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CHINESE ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA

How will it affect U.S. National Security interests?

Thaddeus Daniel Phillips

(U.S. Naval War College, M.A. in National Security and Strategic Studies
(Distinguished Graduate, June 2019) & Georgetown University Law Center, LL.M in
National Security Law (currently enrolled)

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**# 1, Kalavryton Street, Alimos, Athens, 17456, Greece
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ABSTRACT

The engagement and expansion of the People’s Republic of China (PRC or China) into Africa has and will continue to have significant implications for the governments of Africa and the national security interests of the United States. While this burgeoning relationship is likely to lead to a reduction in American influence in Africa, the United States’ national security interests are not a zero-sum game. Ultimately, China’s developing investment in Africa is more likely to complement American power than replace it. Assuming China

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maintains or grows its current pivot toward Africa, the Chinese interest and commitment to security on the continent will grow in lockstep. Greater Chinese attention to African infrastructure growth, natural resource extraction, economic development, and trade will bring Chinese interests in the African security environment into closer alignment with that of the United States. Ultimately, this portends a net increase in total resources devoted to counterterrorism, counter-piracy, combatting violent extremism, disease prevention, and the stability of African states. However, as the Chinese foothold increases, there will be negative ramifications for the United States' diplomatic efforts and military presence, which will pose tough challenges for U.S. policy and resource allocation in the future.

I. Introduction

A chief concern of U.S. global leadership is rivalry with China, which is unfolding in a dramatic way in Africa. China's presence there has grown exponentially over the last two decades, with its funding of \$74 billion worth of development projects between 2000 and 2011, and in 2015, China pledged another \$60 billion in assistance...China overtook the United States as Africa's largest trading partner in 2009.¹

The engagement and expansion of the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) into Africa has had, and will continue to have, significant implications for the governments of Africa and the national security interests of the United States. While this burgeoning relationship is likely to lead to a reduction in American influence in Africa, the United States' national security interests are not a zero-sum game. Ultimately, China's developing investment in Africa is more likely to complement American power than replace it. Assuming China maintains or grows its current pivot toward Africa, the Chinese interest and attention to security on the continent will grow in lockstep. Greater Chinese engagement with the development and economy of Africa will bring the Chinese commitment in the African security environment into alignment with that of the United States. This portends a net increase in total resources devoted to counterterrorism, counter-piracy, combatting violent extremism, disease prevention, and the stability of African states. Chinese engagement on the African Continent will support American national security interests in the short-term and present diplomatic, military, and political opportunities to mitigate national security challenges in the long-term.

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II. Roadmap

As we endeavor to consider the ramifications of Chinese engagement in Africa in all its facets in a manner adequate to draw a logical conclusion, we will explore the context of this scenario through a policy discussion and factual analysis. This discourse will involve exploring the historical experiences of both Africa and China, understanding the national security interests of the United States encompassed by the Africa problem-set, and a discussion of the facts and statistics of Chinese efforts in Africa. From this foundation, an analytical examination of the Chinese collaboration with Africa can occur, allowing for an even-handed assessment of China's strategic motivations and the short- and long-term ramifications for the national security interests of the United States. As necessary throughout the discussion, the commitment and leadership of the United States to the nation-states of Africa will be juxtaposed with that of China. Doing so will lead us to a more objective evaluation of the Chinese commitment in Africa and enable a better evaluation of the implications for U.S. national security.

III. A Brief Historical Synopsis

China's engagement with Africa is not new. China was one of the first countries to partner with the continent following African independence in the mid-20th century. The relationship spawned from a mutual sense of "Third World Solidarity." China and Africa were drawn close because of their relative states of development at the time. As evidence of this bond, Mao told the President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, in 1968, "To help you build the railway, we are willing to forsake building railways for ourselves."² Mao was referring to the construction of the Tan Zam Railroad that would connect landlocked Zambia with the Port of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania. Eight years (1968-1976) and the real value of \$3 billion later, China made good on Mao's gesture. China's show of support came after much of the developed world, including the U.S., Britain, Japan, West Germany, the United Nations (UN), and the World Bank, declined the undertaking because it was deemed financially unviable. At the time, China was the poorest of the three states: Zambia, Tanzania, and China.³ The project was not entirely philanthropic on the part of China, however; African loyalty would pay unquantifiable dividends down the road.⁴

For the remainder of the 20th century, the Sino-African relationship ebbed and flowed as China and the nation-states of Africa struggled through their developmental adolescence. In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping commented on the renewed partnership between the regions, “China and Africa share a common future. We Chinese and Africans have forged a profound friendship through our common historical experience and our common struggles.”⁵ Beginning with the turn of the century and escalating to the present, China’s economic relationship with Africa has taken hold in significant fashion. Although China’s re-discovered interest in Africa is, once again, not motivated purely by altruistic inclinations - it coincided with a dramatic need for resources that came as China’s growth matured - it provided Africa’s natural resource sector with burgeoning market opportunities and relatively affordable manufactured goods in return.⁶

