

## U.S. STRATEGY, AFRICAN KEY ACTORS, AND CHINA

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2009

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**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 20-02-2009		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Strategy Research Project		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b>	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> U.S. Strategy, African Key Actors, and China				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Lieutenant Colonel Erik B. Kraft				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> G. K. Cunningham Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations				<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Distribution A: Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The penetration of Chinese companies into the resource sectors and markets of Africa since the year 2000 represents a serious challenge to all countries seeking to increase trade and influence on the continent. For the United States, Chinese activism in Africa undermined the former administration's desire to "work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity." Few authors recommend challenging China's growing ascendancy in Africa. Most recommend either working with China in Africa or adopting a "wait and see" attitude. The purpose of this project is to recognize the strategic implications of Chinese activity in Africa to U.S. national security interests and offer a strategy to counter China's neocolonial encroachment on the continent.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> African Political Elites, Regional Organizations, African Civil Society, African Populations, Noninterference, Engagement Strategy					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b> UNCLASSIFIED	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> UNCLASSIFIED	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> UNCLASSIFIED			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>
			UNLIMITED	28	



USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **ABSTRACT**

**AUTHOR:** Lieutenant Colonel Erik B. Kraft  
**TITLE:** U.S. Strategy, African Key Actors, and China  
**FORMAT:** Strategy Research Project  
**DATE:** 20 February 2009    **WORD COUNT:** 5,655    **PAGES:** 28  
**KEY TERMS:** African Political Elites, Regional Organizations, African Civil Society, African Populations, Noninterference, Engagement Strategy  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified

The penetration of Chinese companies into the resource sectors and markets of Africa since the year 2000 represents a serious challenge to all countries seeking to increase trade and influence on the continent. For the United States, Chinese activism in Africa undermined the former administration's desire to "work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace, and growing prosperity." Few authors recommend challenging China's growing ascendancy in Africa. Most recommend either working with China in Africa or adopting a "wait and see" attitude. The purpose of this project is to recognize the strategic implications of Chinese activity in Africa to U.S. national security interests and offer a strategy to counter China's neocolonial encroachment on the continent.



## U.S. STRATEGY, AFRICAN KEY ACTORS, AND CHINA

China-Africa trade will exceed 100 billion dollars this year based on figures from the first six months of 2008. In 2007 China-Africa trade was 73 billion dollars.<sup>1</sup>

—China's General Administration of Customs

To Western nations, the China threat in Africa is not simply a matter of the sheer quantity of China-Africa trade but it is as much the astronomical rate of growth in trade Beijing has enjoyed on the continent. Assuming that China's General Administration of Customs figures are accurate, China-Africa trade has increased tenfold since 2001 making them Africa's third largest economic partner after the United States and the European Union.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that the rise of China in Africa has its roots in the domestic imperatives of fueling China's dramatic industrial growth, dismissing the growing competition between Beijing and Washington as merely economic does not take into account the true nature of China's strategic concepts or ways in which they seek to achieve their ends. At the very heart of the matter, competition between the United States and China in Africa is one over influence and of who will set the agenda for African growth and development, the West or the East. Key actors in this drama include both internal actors (African political elites, African regional organizations, the African people, and African civil society) and external actors (nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations, the Chinese government, the United States and other third party external countries). This paper will examine the effect of China's support of the Beijing consensus and its policy of noninterference in Africa on the four major African internal key actors and by doing so will expose multiple friction

points that the United States can exploit using a tailored and nuanced strategy to promote responsible Chinese stewardship in Africa.

### China's Policy for Africa

China's commercial and political activities in Africa have historical precedence, demonstrated by the early trade voyages of Admiral Zheng He to East Africa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to Mao's assistance of various African liberation movements during the Cold War period.<sup>3</sup> As always, China's engagement in Africa is based on its own interests that do not necessarily correspond with the interests of Africa.<sup>4</sup> What has changed is a shift in Beijing's perceived interests on the continent, from an ideological desire to be the leader of the developing world to the desire to build global influence and secure access to natural resources, particularly oil.<sup>5</sup> China's thirst for oil is fueled by its increasing domestic consumption growing at a rate of 8% per annum (Chinese heavy industry consumes over 65% of China's oil) as well as concerns over the stability of global oil markets.<sup>6</sup> Of these two national interests, China perceives the economic imperatives of ensuring access to energy, securing raw materials and developing markets for Chinese manufactured goods its number one priority.<sup>7</sup> China's voracious appetite for natural resources has made it the largest consumer of strategic commodities including zinc, nickel, copper and crude oil, as well as tropical woods.<sup>8</sup> Although expanding global influence, to include the further isolation of Taiwan, is second to the economic drivers of China's engagement in Africa, it still features prominently in Beijing's overall strategy.<sup>9</sup>

