup> This was externally motivated, in part by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the outbreak of Sino-Soviet border skirmishes on the Amur-Ussuri river in 1969. The Chinese government’s concerns about its southern flank also came into focus with the intensifying American offensives in South Vietnam. Mao’s strategy to defray the risk on both fronts was to portray the Soviet Union as a “socio-imperialist power”, hence the possibility for a thaw in relations with Washington was created without any serious outward compromise or retraction of Mao’s ideological framework.<sup>887</sup>

Meanwhile, Zhou was eager to rectify the situation and rehabilitate his government’s international profile. On 6 February 1968, the Premier addressed his Foreign Ministry colleagues once again and, citing the shortage of senior diplomats in China’s overseas missions. He assured the audience that most ambassadors would return to their posts by the end of March or early April, especially to the embassies in Africa and Asia. However, this policy did not extend to the few ambassadors “who had failed to pass the test of the Cultural Revolution.”<sup>888</sup> It appears that Mao, without wanting to make a *volte face* on the Cultural Revolution, still wanted to emphasise Chinese leadership in the third world. On 17 March 1968, Mao finally put a stop to the distribution of Mao badges to foreigners and the printing of his quotations on cargo that

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<sup>885</sup> Cheng 2009, p. 56.

<sup>886</sup> Chen 2001, p. 233. According to Vranken Hickey, by the late 1960s, Sino-Soviet tensions had hit such a drastic state that Moscow purportedly initiated talks with Taipei to discuss the feasibility of “a coordinated joint attack on the mainland”: Van Vranken 2007, p. 10; Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. x.

<sup>887</sup> Chen 2001, p. 242.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*

was destined as foreign aid.<sup>889</sup> This change in external propaganda was justified through Mao's admission that the emphasis on Beijing as the centre of world revolution was "self-styled and mistaken."<sup>890</sup> *Mao Zedong Thought* was, henceforth, removed from all documents related to foreign affairs.

In Tanzania, Nyerere's commitment to the southern African liberation struggle and his frustration with the intransigence of the former colonial powers led him to look favourably at the combative language of the Cultural Revolution which supported anti-imperialism and selected armed struggles. This need for external assistance and the continued desire for a non-aligned foreign policy thus helped to lead the Tanzanian government to a more accommodating stance towards the unrest caused by the Cultural Revolution. Thus Nyerere did not publicly criticise the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, his speech in Beijing on 18 June 1968 suggested that he was more than happy for the friendship to continue. He stressed that there was very little difference in the objectives of both governments' various activities and drew parallels between their countries, that:

All of the major changes Tanzania has introduced have been intended to secure, or at least to further, the supremacy of the people. As I understand it, that was also the purpose of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>891</sup>

In another speech delivered on 21 June (also in Beijing), Nyerere insisted that the Sino-Tanzanian friendship was based on respect, equality and non-interference in

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<sup>889</sup> The ROC's tally increased from 57 to 64 African governments which recognised it, while the PRC only had relations with 45: Lin 1990, p. 150.

<sup>890</sup> Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 78.

<sup>891</sup> Nyerere 1973, p. 35.

each other's affairs; it was deep enough to accommodate differing opinions and – lest there be any question about his position on bilateral relations – added that:

Tanzania is enriched by this friendship, and we value it [...] I have, therefore, no reason to believe that friendship between Tanzania and China will not continue indefinitely, and grow stronger as time passes [...] I believe that you sympathise with us in our struggle, just as we sympathise with the Chinese people's determination to defend their own country and build it according to their own desires.<sup>892</sup>

Coming as it did during the Cultural Revolution, Nyerere's expression of support was crucial for the Chinese government's ailing diplomatic position and should not be underestimated. The Australian Foreign Ministry noted that this was the Tanzanian president's second visit to China and, significantly, the first time that he had visited a country twice.<sup>893</sup> Nyerere called on Consul Zhou after returning to Dar es Salaam and appeared satisfied with his trip. He was apparently impressed by the way that Mao had dealt with the rebels at the textile mill, because it showed that the Chinese government valued its relations with a recipient country above that of its own experts.<sup>894</sup> The fact that this incident is virtually unmentioned in nearly all the English-language accounts of the Friendship Textile Mill suggests that both the Chinese and Tanzanian governments were eager to maintain the image of solidarity and closeness. Thus high level diplomacy had ensured that the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship remained robust, especially in the eyes of the international community. Nyerere's visit

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<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>893</sup> NAA, Department of External Affairs to Australian High Commission in Dar es Salaam, 3 June 1968.

<sup>894</sup> Zhou 2004, p. 101.

to China was part of a longer tour to the East Asian communist countries, which also included North Vietnam and North Korea. The Australian Third Secretary in Dar es Salaam observed that the bilateral relations between Tanzania and North Korea were “demonstrably more cordial” since early 1968, prompted by three main reasons: Nyerere’s identification with countries which have distinguished themselves in the struggle against “imperialist aggression”; his admiration for the economic achievements of North Korea, which he saw on his recent visit; and a feeling that he could develop “an easier relationship with these small Asian communist countries than [...] with the colossus of China”.<sup>895</sup> These observations allude to the challenges which the Tanzanian government faced in being the smaller partner in a bilateral relationship with a grossly larger power. Nevertheless, Chinese aid to Tanzania continued throughout the early years of the Cultural Revolution, in spite of the purges of intellectuals and “bourgeois” experts that disrupted the Chinese military, as well as the country’s industrial and technological capacity.<sup>896</sup> The Friendship Textile Mill was completed ahead of schedule, as the majority of Chinese experts were not involved in the seditious activities.<sup>897</sup> This continuity of aid policy was also evident from the progress that was made on the TanZam rail link project between 1967 and 1970.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the labour intensive Chinese projects meant that large groups of workers were exposed to the risk of radicalisation. However, the Cultural Revolution was only ever a limited threat in Tanzania, because the essential factors for a large scale outbreak were absent. Unlike in countries with a resident ethnic Chinese community which were part of local networks and had the freedom of

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<sup>895</sup> NAA, Australian High Commission in Dar es Salaam to the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 10 September 1968.

<sup>896</sup> Ohn 2000, p. 116.

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

movement, the Chinese experts in Tanzania were geographically confined to their worksite.<sup>898</sup> This made it easier to identify the radicals and quell any disorder. Additionally, the radicalism did not spread locally because there was little fertile ideological ground. The Tanzanian political actors who identified most closely with Maoism were the Umma cadres in Zanzibar but, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, this group declined as an ideological force from 1964. Furthermore, Nyerere's African socialism stole some ground from the extreme left.

