

**The Warming Of Kilimanjaro:
Sino-American Competitive Convergence
in 21st Century Africa**



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Abstract

China has sought friendship with many nations of Africa, and some of these relations have increased and deepened over time. The West, including the NATO countries and particularly the United States, also have developed a presence in Africa. Mostly, the West and China have managed to work without conflict across Africa, sometimes in different locations. The world is governed largely by four trading blocks: the United States of America, China, the Russian Federation, and now the European Union upon ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. Each is grappling for global and regional hegemony, for regional alliances, sustainable sources of energy and other raw materials, and shares of emerging markets for the consumer goods they all produce. America and China are leading this race. China and the United States both are investing aggressively on the continent of Africa, but in different ways, at least visibly. The natural resources and the African labour that China will harvest for its manufacture of goods as the “factory to the world” in the final analysis will benefit the United States and American consumers more than any other country or population. The cash Americans use to pay for this consumption enriches China, especially its rising middle class. Africa is a place where both super powers collaborate, sometimes in seemingly different ways, for a common benefit. This is “competitive convergence.” Africa holds the key to the minerals that will be required to supply desires of the 21st century middle classes globally, including an emerging African middle class. Africa is a place where factories that pollute the environment will increase in number as they decrease within America and China; an emerging market for the sale of goods made by China at prices that will reflect an increasing economy of scale, and Africa is situated at a geographic crossroads between Asia and Europe. All of these conditions will work together to keep a lasting peace between China and The West.

Key Words: China, United States, Africa, foreign policy, competitive convergence

Introduction

The world is governed largely by four major trading blocks: the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and now the European Union upon ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon on 01 December 2009 (listed in the order of their creation or political recreation). The four trading blocks are grappling for global and regional hegemony, regional alliances, sustainable sources of energy and other raw materials, and shares of emerging markets for the consumer goods they all produce and want to sell to each other and to the world. America and China are leading this race, in Africa and elsewhere around the world (Alden, Large, 2008). This article will address the question raised by Wang (2007): "What drives China's growing role in Africa?" The answer may be termed "competitive convergence," in which America and China appear to compete with each other to adopt the other's "game plan" across Africa, and then to win by using the other's strategy, ending up more together than apart. In a way, one could call this "another Great Game" because in part it is reminiscent of what was termed "The Great Game" played out in the 19th century across Western Asia by Great Britain and Russia (Hopkirk, 1992). The result is not merely a "new Sinosphere" (Wild & Mephram, 2006), but a new "ChinAmerisphere."

Mearsheimer and others have warned that "America is likely to behave toward China much the same way it behaved toward the Soviet Union during the cold war" (Mearsheimer, 2006: 161). Nothing could be further from the truth. The reason for this is America's own policy change catalysed by a rise in its stature after 1991, as reported by Mearsheimer himself in the same article:

Shortly after the Cold War ended, the first Bush administration's "Defense Guidance" of 1992, which was leaked to the press, boldly stated that the United States was now the most powerful state in the world by far and it intended to remain in that exalted position. In other words, the United States would not tolerate a peer competitor (Mearsheimer, 2006: 161).

It is exactly on account of America's unilateral hegemony in the world and its lack of willingness to tolerate a "peer competitor" that the United States and China have been drawn closer together, particularly in Africa. The United States is China's key trading partner, as China is America's, whereas during the 1970s and 1980s trade between the United States and the Soviet Union accounted for about one percent of each nation's global trade (Zickel, 1987).

America does not view China as a peer at all, much less as a competitor, in the way that it views Great Britain, France, or even the Russian Federation. Nor does China want

competition from any or all of those powers, either. China has been said to be a “crouching tiger” or a “hidden dragon” (Ambiah & Naidu, 2008), but even if so it is not a dangerous version of either species. So the paradigm on which America and China seem to agree is “competitive convergence” between themselves, especially in product trade. After all, what Americans consume China manufactures, maintaining lifestyle in America, and what the Chinese make, America purchases, bringing cash to China to improve quality of life for the Chinese. A steady stream of raw materials from Africa serves the best interests of both America and China in this respect (Abramovici, 2009), reflecting a primary example of “competitive convergence.” Schweller and Pu have argued that China has several options in an era when America has fallen into decline: maintain the *status quo* unipolarity with American hegemony, maintain unipolarity with Chinese hegemony, or opt to return to bipolarity (2011). The author disagrees that America has fallen into decline, but even if China perceives a diminution of American hegemony, China will not seek hegemony for itself, clearly not outside of the Western Pacific rim, largely because China still requires American air and naval protection to deter Russian and Japanese aggression, and continues a 21st century 1960s style “wedge strategy” (Crawford, 2011) to maintain it. China wants trade to continue with America and The Alliance, particularly the European Union. In reality, America has become China’s best friend, and the United States and The Alliance should appreciate that much more so than they seem to do.

Friedberg has divided Sino-American observers (both critics and fans) into four groups (2005): Liberal Optimists, Realist Pessimists, Realist Optimists and Liberal Pessimists. The author herein is a “Realist Optimist” who does not believe China possesses, or thinks it possesses, the power necessary to challenge the United States, and who does not believe the Chinese people, particularly the currently emerging generation of college graduates, wish to do so at all, and they will form China’s “sixth generation” political leadership after 2020. This factor alone distinguishes the Realist Optimist from the pessimists, be they liberal or realist.

