

Behind the Official Handshake: the bureaucratic politics of Africa-China negotiations:

A comparative analysis of Benin and Togo

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GIMPA-University of Oxford Public Finance and Public Management conference, October 2018

Negotiation does not occur between co-equal parties (...) rather it engages heterogeneous groups with different assets, entitlements and legitimacy and styles of expression (Leach et al. 1999)

Resources (bureaucratic capacities, organizational skills, alliances, access to state resources, technical expertise) are distributed/mobilized unequally among competing actors groups (Hagmann, Péclard, 2010)

ASYMETRIC
NEGOTIATIONS

Multiple power poles exist within, at the interface and outside the bureaucratic apparatus and are involved in 'doing the state' both in co-operation and in competition with the state (Bierschenk, de Sardan, 1997)

Actors:

Need to identify the specific sets of state officials located in specific parts of the state system, of specific entities in ministries (Jessop 1990)

Resources/Repertoires of action:

Since agents are agents are differentially located in the social structures, their exercise of agency is disparate” (Wight 2004)

UNPACKING AND
LOCATING
(AFRICAN) AGENCY

Context:

Agents’ social action can only be captured in its full complexity if analytically situated within the flow of time (past, present, and future) (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Wight 1999).

Case studies rationale



- China as n°1 trade/bilateral DC partners (loans)
- China outpaced France as Benin's largest trade partner in 2004
- Infrastructure is a strategic priority in Benin's NDP (SCRIP)
- China is the n°1 financial provider for infrastructure finance development
- Democracy

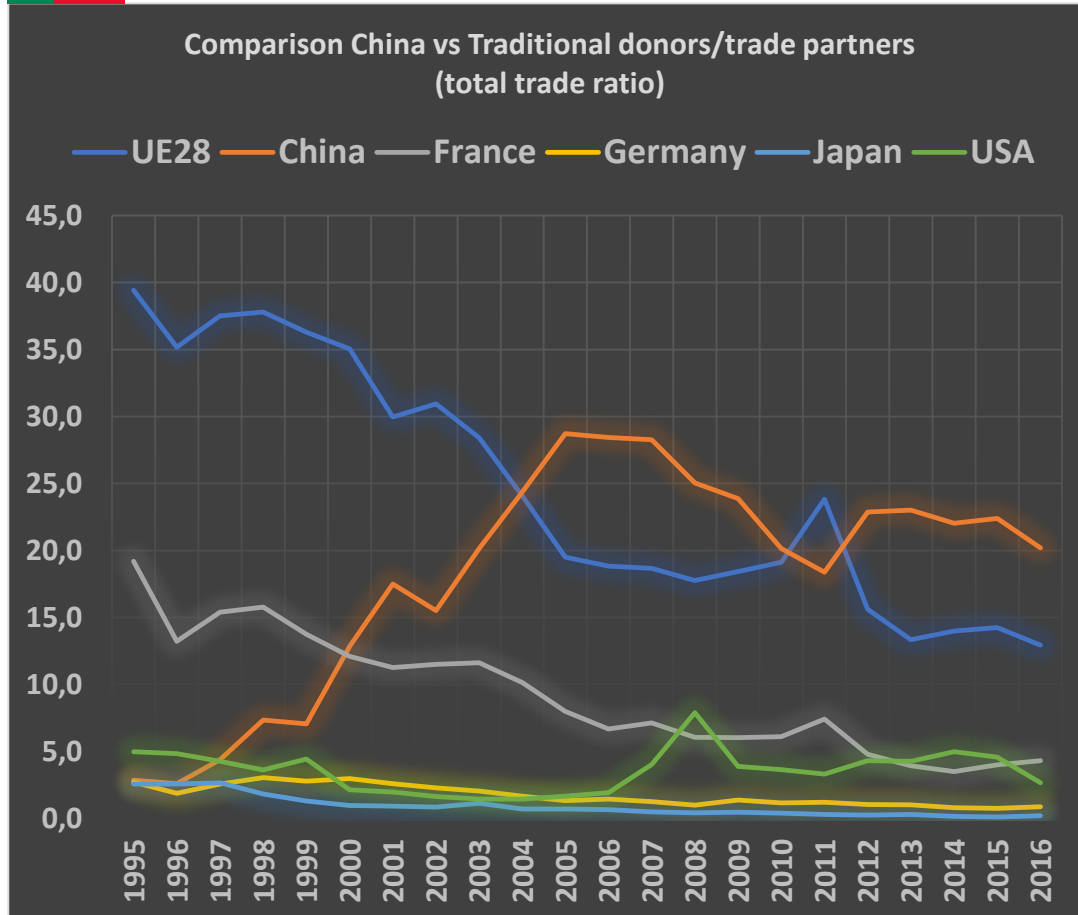


- China as n°1 trade /bilateral DC partner (loans) (21% of total)
- China outpaced France as Togo's largest trade partner in 2003
- Infrastructure is a strategic priority in Togo's NDP (SCAPE)
- China is the n°1 financial provider for infrastructure finance development
- Autocracy