The economic bonds have only become more robust since the uptick began in 2000. Of late, however, as China’s economy has continued to mature and demographics on both sides have shifted, the nature of the economic tie has begun a transition from a resource-driven exchange to one that is more driven by a need for human-resources (i.e., cheap labor).⁷ Today, the breadth of the African economy is increasingly saturated with the engagement of Chinese enterprises. “Nearly a third are involved in manufacturing, a quarter in services, and around a fifth in trade and construction and real estate.”⁸

The impact of the Chinese on the African economy, especially recently, has been significant and quantifiable. From the early 1990s through the early 2000s, 57% of the Sub-Saharan population was living below the World Bank-established poverty line; by 2011, the poverty rate had declined 13%.⁹ During the period from 2000 to 2011, \$75 billion worth of infrastructure funding was provided by China, and it pledged another \$60 billion in 2015.¹⁰ Also noteworthy, in 2009, China became Africa’s largest trading partner, surpassing the United States.¹¹ ¹² By 2014, China-Africa trade reached \$222 billion, or three times that of the United States.^{13 14} China’s impact on the continent is difficult to overstate.

IV. U.S. National Security Interests in Africa

In presenting his Freedom Agenda in January of 2009, President George W. Bush stated, “It is in the best interests of our Nation to alleviate the despair that can allow extremism to take hold by fighting hunger and disease, supporting basic education initiatives, and advancing global

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economic development.”¹⁵ In June of 2012, President Barack Obama launched the White House Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, which created a multitude of American-led projects in Africa related to agriculture, energy and trade, in conjunction with the pre-existing programs such as USAID and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).¹⁶ In forming these initiatives, the United States was recognizing the national security implications at play in Africa. The significant U.S. response to the African AIDS crisis as well as the recent West Africa Ebola outbreak provide a grim attestation of the national security implications a rampant epidemic can wreak on populations, economies, and global stability. As cautioned by the former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, in the 2016 Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, “Emerging diseases against which humans have no pre-existing immunity or effective therapies pose significant risks of becoming pandemics.”¹⁷

Global disease outbreaks aside, the panoply of threats in Africa presents a far less dramatic existential threat to the world - and therefore receive a far less righteous and direct response. Instability in African countries generates from any number of sources, however. Human trafficking, arms smuggling and WMD proliferation, cybercrime, environmental degradation, piracy, insurgencies and terrorism all present significant destabilization risks within Africa that could affect the rest of the world if unchecked.

Terrorism, particularly that wrought by Islamic extremism, presents a grave threat, not just in Africa but to the region and the world. In 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) was active in 18 African countries and claimed as many or more lives in Africa as it did in the Middle East.¹⁸ A number of other Islamist groups have also gained traction in certain areas of Africa, as well: al Shabaab, al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar al Sharia and Boko Haram (who pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2015). Unfortunately, the capacity of these organizations to wreak violence in Africa and threaten the region and the world is well-established.¹⁹

As global business investment and engagement on the continent expand, the visibility and vulnerability of foreign influence will also increase,²⁰ creating myriad opportunities for terrorism, violence, smuggling, and transnational crime. The intersection of these destabilizing threats with foreign investment presents a risk of driving down the allure of Africa, potentially pushing the costs associated with operating in Africa beyond tolerable levels.²¹

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For example, the African piracy threat deteriorated to the point it became too costly to ignore. In 2011, at the peak of the piracy crisis, about 237 ships were attacked, which involved 28 successful hijackings. In the ten years prior to 2011, piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin alone reduced global trade by \$22-25 billion annually;²² this figure does not even account for piracy occurring in the Gulf of Guinea. Consequently, the U.S., the EU and NATO were forced into action, and eventually other navies followed suit. Although the response did effectively suppress the piracy epidemic, the world's navies continue to operate near the Somali coast because the underlying conditions for piracy remain.

These threats are pervasive and they are insidious. Many of these threats are interrelated and interdependent, involving a circular pattern of causation, which makes them incredibly difficult, complex and challenging to combat. "The drivers of conflict and violence include young populations, high unemployment, lack of equal opportunities, urbanization, poverty, inequality, too many guns, and bad governance and corruption."²³ This is why the U.S. is heavily focused on African security concerns, "Without basic security, Africa's ambitions such as lowering unemployment, growing the middle class and getting its citizens out of dire poverty will prove fruitless."²⁴

By 2050, Africa will comprise 25% of the world's population, and it is estimated that a billion African youth, aged 18 or under, will be ready to enter the work force.²⁵ "The protruding youth population could become an important economic boost to the region. Alternatively, it could further increase the risk of instability and violence if young people are deprived of a quality education, stable employment and a political voice."²⁶ The ramifications of the latter outcome would be far-reaching, which is why it is in the U.S. national security interest to focus on the long-term development and stability of Africa, in addition to the instant, more immediate threats presented on the continent.

