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## CHINA'S SOFT POWER IN AFRICA

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### Summary Points

- Africans generally view China as a positive influence. There is no single African perspective on China, but survey data indicate that in a sampling of African countries, the number of people who view China as a positive influence in their country is very close to—and in some cases surpasses—those viewing the United States as a positive influence.
- China's assistance to Africa is growing but is dwarfed by U.S. levels. Since the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, China has made a systematic effort to expand and give greater profile to its soft-power policies in Africa. Although explicit soft-power commitments—in health; humanitarian assistance; and academic, professional, and cultural exchange—are growing, they are not yet anywhere near U.S. commitments in these areas.
- The principal source of China's soft power in Africa is the strength of its economy and its economic engagement. China's expanding trade and investment with the continent and the proliferation of Chinese-led infrastructure projects reflect a fundamentally more optimistic view of Africa's future than Western engagement, which remains driven primarily by humanitarian programs and, to an increasing extent, security interests. Many Africans see China's economic engagement in their countries as more pragmatic and in line with African priorities for the continent, and that gives China an important stake in seeing the continent take off economically. Beyond the "sticky" power of actual trade and investment, the cachet of China as a rising global superpower is profoundly appealing and drives a desire to tie African economies more closely to China's ascension to global economic preeminence. The U.S. financial crisis is seen in many quarters as a powerful indictment of the Washington consensus and may continue to seriously undermine the inspirational power of the U.S. economic model.
- China's respect-for-sovereignty rhetoric still resonates for many Africans. China's often expressed respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and its policy of noninterference resonate for obvious reasons with many African leaders. But they resonate too with many Africans who view Western lecturing on human rights, economic liberalization, and democracy as condescending and hypocritical. The lack of conditionality or broad consultation attached to Chinese assistance and loans allows projects to be implemented quickly, with visible and often immediate results.
- There are some signs of blowback to Chinese engagement from civil society as well as some signs that China is willing to be flexible. The African context is changing, and African governments increasingly must take account of countervailing pressures within their societies,

within the business sector, and in civil society. In a number of countries where political space is expanding, the role of China is increasingly debated and the notion of win-win engagement challenged. Pressures will mount on African governments to build a more robust and strategic approach to deals made with China. In several instances, civil-society groups have pushed back hard on their government for particular aspects of Chinese engagement, and in some cases China has subsequently shifted its approach.

- The United States can do more to encourage economic engagement and infrastructure in Africa. In addition to missed business opportunities, the United States may be losing soft-power potential as more aggressive and forward-looking investors—in China, India, Brazil, and Russia—gain ground in Africa. The U.S. government could do more to encourage and support U.S. investors in Africa. Given the priority that Africans attach to building infrastructure and the catalytic development effects that such projects have, the United States should seek to do more in strengthening African transport, port, and power infrastructure. Virtually every Millennium Challenge Account compact signed with African states has a major infrastructure component, a clear indication of the priority that African governments attach to these projects.
- The United States should strengthen support to governance and civil society. The United States should ratchet down its rhetoric on democracy promotion, which for many Africans rings hollow and sanctimonious. But the United States should at the same time increase its support to strengthening African governance capacities, including provision of technical capacity, greater support for institutions of oversight and accountability, and support for civil society and the media. Ultimately, these will be the institutions that ensure that increasing engagement by China and others is managed strategically and in a way that benefits African countries' citizenry, environment, and economic future.
- The United States can do more to engage in collaborative efforts with China in Africa and to engage China, African governments, regional organizations, and civil society more systematically to mitigate potential tensions and conflicting interests. Both China and the United States have expressed willingness to engage on collaborative projects in Africa, but although there will almost certainly be long-term benefits to such collaboration, it will take a stronger upfront investment of political will and attention to launch these efforts. Health, agriculture, and peacekeeping capacity are areas of potential collaboration in Africa, and more global issues of climate change, food security, and clean and efficient energy use (areas that the Chinese leadership has emphasized in recent international forums) could be taken up in the African context. Likewise, in areas of tension and disagreement—arms sales, transparency, approaches to conflict resolution, environmental safeguards—the United States should ensure systematic, senior-level engagement with Chinese and African leadership to find common ground and mitigate conflict.

## Overview

China's rapidly expanding engagement in Africa has provoked a range of reactions in both Africa and the West. In Africa, these reactions are fueled in some cases by hopes for what China can bring to the continent in trade, investment, and alternative development partnerships; in other cases by fears of what a seemingly insatiable demand for energy, resources, and export markets will mean for fledgling economies, weak governments, and disenfranchised populations. In the

West, China's mix of economic engagement and soft power has spurred some fears that Western influence in Africa will thereby be diminished and that investments in governance, transparency, and accountability will be undermined, particularly in states rich in natural resources but whose governments lack legitimacy or national vision. In contrast, there is acknowledgement that healthy competition for trade, investment, and soft power may ultimately benefit Africa's economic and developmental growth. Ultimately, the challenge will be whether African governments and their people can harness external engagement—China's as well as other key players'—to their eventual national benefit.

