

# Friend or Foe: Chinese Influence in Sub-Saharan Africa

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

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The rise of China over the last few decades has been well documented in media outlets around the world, with most Western companies suggesting it is a cause for concern. The US Department of Defense names China as a potential adversary alongside Iran, Russia, and North Korea. Yet most controversy over China relates to its investment in Africa, and further afield. As the Chinese economy appears to strengthen and its GDP continues to increase, it provides an attractive opportunity for bilateral agreements for many developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The highest number of deployed British Army personnel are in Africa, on a variety of peacekeeping missions, training exercises, and host nation support activities. As the UK strives to improve and maintain its international reputation among the developing continent, whilst assisting countries in defeating non-state terror groups, as well as stemming potential migration into Europe, it must be wary of China operating in the same environment. Can both countries co-exist, or is there a potential for confrontation? By examining the paradigms of both the UK and China, this paper endeavors to determine if there will be a new contest in Africa.

Open source evidence will be used to determine the Chinese and British strategies, and how the effects are felt in Africa by the local population and in the wider international community. This paper argues that the paradigm for the United Kingdom National Security Strategy and subsequent British Army strategy remains relevant for the changing context and regional challenges posed by ongoing Chinese influence in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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## Acronyms

BDS	British Defence Staffs
CAR	Central African Republic
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NSCR	National Security Capabilities Review
NSS	National Security Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRC	People's Republic of China
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Introduction

Outside the United Kingdom (UK), the largest number of UK Armed Forces personnel are currently training or on operations in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Over the last two years, the UK deployed several short-term training teams to build the capacity of national military forces, ensuring many states across Africa can respond appropriately and proportionally to the security threats they face including terrorism, the illegal wildlife trade, violations of human rights and emerging humanitarian crises. However, the UK is not the only foreign power operating in Africa.

Over recent decades, China's relationship with Africa has evolved incrementally through ideological, economic, political, and security interests.<sup>2</sup> This is a result of China's meteoric rise in international standing and continued economic growth within its national borders.<sup>3</sup> Due to this growth and industrial development, there is a continued requirement for substantial energy resources. Lacking these indigenous resources, China is reliant upon foreign countries for its supply of coal, oil, and other power producing materials.<sup>4</sup> Hence, China has formed several bilateral agreements with key energy producing and resource-rich countries, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of China and its foreign policy has caused much international debate throughout history. In the eighteenth century, as China was dormant, Napoleon remarked that one should "let China sleep, for when she awakes, she will shake the world." In 1949, Mao Zedong at the founding

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government, Ministry of Defence, "The British Army in Africa," Deployments, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/africa/>.

<sup>2</sup> David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Country of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), ix.

<sup>3</sup> Sophia Kalantzakos, *China and the Geopolitics of Rare Earths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Victor P. Petrov, *China: Emerging World Power* (New Jersey, NY: D. Van Nostrand Company Inc., 1967), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Kalantzakos, 40.



of the People's Republic of China (PRC) declared that "China has stood up!"<sup>6</sup> As a comparison, China has seen as much change in the last decade that Europe saw in half a century after Mao's declaration.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps, China has indeed awoken.

The PRC is the world's third largest country and the most populous.<sup>8</sup> Through China's evolving foreign policy, Chinese politics now impact far beyond China's borders. Of the many issues facing the global community today, whether it be climate change, economic growth, maritime security, or counterterrorism, none can be addressed adequately without China's participation.<sup>9</sup> Denny Roy, a notable Asia-Pacific security commentator, suggests that the emergence of China as a great power is the preeminent global security issue of the twenty-first century.<sup>10</sup> It is clear to see that China is a rising power, and some suggest that it may even replace that of the current superpower, the United States.<sup>11</sup> However, to the Chinese people, China is not interfering in the global community, but instead, it is returning to its previous global status.<sup>12</sup> The significance of China in the modern era is clear to see. Therefore, because China matters, understanding China matters.<sup>13</sup>

In order to further understand the role China plays internationally, and its impact on the global community, especially the effect on British forces deployed in similar regions, this paper will explore the ways in which the current British Army strategy in Sub-Saharan Africa remains

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<sup>6</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, ix.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 206.

<sup>8</sup> Kerry Brown, *Contemporary China*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Palgrave, 2015), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Szonyi, "Introduction," in *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power*, ed. Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Denny Roy, *Return of the Dragon: Rising China and Regional Security* (New York: Columbia Press University, 2013), 1.

<sup>11</sup> John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xii.

<sup>12</sup> Roy, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Szonyi, 2.

relevant or the ways it may require reframing in light of expanding Chinese influence in the same region. This may determine divergence in approach that could cause conflict, or present an opportunity for cooperation. The primary section will consider current British Army strategy concerning both China and Sub-Saharan Africa, linking current deployments in Africa to the original political, defense and military strategy. The second section will explore Chinese strategy in both the global domain, and more extensively in Africa. The final section will compare and contrast approaches, goals, and international opinion to determine whether Chinese influence in Sub-Saharan Africa should be considered a threat, or an opportunity for the British Army to cooperate. This paper argues that the paradigm for the UK National Security Strategy and subsequent British Army Strategy remains relevant for the changing context and regional challenges posed by ongoing Chinese influence in Sub-Saharan Africa. The author intends that this paper will add to the body of knowledge regarding China from the military perspective. However, the constraint remains that all sources are unclassified and readily available.

## The British Paradigm, and International Perspective

We are increasingly in a state of permanent international competition, competition that can occasionally risk becoming confrontation or even conflict. We need to employ Armed Forces in such a way that not only do they ameliorate the risk of conflict through protection and deterrence, but they also enhance security through building stability overseas and through capacity building activities which contribute to the prevention of conflict.

—General Sir Nicholas Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff

The British political, defense, and military objectives all derive from the national objectives set out by the government in the *National Security Strategy* (NSS). This document outlines the government’s vision: a secure and prosperous UK, with global reach and influence.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> HM Government, Cabinet Office, *National Security Capability Review*, March 2018, accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/705347/6.4391\\_CO\\_National-Security-Review\\_web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705347/6.4391_CO_National-Security-Review_web.pdf), 7.

The UK sees itself at the heart of the rules-based international order. This is partly owing to the fact that, at the time of writing, the UK remains the only nation to be a permanent member in the United Nations (UN) Security Council and also in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth, the G7 and G20, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank.<sup>15</sup> The UK uses its membership in these international assemblies to project and amplify its power and prosperity. The UK government believes that by promoting good governance, anti-corruption, the rule of law and open societies, and by maintaining and championing free trade that the UK will play a central role in strengthening international norms and promoting home values.<sup>16</sup>

To strengthen international norms the *National Security Capabilities Review* (NSCR), released in 2018, announced that it was “reinvesting” in its relationships around the world. Under a strategy named ‘*Global Britain*,’ it vowed to project its values and advance UK interests using soft power, acknowledging that global geopolitics is more contested than it has been in recent history.<sup>17</sup> All UK government strategies link intrinsically to the three National Security Objectives outlined below: They form the basis of political, military and economic strategies at the government level.<sup>18</sup>

- (1) National Security Objective 1: protect our people – at home, in our Overseas Territories and abroad, and to protect our territory, economic security, infrastructure and way of life.