The Cultural Revolution's excesses alienated the more moderate African intellectuals who were initially sympathetic to the Chinese cause. Many were perturbed and appalled by the Red Guards' inexplicable activities. Nabwa shared that he was at first intrigued by the developments that engulfed China, but then found the persecution of esteemed leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Chen Yi humiliating. In his opinion, these activities gave the Chinese government a bad reputation.<sup>899</sup> Similarly Fay Chung of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) saw great value in Mao's concept of the "just war" as "the most practical model for Africa," but was put off by Mao's tirades against intellectuals.<sup>900</sup> Hence, the Cultural Revolution worried China's friends in Africa: The effects of the campaign went far beyond the domestic arena and exacted a heavy toll on Chinese diplomacy. As the section has shown, Tanzania was one of the affected countries, but local political developments there helped to smoothen the rocky path that the Cultural Revolution created.

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<sup>898</sup> This factor played a major role in injecting and sustaining the Cultural Revolution in countries such as Malaya. Where the Cultural Revolution has had its greatest overseas impact was in countries with a significant ethnic Chinese community. Cheng refers to this as the "global phenomenon of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese overseas communities." They were guaranteed support from the Chinese-speaking working class: Cheng 2010.

<sup>899</sup> Interview with the late Ali Mohamed Nabwa, Stone Town, 28 November 2006. Chen Yi was forced to make his first self-criticism in January 1967: Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 23.

<sup>900</sup> Westad 2005; Chung 2006, p. 67.

### iii) **Tanzania's own Cultural Revolution**

Not every aspect of the Cultural Revolution was viewed negatively. In fact, the Chinese government's apparent success in rallying the masses for national development was admired by many third world leaders, who were looking for ways to create an "ideological and moral foundation for national unity and citizenship education."<sup>901</sup> Initially, China's Cultural Revolution appeared to be "an external salvation" for those who sought an alternative to Western political hegemony.<sup>902</sup> This reflected the success of the Chinese government's soft power – through its propaganda, personal diplomacy and various aid projects – as well as the frustration of the post-colonial situation that the African governments faced.

There were important parallels between Mao's Cultural Revolution and Nyerere's policies at the time. As Mkandawire has pointed out, "Nyerere was one of the few African nationalists who straddled the two worlds of thought and action, not only by providing leadership to a nationalist movement, but also by articulating both its ideologies and visions."<sup>903</sup> Nyerere's inspiration for mass mobilisation and the fostering of nationhood came from the socialist countries. Hashim Mbita, the former TANU party secretary, explained in an interview the urgency for a nationwide mobilisation campaign:

In a society that has been subjugated in a particular way of life for a long time, you can fight that system and may even have political victory, but may not have conquered the depth of that subjugation in the people. A slow process of

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<sup>901</sup> Cheng 2009a, pp. 208-209; Cheng 2010.

<sup>902</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>903</sup> Mkandawire, 2001b.

political education until people change would perhaps take fifty years, but a shorter time was preferable. That was what the Chinese did and in Tanzania, the 1967 Arusha Declaration – a type of Cultural Revolution – was to change the minds of people, to realise that they were complete.<sup>904</sup>

The creation of the Tanzanian national service and the pursuit of “education for self-reliance” were entirely in line with the Marxist tenets of sustaining the nation through the efforts of the youth.<sup>905</sup> Taking inspiration from the socialist bureaucratic structure, TANU’s hierarchy and governance extended into the cultural domain and included the production and presentation of culture for the purpose of transmitting ideological doctrine to the people.<sup>906</sup> As shown in the earlier chapters, Nyerere was impressed by aspects of the Chinese model, including Mao’s success at tapping the energy of the youth for his government’s political objectives.<sup>907</sup> The president implemented policies which did not only focus on economic prescription, but extended into the cultural sphere. This included the designation of Swahili as the national language and the pursuit of African socialism. Youth groups were regarded prime targets for “radical challenge” to Nyerere.<sup>908</sup> A letter from a fictitious youth group that called itself the Tanzanian Friends of China made its rounds in Tanzania in August 1970. The letter lambasted Nyerere’s brand of socialism and hailed Beijing as Tanzania’s “only friend and comrade in the battle against modern revisionism and

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<sup>904</sup> Brigadier General Mbita served the Tanzanian government in various capacities, including Chief Press Officer, Presidential Press Secretary, TANU National Executive Secretary and Ambassador. He was the OAU Liberation Committee’s Chief Executive until the end of the South African apartheid regime in 1994, when the Committee’s mandate was declared complete: Interview with the late Hashim Mbita, Dar es Salaam, 27 April 2007.

<sup>905</sup> Joseph, as cited in Edmonson 2007, p. 23-26.

<sup>906</sup> Askew 2002, p. 193; Riccio 2007, p. 132.

<sup>907</sup> Snow 1988, pp. 101-102.

<sup>908</sup> Brennan 2010, p. 212.

imperialism”.<sup>909</sup> Nyerere adopted a version of the Red Guards: The Green Guards were formed from the TANU Youth League. Unlike the former, who rose to prominence as defenders of Mao’s continuous revolution in China, the Tanzanian Green Guards’ mandate was to create a disciplined and diligent unit that would keep the perceived excessive and indulgent expressions of youth in Dar es Salaam in check. The group was the crystallisation of a movement to revive a more “authentic” culture which had already surfaced in Dar es Salaam in the early 1960s. The Green Guards held marches in support of compulsory national service and opposed rioting university students who were protesting against the same policy in October 1966. Outwardly the Green Guards adopted similar visual trappings as the Red Guards: They donned badges of Mao and Nyerere and were issued with collections of the president’s quotes in “little green books”.<sup>910</sup> However, as Snow has argued, although it was Tanzanian initiative which linked the Green Guards to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, “people were frightened, and the Chinese got the blame.”<sup>911</sup>

Nyerere appreciated the conceptual necessity of the Cultural Revolution, even though its practical shortcomings and excesses were clear. During his visit to China in 1968, Nyerere expressed his wish that “all the people of Tanzania could come to China and witness for themselves what a determined people can do.”<sup>912</sup> Drawing parallels between the determination of the Chinese, faith and Christianity, it seems clear that Nyerere’s rhetoric was for a home audience as much as the Chinese. Perhaps to quell

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<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>910</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>911</sup> Snow 1988, pp. 101-102.

<sup>912</sup> NA, FCO31/441, Address by HE Salim Ahmed Salim, 26 April 1969.