V. What's All the Fuss About? The Nature of China's Engagement in Africa Against the Backdrop of American Leadership

Before delving into the breadth and depth of the burgeoning Sino-African relationship, it is important to recognize the paucity of data that exists on the subject.^{27 28 29 30 31} Statistics on Chinese investment (beyond state owned enterprises), the number of Chinese migrants working in

Africa and the extent of trade between China and Africa are particularly inadequate. This problem contributes to the diversity of views on the subject and hinders conclusive, in-depth analysis. There is, however, sufficient data to surmise trends and generally identify major lines of effort within the Sino-Africa relationship.

A. The Belt & Road Initiative

While the dramatic upswing in Chinese engagement with Africa has a trajectory that traces back to the turn of the millennium, the last few years have seen especially notable activity. This is because of the "Belt and Road Initiative," a policy launched by China in 2013. Under the rubric of this initiative, China is to provide 68 countries (as of May 2017) along the old Silk Road with infrastructure development by underwriting hundreds of billions of dollars in investment.³² Belt and Road includes two physical routes: the Silk Road Economic Belt, a land route (the "Belt") connecting China with Europe, and a maritime route (the "Road") that links China with Indian Ocean littoral nations, Africa and Europe.³³ The initiative calls for \$150 billion of investment per year by China and \$1 trillion in overall future funding.^{34 35}

B. Foreign Investment & Aid

According to China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), China's share of direct investment in Africa in 2014 was \$32 billion, or under 5% of total foreign direct investment (FDI) in the continent.³⁶ Viewing FDI growth over time, however, provides context to China's FDI. According to the China-Africa Research Initiative, Chinese FDI stock in Africa was only 2% of U.S. FDI in 2003 compared to 55% of U.S. FDI in 2015. Equally remarkable is the amount of loans provided to Africa by the Chinese Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) from 2000 to 2015 (\$63 billion) when compared to the amount of loans provided during the same period by the U.S. Eximbank (\$1.7 billion).³⁷ Additionally, three new global-development finance institutions have been realized through China's financial leadership: the \$100 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the \$100 billion New Development Bank (formerly known as the BRICS Bank), and the \$40 billion Silk Road Fund.^{38 39}

Further insight can be garnered by comparing the diversity and dispersal of Chinese investment in Africa with that of the United States. China has drawn attention to its lending

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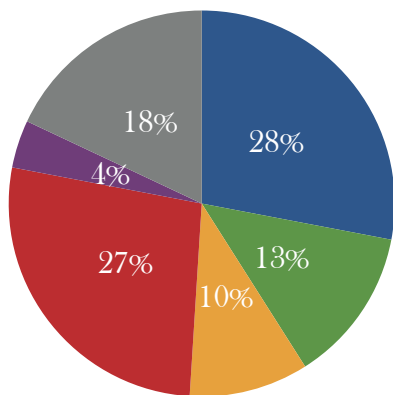
practices by the indifference it has exhibited in dispersing capital. China shows no regard for the rule of law, human rights or the governance environment. Rather, the Chinese calculus appears purely economic, predicated on market opportunities and wealth of resources.⁴⁰ The one litmus test China does seem to apply, however, is an insistence on adherence to the One-China Policy. Not a single state within Africa that supports the Taiwanese claim to statehood receives financial support from China. The United States, on the other hand, requires recipients of its foreign aid

and direct investment to abide by strictures of transparency, good governance, labor standards,

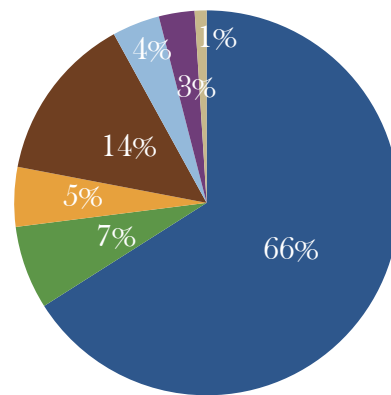
Figure 1. Chinese and U.S. FDI Stock to Africa (by sector), 2015. Janet Eom et al., “The United States and China in Africa: What does the data say?,” *China Africa Research Initiative*, no. 18 (2017): 1-8, accessed 14 September 2017, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5652847de4b033f56d2bdc29/t/58fd32a5ff7c502a493d18ed/1492988584819/PB18_US+China+Africa.pdf.

Chinese FDI Stock to Africa (by sector), 2015

U.S. FDI Stock to Africa (by sector), 2015



- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Financial Services
- Construction
- Scientific Research & Technology Services
- Other Sectors



- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Finance (except depository institutions) and Insurance
- Holding Companies (non-bank)
- Wholesale Trade
- Professional, Scientific, & Tech Services
- Information

environmental sustainability, and human rights.⁴¹

As illustrated in Figure 1, the diversity of Chinese investment in Africa is far greater than that of the United States. Where the United States places two-thirds of its FDI in Africa into mining exploitation, for example, the Chinese invest less than one-third of its FDI in the same. China’s investment diversity on the whole is notably more oriented toward African needs.