Liberal Optimists seem to believe that “China too must become democratic” if the Chinese people expect ever to enjoy the quality of life experienced currently by their “advanced industrial counterparts (all of which are democracies)” (Friedberg, 2005, 15-16). They are wrong. In 2010, China became the world’s third largest tourism draw (Tan and Shi, 2011), and Chinese tourists became the third biggest money spenders (after Germans and Americans) in the world (Alberto, 2011). In many parts of China today, the young educated population enjoys a quality of life comparable to Americans and Western Europeans. Africa harvests raw materials for the input, and energy products for the throughput, out of which comes the product output on which America and China thrive. Just as America will not

tolerate a “peer competitor,” it has no strong desire for China to increase its pace towards democracy and thereupon become a “peer competitor” itself, either. American voters may be liberal, as Friedberg contends (2005: 12), but all American presidents have been realists. Presidents control foreign policy of the United States of America.

As Friedberg suggests by drawing on Kenneth Waltz and others, “realist optimists believe that a bipolar Asia is likely to be tense but stable” and “[t]he huge gap between the two poles and other states in the system also reduces the possibility of sudden changes in the balance of power resulting from changes in the allegiance of third parties” (Friedberg, 2005, 28). Therefore, America and China each want the other to stay the way it is (maintain the *status quo*) for now and the foreseeable future. This has been termed the “balancing act” in China’s foreign policy (He, 2007). China’s “one child” policy increases the pace at which an emerging middle class can rise, and decreases the risk of war simply because the Chinese’ family’s one and only child is too precious to risk in battle, unlike the offspring of the large feudal families that characterized Europe and China in past centuries.

Considerable discussion has evolved concerning China’s “soft power” across Africa (Thompson, 2005), sometimes tainted with negative viewpoints that suggest China is embarking on a “trade safari in Africa” (Servant, 2005). United States secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton focused on America’s “soft power” during her tour of Africa in 2009, likening that to “people’s God-given potential” that reporters mock as “GGP” (Ghattas, 2009) and that smacks rather as a *déjà vu* to America’s 19th century Manifest Destiny. Secretary Clinton also has tried to blend “hard” power (military) with “soft” power (diplomacy) to form what she has called “smart power.” Others have criticised this as evidencing revival of American “imperialist” ambitions (Van Auken, 2009). Clinton has attempted to cosmeticise American “hard,” “soft,” and “smart” power into what China has characterised with the phrase: “Clinton sets ‘tough love’ tone on Africa” (2009). Western authors have countered, alleging China’s “soft” power is disguised within its “charm offensive” (Kurlantzick, 2008) that the author of the present article has characterised as being a “rough kiss.”

Is the relationship between the United States and China in Africa competition or convergence? The question has been raised earlier, but more or less quietly so and in an economic but not a political context, then left largely unanswered (Hendrickson, 2011). It has been suggested that there is convergence between America and China over energy policy in Africa, provided the United States recognises China as a “*status quo*” actor and not as a “revisionist” one (Yang & Hart, 2006). Clearly this is exactly what the United States does do and must do, because the energy and other minerals China collects from Africa are used to produce the goods the American public consumes. There is no need for change in the

current *status quo ante* by America or China.

The present article presents the controversial perspective that the relationship between China and the United States is both competitive and convergent (call it “competitive convergence”), but that this condition is healthy for both nations themselves, for the other major trading blocks, for the emerging nations of Africa, and for the world in general in an *economic* sense. It is partially a different story in a *political* sense, including the military and naval dimensions, where the West appears to want to be seen as favouring partition of traditional African nations whence this may be deemed necessary to avoid, minimise, or end armed conflict (Gaye, 2008), reminiscent of the Western European imperial powers’ division of much of the African continent in the 19th century (Keltie, 1890), but in fact cooperates with China to avoid most interventions in what has been termed “the politics of intervention” (Brunner & Mills, 2003). China eschews what it calls the “three evils” that in its view are religious extremism, separatism, and terrorism (Chung, 2006). A great deal of armed conflict across Africa has been spawned by religious strife, which one author labeled facetiously “the war of the gods” (Foucher, 2007). Apparently for this reason, China is inclined to support existing political structures in Africa, even when current regimes are dictatorial or repressive (Rotberg, 2008), leading one critic to contend that China is a “dragon with a heart of darkness” (Rogers, 2007). The author disagrees entirely and points out China’s generosity (Lum, 2008, 2009; Raghaven, 2010), particularly in health care for the African people (Youde, 2007). Also, historically, America has been primarily a naval power and China has been primarily a land based military power (Marvin, 2011). In this sense also, the one complements the other. China can look toward the United States to protect shipping between China and Africa and the United States can look toward China to keep potentially unfriendly African dictators in tow.

The United States and the West do not seem to mind when China voices opposition to liberal intervention, particularly in the internal affairs of African nations. One reason for this is that becoming involved in foreign wars is *impolitique* within domestic American political campaigns today: “It is not difficult to understand America’s reluctance to act,” some authors have concluded, because “[e]ver since Vietnam, Americans on both the left and the right have become wary of intervening in the affairs of other nations” (Brunner & Mills, 2002: vi). Consequently, it is easy to reckon why America remains silent in the face of Chinese policy that opposes liberal intervention in Africa or anywhere, and cooperates with China to abstain from most intervention options. The West argues publicly that otherwise China would exercise its veto power as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, but in reality the West appears not to really want intervention at all: simply blaming the Chinese to get what the West wants anyway. This outcome forms the basis for another

example of competitive convergence between China and the United States.

