

CHINA IN AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**CHINA IN AFRICA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

by

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ABSTRACT

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CHINA IN AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Unlike in the past, it is Africans – not Westerners – who will determine the nature and depth of China’s engagement in African affairs.

—Chris Alden¹

For over a decade, Chinese influence in Africa has increased dramatically, primarily through increased economic involvement on the African continent. This rapid entry and increase into African markets has been enabled by China’s foreign policy of “no political strings” which, when combined with China’s willingness to provide aid and concessionary loans, has proved to be tremendously appealing to many African leaders.²

The questions that confront the United States are: first, is this increased Chinese activity in Africa a threat to U.S. national security? Second, what should be the United States approach to China and Africa? The answer to these questions begins with an analysis of China’s internal challenges that has led to their increased activity in Africa. Next, China’s interests and methods in Africa will be reviewed as well as a discussion of the reaction to China’s presence by African governments, businesses, individuals, and regional African leaders and organizations. U.S. interests and methods will be analyzed and finally conclusions made as to the implications for the United States regarding Chinese activity in Africa.

China’s Internal Challenges

Tiananmen Square and the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist nations in Eastern Europe sent shockwaves through China’s Communist Party (CCP). Realizing that the future of CCP was far from secure, the party conducted a thorough

study of the reasons for the collapse of these other communist countries.

Understanding the lessons that were learned from this study is important to not only ascertain the reasons that China has looked to increasing its activities in Africa, but also to understand Chinese fears and perceptions that should help shape the development of U.S. reactions to China's increased activities in Africa.

David Shambaugh, in his book *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, explains that the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist parties in Eastern Europe that followed immediately after Tiananmen Square caused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to make "assessments of the causes of collapse of these other ruling parties, as well as analyz[e] the range of internal and external challenges to itself."³ Shambaugh states that the goal of the CCP is very clear. The CCP had "zero interest in transitioning to a Western, or even an Asian, democratic system of competitive parties. Its principal goal is to strengthen its rule and remain in power as a single ruling party."⁴ The lessons that the CCP derived directly led to their deepening involvement in Africa. These lessons also influence the methods that the Chinese have utilized to secure their interests in Africa.

So what did the CCP learn from its extensive study of the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist states? Overall, the Chinese concluded that the causes of collapse were systemic in nature and could be grouped in four categories: economic, political/coercive, social/cultural, and international. More specifically, Shambaugh claims that "probably *the* single most important conclusion ...[is] that a certain recipe for collapse is an ossified party-state that has a dogmatic ideology, entrenched elites,

dormant party organizations, and a stagnant economy that is isolated from the international community.”⁵

According to Shambaugh, the CCP has undertaken numerous reforms in the areas of party ideology, fighting corruption, allowing inter-party democracy, training party cadres, and allowing greater party leader turnover. Shambaugh further argues that although certain parts of the CCP continue to atrophy, the CCP has made significant reforms that have “been sufficient to keep it in power (and even strengthen its grip).”⁶ The question pertinent to the discussion of Chinese activity in Africa is: what specific lessons did the Chinese learn about the collapse of communist states in Eastern Europe that have impacted on their activities in Africa and their relations to the United States and the rest of the world?

Three specific lessons learned by the Chinese have impacted the reasons for Chinese activity in Africa and/or its relations with the United States and the rest of the world. The first lesson relates to the need to concentrate on productivity growth. Chinese analysis showed that economic stagnation was “not an accidental consequence of the planned economy – to the contrary...it was a consciously planned feature of the system!”⁷ Further exacerbating the economic problem was the non-integration of the Soviet Union into the global economy. This stagnation that caused individual deprivations among the Soviet people played a major role in the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist states according to the Chinese. As Li Jingjie, the director of the former Soviet-Eastern Europe Institute stated: “seek not only to strengthen the comprehensive power of the state but also, more important, the material

living standards of the people.”⁸ As we will see, these conclusions have had a direct impact on China’s increased activities in Africa.

The second lesson learned by the Chinese fell into the area of international factors that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and has had a direct impact on the policy of “non-interference” in the internal workings of African states. Specifically, the Chinese blamed the collapse of the Soviet Union on “a succession of Soviet leaderships with: external expansion and aggression; pursuit of international hegemony; the establishment of client states; interference in the internal affairs, and the occupation of, other states; and Cold War competition with the U.S.”⁹ as their goals.

