

United States' new enemy: China and the conquest for world influence
A comparative study of current Chinese and US approaches to foreign
assistance, investment and trade in Africa

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Key-words: China's foreign aid, US foreign assistance, China-Africa trade, US-Africa trade, Chinese FDI to Africa, US FDI to Africa, economic diplomacy, Belt and Road, the Prosper Africa initiative, US policy in Africa, the resource war, China threat, China's peaceful rise.

Abstract

China's new diplomacy has been a topic of heated discussions both within academic scholarship and political circles across the globe. Particularly controversial has been its economic development and its conquest for world influence, which created tensions with the US. The United States of America has been accusing China of borrowing and assisting foreign countries in order to gain more influence worldwide and especially over Africa. Both China and the US emphasise the centrality of economy in their domestic and external policies. Despite their common attachment to economic development the US and China have diverged considerably in their respective promotion of economic and strategic interest abroad. This study compares current Chinese and US approaches to economic diplomacy, with an emphasis on their foreign assistance, investment and trade in Africa. To this end, the research outlines the

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intricacies behind US and China's implication in Africa, and delves into the specificities of their current economic diplomacy. Moreover, it measures their efficiency in engaging with the African continent through FDI, foreign assistance and trade.

Introduction

China has become a major presence on the global stage through its economic upheaval and has sparked numerous intellectual debates about the implications of its growing economic, political and security influence on the world order.

Under the rule of Xi Jinping, China developed a new approach to foreign policy, based on “win-win” cooperation, peaceful development, deepening of relations and partnerships at a regional level, in accordance with the principles of friendship, sincerity, mutual benefit and cooperation. At the same time, Beijing has improved its cooperation with other developing countries (especially with African nations) and has also promoted a major power diplomacy.²

Consequently, its actions have triggered a negative reaction from the United States of America, which accuses China of posing a threat to its national security.³

China and the US are currently confronting each other on many aspects, from intellectual property to maritime disputes. However, the economic competition between them, for gaining more influence across the globe, is by far the most visible one.

Africa has now become a major issue between China and the United States, because China has increased its influence in the region to the detriment of the US, and various Western countries. The United States has signaled the danger

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Forge Ahead under the Guidance of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Thought on Diplomacy*, Speech by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, 01.09.2017, <https://bit.ly/2BfhQbP>.

³ National Security Strategy Archive, *Summary of the National Defense Strategy of The United States of America* 2018, p. 1, <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

that China poses to the future of the region in various official documents. Consequently, if we wish to understand the current competition between Washington and Beijing and to determine whose tactics are more efficient, we need to analyze the economic methods which the two actors use in the region, in order to gain more influence.

Fundamentals of China's economic diplomacy in Africa

Over the past several years, China has managed to become the world's second largest economy, overtaking Japan. Despite this major accomplishment, China has been criticized, especially by the US, for seeking to attract economically and politically fragile states in order to gain access to various markets, goods and raw materials to sustain its economic power.

Since Xi Jinping took office, Beijing has expanded its influence in developing countries that have a strategic role. China's recent foreign policy has led to an economic confrontation with the United States, as the US wants to maintain its hegemony globally.

China has often identified its interests with those of developing countries, especially with Africa, as a way to strengthen its position in the international system.⁴

China has long been involved in Africa. The famous adventures of the Chinese admiral, Zheng Ho, between 1416 to 1423, on the coasts of East Africa, constituted the first Chinese trade attempts with Africa. China's trade relations with Africa grew more intense after the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The Bandung Conference bolstered the ties between China and Africa, and Egypt was the first African state which entered into a trade agreement with

⁴ Ian Taylor, *China and Africa: Engagement and Compromise*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 3.

China. In the 1960s, Beijing was one of the actors who sustained the African countries 'struggle for independence'.⁵

Between 1960 and 1980, China offered foreign assistance for free to African states, so they might consolidate their economic development. However, that was insufficient. Therefore, China began to explore new ways in which African nations could be assisted, such as preferential and discount loans, as well as various project partnerships in Africa.⁶

Africa has always been a major focus of China's diplomacy. Africa's strategic and economic importance to China was also seen in its first White Paper on China's foreign policy in Africa issued in 2006. The document provides insight into the Chinese objectives for Africa.

In this document, China recognizes that Africa's rich natural resources are a major factor encouraging economic development. According to the White Paper, one of the major Chinese objectives in Africa is to deepen the cooperation with Africa bilaterally and multilaterally.

In regards to foreign assistance, the RPC is seeking to increase it without political conditions. It will adopt measures to boost bilateral trade and to pursue negotiation of free trade agreements with African regional countries and organizations. At the same time, China highlights the special importance that the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (launched in 2000) is taking on the development of collective dialogue and multilateral co-operation.⁷

In 2015, China launched its second policy for Africa, which was an important step in Sino-African cooperation. China became Africa's largest trading partner in 2009 and in 2014, Chinese trade with Africa was four times higher than in 2006, when the first policy had been issued. Unlike the first

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 18-24.

⁶ Li Anshan, *China and Africa: Policy and challenges*, in „China Security“, Vol. 3, No. 3, World Security Institute, 2007, pp. 72-74, http://www.cebri.com.br/midia/documentos/china_and_africa_policy_and_challenge.pdf.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *White Paper on China's African policy*, 2006, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/zflt/eng/zgdfzcc/t481748.htm>.

Chinese policy for Africa, the current one will focus on the industrialization of the region, on the modernization of agriculture, on cooperation in resources and energy, and on financial cooperation. China will continue to cooperate with Africa through the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, but also through the PRC Mission - the African Union, which will support the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063.⁸

Africa is currently playing an important role on Xi Jinping's agenda. Xi Jinping said that Africa was an extension of the Belt and Road initiative and a major participant in the project. The two powers will cooperate in many projects for common prosperity, especially in infrastructure.⁹

China and Africa have also drafted *Eight Major Initiatives* to improve their economic cooperation, and also developed *The Action Plan 2019-2021*, for the same purpose.¹⁰

In 2019, China's Prime Minister, Wang Yi, said that Africa and Sino-African cooperation were part of the South-South cooperation policy, a model for international cooperation with Africa. Wang also reiterated that China's ultimate goal was to help Africa become economically independent and have sustainable development.¹¹

Sino-African relations have sparked a lot of criticism over time. Views on China's involvement in Africa differ. Some see China as a development partner. Others see China as an economic competitor that engages in short-term access to Africa's resources. There is also a third interpretation, which sees China as a colonizing power that uses a long-term strategy to replace the pro-Western

⁸ Xinhua, *Full Text: China's second Africa policy paper*, 2015, <https://bit.ly/2VODATO>.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, China supports Africa jointly building Belt and Road, speech by Xi Jinping, 2018/09/03, <https://bit.ly/2i0ZDFh>.