In this new expanded phase of engagement in Africa, China has placed special emphasis on soft-power aspects of its engagement, playing both to African audiences and to a broader international stage, where it seeks to portray itself as a nonthreatening, responsible global power. The jury is out on how this strategy will play out. Multiple audiences require a complex mix of strategies, and as China's engagement on the continent goes forward, it may have to recalibrate some of its soft- and hard-power approaches. This will be most challenging in African countries with weak and unpopular governments, particularly as countervailing nongovernmental forces become increasingly powerful and vocal.

Chinese officials and academics often point out that in its engagement with Africa, China is “crossing the river by feeling the stones,” and to date there have been adjustments of approach in response to popular African reactions. There are aspects of China's soft-power engagement that the United States can learn from, and there are reserves of U.S. soft power that have been underutilized in recent years. This is an opportune time for the United States and others to engage China on areas of common interest, to strengthen African capacities to manage the intensifying competition that China and others bring to the continent, and to preemptively work to mitigate potential areas of disagreement.

## China's Evolving Interests and Expanding Engagement

China is not a new power in Africa, but its engagement has expanded dramatically in the past 15 years, most notably since China went from a net energy exporter to a net importer in the mid-1990s. Its expansion in Africa is linked most directly to the requirements of China's rapidly growing economy, especially in energy resources, minerals, and other commodities. But that expansion is accompanied by a strong diplomatic push to build friendly partnerships with African governments, to gain support in international forums for China's ambitions and worldview, and, in the long-term, to create markets for Chinese goods and services. Taiwan is less of an issue than previously because only four African countries—Burkina Faso, Gambia, Swaziland, and São Tomé and Príncipe—maintain ties and recognition.

### Energy, Natural Resources, and Package Deals

China has made an explicit commitment to expand trade and investment opportunities with Africa. At the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), it pledged to more than double China-Africa trade from \$40 billion in 2005 to \$100 billion by 2010, to increase from 190 to 440

the number of African exports subject to Chinese duty-free treatment, and establish a \$5 billion China-Africa development fund to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

China's biggest plays have been in Africa's oil producers: Sudan, Angola, and Nigeria. Africa accounts for 30 percent of China's overall oil imports, and this share is set to rise during the next decade. But Chinese officials are quick to point out that, contrary to perceptions in the West, China is not "gobbling up" Africa's oil resources. China's share of total African oil production is approximately 9 percent, compared with the U.S. share of 32 percent and Europe's share of 33 percent. China comes late to the oil game, however, and on a level playing field would not likely be as competitive as more established Western oil companies. In Sudan, this is not an issue because Western companies are reluctant or prohibited by sanctions to invest there. In Angola and Nigeria, China has boosted its competitiveness with an array of diplomatic, security, and lending practices, the details of which are not always transparent and publicly available.

Angola, for example, is a major recipient of China's largesse and package deals, and with China's ample stock of capital, money poses little constraint. In 2006, a consortium led by China's SINOPEC and Angola's SONANGOL bid a combined massive \$2.2 billion in signature bonuses for two oil tracts, for which Western companies ExxonMobil and BP bid only \$120 million and \$15 million, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Concessional loans are another vehicle through which to cement ties. Beginning in 2004, China's Exim Bank offered Angola a \$2 billion oil-backed loan to fund reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, destroyed by decades of war.<sup>3</sup> This came at a time when the international community and the International Monetary Fund were using Angola's shortage of liquidity to press for reforms in transparency and governance. According to Angola's deputy prime minister, Aguinaldo Jaime, China came to Angola with critical assistance at a time when the international community refused, insisting on excessive and unreasonable conditions to more robust assistance.<sup>4</sup> The initial Exim loan was followed in September 2007 by a second \$2 billion.

These loans are not entirely without conditions. As Alex Vines and Indira Campos explain,<sup>5</sup> projects proposed for funding by the credit line are approved by a joint committee of the Angolan Ministry of Finance and the Chinese Ministry for Foreign and Commercial Affairs. Once approved, China proposes several Chinese companies to undertake the work, and eventual disbursements are paid directly into the contractors' accounts. China brings its own materials, equipment, and workers—reportedly tens of thousands to date—despite the desperate need in Angola for employment. For now, the Angolan government's urgent priority is reconstruction, and it has not yet insisted in any dramatic way for better terms for Angolans. As the sense of urgency subsides—and should civil-society groups find their voice on these issues—the government may be more prepared to drive a harder bargain with the Chinese.

Relations with mineral-rich countries may be less complex, but deals are struck with similar incentives and levels of opacity. In April 2008, the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a \$9

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1. As of May 2008, \$1 billion had been committed to this fund.

2. "Going Off the Deep End For Oil," *Business Week*, June 26, 2006.

3. Alex Vines and Indira Campos, "Angola and China: A Pragmatic Partnership," in *U.S.-China Engagement in Africa*, ed. Jennifer Cooke (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, July 2008).

4. Aguinaldo Jaime, deputy prime minister of Angola (address to a CSIS conference about China in Africa, via digital video conference, December 5, 2007).