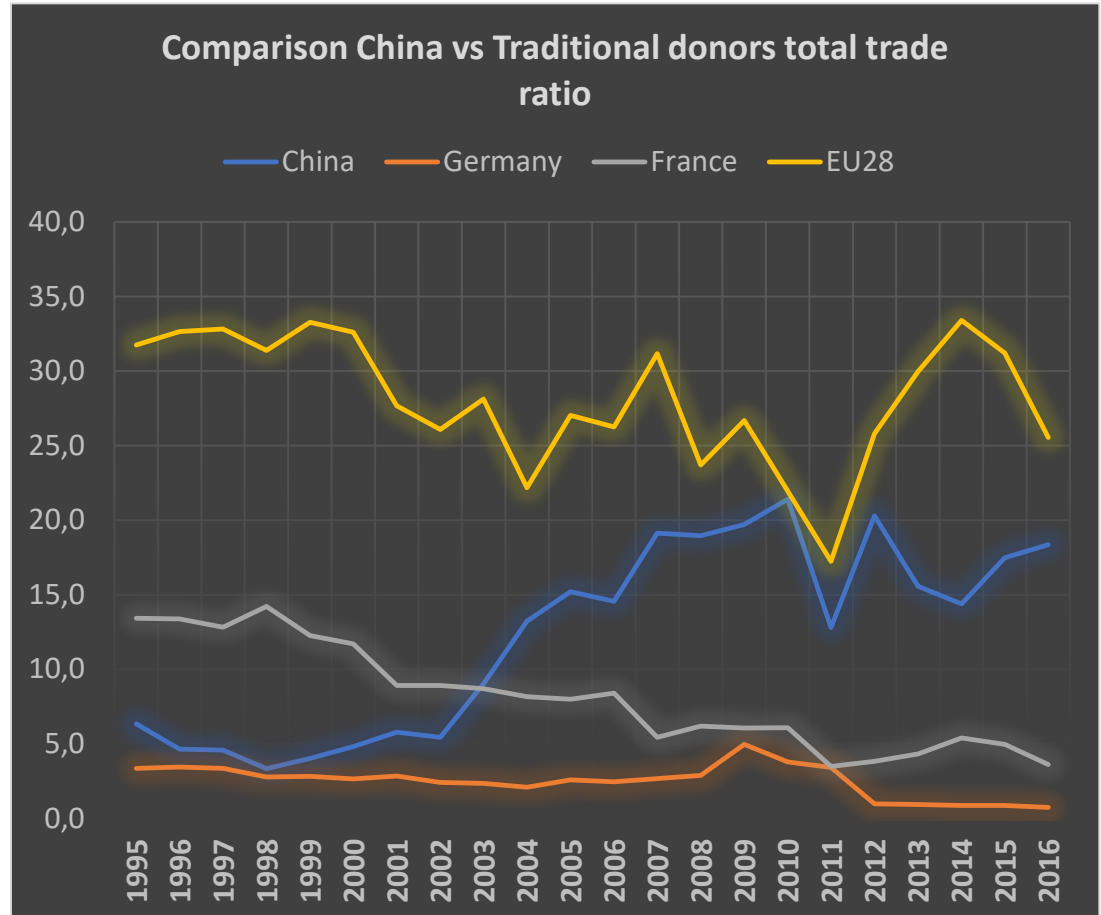


China as n°1 trade partner

Benin

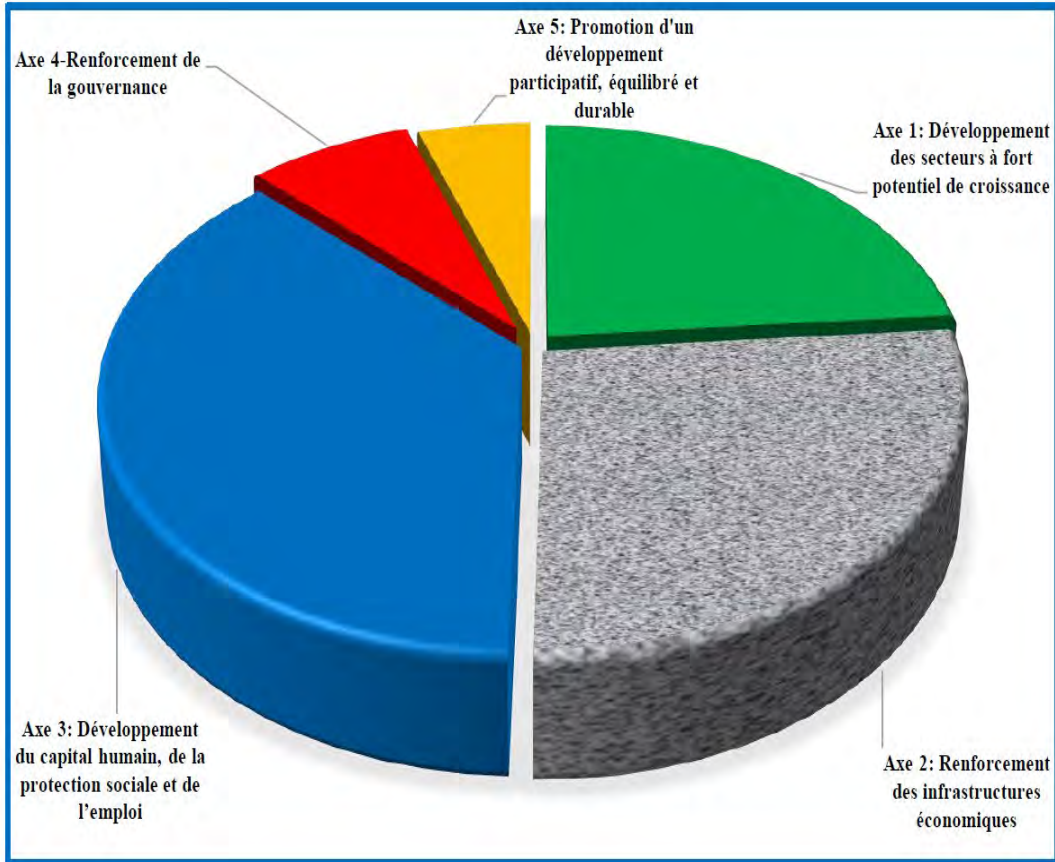


Togo

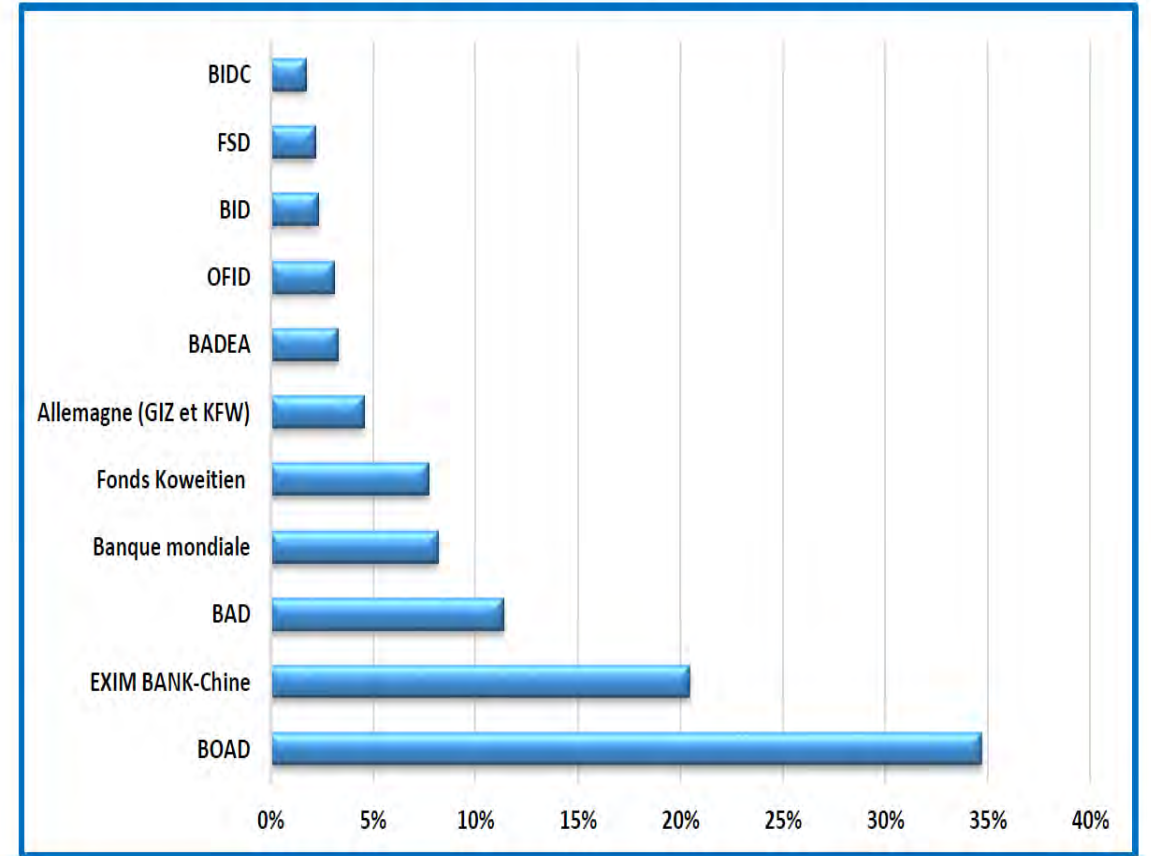




Togo



Graphique 16: Répartition de l'APD par principaux donateurs de l'axe 2



Source : Base de données de l'APD 2016, DCB/MPD

Research questions

- Trace the decisional and negotiation process:

- ❖ Who are the specific agents beyond the presidential cabinet at work and in which context do they interact ?
- ❖ How do African state actors negotiate with China ?

- Resources/ Repertoires of action/agency + outcomes:

- ❖ What is their room for manoeuvre ?
- ❖ To what extent/Under what conditions do they influence the negotiation outcomes/ exercise agency / get better terms / exert increasing ownership over the agenda?