The United States stops short of visibly opposing the sale of arms by China to African dictatorships, counting on the African nations themselves to voice objection as consumers of this Sino-American competition and, in doing so, to support principles of democracy for which America and its Western Allies stand publicly. A series of recent examples typify this political competition, where South African dock workers at its port of Durban proactively refused to unload arms shipments from China bound for Zimbabwe (a land locked nation) because these workers felt the Chinese ordnance would be used repressively by Robert Mugabe against his own people. Subsequently, the governments of Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia also refused to unload this cargo of armaments. China's policy of shipping arms to African dictators seems to have backfired and been rejected by a cross-section of sub-Saharan African countries, including China's major trading partners such as Angola that, in 2008, replaced Saudi Arabia as China's leading supplier of crude petroleum (Harrington, 2008). America said very little.

Africa has become attractive and very likely essential for each of the emerging trading blocks to conquer, and to exploit without admitting to colonisation, as the second decade of the 21st century begins. Africa's highest peak, Mt. Kilimanjaro, is thawing, apparently due to global warming, just as Africa's major energy resources are becoming more scarce, therefore more coveted, by the major powers. China imports from Africa more copper, iron ore, natural rubber, tropical sawn wood, pulp, paper and soybeans than any other country in the world, and over 75% of African exports to China are primary commodities (Kshetri, 2008: 6). The "warming of Kilimanjaro" as discussed herein is not about the physical warming of planet earth, but about the warming of economic and political tensions in the wake of a friendly competition that has emerged between the two leading world powers, China and the United States, a pleasant consequence of "competitive convergence."

This competition is a sequel to the less friendly one that ended with Great Britain's naval victory over France in 1798 at the Battle of the Nile that effectively transformed the Indian Ocean into what some have called a "British lake" that lasted until 1945 (Chew, 2007: 13). China today does not want the Indian Ocean to become (or remain) an "American lake" or much less an "Indian lake," and most certainly the United States does not want it to become a "Chinese lake." This paper will focus particularly on China, but also on the United States, the nation China considers to be its most important role model and ally, and the one nation China wants to emulate as its best friend and eventually to replicate domestically more than any other country in the world. The African continent is one major setting for this important courtship.

The major point of view of this paper is that as Africa opens to America and to China, the two superpowers are drawn closer together rather than further apart, and may draw together also the two other new behemoths, the Russian Federation and the European Union into further warming of global relations. The reason for this is that these four powers, all competitors, all want the same outcome: convergence.

America and China must watch the rise of African sovereign debt if the African people are ever to function as consumers of American and Chinese products, clearly one target of both China and the United States if not their major reason for focusing attention on Africa to begin with. Just as most American aid to African nations has been given and not loaned, China is adopting a similar design. In 2010, a Brookings Blum roundtable argued that developed countries should consider “leveraging multinational corporate interest in developing countries” and include “useful business mentalities in approaches to development aid” (Bräutigam, 2011: 19 citing Dervis, 2010: 25). China has accepted the challenge, and recent Chinese aid has been in the form of resource (commodity) backed loans that allow the developing African countries to have the funding needed for public works expenditures today, then pay for the same in the future by using income derived from the exports that will be created by today’s public works (repayment of current debt with future profits) (Bräutigam, 2011: 12). In reality, China has begun to parallel America in the way it approaches aid to African countries, another example of “competitive convergence.”

How and where in Africa will America and China vie to reach four objectives: earn the *good will* of the African people, harvest *African resources*, peace make and *peace keep* across what was once the “dark continent” by enlightening it, and target a burgeoning market of *African Bourgeoisie* as they emerge from poverty to become a cadre of new consumers in an essential global marketplace? Will Africa follow its highest peak by warming to outside pressures, good or bad, or will an increased American and Chinese presence across Africa exert a chilling effect on the African people, on the African nations, or on China and the United States themselves? A lot will depend upon how the political economy of regionalism plays out, as was forecasted at the close of the 20th century now more than a decade gone by (Mansfield and Milner, 1997; 1999).

A history of America and China in Africa

This part of the paper will focus on the history of the United States and China in Africa from 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was formed (known to the Chinese people today as “Liberation”) until towards the end of the 20th century. The diplomatic histories of

America and China overlap considerably, and converged over the issue of how best to frustrate the diplomacy and the image of the Soviet Union in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. In practice, the two nations approached mostly different African countries, but used similar methods, albeit for different reasons. This underscores the question David Rieff asked in his book *A new age of imperialism?* (1999). The United States has contended that China turned to Africa after failing in Latin America due to Castro and failing in the Middle East due to pressure from the Soviet Union, and that the United States stopped ignoring Africa primarily as a response to China's active entrance there (U.S. Department of State, *Diplomacy in Action*, 1969). This was the beginning of "competitive convergence."

During the service of Zhou Enlai as China's foreign minister, 1949 to 1956, before he became China's premier, China experimented with wide-ranging ideological strategies across *FeiGuo*, as Africa is known in Mandarin, now Chinese Standard. These were drawn from Zhou's "Five Principles" announced in December 1953 at the beginning of China's bilateral talks with India about Xi'zang (Tibet). These "Five Principles" would later be included in the preface to the Panchsheel Agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India on Trade and Intercourse Between the Tibet Region of China and India, announced with Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in June 1954. They included: (1) mutual respect for each nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity [the "One China" principle, "*Yi ge ZhongGuo*"], (2) mutual nonaggression, (3) noninterference in each nation's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful coexistence (Singh, 1998).