The final, and most recent lesson learned by the Chinese occurred as they continued to study Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the collapse of communist states. This lesson developed a Chinese fear of what they have described as the “color revolutions” that they claim were sponsored by the United States. The term “color revolutions” refers to “the ‘rose revolution’ that overthrew President Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia in 2003, followed by the ‘orange revolution’ in Ukraine in 2004, and the ‘(yellow) tulip revolution’ in Kyrgyzstan in 2005.”¹⁰ Foremost among the lessons learned is that “there is unanimous agreement among Chinese analysts that the color revolutions would never have occurred were it not for U.S. subversive efforts.”¹¹ Liu Jianfei of the Institute of Strategic Studies of the Central Party School states that “‘promotion of democracy’ is not just a tactical consideration, but it also has strategic intention...it organically combines ‘promotion of democracy’ with maintaining U.S. hegemony.”¹² Besides the fear that the U.S. will, or is, attempting to create similar conditions for a “color revolution” within China, is the more strategic issue that “the

‘Community of Democracies,” made up of 124 countries, will gain an increasing voice in the United Nations...if this goes on, China’s role in the UN will be constrained.”¹³

The point here is not that China is completely adverse to democracies nor some aspects of democratic principles. The heart of the matter is that China does not want undo interference in determining their future. As Premier Wen Jiabao wrote in the *People’s Daily* in February 2007: “China must follow its own path in building democratic politics...it is completely possible for us to build a democratic country with the rule of law under socialist conditions.”¹⁴

These lessons learned caused the CCP to focus on three internal challenges faced by the current Chinese government. The CCP believes that the risk of these challenges resulting in CCP loss of power can be mitigated by increasing their activities in Africa.

The first and primary internal challenge is to limit domestic unrest. Since the dramatic events of 1989 when “for more than six weeks, millions of students demonstrated for democracy in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and 132 other cities in every Chinese province”¹⁵ the “Chinese leaders have lived with the fear that another Tiananmen might bring down the Communist dynasty”.¹⁶ The primary method used by the CCP to limit domestic unrest has been to expand its economy through increased access to foreign markets, thus creating jobs and raising living standards for its people. David Shambaugh in his study of the Chinese Communist Party probably best captures the fact that China’s increasing economic capabilities and power has also increased the demands placed on the government by its people. “The challenges the CCP faces in maintaining its power and legitimacy increasingly involve governance and providing

public goods...this is a new kind of revolution for a Leninist party: the revolution of rising expectations.”¹⁷ “The Communist Party considers rapid economic growth a political imperative because it is the only way to prevent massive unemployment and labor unrest.”¹⁸ This strategy, however, has been complicated by increased urbanization within China.

The second internal challenge faced by Chinese leaders, increased urbanization, is directly related to the challenge of preventing domestic unrest. “China’s urban population has grown from 20 percent to 40 percent...and Chinese planners anticipate it growing to 55 to 60 percent by 2020.”¹⁹ This movement of the Chinese population to urban areas has placed a great demand on the Chinese government to create more and more jobs to ensure that these urban dwellers have an opportunity to make a living. It is estimated that from 2006 to 2015 twenty-four million new jobs will have to be created in the cities each year and that “China’s GDP must grow at a rate no slower than 7 percent annually if only to meet job creation needs.”²⁰

Not only does urbanization necessitate job creation, but it also multiplies the risk to the Chinese government should it be unsuccessful in meeting these increased job demands. The ability to organize and quickly mass large numbers of people in protest against the government is made easier through this increased urbanization. The only way that the CCP can maintain its economic growth, thus limiting domestic unrest, is to obtain the resources necessary to fuel its production requirements.

The third internal challenge facing the Chinese government is the acquisition of resources to facilitate the necessary job-creating growth of the Chinese economy. An outstanding example of this challenge is China’s increased need for oil. China is now

the world's second-largest petroleum consumer (6.5 million barrels per day in 2004) and accounted for 40 percent of the global demand growth for oil over the past four years. This situation only gets worse over time, as the U.S. Department of Energy projects that by 2025, China's oil consumption will reach 14.2 million barrels per day.²¹ "Chinese officials recognized that, in order to maintain the roaring pace of its economy, the country would need to have secure sources of energy as well as other critical resources."²² A further reason that China has looked to Africa for its resources is an attempt to "diversify its energy imports away from traditional sources in the Persian Gulf...because of ongoing political instability and U.S. military preponderance in and around the region."²³ This increased dependence on resources has placed China in an uncomfortable position however. China has based its policy since 1949 on the notion of self-sufficiency – they can no longer maintain this policy, specifically in the areas of energy, strategic minerals, forestry resources, and food production.²⁴

Chinese Interests and Methods in Africa

China's primary interests in Africa concern the acquisition of resources to enable its increased production capabilities and the opening of additional markets for the sale of its produced goods. A subsequent interest that has evolved since increasing its activities in Africa has been maintaining African state support for Chinese interests internationally, specifically within the United Nations.