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On a macroeconomic level, Chinese investment reflects a concerted effort to find alignment between Chinese weaknesses and African needs. An example of this is the manufacturing industry. While China's rise was predicated in large part on its ability to employ its vast population with low labor wages, China's rise has caused its demographics to shift. There is now a scarcity of low-cost labor in China, and it has turned to Africa's large population for its human capital needs.⁴² As China's population ages and the work force declines in number, the Chinese economy is becoming more service-oriented with rising labor costs. Africa's population, on the other hand, is growing rapidly, at an average rate of nearly 3% per year between 2005 and 2015 which will cause the working age population to expand enormously and consistently through at least 2050. Employment will be a continuing challenge for the people of Africa, requiring the creation of 20 million jobs per year through 2050 and approximately 30 million per year beyond that.⁴³ Africa's human capital is arguably the continent's most abundant resource, which, as mentioned, suits China's needs quite well.

C. Infrastructure Development

Poor infrastructure has proven to be a particularly chronic deficiency for many African economies. In 2013, China Eximbank provided a \$3 billion loan package to build the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway. The following year, the China Eximbank financed another \$3.6 billion for the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway linking Mombasa and Nairobi, Kenya. These are the two largest loans to African countries by China Eximbank. For comparison, the two largest U.S. Eximbank loans were \$805.6 million in 2011 to South Africa's state-owned electric power utility and \$344.2 million in 2008 for a rural electrification project in Ghana.⁴⁴

The lack of infrastructure investment in many countries has inhibited Africa's economic integration with the rest of the world.⁴⁵ Coupled with political turmoil and civil strife,⁴⁶ inadequate infrastructure scares off global investment.⁴⁷ While Africa has benefitted from its symbiotic relationship with China, these projects have been a windfall for China, whose financing of infrastructure has allowed Chinese construction to acquire a significant market share in Africa. The Chinese invested \$75 billion in development projects from 2000 to 2011 and promised another \$60 billion in 2015,⁴⁸ much of which will directly benefit the Chinese construction sector.

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“With the highest rates of poverty in the world, access to water, electricity, roads and other basic infrastructure remain (sic) the biggest challenges, and should be addressed before spending hundreds of more millions of dollars on a military response.”⁴⁹ Not only is China addressing this urgent need for basic infrastructure in Africa, but it has, at least in the eyes of many Africans, been an honest and diligent purveyor. According to one African diplomat, “In my country, if a local official promises to build a road, we never see the road; if the World Bank promises to build a road, in five years we will have a beautiful road; if China promises to build a road, in one year we have a road.”⁵⁰ China is now seven-times larger than the second ranked financier of bilateral-infrastructure in Africa.⁵¹

D. Disease Prevention & Public Health

Health pandemics such as the SARS outbreak in 2002, the H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic in 2009, and the Ebola outbreak in 2014 helped China to appreciate its own risk of disease and the importance of disease monitoring and prevention, particularly in the developing world.⁵² In July 2013, Africa, too, recognized this necessity officially at the African Union Special Summit on HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria when partner states met in Abuja, Nigeria.⁵³ China has been an active participant in bringing medical emergency and health care infrastructure to Africa. China became one of the largest contributors of foreign medical assistance in 2014 following the Ebola outbreak when it deployed over 1,200 emergency medical personnel.⁵⁴

Years of successful collaboration between the U.S. and China have led to rapid progress in the areas of disease prevention and public health in Africa. In 2014, the African Union began working with both governments and their respective Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to build and strengthen a regional disease prevention and control system. In April of 2016, Chinese leadership helped bring African universities into the fold of the China-Harvard-Africa Network (CHAN), a partnership started in 1979 between Harvard University’s T. H. Chan School of Public Health and Chinese institutions to examine and strengthen health care systems.⁵⁵ In January 2017, the Africa CDC became a reality.⁵⁶

F. Military Basing & Stability Operations

If China's engagement in Africa is to be successful, it must help foster an economic climate that protects its interests and supports the prospect of future foreign investment. Toward this end, military forces are required in order to adequately create a sufficiently stable market-economy. As China's policy of non-interference has ended, so too must come a significant uptick in overseas military operations, especially in areas of such intense Chinese economic activity as Africa.⁵⁷

The Chinese are indeed showing a commensurate increase in interest through their military commitment to the region. A recent deal with the Djiboutian government has yielded a Chinese lease for a naval base in Djibouti, one that is notably larger than the American base at Camp Lemonier, also in Djibouti, where approximately 4,000 troops are stationed.⁵⁸ China's Ministry of Defense has said its new footprint in Djibouti, the first of its kind for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), is intended as a base of operations for its forces engaging in military cooperation, joint exercises, anti-piracy patrols, and U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian missions in Africa and elsewhere.⁵⁹

China's growing military reach has been on display elsewhere, as well. China deployed 700 troops to South Sudan in 2015 to defend its oil interests and made efforts to establish a military contingent in eastern Zimbabwe.⁶⁰ In 2008, the Chinese joined the multi-national anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin, leveraged its navy to evacuate Chinese nationals from Libya in 2008 and conducted a similar mission in Yemen in 2015. The Chinese conducted its first joint naval exercise with Russia in the Mediterranean in 2015 and sent another flotilla to again exercise with the Russian Navy in the Baltic Sea in 2017, conducting live-fire drills in the Mediterranean Sea en route.^{61 62} The growing presence of the Chinese military in Africa is seen by many in the West as cause for concern, particularly when viewed in terms of China's unrelenting aspirations for global leadership.