¹⁰ Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021)*, 2018-09-12, https://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/t1594297.htm.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Wang Yi Talks about the African Debt Issue: *China Will Help Africa Achieve Economic Independence and Sustainable Development*, 2019/01/04, <https://bit.ly/2Tnc1UG>.

orientation of the continent through partnerships under the South-South cooperation policy.¹²

Fundamentals of the United States of America's economic diplomacy in Africa

Unlike China, the United States of America did not have deep historical ties with Africa, besides the slave trade. For example, the early US contacts with the African continent followed European practices, and were limited to paying tributes to pirates in exchange for free passage.¹³

During the Great War, the US shared a good relationship with the colonial powers. Therefore, US contacts with Africa were minimal.¹⁴

However, US foreign policy towards Africa changed during the Cold War. For example, in a Memorandum from the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Holmes) to Secretary of State Dulles, dated February 6, 1958, regarding the US policy towards Africa, it was revealed that at that time America was concerned about the Soviet Union's intentions in the region, and attempts were made to strengthen and to secure the African states' ties to the West in order to protect Africa.¹⁵

Another document stated that US President Dwight D. Eisenhower was very concerned about how this could be done, because it was difficult to cultivate good relations with the colonies. The policy finally adopted was to offer 500 million dollars for Africa's development, in the hope that the investments will connect it to Africa's metropolitan areas.¹⁶

¹² Chris Alden, *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon*, Zed Books, New York, 2007, pp. 5-6.

¹³ Glenn Hastedt, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, Facts on File, Inc., New York, 2004, p. 7.

¹⁴ Stephen M. Magu, *Great Powers and US Foreign Policy towards Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2019, pp. 55-56.

¹⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa, General U.S. Policy Toward Africa, Memorandum from the Secretary of State's Special Assistant (Holmes) to Secretary of State Dulles, February 6, 1958*, Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1992, p.1.

¹⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume XIV, Africa, Memorandum of Discussion at the 375th Meeting of the National Security Council (U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to*

During that time, American interests in Africa were related to anti-colonialism, to strategic minerals, to Africa's role in the Western European security system, and to military bases.¹⁷

US foreign policy in Africa has seen many stages and phases of commitment. For example, the Kennedy Administration reconsidered the American foreign policy in Africa and supported African nationalism. On the other hand, the Nixon Administration seemed to return to the old American habits of not getting very involved in Africa.¹⁸

Clinton's administration was more involved in African issues related to conflicts between states, to terrorism, to HIV, and to illicit arms trade.

Under Bush's leadership, America reconsidered its foreign policy towards Africa. Following the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, America began to see Africa as a strategic issue in the war on terror.¹⁹ In the US *National Security Strategy*, 2002, it was mentioned that America was threatened by failed states. The document demonstrated America's commitment to fighting Al-Qaeda and any other terrorist group, especially cells in Africa and the Middle East where terrorists were trained.²⁰

Barack Obama opted for an African policy more geared to the causes of failed states. He focused on promoting democracy for peace and security in Africa, and was convinced that a governance method based on respect rather than coercion is the key to success in Africa.²¹

America's recent approaches to Africa have undergone a number of changes. There are voices criticizing the fact that the United States, under the

Calendar Year 1960), August 7, 1958, Harriet Dashiell Schwar and Stanley Shaloff, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1992, Document 6, pp. 19-22.

¹⁷ Alan P. Dobson; Steve Marsh, *US foreign Policy since 1945*, Second Edition, Routledge, New York, 2006, pp.111-112.

¹⁸ Stephen M. Magu, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁹ Michael Cox; Doug Stokes, *US Foreign Policy*, Second edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, pp. 301-307.

²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2002, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>, pp. 1-5.

²¹ Michael Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 307.

leadership of Donald Trump, is not that involved in Africa, while China's role is amplified mainly through the China-Africa Forum.²²

In spite of recent criticism, and probably due to the Chinese threat to American interests in Africa, Donald Trump issued a new strategy for Africa in 2018. The strategy reflects America's intention to get more involved in the region. At the same time, Trump stressed that America would improve trade relations with African states, and would launch the "Prosper Africa" initiative, which would encourage open markets for US businesses, increase employment opportunities for young people, and support growth and development in Africa.²³

In this document, the US accuses China of using bribery and non-transparent agreements in order to maintain Africa in a state of subservience. Washington also criticizes the Chinese "Belt and Road" initiative, viewing it as a plan through which China will develop commercial routes, with the ultimate goal of advancing global Chinese domination.²⁴

The US deplores the fact that, although it has donated billions of dollars to Africa, money has not stopped terrorism, radicalism and violence. It has also failed to prevent countries such as China and Russia from taking advantage of this situation to increase their power and influence.²⁵

Foreign aid, investments and trade between China and Africa

"Foreign aid "or "Official *Development Assistance*" (ODA) is a term coined by the *Development Assistance Committee* (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to measure aid. According to

²² Reuben Brigety, *A Post-American Africa*, August 28, 2018, Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2018-08-28/post-american-africa>.

²³ The White House, *President Donald J. Trump's Africa Strategy Advances Prosperity, Security, and Stability*, December 13, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2LfEwk>.

²⁴ The White House, *Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on The Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy*, December 13, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2rBYrg6>.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Defence, *National Security Advisor Unveils Administration's Africa Strategy*, <https://bit.ly/2LgZ9Z3>.

OECD, "Official development assistance" (ODA) is defined as *government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Aid may be provided bilaterally, from donor to recipient, or channelled through a multilateral development agency, such as the United Nations or the World Bank. Aid includes grants, "soft" loans and the provision of technical assistance.*²⁶

Chinese foreign assistance dates back to the founding of the People's Republic of China, and has lasted for almost seven decades. At the beginning, China received economic aid from the Soviet Union. Afterwards, the Chinese government used this support for industrialization, and began to provide economic assistance to countries such as North Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

With the emergence of pro-independence movements in Africa, China began to offer them economic and technical assistance. Chinese aid to foreign countries became more consistent after Deng Xiaoping's reform for economic development and openness.²⁷

Unlike OECD countries, China does not officially disclose information about its foreign assistance programs and does not follow the definition of official development aid set by the OECD. Therefore, China is often criticized for lack of transparency. However, there are sources which can provide valuable information on its international co-operation. China publishes annually a document named "China Statistical Yearbook", where we can find information about its internal and external expenditure in the fields of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, energy, the number of contracts China has with various countries, and the workforce. Nevertheless, this document does not specify the type of contracts, or the funding related to them. For example, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce publishes details about the major projects in which it is involved, especially those on infrastructure, so we can see the countries in which China operates and the industries in which it has chosen to get involved. Also,

²⁶Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Net ODA*, <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>.