China has come to Africa in an attempt to meet its increasing requirements for natural resources. In terms of resources, "over 31 percent of all of China's global strategic oil imports come from Africa."²⁵ Although oil and gas resources are of primary concern for China as it relates to Africa's resources, there are other resources that

Africa provides in significant quantities to fuel China's economy to include lumber and cotton.²⁶

In addition to the natural resources available in Africa, China views the African continent as having huge market potential for the sale of its exports. The increasing importance of African markets can be seen with the following statistics: "two-way trade between Africa and China has surged from less than \$10 billion in 2000 to over \$50 billion in 2006;"²⁷ and "currently, there are over 800 Chinese companies conducting business in 49 African countries, with over 480 involved in joint ventures with African firms."²⁸ Although trade with African countries has obviously increased significantly in recent years, this must be placed in context of the importance to China of trade with the U.S. "Preserving access to their largest export market [the U.S.] and maintaining U.S. support for China's economic development are crucial for maintaining China's growth and the Communist Party's political survival."²⁹

The methods that China has utilized to achieve their interests will be discussed below. However, Chinese methods in Africa have allowed it to reap considerable assistance from African nations in international forums. This assistance has now become a Chinese interest. Africa is the "largest single regional grouping of states and [displays a] tendency towards 'bloc voting' in multilateral settings such as the United Nations and its agencies."³⁰ African votes were crucial in helping China win the bid for the 2008 Olympics, and "blocking resolutions tabled at the UN Commission on Human Rights, which condemn Chinese human rights abuses."³¹ Additionally, since China's increased involvement in Africa, the number of African states that support China's "one-China" policy has significantly increased. At one time twenty-two African states

accorded Taiwan official diplomatic recognition. Currently only five African states recognize Taiwan.³²

The methods that China has utilized in Africa to achieve its interests have revolved around adhering to a “non-interference” policy, the construction of “good-will” projects, and low/no-interest loans to African states that become economically tied to China. To facilitate China’s access to vital natural resources in Africa, China has adopted a non-interference policy towards the African governments that possess these natural resources. This policy is best summarized by Premier Wen Jiabao when he stated that “we do offer our assistance [to Africa] with the deepest sincerity and without any political conditions.”³³ This allows China to conduct economic trade with countries that western countries would not deal with due to their lack of good governance. This policy “is arguably the most contentious component of its engagement.”³⁴ This policy has not only come in conflict with Western countries who seek to improve human rights and good governance on the continent, but also “found itself at odds with an emerging consensus on the necessity of good governance within Africa itself.”³⁵ This policy of non-interference is especially problematic when it is understood that 50-80 percent of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa in natural resource exploitation is concentrated in six African states that include Sudan who has a notoriously bad human rights record.³⁶

China has complemented its policy of non-interference in the internal workings of African governments with numerous infrastructure and “good-will” projects in an attempt to strengthen the governments that they are working with and improve African perceptions of China. “In addition to new public buildings serving the needs of

politicians and bureaucrats in African capitals, these same construction firms were building dozens of hospitals and schools.”³⁷

Additionally, China has attempted to demonstrate that its desire in Africa is to establish partners and not economically colonize Africa through the use of grants and loans. In November 2009, “China pledged to grant African countries \$10 billion in low-interest loans (double the amount pledged in 2006) for small and medium-size businesses, and to forgive the remaining debt on certain interest-free loans that China had previously granted.”³⁸

African Reactions to China’s Activities and Presence

In analyzing the African reaction to Chinese activities and presence in Africa it is useful to look at the reactions from four different perspectives: the leadership of the states that have significant trade with China; the companies within the African states that have to compete with the influx of Chinese products; the individual Africans; and the African regional leaders and organizations.

