

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

Is China's Presence in Africa Ethical?

Introduction

CONTEXT-
UALIZES
the issue

In 2009, a government population survey estimated that the Chinese population in Africa was between 580,000 to 820,000 people. **Today**, that number has risen to over one million (Park, "Living in Between"). What accounts for this sudden influx of Chinese migrants? Even though China and Africa have always had close ties, in the last decade China has taken an active role in the development of African infrastructure. **On the surface** the investments of Chinese state-owned

Introduces
the ISSUE

enterprises (SOEs) in African infrastructure projects seems mutually **beneficial**,

but foreign powers such as the United States have questioned China's true motives for investing in Africa. While the arguments for or against the ethics of China's involvement are mostly economic or political in nature, there is also a

Introduces
the
PERSPECTIVE
for individual
research

cultural aspect fueling the large-scale migration of Chinese people to Africa for the purposes of labor. This increasing presence has perpetuated a growing fear of the reemergence of colonialism in Africa, this time by the Chinese. Therefore,

from a **cultural** standpoint, China's involvement in Africa **may or may not** be an ethical business venture.

DISCURSIVE
THESIS

Chinese Perspective

Chinese
perspective
(+)

From a Chinese perspective, bringing in their own labor instead of hiring local workers is not an issue of bias, but of practicality. One reason that Chinese SOEs opt to outsource Chinese laborers to work on infrastructure projects

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

CLAIM 1

involves the *language barrier* between project managers, who are typically ethnic Chinese and speak only English and Chinese, and local African workers (Corkin).

Source is RELEVANT to argument

One Angolan newspaper reported a case in which a local site worker reported a bad work environment because his Chinese overseer did not speak Portuguese, one of the most prominently spoken languages in Africa. Since site workers are not usually provided with a translator, they often misinterpret instructions, which in turn leads to frequent conflicts between workers and managers (Meyer).

EVIDENCE 1

Gives consideration to alternative Chinese perspective (-)

However, hiring Chinese labor poses its own set of problems as well. For example, in English-speaking regions of Africa, the language barrier poses a significant problem for Chinese speakers, as many find it difficult to communicate as effectively in English. According to Bridgette Liu, senior manager of a project in Angola, “it remains a challenge for them to express themselves correctly in English” because there is a “natural inclination to communicate in Mandarin and do business with other Chinese” (Liu and Stocken).

Notice how this paragraph SYNTHESIZES sources to build the argument and expose various points of view

CLAIM 2 under Chinese perspective

In addition to *language*, there is a cultural difference in terms of *work ethic*. In China, laborers are required to complete an extensive training program, while African laborers do not undergo such intensive **training**. These programs enroll over 11 million students each year and aim to teach both discipline and additional skills such as coordination and surveillance (“Vocational Education”).

EVIDENCE 2a: effectively SUMMARIZES source

EVIDENCE 2b: SYNTHESIS of sources builds argument

As a result of this particular type of training, Chinese laborers are multi-skilled and can handle all manners of tasks that would usually require several workers of varying skill-levels (Meyer). Meanwhile, on project sites that hire local labor,

EVIDENCE 2c: DEEPENS argument

Prepared by: Jill Pavich, NBCT

jill.pavich@palmbeachschools.org

Source: College Board/AP Capstone: Seminar

Boca Raton High School, PBCSD

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

absenteeism rates are “rarely less than 20%” while the rate of absenteeism for Chinese laborers is significantly lower at almost 0% (Corkin). By having Chinese-trained laborers, **it makes sense that** companies can save time, money, and resources **because** increased skill and training means less laborers required onsite, and consistent attendance leads to reliable production.

Demonstrates RELEVANCE of evidence by connecting it back to argument; ANALYZES line of reasoning

It then follows that the outsourcing of Chinese laborers to Africa is not due to bias; rather, Chinese companies see it as much more efficient to hire laborers with whom **communicating** will not prove an issue, and who are known to possess better **work ethics** as a result of cultural expectations.

Draws interim conclusion by thoughtfully CONNECTING perspectives

Local Perspective

Local perspective (-)

From a local, African perspective, several opinions exist about increased Chinese presence, but the prevailing one is that the Chinese are attempting to **colonize** Africa like other Western countries did in the 1900s. Both China and Africa have a shared history of being colonized by the West, which has led to strong anti-colonial sentiment in both countries but particularly in Africa (Meyer).

The sudden spike in the Chinese population in Africa has given ground to the **fear** that their presence is indicative of a gradual Chinese takeover in Africa, and in

CLAIM 3

some areas this fear of colonization is so pervasive that it has even led to attacks on Chinese communities such as the situations in the Congo in 2009 (Shinn).