G. Sino-African Relations

Putting Western reservations about China's motivations in Africa aside for a moment, it is relevant to consider the sentiment of the African people toward the Chinese. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, the efforts by the Chinese to develop African economies has been widely appreciated across the continent. Despite instances of Chinese competition causing indigenous

textile factories to go under and construction companies to fold, the net result has been a windfall for African employment,⁶³ lower consumer prices for Africans,⁶⁴ technology transfers and an overall increased standard of living.⁶⁵ Coupled with the frequent visits by senior Chinese officials that have demonstrated China's interest and commitment, it is easy to see why Africa is enamored with the yield from its re-kindled relationship with its Asian benefactor.⁶⁶ According to a survey conducted by The Pew Research Center in 2015, 70% of Africans hold a favorable view toward China (the same survey showed a 79% favorability rating for the U.S.).⁶⁷

During his 2015 trip to Africa, President Xi Jinping distinguished China's relationship with Africa from that of the West, "China supports the resolution of African issues by Africans in the African way."⁶⁸ The point was intended by Xi to underscore China's policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. It was also a subtle counterpunch to Western critics who have accused China of providing life-blood to despotic, abusive regimes the West has long-isolated economically in an effort to purge from power or sanction into submission along Western norms. Nonetheless, the sentiment resonated well with Africans and demonstrated consistency in China's oft-repeated belief that, "[Chinese] policy does not only encourage Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa...people all over the world who invest in Africa can enjoy this treatment."⁶⁹ The Chinese have bought the trust of the Africans, and the Africans believe China will deliver.

VI. China's Detractors

As the scene-setter for China's expanding economic ties with Africa, the Belt and Road Strategy openly and unabashedly attempts to rival the U.S.-dominated trans-Atlantic trade regime. China has made no secret of its aim of a global leadership role. American foreign policy during the Presidency of Donald Trump, at least to date, has been inconsistent with previous administrations. Allies and adversaries alike see America under the Trump Administration retreating from international commitments, relinquishing traditional global leadership roles and displaying a penchant for protectionism. China sees their opportunity and is seizing it, much to the consternation of American foreign policy traditionalists. "...[T]he [Belt and Road] project challenges the current global order, replacing it with a Sino-centric one...The initiative presents an alternative to globalization in an era where powers like the US seem intent on increasing protectionism and retreating from their global leadership role."⁷⁰

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China has been significantly expanding its military presence around the globe, developing its expeditionary forces and a blue-water navy, as well as establishing implicit but observable alliances with well-established adversaries of the U.S. and NATO. Consequently, any military expansion is subject to suspicion by the West who views such moves as encroachment.⁷¹

Additionally, China has been an unapologetic capitalist, pursuing economic relations entirely predicated on market opportunity while remaining wholly indifferent toward humanitarian conditions on the ground. Statistically speaking, China invests heavily in states with poor governance relative to other foreign investors.⁷² “China sees itself as having taken the mantle of globalization - with obviously Chinese characteristics, A.K.A free markets without political freedom,” according to economic development consultant Sebastian Spio-Garbrah.⁷³ During a visit to Africa in 2011, then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a crowd, “The United States is investing in the people of Zambia, not just the elites, and we are investing for the long run.”⁷⁴ Secretary Clinton did not miss the opportunity to draw a juxtaposition with China, labeling their intentions as “colonialist” and “exploitative.”⁷⁵ This is perhaps the criticism most frequently expressed by the West. China is swooping in and providing financial lifelines and political legitimacy to autocrats and dictators that the West has spent significant time and effort ostracizing with sanctions to wrestle into compliance with international norms. Suffice it to say, Chinese amorality in pursuit of economic gains in Africa does not sit well in the West.

VII. Strategy Analysis: The Lykke “Stool” Model

The Lykke Model of strategy analysis considers the inter-related components that combine to guide government policy. These inter-related components are often described as the parts of a stool. If the legs of the stool are not aligned properly with one another, then the strategy that sits atop the legs or, to go a step further - the policy that is supported by the entire stool - becomes imbalanced and vulnerable. Additionally, even if the mechanisms that support the policy are sound, a sufficiently destabilizing environmental factor may raze the entire stool.

For illustrative purposes, a state’s interests, or policy, must rest on a strategy (the stool top) that is supported by means, ways and ends (legs) working in concert to achieve a symmetrical balance. The surface on which the legs rest, if sufficiently risky or unstable, can permeate the entire structure and effect the soundness of the policy undertaking as a whole. By evaluating a state’s

means, ways, ends, strategy, and risk exposure, an objective evaluation of the policy can occur. If the operation of the components does not function to support the espoused policy, then the policy is either disingenuous (i.e., ulterior motives at play) or the policy is flawed and will likely fail.