In order to achieve its national objectives in Africa of securing access to resources, growing markets for Chinese goods, and allowing Beijing to assume greater global influence, China employs the strategic concept of noninterference.<sup>10</sup> Joshua

Kurlantzick, in testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review

Commission portrays China's noninterference doctrine as follows:

First, Beijing ties its efforts into a "win-win" set of values — into the idea that China is growing into a preeminent power but supports a world in which nations would not use hard power to interfere in other nations' affairs and in which all countries can benefit from China's rise. China contrasts this philosophy with that of the US, which Beijing portrays as constantly asking other nations for concessions in the economic and security realms...Beijing's new diplomacy displays a level of pragmatism unthinkable to a previous generation of Chinese leaders.<sup>11</sup>

Simply put, noninterference places the sovereignty of the state as sacrosanct and all internal issues such as corruption, ethnic strife, and lack of transparency are considered domestic problems that should be settled internally without external interference. This policy is not solely an outgrowth of economic issues — China's history of being interfered with is long and has left an indelible mark on its foreign policy.

The application of noninterference manifests itself in the absence of conditions governing China's trade and aid to African nations. The sole requirement China imposes on African states to secure Chinese aid is the recognition of the People's Republic of China vice Taiwan. Without additional conditions, China can move faster and is more agile in seizing opportunities on the continent when they present themselves.<sup>12</sup> Sahr Johnny, the ambassador to China from Sierra Leone, commented on this phenomenon when he said: "They just come and do it. We don't start to hold meetings about environmental impact assessments and human rights and bad governance and good governance. I'm not saying that's the right thing to do. I'm just saying Chinese investment is succeeding because they don't set very high benchmarks."<sup>13</sup> For those African nations resentful of external interference into their domestic affairs, China's trade and aid policy is highly attractive.

The fact that China has little regard for human rights, the environment, and transparency domestically, let alone in its external affairs with African nations, also plays well with certain African political leaders. African leaders trying to avoid indigenous and international pressures to reform can turn to China for sources of revenue to continue their system of patronage and arms to suppress internal dissent. In some instances such as in the Sudan and Zimbabwe, China's practice of noninterference in Africa supports abusive dictators, retarded economic development and all but advocates the theft of national wealth but the political elites.<sup>14</sup>

As a means to carry out its strategic concept and achieve its national objectives in Africa, China skillfully wields its elements of national power into a comprehensive one-stop-shop approach to fostering trade with Africa. China's statist approach to its economy allows Beijing to focus all means of their national power in promoting Chinese trade and businesses in Africa. "Contracts guaranteeing China its desired access to oil or key minerals, as in Angola, or Nigeria, can be combined with soft loans and much-needed infrastructure projects such as highways and railways, and low cost, high-impact 'add-ons' such as rural development projects, industrial parks for small firms, and training and scholarships."<sup>15</sup> China chooses to concentrate on huge infrastructural investments, production and trade, and investments – and less on charity and the social sectors because such aid benefits China's businesses and economies.<sup>16</sup> Unconditional developmental aid and loans used to finance infrastructure projects are often carried out by Chinese companies and Chinese labor.<sup>17</sup> In addition to utilizing its economic and fiscal elements of national power, China also offers military incentives and diplomatic support to African nations. China's use of one-stop-shop packages, linking economic

concessions to aid and investment, is extremely attractive to African leaders and in effect undermines the ability of Western firms to successfully compete. A breakdown of some the specific mechanisms of Chinese aid and trade follow.