Tanzanian wariness of the officially atheistic Communist Chinese, he cleverly declared that:

Today, after the Cultural Revolution, the spirit of the people of China is even greater than before. One of the sayings of Christianity is that Faith can move mountains. You Chinese people have great faith; nor is it blind faith. You believe in the creative power of the people; you believe in your great leader, Chairman Mao Zedong; you believe in the spirit of self-reliance and self-criticism; and you believe in the oneness of the oppressed peoples of the world. But you do more than believe. You are showing us that it is not enough to believe: one must practice what one believes.<sup>913</sup>

The government-driven and -controlled Tanzanian cultural revolution drew its momentum and inspiration from the Chinese campaign. Just as the Chinese campaign's condemnation of the "four olds" was a modernising effort, the TANUYL announcement of *Operation Vijana* (a campaign against indecent dress and adornments) in October 1968 was part of a "modernisationist face of the national cultural project" that was "aimed at defending Tanzania's culture."<sup>914</sup> However, the Green Guards' link to their Red "compatriots" in China eventually led to the former's dissolution. When the Red Guards started acting without the Chinese government's direction, TANUYL's request to the Chinese embassy for badges with Nyerere's image as well as support for the formation of the Green Guards fizzled out.

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<sup>913</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>914</sup> Ivaska 2003, pp. 223-224.

Finally Mao himself accepted that bilateral relations “no longer necessarily implied revolutionary friendship or a commitment to common ideological goals, but rather it simply meant those who were sympathetic to China’s current political line.”<sup>915</sup> Thereafter there was greater regularity in the Chinese embassy’s operations in Tanzania, as well as its more moderate and acceptable diplomatic stance in Africa overall.<sup>916</sup> A new Chinese ambassador, Zhong Xidong, finally arrived in Dar es Salaam in June 1969. The British High Commissioner Horace Phillips described him as “intelligent and urbane [...] anxious to be affable and to create a good impression.”<sup>917</sup> Zhong appeared accommodating and, in their meeting, insisted that, although pure Marxism-Leninism was only practiced in China and Albania, his government still wanted to help the Tanzanians to maintain their independence and enjoy socio-economic progress. To illustrate his point, he cited the TanZam railway project as evidence of China’s desire to help Tanzania, despite the project’s “misrepresent[ation] by China’s enemies.”<sup>918</sup> There was a marked decrease in the embassy’s ultra-left sloganeering, a space that quickly filled by Mao’s warnings about the ominous Soviet threat. Zhong’s arrival led to the start of active anti-Soviet propaganda, which took the form of cinema screenings, including the less than subtle *Anti-China atrocities of the New Tsars* about Moscow’s broken promises to China. Nyerere made special effort to attend the event, much to British chagrin, as it was a break from the president’s practice of absenting himself from functions at diplomatic missions. Between 350 to 400 Tanzanians and Chinese experts were present, too.<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>915</sup> Brady 2002, p. 126.

<sup>916</sup> NA, FCO21/441, China Revisited, 11 June 1969.

<sup>917</sup> He was ambassador to Czechoslovakia from 1961 until he was recalled for the Cultural Revolution: NA, FCO31/441, Chinese anti-Soviet Propaganda in Tanzania, 6 October 1969.

<sup>918</sup> NA, FCO31/441, Chinese anti-Soviet Propaganda in Tanzania, 6 October 1969.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*

Thus in spite of the tribulations that were exacted on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship during the Cultural Revolution, the leaders of both governments remained committed to maintaining good bilateral ties. Nyerere disapproved of the violence and extreme radicalism which later set in, but did not publicly criticise the Chinese government. As the Chinese campaign unfolded, the Tanzanian president promoted a Cultural Revolution in Tanzania which, at the surface, bore some striking similarities to the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Nyerere appreciated and understood the domestic objectives of the campaign, as he was attempting to achieve similar things in Tanzania. Both the Chinese and Tanzanian leaders prioritised their own agenda and the benefits that a strong bilateral relationship had to offer. Those benefits were soon enjoyed.

### **III. Tanzanian diplomatic support for the PRC at the UN**

The significant test of whether the early political, diplomatic and development aid relationship could withstand the upheavals in China came to the fore with the issue of China's representation at the UN. This section examines the main factors that led to the PRC's entry into the UN in 1971, given the major challenges that Chinese diplomacy faced during the Cultural Revolution. The Tanzanian government and its UN delegation made important contributions to this process, as will be explained.

The decline of Chinese radicalism made the PRC more acceptable to other governments, enhanced its strategic position and international status and thus paved the way for the "restoration" of Beijing's seat in the UN Security Council.<sup>920</sup> Concurrently, Mao allowed Sino-American relations to thaw, so that initially halting contacts were

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<sup>920</sup> Van Vranken 2007, p. 11; Chen 2001, p. 239.

made between Beijing and Washington from 1968 to 1969 that eventually led to US President Richard Nixon's monumental visit to China in 1972. This section examines the important role played by individual Africans in furthering the Sino-Tanzanian relationship and, more significantly, their role in enhancing Chinese diplomacy in the late 1960s. It will illustrate this through a case study of Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, a Tanzanian diplomat with Zanzibari roots who was closely identified with the PRC's entry into the UN in 1971.

### i) **China and Salim**

Salim Ahmed Salim was well-suited for his intimate involvement in promoting and developing bilateral ties between Tanzania and China. The first factor was Salim's political roots with the ZNP and Umma party. He was an active trade unionist and ZNP member in the early 1960s and subsequently joined Babu's left-wing Umma group in 1963 as publicity secretary, editing the party newspaper and acting as Secretary General of the All Zanzibar Journalists' Association.<sup>921</sup> Salim's career in the foreign service began after the Zanzibar Revolution in January 1964, when the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council appointed him ambassador in Cairo and then in New Delhi. Unlike many of his Umma comrades whose political careers vaporised after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Salim integrated himself well into the union government.<sup>922</sup> British records described him as "one of the ablest" diplomats and, in spite of his youth, he enjoyed an illustrious career in the foreign service. At the UN, Salim earned himself a reputation for being "one of the UN's youngest and most militant men". He continued to play a

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<sup>921</sup> Salim visited China in December 1963 at the invitation of the All China Journalists' Federation in this capacity.

<sup>922</sup> In May 1968, Salim was appointed Director of the Africa and Middle East Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: NA, FCO31/441, S. A. Salim, 6 June 1969; NA, DO185/54; Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, 17 November 2006, Dar es Salaam.

visible and vocal role on anti-colonial issues – a reflection of the Tanzanian government’s stance as well as his personal convictions – as Chair of the UNGA’s Special Committee on Colonialism in 1966.<sup>923</sup>

Salim also had a good rapport with the Chinese leaders. He was appointed ambassador to China in 1969, a sign of the Tanzanian government’s high regard for its relationship with the “emerging superpower”, as the embassy in Beijing played an important role in the politically and symbolically valuable relationship.<sup>924</sup> In addition to its higher level diplomatic work, the mission also produced a monthly news bulletin that was distributed as widely as Hong Kong, Japan and Tanzania.<sup>925</sup> Salim’s account sheds new light on the Tanzanian government’s attitude towards Beijing and holds the key to understanding the continued Sino-Tanzanian commitment to cooperation.

