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CHINA'S STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AS A ROADMAP TO CAMEROON'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT: *This study critically examines China's strategic economic engagement with Cameroon, focusing on the long-term implications for the country's economic independence. Using Dependency Theory as the theoretical framework, the study explores how China's investments, particularly in infrastructure and energy production, have provided immediate benefits but also reinforced Cameroon's economic dependency. While these investments have led to the development of crucial infrastructure, such as roads, ports, and hydropower facilities, they have been financed predominantly through debt-backed loans, often secured by resource-backed agreements that tie Cameroon's future economic growth to Chinese capital. The research reveals how China's extractive investments in sectors like oil, timber, and mining have deepened Cameroon's reliance on natural resources, stifling the growth of local industries and preventing economic diversification. This dependency on foreign financing and extractive industries mirrors the core-periphery dynamics identified in Dependency Theory, where peripheral nations like Cameroon remain locked in cycles of resource extraction, with the benefits flowing outward to the core nations, rather than fostering sustainable, locally-driven economic growth. The study argues that China's engagement in Cameroon does not significantly contribute to the country's economic sovereignty, but rather perpetuates patterns of neocolonial exploitation, where Cameroon's role as a raw material exporter is maintained. In response to these findings, the study offers policy recommendations aimed at strengthening Cameroon's economic sovereignty, focusing on diversification, sustainable debt management, and inclusive governance. It also proposes strategies for leveraging China's investments in a way that promotes long-term growth and reduces economic dependence. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on China-Africa relations, offering a critical perspective on the risks of neocolonialism in Africa and providing insights into how Cameroon can navigate its relationship with China to achieve true economic independence.*

Keywords: *China-Cameroon, Dependency Theory, Economic Independence, Debt Dependency, Resource Extraction.*

1. Introduction

In this contemporary era, China's increasing influence in Africa has emerged as a defining force in reshaping the continent's economic trajectory. Through mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and extensive foreign direct investment (FDI), China has strategically positioned itself as a pivotal partner in the economic development of several African nations, including Cameroon. The BRI, launched in 2013, represents China's ambitious plan to foster infrastructure development, enhance trade links, and expand its global influence. Cameroon, like many African countries, has welcomed China's investment, viewing it as a promising avenue to address its long-standing developmental challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, unreliable energy supply, and regional disparities in economic opportunities (Wang & Liu, 2020). China's economic engagement in Cameroon has primarily focused on large-scale infrastructure projects, energy initiatives, and access to natural resources, which are seen as vital for Cameroon's economic growth. However, while these investments are often framed as partnerships based on mutual benefit and cooperation, the implications of China's growing economic footprint in Africa are more complex. From the perspective of Dependency Theory, China's increasing presence could be interpreted not as a shift away from past economic dependencies but as a continuation, or even an intensification, of the historical patterns of economic dependence that African nations have traditionally had with former colonial powers. Dependency Theory, a critical framework in postcolonial studies and international political economy, argues that the global economic system is structured in a way that forces peripheral nations like Cameroon to remain dependent on wealthier, core nations for capital, technology, and expertise (Dos Santos, 1970). In this context, China's engagement with Cameroon raises the question of whether these investments are truly facilitating economic independence or merely reinforcing a new form of economic dependency that perpetuates Cameroon's vulnerability in the global economic system.

At the heart of this issue lies the question of whether China's investments in Cameroon's infrastructure, energy, and natural resources are fostering sustainable economic growth and self-sufficiency, or if they are strategically positioning China as a dominant economic force in the region. Critics argue that while these investments provide much-needed capital and infrastructure, they often come with conditions that may limit Cameroon's ability to make autonomous economic decisions in the future (Alden, 2007). Furthermore, the reliance on Chinese expertise and technology in key sectors, such as energy production and natural resource extraction, raises concerns about Cameroon's long-term sovereignty over its economic future. This study seeks to explore China's strategic engagement with Cameroon through the lens of Dependency Theory, exploring the extent to which these engagements contribute to or hinder Cameroon's quest for true economic independence. This study adopts a qualitative research design to critically examine the impact of China's strategic engagement on Cameroon's economic dependency. The research specifically focuses on secondary data analysis to explore the nature of China's foreign direct investment (FDI) in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, and resource extraction, and how these investments shape Cameroon's economic trajectory. Secondary data analysis is ideal for this study because it allows the researcher to leverage existing academic studies, government reports, policy documents, and statistical data to construct a comprehensive understanding of the economic relationship between China and Cameroon. As the study relies on publicly available data, there are no privacy concerns or issues related to confidentiality. However, the study acknowledges certain limitations inherent in secondary data analysis. One limitation is the potential for bias in some data sources, particularly reports produced by governments or international institutions with vested interests in portraying China's engagement in a positive light. Additionally, by relying on secondary data, the study may not capture the local perspectives or experiences of Cameroonian citizens and policymakers, which could offer a more nuanced view of the impact of Chinese investments. Despite these limitations, secondary data provides a robust foundation for understanding complex global economic relationships, allowing the study to offer valuable insights into the role of China in shaping Cameroon's economic future, while remaining mindful of the broader historical and institutional context. By exploring the potential risks and benefits of these engagements, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the long-term implications of China's economic presence in Cameroon and its broader impact on the country's path to economic independence.

Research Problem. This study critically examines whether China's growing economic influence in Cameroon fosters true economic independence or whether it entrenches a new form of economic dependency. China's engagement with African countries, including Cameroon, has been framed largely as a development partnership that addresses critical infrastructure deficits, boosts energy capacity, and facilitates trade. This narrative is often emphasized in the literature, which highlights the positive aspects of China's involvement, such as job creation, technology transfer, and the provision of much-needed capital for development projects (Brautigam, 2009; Alden, 2007). Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has positioned itself as a key player in addressing Africa's infrastructural and energy challenges, and Cameroon has been one of the countries benefiting from these investments. The positive impacts of these projects include improvements in transportation networks, such as roads, bridges, and railways, and enhanced energy infrastructure, which are crucial for Cameroon's economic development (Wang & Liu, 2020). Despite the enthusiasm surrounding these investments, there are growing concerns that the relationship between China and Cameroon may not lead to the economic independence that it is often portrayed to support. Many scholars argue that, while China's involvement addresses critical development gaps, it also brings with it risks that may undermine Cameroon's ability to control its own economic future (Dzekashu & Anyu, 2020). These concerns are particularly relevant in sectors such as infrastructure and natural resource extraction, where China's investments are frequently tied to loans backed by the country's natural resources. As a result, the country could become further indebted and reliant on China, thus reducing its economic autonomy (Brautigam, 2009).

