

AFRICA: THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA COURT THE CONTINENT

David H. Shinn

The United States and China are the two most important bilateral, external actors in Africa today. While the United States wields more influence in most of Africa's fifty-three countries, China has surpassed it in a number of states and is challenging it in others. Both countries look to Africa as an increasingly significant source of raw materials, especially oil. China, more than the United States, views Africa from a long-term strategic perspective. Both countries seek political and economic support in international forums from African countries, which constitute more than a quarter of the membership of the United Nations. The interests of the United States and China in Africa are more similar than dissimilar. There will inevitably be some competition over access to African natural resources and political support, but there are even greater opportunities for cooperation that can benefit African nations.

While this analysis looks only at the role of China and the United States in Africa, it is important to keep in mind that there has been a recent expansion of interest in the continent by a number of other countries. Following the end of the Cold War, attention by Western nations, especially the former colonial powers, tapered off and has only recently returned. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in a significant decrease in engagement on the continent by the former communist bloc countries, although Russia has in the past two years shown renewed interest in Africa. Japan and South Korea have maintained their economic links. The major change, however, has been increased engagement in the past decade by China, India, Brazil, several Arab gulf states, Iran and most recently Turkey. Although the global economic crisis may slow down some of this new attention, the playing field in Africa has become more crowded. In addition, the relationships have changed from efforts to obtain political influence by opposing sides during the Cold War to a post-Cold War emphasis by all outside actors on developing stronger economic and commercial ties with Africa.

The recent economic downturn poses new challenges for the interaction of both the United States and China with African countries. While all three parties will suffer to some extent, China is better situated over the short-term to weather the storm. It has a US\$2 trillion supply of foreign reserves, a current account surplus, minimal links to foreign banks and a budget surplus. Consequently, China is in a stronger position than the United States to maintain solid trade and economic ties with Africa. As of late 2008, China held \$653 billion in U.S.

With US\$2 trillion in foreign reserves and current account and budget surpluses, China is in a stronger position than the United States to maintain economic ties with Africa.

treasury securities out of a total of \$3 trillion held by all nations.¹ China's holdings constituted more than any other country or about 22 percent of all U.S. securities owned by foreigners. Because of this enormous investment, China has some leverage that could work to its advantage as it competes with the United States in other parts of the world, including Africa. The United States will be reluctant to pick a fight with China on African issues that are marginal to U.S. security.

The new Obama administration will inevitably make some changes in the U.S. approach toward Africa and may reassess the way the United States interacts with China on the continent. Neither China nor Africa was a significant campaign issue.

The Obama team made clear that it would work to fight global poverty, root out corruption, continue efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, provide debt relief, encourage a green revolution in Africa, support democratization efforts, finance counter-terrorism cooperation, build health infrastructure and launch a global energy and environment initiative to combat climate change.² Except for the focus on democratization and possibly climate change, none of these issues should pose a problem for United States-China interaction in Africa.

President Obama has said the two countries should seek to find common ground upon which they can better contribute to Africa's development. However, he has also expressed strong support for establishment of a "no-fly" zone in Darfur, which will encounter vociferous opposition from China.³ Obama said he would try to draw China into the international system and work with it on shared political, economic, environmental and security objectives. Obama urged cooperation to create more secure, affordable and dependable energy supplies. He added that the United States must be frank with China when there are differences on human rights issues.⁴

COMPARING THE INTERESTS OF CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES IN AFRICA

China has four principal interests in Africa. First, it wants to ensure access to the oil, minerals and agricultural products that contribute to China's security and GDP growth rate, which has averaged almost 10 percent annually over the last three decades.⁵ Second, China desires good relations with all African countries so it can count on their political and economic support in regional and international forums. Third, it seeks to end Taiwan's diplomatic presence on the continent and to replace it with recognition of Beijing. Fourth, China wants to significantly increase its exports as African economies become stronger and Africans become wealthier.⁶