Salim arrived in Beijing on 21 April 1969, during the CCP’s Ninth Party Congress. The ambassador was welcomed with a rousing reception which, noted the British *Chargé d’Affaires* drily, would likely make him sympathetic to further Chinese overtures.<sup>926</sup> Salim’s speech on 26 April, on the occasion of Tanzania’s fifth anniversary, probably confirmed those fears when he congratulated the Chinese people on the “great victories in all fields” that were achieved during the Cultural Revolution, the accelerated economic and political progress, as well as the undermining of

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<sup>923</sup> NA, FCO31/441, S. A. Salim, 6 June 1969; NA, DO185/54; Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, 17 November 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>924</sup> TNA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estimates 1969-70, Acc. 597, FA/E100/152, August 1969.

<sup>925</sup> Circulation numbers stood at 300 at the time, but the *Chargé d’Affaires* said that the embassy planned to increase it to 500 to meet growing interest: TNA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estimates 1968-1969 – Peking, Acc. 597, FA/E.110/134, Appendix A – Foreign Service Regulations, Regulation 13(2)(ii).

<sup>926</sup> He was appointed ambassador-designate to China and North Korea in February 1969, after having served as ambassador to India: NA, FCO31/441, Tanzania/China, 14 May 1969.

imperialists.<sup>927</sup> Salim enjoyed tremendous access to the Chinese leaders during his tenure as ambassador, which he described as “a more favoured relationship” and “discriminatory diplomacy in Tanzania’s favour.” He met Zhou no less than a dozen times between April and December and the Premier reciprocated by attending two official functions at the Tanzanian embassy, something which the European diplomatic corps “could only have dreamed of.”<sup>928</sup>

Salim was deeply impressed by Premier Zhou, whom he mainly saw late at night for discussions because the Premier kept very long working hours. Salim insisted that Zhou had “an incredible command of facts and figures” as well as a “profound analytical mind.” Zhou also advised Salim to travel out of the capital because “Beijing was not necessarily China,” which created many opportunities for the ambassador to visit industries, villages and state farms in the northeast.<sup>929</sup> These were in areas such as Fushun, Dalian or Heilongjiang, where he saw the best and the worst living conditions for the Chinese people.<sup>930</sup> The Tanzanian embassy reported that travelling around the country was important for two reasons: “To see and know” because very little information about China was otherwise available, and to “spread” Sino-Tanzanian friendship to the Chinese people.<sup>931</sup> At the same time, this exposure meant that the Tanzanians were fully aware of the practical constraints of daily life in China.<sup>932</sup> The

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<sup>927</sup> NA, FCO31/441, Address by HE Salim Ahmed Salim, 26 April 1969.

<sup>928</sup> Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, 17 November 2006, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>929</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>930</sup> Salim was even authorised to travel to the ethnic minority Xinjiang province in the northwest, but never made the trip because his assignment in China was cut short.

<sup>931</sup> A list of proposed journeys for 1968/69 comprised visits to the two Canton Spring/Autumn fairs; the acrobatic students at Wuhan; industries and factories in Shanghai; agricultural centers at Shenyang, Kunming, Xian-Shenxi, Foochow and Taiyuan; scientific centres in Urumqi, Lhasa, Hangchow, and Huhehot: TNA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estimates 1968-1969 – Peking, Acc. 597, FA/E.110/134, Appendix A – Foreign Service Regulations, Regulation 13(2)(ii).

<sup>932</sup> TNA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estimates 1968-1969 – Peking, Acc. 597, FA/E.110/134, Appendix A – Foreign Service Regulations, Regulation 13(2)(ii).

*Chargé* noted critically that taxis were expensive, because they were meant for “bourgeois foreigners whose monies the Chinese are determined to take as much as possible [...] there is nowhere to go for entertainment of any sort and even churches are closed”.<sup>933</sup>

The Tanzanian experience in China was unique, as other African diplomats in Beijing did not necessarily enjoy a similar level of access to the Chinese leaders. Indeed, British records suggest that they were discontented, as they “lived in a vacuum and were bewildered and unhappy in the face of Chinese unwillingness to let them make friends or find out what was going on in the country.”<sup>934</sup> Moreover, with limited resources and little knowledge of the country, few of these African missions had any Chinese speakers, nor adequate or secure communication channels with their own governments. Yet Salim’s tenure in Beijing was brief, as within barely eight months after his arrival he was appointed Tanzanian Permanent Representative to the UN in December 1969, owing to the sudden death of his predecessor in New York and the Tanzanian government’s limited human resources.<sup>935</sup> In hindsight, this development benefitted the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship, because the PRC now had a charismatic ally at the UN. Salim’s diplomatic aptitude and prior experience in China made him an important driver of the PRC’s representation at the UN, with Tanzania always having been one of the sponsors of the pro-PRC resolution.

## **ii) Salim and Tanzanian support for the PRC at the UN**

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<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>934</sup> NA, FCO21/441, China Revisited, 11 June 1969.

<sup>935</sup> Richard Wambura replaced Salim in Beijing and served as ambassador to China from 1970 to 1975: Bartke 1981, p. 35.

The UN was the international stage on which the robust Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship was reinforced in three ways: Firstly, because of Nyerere's overt support; secondly, through Salim's contributions; and thirdly, by common knowledge of the Tanzanian government's close relations with the Chinese.

As shown in Chapter Two, Nyerere had always been a proponent of the PRC's entry into the UN. At the TANU National Conference in October 1967, he once again deplored the PRC's exclusion and the occupation of the Chinese seat by "representatives of a government which was overthrown eighteen years ago," adding that the UN would be impotent on Asian and other crucial international issues if the situation persisted. Nyerere underscored Tanzania's continued advocacy for China's admission and stated that he would continue to persuade others that the PRC's existence should be accepted, "whether or not they liked or approved of its government."<sup>936</sup> Nyerere took this stand consistently on international platforms. In his address to the UN General Assembly in 1970, he criticized the ongoing injustice of the PRC's exclusion.<sup>937</sup>

As Tanzania's Permanent Representative to the UN, Salim had a pivotal role in furthering his government's support for the pro-PRC resolution. The general trend in international sentiments on the "restoration" of the PRC's seat at the UN rose throughout the 1960s. In 1970, the votes for Communist China outnumbered those against for the first time, but the number was less than the two-thirds majority needed to defeat Resolution 1668 (adopted on 15 December 1961 that declared the representation of China an "important question", requiring a two-thirds majority instead of a simple

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<sup>936</sup> Tanzanian Ministry of Information and Tourism 1967.