The core research questions this study addresses is whether China's growing strategic engagement in Cameroon promotes Cameroon's economic independence or merely reinforces a new form of economic dependency. To assess this question, the study will analyze the structure of China's investments and the long-term implications for Cameroon's sovereignty, particularly in key sectors like infrastructure, energy, and natural resources. By critically examining these engagements, the research will explore whether they offer real prospects for sustainable growth or merely lock Cameroon into a dependency relationship that benefits China's strategic and economic interests. While existing literature generally highlights the positive aspects of Chinese engagement in Africa, these perspectives often fail to consider the broader and more complex economic implications. For example, China's investments in infrastructure are often lauded for improving the continent's connectivity, which could potentially open new trade routes and economic opportunities for African countries (Alden, 2007). However, these improvements are frequently financed by loans that must be repaid, often with the country's natural resources or revenue streams, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of this model and its impact on local economic development (Brautigam, 2009). Shinn and Eisenman (2012), argue that China's involvement has brought substantial benefits to African countries, including Cameroon, in the form of technology transfer, job creation, and enhanced capacity. Yet, this research often overlooks the dependency implications of these engagements, where Chinese companies and expertise dominate, and local industries struggle to gain the necessary know-how and infrastructure to become self-sufficient. Critics suggest that, despite the apparent developmental benefits, these engagements often maintain Africa's status as a resource-exporting periphery, which limits its ability to diversify its economy and establish greater control over its resources (Kaplinsky, 2011).

The value of this study lies in its ability to provide a critical perspective on the broader implications of China's economic strategy in Cameroon and other African nations that share similar experiences. While much of the literature tends to focus on the immediate benefits of Chinese investments, there is a lack of scholarly work that critically examines how these investments contribute to or hinder the long-term goal of economic independence for African countries. By applying Dependency Theory, this study will offer a framework for understanding the extent to which these investments may deepen Cameroon's integration into a global economic system that continues to favor core nations, thereby limiting the country's capacity to determine its own economic future. This research also adds value by considering the complex nature of China's engagements in Cameroon, moving beyond the binary of "positive" or "negative" and instead focusing on the nuanced impact of China's investments. By addressing the potential risks of increased dependency, this study will offer insights into whether Cameroon's relationship with China represents a genuine opportunity for development or whether it is creating conditions that could perpetuate the country's peripheral position in the global economy. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing academic debate surrounding China's role in Africa, which is still often framed within the broader discourse of whether China's involvement represents a new form of imperialism or a genuine effort to promote African development. While much of the existing literature tends to focus on the short-term benefits of China's engagement in Africa, this study will explore the long-term economic implications and consider whether these investments truly promote economic independence or merely reinforce dependency.

2. Review of Literature

This section examines the existing literature on China's engagement with Africa, focusing on the economic and developmental impact of its investments, particularly in the case of Cameroon. The review includes studies that highlight both the positive aspects and the critical perspectives on China's role in the African continent. By considering the various angles of this relationship, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implications of China's strategic engagement in Cameroon.

2.1. Positive Aspects of China's Engagement in Africa

China's economic engagement in Africa has often been framed in a positive light, with many scholars emphasizing the benefits of its investments in infrastructure, energy, and trade. These investments are seen as a crucial means to address Africa's longstanding developmental challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, energy deficits, and poor connectivity. Brautigam (2009) argues that China's role in Africa is primarily that of a developmental partner, offering much-needed infrastructure financing, technical expertise, and investment in key sectors like energy and transportation. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to improve connectivity across Asia, Africa, and Europe, is considered a critical element of China's strategy, with African countries benefiting from improved transport networks, new roads, and enhanced energy supply. In Cameroon, Chinese investments have been particularly significant in infrastructure development. Wang and Liu (2020) note that, China's investments have led to substantial improvements in the country's transportation networks, including road construction, rail systems, and port development. These infrastructure projects are seen as pivotal in supporting Cameroon's economic growth by facilitating trade and enhancing access to markets both within and outside the continent. Similarly, Dzekashu and Anyu (2020) highlight that Chinese investments in the energy sector, such as the construction of hydroelectric dams and energy infrastructure, have helped alleviate the country's energy shortages, which have long hampered its industrialization and economic development. Shinn and Eisenman (2012) emphasized the positive role of China in facilitating trade between African countries and the rest of the world. China's growing demand for African raw materials has led to a significant increase in trade between the two regions, with African countries benefiting from a steady market for their natural resources. In Cameroon, the extraction of natural resources such as oil, timber, and minerals has been central to China's economic engagement, and these sectors have experienced growth due to China's demand for raw materials.

2.2. Critical Perspectives on China's Engagement in Africa

While much of the literature emphasizes the positive outcomes of China's investments, there is a growing body of research that raises concerns about the long-term implications of these engagements for African nations, including Cameroon. Critical scholars argue that China's involvement in Africa may replicate, rather than break, historical patterns of economic dependency. According to Dependency Theory, the global economic system has long structured peripheral nations such as those in Africa into a position of dependence on core nations, restricting their ability to control their economic destinies (Dos Santos, 1970). Many critics suggest that China's economic activities in Africa, while providing essential infrastructure and capital, may reinforce the existing dependency structures rather than help African nations achieve true economic independence. Brautigam (2009) argues that China's investments in Africa are often framed as mutual partnerships but are, in reality, highly asymmetrical, with China securing substantial economic and strategic advantages. In Cameroon, the infrastructure projects funded by China are often backed by loans that are repayable with natural resources or future revenue, which raises concerns about the long-term financial stability of the country. These loans often place the country in a position where it is required to repay debts through resources that it could otherwise use for its own development, potentially leading to a cycle of debt dependency (Brautigam, 2009). Furthermore, critics argue that China's involvement in resource extraction in countries like Cameroon risks reinforcing the export of raw materials, hindering the diversification of local economies and the development of value-added industries (Kaplinsky, 2011). Some scholars also point to the dominance of Chinese companies and expertise in key sectors, which limits the capacity of local industries to develop. Dzekashu and Anyu (2020) argue that while China's investments have created jobs and boosted economic activity, many of these jobs are in sectors that rely on Chinese expertise and capital, leaving little room for the development of indigenous industries. In the case of Cameroon, much of the work on large infrastructure projects is carried out by Chinese firms, using Chinese labor and technology, which limits the potential for local skill development and technology transfer (Alden, 2007). This dynamic has led some scholars to question whether these engagements are truly fostering sustainable, self-reliant growth or simply reinforcing Cameroon's role as a provider of raw materials and cheap labor in a global supply chain controlled by external actors.