First, the reactions from the leaders of the states that have significant trade with China will be discussed. In building relations with African states, the Chinese readily refer to past Chinese activities in Africa over the centuries in which the Chinese dealt with their African counterparts as partners, and not as states or a people to be taken advantage of. In 2007, the Chinese ambassador to South Africa reminded Africans of Admiral Zheng Chenggong's activities in Africa in 1664. “Zheng took to the places he visited [in Africa] tea, chinaware, silk, and technology. He did not occupy an inch of foreign land, nor did he take a single slave.”³⁹ This historical perspective is important to African leaders who may have tired of Western interference and exploitation. “At this

point in time, the employment of history still dominates the shaping of African elite responses to China.”⁴⁰

For the individual states that have significant trade with China, China has become “a new strategic partner and a provider of development assistance and foreign investment.”⁴¹ For “pariah” regimes such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, China provides an “ability to raise capital or provide for their own security interests [that] has been constricted through an increasingly coordinated set of actions by Western governments, NGOs and international organizations.”⁴² The leaders of states receiving financial support through trade and sales of resources to China look most favorably upon Chinese activity in Africa. The response from African businesses, individual Africans, and regional leaders and organizations is more mixed and relatively less favorable than the response from these state leaders.

African businesses on the whole find that they are unable to compete with the Chinese once they have arrived in their country. The issues at this level have little if anything to do with the Chinese purchase of oil and minerals, but more to do with the hundreds of Chinese companies and untold number of small businesses that have also entered Africa to tap into its vast market potential. In general, Chinese businesses “utilizing networks and supply chains back to the mainland ... are able to offer up low-cost consumer products that drive out traditional suppliers.”⁴³ Perhaps the hardest hit African industry has been the textile industry. Chinese encroachment in this market has sent shock waves through numerous African states. “Textiles and other clothing imported from China have threatened to put companies in South Africa, Lesotho, Kenya, Mauritius and Nigeria out of business.”⁴⁴ In Mauritius “between 2000 and 2005,

the [textile] sector contracted by about 30 percent...and up to twenty-five thousand workers lost their jobs.”⁴⁵ The textile industry in Nigeria was hit even harder with “more than 80 percent of the textile factories [having] to shut down and an estimated 250,000 workers have been laid off.”⁴⁶ The negative response is not limited to the textile industry however; the impact has also reached down to the small business owner. In Nigeria, “the opening of three wholesale and retail shopping centers in major urban areas ...produced protests from Nigerian businessmen and police action that resulted in their temporary closure.”⁴⁷

For the individual African, the reaction to Chinese activity in Africa has not been completely negative. Although they have undoubtedly felt the impact of rising unemployment due to encroachment of Chinese businesses into their markets, there have also been positive aspects. As previously mentioned, the Chinese have made efforts to build hospitals and schools in an attempt to demonstrate their goodwill toward the African people. Also, due to the arrival of Chinese “retail traders and low-cost imported goods...many Africans could afford new clothes, shoes, radios and watches for the first time in their lives.”⁴⁸

The opportunities provided by Chinese businesses have also come with a large influx of Chinese people that have begun to raise social issues for the individual African. Although exact numbers of Chinese in Africa is very difficult to ascertain, estimated Chinese populations in various African states give a basis for the extent of this influx of Chinese people. In 1980, South Africa had a Chinese population of 10,000 that had risen to between 300,000 to 400,000 in 2006 while Nigeria estimates that it has 100,000 Chinese living there.⁴⁹ This rise in Chinese population has increased tensions between

Africans and Chinese and “instances of anti-Chinese feeling prevail in many African countries, with Zambians being particularly vocal on this point.”⁵⁰

At the regional level, African reaction to Chinese activities in Africa has largely been quiet. However, regional leaders are beginning to not only understand the negative impacts that Chinese activities have had in Africa, but also recognize that they have some leverage on China due to Chinese dependence on African markets and resources. An example of this occurred in response to the impact that China had had on Africa’s textile industry when “over a third of all African countries signed up to the Istanbul Declaration, a diplomatic note requesting that quotas on Chinese textile exports be continued by the WTO by 2005.”⁵¹