Methodology

Materials

- Access to negotiation materials: draft terms of reference, draft / final contracts (>\$100 m)

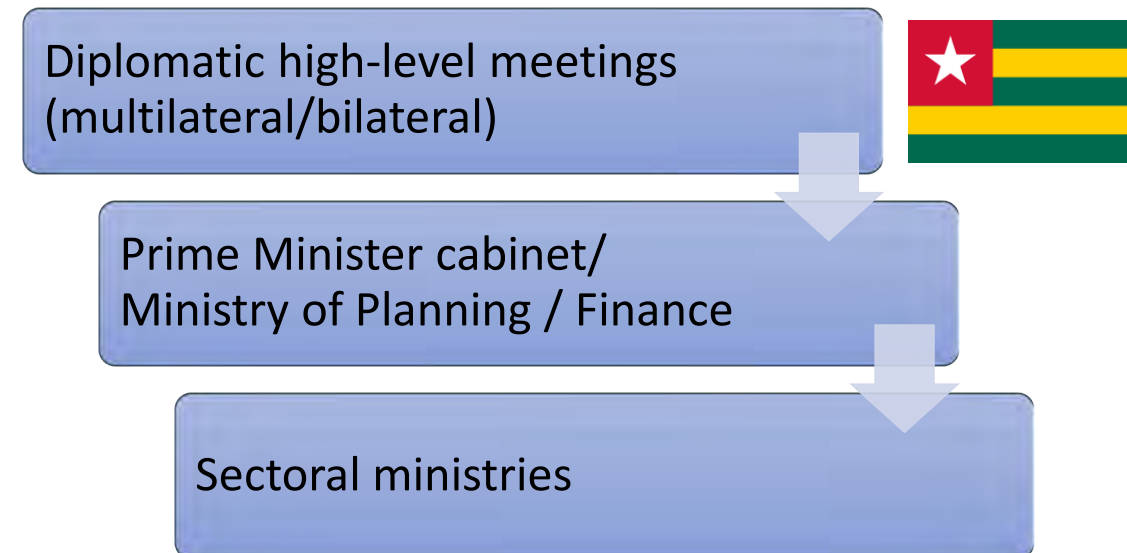
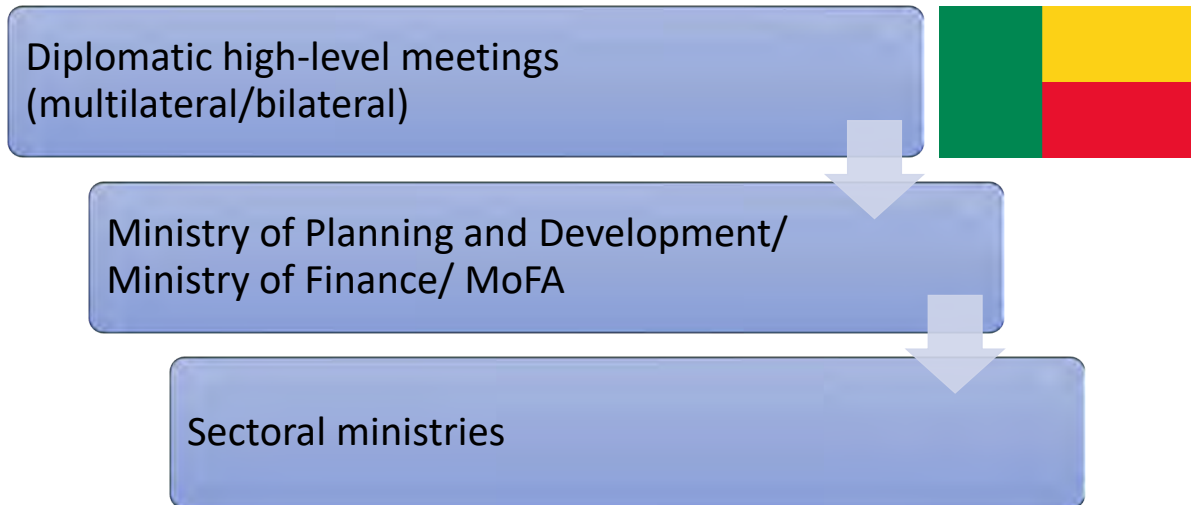
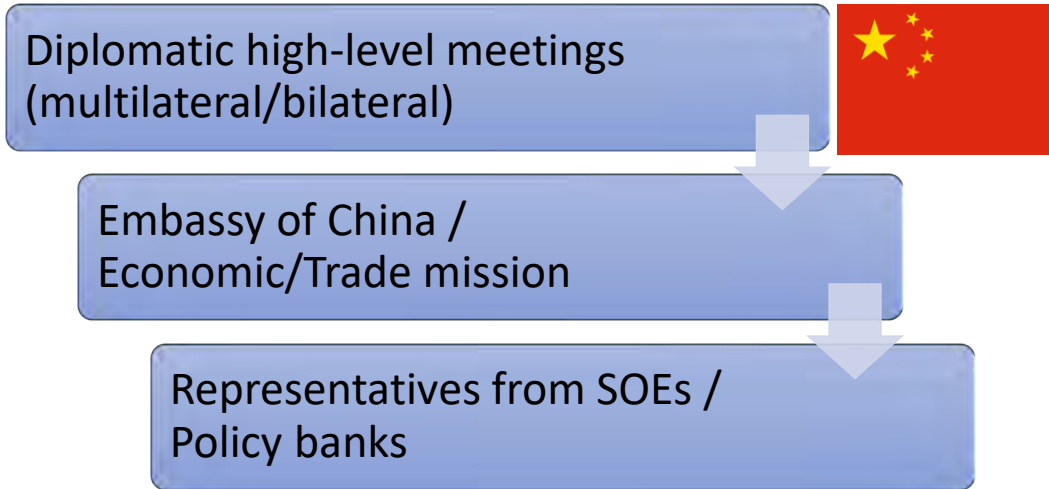
Interviews