The Chinese are able to succeed in the building of large infrastructure projects because they have insulated their companies from much of the corruption and delays that would normally be associated with undertaking large projects in Africa. Many African recipients of Chinese infrastructure aid never receive the loan money from the Chinese EXIM bank approved by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. Known as concessional lending, the money is given directly to a Chinese contractor who in turn fuels the Chinese economy by contracting and buying Chinese equipment, materials, and labor for the infrastructure projects in Africa. Chinese concessional loans do not promote the development of indigenous African businesses. Additionally, the African nation acquires additional debt burden and is responsible for paying an average of 2.85% interest for terms of up to 20 years. The main purpose behind these loans is to “support and assist Chinese firms doing business in Africa overcome the problem of insufficient funding.”<sup>18</sup> Basically these loans are government subsidies to Chinese businesses. In addition to subsidizing Chinese companies, focusing aid on large infrastructure projects in Africa has additional benefits. Infrastructure projects are tangible symbols of Beijing’s support to African countries. By retaining control of all funds, the Chinese can ensure that projects are completed and the loans are not misappropriated. Moreover, China overcomes the lack of infrastructure as a major impediment for further Chinese economic penetration by building what their businesses lack.

Chinese trade, commercial activities, and foreign direct investment (FDI) combined with Official Development Assistance (ODA) make up the majority of China's economic interaction with Africa. In 2006 ODA was 2.3 billion, FDI was .9 billion, and Chinese contracted projects on the continent represented 9.5 billion dollars. Government FDI numbers do not include the direct investment by Chinese companies so the exact numbers are much higher considering that the Industrial Commerce Bank of China invested \$5.6 billion in one transaction with South Africa. Chinese aid, investment, and commerce have continued to increase dramatically since 2006, and it is apparent that much of the growth is driven by the Chinese private sector.<sup>19</sup>

As stated earlier, the primary focus of Chinese aid and economic development in Africa is to secure access to extractive resources, particularly oil. To this end China has focused the bulk of its efforts in energy producing states and a few countries with strategic mineral reserves. "The key African countries targeted by China's Africa Policy include, but are not limited to, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Chad, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Ghana."<sup>20</sup> However, China is also willing to provide incentives and promises of aid to African nations switching official recognition from Taiwan to the Chinese mainland. Only seven African nations still officially recognize Taiwan, a realization of a 50-year policy of internationally isolating Taiwan.<sup>21</sup>

### Key Actors in the China-Africa Drama

Although China's Africa policy is primarily directed at securing the acquiescence of the political elites in charge of the various African nations, Beijing's policy has a much more far-reaching effect on social groups and organizations both in Africa and beyond

the continent. Chinese contact in Africa has simultaneously both negative and positive effects. Increased trade between China and Africa has brought much needed investment and capital to the region and China has been sending doctors, agriculture specialists, and teachers to Africa for decades. However, the tenfold increase in foreign trade since 2000 has produced a crippling trade imbalance. Similar to trade patterns of the colonial era, China extracts raw materials from Africa and then turns around and floods African markets with manufactured goods. Such an export strategy contributes to deindustrialization of Africa and depletes resources required for Africa's own future industrialization.<sup>22</sup>

There are many other issues affecting the different players engaged in the China-Africa drama. Environmental degradation, illegal and legal Chinese immigration, subpar labor conditions, and the wholesale destruction of African industries that cannot compete with their Chinese counterparts in the global market place are just a few of these. On one side of the equation, the Chinese government, African political elites, and Chinese multinational corporations benefit from Africa's favorable relationship with China. On the losing side of the equation are the African populations, nongovernmental agencies and the African civil society. At the time when the West is making amends for years of exploitation and neglect in Africa, China, under the pretense of capitalism, has arrived on the scene as the spoiler. An examination of effect of Chinese engagement on four internal African groups will highlight the friction points that Chinese policy is creating within each of these groups and expose fault lines that can be leveraged to force China to take on a more responsible role in Africa. The four groups discussed

here are African political elites, African regional organizations, African populations, and African civil society.

*African Political Elites.* For African political elites, China represents an attractive ideological alternative to Western ideals of liberal democracies and market economies. Rather than facing the truth that the paternalistic and parasitic nature of their own regimes is the biggest hindrance to the development of Africa, the political elites have seized upon China's success as a means to legitimize their hold on power:

(The) concept of a distinctive 'Chinese model' which is certainly appealing to Africa's more repressive regimes – the idea that it represents a refutation of the view that democracy is an essential precondition for development. The view is widely held that China proves the opposite - the need for strong government...leading lights of the Obasanjo faction claimed that an absence of stability and visionary leadership were the principal cause of Africa's underdevelopment and that it was these same qualities that had enabled Singapore and China to become contemporary economic miracles.<sup>23</sup>

African political elites can dispute calls for political liberalization by pointing to the economic success of China under an authoritarian and centrally controlled government.