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<sup>15</sup> HM Government, The Prime Minister’s Office, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, Cm 9161, accessed January 1, 2019. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf), 14.

<sup>16</sup> *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

- (2) National Security Objective 2: project our global influence – reducing the likelihood of threats materialising and affecting the UK, our interests, and those of our allies and partners.
- (3) National Security Objective 3: promote our prosperity – seizing opportunities, working innovatively and supporting UK industry.

The government uses the national security objectives to formulate UK national strategy, which then articulates national policy objectives and the routes by which government departments, in combination, will deliver them. The Ministry of Defence, as a government department, translates the responsibilities allocated to defense to more specific outcomes and the outputs required to deliver them. Military strategy is, therefore, a subset of defense strategy. It directs the use of the military instrument of national power in response to a specific challenge nominated by the government.<sup>19</sup> For example, the Ministry of Defence created the *Defence Engagement* policy that articulates the use of military assets to achieve the national policy and defense objectives directed in the NSS and *Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR).

Recently the UK altered its paradigm. Owing to a combination of economic, political, and military power shifts, the UK witnessed a decline in global preeminence in the last century and a half. In an environment in which the UK's influence is no longer guaranteed, and the economic and political power shifts are no longer in the UK's favor, the SDSR recommended that a more "agile, active and flexible approach" to foreign policy was required.<sup>20</sup> In a session at the House of Lords, the former National Security Advisor, Sir Mark Lyall Grant KCMG, observed that the Westphalian system of nation-states was under noticeable strain. He also claimed that traditional governments were "losing the monopoly of things that are fundamental to a state." Grant identified several examples including the size of multinational companies; terrorism;

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<sup>19</sup> *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01, UK Defence Doctrine*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 4.

migration; and the growing role of non-state actors, including militias in some parts of the world.”<sup>21</sup>

The latest SDSR stated that strong alliances and partnerships worldwide are ever more important since many of the opportunities and threats are global. Economic growth in Asia is moving the global center of gravity toward Asia, and China is actively changing the world order to their advantage. It claims that the rules and standards the West have built, and the values on which they rest, no longer apply to China.<sup>22</sup>

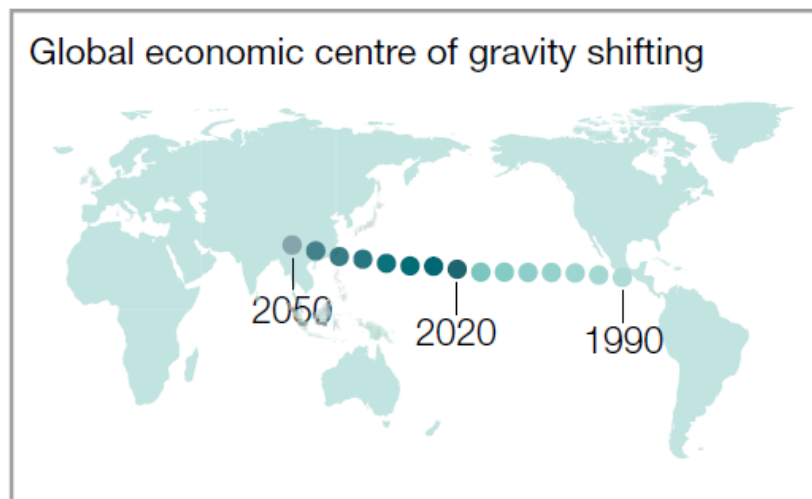


Figure 1. Global Economic Centre of Gravity Shifting. *Global Strategic Trends – The Future Starts Here*, 84.

The UK maintains defense assets designed to deliver hard power to defend the national interest. However, defense assets have broader utility in maintaining security and prosperity beyond the threat or use of hard power. The UK defines Defence Engagement as the means by which it uses its defense assets and activities, short of combat operations, to achieve influence.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> HM Government, Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Note 1/15 Defence Engagement*, accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/570579/20160104Defence\\_engagement\\_jdn\\_1\\_15.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570579/20160104Defence_engagement_jdn_1_15.pdf), v.

Defence Engagement forms an important element of the cross-government soft power strategy.<sup>24</sup> Several mediums are available. The *Defence Engagement Strategy*, and Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) are some examples of this soft power capability. The Defence Engagement Strategy aims to inform defense engagement, out to a 20-year horizon, to achieve influence in a global context.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, the CSSF enables the UK to use the optimum combination of development, diplomacy, defense, and security assistance rapidly and flexibly in countries at risk of conflict and instability.<sup>26</sup> Soft power is by its nature hard to measure, but the UK has scored highly in the *Soft Power 30* report produced by Portland Communications, an international consultancy agency.<sup>27</sup> In 2018 it ranked the UK in first place, followed by France, Germany, the United States, and Japan. The UK was in second place in 2016 and 2017.<sup>28</sup> Defense has a much broader utility than war fighting alone. Through Defence Engagement, the Government uses defense soft power capabilities to influence and shape the environment, promoting and protecting the UK's security and prosperity as well as supporting both defense objectives and wider government strategies.<sup>29</sup>

In 2018, the UK government recognized that the UK strategy for Africa needed to change and expand, owing to the changing political environment.<sup>30</sup> It stated that it would position the UK as a partner for growing powers, to enable it to protect and promote UK interests into the future.<sup>31</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, set to double to two

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<sup>24</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01, UK Defence Doctrine*, 60.

<sup>26</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 44.

<sup>27</sup> Portland Communications, April 2019, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://portland-communications.com/london/>.

<sup>28</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 89.

<sup>29</sup> *Joint Doctrine Note 1/15 Defence Engagement*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> HM Government, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Written Evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, (OTS0103), accessed January 1, 2019, <https://cnslibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/Written-evidence-from-FCO-to-Foreign-Affairs-Select-Committee-Oct-2018.pdf>, 45.

<sup>31</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 49.

billion and to represent a quarter of the world's population by 2050.<sup>32</sup> Also, the Foreign Affairs Committee highlighted in its annual report that parts of West Africa are increasingly important in the contest with Islamic extremism and terrorism.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, recognizing that Africa has considerable potential for economic opportunity, but requires a considered approach.

The UK and its European allies view mass economic migration as a critical regional security threat to Europe, and much of that migration is coming from Africa. In 2016, almost all of the migrants trying to reach Europe originated from Sub-Saharan African countries (primarily Eritrea, The Gambia, Ghana, and Nigeria). Without a long-term solution, this mass movement is likely to continue as employment opportunities in Africa fall short of population growth, climate change exacerbates already difficult conditions for farmers, and severe water stress affects 75-250 million Africans.<sup>34</sup> France is sufficiently worried about terrorism in the Sahel, and the threat it poses to French and European interests, to station thousands of troops in the region.<sup>35</sup> Recognizing the growing instability within the region, the UK established defense staffs in the Gulf, Asia-Pacific and West Africa that became fully operational in 2017.<sup>36</sup>

The reason a more stable and prosperous Africa is good for both Africa and the UK, is that a strong partnership with Africa and UK diplomatic and financial investment will help ensure that UK businesses are a partner of choice for Africa in terms of trade and investment, especially

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<sup>32</sup> *Written Evidence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, 46.