2.3. The Debate on Neocolonialism and New Imperialism

The growing body of literature on China's role in Africa also raises questions about whether China's economic presence is a form of neocolonialism or new imperialism. While China positions itself as a partner in Africa's development, some scholars argue that its engagement mirrors the exploitative relationships that existed during the colonial period, albeit with different actors. According to Alden (2007), the dependence on China for loans, technology, and infrastructure creates a scenario in which African nations are economically beholden to a foreign power that controls key sectors of their economy. This situation is reminiscent of the colonial past, where African countries were economically dependent on European powers for infrastructure, trade, and resource extraction. However, not all scholars agree with this characterization. Shinn and Eisenman (2012) argue that China's engagement offers African countries a viable alternative to traditional Western sources of aid and investment, and that its approach is less likely to impose political conditions on recipient countries. They suggest that China's willingness to invest in countries that have been marginalized by Western powers offers Africa the opportunity to engage with a rising global power that is interested in mutual economic cooperation. Some scholars argue that China's investments provide the necessary capital and infrastructure to help African countries move toward industrialization and reduce their dependence on foreign aid (Wang & Liu, 2020).

The literature on China's engagement in Africa, particularly in Cameroon, presents a complex picture of both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, Chinese investments have contributed significantly to the country's infrastructure development, trade expansion, and energy production, which are critical for long-term economic growth. On the other hand, these investments may reinforce patterns of economic dependency that limit the ability of Cameroon to exercise true economic sovereignty. The debate over whether China's involvement represents a form of neocolonialism or a genuine partnership for development remains unresolved, with scholars emphasizing different facets of the relationship. The existing literature generally overlooks the long-term consequences of China's involvement in Africa, especially in terms of the growing dependency on Chinese capital and expertise. This gap in the literature underscores the need for more in-depth, critical analysis of China's engagement in Cameroon, as this study seeks to provide. By applying Dependency Theory and focusing on the nuances of China's investments, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about the nature of China's role in Africa and its implications for the economic independence of countries like Cameroon.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Dependency Theory ofChina-Africa Engagement

Dependency Theory remains the central conceptual lens of this study. It argues that the global capitalist system is inherently unequal, with wealth flowing from peripheral nations (such as Cameroon) to core countries (developed nations), creating a cycle of economic dependence. This dependency manifests through mechanisms of resource extraction, labor exploitation, and the unequal flow of surplus from the periphery to the core, thereby preventing peripheral nations from achieving economic autonomy and sustainable development (Frank, 1967; Prebisch, 1950). At the heart of Dependency Theory is the argument that the economic development of core countries is intrinsically linked to the underdevelopment of peripheral nations. According to Frank (1967), the prosperity of core nations depends on the exploitation of peripheral nations, which remain economically dependent on the core for capital, technology, and markets. In this system, despite their wealth in natural resources, peripheral nations are subordinated by an economic system structured to benefit core nations, leaving them unable to pursue independent paths of industrialization and diversification. This framework is crucial for analyzing the relationship between China and Cameroon. As a peripheral nation in the global economic system, Cameroon remains economically dependent on external actors, particularly China, which has become a dominant investor in the country. By focusing on large-scale infrastructure projects, foreign direct investment (FDI), and resource extraction, China's investments might offer a critical opportunity for economic growth in Cameroon. However, these investments may also deepen Cameroon's dependence on China, rather than fostering true economic sovereignty.

3.2. Dependency Theory and the Modern Dynamics of China-Africa Relations

While Dependency Theory was originally used to critique the relationship between peripheral nations and Western powers, the rise of China as a global economic actor invites a reexamination of this framework. Scholars debate whether China's involvement in Africa represents a break from traditional neocolonial patterns or whether it constitutes a new form of economic dependency (Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo, 2019; Waqar, 2021). Recent studies suggest that Chinese FDI in Africa replicates many of the structural features identified in classical Dependency Theory. For example, Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) assert that Chinese investments, particularly in resource extraction and infrastructure, exhibit patterns of unequal exchange that benefit China's economic interests at the expense of African sovereignty. These investments are typically geared toward securing access to natural resources, which continue to be exported to China, rather than fostering the kind of industrial diversification needed for African economies to break free from the dependency cycle. Ferdinand (2018) notes that, despite China's rhetoric of mutual benefit, its investments often prioritize China's strategic and economic interests, leaving African nations vulnerable to debt traps and continued reliance on raw material exports. Recent research also shows that Chinese investments, although they may increase GDP in African countries, often reinforce a model of economic dependence. A study by Chadwick et al. (2022) finds that Chinese investments in sectors like oil and mining often extract resources without significant reinvestment into local industries or human capital development. This pattern aligns with Dependency Theory, which highlights the perpetuation of dependency as capital and wealth flows outward, rather than fostering sustainable internal growth (Frank, 1967).

3.3. Structural Constraints on African Economic Autonomy

Dependency Theory not only emphasizes external exploitation but also identifies internal structural constraints that limit peripheral nations' capacity for economic independence. In Cameroon and some other African nations, these constraints often manifest through weak institutions, a reliance on resource-based economies, and governance challenges. Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) emphasize that without strong governance structures and economic diversification, Cameroon remain vulnerable to the resource trap, a condition in which dependence on natural resources restricts their ability to move up the value chain or build industries. Recent literature continues to demonstrate how governance quality impacts the outcomes of Chinese investments. Tende and Fogwe (2018) argue that where institutions are weak, Chinese investment tends to exacerbate rather than alleviate dependency, often reinforcing the economic structures inherited from colonialism. The absence of adequate regulatory frameworks and capacity for oversight means that Chinese companies often extract resources with minimal reinvestment into local development, exacerbating inequalities and limiting sustainable growth. In Cameroon, this dynamic perpetuates the cycle of dependence, wherein the benefits of investment are not reinvested in ways that contribute to long-term economic diversification. A recent study by Johnson et al. (2023) finds that governance structures in countries receiving large amounts of Chinese FDI, such as Cameroon, often prioritize short-term economic gains, such as infrastructure improvement, rather than structural reforms that would lead to industrial diversification. This focus on short-term growth without accompanying institutional changes perpetuates the peripheral status of these countries in the global economy.