- 35+ semi-structured interviews with state actors involved in the negotiation (i.e. especially low-, middle , -higher echelon-ranking civil servants), civil society actors, businessmen, former ministers

Data

- Largely Qualitative
- Quantitative (statistics, trade/aid/development cooperation charts)

Negotiation : Actors and Processes / State and Corporate objectives



Argument



Explanatory Variable 1

- Structural asymmetries:

The bureaucratic capacities/ internal coordination affects the outcome of the negotiation in Afr. governments advantage/disadvantage



Explanatory Variable 2

- Intervention of the executive branch (i.e. the presidency)

Negative impact on the variation of the outcome



Explanatory Variable 3

- The nature of the political regime/system of governance

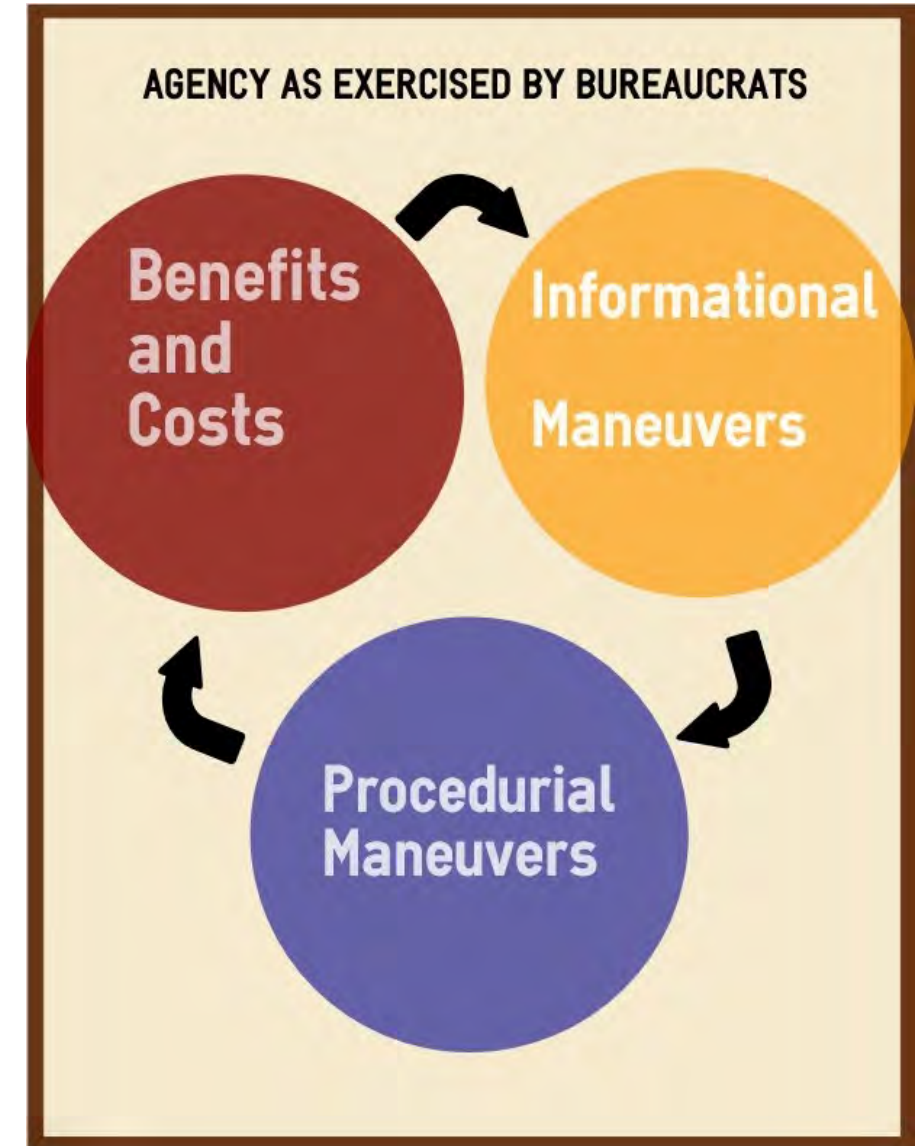
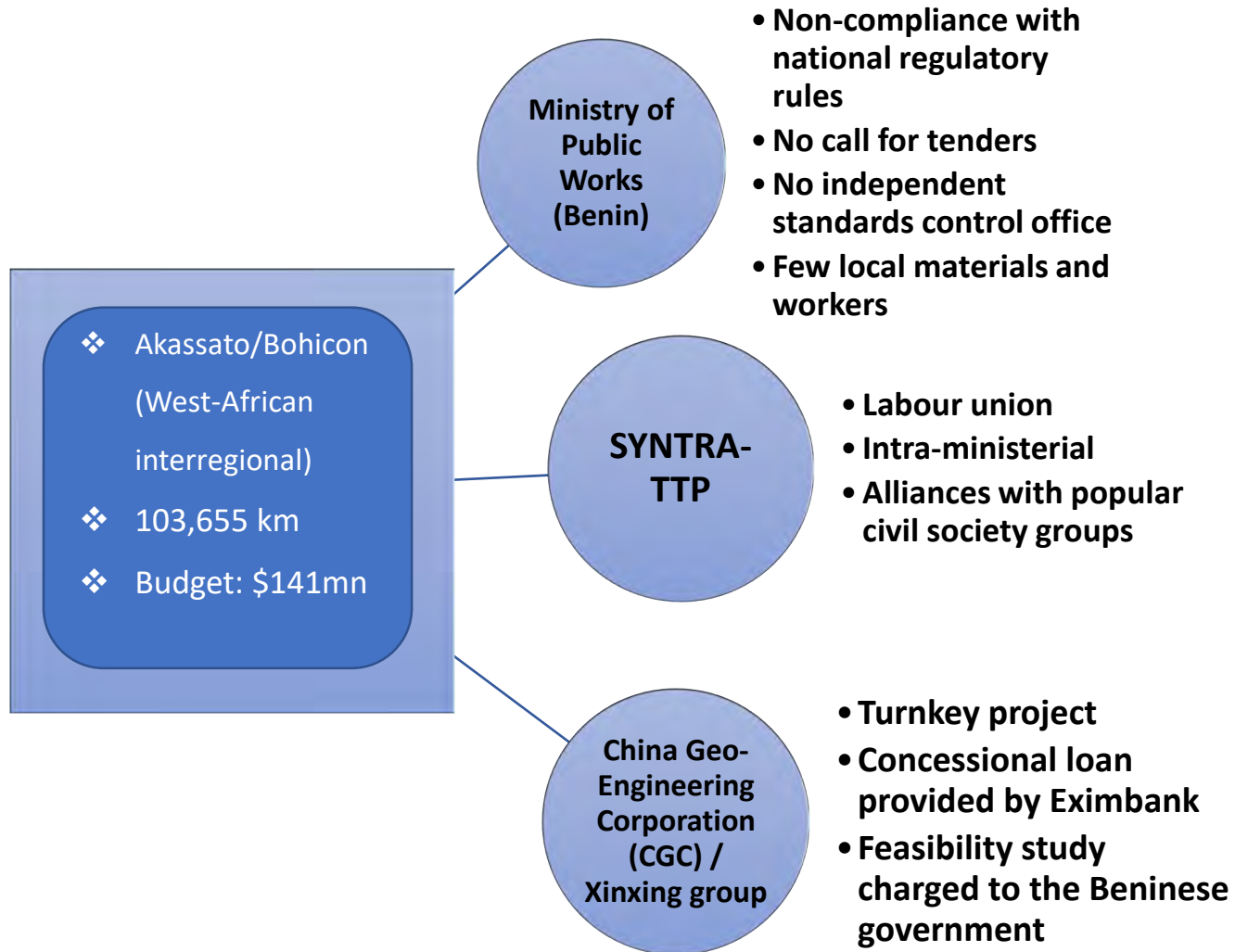
Affects negotiations