<sup>33</sup> HM Government, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Government Response to House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee's Seventh Report of the Session 2013-2014, HC86-1, May 2014, accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/313859/40581\\_Cm\\_8861\\_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/313859/40581_Cm_8861_accessible.pdf), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Atlantic Council – Africa Center, Grant T. Harris, *Why Africa Matters to US National Security*, accessed January 1, 2019, [http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/Atlantic%20Council-Why\\_Africa\\_Matters\\_to\\_US\\_National\\_Security.pdf](http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/Atlantic%20Council-Why_Africa_Matters_to_US_National_Security.pdf), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Atlantic Council, 14.

<sup>36</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 31.

when Africa's consumer market is predicted to grow significantly.<sup>37</sup> The double benefit of increased trade with the UK and potentially stemming migration from Africa to Europe is attractive to the UK government. However, China also recognizes the benefits of trade in Africa, although for different reasons.

The UK government keenly monitors the rise of China. Lord Hague, former Secretary of State, called President Xi Jinping's October 2017 speech to the Chinese Communist Party's National Congress "the most important political event of recent years." He said President Xi: "declared that in two stages, to 2035 and then to 2050, China will take center-stage in world affairs, with not only the economic muscle but the corresponding military and political prominence, with world-class military forces and a system of government, defined as socialism with Chinese characteristics, in a moderately prosperous country."<sup>38</sup> This was a significant shift as China introduced more than an economic goal, hinting at military and political ambition.

By 2050, the world economy is likely to have doubled, although the rate of growth will probably have slowed. The seven largest emerging economies, the E7 (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Turkey) are likely to have increased their share of the global economy from around 35 percent to almost 50 percent by 2050, surpassing the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States). China's GDP, at market value, could overtake that of the United States by 2020, and by 2050 it is likely to be around 40 percent larger, accounting for 20 percent of global GDP.<sup>39</sup> Stephen King, Senior Economic Adviser, HSBC, demonstrated the scale of China's economic growth. In 1980 China's GDP had been 2.7

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<sup>37</sup> HM Government, Department for International Development, *DFID Africa Regional*, accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/630898/Africa-Regional.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630898/Africa-Regional.pdf), 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> HM Government, Ministry of Defence, *Global Strategic Trends: The Future Starts Today*, 6th ed., accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/771309/Global\\_Strategic\\_Trends\\_-\\_The\\_Future\\_Starts\\_Today.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771309/Global_Strategic_Trends_-_The_Future_Starts_Today.pdf), 84.



percent of the world's total, while the United States accounted for 25.8 percent and the UK 5.4 percent. In 2017, China accounted for around 15 percent, the United States 24.5 percent, and the UK 3.2 percent. He said, "As a rough rule of thumb, that suggests that China is delivering economically every ten years what it took the United States every 50 years to achieve."<sup>40</sup>

As a result of China's economic growth, and the subsequent shift in global power. The UK established a global comprehensive strategic partnership with China.<sup>41</sup> The political and economic relationship with China is rapidly expanding. The UK government openly admits that it does not expect to agree with the Chinese Government on everything and that in all dealings they will protect the UK's interests vigorously. However, the UK aims to build a deeper partnership with China, working more closely together to address global challenges, including climate change, antimicrobial resistance, terrorism, economic development in Africa, and peacekeeping.<sup>42</sup> This comes at a time when China's economic and geopolitical influence, and its technological capabilities, are growing substantially. The UK government states that it is not in the UK's interest to treat China systematically as an adversary; rather, the government should aim to work closely with China in seeking to address significant global challenges, while ensuring such co-operation is consistent with the international humanitarian law.<sup>43</sup>

To further understand China, the UK government has commissioned numerous reports and studies into China in the 21st century. Socio-political experts brief the government regularly to encourage discussion and improve understanding. As a result, the UK government has noted that China's history is central to understanding its world view. Carrie Gracie, a former China Editor, articulated what she called China's "victim psychology," based on the belief that for "two

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<sup>40</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, 58.

<sup>43</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 3.

centuries [the Chinese] were the victims of terrible humiliation at the hands of foreigners, beginning with the UK." <sup>44</sup> Professor Steve Tsang, Director, China Institute, School of Oriental and African Studies, said that it had never been "a realistic prospect that, if and when China became rich and powerful, it would continue ... keeping a low profile." China wanted to "claim its place in the sun." While China had been clearer in its desire to have a greater global role, "it has never been spelled out exactly what the rightful place for China would be" internationally. <sup>45</sup>

The UK Foreign Secretary said, "we cannot stop the rise of China, nor should we seek to." He noted, however, the risks associated with a having "an existing power and a rising power" in the United States and China respectively. He said that to avoid the 'Thucydides trap,' it was necessary to "[maximize] understanding on all sides of each other's objectives."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, despite the numerous reports, a large amount remains unknown about China's objectives.

In addition to the further understanding of China, it is necessary to understand Africa in the 21st century further. Africa is increasingly a continent of opportunity, and economic and political potential, despite challenges from instability and poverty. The UK government aims to deepen its political, economic and military relationships with Sub-Saharan African countries significantly. To enable this, a whole force approach delivers a more strategic and coordinated government approach to Africa.<sup>47</sup> The focus on Africa will change and expand to match challenges and opportunities faced by rapidly growing, young populations across the continent.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Select Committee on International Relations*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> The Department for International Development (DFID) works closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence, Department for International Trade, the Home Office and others to ensure the UK has a coherent approach towards Africa. *DFID Africa Regional*, 2.

<sup>48</sup> *National Security Capability Review*, 33.

The UK government is committed to Africa's economic development and claims it will continue to make substantial investments to promote higher economic growth and poverty reduction.<sup>49</sup>

Many of the challenges to stability and prosperity in Sub-Saharan Africa do not respect borders. Conflict and humanitarian crises in Africa affect multiple countries, for example through flows of refugees and immigrants across borders, or terrorist and organized crime networks that cause, and benefit from, instability.<sup>50</sup> The SDSR strengthened the global defense network with new British Defence Staffs (BDS) in Sub-Saharan Africa; Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.<sup>51</sup> This aids in stabilizing the region. In order to promote prosperity and provide humanitarian assistance in Africa, DFID provided £83 million in 2013 to the Sahel, including £23 million to Mali to support communities still at risk of food insecurity and conflict-affected populations, and provided a further contribution of £20 million for 2014.<sup>52</sup>

The UK and France are engaging with many African governments to support their efforts in combating threats such as Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations. The UK provided personnel to UN and European peacekeeping missions, and the UK is continuing a capacity building program in Nigeria, and the French and other European countries are engaging in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR).<sup>53</sup> The BDS in West Africa oversees and provides coherence to a growing program of UK military advice and capacity building support as well as providing a regional defense focus. UK training and advisory support is helping Nigeria and its

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<sup>49</sup> *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> *DFID Africa Regional*, 2.

<sup>51</sup> HM Government, Ministry of Defence, Defence and Foreign Secretaries, *International Defence Engagement Strategy: Defence Engagement 2014/15*, accessed January 1, 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/457595/20150731-DE\\_Report-2014-15-FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457595/20150731-DE_Report-2014-15-FINAL_WEB.pdf), 8.