Couched in the context of Chinese engagement with Africa, this analysis will facilitate an objective evaluation of China's stated policy intentions and allow a subsequent extrapolation of its effects on U.S. national security.

Means

At the most basic level, China's means can be expected to drive the other factors that in effect ultimately determine its policy. A major "means" for China is its enormously high savings rate, about 50% of its GDP. This accrues as a major macroeconomic advantage for China, whose investment flow, which is derived largely from savings being funneled back toward financial investment, is afforded by the relative liquidity of the Chinese economy. The fact that China is the world's second largest net creditor and set to overtake Japan as the number one net creditor in the next ten years is a testament to China's prowess in this regard.⁷⁶

China's historical ties to Africa and its own experience of successfully leveraging overseas FDI to transition its economy give China a unique message that it hopes will resonate with the developing world. China has also developed a comparative advantage in the infrastructure sector, in rail construction in particular, which the developing world needs in order to attract FDI. For China, these strengths amount to "means."

In China's case, though, it is not just resources that make up its means, but it is also its lack of resources. For example, the relative natural resource scarcity in China has largely driven the outward, global expansion of many firms within Chinese industry, such as those in mining and petroleum.⁷⁷ As China looks into the future and sees its demographics shifting, it will have a fresh set of "means" scarcity to factor into its policy-making. A declining working-age population and an economic transition from a resource and labor-intensive manufacturing-based economy to a service-based, consumer economy are two major drivers in this regard.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, China has a rapidly growing military and a newfound interest in overseas operations driven by aspirations for a more prominent role on the global stage. Such are China's means.

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A. Ways

Africa's natural resource abundance, large and growing working population, and historical ties to the PRC provide China the opportunity, or "way," to engage Africa for the mutual benefit of both parties. As a consequence, China has been drawn toward African shores as a way to leverage its strengths against its resource limitations. Trade, foreign aid, training, technology transfers, and large-scale development projects (i.e., components of the Belt and Road Strategy) have largely been the "ways" in which China has pursued this.

These economic interests also provide a "way" for China to productively use its military in overseas and expeditionary operations. A forward-deployed military capability provides China with an option to respond to destabilizing developments and violence where it has citizens and financial interests at stake. Additionally, China has used international military operations in the African area of operation to justify deployment of military forces to the region and the acquisition of its base in Djibouti. Maritime piracy, non-combatant evacuations from unstable lands, U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, joint exercises, and concern over the stability of African states are all expressed, demonstrated and legitimate ways for China to incorporate its military forces in Africa.

B. Ends

These means and ways enable China to pursue its ends. Creating opportunity for the Chinese economy is an end in and of itself. This will enable the Chinese economic engine to continue to strengthen into the future. An official Chinese announcement cited one particular objective of Chinese manufacturers moving production to Africa. "By producing overseas and exporting to Europe or North America, Chinese companies would be able to avoid trade frictions and barriers imposed on exports from China."⁷⁸ Additionally, assisting the nations of Africa with manufacturing skills, employment, infrastructure development and economic transition reflects positively on China. It will allow the country to achieve its goals of being viewed as a beneficent global actor by improving the investment climate in Africa for the rest of the world and elevating the world's perception of China.

As identified previously, engaging with Africa on such a large scale also provides justification for China's use of its military resources in a manner that benefits the security,

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investment and economy of Africa in order to encourage the stability of African states, protect its investments, and contribute to the global security mission in the region. In doing so, China has established a utilitarian purpose and justification to incorporate its military into the Africa mission. This enables China to expand its military's area of operations and make use of its first overseas base, while simultaneously enhancing its global standing in accordance with its ambitions.

C. Strategy

China's strategy, as one would suspect, is to leverage its means through its ways to accomplish its ends. China is leveraging its financial and military resources with vision and leadership to achieve economic opportunity and expansion while simultaneously providing a pathway to global prominence and influence. The strategy is practical, useful to China, beneficial to Africa, and humanitarian. It also makes it difficult for adversaries to find legitimate grounds of protest. Most importantly, it helps China achieve the ends it seeks.

D. Policy

Surprising as it may seem, China has had a difficult time cogently articulating the policy at play behind its engagement in Africa - or even the larger Belt and Road Strategy, for that matter. Zou Tongxuan of Beijing International University acknowledged the chink in the Belt and Road Strategy, "We haven't really come up with a specific goal."⁷⁹ Policy pronouncements, if that nomenclature can even be applied here, run the gamut. Some officials have suggested the underlying purpose is to keep the Chinese economy moving by ensuring markets exist for Chinese businesses, while others are more grandiose, indicating the desired end-state is to achieve an economic trading bloc that rivals the transatlantic one.⁸⁰

What is clear is that there are a host of motivations driving the Belt and Road Strategy, and by extension the Chinese engagement in Africa. One such interest includes finding alternative sources for investment of China's foreign currency reserves by funneling money sitting in low-interest U.S. securities into vehicles with a more productive return.⁸¹ Another possibility is that the strategy is intended to achieve the goals outlined in the "Made in China 2025" plan, which calls for China to transition from an exporter of low-end commodities to higher-end, efficiency- and technology-based commodities.⁸² Of course, successful execution of the Belt and Road

Strategy would also portend a significant rise for China that would potentially enable it to challenge the current global order.⁸³ As a policy objective, that possibility should not be overlooked.