<sup>937</sup> Yu 1975, p. 61.

majority). According to Salim, the pro-PRC delegations at the UN were “organised and systematic.”<sup>938</sup> They had agreed that he would be tasked to manage any unexpected occurrences as “the responsibility of the unknown,” which he executed well.<sup>939</sup> The international political tide was in their favour and on 25 October 1971, at the UN General Assembly’s 26<sup>th</sup> Session, the “important question” resolution on PRC membership was finally defeated.<sup>940</sup> Until that point, Nixon had outwardly maintained the stance that the PRC should adhere to a “Two China” (dual recognition) arrangement in order to enter the UN, in spite of Kissinger’s top-level dialogues with Beijing. Indeed, Kissinger had concluded that there were insufficient votes for the US-sponsored “Two China” option and that their interests would in any case be best served by “cementing the Chinese relationship that mattered for the future.”<sup>941</sup>

The announcement that the US president would visit China before May 1972 increased the momentum for the restoration of Beijing’s seat, as other countries were concerned that they might be left out in the cold.<sup>942</sup> Salim described the situation as “Washington wanting to have its cake and eat it too.”<sup>943</sup> On 15 November 1971 the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 2758 to seat the PRC and oust the ROC by a conclusive vote of seventy-five to thirty-five.<sup>944</sup> On hearing the result of the vote, Salim reportedly burst into dance, an episode that was recalled as a minor diplomatic drama that identified him – and his government – as a strong Chinese stalwart. Salim

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<sup>938</sup> Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, Dar es Salaam, 17 November 2006.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>940</sup> Van Vranken 2007, p. 11.

<sup>941</sup> Engel 2008, p. 423.

<sup>942</sup> The announcement was released simultaneously at 10:30am in Beijing on 16 July and 10:30pm in Washington on 15 July: Huang 2008, pp. 232-233.

<sup>943</sup> Interview with Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, Dar es Salaam, 17 November 2006.

<sup>944</sup> Lin 1990, p. 152.

personally denied that he had danced, saying instead that there was a “jubilant” and “ecstatic” eruption amongst the delegates upon hearing the news. In any case, the event was, in the words of another former Tanzanian ambassador Paul Rupia, “a culmination of Tanzanian efforts to cement relations between the countries.”<sup>945</sup>

The PRC’s entry into the UN was a monumental event in its diplomacy and triggered a downward spiral for Taiwanese diplomacy, as various governments stepped forward to recognise the PRC in rapid succession.<sup>946</sup> This diplomatic breakthrough in Beijing’s international relations gave mettle to Mao’s claims that his revolution had effectively brought China from weakness into strength.<sup>947</sup> In his speech welcoming the PRC delegation to the UN, Salim praised:

Those of us who have been fortunate, as I have been, to have lived with and know something about the people of China have good reason to admire their ancient and well preserved culture, their heroic struggle for their own dignity and independence and their unflinching support for the liberation struggle all over the world.<sup>948</sup>

This event ushered in a new chapter in Beijing’s international relations and coincided with the return of Chinese ambassadors to their posts in the early 1970s. China’s UN membership and its diplomatic relations with many more governments necessitated a large number of skilled and able staff. The Foreign Ministry, which had many of its personnel scattered during the Cultural Revolution, had “depleted ranks.”

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<sup>945</sup> Chen 2001, p. 239; Interview with Ambassador Paul Rupia, Dar es Salaam, 14 November 2006.

<sup>946</sup> Fifteen African governments established or resumed diplomatic relations with Beijing between October 1970 and October 1972. Between 1971 and 1979, 46 governments severed relations with the ROC in favour of the PRC: Van Vranken 2007, p. 11.

<sup>947</sup> Chen 2001, p. 272.

<sup>948</sup> Yu 1975, pp. 24-25.

Beijing was not adequately equipped to manage the issues that its membership would have raised, and it thus refrained from joining some specialised UN agencies.<sup>949</sup> Aware of the gravity of the situation and the fact that all eyes would be on the Chinese delegates, Mao briefed the diplomats bound for New York. He emphasised that they should cooperate with the twenty-three countries that co-sponsored the resolution – “our friends in need” – as well as the other fifty-three which supported the resolution.<sup>950</sup>

Significantly, Mao explained that although there were seventeen delegations which abstained, they did not in fact succumb to US pressure and had demonstrated their support for China through their abstentions; he told the Chinese delegates to maintain contact with the thirty-five countries which opposed the resolution, as it was a diverse group that represented various interests. The Chairman also stressed the importance of extending the “international united front” at the UN and that the delegates should treat others as equals, without arrogance and to adhere to non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Premier Zhou urged the group to be modest, prudent and to devote themselves wholeheartedly to their diplomatic work so as to live up to the expectations of the Chinese people and third world countries. He added that they should undertake their tasks seriously and not take advantage of their veto power.<sup>951</sup>

This section has shown that, despite the great damage caused to China’s foreign relations by the Cultural Revolution between 1966 to 1968, Beijing was still able to reap diplomatic support that quickly led to its successful entry into the UN in 1971. An

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<sup>949</sup> Barnouin / Yu 1998, p. 41.

<sup>950</sup> Huang 2008, pp. 252-253.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

important component of that support came from the African countries and third world governments which pushed the pro-PRC resolution through. The visibility of Communist China's aid projects in Africa, as well as its support for the southern African liberation struggles won it more support. The Tanzanian delegation at the UN supported the pro-PRC position throughout the 1960s and the accounts from Tanzanian diplomats demonstrate that their government identified itself closely with the push to "restore" Beijing's membership in the UN.

### **Conclusion: A friend in need is a friend indeed**

The Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 was a domestic phenomenon in China which, at its worst period, brought the entire country to the brink of chaos and anarchy. This chapter examined the effects of the Cultural Revolution on the Sino-Tanzanian relationship during the most tumultuous years of the campaign, from mid-1966 to 1969. The Chinese government's diplomatic position in Africa declined markedly from 1965 and was further eroded by the onset of the Cultural Revolution. These developments caused many governments to question the Chinese government's political intentions, suitability as a donor and overall reliability as a third world ally.