<sup>52</sup> *Government Response to House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee's Seventh Report of the Session 2013-2014*, 7

<sup>53</sup> *Joint Doctrine Note 1/15 Defence Engagement*, 3.

regional allies in the Lake Chad Basin and other parts of West Africa to develop the capacity and capability needed to confront their security challenges, such as the threat from Boko Haram-associated extremism. The resident British Military Advisory and Training Team in Nigeria, and a network of liaison officers, operational commitments, and short term training teams are delivering the support.<sup>54</sup>

The UK has strengthened its commitment to international peacekeeping in Sub-Saharan Africa and made new deployments to UN missions in Somalia and South Sudan.<sup>55</sup> The UK commands the EU counter-piracy operation in the region. In Kenya, the British Peace Support Team assists the East Africa Standby Force and trains Kenyan, Ethiopian and Ugandan forces in regional peacekeeping. UK Armed Forces continue to use training areas in Kenya. With South Africa, the British Peace Support Team assists the Southern Africa Development Community forces including in Malawi and Zambia and supports military reform in South Africa.<sup>56</sup>

In conclusion, the UK Government, and especially the British Army, are committed to Sub-Saharan Africa. By utilizing both economic and military soft power, it aims to improve the living conditions of the worst-off Africans. The benefit of financial investment may stem migration into Europe, and the military training assistance may assist in reducing the threat of extremism. However, China is also present in Africa. Therefore, it is necessary to understand China's intentions.

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<sup>54</sup> *UK's International Defence Engagement Strategy*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, 56.

<sup>56</sup> *UK's International Defence Engagement Strategy*, 12.

## The Chinese Paradigm: Unprecedented Rise or Return to Power?

Originating between four thousand and five thousand years ago, China's is one of the world's oldest civilizations. However, two notable recent events have shaped China's modern history. Firstly, in the 1700s, the British East India Company held a monopoly over the production and export of Indian opium. China banned the importation and use of opium in 1729, yet by the early 1800s, the pandemic of widespread opium addiction and the effect on the Chinese economy became severe issues for the Chinese government. In 1839, China challenged the UK but lost the war owing to a significant overmatch in the military three years later. The postwar settlement yielded the first of what became known as the "unequal treaties" between China and stronger foreign powers. The Treaty of Nanking opened additional Chinese ports to British traders, ceded Hong Kong to Britain, and required the Chinese to pay Britain reparations of \$21 million, equal to about half China's annual revenue. Known as the Opium War, this conflict holds a prominent place in the Chinese worldview. Chinese textbooks divide China's history into two main periods: before and after the Opium War, beginning the Century of Shame.<sup>57</sup> Years later, Japan's decisive victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 shocked China far more than anything the West had done to that point. This war revealed that even Japan had mastered the secrets of Western strength to the point where it could humiliate China.<sup>58</sup>

Unleashed by Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening up" policy, the Chinese people have transformed a backward agricultural country into the world's second largest economy and its industrial workshop.<sup>59</sup> In the 1970s Zhou Enlai devised a plan to modernize China's agriculture,

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<sup>57</sup> Denny Roy, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: WW Norton and Company, 2004), 24.

<sup>59</sup> Roderick MacFarquhar, "Does Mao Still Matter?" in *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power*, ed. Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 26.

industry, defense, and science and technology; but it was not until Deng Xiaoping's resurgence that the necessary political will and social stability were created to make it possible. Although its liberalization policies were very gradual, in fewer than three decades China has gone through a transformation from one of the most isolated economies in the world to a global economic powerhouse.<sup>60</sup>

The opening up and domestic reforms were two complementary policies that succinctly describe the post-1978 period, and both worked towards the modernization of China.<sup>61</sup> Since 1978, the Chinese government has gradually opened up its economy, and in 1979 it embraced foreign direct investment (FDI) as a vehicle to obtain advanced technology and assistance in achieving its objectives of modernization.<sup>62</sup> At the beginning of this reform, China was substantially poorer than Sub-Saharan Africa; China's GDP per capita was behind all Sub-Saharan countries, except Ethiopia and Tanzania.<sup>63</sup> Less than a quarter of a century later, after 15 years of negotiations, China acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the 164-nation body that regulates global commerce. By doing so, China agreed to follow thousands of legal commitments concerning its trade practices. To fulfill its WTO obligations, the government transformed the Chinese political economy. State-owned enterprises underwent considerable restructuring. Market forces were allowed to play a stronger role, and increasingly, private enterprises emerged as the key driver for economic growth. China gained tremendously from these reforms, more than \$1 trillion worth of foreign direct investment (FDI) flowed into the country in the next fifteen years. As global production shifted to China, the country became an export powerhouse. Chinese exports grew from \$266 billion in 2001 to \$2.3 trillion in 2015. In

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<sup>60</sup> Beule and Van der Buleke, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 79.

<sup>62</sup> Beule and Van der Buleke, 32.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

2010, China overtook Japan and became the second largest economy.<sup>64</sup> As exports grew, China surpassed the United States to become the world's largest trading nation in 2013.<sup>65</sup> China's emergence indicates that the balance of world power has shifted. Except for the petroleum sector, China has already displaced traditional colonial powers and the United States as the predominant economic power in Africa.<sup>66</sup>

How China views itself from its history is important. The Chinese draw three emotive and interrelated lessons from their past. First, China properly deserves recognition as the world's greatest country, a position it occupied through most of human history. Second, dividing the country impedes greatness. China must recover lost territory and the unity preserved. Third, China's vulnerability for a brief period of its modern history led to massive "molestation" at the hands of "predatory" foreign powers, therefore, the world's other great powers are ruthless and exploitative. These three lessons point to a common conclusion: China must become powerful to protect itself and its interests. This goal has driven the Chinese throughout their modern history, with the other great powers used as a basis of comparison.<sup>67</sup> China's foreign policy has strong internal public support because it combines the country's return to global status, and helps secure continued growth rates and increased prosperity across the nation. The public embraces the political narrative of success and rebirth after decades of "humiliating" defeats in China and the Chinese government broadcasts it.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Kalantzakos, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Wu, "Is China Keeping its Promises on Trade?" in *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power*, ed. Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 141-142.

<sup>66</sup> David E. Brown, *Hidden Dragon, Crouching Lion: How China's Advance in Africa is Underestimated and Africa's Potential Underappreciated* (Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, September 2012), 1.

<sup>67</sup> Roy, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Kalantzakos, 40.

To support growth and return to global status, China's mercantilist foreign policy mandates that the raw materials and natural resources needed to sustain the nation's growth and it will extract them from developing-world countries. This is regardless of whether China's activities measure up to, or fall short of, Western ethical standards and the governance that accompanies it.<sup>69</sup> One should see China's quest to build a strategic partnership with Africa in the broader context of the central strategic objective of Beijing's foreign policy promoting the PRC's peaceful rise as a global superpower.<sup>70</sup>

According to Swaine and Tellis, notable China commentators, China's grand strategy uses elements of a realist approach to international relations.<sup>71</sup> Adopting this approach implies that the focus of analysis rests principally on the state as a political entity dedicated to ensuring the internal and external security of both elite and populace. Material factors such as the country's geographical position, resource endowment, economic size and structure, and military power, as well as the power wielded by senior political leaders, are emphasized as critical determinants of a regime's capability to provide for its security.<sup>72</sup> China's strategy has evolved from an offensive realist approach under Mao Zedong to a defensive realist approach under Deng Xiaoping and thereafter. To clarify, an offensive realist state seeks security by intentionally decreasing the security of others, whereas a defensive realist state increases its security to protect itself.<sup>73</sup> There

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<sup>69</sup> Halper, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, *Hidden Dragon, Crouching Lion*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Krasner, an international relations professor at Stanford University, defines grand strategy as, "[a process through which a state can] mold the international environment by regulating international regimes, influencing the foreign policy choices made by other states, and shaping or even determining the domestic regime characteristics of other countries." Stephen D. Krasner, "An Orienting Principle for Foreign Policy," *Hoover Institution*, October 1, 2010, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/orienting-principle-foreign-policy>.