More important for the political elite than the ideological basis for turning away from democratic reform, China offers an alternate source of funding than Western trade and development trade. "Revenues from trade (and taxes), development assistance and other means of support widen the margins of maneuver of Africa's autocrats, and help them to rein in domestic demands for democracy and respect for human rights."<sup>24</sup>

The ability to resist Western attempts to bring greater transparency, better governance and better business practices through conditions placed on economic trade and assistance is essential to many of those in power, especially the worst of the dictatorships in countries such as in Chad, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. In some of nascent democracies on the continent, however, there is a growing perception among the

political elites that the economic conditions of Chinese aid, coupled with Beijing's labor practices, the dumping of low-cost manufactured goods, the undervaluation of the Renminbi, and state support for certain industries create an unfair trade environment, not just for other foreign investors, but also for African businesses and industries.

Unfortunately, the odds of African political elites, especially those in resource-rich nations, abstaining from Chinese aid and trade practices because of the long term negative effect on development, are low. The political culture of the majority of African states is one prioritizing regime security over the security of the people. China's unconditional aid and trade, focusing on the incumbent political ruling class as the sole legitimate arbitrator of the African state, reinforces the neopatrimonial nature of the regimes. The political elites throughout Africa depend on threat of force and violence against the regimes' internal detractors and the distribution of material benefits to supporters to maintain power. China provides the arms, revenue sources, and diplomatic cover for many of the political regimes to retain their hold on power, ultimately undermining political reforms, retarding the growth of an African middle class, and breeding resentment in the disenfranchised.<sup>25</sup>

*African Regional Organizations.* African regional organizations include sub-regional organizations such as the South African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) as well as many other smaller grass roots groups on the continents. For the purposes of discussing China's relationship with African regional organizations, the African Union (AU) will be the primary focus, in particular the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a developmental framework adopted by the African

Union in July of 2001. Essentially NEPAD represents the AU's vision and strategic framework for the renewal of Africa. Although offering rhetorical and symbolic support to the AU such as building the AU's headquarters, China insists that its support to NEPAD be channeled through the China-Africa Cooperation Forum.<sup>26</sup> Rather than be bound by the AU and NEPAD framework, China prefers to work through parallel organizations which Beijing essentially sets the agenda for and controls. To this end, China established the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2000 as a mechanism to promote diplomacy, trade, and investment.

The creation of parallel regional organizations in Africa by China does not preclude Beijing from remaining engaged with the AU. NEPAD, despite its discussion of liberal democracy and human rights, remains attractive to China because of its call for major infrastructure projects in Africa.<sup>27</sup> However, NEPAD's African peer review mechanism and the AU's advocacy of external interference in African nations, to include "military intervention, in order to prevent or terminate large-scale human rights abuses and crimes against humanity" is diametrically opposed to Beijing's policy of non-interference and practices in Sudan and Zimbabwe.<sup>28</sup>

Africa would benefit from an African policy on China developed through the AU.<sup>29</sup> However, China has skillfully avoided the collective bargaining power of African nations by creating parallel Chinese-sponsored regional organizations and focusing on bilateral relations with African states outside of the AU and NEPAD frameworks. Beijing's involvement in these regional associations allows them to leverage multilateral ties to build bilateral links and exclude the United States from important gatherings; thus further undermining U.S. influence on the continent.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, an effective

common response to China's growing activism in Africa by the AU is not likely. The organization remains structurally weak and is "enfeebled by the language and cultural divides which still plague Africa's regional politics."<sup>31</sup>

*African Populations.* Perhaps no other group has suffered more from the unintended consequences of China's Africa policy than the general population of most African countries. Although Chinese trade and aid to the continent brings needed investment, infrastructure, and humanitarian assistance, the nature of the economic arrangements between Beijing and African states undermines the development of indigenous African businesses and the middle class. African industry cannot adequately compete with Chinese businesses, especially given the current level of Chinese government subsidies.

African producers are simply not in a position to compete with Chinese companies even in Africa's domestic markets, as they are unable to undercut Chinese production costs and prices. Local retailers too are faced with rapidly increasing business competition from expatriate Chinese traders. Their presence stirs significant local resentment in several African countries.<sup>32</sup>

Currently, China enjoys a high level of popularity in Africa (as does the United States). However; there is a growing trend of resentment among the African population towards Beijing. As Chinese engagement and physical presence on the continent grows, so does the friction caused by their lopsided trade, aid, and immigration practices.