5. Vines and Campos, "Angola and China."

billion loan deal from China's Exim Bank to help build major road and rail construction projects. In exchange, Chinese companies will receive mining rights to millions of tons copper and cobalt; and a joint venture of the Congolese mining company Gecamines, China's Sinohydro Corporation, and China Railway Engineering Corporation will pay back the investment from mining revenues. Many Congolese are deeply skeptical of the deal, the full details of which are sketchy, particularly given the levels of corruption within the government. "It may be win-win," said one Congolese student, "but it is China and the government in Kinshasa that are winning, not us."<sup>6</sup>

It is as yet unclear what the long-term soft-power impact of China's investment deals will be in Africa. The view of the Congolese observer is one take. Survey data seem to indicate that opinions so far align more with the view of the Senegalese president, Abdoulaye Wade:

China's approach to our needs is simply better adapted than the slow and sometimes patronizing post-colonial approach of European investors, donor organizations and nongovernmental organizations. In fact, the Chinese model for stimulating rapid economic development has much to teach Africa.

With direct aid, credit lines and reasonable contracts, China has helped African nations build infrastructure projects in record time—bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, dams, legislative buildings, stadiums and airports. In many African nations, including Senegal, improvements in infrastructure have played important roles in stimulating economic growth.

And, for those who are skeptical of the structure of these deals, Wade continues:

It is a telling sign of the post-colonial mindset that some donor organizations in the West dismiss the trade agreements between Chinese banks and African states that produce these vital improvements—as though Africa was naive enough to just offload its precious natural resources at bargain prices to obtain a commitment for another stadium or state house.

## Diplomatic Engagement

China's rising trade and investment in Africa have been matched by a major diplomatic push to foster closer ties with African governments, win support for China's worldview, and reassure Africans (and the world) of China's friendly intentions.

### **Messages: Solidarity, Sovereignty, Win-win**

China's public diplomacy emphasizes the notion of solidarity and South-South cooperation. Chinese officials are quick to point out that as far back as the fifteenth century when Admiral Zhen He made his famous voyage to the East African coast, China has never sought to subjugate, colonize, or enslave. They point to China's record of support for African liberation movements and the common interest of the developing world in creating a just, equitable global economy. China presents itself as a champion of developing-country interests in international forums, and clearly expects that that sense of solidarity will be reciprocal. Speaking at the first FOCAC in 2000, Minister Shi Guangsheng declared:

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6. Decky Kipuka-Kabongi, research intern, CSIS.

China will unswervingly side with African countries and peoples to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the vast number of developing countries and push for the establishment of an equitable and rational new international political and economic order. Here, let me take this opportunity to express my heart-felt thanks to African countries for your support for China's accession to WTO. China's accession to WTO will be beneficial not only to China and world economic and trade development, but also to the economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa. It is our hope that African countries will continue to render us your precious support so that China's accession to WTO will be realized at an early date.<sup>7</sup>

China also emphasizes the notion of "respect" for African countries, embodied in its policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of sovereign countries and in an approach to conflict resolution on the continent that is seen as much less confrontational than Western interventions. This approach resonates with many African governments and indeed with many (but not all) African citizens to whom Western browbeating and condemnation seem patronizing and ineffectual. In explaining China's reluctance to sanction President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Chinese officials and analysts explained that they were simply following the approach of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and that if SADC changed its stance they would reconsider.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly on Darfur, Chinese special envoy Liu Guijin has stressed the need for greater diplomatic effort instead of an emphasis on sanctions, punitive measures, or military options favored in the West, a view that is echoed by a number of African leaders and African Union representatives. Likewise, China's objection to the International Criminal Court's request for indictment of Sudan's president, Omar Bashir, is a position shared by a number of African leaders, including Jean Ping, chair of the African Union Commission.

Finally, China emphasizes the win-win aspect of its engagement in Africa. This approach finds support in Africa for a number of reasons. First, there is appreciation for China's pragmatism and the idea that it comes to Africa as a business partner, not to proselytize or offer charity. Second, the perception is that economic self-interest is more likely to ensure sustained engagement than will humanitarian impulse or intermittent crisis diplomacy. Finally, the win-win notion implies that Africans are free to negotiate the terms of the arrangements, and that China will be responsive to African demands.

## **Vehicles for Diplomatic Engagement**

The most comprehensive of China's diplomatic efforts toward Africa is the triennial FOCAC. Launched in October 2000, the forum alternates between Beijing and an African country and encompasses assistance, economic development, trade, investment, and political partnerships. The 2006 summit in Beijing drew high-level delegations from 48 African countries, with 41 African heads of state present. The summit is a major undertaking for the Chinese and was reportedly the largest-ever international event held in China. FOCAC has been the venue for announcements of major Chinese commitments to Africa. At the next FOCAC, to be held in Cairo in October 2009, agriculture, food security, environmental concerns, and climate change are likely to be priority focus areas.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Shi Guangsheng, minister of foreign trade and economic cooperation of China, "To Intensify China-Africa Cooperation for a Brilliant Future" (speech at FOCAC, October 11, 2000).

8. Staff at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and Chinese Institute for Contemporary International Relations, interviews with author, Beijing, May 2008.

9. Analysts who specialize in Africa at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, interviews with author, Beijing, May 2008.