3.4. China's Role in Perpetuating Dependency

The role of China in Africa is often framed within the debate about whether China's growing influence represents a form of neocolonialism or a new model of cooperation. Nkrumah (1965) conceptualized neocolonialism as the continuation of economic dominance over African nations even after formal decolonization, where external powers maintain control through economic influence rather than direct political rule. While China positions itself as a partner in African development, some scholars argue that its involvement mirrors the exploitative dynamics of colonialism (Brautigam, 2009; Alden, 2007). Ferdinand (2018) and Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) both highlight how China's approach to economic engagement in Africa is characterized by resource-backed loans and infrastructure projects that ensure long-term dependency.

Chinese investments often come with the condition that resources, such as oil and minerals, be used to repay debts, creating a new form of economic control that restricts Africa's economic sovereignty. This mirrors the colonial structure, where African economies were designed to serve the interests of colonial powers, making it difficult for these countries to break free from dependency. In the case of Cameroon, while China's investments improve infrastructure, they also contribute to a new kind of neocolonial relationship, where Cameroon's future economic growth remains tethered to China's interests (Tende and Fogwe, 2018). This form of investment risks maintaining Cameroon's position in the global economic system as a resource exporter rather than a fully integrated industrialized nation.

3.5. Cameroon's Economic Structure

To understand how China's investments may reinforce dependency in Cameroon, Path Dependency Theory offers a useful extension of Dependency Theory. Path dependency suggests that the decisions and institutions set in place early in a country's development process create structural constraints that limit future policy choices (Bennett & Checkel, 2014). Cameroon's colonial history, with its focus on resource extraction and centralized governance, has created a legacy that continues to shape its post-colonial economic and political decisions. Joseph (1986) and Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo (2019) argue that Cameroon's governance structures, which prioritize the centralization of power and the interests of political elites, align with the resource-extraction model established during colonial times. This path dependency makes it difficult for the country to diversify its economy or invest in industrialization, as the economic system remains geared toward exploiting and exporting natural resources. Chinese investments in infrastructure and resource extraction further reinforce this economic structure, leaving little room for the kinds of systemic changes necessary for true economic independence. Dependency Theory offers a lens through which to evaluate China's engagement with Cameroon. While Chinese investments have contributed to infrastructure development and regional integration, they also risk perpetuating a form of economic dependency that hinders Cameroon's ability to achieve economic sovereignty. The resource-backed loans, emphasis on infrastructure, and continued reliance on resource extraction reinforce the peripheral status of Cameroon within the global capitalist system. By applying Dependency Theory to Chinese investment patterns, this study will critically examine whether these engagements truly foster economic independence or merely deepen Cameroon's dependence on China, ultimately reproducing the same dynamics of exploitation and unequal exchange that have historically shaped relationships between the global core and periphery.

4. China's Engagement in Cameroon: A Roadmap to Economic Independence or a New Form of Dependency?

China's economic footprint in Cameroon has grown significantly in recent years, with Chinese investments spanning across various sectors, particularly infrastructure development, energy production, and natural resource extraction. This engagement has been driven by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global development strategy launched in 2013 to enhance connectivity and cooperation between Asia, Europe, and Africa. As part of this initiative, Cameroon has emerged as a key partner, benefiting from a wide array of infrastructure projects that aim to modernize the country's transport networks, energy infrastructure, and industrial capacities. This section explores the nature of China's involvement in Cameroon and critically examines whether these investments represent a pathway to economic independence or a new form of dependency.

4.1. China's Expanding Footprint in Cameroon

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China into Cameroon has been primarily focused on large-scale infrastructure projects. Chinese companies have financed and built key infrastructure and numerous roads and railways. These investments are vital for Cameroon, a country that has long struggled with inadequate infrastructure, energy shortages, and transportation bottlenecks that hinder its economic growth (Brautigam, 2009). According to Ferdinand (2018), Chinese investments have provided a much-needed injection of capital into Cameroon's underdeveloped infrastructure, facilitating trade, regional integration, and access to energy. The infrastructure improvements have the potential to enhance Cameroon's economic growth by boosting its trade capacity and improving access to regional markets. However, while the Belt and Road Initiative has positioned China as a partner in development, these investments come with certain risks, particularly regarding debt dependency and resource extraction.

China's engagement in Cameroon is often financed through loans, many of which are backed by future resource extraction, creating a scenario in which Cameroon is required to repay its debt by offering access to its natural resources, including timber, minerals, and oil. Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) argue that this debt model mirrors the patterns of economic dependency seen in Africa during the colonial era, where resource-rich countries were subjected to long-term economic subjugation by external powers. The reliance on Chinese loans, often structured around resource-backed agreements, raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of Cameroon's economic growth and its capacity to reduce dependency on foreign capital.

Brautigam (2009) highlights the risks of neocolonial exploitation in the context of China's economic engagement in Africa. While China presents itself as a partner in Africa's development, critics argue that its investments often prioritize China's strategic and economic interests rather than those of the host countries. This has led some scholars to suggest that China's role in Africa, particularly through the BRI, constitutes a new form of economic imperialism, where African countries are made to depend on Chinese capital and expertise. Waqar (2021) suggest that China's growing influence in Africa could lead to a form of neocolonialism, in which African nations like Cameroon remain economically subordinate to China, despite the superficial appearance of mutual benefit. It is essential to assess whether China's economic presence in Cameroon will contribute to the country's economic independence or deepen its reliance on China. Tende and Fogwe (2018) argue that while the infrastructure projects financed by China will enhance Cameroon's economic capabilities in the short term, the long-term implications of this engagement remain uncertain. If Cameroon continues to rely on foreign loans and resource extraction to finance its development, the country may become locked into a cycle of debt dependency, which could limit its ability to pursue independent economic policies or diversify its economy.