Besides cheap manufactured goods, China has also exported to Africa the same disregard for labor standards, work place health and safety, and environmental concerns that they practice at home.<sup>33</sup> For example, in Zimbabwe, trade unionists complain about the abuse of workers and poor relations with indifferent Chinese management.<sup>34</sup> In Zambia, the country's opposition party ran on an anti-Chinese

platform protesting the poor labor conditions and unsafe work environment at the Chinese run copper mines. Claims that Zambians had not benefited from the lopsided trade balance with China sparked protests throughout the country. Although the opposition party was defeated, partly due to China's threat to withhold aid, resentment against the Chinese remained.<sup>35</sup> During the most recent election, Mr. Bantu's opposition party, the same party that previously ran on an anti-Chinese platform, netted almost 50% of the popular vote. The continuation of poor Chinese labor practices and the importation of cheap manufactured goods is a major source of discontent among African labor.

The pattern of Chinese exploitation in African petroleum-producing states has an even larger negative impact on the disenfranchised populations in these countries. "The Chinese and their elite partners in the Sudan government want to conceal some terrible facts about their partnership. They are joining hands to uproot poor people, expropriate their land and appropriate their natural resources."<sup>36</sup> The forced relocation of villages and killing of villagers who refuse to move by the government of Sudan has taken place to facilitate Chinese oil and infrastructure projects in Sudan. In Nigeria, where China has just secured drilling rights to several oil fields within the Niger delta region, China is supplying arms and patrol boats to the Nigerian government to suppress local unrest and revolt. Moreover, in Angola, China continues to support one of the most corrupt regimes on the continent with oil money while simultaneously undermining Western efforts to increase transparency and create a more equitable distribution of wealth. Although Beijing professes a policy of noninterference, it is more than ready to interfere on behalf of the political elites, especially in petroleum rich

states. China's actions in this area will put it at odds with populations vying for political recognition and control of their state's natural resources.

A real and growing source of tension between African populations and China is the illegal and legal immigration of Chinese nationals to the continent. Chinese companies prefer to use Chinese labor for their projects in Africa:

There are also concerns about Chinese funded projects where in some cases, the ratio of Chinese expatriates (labor and enterprises) to locals contracted is as high as 70 per cent Chinese and 30 per cent local. This practice does not help Africa in addressing the problems of high unemployment and the scourge of poverty. Nor does it assist Africa's private sector to grow both technically and financially. Instead it could entrench African dependence on external assistance.<sup>37</sup>

Besides the obvious friction this practice causes with the local African populations with high unemployment rates, many of the contracted Chinese laborers stay in Africa after their projects are complete. It is estimated that currently over 750,000 Chinese immigrants inhabit Africa, competing for jobs with local Africans.<sup>38</sup> Given Africa's unemployment and the competition these newcomers represent to local merchants, high immigration rates aggravate relations between local populations and China.

China's engagement in Africa is affecting African populations in other unintended ways. China's focus on securing resources and their search for new markets has resulted in increasing trade and contact with the continent. As contact increases, Chinese business practices, immigration, support for the political elites, and the domination of African domestic markets cause local populations to question the benefit of China-Africa relations. Additionally, China's support of unpopular governments and arms trade in Africa have made Chinese expatriates and businesses legitimate targets for groups harmed by the regimes China supports as is the case in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Nigeria.

*African Civil Society.* Civil societies are organized associations through which citizens can “pursue common goals, participate in and influence public affairs, and practice the democratic values of tolerance, consensus building, and free and open debate.”<sup>39</sup> Within Africa, the civil society is made up of the more educated and professional segments of African society. Their concerns, affiliations, and ethnic backgrounds are as diverse as the African nation states are unto each other. For the United States, African civil society represents another means to engage the political elites in Africa from within individual states as well taking advantage of their political influence at the regional level. Where the general population lacks significant input into the political process, the civil society often becomes the voice of local concerns. Generally proponents of democracy and human rights, African civil society is becoming increasingly suspicious and critical of Chinese engagement in Africa.