This chapter has demonstrated in detail the resilience of the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship in the face of pressures from the Cultural Revolution. Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in May 1966 to transform the Chinese state and society through strengthening ideological unity. However, his personal agenda was to consolidate his power by eliminating his political rivals. The Tanzanian government initially viewed the explicit tenets of the Chinese campaign positively, as there appeared to be important parallels with what Nyerere wanted to achieve. He appreciated

its underlying objectives and implemented a number of similar initiatives in Tanzania during the same time.

However, the negative effects of the Cultural Revolution quickly became apparent – first to the visiting Tanzanian delegation, to diplomats, Africans living in China and, finally, in Tanzania itself. Ambassador He Ying left Dar es Salaam as part of the worldwide recall of Chinese diplomats and China's African policy was left to Ambassador Huang Hua in Cairo, as well as the skeletal staff comprised of junior diplomats. Radical propaganda was circulated by the Chinese embassy in Dar es Salaam, which increasingly emphasised Mao's personality cult. Three incidents were discussed in this chapter – the Ruvu irrigation project, the TanZam rail link discussions and the disturbances at the Friendship Textile Mill – which demonstrated how the Cultural Revolution affected China's aid projects. There was factionalism within the Chinese government and bureaucracy, so that high-level, internal decision-making processes were based on radical rather than geo-political objectives. Numerous officials in government ministries were purged, which disrupted the progress of Chinese aid projects and created very negative impressions in the host countries. Specifically at the Friendship Textile Mill, radical Chinese experts had a direct, destabilising influence on the local workers. Yet these challenges and threats to the Sino-Tanzanian friendship were effectively mitigated.

Top-level engagement between the Tanzanian and Chinese governments was vital to the continuation of the Sino-Tanzanian collaboration and Nyerere did not hesitate to raise his concerns about the Chinese experts' behaviour at the textile mill directly to Mao. The research shows that the developmental and diplomatic dividends from the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, discussed in the earlier chapters, sealed both

governments' commitment and allowed them to survive the most intense years of the Cultural Revolution. In contrast to the negative outcomes that extreme Chinese radicalism had in other countries, Sino-Tanzanian ties at the highest levels appear to have strengthened by the trials in those difficult years. The visible indicators of the robust bilateral relationship were the continuation of Chinese aid projects in Tanzania, Nyerere's second state visit to Beijing in 1968 and the Tanzanian government's active role in supporting PRC membership at the UN. The goodwill that had been generated by China's offer to construct the TanZam rail link, as well as its other economic and development assistance, yielded significant dividends.

Mao attempted to ameliorate China's diplomatic crisis by shifting the emphasis from domestic ideological transformation to countering foreign threats to China, both by the Soviet Union at its northern border and by the United States in Vietnam. Thus began the Chinese government's more sober and moderate stance, which paved the way for the PRC's admission to the UN. Yet aside from the changing international political landscape and strong state to state relations between Tanzania and China, personal relationships were also a crucial component that facilitated bilateral ties through those challenging times.

The tide finally turned in Beijing's favour in November 1971, when there was a majority vote at the UN General Assembly in favour of admitting the PRC delegation. That monumental event marked the close of Beijing's severe diplomatic isolation and ushered in a new era in Chinese international affairs. Throughout these challenging years in the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, Tanzanian support for the PRC's entry into the UN was unwavering and the Tanzanian delegation was a stalwart support of PRC admission into the organisation.

## Conclusion – The Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s

The thesis addresses a gap in the historical narrative of the celebrated Sino-Tanzanian relationship during the crucial phase of the 1960s, which was the formative period of the bilateral connection. It explains how the friendship between what Nyerere called “unequal equals” was first struck, fostered, deepened and then tested by external, Chinese and local African factors. Yet the 1960s has received comparatively little scholarly attention. The majority of publications about that decade are not historical studies, but are from the fields of political science and international relations. On the other hand, newly available primary sources allow for a more nuanced historical research which will, hopefully, grow. There is currently much scholarly – and media – interest in contemporary Sino-African relations, because of China’s renewed engagement with the continent. Hence, this case study of Sino-Tanzanian relations in the 1960s offers valuable insights to the broader discourse on the evolution of Sino-African relations and contributes towards a fuller understanding of the conduct of bilateral relations, particularly the dynamics between donor and recipient governments.

The thesis stands out as a work of history, having re-examined and added new dimensions to the geopolitical paradigms of decolonisation and the Cold War, through which the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was previously studied. It also contrasts with the literature’s focus on Chinese objectives and actions. While recognising the significance of the Cold War and other externalities, the research has broken new ground by demonstrating that local African factors, such as the political dynamics in Zanzibar, the dynamic role of individual Tanzanian (Zanzibari and Tanganyikan) politicians and diplomats, as well as Tanzania’s political stability from 1965, contributed greatly to the rapid development of the bilateral relationship.

The research has shown the unique qualities of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in the 1960s as it developed through three chronological phases: The foundations of Sino-Zanzibari and Sino-Tanganyikan ties (Chapters One and Two); the potentially fragile post-colonial African state and Chinese anti-imperialist aid (Chapters Three and Four); as well as the realities of the growing Sino-Tanzanian relationship at the governmental and community levels (Chapters Five and Six). For this, it has drawn on recently available primary and secondary sources. Significantly, a number of important memoirs by Chinese officials (published in Chinese) have added useful insights on how the developments in Tanzania were perceived; these were complemented by oral history interviews with selected historical actors.

For the first phase, the thesis has presented a new analysis of the history of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship through a careful examination of the very separate developmental paths of China's relations with Zanzibar and Tanganyika respectively. Independence made the Tanganyikan and Zanzibari governments more accessible to Chinese diplomatic overtures. Yet the concomitant existence of post-colonial and colonial countries due to incomplete decolonisation in Africa created pressures which promoted South-South, Afro-Asian solidarity, as well as political tensions, since China was generally perceived as a militant, revolutionary Communist power. Contrary to most scholarly accounts which attribute the growth of those connections solely to Chinese initiative, the findings suggest that the Zanzibari nationalists actively sought and cultivated the relationship, initially through Communist bloc sponsored activities.

The Zanzibari Marxists were attracted to Communist China as a country run by a successful revolutionary government that offered relevant lessons on combining socialism, nationalism and development. Dynamic individuals such as Abdulrahman

Babu and his colleague Ali Sultan Issa were important conduits who, on the one hand, secured Chinese assistance in support of their political objectives and, on the other, informed official Chinese understandings of African affairs as local experts. Through their efforts, Zanzibaris were selected and sent to China to work at *Radio Peking* and at the Foreign Language Institute, directly contributing to the extension of Chinese soft power throughout Swahili-speaking East Africa. Babu, in particular, was the crucial broker of China's inchoate foray into the region. Local African agency and participation was, thus, integral to the rapid development of a Chinese bridgehead in Zanzibar and continuously shaped and buttressed the high level diplomatic rapprochement.