EVIDENCE 3a

Even **Michael Sata, the president of Zambia**, has explicitly expressed his concerns about Chinese motives, saying that “the Chinese are the most unpopular

Establishes the CREDIBILITY of the source and clarifies its RELEVANCE to the argument

Where else in the essay do we see this?

Prepared by: Jill Pavich, NBCT
Source: College Board/AP Capstone: Seminar

jill.pavich@palmbeachschools.org
Boca Raton High School, PBCSD

EVIDENCE 3b SYNTHESIZES

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

people in the country” and “the Chinaman is coming just to invade and exploit Africa” (French).

Gives consideration to alternative local perspective (+)

There are some who believe that the increased Chinese population in

Africa is beneficial because of the increased *globalization* that results from the merging of Chinese and African cultures. Many Chinese choose to expatriate

CLAIM 4

themselves to Africa as laborers as a sort of stepping stone to the country – even after their contracts have expired, many Chinese establish themselves in Africa as small business owners and entrepreneurs, bringing new products and ideas into Africa that locals would not have access to otherwise (Park, “Africans Have Mixed Perceptions”). In countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, the attitude towards Chinese migrants is that of appreciation rather than resentment

EVIDENCE 4 SYNTHESIZES several sources to build support for claim

Shifts back to PREVAILING local perspective, Claim 3 (-)

(Park, “Living in Between”). **Even in these nations, however, the fear of**

colonization is eminent. For example, traders and local businesses in these nations often feel threatened and undermined, and other locals see the influx of Chinese products and ideas as creating a cultural imbalance (Manji).

While Chinese involvement in Africa has indirectly perpetuated a fearful mindset amongst local residents, it can be seen that the fear of colonization has

Draws explicit CONNECTIONS between perspectives

more to do with Africa’s past history than China’s current actions in Africa.

Locals have acknowledged the benefits of the increased Chinese presence, **from which it can be concluded that China’s level of involvement can be considered culturally acceptable and therefore ethical.** While the issue of the

DRAWS a CONCLUSION based on consideration of EVIDENCE

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

fear culture remains, China cannot be totally faulted for its emergence, though perhaps in the *future* **Chinese companies should be** more aware and mindful of it when considering courses of action in Africa.

Shifts toward a solution

Solution

The largest cultural issue for the Chinese in Africa is the fear culture, and in order to rectify the conflicts this causes, **the Chinese should focus on** courses of action that would clarify their motives for their involvement. Since locals perceive the Chinese employment process as biased and fear attempts to overtake them altogether, implementing solutions that would allow local workers more job opportunities would prove quite effective. Specifically, one way to open up equal employment opportunities could be requiring Chinese companies to provide **translators** on work sites. This would decrease the number of language related work conflicts and remove language as an important factor in hiring new laborers.

Solution logically connects to researched evidence presented earlier

Offers a SOLUTION based on solid line of reasoning from essay's research findings

While this solution offers the benefit of increasing work for local residents and even multi-lingual locals, it also presents its own set of challenges; it would increase labor costs for Chinese SOEs and therefore is not cost-effective. Moreover, it is **not the end-all solution** in mitigating the fear culture since it is not the only factor that perpetuates local perceptions of bias against Africans. Thus, solutions implemented in the future should seek to benefit both Chinese companies and local Africans in order for the ethical nature of China's involvement to be seen clearly by both local and international parties.

Acknowledges limits to and CONSEQUENCES of proposed solution

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

Works Cited

- Corkin, Lucy, Christopher Burke, and Martyn Davies. China's Role in the Development of Africa's Infrastructure. Working paper. School of Advanced International Studies, 2008. Web. 21 Jan. 2013.
- French, Howard W. "In Africa, an Election Reveals Skepticism of Chinese Involvement." *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic Monthly Group, 29 Sept. 2011. Web. 19 Jan. 2013.
- Liu, Bridgette, and Richard Stocken. "Why Chinese Companies Are Successful in Africa." Editorial. AllAfrica. AllAfrica, 4 Jan. 2012. Web. 21 Jan. 2013.
- Manji, Firoze, and Stephen Chan. "Is China Good for Africa?" Editorial. *New Internationalist Magazine*. New Internationalist, Oct. 2012. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.
- Meyer, Riaan, Abiodun Alao, Chris Aiden, and Ana Cristina Alves. Chinese Financial Institutions in Africa. Working paper no. 103. South African Institute of International Affairs, Nov. 2011. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.
- Park, Yoon Jung, Dr. "Africans Have Mixed Perceptions of Chinese Migrants, Finds Study." Interview by Sen Lam. Radio Australia. ABC. ABC, 14 Aug. 2012. Radio. Transcript.