A larger issue for regional leaders however has been China’s support to African “pariah regimes.” “By actively courting ‘pariah regimes’ like those of Sudan and Zimbabwe, Beijing has not only irritated the West...but found itself at odds with an emerging consensus on the necessity of good governance within Africa itself.”⁵² Chinese support to these regimes along with the perceived lack of concern by the Chinese government of the long-term health of African economies led to South African president Thabo Mbeki’s and Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade’s development of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in July 2001. “NEPAD envisaged a reconfiguring of donor-recipient relations, such that market-led approaches to development would be encouraged among African states, as would good governance and transparency.”⁵³ This new program obliged participating governments to agree to “adherence to ‘best practice’ in pursuing democratic governance and liberal market

criteria. A commitment on the part of African states to abide by these terms was to be matched by a commitment on the part of G8 countries to increase assistance.”⁵⁴

The importance of this regional effort was not lost on China. “This unexpected development [NEPAD] put China in an invidious position, opening it to criticism from African sources of its single-minded pursuit of profit over the needs and concerns of ordinary Africans.”⁵⁵ This ultimately has led to such things as “the Chinese donation of US\$500,000 towards a health training project in East Africa which received much publicity in NEPAD communiqués.”⁵⁶ However there are some within the “NEPAD secretariat [that] remains ...critical of the Chinese role, seeing it as both threatening to aspects of its trade and development strategy as well as to broader governance aims.”⁵⁷

U.S. Interests and Methods in Africa

Although the United States obviously has interests in the natural resources and markets available in Africa, most of the United States’ interests concern improving African state governance and the rights and living standards of the African people. The current National Security Strategy (NSS) states, “our goal is an African continent that knows liberty, peace, stability, and increasing prosperity” which we hope to achieve through economic development and the expansion of democratic governance, and strengthening the capabilities of the African Union (AU).⁵⁸

The principal way that the United States has chosen to pursue these goals in Africa revolves around the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) created by the United States Congress in January 2004. The MCC is an independent U.S. foreign aid agency attempting to “deliver smart U.S. foreign assistance by focusing on good policies, country ownership, and results.”⁵⁹ Specifically “MCC forms partnerships with some of the world’s poorest countries, but only those committed to ... good governance,

economic freedom, and investments in their citizens.”⁶⁰ The partnerships that the United States enters into “provides these well-performing countries with large-scale grants to fund country-led solutions for reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth”⁶¹

Countries that desire to receive this assistance offered by the MCC must meet minimal level of demonstrated performance in “17 independent and transparent policy indicators and selects compact-eligible countries based on policy performance.”⁶² Most importantly however, is that with the oversight of the MCC, the state receiving assistance must identify the problems and priorities for achieving economic growth and to reduce poverty, develop their own solutions to solve these problems and take responsibility for implementing these solutions. To date, the MCC has approved over \$7.4 billion in assistance worldwide. The U.S. Congress has recently demonstrated its continued support of MCC by passing a \$1.105 billion budget for Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) work to reduce poverty through economic growth. The FY10 budget number represents a 26 percent increase over the MCC’s budget in FY2009.⁶³

Although many African states have qualified for and are receiving foreign assistance from the MCC, noticeably absent are countries such as Angola, Sudan, and Chad. In fact, of the top ten African trading partners with China (Angola, South Africa, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Congo, Benin, Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Sudan)⁶⁴, only Benin receives assistance through the MCC. This is an indication of the effect that China’s activities in Africa has had on U.S. interests in the region. These resource rich states receive enough revenue through the sale of resources to China to maintain their

governments and reap the benefits of China's non-interference policy to maintain their power.

This not only highlights the limitations that the MCC has in furthering U.S. interests, but also demonstrates how China's activities in Africa counter U.S. desires. As stated in the NSS, China "must act as a responsible stakeholder that fulfills its obligations and works with the United States and others to advance the international system that has enabled its success."⁶⁵

Besides access to revenues created by the sale of natural resources and trade with China, money is available to these same African states from the United Nations to increase the quality of life for their populace with no strings attached. "The Millennium Project was commissioned by the United Nations Secretary General in 2002 to recommend a concrete action plan to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people."⁶⁶ This "competing" source of funds from the United Nations further dilutes the United States' ability to influence African state behavior.

Implications for the United States

In considering the implications for the United States of Chinese activity in Africa it is useful to begin with a positive aspect for the United States, and the world at large, of Chinese activities. First, despite U.S. displeasure with the ability of regimes such as Sudan to use the revenues that they gain through the sale of oil to China to fund their civil war and resist governmental reform, the fact is that the U.S. and "governments in the West can only be happy at the Chinese willingness to pump more oil from inhospitable locations."⁶⁷ This has enabled China to continue to fuel their expanding economy that is of great interest to the United States given our economic dependence on China, without significantly impacting the global oil market.