From 1956, under Marshal of China Chen Yi's service as China's vice premier, member of State Council, and foreign minister, China adopted a posture as America's nemesis in Africa. This became evident during the tour Premier Zhou made with Chen Yi between 13 December 1963 and 05 February 1964 as they toured ten African countries: Algeria, Egypt [then United Arab Republic], Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia, during the course of which Zhou and Chen told African leaders that China rejected colonialism, expansionism, and imperialism (People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000). In addition, Zhou and Chen told the Africans they should unite with Asian countries to safeguard world peace, and that international issues should be decided by all nations together, large or small, and not by the big powers alone, because:

[I]t runs totally against the historical trend to ignore the independent will of the newly-emerged Asian and African countries and attempt to write off the status of those countries; all countries in the world, big or small, strong or weak, are equal; anyone who adopts the practice of the big domineering the small and the strong bullying the weak is doomed to failure (People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

This was an admonishment to Africa not to trust the Soviet Union as much as it was for them not to trust the United States, and eventually worked to an American advantage as Africans came to mistrust a growing China itself (Blair, 2007).

China divided its messages to the Africans, separating Arab Africans from the rest by articulating a separate set of Five Principles for China's dealings with Arab nations based on the 1955 conference of nonaligned nations held at Bandung, Indonesia (thereafter referenced as the Bandung Conference):

- [1] China supports the Arab and African peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and new colonialism and to win and safeguard national independence.
- [2] It supports the pursuance of a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment by the Governments of Arab and African countries
- [3] It supports the desire of the Arab and African peoples to achieve unity and solidarity in the manner of their own choice
- [4] It supports the Arab and African countries in their efforts to settle their disputes through peaceful consultations.
- [5] It holds that the sovereignty of the Arab and African countries should be respected by all other countries and that encroachment and interference from any quarter should be opposed. These five principles represented the concrete application of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence and a development of the Bandung spirit (People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

In this respect, China appears to have wished to point out that China is different from the European colonial powers, namely Britain and France, as well as from the United States and the Soviet Union, in its African ambitions. Also, China appears to have had the vision to carve out a foreign policy for Africa that distinguishes the sub-Saharan largely non-Arabic area from the super-Saharan largely Arabic region. Until then, it was difficult to witness such a distinction in United States foreign policy toward Africa. Since that time, the United States has changed its policies to reflect China's, yet another example of competitive convergence.

In Ghana and Mali, Premier Zhou and Marshal Chen articulated Eight Principles that were to become foundations for Chinese aid to African nations:

- [1] The Chinese government always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other countries. It never regards such aid as a

kind of unilateral alms but as something mutual.

[2] In providing aid to other countries, the Chinese Government strictly respects the sovereignty of the recipient countries, and never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges.

[3] China provides economic aid in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans and extends the time limit for repayment when necessary so as to lighten the burden of the recipient countries as far as possible.

[4] In providing aid to other countries, the purpose of the Chinese Government is not to make the recipient countries dependent on China but to help them embark step by step on the road of self-reliance and independent economic development.

[5] The Chinese Government tries its best to help the recipient countries build projects which require less investment while yielding quicker results, so that the recipient governments may increase their income and accumulate capital.

[6] The Chinese Government provides the best-quality equipment and material of its own manufacture at international market prices. If the equipment and material provided by the Chinese Government are not up to the agreed specifications and quality, the Chinese Government undertakes to replace them.

[7] In providing any technical assistance, the Chinese Government will see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master such technique.

[8] The experts dispatched by China to help in construction in the recipient countries will have the same standard of living as the experts of the recipient country. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities. These eight principles fully give expression to the sincere desire of China in seeking to conduct economic and cultural cooperation with the newly-emerged countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (People's Republic of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

The United States never rejected the principles of the Bandung Conference, appearing relieved that its attendees stopped well short of denouncing the United States or its Western allies, and adopted the diplomatic posture that China's position as announced by Zhou and Chen was reasonable:

In the end, however, the Bandung Conference did not lead to a general denunciation of the West as U.S. observers had feared. Instead, the participants displayed a wide range of ideologies and loyalties. U.S. allies in Asia were able to represent their shared interests with the United States in the conference meetings, and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai took a moderate line in his speeches to the delegates. Nevertheless, Bandung gave a voice to emerging nations and

demonstrated that they could be a force in future world politics, inside or outside the Cold War framework (United States Department of State, Diplomacy in Action, 1955).

What this means is that both China and the United States follow what one may term a “Kaleidoscope Policy” across most of Africa, meaning that each of these two P5 Powers maintains diplomatic relations with largely the same African countries, competing successfully for their favour.