While most Chinese officials are quick to deny that access to African natural resources is their top priority, both Chinese trade patterns and investment in the continent suggest otherwise. China obtained 33 percent of its imported oil from Africa in 2006 and even larger percentages of minerals such as cobalt and manganese.⁷ There is a widely held belief that if China's annual GDP growth rate drops below 8 percent, it will pose problems for the current leaders of China's Communist Party.⁸ This is a situation they will make every effort to avoid. In a recent discussion with the author, a senior Communist Party official was optimistic that even with the global economic crisis the country's GDP growth rate would not fall below this level in 2009.⁹

Independent African countries were instrumental in supporting Beijing's admission into the United Nations in 1971. China has never forgotten this fact and recognizes that African votes are crucial to supporting its policies in forums such as the World Trade Organization. Many African governments hold views on human rights issues that are similar to those of China. They support each other in public statements and in confronting criticism from the West in the UN Human Rights Council and elsewhere.

Four African countries—Gambia, Burkina Faso, Swaziland and São Tomé and Príncipe—still recognize Taiwan. Although none of these countries is particularly important, China has worked energetically to ensure that it does not lose the recognition of countries that now recognize Beijing. In addition, China has attempted to convince those that have relations with Taiwan to switch allegiance. Beijing does not oppose Taipei's commercial interests in Africa, but insists that African governments accept the "one China" principle if they want relations with China.

In recent years, Africa has collectively maintained a small trade surplus with China thanks primarily to large oil exports from several countries. Chinese exports to Africa constitute less than 3 percent of total exports and consist primarily of manufactured products, machinery and transport equipment.¹⁰ In spite of the

small percentage of its exports going to Africa, both large Chinese companies and small traders assiduously cultivate African markets. Although there are huge regional variations, Africa's 965 million people have an unusually high population growth rate.¹¹ Looking to the future, China has every intention of maximizing its exports to Africa.

U.S. interests in Africa are surprisingly similar to those of China. In 2006, it received 22 percent of its imported oil from Africa.¹² Although this was a smaller percentage than China's, it constituted a higher total amount because the United States imports considerably more oil than does China. The United States relies much less on Africa for imported minerals. Like China, the United States sees Africa as a market for its exports, but it is less engaged than China in promoting exports to Africa. To some extent, the close relationship between the Chinese state and its large companies provides an advantage not shared by private American companies with the U.S. government.

The United States is as interested as China in obtaining political and economic support of African countries in international forums. At the governmental level, however, it has not worked as hard in recent years as China to cultivate the support of African governments. In addition, some U.S. foreign policies have not been well received by many African leaders. For example, provision of U.S. aid contingent upon political and economic reform has been largely unpopular. Unlike China, the United States does not need to concern itself with countering a competitor seeking diplomatic recognition on the continent.

A number of security issues, especially counterterrorism, have risen to the top of the list of U.S. interests in Africa. Since September 11, 2001, the United States has devoted considerable resources, particularly in North Africa, the Sahel—the region south of the Sahara and north of the savanna belt—and East Africa, to combating terrorism and assisting African governments to do the same. In 2002, the United States established a military base in Djibouti to improve its ability to counter terrorism in the region. This distinguishes U.S. interests from those of China, which has no military bases in Africa and professes not to desire any. On the other hand, increasing attacks on Chinese personnel in countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan and Nigeria may cause China to pay more attention to security concerns. Following efforts by pirates to seize Chinese ships off Somalia, Beijing sent two destroyers and a supply ship to the region to help an international naval force combat piracy.¹³

U.S. AND CHINA STRATEGY TOWARDS AFRICA

Important differences in governmental philosophy play a large role in determining how the United States and China view foreign policy strategy. Although it has many advantages, the political system in Washington is not ideal for pro-

moting long-term strategic thinking. A change at the head of the executive branch every four or eight years does not encourage planning that looks decades into the future. The American system must also account for Congressional interests and those of numerous private constituencies. China, with its top-down, communist system of government and a history of looking ahead decades or even generations, operates more strategically. It can also make long-term policy from the top, sometimes quickly, without having to take into account a wide range of domestic interest groups.