Team Project: Sample Essay INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

--- "Living in Between: The Chinese in South Africa." Migration Information.

Migration Policy Institute, Jan. 2012. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.

Shinn, David, and Joshua Eisenman. "China and Africa: A Century of

Engagement." Center for Strategic and International Studies. CSIS. 2012.

Web. 21 Jan. 2013.

"Vocational Education Matches Youth with Jobs and Helps Sustain Growth." The

World Bank. The World Bank Group, 17 Feb. 2012. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

Team Reflection

Research and Personal Perspective

I was really excited to base my project on the topic of ethical foreign policies. My previous experiences in activities such as Model United Nations have encouraged me to go through a similar process of deconstructing public information on foreign policies and countries' past actions in order to reconstruct opinions on new situations, and I thought that this would really prove advantageous in this project. While my background in MUN provided an interesting pretext for the project I found that the skills I developed from it were quite different from what was needed to complete the project. The most notable difference was that the report required a certain level of objectivity while the reconstruction required for MUN is much more biased. Through this project, I've developed a new understanding of international relations but especially of the relationship between

China and Africa. **In the past I've only ever really considered the economic or political aspects of the topic, but for this individual report I focused on the cultural lens instead.** I was initially a little upset that this was the lens my group assigned me because I felt that this was the most difficult lens to find information

on and seem unbiased with, because **the research that's required for it is really based more on opinion rather than facts and data** which is what I've been used to in the past. In the end, however, I'm glad that I got to focus on a more difficult aspect because I was able to develop my deconstruction and reconstruction skills

**INITIAL
VIEW of the
problem**

**DISCOVERIES
made during
the research
process**

Team Project: Sample Essay

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

*Revisions to
THINKING
about the
topic;
personal
approach to
research
process*

more since **I had to take more information from each source as well as incorporate more of my own personal interpretation of this information to support my point**, since I sometimes came across information that I found a bit confusing. Since we also had to come up with a solution, we had to focus not only on what was happening, but why, and **I feel like this was an interesting new skill that we had to develop** through this project even though I felt like I wouldn't be able to come up with a feasible solution at first. I think that this project also allowed me to explore the far-reaching consequences of countries' actions, especially when several parties are involved. With a situation like China's involvement in Africa's infrastructure development, it would be expected that the main consequences would be political and economic in nature, but this project helped me see that there are serious implications for culture as well. **I feel like my thinking has also changed in that** I now have a bit of a tighter grasp on China and Africa's foreign policies, which would prove helpful in the future due to the prominence of both regions with regards to the rest of the world.

*DISCOVERIES
made during
the research
process*

*Revision in
thinking*

Group Dynamics

I can honestly say that I think the group I worked with for this project is one of the best groups I've ever worked with. In the past I've often been almost forced into the role of group leader, which entails having to be really strict with my group members about deadlines and doing their work properly, and this often makes me seem bossy and controlling. This time, however, I feel like I got to take

*PERSONAL
VIEWS about
SOLVING the
problem*

Team Project: Sample Essay INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH REPORT (IRR)

a break from that. We were all equals in the group – not one of us stood out as a leader because we all made sure to pull our own weight in the group. It was helpful that we all had quite similar work habits and methods of research, because it meant that we were able to collaborate fairly equally and there were no conflicts that arose from an unequal work distribution. At first we all had some concerns because we were unsure if **our preexisting friendship** would get in the way of our group. While it sometimes proved distracting because we would want to talk to each other about different things when we were meant to be working, in the end we were always able to meet the deadlines and goals that we set for ourselves and I think our friendship actually worked to our advantage. We were very honest with each other about how we were feeling about the project, which meant that we were able to avoid any drama in our group so we knew we didn't have to worry about underlying tensions or fears getting in the way of our productivity. Our friendship also made communicating really simple because we were already used to talking with each other often and checking in, and we already knew each other's schedules so collaborating was easy to arrange.

**PERSONAL
VIEWS about
SOLVING the
problem**

(Individual Research = 1,099 words)

(Reflection = 774 words)

Though it addresses group dynamic, the reflection focuses PRIMARILY on the student's INDIVIDUAL research process/experience; it provides insightful explanation of student approach to research and describes personal process of rethinking the issue, revising the writing, and arriving at new discoveries through engagement in the learning process.