At the end of the 20th century, China conducted USD 5.6 Billion in trade with Africa (IMF, 2004), but this more than quadrupled to USD 32.2 Billion by the end of 2005. The volume of American trade with China increased markedly also, from USD 26.9 Billion in 1999 to USD 58.9 Billion in 2004 (People’s Republic of China, Ministry of Commerce, 2005a). In part, an increase in America’s trade with China has enabled China to increase its trade with African nations. In some ways, both America and China have returned to the age of “dollar diplomacy” that characterised the administration of the American president William Howard Taft (1909-1913). China has provided billions of USD in foreign aid to nations across Africa (Lum, 2009:12). This is despite hard evidence to document that foreign aid improves a country’s security, whether the country be the donor or the donee. Perhaps this is one reason why the United States, the largest donor of foreign economic aid in the world to a total tune of USD 122.8 Billion, prefers its foreign aid to filter through the private sector, which accounted for 79% or USD 95.5 Billion in 2005, the last year available before the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) stopped publicising this data in 2006 (Vaughn’s U.S. foreign aid summary, 2011).

At least 674 Chinese companies have invested in Africa in sectors such as mining, fisheries, telecommunications, and forestry (Raghavan, 2010). American companies are there too. For example, Exxon Mobil and Chevron Texaco together control almost half of Nigeria’s crude oil industry (Salin and Minter, 2003). Besides direct cash investments to governments in Africa, America and China have explored other methods. China has invested some USD 400 Million into cell phone telecommunications in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe through the large Chinese telecommunications company, Huawei (Eisenman and Kulantzick, 2006).

China financed construction of the Tanzam Railway (“Uhuru” meaning “Freedom” Railway in Swahili) between Tanzania and Zambia to give Zambia as a landlocked nation access to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam, and repaired the road linking Mombasa and Nairobi (Servant, 2005). As Stephen Jennings noted at a London conference of the Russian investment bank, Renaissance Capital, “China can become to Africa what America has been to China,” in the sense that “Africa will emerge as a market for Chinese goods as well as a

source of human capital, knowledge, and natural resources” (Raghaven, 2010).

At the first China Africa Forum held at Beijing in 2000, China created the African Human Resources Development Fund (“China – Africa forum benefits strategic ties,” 2010). Since then, 10,000 African students have received training in China (Servant, 2005). The United States and China both have invested heavily in education across the African continent, in both educational infrastructure (schools) and programmes. China has focused more on “infrastructure,” meaning physical structures such as schools and hospitals as well as airports, highways and railways, oil and gas pipelines, as well as facilities for the production of electricity such as the construction of ten hydroelectric plants in Africa (Alden, 2009). America and China have provided major Healthcare aid and services to selected African nations. One example is the more than 15,000 physicians that China has provided to 47 African nations since the 1960s to treat 180 million patients in what has been labeled as China’s “health diplomacy” (Thompson, 2005).

The lack of sufficient and nutritious food may be the most fundamental pitfall of oil wealth in Africa, perhaps epitomised in Gabon, a tiny country which has lost down six million trees between 1972 and 1986 and spent USD Four Billion to construct the Transgabonese Railroad with its 50 bridges (Pitfalls, 2009). Most of the country’s wealth was squandered by its leadership, and some of this was funded by China. The enormity of this practise in Gabon led Douglas A. Yates to call Gabon “The Rentier State” (Yates, 1996).

Both China and the United States have earned acclaim for their efforts to improve food security in Africa. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has noted that China’s success in curbing malnutrition and optimising food security has served as an inspiration to African nations particularly (“China-Africa Commitments Applauded,” 2009). The United States provided an additional USD 70 million in food aid to Africa very recently, and President Barack H. Obama announced at the L’Aquila Summit in July, 2009 that the United States would invest USD 3.5 billion in agricultural aid to Africa to improve crop growth to combat hunger (Cousin, 2009). Here again, America parallels China, one more example of competitive convergence and not of the “great leap backwards” as some have argued (Economy, 2007).

African governance

The United States embarked upon a programme of “Transformational Diplomacy” devised by former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice early in 2006 (Vaïsse, 2007). Under this new paradigm, American diplomats in developing regions would focus on good governance within states instead of relations between or among states. This appears to be a vital part of

secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton's new "Tough Love" policy in Africa, urging African nations to "tackle their own problems," adding that:

We are not sugarcoating the problems, we are not shying away from them, our emphasis is to help to channel the hopes and aspirations of the people of Africa, in a way that changes the direction of their countries ("Clinton sets 'tough love' tone on Africa," 2009; Tandon, 2009).

It stands at least partially parallel to China's promise not to interfere in the internal relations of African nations. The Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China – Africa Cooperation, signed on 12 October 2000, contains what Western diplomats deem to be an enigma: it pledges that the parties to this agreement recognise that the "universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms should be respected," whilst at the same time "the politicization of human rights and the imposition of human rights conditionalities on economic assistance should be vigorously opposed to [SIC] as they constitute a violation of human rights" (Lum, 2008: 117).

The Heritage Foundation has suggested that China showers diplomatic attention, financial aid, and military assistance on African countries friendly to China (Brookes and Shin, 2006). The United States does the same thing (McLaughlin, 2005), particularly through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2002 that requires African nations to have achieved or made progress toward market economies, the rule of law, the protection of intellectual property, and representative governance among other factors in order to receive lowered trade barriers with the United States. Forty African nations are eligible currently (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010).