The U.S. approach towards Africa since the end of the Second World War has been surprisingly consistent in view of the regular changes in administrations. This may be due more, however, to the relatively low priority accorded Africa by both Republican and Democratic administrations over the years. During the Cold War, the United States obsessed over combating communist influence in Africa. After September 11, a strategy based on counterterrorism became the overriding concern. Humanitarian assistance has consistently remained an important theme of American policy toward Africa. Support for sustainable development, increased trade and investment, democratization and human rights, debt relief and improvement of the environment have been more episodic goals only sometimes honored in the breach. At the policy level, however, there has rarely been an attempt to design a strategy toward Africa that looks beyond a few years. Although the U.S. intelligence community has been more forward looking, its efforts seldom translate into long-term strategic policy.

In 1953, Zhou Enlai proposed “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” as the preamble for the Indian-Chinese Trading Treaty in Tibet. China then incorporated these five principles into the “Ten Principles of Bandung” enunciated at the 1955 Asian-African conference in Indonesia. The original five principles include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.¹⁴ Although China has updated the five principles, they remain essentially intact. China’s widely publicized white paper entitled “China’s African Policy,” issued in 2006 reaffirmed them.¹⁵ This white paper effectively serves as China’s strategy document for dealing with Africa in the decades to come. The U.S. Joint Forces Command is one of several organizations to conclude recently that China is pursuing long-term strategic goals.¹⁶

While Chinese pronouncements over the years convey an enviable attention to long-term strategic objectives and even suggest that China has been consistent in its principles, the track record suggests a more nuanced conclusion. China did consistently support African liberation movements and the end of minority rule on the continent. On the other hand, it carefully selected the liberation groups that it

assisted, often choosing organizations during the Sino-Soviet split that it perceived to be pro-China and anti-Soviet. Of greater concern in view of its stated respect for non-interference in African countries, China established a record during the 1960s of supporting several African revolutionary groups that opposed governments in independent countries such as the Congo, Burundi, Niger and Cameroon. As for the principle of “mutual benefit,” some of its recent concessionary loans could be interpreted as being of more benefit to China than the African country receiving the loan.

U.S. AND CHINESE STRUCTURES FOR IMPLEMENTING RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

The United States and China, because of their distinct forms of government and cultural backgrounds, have different bureaucratic structures for interacting with Africa. Not surprisingly, the United States provides far more information to the public on the nature of its interaction with African countries. China, with a long history of opaqueness, offers much less information, but in recent years has become more forthcoming. Chinese government Web sites even provide English translations of increasingly more data. Nevertheless, it is still impossible, for example, to obtain statistics on the annual level of Chinese assistance for each African country.¹⁷ Information on military cooperation rarely extends beyond an announcement of exchange visits, the names of the participants and platitudes about good military ties between the two parties.

U.S. structures for making and implementing policy towards Africa are well known and require little elaboration. At the highest level, the president receives guidance from the National Security Council, relevant departments of government and Congress before making the most important policy decisions. The Africa Bureau of the State Department has responsibility for developing and implementing policy towards sub-Saharan Africa, while the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs is responsible for North Africa. Depending on the nature of the subject, however, the State Department often shares responsibility with the Department of Defense on security matters, the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Trade Representative on trade issues, the Treasury Department on international debt and financial issues, the Federal Bureau of Investigation on legal matters and so forth. The U.S. Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Corporation are the principal assistance agencies, while the Export-Import Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation play important roles in trade and investment promotion. The directors of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency provide intelligence support. In 2007, Washington estab-

lished a new military command, AFRICOM, devoted exclusively to Africa. It combines the responsibility for Africa previously held by three separate military commands.

The Chinese structure, although similar in some respects, functions differently because of greater concentration of decision-making power at the top and the role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and provincial governments. The highest organ of executive power is the State Council, which includes the premier, vice-premiers, ministers and others. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs advises Chinese leaders and helps implement African policy. It divides responsibility between a unit for sub-Saharan Africa and one for West Asia and North Africa. The Ministry of Commerce plays a far more important role than its U.S. counterpart. The Chinese Department of Foreign Aid has the central role in administering aid projects. It also provides policy advice to senior decision-makers and encourages investment and trade in Africa. It has operational authority over the economic and commercial staff assigned to Chinese embassies in Africa that are under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸ The United States follows the same system in the case of commercial, but not economic, officers assigned to American embassies by the Department of Commerce.