The fact that the Chinese people have had to pay a heavy price in terms of liberty and environmental damage to their country has not been lost on some in the African civil society. Journalists have noted as much in Nigeria and question China’s progress in Africa and the “implications for democracy and governance in Africa.”<sup>40</sup> Continuing support for Sudan and Zimbabwe, the growth of China as a major weapons supplier to African governments, and Beijing’s increasing ownership stake of African resources purports an increasing critical attitude of African civil society towards China.<sup>41</sup> The civil society’s concern about China’s negative effect on the African environment and local economies are well founded. For example, in Mozambique, despite being located on several earthquake faults, the necessity to relocate thousands of villagers and the environmental degradation of the Zambezi river, China is eagerly pushing forward with

the Mphanda Nkuwa dam project. Mozambican civil society, in coordination with the local population, has attempted to raise numerous concerns to the Mozambique government in an attempt to stop the project.<sup>42</sup> African civil societies are addressing other environmental issues caused by the Chinese, often in collusion with corrupt local officials, to include illegal and environmentally irresponsible logging and the over-exploitation of African fisheries at the hands of Chinese fishing vessels. Labor relations, Chinese immigration, the spread of cheap Chinese goods, and continued unconditional support to the political elite are also becoming central issues in the debate among African civil societies.

African civil society is slowly turning from a tacit supporter of Chinese engagement into a vocal and persistent critic of Beijing. The two largest challenges facing the African civil society in terms of addressing the ill effects of Chinese engagement include preventing democratic reversal on the continent and finding leverage points to induce China to modify their African policies and trade. With China presenting an alternative developmental model to the West's, accompanied by trade and unconditional aid, African civil society must "reestablish and revalidate...the legitimacy of democracy and human rights" as the sustainable and correct path for African development.<sup>43</sup>

In the past, African civil society has collaborated with African and Western NGOs "to pressure Western governments to demand political liberalization from African governments as a pre-condition for further development assistance."<sup>44</sup> They have also played the "naming-and-shaming" game to influence Western companies to reform their practices. These typical levers do not work well against a Chinese government that

does not tolerate domestic criticism and is largely immune to international pressures on human rights (although there has been some success in Darfur due to tying the issue to the Beijing Olympics). Additionally, most Chinese companies, with no responsibility to stockholders and subsidized by the Chinese government, are far less responsive to international criticism. The exceptions to this maxim are those Chinese firms attempting to operate globally while integrating into Western capital markets.<sup>45</sup> The most effective lever, however, is when the African civil society can influence state governments to demand concessions beneficial to local populations and to properly regulate and control Chinese engagement and commercial interests within their borders.

#### How to Leverage Chinese Missteps in Africa

The African internal groups described above are not homogenous in make up or character. The ideological leanings and commitment to democracy by the political elite differs from African state to African state. In 2008, the Freedom House organization classified 11 African nations as free, 24 as partially free and 19 African countries as not free.<sup>46</sup> Correspondingly, the attitudes towards good governance and political cultures of the elites differ with how committed to and how long each African country has or has not experimented with democracy. Additionally, there are of course inherent differences within African populations and the civil societies of different African states and regions. The level of resentment within these groups depends upon the degree of Chinese involvement and whether a particular African nation effectively regulates Chinese trade, labor practices, and other facets of bilateral Chinese interaction on terms favorable not just to the political elites but to the nation as a whole. The four internal African key actors discussed in this paper (African political elites, regional organizations, African

populations, and African civil society), and the potential levers against China they represent, should be approached utilizing a nuanced and tailored strategy. Such a strategy is made up of four distinct soft power methods: embarrass, empower, enrich, and engage.

*Embarrass.* The strategy of embarrassing the Chinese government and Chinese international companies should be utilized to modify Chinese behavior and gain their cooperation in dealing with the most repressive and rogue regimes in Africa. The full measure of U.S. diplomatic and informational elements of national power should be used to highlight China's support of repressive dictators such as Mugabe and Bashir. Maximum cooperation and utilization of international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and all manner of NGOs should be engaged to highlight China's linkage to the atrocities going on inside Sudan and Zimbabwe. The United States should force China to utilize its veto power in the UN Security Council to deter international action against these states as many times as possible while simultaneously using the global media outlets to criticize China's conduct. Such a strategy has worked in the past in connection with the Darfur genocide in Sudan. The international outcry over Beijing's complicity in Bashir's brutal repression of his people coupled with the impending Beijing summer Olympics made China temporarily abandon its policy of noninterference and the Chinese forced the Sudanese government to accept UN and AU peacekeepers on their soil. However, criticism may be most effective against China when it comes from the key African actors themselves. Such is the case currently developing in regards to Zimbabwe with political elites, civil society groups, and populations in southern Africa calling for the end of Mugabe's regime. The