<sup>72</sup> Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2000), 6.

<sup>73</sup> Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kauffman, "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure it?" *International Security*, Spring 1998 v22, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://web.stanford.edu/class/polisci211z/2.1/Glaser%20&%20Kaufmann%20IS%201988.pdf>.



is little doubt that China’s security strategy is still firmly rooted in realism. In seeking to overcome the memory of “a century of national humiliation” at the hands of the West and Japan, generations of Chinese have longed for a strong and prosperous China. Many Chinese political elites believe that because of its size, population, civilization, history and, more recently, its growing wealth, the rest of the world should regard China as a great power. This strong belief in the utility of economic, diplomatic and military power and the motivation to accumulate power firmly anchors China’s security strategy within the realist camp.<sup>74</sup>

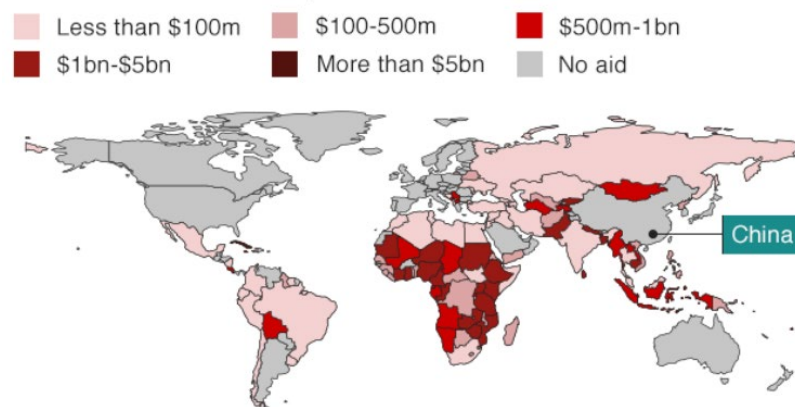


Figure 2. Where China Sends Aid, 2000-2014. “China’s Secret Aid Empire Uncovered,” BBC, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41564841>.

The use of China’s instruments of national power is evident in Africa. China chooses to expand its economic ties in Africa due to the increasingly attractive trade and investment opportunities, initially as an indispensable supplier of natural resources, but increasingly as an attractive export market and investment target. Also, the domestic factors within China, including the burgeoning demand for inputs to feed rapidly rising industrial production make Africa attractive.<sup>75</sup> China’s involvement in Africa is not a new phenomenon. The PRC, starting

<sup>74</sup> Tang Shiping, “From Offensive to Defensive Realism: A Social Evolutionary Interpretation of China’s Security Strategy” in *China’s Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics*, eds. Robert S Ross and Zhu Feng (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 141, 150-152.

<sup>75</sup> Brown, *Hidden Dragon, Crouching Lion*, 21.

providing aid to African nations in the early 1950s. China's supreme leader, Mao Zedong, aided Africa's newly independent nations in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in competition with Moscow and Washington. China's involvement in Africa, both diplomatic and commercial, came alive again in the 1980s as an international extension of Deng Xiaoping's policies of "reform and opening." China-Africa economic ties gained further momentum in the 1990s, due most importantly to China's search for natural resources.<sup>76</sup>

Initially, the approach in Africa emphasized agriculture and Africa has been the continent that has profited the most from its agricultural assistance. Chinese aid has built pilot farms in more than 40 African countries, engaged in 200 cooperation programs, and sent over 10,000 agro-technicians over the years to train local farmers and provide technical consultancy. Although it was not agriculture but infrastructure that the majority of Chinese aid was geared towards, accounting for 70 percent of aid according to Chinese declarations, and the major projects in Angola, Congo and Gabon will increase the share of this sector in total spending. As stated by one South African observer, "even Africa's numerous colonial powers did not have the commitment to invest so substantially in the continent infrastructures and probably were unable to afford to anyway."<sup>77</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, when the cold war nations were pulling out of Africa and Western development aid halved, China kept up its commitment. China implemented a very different approach to Africa when it re-entered in the world economy. Consequently, the Sino-African relationships moved from an ideological and political approach to a more pragmatic and economic stance, fostering external trade and foreign investment. China had turned itself into the manufacturing hub of the world and set its eye on Africa's raw materials.<sup>78</sup> Throughout the

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<sup>76</sup> Brown, *Hidden Dragon, Crouching Lion*, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Jean-Raphael Chaponniere, "Chinese Aid to Africa, Origins, Forms and Issues," in *The New Presence of China in Africa*, ed. Meine Pieter van Dijk (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>78</sup> Beule and Van der Bulcke, 44.

1990s, China was making deals to secure long-term natural resources and also to buy facilities in Africa. Sino-African trade reached \$126.9 billion in 2010. According to figures cited in the Wall Street Journal, trade mainly dominated by commodities and raw materials reached close to \$166 billion in 2014.<sup>79</sup> The investment was attractive to Sub-Saharan African countries, and by 2005, China had established relations with all but four of the nations in the African continent, establishing a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 which has met seven times since then, the most recent being in Beijing in September 2018.<sup>80</sup>

China-Africa relations encompass a broad, multi-layered set of fifty-four bilateral, political, economic, military, and social relationships. By definition, bilateral relations require two parties, yet China's size and resources allow it to initiate most of its interaction with African countries. China determines the level of interaction, the types of activities, and the terms of agreements. African states allow this relationship to occur as they want more international respect and acceptance of the African continent as an emerging world player. China's diplomats routinely say they want to expand relations with Africa in a manner that is "win-win" for both Africa and China. Not surprisingly, however, China seeks principally to secure its interests.<sup>81</sup>

In 1998, the Chinese government initiated the "go global" strategy for Chinese enterprises, and FDI has been increasing since. China's "go out" policy is an important factor in explaining China's investments in Africa. The Chinese government actively stimulated Chinese private entrepreneurs to startup businesses in Africa; by the end of 2006, China had invested more than \$10 billion in Sub Saharan Africa.<sup>82</sup> The investments focus on building the necessary

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<sup>79</sup> Kalantzakos, 111.

<sup>80</sup> Brown, 201.

<sup>81</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 362.