In comparison to the Zanzibari case, the early Chinese contact with Tanganyikan nationalists began more gradually and was not initially a result of an ideological preference for Communist assistance on Nyerere's part. Rather, the president's reputation as a respected leader and his non-aligned foreign policy made Tanganyika a popular destination for foreign aid across the donor spectrum. While the typical donor-recipient relationship was one of asymmetrical power, China was an exception in this respect, as it was a developing country itself, facing its own great domestic needs. It was also in a relatively weak diplomatic position internationally. As the thesis has shown, there was a mutual need and benefit in the Sino-Tanzanian relationship. Indeed, even prior to Tanganyika's independence Nyerere had supported Beijing's One China policy and expressed his personal commitment to reinstating the PRC's seat in the United Nations Security Council – an issue of paramount importance to the Chinese government. The Sino-Tanganyikan relationship thus developed through mutual interest between 1962 and 1963. However, Tanganyika's expanding role in the African liberation struggle created tensions in its bilateral relations with the former

colonial governments, while the Chinese government's support as a militant, Afro-Asian, anti-imperialist power grew apace. The benefits were mutual: China soon became a trusted and important ally for the Tanganyikan government, while Nyerere was similarly regarded by his Chinese counterparts.

Hence the research has shown that the Sino-Zanzibari and Sino-Tanganyikan bilateral relationships were distinct yet inter-related – a fact that has not been discussed in the existing literature. A fuller analysis of the first phase of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship must take into account China's strategic connections with both Zanzibar and Tanganyika, in recognition of the disparate historical experiences that were brought together when the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar was formed in April 1964. As has been demonstrated, the political (ideological), economic and social differences between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar affected the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship throughout the 1960s, although the overall result was still a deepening of Sino-Tanzanian ties.

The thesis has argued that the second phase of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was one of deepening mutual engagement at the highest levels which was precipitated by two locally masterminded crises in January 1964. The Chinese government used the opportunities that arose in the aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution and the Tanganyika Rifles mutiny to enhance its ties with both governments through providing military and other assistance. Chinese military support to Tanganyika proved timely and filled the vacuum that was left by the withdrawal of West German and later British aid. More significantly, Nyerere's response to the potential fragility of the post-colonial state was to break away from the inherited military hierarchy to create a politically embedded, developmental militia that also engaged in nation-building. The Tanzania People's

Defence Force (TPDF) was thus subjugated under the authority of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), an arrangement that was mainly inspired by the design of the Chinese people's army.

Moreover, the importance of the Chinese government's immediate embrace and support for the government of the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in April 1964 cannot be overstated. From Beijing's perspective, it was prepared to work with whichever was the incumbent African government. In this case, the change was positive, as the Union combined a diplomatically important Tanganyika with a revolutionary Zanzibar. Key Zanzibari figures such as Babu and Salim continued to reinforce the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship. Nyerere's commitment to the bilateral relationship quickly made him China's favoured and respected partner in East Africa. Chinese friendship with the Tanganyikan government yielded significant political dividends for the diplomatically isolated Chinese government and facilitated its support for the African liberation movements.

The numerous visits made by Tanganyikan officials to China in the early 1960s had prepared the ground for the high-level visits by Nyerere and Zhou Enlai in 1965. Personal diplomacy between the leaders played an increasingly important role henceforth. The Tanzanian government welcomed the inflow of Chinese assistance and, in exchange, it supported Chinese influence on the international stage without necessarily compromising on its own political objectives. The clearest indicator of the importance of Tanzania to China's African policy was the Chinese government's offer to construct the Tanzania-Zambia (TanZam) rail link in February 1965, a move which had immense political repercussions on Tanzania's foreign relations with other governments.

Beijing's offer to build the TanZam rail link seriously altered the geo-political situation in southern Africa by injecting a new Communist actor in an equation that had previously been defined by ineffectual British decolonisation in Rhodesia and black-white racial tensions. Therefore, by the middle of the 1960s the Sino-Tanzanian relationship had attained the character of a militant and anti-imperialist friendship that yielded mutual dividends. Most significantly, there was an extremely strong personal rapport between the leaders of both countries, who held each other in high regard. More generally, China's new role as a donor to African governments was based on an entirely different historical experience, ideology and political philosophy from any Western precedents, appearing all the more threatening in Western eyes for its insidious appeal.

When Zhou announced China's *Eight Principles Governing China's Foreign and Technical Aid to Foreign Countries* (in late 1963/early 1964), this espoused a more equitable donor-recipient relationship than the traditional Western aid arrangements. Uniquely, Chinese assistance included support for the political consolidation of the newly independent government, mass mobilisation for development and the encouragement of self-reliance through its projects. The thesis has argued that these were revolutionary principles, as they clearly articulated political intent as well as the desired political outcomes for the recipient country. In contrast to this, Western donor countries presented foreign aid as apolitical.

The existing literature on the Tanzam rail link focuses very much on Chinese objectives for the offer to sponsor the project and, indeed, the benefits that such a successful, high profile project would have because of its direct impact on Zambia's effectiveness as a frontline state, as well as the potentially great impact in delivering development to Tanzania's remote Kilombero region. The Cold War literature explains

the opportunities that African leaders such as Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda had for bargaining for more assistance from foreign governments in order to secure the best arrangement possible. However such a focus on geopolitics does not adequately account for local African agency and factors.

As the research has clearly shown, Nyerere did not simply proceed with the Chinese offer – not even for the completion of just the Tanzanian segment of the rail link. After all, Communist China was not his preferred donor for such a technologically complex and capital-intensive undertaking, so he continued to pursue other donor options instead, while trying to convince his sceptical Zambian counterpart Kenneth Kaunda of the feasibility of a Chinese sponsored rail link should no other offers materialise. Most published accounts of the history of the TanZam rail link neglect the disagreement between and within the Tanzanian and Zambian governments about Chinese sponsorship. The Chinese government acknowledged at the time that the decision lay with the two African leaders, and that the sum total of its own efforts might be in providing Nyerere with a trump card to improve his bargaining position vis-à-vis the Western donors, a role that it was fully prepared to play. The pressure of the Rhodesian unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in November 1965 warmed the Zambian government's attitude towards Chinese overtures in 1966, so that the first tripartite agreement to build the rail link was signed in 1967.