Despite these challenges, the infrastructure development facilitated by Chinese investments could provide a foundation for Cameroon to achieve sustainable economic growth if accompanied by sound economic policies and strategic investments in local industries. Ferdinand (2018) suggests that the key to ensuring that China's engagement leads to economic autonomy rather than dependency lies in the ability of Cameroon's government to effectively manage these investments and leverage them to support long-term industrialization and human capital development. China's expanding footprint in Cameroon, through the Belt and Road Initiative and other forms of investment, represents a complex and dual-edged opportunity for the country. On one hand, the infrastructure projects are crucial for addressing Cameroon's long-standing development challenges. On the other hand, the risks associated with debt dependency and resource extraction raise critical questions about the sustainability of this engagement and the potential for Cameroon to achieve true economic independence. To avoid reinforcing a new form of economic dependency, Cameroon must ensure that Chinese investments are strategically managed to benefit its long-term development goals, particularly in terms of economic diversification and industrial growth.

4.2. Chinese Investments in Infrastructure and Energy

China's engagement in Cameroon's infrastructure development, particularly in the energy, transportation, and telecommunications sectors, has become a critical component of the country's economic transformation. Major Chinese-funded projects, such as road construction, hydroelectric plants, and port development, are designed to address Cameroon's infrastructure deficits, improve regional connectivity, and enhance energy production. For instance, the Memve'ele Hydroelectric Power Station, a flagship Chinese project, was constructed to address Cameroon's severe electricity shortages and foster economic growth by providing a more reliable and consistent energy supply (Brautigam, 2009). Chinese-funded road networks, including highways connecting Cameroon to neighboring countries, are intended to improve trade routes and regional integration, which are essential for the country's long-term economic growth (Ferdinand, 2018). While these infrastructure investments are crucial for Cameroon's economic development, Dependency Theory provides a critical lens through which to examine the sustainability of these projects. According to Ferdinand (2018), many of these Chinese investments in infrastructure are financed through resource-backed loans. For instance, the construction of the Memve'ele Dam was funded through loans that are secured by Cameroon's natural resources, specifically its energy generation capacity and potential energy exports. This model of debt financing, while providing the country with much-needed infrastructure, raises significant concerns regarding debt dependency. The use of natural resources as collateral for loans risks entrenching Cameroon's dependency on China, as the country's future economic growth becomes tied to the export of raw materials rather than the development of sustainable, value-added industries.

This situation aligns with Dependency Theory, which argues that foreign investments in resource-rich countries often reinforce the existing extractive economic structure rather than promoting diversification and industrialization. Waqar (2021) points that these types of foreign investments tend to maintain the export-oriented model of peripheral countries, leaving them reliant on the export of natural resources while failing to develop the necessary infrastructure for industrialization. While the construction of infrastructure, such as roads and energy plants, certainly addresses immediate developmental challenges, these projects often lack the mechanisms to stimulate local industries or value-added sectors. Instead, they primarily focus on improving the infrastructure required for extracting and transporting raw materials, thereby reinforcing Cameroon's position as a supplier of raw resources rather than as a player in global manufacturing or industrial markets (Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo, 2019). The lack of emphasis on local industry and the focus on improving extraction capabilities further compounds Cameroon's dependency. Ferdinand (2018) notes that while Chinese investments in infrastructure can boost the country's GDP in the short term, they do little to challenge the broader structures of global capitalism that continue to marginalize peripheral nations in the global economic system. This is particularly evident in sectors such as energy production, where the benefits of increased energy generation may be outweighed by the need to export this energy to repay Chinese loans, rather than using it to fuel local industrial growth. In this way, the investments reinforce the unequal exchange relationships that characterize dependency, where the peripheral country remains subservient to the core nations in terms of economic decision-making and resource allocation (Frank, 1967).

The debt dependency associated with these infrastructure projects could place future generations of Cameroonians under a heavy burden of repayment, with limited benefits in terms of long-term industrial development. Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) highlight how debt-financed infrastructure projects often lock countries into a cycle of borrowing and repayment, which may hinder their ability to invest in local entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and economic diversification. While the infrastructure itself may bring short-term economic benefits, the structure of the loans could perpetuate Cameroon's reliance on external financing and China's strategic influence over its economic policies. While China's investments in Cameroon's infrastructure including energy generation have undeniably provided much-needed improvements, the risks associated with debt dependency and the perpetuation of an extractive economic model must not be overlooked. Brautigam (2009) suggests that, while these projects bring immediate infrastructure benefits, they fail to challenge the broader economic structure that keeps peripheral nations like Cameroon dependent on the export of raw materials. Instead of fostering local industries or diversifying the economy, Chinese investments in infrastructure appear to reinforce existing patterns of dependency, raising serious questions about whether these investments will ultimately contribute to Cameroon's economic independence or merely deepen its reliance on external capital and foreign resources.

4.3. China's Economic Role in Cameroon's Natural Resource Sector

China's involvement in Cameroon's natural resource sector represents one of the most significant dimensions of its economic engagement in the country. While Chinese investments in infrastructure have garnered significant attention, the most substantial impact has arguably been in the oil, timber, and mining sectors, where Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs), including the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), have secured major stakes in Cameroon's most valuable resources. Brautigam (2009) highlights, China's engagement in these sectors is emblematic of the broader dependency dynamics that characterize much of China-Africa relations, as it perpetuates the export-driven economic structure that has historically characterized Cameroon's relationship with external powers. In the oil sector, Chinese investments have enabled CNPC and other Chinese SOEs to control a significant portion of Cameroon's oil production. Cameroon is one of Africa's smaller oil producers, but the oil sector remains central to its economy, contributing substantially to government revenue. According to Ferdinand (2018), China's presence in this sector has significantly bolstered Cameroon's oil extraction capabilities, but it also places the country in a vulnerable position, dependent on foreign capital and expertise for the extraction and processing of its oil. While the influx of Chinese capital has created job opportunities and contributed to short-term economic growth, the export-oriented nature of these investments means that the profits from oil extraction largely benefit Chinese firms and foreign investors rather than contributing to the development of domestic industries or the broader Cameroonian economy. Chinese companies have a significant role in timber extraction in Cameroon's East and South regions, which remains one of the country's most important industries. Cameroon's timber industry, largely controlled by Chinese companies, continues to be oriented toward export rather than domestic processing, which deprives the country of the opportunity to capture greater value from its natural resources (Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo, 2019).