Stripping Africa of resources

Chinese enterprises have undertaken to harvest large hectares of forest on Madagascar island, off the coast of East Africa, as well as from rainforest areas of Cameroon and Gabon, that have been termed illegal (Butler, 2005). However, China uses the wood it imports, both legally and illegally, to manufacture wood products, and the largest market for these products is the United States (Xu and White, 2004: ii). In fairness, China has proposed guidelines for "sustainable logging" by Chinese companies (Butler, 2007), in an effort not to be blamed for denuding the African landscape ("China calls for sustainable logging by Chinese firms overseas," 2007). This evidences China's following America's lead in at least paying lip service to environmental protection, although both nations stand out as being among the few in the world that have not signed the Kyoto Protocol, two additional

examples of what is witnessed as competitive convergence.

China especially has sought mining rights across what the author labels a “Bamboo Corridor” that extends from Northeast to Southwest Africa (Figure 1). By “mining,” all energy resources are included, whether for solid, liquid, or gaseous materials. China seeks copper and iron ore from Angola and Gabon, diamonds from Angola and South Africa, platinum from Zimbabwe, and countless other minerals from all across Africa (Alden and Alves, 2009). Substantial criticism from the West has focused on the question whether China is looting Africa of its natural resources (Austen, 2008; Bochkarev, 2008). These commodities, however, go to produce finished products consumed in America, Europe, and the rest of the world. It is not so much who gathers the food, but who eats what has been gathered by others.

The United States has received criticism also for failing to monitor the destination of oil revenues it pays to countries such as Angola, where poverty seems to increase, although it should decrease proportionally to the increase of its oil revenues (Karniol-Tambour, 2004). One suggestion made is that the United States should insist that oil purchases be tied to nation building, as it has done in Iraq, and that the United Nations should require this model to be followed by China and other nations whose mineral purchases are depleting Africa’s natural resources (Karniol-Tambour, 2004).

Both the United States and China along with the Russian Federation and the European Union attempt to provide naval patrol protection particularly along the Horn of Africa coastline troubled by pirates apparently based in Somalia. Most ships that traverse the Gulf of Aden, precariously close as it runs to Somalia infested with pirates, carry commodities to China or finished goods from China. The *De Xin Hai*, a Chinese flag merchant ship captured by pirates 700 kilometres off the coast of Somalia, was released upon China’s payment of EURO 4 Million (“Chinese Admiral Floats Idea of Overseas Naval Bases,” 2009). This prompted Chinese rear admiral Yin Zhou to recommend that China set up supply bases overseas, the most likely location being the Horn of Africa (Kostecka, 2011), suggesting a change in China’s traditional policy of keeping its armed forces out of Africa.

China and the United States both have sold weapons systems to client states of Africa, and the Roman Catholic Church has accused China also of trafficking in small arms and land mines.¹ Peter Brookes argues that China has provided the Sudan and Zimbabwe with an

¹ The author’s personal interview with His Grace, The Most Rev’d. William Kenney, 07 November 2008, at the residence of the author’s wonderful friend, His Excellency, Mr. D.R. Todd, Her Britannic Majesty’s Ambassador to Poland. His Grace is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Oxford and the personal representative of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI for arms control and the elimination of land mines.

arsenal of military equipment that the Sudan has used against its own and neighbouring non-Muslim populations, vetoed proposed United Nations sanctions against the Sudan [effective 09 July 2011, North Sudan]. Hong Kong firms have been accused of providing ordnance to support rebels fighting against the governments of Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone in West Africa, in what might be considered to be China's new movement into African territories west of its "Bamboo Corridor" (Brookes and Shin, 2006). Islamic nations are questioning the American sales of more than USD 30 Million in ordnance to Nigeria (Booker and Minter, 2003), a nation divided between a Muslim north and a Christian south that only months ago elected a Christian president.

The most important activities that China and the United States provide to the African continent may be Peacekeeping, or the participation in United Nations sanctioned activities to maintain peace. Naval patrols, Ordnance (arms) sales, and Peacekeeping ("NOP") go together in some ways, although trafficking in small arms and landmines may run afoul of genuine Peacekeeping efforts. China deployed 550 People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops to Liberia in 2003 as its largest overseas Peacekeeping mission since 1994 (Xinhua, 2003), and then sent 4,000 PLA troops to the Sudan to guard its oil pipeline there (Gertaz and Scarborough, 2004). China has recognised the new country of South Sudan which is the source of this oil, so the mission of the PLA after 09 July 2011 will be interesting: will China protect South Sudanese oil reserves from Northern Sudanese exploitation?

The current American and Chinese diplomatic efforts involving Africa may be said to have begun with the presidency of James Earl ("Jimmy") Carter, Jr. in the United States that began on 20 January 1977, and the almost contemporaneous reform movement in 1977 known colloquially as the "Beijing Spring" that ended China's "Cultural Revolution" at home and culminated with the elevation of Deng Xiaoping as China's leader, although he did not become China's chairman. This period has signaled several major and several more minor changes to the American and the Chinese approaches to Africa, although these two nations have continued to design and implement parallel strategies. In fact, they have begun significantly to work together in some African locations, and are considering joint peacekeeping training (Shinn, 2009), reflecting additional competitive convergence.