China's State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) has no U.S. equivalent. It ranks equally with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce. It is either the sole owner of an SOE or maintains a controlling share of stock in a public SOE. SASAC has branch offices in Africa. Chinese provincial and city governments have some authority over private firms and SOEs as a result of their links to local Ministry of Commerce or SASAC offices. Chinese cities responsible for large quantities of exports encourage SOEs and private companies to expand their operations in Africa. In a related development, China established in 2004 the China-Africa Business Council jointly with the UN Development Program to support China's private sector investment in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁹

China's Export-Import Bank has become an important part of its engagement in Africa. It is the only state-owned entity used by the government to distribute official economic assistance. It provides low-interest loans to governments and encourages Chinese firms to invest in Africa through export credits, loans for overseas projects and international guarantees. These loans usually result in large infrastructure projects built by Chinese companies with Chinese materials and often using a significant proportion of Chinese labor. China's state-controlled banks are also becoming increasingly active in Africa.²⁰ In 2007, for example, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China purchased a 20 percent share of the Johannesburg-based Standard Bank for \$5.5 billion.²¹

China uses several other organizations to expand and monitor its ties with African countries. The Communist Party of China's (CPC) International Department and its affiliated organizations interact with African counterparts to lay the foundation for commercial and diplomatic cooperation, exchange visits and ensure that policies are implemented in accordance with the CPC's strategic objectives.²² China has a long history of providing financial support and military training for African liberation groups. This has developed over the years into military cooperation with independent African governments. Links between China's Central Military Commission and People's Liberation Army and their African counterparts have become an important part of the bilateral relationship.²³ The government's principal news organization, *Xinhua*, also has long and significant ties to Africa. It has large regional bureaus in Cairo and Nairobi and more than twenty branch offices throughout Africa that report developments on the continent and feed information to African news services. *Xinhua* personnel today are usually well-trained, knowledgeable and language qualified.²⁴

In 2000, China and Africa created a unique mechanism to promote dialogue between the two parties and coordinate China's strategy toward Africa more effectively. Known as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), it meets every three years at the head of state level, alternating between Beijing and an African capital. It provides a policy framework for building Sino-African relations through high-level consultation and diplomatic interaction. The next FOCAC summit will take place in Cairo in 2009.²⁵

Both the United States and China have the same number of embassies in Africa—forty-eight each. However, Beijing has more diplomatic offices—including embassies and consular offices—than does Washington, in spite of the fact that only forty-nine African countries recognize China while all fifty-three recognize the United States. With the exception of Somalia, where for security reasons neither the United States nor China has a diplomatic presence, China has a diplomatic mission at the embassy level in every African country with which it has diplomatic relations. For cost saving or security reasons, the United States closed its embassies in Guinea-Bissau, Seychelles and Comoro Islands, while China pointedly maintained its embassies in all three countries. The United States never opened one in São Tomé and Príncipe. The United States has six independent consulates and one branch office in Africa, while China has nine independent consulates there.²⁶ Only one of the countries—Comoro Islands—that recognizes China does not have an embassy in Beijing.²⁷ Four African countries—Comoro Islands, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia—that recognize the United States do not have embassies in Washington, although two of them have missions at the UN in New York accredited to the United States.²⁸

TACTICAL DIFFERENCES IN ENGAGING WITH AFRICA

China and the United States use essentially the same political, economic, military and cultural tools and tactics for implementing their relations with African countries. There are occasionally important differences in the way they apply these tools. Probably due to their cultural background, Chinese officials interact with Africans more humbly than is the pattern demonstrated by American counterparts. Having served as the leader of the Western world since the end of the Second World War and experienced a generation as the world's only super-power has unfortunately resulted in the implementation of U.S. foreign policy in a manner that often appears arrogant and insensitive to the concerns of others. Although China has made some missteps in Africa, it has done a much better job than the United States in mastering humility while engaging with Africans.