Along with FOCAC, China has a major diplomatic presence in Africa. In fact, as David Shinn points out, Beijing is more widely represented in Africa with missions on the ground than is the United States.<sup>10</sup> Beijing, which has diplomatic relations with 49 African countries, maintains an embassy with an accredited ambassador in 48 of them.<sup>11</sup> The United States, which has relations with all 53 countries, has the same number of embassies. Further, China maintains offices of a commercial counselor in 40 of those countries<sup>12</sup> and seven consulates general in 5 of them. The United States has six independent consulates.<sup>13</sup>

Visits by senior Chinese leaders are another way that China cements its relationships with African states. Since 2004, President Hu Jintao has made three trips to Africa, visiting 14 countries. Premier Wen Jiabao has visited eight African countries since 2003; and former foreign minister Li Zhaozhing, 13 countries in 2006 and 2007. These trips are not limited to African powerhouses or energy producers. They have included visits to Seychelles, Central Africa Republic, and Madagascar, none of them likely destinations for senior U.S. leadership. The impact of senior official visits, particularly in Africa's smaller states, which enjoy little global attention, can be significant in shaping perceptions and partnerships.

## Humanitarian and Development Assistance

China's aid flows to Africa are nearly impossible to quantify. Accurate data on assistance flows are not available, in part because, as a recent Congressional Research Service report points out, China's assistance "consists of grants, interest free loans, bilateral state loans, and concessional low-interest loans that are often partially commercial in character."<sup>14</sup> No single agency manages this mix of funding flows, and it is difficult to verify that pledges made in venues such as FOCAC on health, agriculture, and education are eventually fulfilled.

At the most recent FOCAC, President Hu pledged that China would:

- Deploy 100 top Chinese agricultural experts to Africa by 2009;
- Establish 10 agricultural technology centers;
- Build 30 hospitals;
- Provide \$40 million in grants for anti-malaria drugs, prevention, and model treatment centers;
- Deploy 300 Peace Corps-like volunteers to Africa;
- Build 100 rural schools in Africa;
- Train 15,000 African professionals; and
- Double the number of Chinese government scholarships for African students from 2,000 to 4,000 per year.

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10. David Shinn, "China's Engagement in Africa," in *Africa Policy in the Bush Years*, ed. J. Stephen Morrison and Jennifer G. Cooke (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, forthcoming).

11. Somalia is excluded, as are the four countries that maintain relations with Taiwan.

12. Shinn (forthcoming).

13. Ibid.

14. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *China's Foreign Policy and "Soft Power" in South America, Asia, and Africa*, report prepared by Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 110th Congress, 2nd sess., April 2008, Committee Print no. 110-46.

These commitments are important and, although relatively small compared with Western donor commitments, should prompt the established donor community to make greater efforts to coordinate engagement and assistance flows with China. China's engagement on family planning in Uganda offers an example of how a fairly low-cost, low-tech approach can nonetheless fill important gaps in existing Western donor flows.

Overall, however, the big-ticket items within the FOCAC commitments to date remain in the areas of trade and investment. This is consistent with China's win-win approach and the government's projection of itself not as a donor state but as a still-developing country keen on building South-South partnerships.

## Cultural Exchanges

China has pushed strongly to broaden cultural exchanges with Africa as well. The first Confucius Institute in Africa was established in Nairobi in 2005. These institutes are funded by the Chinese government and offer Chinese language and cultural programming to the general public. Today there are 19 such institutes in Africa.<sup>15</sup> In 2008, China pledged 20 million renminbi for education projects in South Africa, to include the teaching of Mandarin in 50 local high schools. Support for trade and cultural visitors programs is expanding with the establishment in 2004 of an African Cultural Visitors Program. Beyond the 4,000 government scholarships promised by the Chinese government to African students annually, an increasing number of African entrepreneurs are moving to China, with signs of African diaspora communities being established in a number of Chinese cities.

Equally powerful in people-to-people exchanges and popular perceptions are the large numbers of small-business entrepreneurs who have migrated from China to Africa, setting up shops not only in large capital cities but also in much smaller towns and communities. Anecdotal accounts of African reactions are mixed—language in many cases remains a powerful barrier, and in larger cities Chinese communities remain fairly close, without a great deal of social contact. This may naturally change over time and is an area that warrants further observation and analysis.

## U.S. Engagement in Africa

China's expansion in Africa comes at time when U.S. interests and engagement in Africa are growing as well. Rising energy stakes, the global "war on terror" with its emphasis on weak and failing states, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and new domestic U.S. constituencies interested and active on Africa and conflict resolution have all generated a dramatic increase in U.S. commitments. The Bush administration has launched a number of major initiatives in Africa, with historic funding levels backing them up.

Among these initiatives are:

- The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) with \$15 billion over five years directed primarily at Africa and with congressional authorization of \$48 billion for an expanded program in the next five years;

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15. Confucius Institute Online, <http://www.confuciusinstitute.net>.

## China's Smart Power in Reproductive Health: Reaching Out to Uganda

Eric Little

China and Uganda have had a bilateral health relationship since the 1960s, and Chinese medical personnel have worked in Uganda since 1983.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, 11 medical teams with more than 100 doctors have served in the country.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these medical teams, the Chinese pharmaceutical company Beijing Holley-Cotec has established offices in Uganda, where it now markets a new malaria drug in the country.<sup>3</sup> Other medical ties include the provision of drugs and medical equipment worth \$40,000 and health exchange programs in which Ugandan physicians have traveled to China for medical training.<sup>4</sup> Among the most recent and innovative partnerships has been a joint venture on family planning and reproductive health, launched in 2006.