The American model: Transatlantic "Open Regionalism"

The 21st century American approach to Africa appears largely to mirror America's approach to Asia and Latin America (Gudynas, 2005), which in both locations has been called "Open Regionalism" (Bergsten, 1997). In the Pacific Rim, it has been called the "Trans-Atlantic Partnership" (Barfield and Levy, 2009a, 2009b). This approach within Africa parallels the

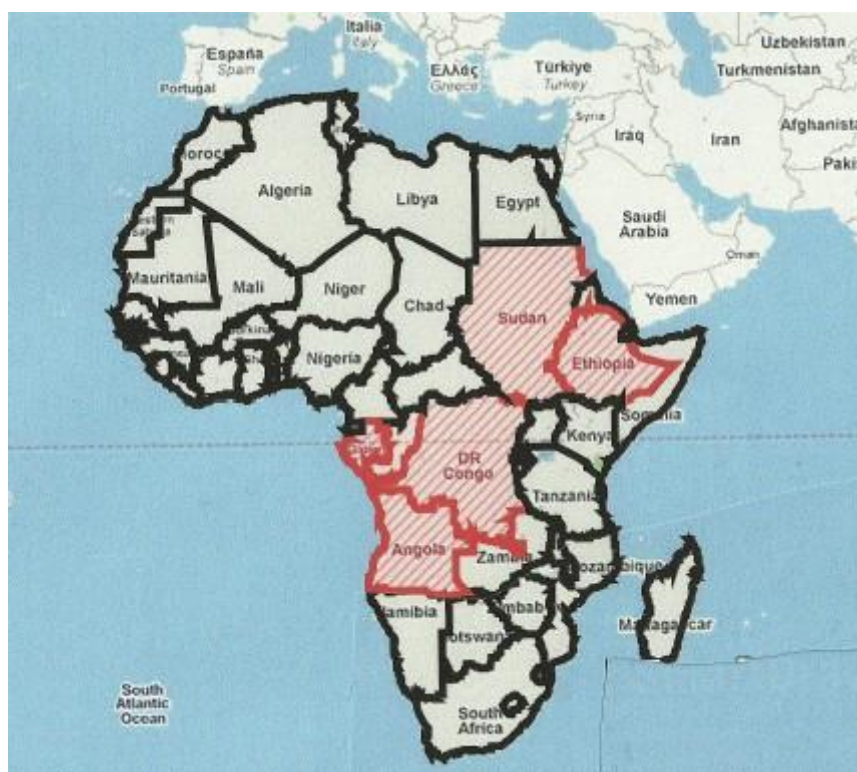
regional integration that the United States has built, somewhat successfully, across Asia and Latin America. The objective of Trans-Pacific Open Regionalism has been to cement economic relations with each country, and encourage them to develop similar ties with each other in due course. A similar pattern has evolved in Latin America. The purpose of Open Regionalism is to create a network of partner nations across a free trade zone for industrial goods that is accompanied by a political forum. Open regionalism appears to be the American objective in Africa.

The Chinese Model: “Concentric Differentiation” and a “Bamboo Corridor”

The People’s Republic of China has pursued a “Concentric Integration” approach amongst its neighbours across Asia (Su, 2009), and China’s 21st century style in Africa may be called a “Concentric Differentiation” approach. This paradigm is different from “Open Regionalism,” in that it does not strive to motivate the countries receiving Chinese aid to develop independent relations with each other. The purpose of “Concentric Integration” has been said to be “a production network with China at the centre” (Men, 2007, 250). Accordingly, China’s style and objectives are different from those of the United States, in Asia and Africa (Rogers, 2007), confirming competition but thus far without signs of tangible convergence.

One question that emerges over and over again, and this is whether China or the United States can fairly be accused of “Neocolonialism” across Africa. Former British foreign secretary Jack Straw flatly accused China of behaving today the way Great Britain behaved toward Africa 150 years ago (Junbo, 2007). This China denies vehemently, and as its premier Wen Jiabao pointed out on 18 June 2007 during a visit to Egypt, that at the time China had no military bases anywhere on the continent of Africa (Junbo, 2007). On the other hand, the United States created an African command to coordinate its military operations on the African continent, although this is headquartered at Stuttgart, Germany, well outside of Africa, apparently following China’s lead. This is an example of competitive convergence.

Figure 1. China's "Bamboo Corridor"



SOURCE: The author, with input from Hanzhen Liu, M.B.A., doctoral student at the University of Warsaw Institute of International Relations. The countries shaded in red colour have attracted the most consistent investment interest by China.

There are several indicators of a major Chinese presence in parts of Africa. These include the amount of (1) Foreign Aid, (2) Foreign Direct Investment, (3) Chinese labourers, and (4) Chinese diaspora situated within any given African state. From all of these different indicators, what one may term a "Bamboo Corridor" seems to have emerged across the centre of Africa from Northeast to Southwest, from Ethiopia down to Angola and covering the Democratic People's Republic (DPR) of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in particular (see Figure 1). This is China's "Core Corridor," but two parallel corridors have emerged, one to its East, one to its West.

Parallel to China's "Bamboo Corridor" but to its East are African states including Mozambique from which China is harvesting massive amounts of timber (Behar, 2008), and from which China is buying land in Zambia where also it mines platinum, plus gold and iron ore from Zimbabwe (Siulapwa, 2010). Parallel to China's "Bamboo Corridor" but to its West are other African states including Algeria and Nigeria that have attracted Chinese interest

more recently. The reason for China's interest in Nigeria is that it imports much of its oil from there. Algeria signed a pact with China in 2008 to cooperate in the production of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, ("China, Algeria Sign Nuclear Accord," 2008), just as Algeria has signed similar agreements with the United States and the Russian Federation. There has been both competition and convergence in the foreign policies of China and the United States in respect to Africa.