China emphasizes high-level personal contact in consolidating its relations with African leaders. President Hu Jintao has made four trips to Africa visiting multiple countries since he became president in 2003. Premier Wen Jiabao has been a frequent visitor to Africa. In 1991, China's foreign minister began making annual visits, normally in January, to Africa.²⁹ African leaders have taken note of and appreciate this attention. Chinese leaders from key ministries, the Communist Party's International Department and the People's Liberation Army also make frequent trips to Africa. China is equally attentive to receiving African leaders in Beijing.³⁰ No American administration, with the possible exception of President Clinton's second term, has ever sent so many high-level officials to Africa. The United States does receive a large number of African delegations, though they often come because the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have their headquarters in Washington and the United Nations is in New York.

While China places a premium on ensuring good relations with African government leaders, elites affiliated with them and the business community, the United States makes a much greater effort to reach out to other elements of African society. Unlike the United States, China has made relatively little effort to develop close relations with African civil society, labor unions, non-governmental organizations and opposition political parties. In many African countries these organizations are more important than their counterparts in China, if they exist at all. The United States excels in establishing close ties with these groups.³¹

Most Chinese assistance to Africa is in the form of low-interest loans while nearly all U.S. aid consists of grants. The magnitude of the loans in recent years has been impressive, e.g. \$13 billion to Angola, \$9 billion to Democratic Republic of the Congo and \$5 billion to Niger.³² Because Chinese loans are generally tied to large infrastructure projects carried out by Chinese companies and often based on repayment by exporting oil or minerals to China, they constitute a barter

agreement rather than aid. Compared to the United States, Chinese grant aid is exceedingly modest. Nevertheless, China is one of the few countries that offers African governments competitive bids for building roads, dams, government buildings, telecommunication networks and so on. Many African leaders have placed the building of infrastructure at the top of their agenda, and China has responded enthusiastically, albeit to its own advantage. Western governments largely ended financing for infrastructure projects more than a decade ago. Even when private Western companies bid on these projects today, their bids are usually considerably higher than those from Chinese companies. As a result, China has filled the void left in recent years by Western companies.³³

Special economic zones (SEZ) have achieved considerable success in China, which is now transferring the concept to Africa. They offer Chinese companies favorable incentives, tax breaks and dependable electrical power. The SEZs provide infrastructure corridors that link fragmented African producers and markets in China. The SEZs in Africa offer special privileges to Chinese firms that are at least temporarily unavailable to other foreign firms. China's SEZs in Africa include a hub in Zambia's Copper Belt, two trade zones in Nigeria, an economic and trade zone in Egypt and an industrial park in Ethiopia.³⁴ The United States has no similar programs in Africa.

An especially successful Chinese aid program in Africa has been the sending of medical teams, beginning in Algeria in 1963. By the end of 2005, China had dispatched more than 15,000 medical personnel to forty-seven African countries and claimed to have treated about 170 million patients.³⁵ Over the past forty years in Tanzania alone, more than 1,000 doctors from China's Shandong province provided medical service in the country. The current Chinese medical team in Tanzania consists of twenty-five doctors who treat more than 60,000 outpatients and 17,000 inpatients annually.³⁶ While the U.S. has no comparable program, it has a highly successful Peace Corps operation that since 1961 has sent more than 60,000 volunteers to forty-six African countries.³⁷ China initiated its own volunteer program to Africa in 2005 when it sent twelve young Chinese to Ethiopia.³⁸ China is sending 300 young volunteers to Africa in 2009. They will engage in activities such as teaching Chinese, encouraging poultry technology and introducing traditional Chinese medicinal treatments in local hospitals.³⁹

China has become an active participant in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, especially since 2000. By late 2008, China had more than 1,600 military and police personnel assigned to six of the seven UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. The largest Chinese contingents were in Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, southern Sudan and Darfur. China has far more peacekeepers in Africa than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council. African

and non-African leaders have praised China's contribution to this effort. There is some evidence that China intends to expand its peacekeeping activities and may also take greater interest in rescue and relief tasks, counterterrorism exercises and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The United States has only about forty military personnel assigned to UN missions in Africa, although it pays a much higher proportion of the peacekeeping budget and does considerably more training of African peacekeepers than China.⁴⁰