In November 2006, China hosted an international conference, with a Ugandan delegation in attendance, with the purpose of promoting South-South cooperation on reproductive health supplies.<sup>5</sup> Reproductive health services have received scant attention from the United States, largely because of continued domestic political debates, despite the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a historic effort to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS in 15 focus countries, including Uganda. This gap in the U.S. approach offered China a niche where it could capitalize on its long-standing and robust family planning capabilities, as illustrated by the National Planning and Family Planning Commission of China.

In October 2007, Wang Pei'an, vice minister of the Family Planning Commission, visited Uganda and launched a capacity-building program to be implemented by a new reproductive health service center funded by the Chinese government.<sup>6</sup> Along with infrastructural development, the package included medical equipment, an exchange program to train Ugandan health personnel in Chinese hospitals, and a commitment by China to send some of its health experts to Ugandan clinics for consultation.<sup>7</sup> This program will run through 2010 and supplements the multitude of other projects that define the Sino-Ugandan health relationship.

China's investment in family planning in Uganda illustrates how a relatively low-tech, inexpensive Chinese program was married with a clear need in Uganda. From its own experience and expertise in family planning programming, China has recognized the enormous need for family planning and population solutions in underdeveloped countries like Uganda. China has been able to fill a void left by initiatives like PEPFAR that are unwilling to engage on family planning and reproductive health issues. These programs exemplify Chinese willingness to listen, meet local Ugandan demands, and maintain a policy of noninterference and respect for sovereignty. China continues to expand its efforts with family planning programs it has set up in Zimbabwe, Mali, Nigeria, and Bangladesh and consultations on Chinese programs in South Africa<sup>8</sup> and Egypt<sup>9</sup> as well.

These programs also serve China's economic ambitions. China has clearly recognized its lack of international pharmaceutical export experience; as of 2006 it exported just over 5 percent of the world's pharmaceuticals.<sup>10</sup> The government has recognized that lack of information about developing-country priorities, lack of understanding about international pharmaceutical rules, and few relationships with international procurement organizations and distributors have been key obstacles to expanding pharmaceutical exports.<sup>11</sup> By offering programs like the family planning

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## China's Smart Power in Reproductive Health (continued)

initiative in Uganda, China can in effect learn these priorities, develop supply channels that ultimately will make global rules easier to navigate, and develop procurement and distributional relationships. Thus, in addition to gaining an edge in Africa by answering developmental needs without moral preconditions, providing health care in Uganda benefits China's emerging pharmaceutical industry by exposing a captive market to Chinese products, thus potentially opening new markets for future African consumption.

China's relationship with Uganda is a strong example of how China is using soft power to successfully and deftly broaden its influence in Africa. China gains at least short-term popularity by answering the demands of the Ugandan population while it boosts its own pharmaceutical industry. As the United States continues to debate the merits of family planning within its own global health initiatives, China will continue to fill a major gap in public health efforts in Uganda and more broadly across Africa.

From the U.S. perspective this issue points to the importance of finding a strategic and more holistic approach to future international health engagement, specifically the necessity of finding common ground on the challenges surrounding domestic cultural disputes like family planning and reproductive health. Similarly, as the United States engages with the developing world, it would do well to cultivate greater receptivity to what country leaders see as vital needs. Such a working relationship would produce greater diplomatic trust, would promote bilateral interests on a more even footing, and would serve to develop greater support for U.S. policies abroad.

### Notes

1. "Sino-Ugandan Relations," Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Uganda, October 28, 2004, <http://ug.china-embassy.org/eng/zwx/t168251.htm>.
2. David Shinn, "Africa, China and Health Care," *Inside Asia*, nos. 3 and 4, October–December 2006, p. 14, <http://www.ccs.org.za/downloads/Inside%20AISA%20October-December%202006.pdf>.
3. Ibid.
4. "Sino-Ugandan Relations."
5. Zhao Baige, "Promote South-South Cooperation to Improve Reproductive Health Commodity Supply and Service" (speech of vice minister of National Population and Family Planning Commission of China at opening ceremony of roundtable on RH supply among developing countries, November 7, 2006), <http://www.npfpc.gov.cn/EN/en-nljs/ennljs-1.htm>.
6. "China Starts Its First Foreign Aid Program in Population, Reproductive Health," National Population and Family Planning Commission of China, October 26, 2007, <http://www.npfpc.gov.cn/en/en2007-10/news20071025.htm>.
7. Ibid.
8. "South Africa News Delegation Visited National Population and Family Planning Commission, National Population and Family Planning Commission of China, October 30, 2007, <http://www.npfpc.gov.cn/en/en2007-10/news20071030-1.htm>.
9. Ibid.; "Bolstering Health Ties with China," Egypt State Information Service, Egypt Online Archive, June 26, 2005, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/EgyptOnline/Archive/20050626.htm>.
10. "The Supply of China's Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health," China Training Center, Reproductive Health and Family Care, November 7, 2006, <http://www.npfpc.gov.cn/EN/en-nljs/ennljs-2.pdf>.
11. Ibid.

## China's Peacekeeping Deployments in Africa

Roy Levy

Chinese peacekeepers are deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide, but their presence in Africa is striking. Of the roughly 2,000 peacekeepers China had deployed around the world, on average during the first nine months of 2008, 77 percent were in Africa. China is by far the largest contributor to Africa peacekeeping among the Security Council's permanent five members, with 63 percent of total P-5 contributions to the continent.