<sup>82</sup> United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *World Investment Report: Transnational Corporations, Extractive Industries, and Development*, accessed January 2, 2019, [https://unctad.org/en/docs/wir2007\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/docs/wir2007_en.pdf).

infrastructure to explore oil or gas but also serve to develop agriculture, telecommunication, and manufacturing activities. In 1991, only 4 percent of the Chinese FDI went to Africa. That percentage increased to 16 percent in 2001. Chinese FDI is the result of the rapid economic development in China, the important stock of foreign exchange or reserves China has obtained, and a reorientation of its strategy to invest in industries providing the raw materials for China's manufacturing sector.<sup>83</sup>

Besides its economic and commercial interaction in Sub-Saharan Africa, China has engaged in intense diplomatic activity. Since establishing the FOCAC, economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa has entered a new era of increased interaction. FOCAC laid the foundation for economic cooperation between Chinese and African governments and companies. The Forum acts as a go-between for ministers, diplomats, and businessmen. The action plan of FOCAC covers areas such as African exports of agricultural products to China, the participation of Chinese companies in infrastructural works in Africa, the reduction of trade tariffs on raw materials, and the investment of Chinese firms in the African continent.<sup>84</sup> China's approach in Africa has led to Joshua Ramo, deemed by the World Economic Forum to be one of China's leading foreign-born scholars, to propose the concept of the "Beijing consensus" as opposed to the Washington consensus. According to Ramo, both pursue the same goals but in a different order of priority, with Beijing giving priority to stability and development while the Washington consensus views reforms as the pre-condition to stability and development.

The Washington consensus favors privatization, and the Beijing consensus encourages the spending of public money and a push to protect public property. These differences contribute to the positive image of China in Africa where they regard alternative Asian strategies with deep

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<sup>83</sup> Meine Pieter van Dijk, "Introduction: Objectives and Instruments for China's New Presence in Africa," in *The New Presence of China in Africa*, ed. Meine Pieter van Dijk (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>84</sup> Beule and Van der Bulcke, 45.

interest. Chinese aid is attractive to the countries that are most resistant to reform, such as Angola, which was granted a loan of \$2 billion at a time when it was being called on to account for the disappearance of \$4 billion from the public treasury. It is also attractive to countries that have suffered from instability caused by overly mechanical application of reforms designed according to the Washington consensus.<sup>85</sup> Leonard, director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, wrote that the Beijing consensus could be the worst ideological menace to the Western world since the collapse of communism.<sup>86</sup>

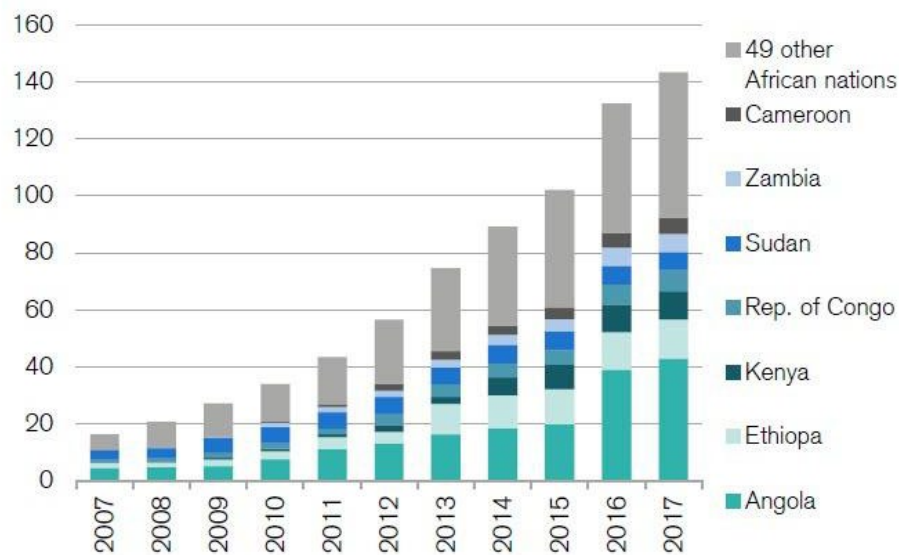


Figure 3. Chinese Loans to African Governments. Zerohedge, accessed January 6, 2019, <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2019-01-05/how-china-colonized-entire-continent-without-firing-single-shot>.

Owing to the Beijing Consensus, China is fast becoming a significant player in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>87</sup> In 2008 it replaced the EU and the United States as Africa’s major trading partner. However, not just related to trade; China’s FDI and development aid are also increasing

<sup>85</sup> Chaponniere, 75.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), 133.

<sup>87</sup> Ulrich Jacoby, “The New Partnership Between China and Africa for Aid and Trade,” *Finance and Development* 44, no. 2 (June 2007): 34.

rapidly; aid, investments, and trade mutually reinforce each other in the case of China.<sup>88</sup> This combined use of aid, investments and trade require political coordination and China has developed a strategy of different policies concerning Africa, which includes Chinese migration to Africa and buying or leasing land for agricultural purposes.<sup>89</sup> Across Africa, China’s infrastructure projects generate some \$50 billion a year in earnings, which of course contribute, directly and indirectly, to numerous jobs for Chinese citizens.<sup>90</sup> Chinese businesses are commonplace in Africa. In 2017, McKinsey & Company, an international management consultancy, published a report that estimated over 10,000 Chinese-owned corporations are working in Africa.<sup>91</sup> Table 1 highlights the main Chinese actors and motives in Africa.

**Table 1: Main Chinese Actors and Motives in Africa**

<b>Main actors</b>	<b>Main motive</b>
The Chinese Government	Tries to implement the government's strategy for Africa and it coordinates the activities of different actors
State-owned enterprises	‘Go to Africa’ as a part of the official ‘Go Out’ policy to ensure the supply of raw materials
Private Chinese companies	Go to Africa because they see opportunities there and fear competition in the Chinese market
The Chinese Embassy in the African country	Informs Chinese firms in the country and coordinates activities of different actors
Chinese people	Have different interests, but are driven by strong economic motives to go and work in Africa

Source: Meine Pieter van Dijk, *The New Presence of China in Africa*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Helmut Asche and Margot Schuller, *China’s Engagement in Africa, Opportunities and Risks for Development*, (Eschborn: GTZ, 2008), 32.

<sup>89</sup> van Dijk, *Introduction: Objectives and Instruments for China’s New Presence in Africa*, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Atlantic Council, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Panos Mourdoukoutas, “What Is China Doing In Africa?” *Forbes*, August 2018, accessed January 3, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2018/08/04/china-is-treating-africa-the-same-way-european-colonists-did/#19cd8551298b>.

China's approach on the continent is seemingly diplomatic. It emphasizes the role of institutions like the African Union, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), and regional trade organizations. With an emphasis on peaceful trade cooperation and mutual interests. The goals concern the supply of raw materials and the creation of a market for Chinese products and services to provide an alternative development model for the Washington donor consensus.<sup>92</sup>

The majority of recent Chinese foreign policy initiatives in Africa were commercial. The Chinese government has also increased China's foreign policy profile in non-commercial areas. China agreed for the first time to send combat troops to support UN peacekeeping missions in Africa; deployments of 170 troops to Mali and 700 troops to South Sudan- the first ever Chinese infantry battalion to be sent on external peacekeeping operations.<sup>93</sup> China's special envoy for Africa took an active role in endeavoring to mediate the conflict in South Sudan.<sup>94</sup> China is increasing its military and security engagements in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is problematic for the West. In 2015, China announced plans for its first permanent military presence outside of the South China Sea in Djibouti.<sup>95</sup> Also, China has stepped up its participation in UN peacekeeping operations, sending the majority of its soldiers to Africa. These deployments have many positive effects, however, by promoting itself as a UN peacekeeper, and contributing to the world policing force, it raises China's profile as an international conflict-resolution mediator, directly challenging the traditional role of the West.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> van Dijk, Introduction: Objectives and Instruments for China's New Presence in Africa, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Karen Allen, "What China Hopes to Achieve with First Peacekeeping Mission," *BBC News*, December 2015, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34976580>.