Ricardo Soares de Oliveira clarifies this point when he states that “Chinese-Western relations over Africa’s oil are therefore dependent on wider political dynamics.”⁶⁸ His point is that from a purely economic standpoint, the U.S. and the rest of the Western world have little interest in Chinese activity. “Their [Chinese] investment outreach commenced at roughly the same time as the West began to reduce its exposure to Africa...far from being a ‘scramble for Africa’, could be more accurately described as pushing on an open door, one which...the West had left ajar as it scrambled eastward.”⁶⁹ Again, speaking from a purely economic point of view, Chinese oil activity is almost insignificant from a global perspective. “The foreign equity oil acquired (less than half a percentage point of world oil production) or likely to be acquired by China is not enough to make much of a difference.”⁷⁰

The next critical point to understand concerns foreign military presence in Africa. While the United States, with the creation of AFRICOM, and India have increased their military presence in Africa, Chinese military activity has been maintained at a constant level. “Bilateral [military] exchanges have remained stable at an annual average of 26... [and] Chinese military presence is negligible. China has no bases in Africa...nor has it trained African soldiers to counter threats to national interests.”⁷¹ So, although the Chinese have at times provided military aid to African states, Sudan being the most notable, “such assistance does not seem to be part of any coherent strategy related to protecting its security interests.”⁷² This seems to be in line with the lessons that the Chinese learned from the collapse of the Soviet Union – that is to avoid: external expansion and aggression; pursuit of international hegemony; the establishment of client states; and the occupation of other states.

Thus, if from a purely economic standpoint, Chinese activity is beneficial to both the U.S. and to China, and there appears to be no Chinese strategic plan to militarily interfere in Africa, the United States should look to forge a partnership with China, as it concerns Africa. To do so would pose little to no risk to the national security of the United States. This partnership should be viewed as a microcosm of the cooperation that the United States hopes to emulate in its larger dealings with China. As stated earlier, the U.S. National Security Strategy wants China to “act as a responsible stakeholder.”⁷³ Africa offers an excellent opportunity for the United States to engage with China to meet this desire.

Spheres of influence have evolved in Africa since China has increased its activity on the continent. Through the use of the MCC, the United States has gained influence on African states that desire to achieve good governance or have been willing to improve their governance in order to receive U.S. assistance. The Chinese have been able to gain influence with the resource rich African states, to include “pariah regimes” that do not need U.S. assistance due to their ability to trade with China. Many of these states that China has gained influence over are states that are beyond the reach of U.S. influence because of U.S. reluctance to deal with them due to their human rights or poor governance practices. Because these spheres of influence have developed, there is a requirement for the United States to work with China in order to achieve common interests across the entire continent. Specifically, these interests are: regional stability in Africa, African governments that are responsive to their people’s needs, and the avoidance of a Cold War between China and the United States.

Both China and the United States have much more to lose through direct conflict with each other than they have to gain. “Even if the two sides manage to avoid a shooting war, a cold war with China would wreak havoc in the United States and throughout the world. The two countries have become economically dependent on one another.”⁷⁴ As stated earlier, one lesson that China learned as it studied the collapse of the Soviet Union was that one reason for this collapse was the Soviet Union’s Cold War with the United States. Thus, like the United States, China also has an interest in ensuring that this Cold War does not develop.

It is also possible that the Chinese may be willing to modify their non-interference policy, but only as it becomes clear that such a change is in their national interest. From a historical perspective the U.S. has recently seen other countries change their policies. Changes that, from a U.S. perspective, may have been seen as very unlikely only a few short years before. Specifically, George Tenet, in his book *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*, describes two very surprising policy changes in the last decade. The first involved Libya’s renouncing of its WMD programs. The second was Saudi Arabia’s change of policy to actively pursue terrorists within their country. But as Tenet states, “Let’s be clear: the Saudis acted out of self-interest. At stake were not only plots against the United States but the stability of Saudi Arabia as well.”⁷⁵

An additional consideration that indicates that China may be willing to change their policy of non-interference is a result of pressures from within the African continent. The ability to maintain its policy of non-interference is especially hard for China when criticism of its policy comes from within Africa itself as demonstrated by its reaction to the creation of NEPAD. “For China, the ability and desirability of holding to its stance of