China's participation in the UN peacekeeping regime and the composition of its deployments allow Beijing to develop and nurture its national interests, maintain friendly and noninterventionist relations with recipient governments, and at the same time project the image of a responsible stakeholder on the international stage.

Sudan is a case in point. Beijing has fairly consistently opposed efforts within the Security Council to pressure or punish Khartoum, and in fact China has been among the larger suppliers of weapons to the Sudanese government. Yet, at the same time, it has deployed personnel to both the UN Mission in Southern Sudan (UNMIS) and the hybrid African Union-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

Consistent with the government's reluctance to interfere in the affairs of a sovereign state, the composition of Chinese deployments is generally on the softer side of such military interventions. Of the total number of Chinese personnel contributed to missions around the globe, 5 percent are military observers, 14 percent are police, and 81 percent are troops. In Africa, the troops component of China's contribution is even higher, at 91 percent. Troops carry out a variety of tasks and functions: in addition to combat units tasked with defending UN installations and personnel as well as local civilians in immediate danger, this component includes "enabling units" such as engineers, logistics staff, and medical personnel. And, unlike the contingents of police and military observers, which are composed of a mixture of personnel from all contributing countries, troops are deployed in their organic home units, which leaves the contributing countries with substantial influence on their deployment whereabouts and, though rare, the ability to utilize those troops for projects other than those mandated by the mission.<sup>1</sup>

In Africa, the vast majority of China's peacekeeping troops fall within the category of enabling units.

China's contribution to UNAMID in Darfur has consisted of a 315-member engineering contingent dispatched to help with the construction of camps, roads, and bridges. Beijing has recently said that it is willing to send well diggers and other relevant equipment to Darfur to solve the water shortage facing the hybrid African Union-United Nations force.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in southern Sudan, China has contributed to UNMIS 460 engineers, transport experts, and medical personnel. In all, according to Wei Yanwei, vice director of the Peace-Keeping Affairs Office of China's Ministry of National Defense, Chinese peacekeepers worldwide have built or repaired more than 200 bridges and 7,500 kilometers of roads, airports, and water supply infrastructures, and they have treated nearly 50,000 local patients.<sup>3</sup>

The pattern is similar in Liberia, where China's 530 peacekeeping troops consist of engineering, transportation, and medical staff. Of the approximately 200 Chinese peacekeepers in the

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### China's Peacekeeping Deployments in Africa (continued)

Democratic Republic of the Congo, 175 are engineers and 40 are medical personnel who are, according to the UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit's chief, "providing some of the best medical support anywhere in Central Africa."<sup>4</sup>

While these various enabling units are tasked mainly with supporting the mission and its peacekeepers' needs, experience shows that, in the process, many facilities, items of infrastructure, and services that benefit local populations are also being constructed and rehabilitated. It is in this aspect of peacekeeping—the soft-security portion of nation building and reconstruction—that the greatest opportunities lie for using soft power to promote China's wider national interests. Significantly, China's largest peacekeeping contributions in Africa—in Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia—are also where it has made large investments in natural resources and where stability, infrastructure, and good government-to-government relations will ultimately redound to its economic interest.

#### Notes

1. Official of UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, interview with author, New York, October 2008.
2. "Sudan: China to Send Second Batch of Peacekeepers to Darfur in July—Spokesman," BBC Monitoring Middle East, June 29, 2008, accessed via LexisNexis on October 5, 2008.
3. BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, June 30, 2008, accessed via LexisNexis on October 5, 2008.
4. "UN Peacekeeping Missions," *Business Day*, October 1, 2004, <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.za/eng/zjnl/t177585.htm>; David Harland, "Why the UN Welcomes Chinese Peacekeepers" *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 2004.

- The President's Malaria Initiative, with \$1.2 billion over five years to reduce malaria-related deaths;
- The Millennium Challenge Account, which commits \$15 billion for five years, to provide countries with a proven track record in good governance and delivery of social services major funding flows to unleash their economies' potential for growth and development; and
- The U.S. Africa Command, a unified military command for Africa that pledges to build African capacities to respond to the continent's security challenges.

These are major new initiatives intended to help to bolster African health, development, and security. There is some question, however, as to whether they are having the kind of soft-power impact that might have been anticipated, given the levels of resources accompanying them.

First, this may be because humanitarian assistance from the West is taken, to a certain extent, as a given and an obligation for wealthy, developed countries. But in part it may be that, although these are things that the United States would like to do for Africa, they are not necessarily the priority list of things Africans most want. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has

generated some trade and employment benefits, but there has not been a concomitant, robust effort to build African trade capacities, with the result that many countries are unable to take full advantage of the agreement. Outside of oil, U.S. firms are wary of investing in Africa, and the opportunity for joint ventures, transfers of technology and know-how, training, and employment have not materialized. Africa is seen largely through the lens of assistance and security, with economic potential and investment or trade potential a distant third.

Second, while U.S. soft-power programs have increased, the United States, unlike China, still exerts considerable hard power in Africa, with airstrikes into southern Somalia that killed a number of civilians and counterterror operations in the Sahel. The United States is often accused of launching punitive measures against human rights abusers in Sudan and Zimbabwe while remaining relatively silent on human rights abusers in countries that happen to be security allies or energy suppliers. The introduction of the African Command was clumsily done, without prior explanations to Africans and with descriptions so broad and all-encompassing that many Africans believed that the U.S. Department of Defense was slated to take over U.S. policy toward Africa.