<sup>94</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 310.

<sup>95</sup> Atlantic Council, 23.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

It is not all positive opinions on the role of China. Zambia finds itself in debt to China for \$6–10 billion, nearly a third of its total GDP. Chinese control over the country’s economy has put Zambia in a compromising position. As one former Zambian prime minister put it, “European colonial exploitation in comparison with Chinese exploitation appears benign,” the latter being “focused on taking out of Africa as much as can be taken out, without any regard for the welfare of the local people.” Several other African countries, including Rwanda and Ghana, could make the same claim.<sup>97</sup>

## The African Assessment

We have had the Arabs, the Europeans, the US, the Japanese, and now let us benefit from the Chinese. Foreigners come and go.

—Anonymous

As more African countries open their economies to foreign investment, Chinese companies drive a hard bargain. There are international concerns over how China operates in Africa, attaching no conditions to aid, paying bribes, underbidding local firms and not hiring Africans. It undermines local efforts to increase transparency and good governance and international efforts at macroeconomic reform by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>98</sup> Despite this, the Beijing consensus could replace the Washington consensus. The railroads, bridges, dams, and schools built by Chinese companies are low cost and completed in a fraction of the time such projects usually take in Africa. The Chinese have also started numerous initiatives to develop local industrial infrastructure and help Chinese firms

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<sup>97</sup> Arthur Herman, “The Coming Scramble for Africa,” *National Review*, December 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/africa-china-united-states-foreign-policy-economic-development/>.

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth Manero, “China’s Investment in Africa: The New Colonialism?” *Harvard Political Review*, February 2017, accessed January 3, 2019, <http://harvardpolitics.com/world/chinas-investment-in-africa-the-new-colonialism/>.



invest in Africa. The infrastructural improvements could help African countries secure other loans and investment opportunities.<sup>99</sup> Everyday life is changing for millions of Africans. Cheap Chinese imports mean that they can afford new clothes, shoes or radios.<sup>100</sup> Africans have affordable luxuries, owing to the new markets exposed to China.

In countries such as South Africa and Botswana, which have relatively sophisticated economies, Chinese investment has been regarded positively both internally and externally. In countries like Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Ethiopia, however, Chinese investment is less welcome by the international community, with accusations that China has been one of the few sources of funding for internationally shunned regimes. Sudan, in particular, caused controversy, with China trading with the discredited regime of President al-Bashir when he stood accused of supporting genocidal campaigns in the Darfur region. The decision by China to contribute a large number of peacekeepers to the UN forces sent to the conflict zone in 2008, was an attempt to show the world that China was trying to play a constructive role. Even so, the external accusation of pursuing commercial and energy interests at the expense of all others was hard to deflect. Internal to Africa, some Sub-Saharan countries stated that the sole interest of China was to create infrastructure and manufacturing jobs for its own people.<sup>101</sup>

Many African countries see relations with China advantageously. It is an opportunity to improve their standing within the international community, and potentially increase investment in their economy and generate income. A relationship with China has many benefits for African countries. An opportunity to form relationships with a country with no colonial history in Africa,

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<sup>99</sup> Chris Alden, *China in Africa* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 22.

<sup>100</sup> Beule and Van der Bulcke, 49.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, *Contemporary China*, 201.

that will provide loans with no political or diplomatic constraints, and an alliance with a country that has a veto vote on the UN Security Council.<sup>102</sup>

The implications of Chinese political and economic actions in Africa go beyond the frustrations of Africans about substandard Chinese imports and the competition from Chinese small businesses. Economic history suggests that societies can only develop into "modern economies" when they begin to turn raw materials into manufactured goods. This requires industry and is the industrial nations that in turn become rich and powerful. Chris Alden, a leading expert in China-Africa relations, explains that if African countries wish to develop their economy and raise their populations out of poverty, as China did, they must move beyond merely being resource exporters to the outside world.<sup>103</sup> This cannot happen in many parts of Africa, however, so long as the countries remain trapped in their role as a primary source of raw materials and a market for substandard consumer goods from elsewhere, especially China. To combat this, the Chinese government pour billions of dollars of gifts and low-interest loans into African regimes. Meanwhile, these regimes provide access to resources and a market for poor-quality products that would be unacceptable in Western markets.<sup>104</sup>

According to the African Development Bank, due to the injection of capital from China, sub-Saharan Africa is poised to be the second-fastest-growing economy in the world, with a growth rate of 3.1 percent in 2018 and a projected growth rate of 3.6 percent in 2019–20. The continent is ready and eager to join the world's economic order.<sup>105</sup> However, Kenya ranks as Africa's third most indebted country to China for the period between 2000 to 2017, according to

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<sup>102</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, 363.

<sup>103</sup> Chris Alden, *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon?* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 126, 127.

<sup>104</sup> Halper, 99.

<sup>105</sup> Herman, Arthur, "The Coming Scramble for Africa," *National Review*, December 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/africa-china-united-states-foreign-policy-economic-development/>.

data from the China Africa Research Initiative. The country's current debt to China is understood to be about \$9.8 billion, which has funded large chunks of national infrastructure, including several highways and the Standard Gauge Railway which provides a high-speed connection between Mombasa and Nairobi, the country's capital, to facilitate the import and export of goods.<sup>106</sup> Kenya is improving due to Chinese investment but at risk.

Time will test China's policies, and Beijing may find itself becoming criticized increasingly by unions, NGOs, and civil society. So far, however, with all the shortcomings and the potential backlash, China continues to strengthen its ties across the continent – a fact that causes its rivals to worry.<sup>107</sup> At present, China has found a way to make its presence and interests less heavy-handed and controversial in comparison to traditional Western powers, which share a long and fraught colonial past or an interventionist record. As China's policies unfold, it gives the West a significant opportunity to evaluate Chinese geostrategic and economic intentions as the race to control limited resources escalates.<sup>108</sup>

Not all commentators feel that China is attempting to turn Africa into a Chinese colony. One such person is Ching Kwan Lee, a professor of sociology at the University of California. Lee argued in the *Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa* that the investments the Chinese state made in Africa were not as "imperialists" or "colonialists." Nor were ones by private corporations. She suggests Chinese corporations are not being motivated by profits, that they have a long-term horizon in mind, and they make for good local citizens. Also, the Chinese workers in Africa pay their fair share of taxes to the African countries in which they

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<sup>106</sup> Huang, Kristen, "Will China Seize Prized Port if Kenya Can't Pay Back Its Belt and Road Loans?" *South China Morning Post*, December 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/2180026/will-china-seize-prized-port-if-kenya-cant-pay-back-its-belt>.