The involvement of Chinese firms in resource extraction is a key example of Dependency Theory, which argues that economic relationships between core and peripheral countries are structured in ways that perpetuate inequality and dependency. Frank (1967) asserts that, the economic development of core nations is tied to the exploitation of peripheral nations, and China's engagement in the oil and timber sectors of Cameroon can be seen as a form of this exploitation. While Chinese investments generate short-term economic benefits such as job creation and infrastructure development, they also reinforce a structure where Cameroon remains dependent on the export of raw resources to core nations, with limited opportunities for local value creation. Ferdinand (2018) notes that these sectors are characterized by an extractive economic model, where the profits from resource extraction flow out of Cameroon, benefiting foreign investors rather than the country's domestic economy. This extractive nature of Chinese investments exacerbates Cameroon's economic vulnerability, making it highly dependent on global commodity prices and foreign capital, and limiting the country's ability to diversify its economy or build a resilient industrial base. Brautigam (2009) highlights that such investments often come with debt-backed agreements, which further deepen Cameroon's dependency on external financing and external markets. In the case of oil extraction, for example, Chinese companies often finance infrastructure projects or energy-related initiatives with loans tied to future oil revenues, creating a debt dependency that risks locking Cameroon into an endless cycle of borrowing and repayment. Similarly, timber extraction is often financed by loans tied to future exports, further entrenching Cameroon's reliance on raw material exports to meet its financial obligations. Waqar (2021) asserts, this model of debt dependency reinforces the neocolonial relationship between China and African nations, where the host countries are made to rely on external loans and capital to finance development while simultaneously sacrificing their economic autonomy and resources.

The extractive nature of Chinese investments in Cameroon's natural resource sector perpetuates the country's economic vulnerability and dependency. Ferdinand (2018) points out that although Chinese investments contribute to short-term economic growth and improve Cameroon's infrastructure, these benefits are often concentrated among Chinese firms and local elites, while the broader population remains excluded from the gains. This economic concentration means that the benefits of natural resource extraction are not widely distributed or reinvested into the domestic economy, preventing the development of local industries or the diversification of Cameroon's economy. Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) assert that, without significant structural changes or policy interventions, Cameroon remains locked in a system of dependency that stifles its long-term prospects for economic independence. While Chinese investments in Cameroon's natural resource sector, particularly in oil and timber, have contributed to short-term economic growth and infrastructure development, they also reinforce the country's dependence on foreign capital and external markets. By continuing to rely on the export of raw materials and engaging in debt-financed projects tied to resource extraction, Cameroon is at risk of perpetuating the extractive economic model that has historically undermined the development of local industries and value-added sectors. Brautigam (2009) and Ferdinand (2018) argue that the structural dynamics of Chinese investments in Cameroon's resource sectors risk entrenching the country's economic vulnerability, keeping it trapped in a cycle of dependency rather than promoting true economic independence.

4.4. Debt Dependency and the Risk of Neocolonialism

A key concern regarding China's growing economic footprint in Cameroon is the debt-financed model through which many of these investments are structured. The typical approach involves Cameroon securing loans from China to fund large-scale infrastructure projects. While these loans are often offered at favorable rates, they are usually backed by natural resource revenues (such as oil and timber exports) or government assets. According to Waqar (2021), this model, while providing Cameroon with much-needed infrastructure and economic growth opportunities, introduces significant debt vulnerabilities. The reliance on future revenues from natural resources as collateral raises the specter of debt dependency, where Cameroon could find itself in a position where it is unable to repay its loans. This financial dependency increases the likelihood that China could gain leverage over Cameroon's most valuable assets, such as oil reserves or timber, potentially leading to a loss of sovereignty over critical national resources. The growing debt dependency brings with it a deeper concern regarding neocolonialism. Kwame Nkrumah's (1965) concept of neocolonialism describes a situation in which, despite formal political independence, former colonies remain economically dependent on external powers, often through mechanisms such as debt traps and unequal trade relations. Nkrumah argued that neocolonialism sustains colonial patterns of domination, albeit in more subtle and indirect ways. China's resource-backed loans, while seemingly beneficial by financing critical infrastructure projects, may effectively act as a new form of economic control over Cameroon. Ferdinand (2018) suggests, these loans do not only finance infrastructure but also create an economic structure where Cameroon's development trajectory is dictated by the need to repay debts to China. The country's economic future becomes bound to external creditors, limiting its policy autonomy and undermining its long-term economic sovereignty.

This issue is compounded by the control that China exerts over the execution of these projects. Chinese firms, often state-owned, manage not only the financing of the projects but also their construction, operation, and the resulting profits. This is particularly evident in sectors like infrastructure and resource extraction, where Chinese companies have secured substantial stakes in oil, timber, and other extractive industries. The Memve'ele Hydroelectric Dam, for example, while providing Cameroon with much-needed electricity, was built with Chinese financing and expertise, with Chinese firms controlling key operational aspects (Brautigam, 2009). Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo (2019) argue that such arrangements perpetuate a form of economic control where the bulk of the profits from these infrastructure projects flow back to China, rather than benefiting Cameroon through the creation of local industries or job opportunities that might foster economic self-sufficiency. The focus on Chinese firms managing critical infrastructure projects and resource extraction rather than fostering local capacity or industrialization is a core issue in the debate over neocolonialism. Ferdinand (2018) notes, the pattern of financing infrastructure and resource extraction via loans from China and the consequent involvement of Chinese firms in these sectors suggests a modern form of dependency. Instead of stimulating economic diversification or enabling industrial growth, these investments continue to perpetuate Cameroon's reliance on the export of raw materials, reinforcing the structure of a resource-exporting economy. This situation mirrors the extractive relationships seen in the colonial era, where peripheral nations like Cameroon were forced to export their natural resources without developing the internal capacity to process or add value to them domestically.

The long-term consequences of these debt-financed infrastructure projects could leave Cameroon locked into a cycle of debt dependency, where the need to repay Chinese loans continues to dictate the country's development priorities. This cycle limits the government's ability to invest in critical sectors such as education, healthcare, or technological innovation, which are key to achieving true economic independence. Moreover, the model of resource-backed loans raises questions about whether these projects are truly empowering Cameroon, or if they are simply reinforcing its dependence on foreign capital, in this case, China. Waqar (2021) argues, while Chinese investments appear to provide short-term economic growth, they risk deepening Cameroon's long-term vulnerability, perpetuating the neocolonial dependency dynamics that Nkrumah (1965) warned about. China's debt-financed investments in Cameroon's infrastructure and natural resource sectors raise significant concerns about the country's economic sovereignty. The resource-backed loan model not only exposes Cameroon to debt dependency but also reflects a more neocolonial form of economic control, where the country's future development is shaped by the financial interests of an external power, in this case, China. Despite the potential short-term benefits of infrastructure development and job creation, the long-term effect may be the continued economic dependence of Cameroon on China, reinforcing an extractive economic model rather than fostering sustainable, self-sufficient growth.