²⁷ Hong Zhou, *China's Foreign Aid: 60 Years in Retrospect*, Springer, Singapore, 2016, pp. 1-3.

valuable information comes from the media and from other government documents.

Research labs, like "SAIS China Africa Research Initiative" (SAIS-CARI), have gathered information and constructed a solid picture of Chinese foreign aid. According to SAIS, Chinese foreign assistance has increased from 2003. If in 2003 China offered nearly \$600 million in foreign aid, in 2006 it began offering billions of dollars. In 2008, when the economic crisis affected America and Europe, China offered \$1.84 billion in foreign aid, while the US (hit deeply by the crisis) offered \$1.76 billion.²⁸

Figure 1. Chinese global foreign aid expenditure: 2003-2017.

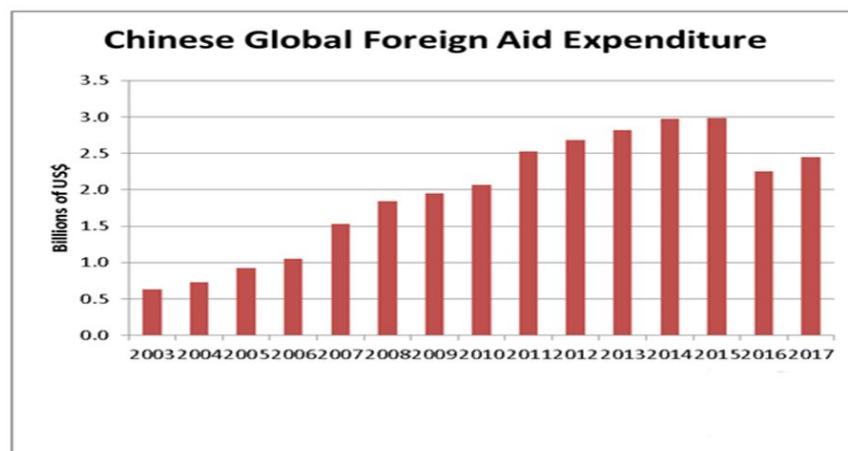


Figure 1 shows the global Chinese foreign aid expenditure between 2003-2017, according to statistics produced by researchers from the China-Africa Research Initiative.

In addition to its increased foreign aid globally, China has committed aid to various African states.

²⁸ SAIS China Africa Research Initiative, *Chinese foreign aid to the world*, <https://bit.ly/2XZLQlx>.

In 2000, Sino-African economic relations entered in a new era. Beijing Declaration of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum and China-Africa Economic and Social Development Cooperation Program have been a guide to Chinese cooperation with developing countries in Africa and laid the foundations for long-lasting collaboration between China and Africa on the principles of equality, cooperation and mutual benefit. For the first time in history, China proposed to write off debts worth \$10 billion for 32 states in Africa.²⁹

In 2014, China published a White Paper on foreign assistance, where it stated that Africa and Asia are the largest beneficiaries of Chinese foreign aid. According to this document, China has provided billions of dollars in aid, in three forms: grants, interest-free *loans*, and concessional loans.

China provides grants to beneficiary countries for social projects, in order to finance human resource development, technical cooperation and emergency humanitarian assistance. Concessional loans are offered by Exim Bank, and are mainly used to help recipient countries to carry out large and medium-sized manufacturing projects and projects with economic and social benefits. The White Paper shows that from 2010 to 2012, China provided foreign aid to 121 countries, out of which 51 were from Africa.³⁰

China has actively helped African countries especially with infrastructure construction and with energy projects in countries such as Ghana and Senegal. China offered foreign assistance for agricultural projects in terms of technological development, and cancelled the debt for Tanzania, Zambia, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast and Sudan.³¹

Although China shed some light on its foreign assistance, it is *difficult* to make a *precise* estimate of *Chinese contributions*, because (unlike the West) China

²⁹ Hong Zhou, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

³⁰ The State Council of the People's Republic of China, White Paper on *China's Foreign Aid* (2014), July 2014, Beijing, <https://bit.ly/2TlaPe9>.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

doesn't publish official data. For this reason, Beijing is often criticized for lack of transparency. For example, in the above-mentioned White Paper, China does not provide full information regarding the amount of foreign assistance it offers.

One possible reason for which China does not publish official data may be that Beijing is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, which takes all decisions at state level. When the party decides to launch a particular project, it does not encounter any resistance regarding the budget, the funding and the destination of funds.

Furthermore, China may also provide financial support to countries with which the West does not want to associate, either because they are accused of terrorism, or they don't respect human rights.

On various occasions, Xi Jinping pointed out that the PRC would provide financial aid with "no strings attached". His statement can be interpreted as expressing a different approach from the one which characterizes the policy of the US that imposes conditions such as respect for human rights, democratization, and the rule of law to countries which request foreign aid. Venezuela's case can be seen as part of this context, because China offered a loan in 2018, although Venezuela was in deep crisis. The loan was offered in exchange for oil, but the Chinese initiative was strongly criticized, especially by the US, which accused China of trying to gain influence in Latin America.³²

In a study by AidData, which assesses Chinese foreign assistance to Africa, the research lab reveals that seven countries included in the top 10 to which China is providing foreign aid are situated in Africa: the Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ghana. These seven states are followed by countries from Asia, such as Sri Lanka and Cambodia, and by countries from Central America, such as Cuba.³³

³²Why some Venezuelans fear Maduro is selling them out to China, CBS News, September 15, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2IKIX17>.

³³Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., Parks, B.C., Strange, A. M., & Tierney, M. J, *Aid, China, and Growth*:

Given the fact that, in 2017, the People's Republic of China has registered a 6.9% GDP growth, and this country is the second largest economy in the world, it requires large amounts of energy to sustain its economic growth.³⁴ Therefore, China is looking to strengthen its ties with countries from Africa, because these states are rich in oil and in natural resources, and foreign aid can benefit all parties involved in the transaction, especially the donor country.

According to a report issued in 2015, by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2011 China had become the world's largest consumer of energy, and is currently the world's second largest consumer of oil after the United States. The agency claims that in 2013 China surpassed the US and became the world's largest importer of oil and other liquids, largely due to its increased consumption of oil.³⁵

Furthermore, China is currently the largest consumer of steel, coal, wheat and oleaginous fruit. Thus, its increasing dependence on this type of products will encourage closer ties with the producing countries.³⁶

Now, if we break down the list of the seven African countries included in the Top 10 Recipients of Chinese ODA, we will discover an interesting link between them and the donor.