Third, although China's diplomatic presence in Africa has increased, the U.S. presence has diminished, with embassies chronically understaffed or shutting down altogether. The State Department's Bureau of African Affairs has lost personnel to assignments in the Middle East, and funding constraints hamper the bureau's leadership from making longer, multiple-stop visits in Africa. Visa regulations have slowed the visa application process considerably. The process has become a nightmare for many Africans, whose first contact with Americans or at least the U.S. diplomatic presence will often be a jaded, overworked consular officer, an exorbitant visa fee, and a protracted wait for an uncertain outcome. Potential students or visitors may well expect a more welcome reception and shorter process from Chinese counterparts.

Fourth, competition for African commodities has increased, not just from China but from India, Brazil, Russia, and even South Africa. Africa has options, and U.S. influence is thereby diminished.

Finally, global developments have an impact on African opinion. The U.S. war in Iraq, the abuses of Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, and perceptions of U.S. unilateralism continue to take their toll and undermine U.S. rhetoric on democracy, human rights, and U.S. intentions. The current financial meltdown may ultimately have an impact as well, as Africans calculate that they may be better off staking their bets on Asia's burgeoning economies.

## Opinion Polls

The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project indicates that in a sampling of African countries, Chinese and U.S. influence is strongly felt, that Chinese influence is perceived to be growing more than that of the United States, and that China's influence is perceived in many cases as more positive.<sup>16</sup>

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16. Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 27, 2007, pp. 44–46, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/256.pdf>.

**Table 3.1 China, U.S. Influence Felt throughout Africa**

	<b>Influences in your Country*</b>		
	<b>China</b> (in percent)	<b>U.S.</b> (in percent)	<b>Gap</b>
Ethiopia	85	88	-3
Mali	83	66	+17
Ivory Coast	79	65	+14
Kenya	76	82	-6
Senegal	72	54	+18
Nigeria	70	75	-5
South Africa	65	66	-1
Ghana	61	69	-8
Tanzania	50	47	+3
Uganda	46	67	-21

\*How much influence do you think \_\_\_ is having on the way things are going in our country? Question asked only in Sub-Saharan Africa (and Latin America).

**Table 3.2 Growing Chinese Influence**

	<b>Influence Is Growing*</b>		
	<b>China</b> (in percent)	<b>U.S.</b> (in percent)	<b>Gap</b>
Ethiopia	85	73	+12
Mali	81	58	+23
Ivory Coast	72	48	+24
Kenya	74	66	+8
Senegal	79	51	+28
Nigeria	63	64	-1
South Africa	61	51	-10
Ghana	59	64	-5
Tanzania	77	69	+8
Uganda	47	59	-12

\*Do you think \_\_\_ influence in our country is growing, decreasing, or staying about the same? Question asked only in Sub-Saharan Africa (and Latin America).

**Table 3.3 China's Influence More Positive than America's**

	China's Influence (in percent)		U.S. Influence (in percent)		Gap
	Good	Bad	Good	Bad	
Kenya	91	6	74	16	+17
Ivory Coast	90	6	80	12	+10
Ghana	90	5	79	13	+11
Senegal	86	6	56	23	+30
Mali	84	7	63	25	+21
Nigeria	79	12	58	27	+21
Tanzania	78	13	36	52	+42
Uganda	75	13	65	24	+10
Ethiopia	61	33	34	54	+27
South Africa	49	32	55	4	-6

Based on respondents who say China/United States has at least a fair amount of influence on the way things are going in their countries. Question asked only in Sub-Saharan Africa (and Latin America).

## Recommendations

The United States and China are not on a strategic collision course in Africa. Despite differences of approaches and areas of sharp disagreement, there is ample common ground that African states, China, and the United States should exploit. China's inroads into African economies may spur greater attention and focus by U.S. companies, and there is some evidence that major U.S. firms are beginning to realize the opportunity costs of not getting a foot in the door.

U.S. soft power in Africa may be losing out to China's more pragmatic, optimistic business approach. There are areas in which the United States can emulate China's approach; areas that merit continued support whether or not they are popular with African governments; and areas where China, the United States, and Africa can strengthen collaboration and forestall potential standoffs.

Drawing lessons from China's success, the United States should:

- Place greater emphasis and priority on encouraging and supporting U.S. businesses to invest in Africa, working through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Commerce Department, and Exim Bank.
- Provide greater support for infrastructure projects in transport, port facilities, and power (through the African Development Bank, multilateral initiatives, or establishment of an Infrastructure Fund along the lines of the United Kingdom's Africa Emerging Infrastructure Fund).

## Civil Society Pushes Back

China's expanded engagement in Africa is relatively recent. As Chinese government and business interests are increasingly confronted with realities on the ground, their approach to both government and nonstate actors will likely require modification. In a number of instances, African civil-society groups have pushed back on their governments regarding certain aspects of China's engagement. In some cases, African governments have responded, negotiating a change in the engagement, and China in turn has been willing (or forced) to respond. The cases demonstrate that there is no monolithic view of China's approach in Africa. Where civil society is active and informed, there have been increasing debates on the merits of China's engagement, greater demands for transparency, and pressures on governments to strike harder deals with Chinese counterparts. Ultimately, these pressures may change China's hard- and soft-power approaches in Africa.