Another difference between China and the United States is the growing number of Chinese communities in Africa. Those in Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa date back more than a century; the Chinese who constitute these older communities tend to have citizenship of the host country and have varying degrees of sympathy with Beijing. The newer communities are found throughout Africa, and consist mainly of small traders and business persons. Including both recent arrivals and those who trace their ancestry back a generation or more, South Africa has the largest Chinese community, which most knowledgeable observers estimate at about 300,000 people. Chinatowns have developed in cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Lagos and Dakar. These communities are important to Beijing as they serve as a natural link to the local business community and assist trade and investment.⁴¹

THE AFRICAN RESPONSE TO CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT

African government officials almost universally welcome China's expanded engagement on the continent. They view it as an alternative source of financial assistance and political support especially when Western countries are not forthcoming.⁴² African Union Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, who is half Chinese, recently stated that "China is Africa's key strategic partner."⁴³ Sudan and Zimbabwe, two countries treated as pariahs by the United States, are particularly beholden to China. Other states probably have closer links to China than to the United States. Candidates include Angola, Algeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Niger, Zambia, Mauritania, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau and the Comoro Islands. Even traditionally close allies of the United States, such as Ethiopia and Kenya, seem to be moving in the direction of China. While most African leaders seek stronger ties with China, a few have expressed concerns about China's trade and investment practices. South African President Thabo Mbeki has asked if China's relations with Africa are significantly different than those of the former colonizing powers.⁴⁴ There was an outcry several years ago when Chinese textile exports forced many African mills to shut down, resulting in significant loss of jobs.⁴⁵ Although most African officials understand that China is pursuing its own interests in Africa and they may privately harbor some concerns, they remain

anxious to benefit from China's engagement.⁴⁶

African representatives of civil society, labor unions, non-governmental organizations and opposition political parties have a far more mixed reaction to China's engagement on the continent. Some are supportive, others hostile and still others merely skeptical of China's ultimate goals. Those organizations that promote more democratic governance, economic policy reform and improved human rights practices tend to be the most negative towards China. Labor union representatives from the textile sector are especially unhappy with China. African business people generally welcome China's growing trade and investment, although those small African traders and owners of local industries that have been shut down or lost business due to Chinese competition are critical. African consumers welcome the lower prices of Chinese products, but some consumers complain about low quality or counterfeit goods.⁴⁷

African academics tend to write supportively of China's engagement, although there are some critics. Adama Gaye, visiting Senegalese research associate at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies' African Studies Program, has waxed enthusiastically about the activities of China in Africa.⁴⁸ South African professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah has been equally positive about the relationship.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Congolese professor Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo has worried that the Chinese are too focused on maintaining the political status quo in Africa and lack good interactions with Africa's private sector.⁵⁰ Sudanese professor Ali Abdalla Ali has moved from being an outspoken advocate of Chinese activities in Sudan to a recent critic.⁵¹

Although the data cover relatively few African countries, the Pew Global Attitudes Project provides some useful insights on the way Africans perceive the United States and China. A global survey in mid-2007 included twelve African countries; five had a more favorable opinion of the United States, and seven had a more favorable view of China. When respondents in ten sub-Saharan African states were asked whether the influence of China and the United States was positive, only South Africa gave China less than a 50 percent positive rating while Tanzania and Ethiopia placed the United States below 50 percent. More importantly, all ten of the countries except South Africa thought China's influence was more positive than the United States' influence, and usually by a significant margin.⁵²

A survey in mid-2008 looked only at four African countries—Egypt, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa. It found that Egypt, Nigeria and Tanzania had a more favorable view of China while South Africa had a more favorable opinion of the United States. More Egyptian respondents concluded that the influence of both China and the United States is a bad thing rather than a good thing. Nigerians, Tanzanians and South Africans were more positive than negative about both coun-

tries. When asked if China will replace the United States as the world's leading superpower, most Egyptians said it will never happen. A plurality of Tanzanians and Nigerians said it will happen or has already happened, and South Africans were about equally divided.⁵³