4.5. Evaluating the Economic Independence of Cameroon

China's growing economic engagement in Cameroon, particularly through its investments in infrastructure development, resource extraction, and debt financing, raises critical questions about the country's ability to achieve economic independence. While these investments bring immediate economic benefits, such as improved infrastructure and enhanced energy capacity, they do not fundamentally alter Cameroon's economic structure or address the structural issues of economic sovereignty that have persisted since the colonial era. Despite the apparent progress, these investments often reinforce the same patterns of dependency that have characterized the relationship between peripheral nations and core countries for centuries. The resource extraction model, debt dependency, and unequal economic relationships tied to these Chinese investments reflect a continuation of the dependency dynamics described by Dependency Theory (Frank, 1967). One of the key aspects of China's economic dominance in Cameroon is its significant control over the country's natural resources, including oil, timber, and minerals. As Brautigam (2009) points out, China's engagement in these resource-rich sectors often leads to the exploitation of Cameroon's raw materials for export, rather than promoting the development of value-added industries within the country. Chinese companies, often state-owned enterprises (SOEs), dominate the oil and timber extraction industries, ensuring that the profits from these sectors largely benefit China, rather than the Cameroonian economy. Ferdinand (2018) argues that this export-oriented model of economic engagement traps Cameroon in a cycle of resource extraction that prevents it from diversifying its economy and pursuing industrialization, both of which are critical for achieving long-term economic sovereignty. The export of raw materials, rather than the development of local processing and manufacturing industries, means that Cameroon remains dependent on global commodity prices, which are often volatile, and continues to suffer from the challenges of economic vulnerability tied to fluctuations in the global market.

Further complicating the prospects for economic independence is the debt financing model used by China to fund its infrastructure projects in Cameroon. As Mayers and Assembe-Mvondo (2019) note, many of China's infrastructure investments are financed through loans that are secured by future resource revenues or government assets. The Memve'ele Hydroelectric Dam, for example, was funded by loans from China, with repayment tied to future hydroelectric power generation and energy exports. This debt dependency places Cameroon in a precarious position, where the country's future economic development is closely tied to its ability to repay foreign loans, often at the expense of economic autonomy. Waqar (2021) argues that this model risks creating a debt trap, where Cameroon is forced to continue borrowing to finance its development, thereby deepening its dependence on foreign capital and limiting its ability to pursue independent economic policies. Despite the short-term benefits of improved infrastructure, China's investments in Cameroon ultimately fail to address the structural inequalities that prevent the country from achieving true economic independence. Tende and Fogwe (2018) emphasize that while Chinese investments in infrastructure such as roads, energy plants, and ports improve the country's connectivity and energy capacity, these projects do little to challenge the broader economic system that keeps Cameroon tethered to foreign investments and reliant on resource extraction. Instead of fostering the local industrialization necessary for economic independence, these investments primarily serve to enhance the extractive economic model that has historically shaped Cameroon's economy. Ferdinand (2018) argues that without significant shifts in economic policy and a focus on local industrial development, Cameroon will remain trapped in a pattern of economic dependency that benefits external actors, particularly China. China's investments in Cameroon, while providing immediate benefits such as infrastructure development and energy supply, do not represent a true pathway to economic independence for the country. The export-oriented nature of China's investments, coupled with the debt financing model and resource extraction framework, ensures that Cameroon remains locked in a dependency relationship with China. Brautigam (2009) and Waqar (2021) highlight that while these investments may support short-term growth, they fail to address the broader structural challenges that prevent Cameroon from diversifying its economy or achieving sustainable economic sovereignty. Thus, instead of promoting economic independence, China's engagement with Cameroon reinforces the core-periphery dynamics that have shaped its economic history, continuing the pattern of dependency that has characterized Cameroon's interactions with external powers.

5. Discussion and Analysis

This chapter provides a critical analysis of China's engagement with Cameroon, specifically examining the extent to which Chinese investments align with the core–periphery dynamics discussed in Dependency Theory. By analyzing China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Cameroon's infrastructure, resource extraction, and energy sectors, this chapter evaluates whether these investments foster economic independence or entrench economic dependence. The analysis focuses on the impact of Chinese economic involvement in Cameroon, with a particular emphasis on how resource extraction, debt financing, and centralized governance influence the country's sovereignty and development trajectory.

5.1. Reproduction of Core–Periphery Dynamics

China's involvement in Cameroon largely mirrors the core-periphery relationship described by Dependency Theory, where Cameroon, a peripheral nation, remains dependent on China and other foreign powers for economic development. Core nations, including China, maintain control over capital, technology, and value-added processes, while the periphery (Cameroon) supplies raw materials. Despite the apparent benefits of Chinese infrastructure investments in ports, roads, and energy projects, the fundamental structure of Cameroon's economy remains focused on the export of raw resources, with minimal value-added processing. As Brautigam (2009) points out, while China's infrastructure projects help to reduce bottlenecks and improve regional connectivity, they are primarily designed to facilitate resource extraction, such as oil, timber, and minerals, which remain at the heart of Cameroon's export economy. Chinese companies, such as those involved in oil extraction and mining, often control the production and export of these resources, leaving little room for local industries or small enterprises to participate in the economic benefits. This reinforces the dependency model described in Dependency Theory, where the peripheral countries remain locked in an extractive economy, exporting raw materials to core countries (China) while receiving minimal benefits from industrial development (Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo, 2019). In this light, China's investments in Cameroon serve to reinforce, rather than break, the core-periphery dynamics that have historically defined the relationship between African nations and external economic powers. Cameroon's role as a resource provider and China's role as a technological and capital provider ensures that Cameroon remains in a dependent position within the global economy, which aligns with Frank's (1967) argument that the peripheral countries are often exploited for their natural resources, while the core countries benefit from value-added industries and technological advancements.