E. Risks

At this point in the analysis, after evaluating the means, ways, ends, and strategy, the top of the stool appears to be well-balanced. To complete the analysis, one more factor, risk, needs to be assessed to determine if the strategy and supporting “legs” will enable China to pursue its policy.

There are inherent risks involved in China’s approach to Africa. As with the Belt and Road Strategy as a whole, China is making a huge financial commitment. As previously mentioned, the interest in Africa is not solely motivated by profit. In expanding economic ties to Africa, China is also seeking solutions to developing shortcomings in its own economy brought about in part by the natural advance of Chinese economic progression and in part by shifting population demographics, as well as the lack of natural resources. If the engagement fails to pan out, China risks monumental financial loss and potentially dire economic straits at home, which could encumber its own economic development for years to come. It would also stall China’s ambitions to achieve global parity with the United States and hamper future efforts to marshal support behind Chinese leadership going forward.

From where, then, do these risks emanate? For starters, as previously discussed, China is looking to invest \$150 billion per year in its Belt and Road Strategy. By some accounts, China is already struggling to find sound and profitable investments to see the strategy forward.⁸⁴

Even in this nascent stage, China has already encountered some resistance to its Belt and Road strategy. “Locals in some countries are angry about what they view as China’s heavy-handedness,” a by-product of China’s willingness to work with unsavory governments.⁸⁵ China-funded Belt and Road projects are known to pay little to no attention to environmental impacts, labor rights, corruption or corporate malfeasance.⁸⁶ As a consequence, China is facing a backlash against the nascent effort for a host of reasons, not the least of which is concern about an over-mighty China and what a world led by Chinese moorings would look like.^{87 88} If China does not achieve buy-in from a quorum of countries, the undertaking risks falling flat with a heavy thud.

F. Policy Evaluation

This analysis lends understanding to the difficulty Chinese officials have had succinctly stating the policy behind the Belt and Road. Individually, any number of possible policies can be said to be at the heart of the Belt and Road Strategy and Chinese engagement in Africa. Only cumulatively, however, do these policy objectives justify the significant risk of financial loss and national embarrassment that would accompany failure for China. The conclusion that can be drawn, then, from the Lykke Stool Analysis is that the policy underlying China's engagement with Africa is all encompassing. That is to say, the underlying policy objective is as broad as the Belt and Road Strategy itself. China is seeking to expand its diplomatic, economic, and military influence in order to create a Sino-centric alternative to the status quo world order.

VII. Near-term Effects on U.S. National Security Interests

It remains to be seen how Chinese engagement in Africa will play out. There is no doubt, the extent of Chinese engagement is going to yield a significant impact across, and beyond, the continent. For purposes of this portion of the analysis, we will specifically look at the ramifications of Chinese involvement on U.S. national security interests.

Previous discussion has made the point that economic involvement in Africa will make it incumbent on the Chinese to contribute universally to areas of global concern in the region. Disease control and prevention, counter piracy, counterterrorism, and U.N. peacekeeping and humanitarian missions jump out as areas of overlap between burgeoning Chinese involvement and areas of long-standing U.S. national security interests. In this respect, Chinese involvement is likely to be both complementary and supplementary to U.S.-led efforts. They will alleviate some of the burden on U.S. shoulders and, at the same time, provide an increase in net resources, which will yield a gain in overall mission-effectiveness. This means there is significant opportunity, almost inevitably, for Chinese efforts in Africa to align with short-term U.S. national security interests in these fundamental, stability-inducing operations.

VIII. Long-term Effects to U.S. National Security from Chinese Involvement in Africa

In the long-term, the effects on U.S. national security interests from China's engagement with Africa are less clear-cut. Not all areas of consideration are a zero-sum game - but some are. For example, a robust economic relationship and considerable financial assistance will likely manifest in significant diplomatic inroads developing between China and Africa. Inevitably, this will mitigate U.S. diplomatic capacity by watering-down U.S. leverage on the continent. Also, not to be overlooked is the concurrent rise of China that will take place on the world stage in the process. Over time, success of the Chinese pivot towards Africa, to say nothing of the success of the larger Belt and Road Strategy, will likely deliver China as a major global superpower. If China is able to effectively achieve its ends in Africa, it will have considerably expanded its sphere of influence diplomatically, militarily, and economically. In such case, the United States will have a formidable adversary against which it must compete to assert its leadership and ideology.

There are other long-term effects on U.S. national security that could yield from Chinese engagement in Africa, as well. Some that are not so black and white. As just mentioned, short-term opportunities presented by Chinese involvement in Africa do exist for U.S. national security efforts. A significant and enduring Chinese presence in Africa would present the U.S. and China with unique circumstances to engage and collaborate on a variety of issues.