The existence of a "competitive convergence" paradigm seems evident from the joint speeches given at Beijing on 19 August 2011 by United States vice president Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Chinese vice president (president designate) Xi Jinping, where Biden and Xi agreed that competition between China and the United States is healthy:

Xi Jinping: Business people of both China and the United States over the past 30 years and more since we established diplomatic relations ... have worked together in a pioneering effort[.] In January this year, President Hu Jintao paid a successful state visit to the United States. President Hu and President Obama jointly inaugurated a new stage in China-U.S. ties that is our joint effort to build a cooperative partnership based on mutual respect and mutual benefit. During his visit to the U.S., President Hu Jintao encouraged business people of the two countries to make the most of the opportunities presented by the deepening economic globalization, actively explore each other's market, and promote our mutually beneficial cooperation.

Joseph Biden: I also agree with the [Chinese] Vice President that competition is healthy. It is good. It has awakened us.. It has regenerated us. It [is] nothing but welcome on the part of the United States. (Remarks, 2011).

Xi Jinping is scheduled to become president of the People's Republic of China in 2012. His father, Xi Zhongxun, was a reformist vice premier and member of China's state council who advised Deng Xiaoping not to attack protesters in 1989 at Tiananmen Square, and recommended that Deng inaugurate "market socialism" in China (MacFarquhar, 1997), the concept that led to China's financial strength today. Quite frankly, when the United States made secret "shadow loans" of 1.1 trillion dollars to the world's banking institutions between 2008 and 2010 during the financial crisis (Keoun, 2011), this was mostly Chinese money, because China has increased its foreign reserve currency to over US\$ 2.85 trillion, as of early 2011 (China Currency, 2011). What the United States did, therefore, was to serve as the world's investment banker, accepting China's deposits in dollar reserve currency, then loaning that money out to the world: Morgan Stanley (\$107.3 billion), Citigroup (\$99.5 billion), and Bank of America (\$91.4 billion), and among foreign banks the Royal Bank of Scotland (\$84.5 billion), Zurich's UBS AG (\$77.2 billion), and Germany's Hypo Real Estate

Holdings, AG (\$28.7 billion)(Keoun, 2011). Clearly, America has benefitted from and utilised China's money. This is not to say that friendly competition in Africa caused this, but certainly that competition seems not to have harmed this, either.

The benign pattern of competition that America and China displayed across Africa over the first decade of the 21st century reflect what the author has termed Ideal Realism in international relations theory (Jones, 2009). As America and China serve the interests of each other, the rather "tiny nations" of Africa are free to cooperate with one, the other, or both much as a shopper in a supermarket is free to opt to purchase one product or another or multiple products for consumption. These options have been made clear by different authors from different perspectives (Lyman, 2007; Michael and Beuret, 2009). America and China have come to share environmental resources into which each has invested mightily, and more or less seem to have pooled their FDI, informally if not formally, to their mutual benefit and also to the benefit of most African nations ("China-Africa trade brings mutual benefit," 2010). Africa has become core to China's 21st century global strategy (Kitissou, 2007), but it has become core to America's global strategy as well. This is "competitive convergence."

Conclusion

China and the United States both are investing aggressively on the continent of Africa, but in different ways, at least visibly. However, in evaluating the morality of their African objectives: the natural resources and the African labour that China will harvest for its manufacture of goods as "factory to the world" in the final analysis will benefit the United States and the American consumer more than any other country or population, other than China itself. Neither China nor the United States has attempted to divide up Africa since the fall of the Soviet Union, nor will either nation endeavour to do so in future from all current accounts. Africa is a place where both super powers collaborate, sometimes perhaps in seemingly different ways, for a common benefit. I call this "competitive convergence." Africa holds the key to the minerals that will be required to supply desires of the 21st century middle classes globally, including an emerging African middle class (Bello, 2008; Luk, 2008). Africa is a place where factories that pollute the environment will increase in number as they decrease within America and China, two of only a few nations that have refused to sign the Kyoto Accord because currently they are the world's largest polluters. Africa is an emerging market for the sale of goods made by China at prices that will reflect an increasing economy of scale. In many ways, Africa is situated at a geographic crossroads between Asia and the Western Hemisphere, but also closer than China is to Europe. Whereas during the "Cold Peace" [the author deliberately substitutes "peace" for "war"] of 1945 to 1989 the two powers of that

era fought only “proxy” wars using military armaments, across the 21st century China and the United States will witness “proxy” trade wars that the one, the other, or both together may ignite for their mutual economic advantage: the “competitive” aspect of “competitive convergence.”

All of these conditions will work together to keep a lasting peace between China and the United States and the other two large trading blocks that have come to govern the world. The losers in this paradigm may be Brazil and India, and possibly other nations as well that desire to join the ranks of the super powers, but will be held back from doing so for one reason above most other reasons: the four giant trade competitors already are established across the continent of Africa, and will refuse to allow other actors to become potential peer competitors. The United States will not allow any “peer competitors,” and China will not allow India to become its peer competitor. This is the major reason why France suddenly has emerged as a peacekeeping force in Libya, and why the “old” European empires including Britain, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Portugal, and Spain all are eager to salvage what they can from those portions of Africa they once controlled in the erstwhile hope of one day joining the competitive convergence of America and China. The real options are unipolarity with American hegemony or bipolarity, like it or not. If China opts to have bipolarity, it can expect to pay a high price for entrance into the first class lounge.

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