In South Africa, trade unions protested the inflow of low-cost Chinese goods, particularly textiles. President Thabo Mbeki took the issue up with Chinese officials, and after a personal meeting between Mbeki and Premier Wen Jiabao, China agreed voluntarily to cut textile imports to South Africa by one-third, with quotas on Chinese textiles and clothing imports to be imposed for three years. Although the quota is temporary—and there is little evidence that South Africa has used the time to strengthen the competitiveness of its beleaguered textile industry—it was nonetheless an indication of the potential of African governments to demand more of their Chinese counterparts. In April 2008, South African dockworkers, backed by the Congress of South African Trade Unions, blocked the off-loading a Chinese ship carrying arms destined for Zimbabwe. A number of member states of the South African Development Community and union groups joined in the protest. Ultimately the South African high court ruled that the cargo could not be moved overland, and the ship was diverted to Angola and eventually back to China.

In Zambia, public protest greeted President Hu Jintao on his arrival in Lusaka in 2006. Chinese mining companies were accused of ignoring safety regulations and limiting trade union activities. An explosion in the Chambishi mine in 2005 killed 50 Zambian workers, and there had been frequent protests over work conditions and pay. In the 2006 elections, Michael Sata challenged incumbent Levy Mwanawasa in the presidential race, running on a populist, anti-China platform. Sata eventually lost the election, but his party made significant gains in local and parliamentary elections in the country's capital.

In Gabon, a consortium of Gabonese and international environmental nongovernmental organizations accused SINOPEC (China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation) of falsifying an environmental impact report associated with an oil-prospecting project in Loango Park. Ultimately the government ordered SINOPEC to shut down operations and withdraw.<sup>1</sup>

In these examples, popular protest worked its way through governmental channels, resulting in a renegotiation of the terms of engagement with Chinese firms or government interests. Even more challenging for China may be direct confrontations with anti-Chinese sentiment or violence, including, for example, Chinese oil workers taken hostage or killed in the Niger Delta, Ethiopia, and most recently Sudan or rising community-level antipathy toward

*(continued next page)*

### Civil Society Pushes Back (continued)

Chinese small businesses. These kinds of incidents are likely to grow as China's presence on the ground grows over time and may force an even greater shift in the Chinese policy of noninterference and reshape how the Chinese government and business interests approach community and civil-society engagement.

#### Note

1. "China's Sinopec Provokes Conservation Uproar in Gabon," Agence France-Presse, September 28, 2006.

- Continue support for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, one of the few vehicles through which the United States currently supports major, long-term infrastructure projects. The MCC neatly addresses the twin challenges of building African infrastructure and promoting accountable governance, offering incentives to countries with a record of transparency, sound economic management, and basic service delivery. While the MCC should not lower the governance bar to expand coverage to more countries, the United States might consider, through the MCC or other agencies, establishing mini compacts that focus on infrastructure but involve smaller amounts and greater oversight.
- Expand diplomatic presence in Africa. This will likely enhance soft-power influence but will at the same time serve U.S. interests in managing an expanding array of interests and initiatives in Africa. The United States should also make greater investments in consular services to expedite the visa process for visitors, students, and professionals. The U.S. government could invest greater attention and resources in cultural, educational, and science exchange programs between the United States and Africa, all areas where the United States continues to wield considerable inspirational power.

To strengthen the governance agenda, the United States should:

- Strengthen its technical and capacity support to institutions of accountability and oversight—particularly African legislatures, civil-society organizations, and the media. It should make greater efforts to engage regional organizations, particularly the African Union, in building capacity to manage and set standards for foreign investments, environmental stewardship, worker safety, employment, and transparency. The United States would do well, however, to tone down its rhetoric on spreading democracy while it works to strengthen these institutions.

To engage China and Africa on areas of common interest, the United States should:

- Coordinate efforts with China and African governments. Both China and the United States have expressed willingness to work together on assistance programs in Africa. Formal collaboration on projects—in health, agriculture, and peacekeeping training, for example—will be difficult initially to launch, given the very different U.S. and Chinese institutional structures

that administer such programs. These kinds of collaborations will take a major up-front investment of political will and diplomatic attention. But simply increasing informal coordination of efforts in a particular country or sector could bring greater efficiency of effort.

- Collaborate on global challenges. Chinese leadership has recently given much greater emphasis to global challenges of food security, climate change, the need for clean and efficient energy, and agricultural development. These themes will likely be highlighted at the upcoming FOCAC in 2009. The next administration should begin early to engage China and African governments at a senior level to find common ground on these issues and begin to build a coordinated strategy to tackle them.
- Ensure regular, senior-level contact with Chinese and African leaders to anticipate and preempt potential areas of conflict and disagreement. In the coming two years, divisions on Sudan will likely deepen, as the country embarks on what will almost certainly be a chaotic and divisive election process. That process may well generate the starkest division between U.S. and Chinese approaches and interests in Africa. The new U.S. administration should push early for engagement with senior leadership of the African Union and the Chinese government to establish common interests, benchmarks, and redlines on the Sudan election and referendum and build a multilateral consensus on the way forward.