*Democracy: facilitates interplay of state/non-state agency

*Autocracy: constrains agency

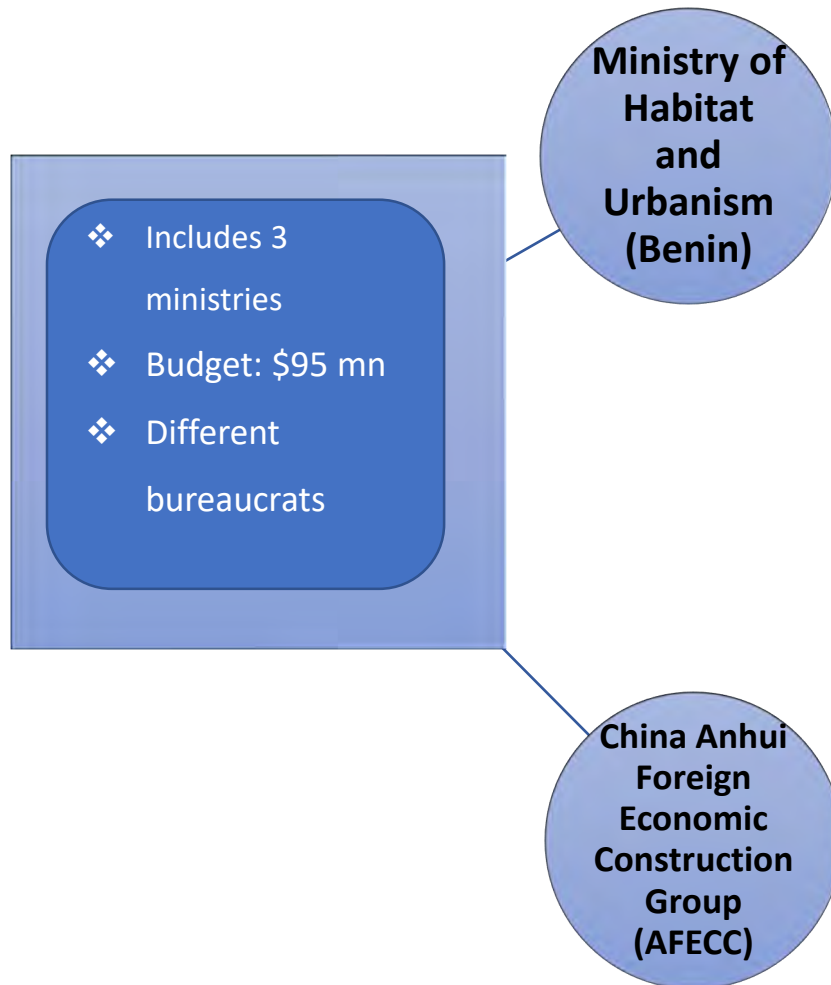


Case study 1: Inter-departmental Road project (2010)





Case study 2: Administrative tower (2013)



- Agency during the pre-negotiation phase (internal coordination)
- Several negotiation rounds
- Success in appointing independent standards control + free access to the construction site (monitoring)
- Respect of national labour regulations
- Knowledge transfer (training)
- Use of local materials acc. national regulation
- Mention of specific tax-exemption

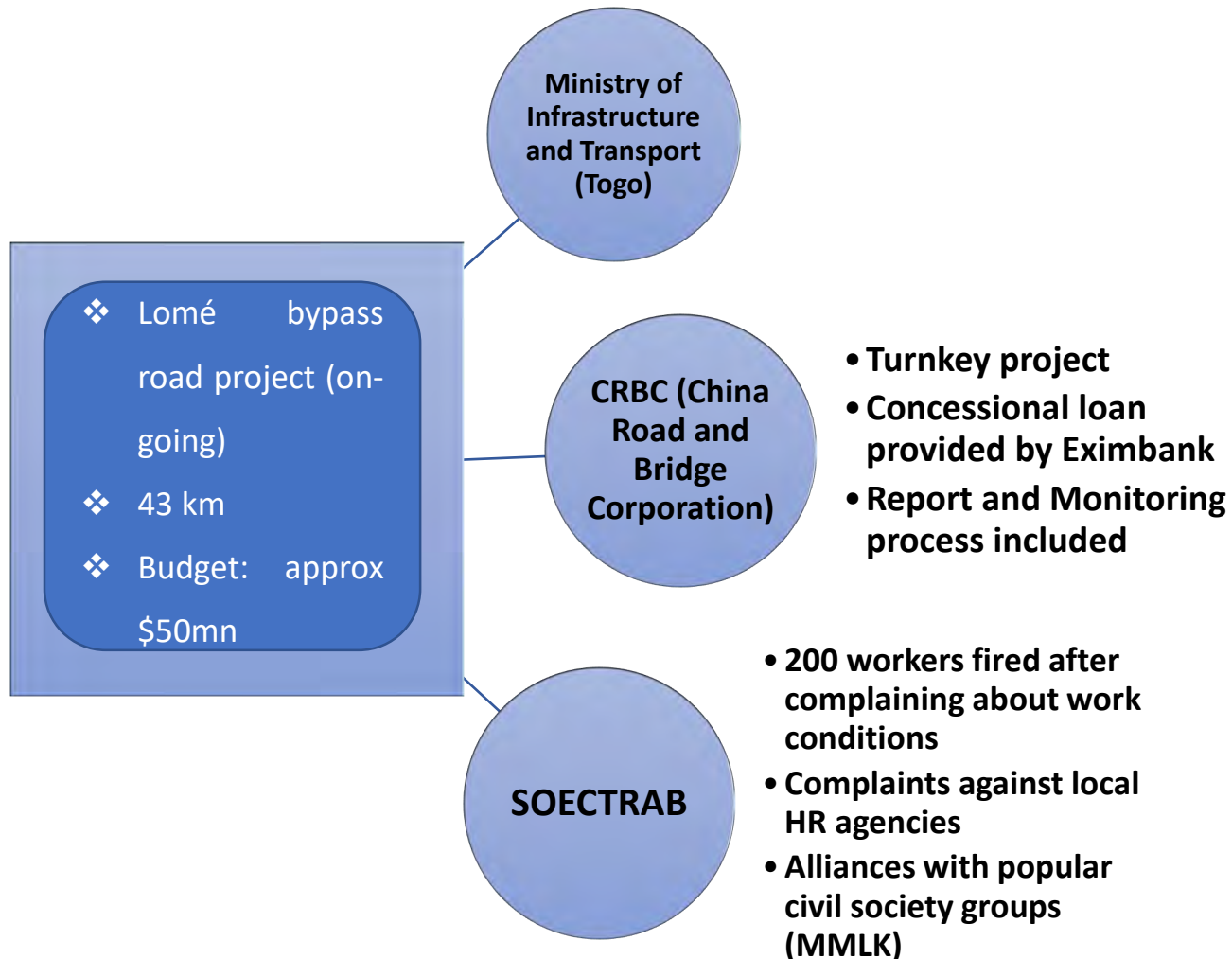
- Turnkey project
- Concessional loan provided by Eximbank