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER


The most important lesson that the United States could learn from China is to engage Africa and the rest of the world with greater humility. Listening to African leaders and preaching to them less would go a long way in creating a more effective dialogue. This does not mean the United States should end calls for policy reform and criticism of corruption and human rights abuses, but it does require that the United States first put its own house in order so that it is in a stronger position to teach by example rather than gratuitous pontification. In recent decades, the United States has too often been heavy handed in the way that it treated countries with which it had differences. At the same time, it would be helpful if the Chinese spoke more frankly with African governments that engage in egregious human rights abuses, major corruption and demonstrably poor governance. Because of its own shortcomings, China is not likely to raise human rights issues, but it may be more willing to discuss corruption and even governance problems.

China works harder to develop strong government-to-government relations with most African countries than does the United States. China has one important advantage: Because of its stated policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of African states, it avoids discussions about most controversial issues. The United States should continue to raise these issues, albeit exercising greater humility and sometimes using a different tone. However, China also makes a concerted effort to engage in high-level personal contact with a wide range of African officials. This has paid huge dividends and should be emulated by the United States. This will require more visits to Africa by senior American officials and more invitations to Africans to visit the United States. For its part, China should learn from the United States to expand contact with African civil society, labor unions, non-governmental organizations and opposition political parties. Any well-led American embassy in Africa has wide contacts with these groups and, as a result, has a better understanding of the country. Although contacts with such groups sometimes irritate the host government, it is a price worth paying.

Once the United States can reduce significantly its responsibilities in Iraq and Afghanistan, it should learn from China and contribute more security personnel to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. It seems hypocritical, for example, when the United States asks the rest of the world to offer up troops for the UN operation in Darfur, or suggests that the UN should send peacekeepers to Somalia, when it is

clearly unprepared to contribute troops. For its part, China might join the United States and other Western countries in training Africans to take part in peacekeeping operations on the continent. Both the United States and China seek more stability in Africa and this is one way to help achieve this goal.

Although China has become more open and willing to share information, it still has a long way to go. Beijing could learn from the United States and the West about the utility of greater openness on topics such as assistance and investment in Africa. These are not security issues. More information from China and greater interaction with Western donors would help to improve coordination and reduce duplication to the benefit of Africans. Greater sharing will also build confidence between China and the United States.

Finally, the United States and China need to focus on identifying areas where they can cooperate in ways that will also benefit Africa. This is not a part of the world where China and the United States find themselves in conflict or where competition should loom large in the relationship. Even in the case of Darfur, where important policy differences separate Beijing and Washington, China worked behind the scenes to bring about a more flexible policy by the Sudanese government. Potential areas for cooperation include collaboration in peacekeeping operations, energy development, joint assistance projects in agriculture and public health, building stronger African export capacity and improving environmental practices of both Africans and foreigners as they engage in trade and aid projects on the continent.⁵⁴ 

NOTES

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² "Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Strategy to Promote Global Development and Democracy," (campaign material on the Obama-Biden Web site), www.barackobama.com/pdf/Issues/Fact_Sheet_Foreign_Policy_Democratization_and_Development_FINAL.pdf.

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⁶ David Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, "Responding to China in Africa," (policy paper, American Foreign Policy Council, Washington, DC, June 2008), www.afpc.org/publication_listings/viewPolicyPaper/236; Uche Ewelukwa Ofodile, "Trade, Empires, and Subjects—China-Africa Trade: A New Fair Trade Arrangement, or the Third Scramble for Africa?" *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 41, no. 2 (March 2008), 532-36.

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- ⁸ Discussions between the author and various Chinese officials and scholars in Beijing during visits in January and March 2007.
- ⁹ Communist Party official, in discussion with author, Washington, DC, 13 December 2008.
- ¹⁰ Computation of China's exports to Africa was tabulated by the author using data from the International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 2007* (Washington, DC, IMF, 2007), 131.
- ¹¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2007, "World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision, Highlights," (Working Paper no. ESA/P/WP.202).
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