Ethiopia, for example, is among the richest countries in Africa, especially in natural gas. In 2019, the Ministry of Mines, Petroleum and Natural Gas of Ethiopia announced that China's Poly-GCL Petroleum Group Holdings Limited (Poly-GCL) would build a 767 km natural gas pipeline between Ethiopia and Djibouti. The Chinese company also announced that it had discovered eight trillion cubic meters of natural gas in Ethiopia.³⁷

Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset, AidData Working Paper #46, Williamsburg, 2017, VA: AidData.

³⁴ World Bank, *Country profile: China*, <https://bit.ly/2UKsRK5>.

³⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *China: international energy analysis*, May 14, 2015, <https://bit.ly/28NmW12>.

³⁶ The new political economy of resources, *Resources Futures*, <https://bit.ly/2u9T4FU>.

³⁷ Xinhuanet, *Chinese firm to construct Ethiopia-Djibouti natural gas pipeline*, 2019-02-17, <https://bit.ly/2ub10a8>.

Nigeria, a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has an oil reserve of 37.45 billion barrels.³⁸ Nigeria was accused that it was becoming dependent on Chinese loans. These were reflected in agriculture and in transportation.³⁹

Ghana is also found on China's list of ODA favorite countries. Ghana's natural resources include gold and bauxite, accounting for 64.4% of the country's main exports.⁴⁰ A recent infrastructure agreement worth of \$2 billion between China and Ghana has generated criticisms. It does not seem to be a real loan, but more of a bargain, because Ghana will offer bauxite to China, whereas Beijing will provide aid for infrastructure.⁴¹

In order to better understand the extent of China's foreign assistance in Africa, I have included a table outlining various Chinese ODA projects in Africa, using information from AidData.

³⁸ Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, *OPEC share of world crude oil reserves*, 2017, https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/330.htm.

³⁹ Emily Feng, *Chinese investment extends its influence in Nigeria*, Financial Times, November 21, 2018, <https://on.ft.com/2u9VNiC>.

⁴⁰ Dave Baxter, *Ghana benefits from natural resources*, Business Reporter, <https://bit.ly/2HBPVqy>.

⁴¹ Ghanaweb, *Cash for Bauxite: Parliament Okays \$2bn Ghana-China barter trade*, 31 July 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Ji5GpZ>.

Figure 2. Chinese ODA projects in Africa: 2012-2014

Year	Donor	Funding agency	Recipient	Type of founding	Project	Amount
2012	China	Import-Export Bank	Ghana	Loan	Hidro Energy	\$75,353,061
2012	China	Import-Export Bank	Nigeria	Loan	Aeroport Terminal	\$500,000,000
2012	China	Import-Export Bank	Tanzania	Loan	Gas pipeline	\$1,230,000,000
2012	China	Unspecified	Sudan	Grant	Technology	\$1,615,428,000
2013	China	Unspecified	Djibouti	Loan	Port Ghumbait	\$70,000,000
2014	China	Unspecified	Mali	Loan	Highway	\$8,000,000,000

Figure 2 shows that Beijing provides foreign assistance for massive projects in Africa, and engages in sectors such as transportation, industry and energy. In China, foreign assistance budget is made by the Ministry of Commerce, and concessional loans are provided by China's Import and Export Bank. There are some other banks involved in Chinese overseas aid, namely: the China Construction Bank, which manages the China-Africa Development Fund, and the People's Bank of China, which deals with China's participation in multilateral institutions. Although it participates in multilateral organizations, China prefers bilateral aid.⁴²

⁴² Meine Pieter van Dijk, *The New presence of China in Africa*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2010, p. 61.

Investments

China has an increased presence in Africa through investments as well. In 2018, Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the Beijing Summit of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, where he announced the development of eight major initiatives in Africa. Some of the most important initiatives include industry, infrastructure, investment and trade.

At the same time, China plans to expand investment in Africa, in particular by encouraging Chinese firms to increase their investment, especially in areas such as manufacturing, agriculture, financial services, trade and logistics, and digital economy. Beijing will provide assistance in agriculture, and intends to implement 50 programs of this kind which will increase the production of corn, rice, wheat and cotton in Africa. These raw materials are much needed in China.⁴³

According to the 2018 China Statistical Yearbook, in 2017 the Chinese net direct investment (FDI) in Africa amounted to \$4.1 billion - an increase from the \$2.4 billion registered in the previous year.⁴⁴

In the following figure, I will show the top five African destinations for China's direct investment. The table will focus on the time frame between 2015 and 2017, and the statistical data is retrieved from the China-Africa Research Initiative.

⁴³ Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, *Elaboration on the Eight Major Initiatives of the FOCAC Beijing Summit*, September 19, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2XR8sEK>.

⁴⁴ National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Net Overseas Direct Investment, Africa*, Total Net Overseas Direct Investment, <http://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=C01>.

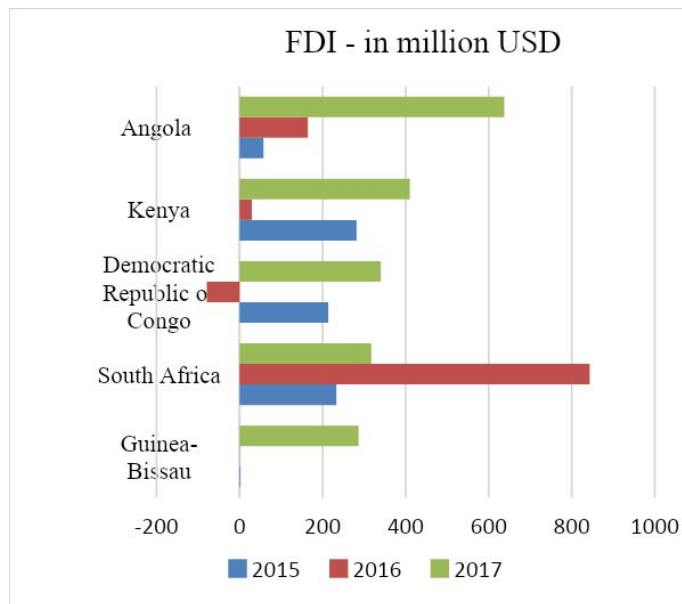
Figure 3. Top 5 destinations in Africa for Chinese FDI

Figure 3 shows that Beijing has increased its foreign direct investment over previous years, especially in Angola and in Guinea-Bissau. For example, in Guinea-Bissau, a country devastated by civil war in the 1990s, a possible explanation for the increased Chinese FDI may be the country's agricultural potential. Guinea-Bissau is a major exporter of cashew - a raw material where China is a major consumer.