Source: author



Case study 3: Agoè-Noèpé (2017-18) (on-going research)

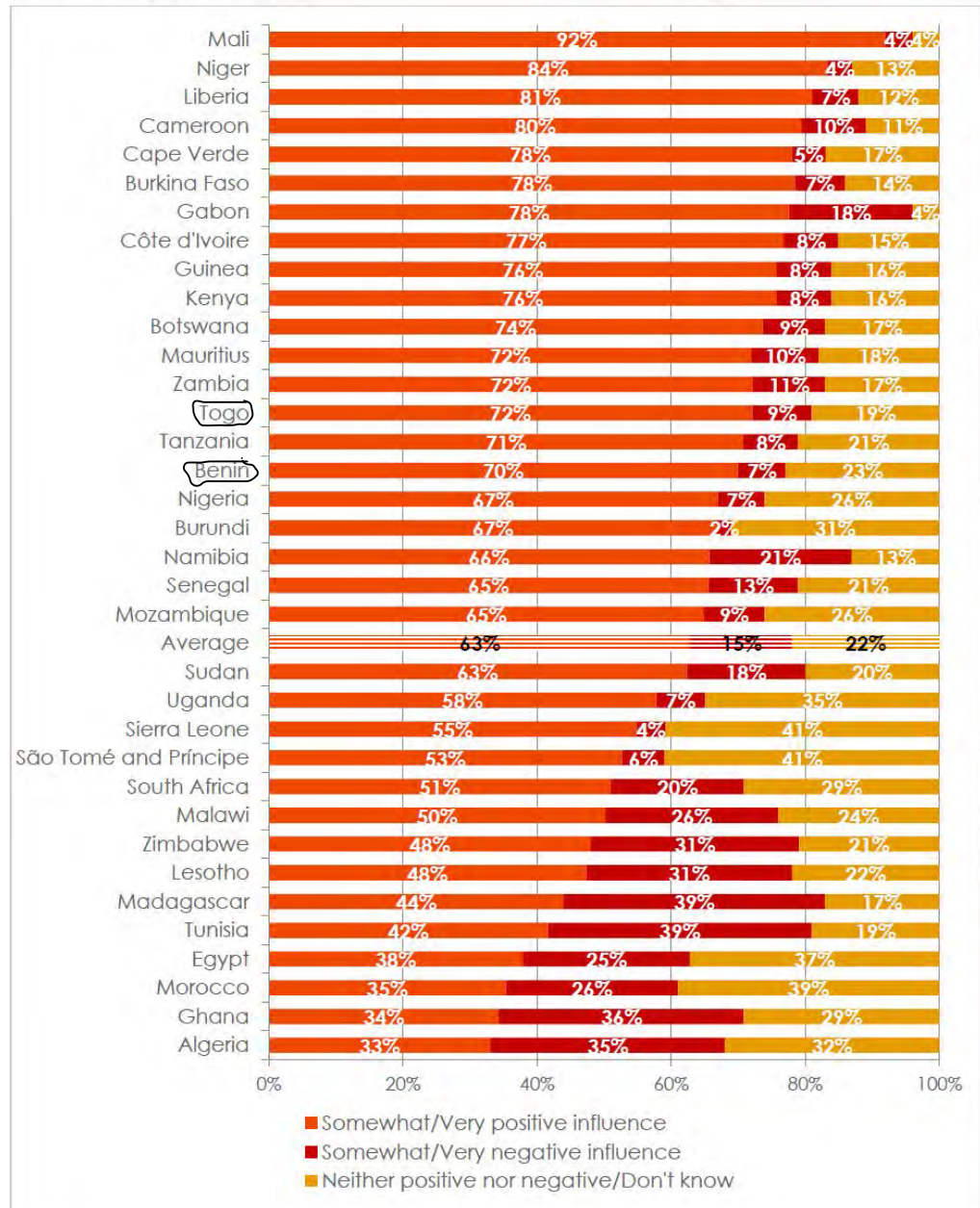


A 'China strategy' for African governments ?

- Parallel track for China → structural coordination/adaptation issues
- China/Benin (inter-ministerial) coordination mission (2015-2017) :
 - ✓ Norms
 - ✓ Quality of Materials
 - ✓ Labour
 - ✓ Report, Monitoring & Evaluation
 - ✓ Applies to all further projects
 - ✓ Ministry of Habitat and Urbanism as focal point (assertive agency)



Figure 10: Is China's economic and political influence positive or negative?
| 35 countries | 2014/2015



Conclusion:

Contributions and Implications

- Advantageous outcomes are possible for Afr. governments despite power asymmetry
- Agency/ Explanatory variables : V2 can be an asset
- Overall good image of China in Benin, Togo
- Debate revolves more around better internal coordination for enhanced bargaining by Afr governments (communication/language)
- Motivations of bureaucrats vary
- Next steps (Cote d'Ivoire vs Cameroon case studies)