leaders of Botswana and Kenya as well as the church leaders in South Africa have called for the immediate removal of Mugabe.<sup>47</sup> Only the AU and the South Africa government continue to hope for a peaceful internal resolution of Zimbabwe's political crises. This too may change in light of the current cholera epidemic within Zimbabwe contributing to the three million refugees and expatriates crowding into the South Africa and neighboring African states.<sup>48</sup>

*Empower.* Significant democratic and human right frameworks are institutionalized in the AU and NEPAD. The United States should utilize its financial, diplomatic and military elements of national power to empower this existing regional organization to go beyond simple rhetorical support for political liberalization in Africa. Empowerment of the African Union, its development framework NEPAD, and other regional organizations as a means to strengthen the African position vis-à-vis the Chinese through collective bargaining will frustrate China's advantage when dealing bilaterally with African nations. If China has to work through the AU vice establishing its own regional forums, then China would be forced to abandon some of the more negative aspects of its foreign policy in order to remain in sync with the regional body setting the agenda for the continent. Ultimately, a powerful AU abiding by the principles on which it was founded, and carrying the legitimacy of representing African interests, can be a source of great good on the continent. With U.S., as well as China's backing, the AU could effectively pressure repressive regimes to modify their behavior and push forcefully for political reform. To this end, the United States should seek to counter China's formation of parallel regional organizations by working through and in earnest cooperation with the AU and other African regional organizations.

*Enrich.* China focuses its diplomacy and aid in gaining access in African nations through a win-win policy with the political elites in power. Their trade patterns and infrastructure projects are focused on enabling resource extraction, exploiting new markets and maximizing their own profit and energy access. The friction that such a policy causes within disenfranchised African populations is another leverage point that the United States can use to influence China from within African nations. Whereas China seeks markets for their cheap industrial goods in Africa and therefore displaces opportunity for African businesses, the United States is better situated to offer markets for African made industrial goods and textiles. Additionally, should it ever become politically feasible to suspend subsidies to farmers in the United States, the African continent would benefit greatly from the exportation of agricultural products to America. Creating African jobs, promoting African industry, and offering markets supporting the diversification of African economies would greatly improve the economic standing of the average African citizen. Additionally, the growth of African businesses and manufacturing capability will in turn support the growth of an African middle class. The increased distribution of wealth outside the circle of the political elites will result in a call for greater representation and pressure against the government to curtail Chinese competition and the mortgaging of the state's resources to Beijing. Besides fostering good will towards the United States, such a policy will ultimately result in greater stability and capacity in Africa albeit taking a long period of time to come to fruition.

*Engage.* The strategy of engaging African civil society has a greater chance of offering immediate returns. Working with and supporting African civil societies in addressing the negative effects of China's Africa policy should be a priority across the

spectrum of concerns. The civil society offers a forum for debate with Africa and a voice for African populations in bringing their grievances to the attention both locally and internationally. Investment should be made to develop a network of African civil societies throughout the continent to include integration into regional and international organizations. In short, the United States should leverage the civil society's ability to wield influence internally, regionally, and internationally to convince African political elites to pressure Beijing into becoming a more responsible steward in Africa.

### Conclusion

The United States should approach the four key African actors utilizing strategies tailored to address the friction points caused by China's Africa policy within each of the different groups. While the strategy of embarrassing China over its support of repressive regimes has both international and African domestic components, the other three strategies seek to exploit the missteps of China's African policy to influence African organizations and states to force China to address the negative aspects of their trade and aid policies. The United States will not eliminate competition between itself and China on the continent, but it can reduce the negative second and third order affects of China's Africa policy on the development of economies and democratic reform there. Africans, in general, have a favorable view of China's engagement in Africa. However, unless China delivers on the mounting expectations of Africans, the current growth in aid, trade, and engagement may not be sustainable. Ultimately, disappointment at China's inability to deliver promised aid and development could result in the biggest friction point between Africa and Beijing.

## Endnotes

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