An example of one such issue is the fight against violent extremism. With the collapse of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, hundreds of Chinese foreign fighters will be returning home to China's restive Uighur settlements in western Xinjiang. China is aware that if even a nominal percentage of its over 10 million-large Muslim population resorts to radicalization as a means of recourse for perceived abuses, it could have a long-term domestic insurgency on its hands. The fact western Xinjiang abuts the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan means foreign fighters would encounter a woefully porous border should China find itself in the crosshairs as the next destination for transnational jihadis.⁸⁹ If history is any indication, violent extremism is going to be an ongoing concern for both the U.S. and the Chinese. Fortunately, competent and capable allies in the fight against terrorism are always a valued resource. It seems only natural then that the U.S. and China should collaborate counter-terror stability efforts in a continent struggling to develop amid persistent threats of terrorism, violence and upheaval.

Collaboration such as this would be commensurate with the aims of both countries. Working together to establish greater security in the region would facilitate the establishment of long-term diplomatic, military, and political relationships on neutral ground and in areas of overlapping concern and mutual interest. Aside from the obvious, more immediate effect that sustained and coordinated counter-piracy, counterterrorism, and stability operations would have on the African problem set, collaboration would breed familiarity. Familiarity, in turn, would foster more open lines of communication. In compilation, the coordination, collaboration and dialogue would yield a line of communication between the U.S. and China that would mitigate the likelihood of hostilities developing due to escalated tensions or inadvertent miscalculations. Avoiding hostilities with China is, of course, good for the long-term national security interests of the United States.

The views of some Western pundits, mentioned previously, dismiss Chinese efforts in Africa, and the Belt and Road Strategy writ-large, as an unabashed attempt to unseat, or at least rival, the United States' position as global leader. Considering the creeping tendency toward isolationism under the current administration, the U.S. can hardly feign shock or outrage at China for stepping in to fill the void. Nonetheless, China's involvement in Africa does threaten U.S. national security interests insofar as the U.S. sphere of influence shrinks by an amount proportional to that by which China's grows. The real problem is that this abdication by the United States will not be as recoupable as it might have been in the past. There is a palpable sense that China's rise is inevitable and any square inch of turf given up by the U.S. in the finite land of global hegemony will not be reacquired easily. To make matters worse, China's investments are buttressed by soft power tactics like educational and cultural exchanges, as well as political party training programs.⁹⁰ There should be no mistaking it: China is playing the long-game in Africa.

There is a distinction, however, that should be drawn between China pursuing strategic goals directed at economic gain, political influence, and global standing and pursuing a policy that is deliberately designed to limit the ability and capacity of the U.S. to achieve its national security interests. China's interests in Africa are not intrinsically anti-U.S.; they are just pro-China.

IX. Final Discussion & Conclusion

Evidence indicates Chinese engagement in Africa is more controversial in the West than elsewhere. The Sino-African relationship is in fact very popular among its two most affected constituencies. Official figures put the number of Chinese that have flocked to the continent seeking out new economic opportunity at close to one million.^{91 92} As for Africans, the available evidence suggests Chinese engagement is being met with enthusiasm. Large scale infrastructure development and burgeoning financial aid and investment, especially when combined with China's "no-strings attached" approach and effective, efficient execution, are convincing the indigenous population that China's interests align with its own. Consequently, a future where China has a firm foothold on the continent is all but inevitable.

On a global scale, China is going to grow to compete with the United States. It is unlikely the status quo will manifest otherwise. The United States can either obstinately obstruct China's emergence as a global superpower or it can strategically embrace it. While obstructionism offers to impede China's progress, it is shortsighted, and likely to foster Chinese animus. Alternatively, a strategic embrace would allow the U.S. to benefit from China's resource expenditures and better focus on buttressing U.S. spheres of influence in a manner that offsets Chinese gains. Ultimately, a strategic embrace will better position the U.S. to maintain a favorable global balance of power while also allowing it to dictate the narrative for the inevitable competition that is likely to unfold between the United States and China.

Thus, the U.S. would do well to read the tea leaves for what they are. This is not to suggest a policy of complicit abdication but rather a policy of conservation through consolidation. To accomplish this fete, the U.S. will need to be wise in its allocation of resources and prescient of Chinese aspirations. Under the auspices of burden-sharing, the U.S. can conserve its own resources by leveraging China's common interests toward its own ends. This would allow the U.S. to benefit in the short term from Chinese resources being brought to bear while simultaneously sparing American resources for other lines of effort that focus on the long term – efforts not in alignment with Chinese interests. Such resource conservation and consolidation can ensure American spheres of influence are prioritized, maintained and reinforced adequately. Meanwhile, the U.S. would allot itself the geopolitical latitude to magnanimously welcome the productive participation and rise of China as a global partner.

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A strategic embrace will promote African development, foster cooperative dialogue between the U.S. and China, augment American national security efforts in the short term, and enable the U.S. to strategically reallocate resources to address the national security threats of the future. Under the circumstances, such a policy is the most advantageous course of action the United States has at its disposal.

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