Angola exports oil, coffee and diamonds.⁴⁵ China has become the largest oil importer in the world. As such, there is an economic connection between China and Angola. Another interesting aspect is that the *Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, has recently pointed out that Beijing will modernize its strategy in Angola, and the FDI has thus increased.*

⁴⁵ Shelly Zhao, *The China-Angola Partnership: A Case Study of China's Oil Relations in Africa*, China Briefing, May 25, 2011, <https://bit.ly/2HDGs1L>.

Since 2006, China's direct investment has steadily increased in Africa. The main sectors for the Chinese FDI were construction, mining, manufacturing and IT services.

*In 2017, China's gross earnings in construction amounted to \$51.1 billion - double from the value registered in 2008. China's land acquisitions in Africa have also increased. For example, in Cameroon, Chinese firms have acquired 104 thousand hectares of land.*⁴⁶

Trade

In terms of China's trade with Africa, Beijing encourages African products to enter the Chinese market and to continue granting zero tariff treatment to 97% of taxable items from LDC countries. Bilateral trade has flourished over the last two decades.⁴⁷

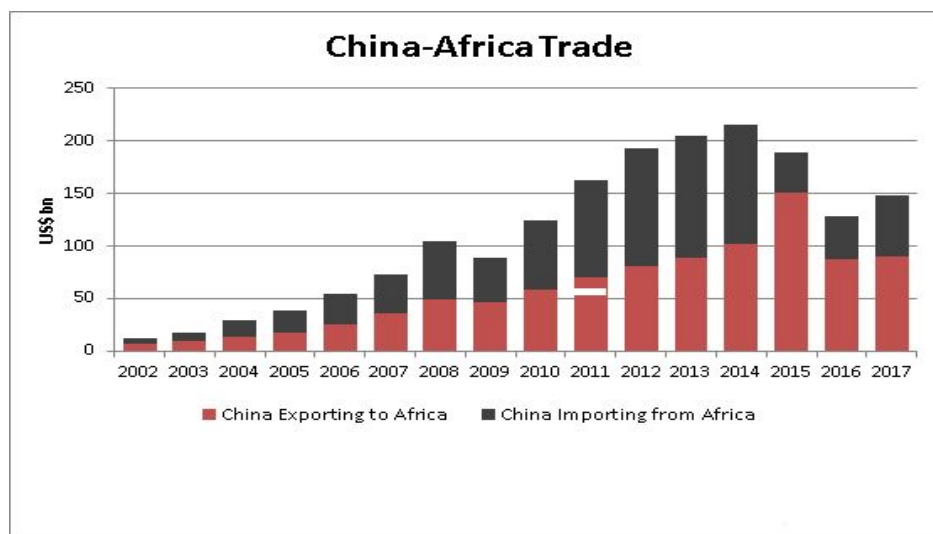
The ultimate goal of the PRC is to conclude free trade agreements with various African countries. Currently, China has no free trade agreements with any African country, while the US has a free trade agreement with Morocco.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ SAIS China Africa Research Initiative, *Chinese contracts in Africa*, <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-contracts-in-africa>

⁴⁷ China daily, *Full Text: China's second Africa policy paper*, 2015-12-05, <https://bit.ly/2FPPdEc>.

⁴⁸ Office of the United States Trade Representative, *Free Trade Agreements*, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>.

Figure 4. China-Africa trade between 2002-2017. The data is retrieved from SAIS.



In 2017, the top Chinese imports were from Angola (\$ 20.69 billion), South Africa (\$ 8.66 billion), Congo (\$ 3.96 billion), Zambia (\$ 3.12 billion), Gabon (2.29 billion US dollars), and Nigeria (\$ 1.62 billion). Among the most important African products imported by China in 2017 were: oil (\$ 34.9 billion), copper (\$3.9 billion), wood (\$ 2.2 billion), and metals worth 1.9 billion dollars.⁴⁹

China has been accused of borrowing and assisting foreign countries in order to gain more influence on the African continent. Africa's importance to China is major, as we noticed from the figures for trade, FDI, and foreign assistance. However, despite these accusations (emanating especially from the US), China claims that Africa's cooperation is based on the "South-South" cooperation policy, and its aid to the continent is beneficial for both involved parties. Beijing explains its presence in Africa in terms of making the continent economically independent.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ United Nations International Trade Statistics Database, Trade Statistics, 2017, <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi Talks about the African Debt Issue...*

Foreign aid, investments and trade between US and Africa

The Trump Administration's National Security Strategy has indicated that the economy of the United States is the one which sustains the nation's power.⁵¹

This new strategy reveals that the United States will focus especially on trade, on exports and on selective use of external assistance. According to this document, these are tools which can promote stability, prosperity and political reform, and build new partnerships based on the principle of reciprocity.

In regards to trade, America will adopt new trade and investment agreements, and will modernize the existing ones. Simultaneously, the United States places emphasis on innovation and technology development.⁵²

At the same time, the US will concentrate more on the developing countries, and will create profitable markets for American products and companies.

Washington warns that China is increasing its role in the developing countries through foreign assistance and investments, with the aim of expanding its influence and of gaining advantages over the United States.⁵³

US foreign assistance dates back to 1947, when America used this instrument in the Cold War to stabilize the governments and the economies of Greece and Turkey - countries which were facing the pressure of communism. Its foreign assistance embarked on a bold new program, the \$13 billion Marshall Plan for Western Europe.

The decolonization process, and the Cold War competition between the US and the Soviet Union (for gaining influence in the developing countries from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East) turned the US foreign aid into a means of reducing poverty and social problems in those regions.

⁵¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, p. 4, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 17-22

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 33-37

In 1961, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was created in order to provide such programs. In the 1970s, US foreign assistance was a channel of peace in the Middle East, and America offered economic aid to Egypt and Israel.

After the 1990s, US foreign aid focused primarily on promoting democracy in the ex-socialist countries. Furthermore, in Africa, the United States of America promoted democratic institutions and supported the transition from African civil wars to peace in order to avoid the collapse of certain countries, such as Sudan.⁵⁴

Currently, the US State Department and USAID have developed a strategic plan for foreign assistance. Among the most important objectives in the document are: stabilizing North Africa and the Middle East, promoting an inclusive economy, reducing extreme poverty, rebalancing the Asia-Pacific region through development and cooperation, conflict prevention and humanitarian aid, encouraging democratic governance, and promoting human rights.⁵⁵

In 2004, the US created the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), with the aim of delivering external assistance to poorer countries. The MCC provides time-limited grants that promote economic growth, reduce poverty and strengthen institutions. The corporation has invested more than \$12 billion in programs for poor countries, in areas such as agriculture and irrigation, anti-corruption, education, energy, health, and sanitation, especially in Africa.⁵⁶