As the thesis has shown, however, following the promising first and second phases of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship, events in the third phase revealed its weaknesses. The thesis examined three main trials, which were distinct but related: The effects of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; the contradictory effects of

Chinese military aid and, finally, the gap between both governments' solidarity rhetoric and reality.

Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that started in 1966 and officially lasted until 1976 unleashed successive waves of domestic turmoil. In its most intense period between 1966 and 1968, the campaign crippled the Chinese foreign ministry, radicalised many overseas Chinese communities and fuelled a violent xenophobic tide within China. The research has shown that even Premier Zhou struggled to contain the Cultural Revolution's worst excesses from interfering with his government's foreign relations. China's closest African ally was not spared from this radicalism, as the disruptions at the Friendship Textile Mill and discussions of the Ruvu irrigation project in 1968 illustrated. These important episodes appear in selected Chinese language publications, but have gone largely unmentioned in the English language studies. Yet how the Tanzanian and Chinese governments responded to them is crucial to understanding their level of mutual commitment to the success of the bilateral relationship by the late 1960s. Fuelled by mutual needs – China's desire for international and domestic legitimacy combined with Tanzania's need for economic and military development – both governments worked together to contain any diplomatic fallout from the incidents, suggesting a high level of trust between their leaders.

The second important trial that confronted the Sino-Tanzanian relationship in its third phase was the double-edged nature of Chinese military assistance. Zanzibar's relations with Tanganyika were complex and at times contradictory; they were only papered over by the formation of the Union. The thesis has argued that the Cold War threats which existed prior to April 1964 did not simply disappear with the creation the

Union, although it strengthened Nyerere's authority on the mainland and Karume's in Zanzibar. For the latter, the Union shielded Karume from political opposition until his assassination in 1971 and buttressed his personal power, as he successfully exploited the Sino-Soviet rivalry by building up the islands' military, thus stonewalling Zanzibar's military integration process with the mainland. The third and final important trial that the research has highlighted in the third phase of the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was the gap between both governments' solidarity rhetoric and the interactions between their peoples. Nyerere was attracted by the Chinese revolutionary and development experience; he was similarly impressed by the traits of frugality, duty, discipline and sense of community above self which he had observed in China. The Arusha Declaration in 1967 articulated Nyerere's objectives of a socialist and self-reliant developmental path. In this way, the Chinese experts matched his definition of a *committed expert*. Nevertheless, in spite of the mutual pronouncements of fraternal feelings, problems arising from cross-cultural differences revealed the relative shallowness of that professed solidarity.

The progressive strengthening of Nyerere's political position in Tanzania through policies that included the subjugation of the military under TANU, the constitutional change that formalised a single party rule in 1965 and the Arusha Declaration in 1967 was in stark contrast to the dramatic deterioration of China's domestic situation during the same period. In fact, as the research has shown, Nyerere's relatively successful consolidation of power after the army mutiny in 1964 created a politically stable situation in which a consistent policy towards Communist China could be pursued whereas, elsewhere in Africa, military coups that erupted in the mid to late 1960s resulted in the cessation of diplomatic ties with the PRC. Combined with

Nyerere's strong personal regard for the Chinese leaders, as well as the solid foundation of Sino-Zanzibari and Sino-Tanganyikan relations during the two earlier phases, the Sino-Tanzanian bilateral relationship was shielded to a large degree from the disruptions of the Cultural Revolution and did not attract international scrutiny. Furthermore, the Chinese government continued to prepare for the TanZam project, while the Tanzanian delegation at the UN was a stalwart supporter of the PRC's admission into the organisation. Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim, in particular, was a prominent example of a charismatic individual in Nyerere's government whose tenure at the UN quickly became identified with his support for the PRC's membership at the international organisation.

The Sino-Tanzanian relationship was complex and resilient in the face of intense external and domestic pressures. It emphasised the shared similarities and attitudes between its governments and played down the differences. Both governments placed great importance on the success of the bilateral connection and did not allow it to fail. Significantly, it can be argued that their mutual interest was not merely for political or economic gain, but also for what the leaders believed to be an alternative version of development in the post-colonial world. As the thesis has shown, Nyerere's government successfully maintained a strong position despite the bilateral connection appearing to be between the "unequal equals."

This research has emphasised the importance of understanding the long historical relationship that underpins contemporary China-Africa relations. Broad comparisons between the current discourse on Sino-African relations and the historical literature in the 1960s and 1970s show interesting parallels – allegations of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism still abound, albeit in the economic rather than

political or ideological sense. Aside from those broad brushstrokes, the stark differences between the Chinese government under Mao and that of his successors, from Deng Xiaoping to the present day, suggest that few actual similarities exist. Colonialism in Africa has been replaced by economic and developmental concerns, and Afro-Asian solidarity no longer holds much political weight. The international and domestic contexts in China and in African countries today are dramatically different from the situation in the 1960s, although, in the case of China and Tanzania, both governments favour proclamations of a history of good bilateral relations. As this thesis has shown, this was clearly the case in the 1960s, when the Sino-Tanzanian relationship was not necessarily smooth or straightforward, yet had successfully weathered significant tribulations to enter the decade of the 1970s as close political allies.

## Appendix I: Poem from the *People's Daily*

### Spring wind blows to the Land of Cloves – dedicated to Zanzibar

In the endless night, gunfire rings out,  
At dawn break, the sun of revolution rises!  
Zanzibar, I stand in Beijing watching you,  
With happy tears in my eyes!

The Land of Cloves has thousands of trees  
But for whom did they bloom in the past?  
Red flowers freshly covered by blood,  
For whom did the flower gatherers toil?

The ancient slave market,  
Is now the home of revolution,  
After so many bitter years,  
The Land of Cloves welcomes its first spring.

The spring wind blows into a shack,  
It puts smiles on the workers' faces,  
In the stunning Pearl of the Indian Ocean,  
Human hearts and cloves alike are in full bloom!

You use spears, stones, pikes,  
You use rage, hatred, strength,  
You use the weapons captured from the rulers,  
The enemy is felled!

You reclaim the fat of the land,  
Reclaim the fragrant clove,  
Reclaim freedom and happiness,  
Reclaim the islands' great beauty!

Zanzibar, share your honour with me,  
Our friendship, high as the mountain and long as the river,  
I brim with tears of happiness,  
As I watch you from Beijing.

Zang Kejia, 8 April 1964, Beijing

*Translated from Chinese by Alicia Altorfer-Ong, with kind assistance from Xiao Li.*

## Appendix II: Photograph from Nyerere's state-visit to Beijing 1965

*[Material removed for copyright reasons.]*

Figure 1: President Julius Nyerere's state visit to Beijing, February 1965

Source: DNA, Photograph from the NCNA.

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