'non-interference' in African affairs is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain as its own embedded interests are subject to domestic influences and challenges by Africans from all sectors."⁷⁶

History also demonstrates that regional stability will become more of an interest to China than is presently the case. The United Kingdom's and United States' experiences in the Middle East are similar to China's current experiences in Africa:

We are now treading the same ground [as the UK], there are already signs that China is about to follow in our footsteps. The pattern is as follows: what first brings the external great power into the region is trade. For that reason, it is unconcerned about how the people of the region govern themselves...over time, however, the great power's trade relationships expand to the point where it becomes economically dependent on the Middle East and particularly on its oil. Once this happens it does care about who rules where and who conquers whom because these matters can have a profound impact on the great power's own economic stability.⁷⁷

Indeed there are indications that "as Chinese business has become more deeply embedded ... their concerns have shifted from attaining access to resources and markets to sustaining their position and investments."⁷⁸ Some of this shift in concern has resulted from attacks on their economic interests due to instability. "Chinese mining activities often fall prey to endemic instability and violence in economic partner states... a separatist movement [in Nigeria] threatened attacks on oil workers, storage facilities, bridges, offices, and other oil industry targets."⁷⁹

The Chinese demonstrated in Africa that their concern for stability can at times override their policy of non-interference. In November 2006, the Chinese government played a key role in convincing the Khartoum regime to accept a hybrid AU-UN mission in Darfur. In fact, "China has broken its own past precedents and actively participated in UN-sanctioned peacekeeping operations in part of Africa. Chinese peacekeeping has

expanded across the continent”⁸⁰ to include Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

Because Chinese activities in Africa are not an economic or military threat, at least to the point where they should be considered threats to our national security, time is available to achieve cooperation with China without compromising U.S. national security. The United States should use this available time to find ways to cooperate with China along lines of mutual interest – specifically to avoid a Cold War, attain greater regional stability, foster economic development on the continent, both to enlarge markets and facilitate access to resources, and increase the level of responsive governments within the African states. Creation of democracies should not be a focus of these discussions, but the creation of countries that are more responsive to the needs of their people – a matter in which the Chinese understand due to their own concerns about maintaining a hold on their government in China and the lessons they learned from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The United States should also look to use the United Nations as a neutral party between the United States and China. The Chinese seem willing to support United Nations initiatives in Africa as shown through its participation in UN peacekeeping missions and its support to NEPAD (which the United Nations supports). In fact, because China seems to understand the importance of support to NEPAD to further their interests in Africa, the United States should look for ways to support African development more through NEPAD than its unilateral method of the MCC. Combining resources into one developmental program that Africans, not China or the U.S. controls,

could only help to achieve cooperation between China and the United States concerning Africa.

Endnotes

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³ David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Washington DC, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), 2. David Shambaugh is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Director of the China Policy Program at the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University.

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⁵ Ibid., 60;4.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁸ Ibid., 76.

⁹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 89.

¹³ Ibid., 91-92.

¹⁴ Ibid., 123.

¹⁵ Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 35.

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, 7.

¹⁸ Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 54.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Ibid., 23.

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²³ Chris Alden, Daniel Large, and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, eds., *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 77. Hereafter referred to as Alden, Large, and Soares de Oliveira.

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²⁵ Ibid., 12.

²⁶ Ibid., 13.

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁹ Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 28.

³⁰ Alden, *China in Africa*, 22.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 21.

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ Alden, Large, and Soares de Oliveira, *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace*, 21.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 14.

³⁷ Alden, *China in Africa*, 4.

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³⁹ Alden, *China in Africa*, 18-19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴¹ Ibid., 60.

⁴² Ibid., 61.

⁴³ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Alden, Large, and Soares de Oliveira, *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace*, 59.

⁴⁶ Alden, *China in Africa*, 49.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁵¹ Ibid., 77.

⁵² Alden, Large, and Soares de Oliveira, *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace*, 21.

⁵³ Alden, *China in Africa*, 98.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Alden, Large, and Soares de Oliveira, *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace*, 22.

⁵⁶ Alden, *China in Africa*, 78.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: The White House, March 2006), 37-38.

⁵⁹ *Millennium Challenge Corporation Home Page*, <http://www.mcc.gov> (accessed January 16, 2010).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

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⁷³ Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 41.

⁷⁴ Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*, 5.

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⁷⁹ Holslag, "China's New Security Strategy for Africa," 24.

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