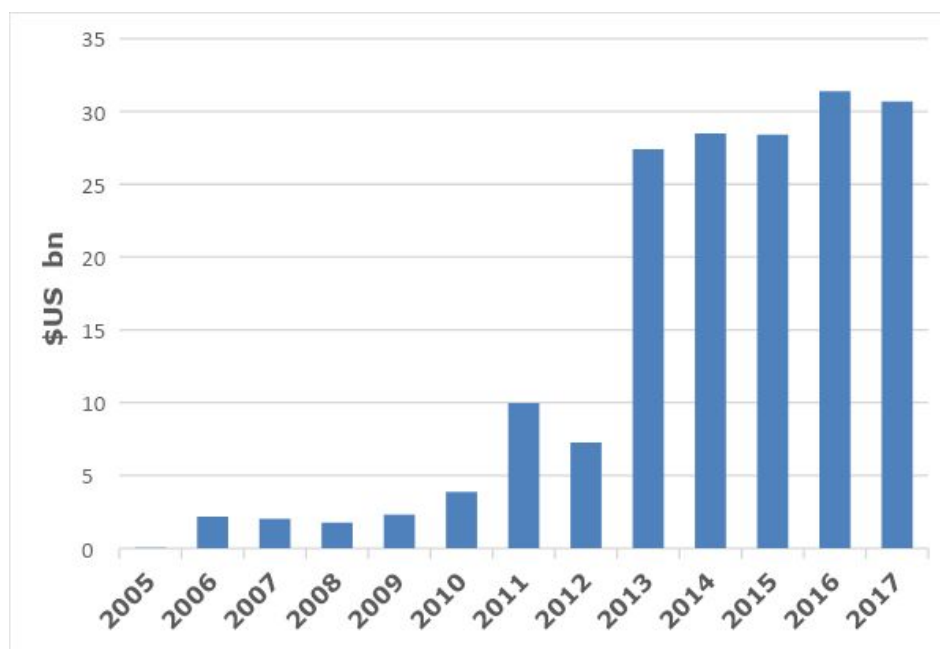
In 2018, the US offered \$22.7 billion in foreign assistance globally, a decrease from \$30.7 billion in 2017. This may be an effect of Trump's policy, which stressed that it would only give foreign aid to its friends.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Carol Lancaster; Ann Van Dusen, *Organizing U.S. Foreign Aid: Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2006, pp. 10-12.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Department of State-USAID FY 2014–2017 Joint Strategic Plan*, April 2, 2014, pp. 3-4, <https://bit.ly/2CpUqRE>.

⁵⁶ Millennium Challenge Corporation, *About MMC*, <https://www.mcc.gov/about>.

⁵⁷ *Map of US Foreign Assistance Worldwide*, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/explore>.

Figure 5. American foreign aid expenditure: 2005-2017

Source: Map of U.S. foreign assistance worldwide, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/explore>.

Unlike China, the US is a member of the Economic Cooperation and Development Organization, and is a donor of official development assistance (ODA). The member countries of the Organization represent 78% of the world's FDI, and 95% of the official development assistance to the world.⁵⁸ According to the OECD statistical data, between 2016 and 2017 America allocated the highest ODA budget for Sub-Saharan Africa, while Latin America ranked fifth in terms of US external assistance.⁵⁹

The top 10 recipients of US foreign aid in 2018 were: Jordan (816.2 million), Ethiopia (\$803.8 million), Afghanistan (\$779.1 million), South Sudan

⁵⁸ Office of the United States Trade Representatives, *Trade Organizations: OECD*, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/wto-multilateral-affairs/oecd>.

⁵⁹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Aid at a glance charts*, <https://bit.ly/2ncunbv>.

(\$740.2 million), Nigeria (\$711.2 million), Syria (\$633.8 million), Kenya (\$591.5 million), Yemen (\$448.7 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$433.1 million), and Somalia (421.6 million).⁶⁰

We can see that the United States has offered the highest amounts of foreign aid to African countries. Africa plays one of the most important roles in the United States foreign aid system, which has identified that new changes on the African continent require a new type of partnership. There are voices criticizing the fact that, because of China, the United States is losing influence in Africa.⁶¹ America has criticized China for expanding its political and financial influence in Africa and deliberately and aggressively targeting investment in the region to gain a competitive advantage over the United States. The US accuses China of using bribery and non-transparent agreements to keep Africa captive to Beijing's demands.⁶²

Interestingly, in 2018, Donald Trump launched a new strategy for Africa. The document stresses that America will improve trade relations with African states and launch the "Prosper Africa" initiative, which will develop markets for US affairs, increase employment opportunities for young people, and support growth and development in Africa.⁶³

As we noticed in the previous analysis of China's foreign aid, Ethiopia plays a major role for Beijing. At the same time, we noticed that it occupies the second position in the top 10 recipients of US aid. The US strategy for Ethiopia, issued in 2018, reveals that although Ethiopian public opinion is favorable to America, China's growing influence in the country, and certain perceptions among the Ethiopian elite that America would favor security at the expense of democracy, jeopardize the country's pro-Western orientation. Interestingly, the document also shows that America will only gain influence in the region if the

⁶⁰ ForeignAssistance.gov, *Map of US foreign assistance worldwide...*

⁶¹ Reuben Brigety, *A Post-American Africa ...*

⁶² The White House, *Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton ...*

⁶³ The White House, *President Donald J. Trump's Africa Strategy Advances...*

US is able to effectively communicate their assistance in improving the well-being and the rights of all Ethiopians.⁶⁴

Both China and the US favor Nigeria in terms of foreign assistance. If the Chinese policy for Nigeria is not well known, America has a special strategy. In a document similar to that on Ethiopia, Nigeria is mentioned as being of a particular importance for the US, because it has a leading role in promoting democracy and stability on the African continent. Nigeria is the most important strategic partner for the United States in Africa.⁶⁵ Therefore, Washington wants to improve Nigeria's governance system, as well as the laws and the welfare of its people. There are currently seven US missions dealing with this activity in Nigeria.

The US's involvement in Africa through foreign aid has targeted long-term development, by funding projects that promote economic growth and prosperity across the poorest countries of Africa. ODA is also allotted to humanitarian assistance in areas affected by various factors. In addition, America offers external assistance programs to support political stability, and to reform markets.⁶⁶

Unlike China, which provides foreign assistance for grandiose projects in Africa and at a global level, and which is particularly involved in sectors such as transportation, industry and energy, the United States is focusing its external assistance on such areas as education, health and population (33% of the ODA budget for 2016-2017); humanitarian aid (24%), and various projects on production. While China provides external assistance and erases the debts of

⁶⁴U.S. Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Ethiopia*, 2018, p. 8, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/284882.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Idem, *Integrated Country Strategy: Nigeria*, 2018, p. 9-10, <https://bit.ly/2Y5RhQ8>.