<sup>107</sup> Chris Alden, "Harmony and Discord in China's Africa Strategy: Some Implications for Foreign Policy," *China Quarterly* 199 (2009):563.

<sup>108</sup> Sophia Kalantzakos, *China and the Geopolitics of Rare Earths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 155.

work. Lee goes so far as to contend that Chinese corporations actually promote African independence and autonomy, rather than the usual dependence that is associated with colonialism. She concludes that China is helping Africa to stand by themselves, rather than making Africa dependent on them.<sup>109</sup>

China's growing economic presence in Sub-Saharan Africa is not altruistic and in theory, highlights the principle of "mutual benefits" to both sides. Under the framework of "resources for development," Beijing mobilizes its vast state financial resources to invest broadly in infrastructure projects across Africa and extract natural resources in return. Moreover, these investments generate multiple layers of benefits for China, including contracts for Chinese service companies, the relocation of labor-intensive, heavy-pollution industries from China, political favors extracted from African governments on foreign policy issues at multilateral forums such as the United Nations, and a positive international image of China is a "responsible stakeholder." These motivations are particularly true in explaining China's interests in resource-poor African countries.<sup>110</sup> Other countries classify China as a nefarious actor in its African dealings, but the evidence tells a more complicated story. Chinese loans are powering Africa, and Chinese firms are creating jobs. China's agricultural investment is far more modest than reported and welcomed by some Africans.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Mourdoukoutas, Panos, "What Is China Doing In Africa?" *Forbes*, August 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2018/08/04/china-is-treating-africa-the-same-way-european-colonists-did/#19cd8551298b>.

<sup>110</sup> Sun, Yun, "China in Africa: Implications for US Competition and Diplomacy," Brookings, April 2013, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/china-in-africa-implications-for-u-s-competition-and-diplomacy/>.

<sup>111</sup> Brautigam, Deborah, "US Politicians get China in Africa All Wrong," *The Washington Post*, April 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-worldpost/wp/2018/04/12/china-africa/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.300ae192af75](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-worldpost/wp/2018/04/12/china-africa/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.300ae192af75).

Several historical and cultural features of China's strategic outlook, experience, and behavior increase the potential negative implications for Western security interests, including a possible fundamental structural shift in the distribution of economic and military power across Eurasia. First, throughout most of its long imperial history, China was the predominant political, economic, cultural, and military power of East Asia. Such predominance created a deep-rooted belief in the geopolitical centrality of China to the region. As China's relative power grows, this belief could eventually predispose Beijing to seek to displace the West as the preeminent power and central provider of security across much of Asia-Pacific.<sup>112</sup> China's growing influence has its military side as well. China's decision in 2017 to build a military and naval base in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa has significant geopolitical implications. The Djibouti base location gives China's new aircraft carriers a place to rest and refit — and to project Chinese power where no one ten or twenty years ago thought possible.<sup>113</sup> Within Africa itself, the implications are serious. A recent report by a UN sanctions committee claimed that Chinese companies supplied anti-tank missiles and launchers, rifles, ammunition and rockets to South Sudan to the tune of \$20m. Weapons sales are reported to have stopped before the rebellion at the end of 2013, but China has major economic interests here that it is keen to defend.<sup>114</sup>

China's relationship with Africa is complex. Covering economic, diplomatic, and now military spheres of influence there are considerable implications for the British Army, the UK, and the West. However, the British government approach is currently to try and build a

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<sup>112</sup> Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2000), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Herman, Arthur, "The Coming Scramble for Africa," *National Review*, December 2018, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/africa-china-united-states-foreign-policy-economic-development/>.

<sup>114</sup> Allen, Karen, "What China Hopes to Achieve with First Peacekeeping Mission," *BBC News*, December 2015, accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34976580>.

relationship with China, but will this merely protect UK interests, or protect those less able to protect themselves.

## Conclusion

In the days of Waterloo, the army was all about warfighting. Today we expect our army and our soldiers to be frontline ambassadors as well as fighting forces, wielding soft, smart as well as hard power. Better to reap the reward of early defence engagement than the whirlwind of later conflict.

—The Right Honourable Sir Michael Fallon, Secretary of State for Defence

With China's influence in Sub-Saharan Africa ranging across the instruments of national power, it will always cause controversy. Any country operating in another will generate positive and negative opinions both internally and externally to that country. China is no different from other superpowers in that it will look after its own interests first.<sup>115</sup> That means it needs raw materials to keep its industrial sector going and it needs markets for its export products. However, the UK and British Army can categorize the risks and opportunities in two areas; short-term and long-term.

In the short-term, the attraction of China's bilateral agreements with Sub-Saharan African countries is generally strong. The African states can enjoy the fact that China was considered a developing power a few decades ago, and is now a contender for superpower status.<sup>116</sup> The African states believe they could benefit in the same way. China can also provide a considerably larger scale of support than the UK can, whether in financial or military terms. The Chinese financial packages, under the Beijing Consensus, also come with a lot fewer conditions that have to be met compared with that of the Washington Consensus. Therefore, China can offer more

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<sup>115</sup> van Dijk, *Conclusions from China's Activities in Africa*, 215-216.

<sup>116</sup> Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu, "Africa and China in the Post-Cold-War Era," in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon?* eds. Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 3.

investment, and infrastructure than the UK. This provides employment opportunities and second or third order effects improving the quality of life for Africa. For the UK, although humbling that it is no longer able to compete with the economic giant of China, it can also benefit from a more stable Africa. UK-Africa trade could improve, and regional security within Europe could also improve as migration reduces due to employment opportunities in Africa. This means that the British Army should have a smaller commitment to combat terrorism within the African continent and as the wealth of the African population improves, in theory, the humanitarian assistance burden would reduce. In the short-term, there are benefits for the UK and the British Army.

In the long-term, the UK government and military risk losing influence within Africa and the wider Asia-Pacific. The UK cannot compete with China on an economic scale or military commitment, and nor should it try to. The UK government only viewing Sino-UK relations through an economic lens has potential implications at all levels. Especially for the UK military, notably the British Army, by prioritizing economic considerations over other UK Strategic interests, values, and national security. The UK government needs to create a robust cross-government approach to China, that matches the approach of other allies, whether that be the United States or European partners.

For Africa in the long-term, it could lose the most out of the Sino-African bilateral agreements. If countries begin to default on loan repayments, China can use its considerable size to enforce restrictions or take advantage as it wishes. This could be through strategic positioning of Chinese military assets, increased demand in natural resources, or prioritizing Chinese nationals in Africa states over the welfare of Africans.<sup>117</sup> If China continues to provide funding to shunned regimes or creates an environment where extremism can thrive, then an international

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<sup>117</sup> Meine Pieter van Dijk, "Conclusions from China's Activities in Africa," in *The New Presence of China in Africa*, ed. Meine Pieter van Dijk (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 215.

response would be required, not just a UK response. Pro-Chinese countries influencing decisions in the UN could cause further complications.

The paradigm for the UK National Security Strategy and subsequent British Army Strategy remains relevant for the changing context and regional challenges posed by ongoing Chinese influence in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, opportunities must be taken to increase the government wide approach to China, to prevent losing influence in the long-term over a region deeply linked with British history. The Sino-UK relationship should remain non-adversarial, but the UK should not prioritize cooperation over UK or African interests.



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