5.2. Debt Dependence and Vulnerability

A significant concern regarding China's engagement in Cameroon is the debt-financed model of investment. China typically funds large-scale infrastructure projects in Cameroon through loan agreements, many of which are resource-backed. This means that Cameroon agrees to repay loans using future revenues from oil exports, minerals, or other natural resources. While these loans allow Cameroon to improve its infrastructure and address developmental gaps, they also expose the country to debt vulnerability, as the loans are often not repaid by domestic revenues but by the future extraction of its resources. According to Waqar (2021), these resource-backed loans place Cameroon in a precarious economic position, particularly given the volatility of global commodity prices and the uncertainty surrounding the country's resource-based revenues. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a cornerstone of China's economic strategy, has been critiqued for creating debt traps in which countries like Cameroon may become increasingly dependent on Chinese capital and find themselves unable to meet repayment obligations, leading to economic and political leverage for China. As Ferdinand (2018) notes, the debt dependency created by resource-backed loans may have serious long-term consequences for Cameroon's economic sovereignty. This type of financing model risks reproducing a neocolonial form of economic domination, where Cameroon's ability to control its economic future is compromised by external debt obligations to China. Thus, despite the short-term gains from Chinese investments, such debt arrangements contribute to the structural dependency that Dependency Theory emphasizes, where economic autonomy is continually undermined by external financial pressures.

5.3. Institutional Continuity and Elite Capture

Cameroon's political economy remains influenced by the centralized governance structures inherited from its colonial past, particularly the French model of direct rule. As Mamdani (1996) argues, post-colonial states like Cameroon maintain centralized bureaucracies that concentrate power in the hands of a few elites. In Cameroon, this centralization has facilitated the continued dominance of local elites, who control access to foreign capital, resources, and investment opportunities. China's investments have often been channeled through centralized government agencies, bypassing local governance structures and reinforcing elite control over economic benefits. As Joseph (1986) points out, Cameroon's elite-dominated political culture has resulted in a system where economic benefits from foreign investments are captured by elites rather than distributed broadly across society. This elite capture of Chinese investments reinforces the country's unequal development and economic dependence on external powers. Although China's projects create jobs and improve infrastructure, they do little to address the structural inequalities that exist in Cameroon's economic system. This pattern of elite capture mirrors the colonial era, when local elites acted as intermediaries between the colonizers and the broader population, facilitating resource extraction while maintaining political control (Asuelime, 2017). By providing capital and infrastructure, China essentially becomes the new core power, but the local elites act as intermediaries, ensuring that the benefits of these investments do not reach the masses but remain concentrated among the political and economic elites.

5.4. Limited Economic Diversification and Industrialization

One of the most significant concerns regarding China's investments in Cameroon is the limited economic diversification that these investments promote. Despite infrastructure development and the construction of hydroelectric dams and roads, Cameroon's economic model remains heavily reliant on resource extraction and raw material exports. According to Mayers & Assembe-Mvondo (2019), China's investments in Cameroonian infrastructure often fail to address the structural barriers to industrialization and economic diversification, leaving the country's economy largely dependent on oil, timber, and mineral exports. While China's financing of infrastructure improves trade routes and energy access, these projects largely serve the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of resource extraction rather than building local manufacturing or value-added sectors. This economic structure limits the potential for industrial development and the creation of local industries capable of competing in the global market. As Ferdinand (2018) argues, without a focus on local industrialization, China's investments will likely only serve to strengthen the peripheral role of Cameroon in the global economy, ensuring that the country remains dependent on raw material exports.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This thesis critically examined China's strategic engagement with Cameroon through the lens of Dependency Theory, analyzing the economic impact of Chinese investments on the country's economic independence. The analysis revealed that, despite the immediate benefits provided by Chinese investments in sectors like infrastructure, energy, and resource extraction, these engagements reinforce Cameroon's dependency rather than promote its economic autonomy. As Dependency Theory suggests, the core-periphery relationship remains a key feature of Cameroon's interactions with China. Cameroon continues to rely on resource extraction and foreign capital to fuel its development, with little progress toward breaking free from external economic dominance. The debt-financed model of engagement, coupled with the focus on extracting natural resources, raises significant concerns about Cameroon's long-term economic independence. Chinese investments, although providing essential infrastructure and development, fail to foster true economic independence due to the conditions attached to loans, often tied to resource-backed agreements, and the lack of local value-added industries. Additionally, Cameroon's centralized governance structure, inherited from its colonial past, continues to concentrate the benefits of these foreign investments in the hands of elite groups, preventing the broader distribution of economic benefits. As such, Cameroon remains caught in a cycle of dependency, where external powers like China benefit disproportionately from its natural resources, while the country remains economically reliant on foreign capital.

Given these findings, this thesis proposes several key policy recommendations for Cameroon to better manage its economic relationship with China and enhance its economic independency.

First, Cameroon must prioritize economic diversification by focusing on developing local industries, especially in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. Building value-added industries is critical for reducing Cameroon's dependence on raw material exports and stimulating sustainable development. By diversifying its economy, Cameroon can reduce its vulnerability to fluctuations in global commodity prices and strengthen its industrial base. Second, a more sustainable debt management strategy is essential. Cameroon should ensure that resource-backed loans are used for projects that generate long-term economic returns, rather than becoming dependent on external debt for infrastructure projects. Transparency in the negotiation and execution of debt agreements with China is vital to prevent the country from falling into a debt trap. Third, decentralization of decision-making is crucial. By empowering local governments and communities, Cameroon can increase local participation in economic planning, ensuring that foreign investments benefit a broader segment of the population. This would also help address the issue of elite capture, ensuring that the benefits of foreign investments are more equitably distributed across the country. Cameroon should leverage Chinese investments for long-term industrialization, ensuring that projects align with the country's economic development goals. Rather than focusing solely on infrastructure, Chinese investments should support the country's transition into technologically advanced sectors and contribute to economic diversification. Lastly, strengthening institutional capacity is critical for managing foreign investments effectively. By focusing on improving resource management, negotiating foreign investments, and ensuring accountability in the use of public funds, Cameroon can better safeguard its sovereignty and ensure that foreign investments contribute to its long-term development goals rather than reinforcing economic dependency.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on China-Africa relations, particularly by providing a critical perspective on the long-term implications of Chinese investments in African countries like Cameroon. Through the application of Dependency Theory, the study underscores how Chinese engagement, despite offering immediate development benefits, often replicates the core-periphery dynamics that have historically characterized Africa's relationship with former colonial powers. The findings highlight the need for African countries, including Cameroon, to develop strategies that promote economic sovereignty while managing foreign investments in a way that reduces dependency. By diversifying their economies, improving governance, and ensuring that foreign investments contribute to sustainable development, African countries can break free from the patterns of dependency that have defined their economic relationships with global powers for centuries.

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