⁶⁶ James McBride, *How does the U.S. spend its foreign aid?*, Council on Foreign Relations, October 1, 2018, <https://on.cfr.org/2O8BLYe>.

many African states, the US has only offered 4% of its global budget for ODA for this type of circumstance.⁶⁷

Investments

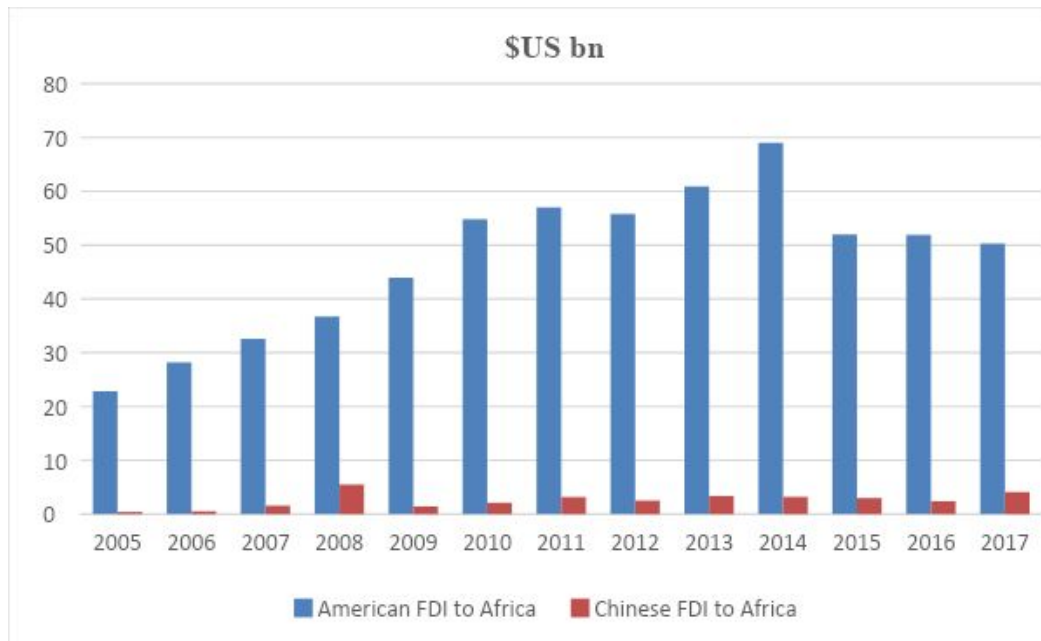
In terms of investments, the US intends to expand its economic relations in the region through the new "Prosper Africa " strategy. The primary objective of the US is to help Africa attain economic independence.⁶⁸

In 2017, US FDI in Africa was \$50.3 billion (a decrease from \$51.7 billion in 2016), while according to previous analysis China's FDI in Africa was \$4.3 billion. The main sectors targeted by the US FDI in Africa were mining and food. Europe and Asia-Pacific are among the top regions for the American FDI, while for China the analysis showed that it favors Asia and Africa.⁶⁹

⁶⁷The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Aid at a glance charts*, <https://bit.ly/2ncunbv>.

⁶⁸The White House, *Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton ...*

⁶⁹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis of The U.S. Department of Commerce, *Direct Investment by Country and Industry*, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2OjFrz7>.

Figure 6. American and Chinese FDI to Africa

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data & SAIS China Africa Research

Although the American foreign direct investment in Africa is higher, we can see that the Chinese FDI to Africa has been increasing.

Figure 6 shows that, starting from 2009 (the year which marks the arrival of a new US president, Barack Obama), the American foreign direct investment in Africa rose steadily until 2014. Since 2016, when Trump came to power, it has decreased. One possible explanation may be that Obama has African roots and wanted to increase the continent's economy, while Trump seems to focus more on Europe and Asia. However, Chinese investments in the region have made Trump change his position and give more importance to FDI in Africa, through the new African policy.

Although the American foreign direct investment in Africa is higher, we can see that the Chinese FDI to Africa has been increasing.

Trade

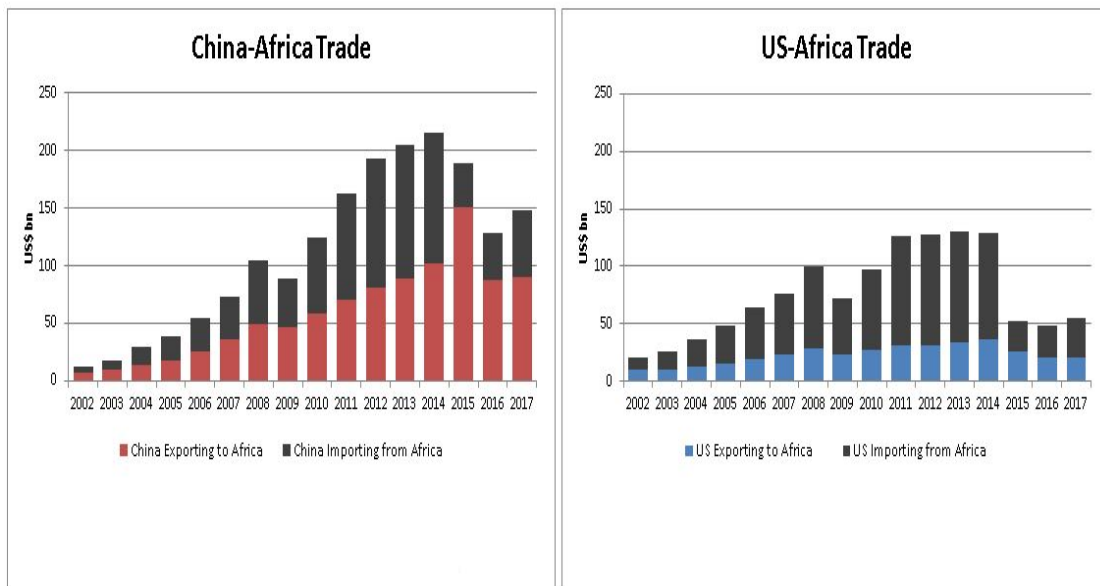
In regards to trade, Washington wants to expand markets for US products and services, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, and accelerate the economic development of the continent by increasing global, regional and bilateral trade. The US is currently cooperating economically with Africa through its Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFA), as well as through bilateral agreements. In 2017, US exports to Africa amounted to \$21 billion dollars, and imports amounted to approximately \$34 million dollars.⁷⁰

The top five US export markets in sub-Saharan Africa, in 2017, were: South Africa (\$ 5.0 billion), Nigeria (\$ 2.2 billion), Ghana (\$ 886 million), Ethiopia (\$873 million), and Angola (\$ 810 million). The US imported mainly from South Africa (\$ 7.8 billion), Nigeria (\$ 7.1 billion), Angola (\$ 2.6 billion), Ivory Coast (\$ 1.2 billion) and Botswana.

Among the most important African products imported by the US were: mineral fuels (\$ 11.2 billion), precious metals and stone (\$ 4.1 billion), cocoa (\$ 1.2 billion), vehicles (\$ 1.2 billion), iron and steel (\$ 950 million).⁷¹

⁷⁰ United Nations International Trade Statistics Database, *Trade Statistics ...*

⁷¹ Office of the United States Trade Representative, *Countries & Regions: Africa*, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa>.

Figure 7. China-Africa trade versus US-Africa trade

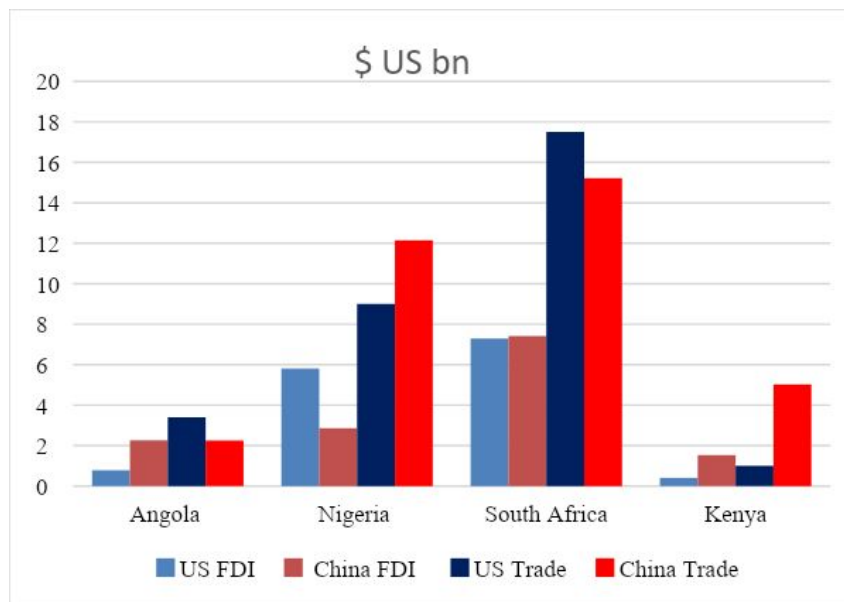
Source: SAIS China Africa Research Initiative

In 2017, Chinese exports to Africa were \$ 90 billion, while US exports were \$ 21 billion. According to the previous analysis, Chinese trade with Africa has been increasing since 2008. Moreover, after Xi Jinping's arrival in 2012, Africa's trade has increased, partly due to the reforms that Xi Jinping had initiated in China, and also due to Beijing's reliance on the South-South cooperation strategy. The strategy helped China increase its influence in the region and supported the Chinese peaceful rise, which concentrates on creating a peaceful and stable external environment to develop itself.

On the other side, the American trade with Africa has been declining since 2016, in large part reflecting Trump's protectionist tendencies.

In order to better understand the competition between China and the United States in Africa, I have chosen four African states, emblematic of the massive strategic Chinese and American interests in the region: Angola, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. I have tested the FDI and trade for these four countries.

Figure 8. Chinese and American Foreign Direct Investment and Trade with Angola, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya in 2017



Source: data from Office of the United States Trade Representative and SAIS China Africa Research Initiative.

The chart shows that Beijing is much more involved in these African countries than the United States, both through direct investment and trade. My previous analysis of the top Chinese preference in terms of FDI showed that Angola, Kenya and South Africa were the top three.

At the same time, South Africa remains an important trading partner for the United States, and Donald Trump's approach to economic cooperation with Africa seems to continue the policy of his predecessors. If we look at the chart, these countries are enjoying not only Chinese FDI, but also intense trade with China. Trade between China and Nigeria stood at \$ 12 billion, while trade with the US stood at \$ 9 billion.

Interestingly, even though America has developed a new strategy for Nigeria in order to secure the country's pro- Western orientation, and even though the US stressed that Nigeria remains its most important strategic partner in the region, **Figure 8** shows that the balance of influence in Africa is increasingly favoring China.

Conclusion

The research has shown that, although Washington was accused of disengagement in Africa, leaving enough space for various Chinese maneuvers in the region, it had become aware of the danger of its minimal involvement, and tried to gain ground through a new strategy in Africa, which is designed to bring mutual benefits and to rebalance their ties with the African continent.

The analysis has also highlighted that China's foreign assistance in Africa is following an upward trend since 2006, but the United States remains the global leader in foreign aid.

However, Africa remains a major interest for China's foreign assistance. Interestingly, most countries aided by China are rich in natural resources, especially in oil and gas. The idea that the People's Republic of China needs access to natural resources to support its economy has found a strong ground when we look at China's choices in terms of countries to which it offers foreign assistance: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana.

Beijing offers external assistance for grandiose projects in Africa and engages in sectors such as transport, industry and energy, while the United States prefers to give foreign aid for sectors such as agriculture and irrigation, anti-corruption, education, energy, and health.

China continues to grow as an investor, especially in the developing countries. Beijing's FDI to Africa has been increasing since 2012. Moreover, China's favorite countries in terms of investments are those that have rich natural

resources, like Angola. The fact that the PRC has become the largest oil consumer in the world creates a direct link with oil-exporting countries.

The analysis has shown that, unlike China, the US doesn't engage in Africa just to have access to various natural resources, but intends to remain a promoter of democracy on the continent. Washington wants to improve the governance system in some African countries, as well as the laws and the welfare of the people.

In regards to trade, the analysis has shown that Beijing has surpassed the United States in Africa. Although the US wants to expand markets for American products and services, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, its trade with the African continent is low.

This study showed that China's South-South cooperation technique in Africa was much more efficient than the American approach, and the figures provided a new perspective on the relationship between a superpower and an emerging one.

The new US strategy for Africa can be regarded as a major step to become more involved in the region to strengthen African States' conviction that the US is a trusted partner. Also, through this strategy, America is clearly fighting Chinese influence in Africa, after repeatedly accusing it of undermining its interests and friendly relations with some African states.

However, to be successful, America needs to increase its trade with Africa, to improve its cooperation with the countries that have traditionally been pro-Western (such as Ethiopia), and to get involved in areas like agriculture, because China is stepping up its cooperation with many African countries, providing both developmental assistance and support for projects which improve agricultural production in the region. China is thus gaining more influence in Africa. The fact that it is more flexible than the US makes it an interesting partner for many African countries that seek to grow economically without too much pressure on the quality of their governance.

The competition between the two states is visible in many spheres, but at least for the time being, America remains the most powerful state in the world.

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