

## China and U.S. in Africa: A Case of Exaggerated Rivalry

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### 논문요약

중국의 부상과 그에 상응하여 세계 각지의 국제무대와 지역 수준에서 중국인의 참여가 증가했다. 이는 중국이 지금까지 미국의 영향력 대체를 위해 노력하고 있다고 알려져 있기 때문에 중국과 미국 사이에 전략적 경쟁과 경쟁의 주장이 설득력을 얻고 있다. 결과적으로 미국이 미국의 영향력과 이익을 보호하기 위해 중국의 개입 증가에 대응해야 한다는 요구가 있었다. 이 연구는 아프리카에 대한 중국의 참여가 증가하면 대륙에서 미국의 전략적 이익을 대체하는 정도를 조사함으로써 이 논쟁에 기여하는 것을 목표로 하고 있다. 이 연구는 아프리카에 대한 중국의 개입은 중국이 대륙에서 널리 묘사되고 상상한 것처럼 미국의 이익을 위협할 필요가 없는 틈새시장을 만드는 것을 수반했다고 주장한다. 이는 중국이 현저하게 위협할 수 있는 세계의 다른 전략적 부분에 비해 미국은 역사적으로 아프리카에 대한 전략적 이해관계가 비교적 미미하다는 점을 전제로 한 것이다. 이런 식으로 볼 때, 아프리카에서의 중국인의 침투 증가는 미국의 핵심 전략적 이익에 즉각적인 위협을 가하지 않았기 때문에, 아프리카에서의 중국 주둔에 대항하기 위해 미국이 측정한 대응을 설명한다.

주제어 : 전략적 이익, 영향력, 무역과 투자, 외교정책

## I. Introduction

Rise of China and increased Chinese engagement in different parts of the world has not gone unnoticed of its implication to U.S. interests. Through a number of global and regional initiatives through public diplomacy, trade, natural resource extraction, infrastructure development among others, China is said to be challenging hitherto U.S. established order. In Africa, China has surpassed U.S. and her western allies to become number one trading partner and a major source of foreign direct investment to the continent(Sun and Tornton 2014, 7). China has also increased her involvement in Africa's natural resources extraction a sector previously dominated by western powers. The increased Chinese presence in the continent has prompted claims that China is threatening U.S. strategic interests over natural resource, especially oil in Africa(Klare and Volman 2006, 609-610; Taylor 2006, 941; Walker 2008, 1-10; Zhenxing 2013, 2). Further China is said to be undermining US and her western counterparts' efforts of promoting good governance, human rights and democracy in Africa(Zhenxing 2013, 6; Zhao 2012, 383; Council on Foreign Relations 2006, 28-105). It is on this basis of increased Chinese presence Africa, that there have been calls in some quarters for U.S. to counter and balance Chinese venture in the continent(Council on Foreign Relations 2015, 33; Walker 2008, 3; Rogers 2007, 22). However, there are those who opine that Chinese presence in Africa does not pose immediate threat to U.S. strategic interests and therefore no need to counter Chinese engagement in Africa. This is as reflected in U.S. policy makers and scholars

downplaying severity of Chinese engagement in Africa as a threat to U.S. strategic interests (Congressional Research Service 2008, 118; Walker 2008, 4; Yi Chong 2008, 16-37).

Against contending argument on the role of China in Africa and its impact to U.S. interests and corresponding call for U.S. (non) response to counter Chinese involvement, this study aims to contribute to this debate by examining the extent to which increased Chinese involvement in Africa has, if any, overshadowed U.S. strategic interests in the continent. The study contends that, Chinese involvement in Africa has entailed China creating own niche that does not necessary threaten U.S. interests in the continent as widely portrayed and imagined. This is premised on the fact that U.S. has historically had relatively minimal strategic interests in Africa as compared to other more strategic parts of the world that China could significantly threaten. Seen in this way, increased Chinese penetration in Africa has not had immediate threats to U.S. core strategic interests, thus explaining measured U.S. response to counter Chinese presence in Africa.

This paper proceeds as follows; first and second sections respectively, examine U.S. and Chinese involvement in Africa from a historical perspective to contemporary settings. In the two sections, emphasis is placed on U.S. and China ties with Africa on trade and investment especially on oil sector, security cooperation, governance and diplomacy. Section three is an analysis comparing and contrasting the two major power involvements in the continent with view of establishing the extent to which China has replaced or undermined U.S. interests in Africa. Fourth section is a conclusion and policy recommendations.

Before proceeding to the next sections, it is worth to point out

some salient feature in the study of Africa relations with major powers. This essay does not assume U.S., China and Africa as single monolithic unit of analysis as found in most literature(Maxi 2008, 403). The paper acknowledges that U.S. and China's involvement in Africa entails multiplicity of actors both state and non-state actors. In the same breadth, Africa constitutes different political units with diverse history and socio-economic and political make up. Having clarified on multiplicity of actors involved in these interactions, the paper generalizes U.S., China involvement in African while also making specific cases where necessary. The paper employs qualitative analysis relying on secondary sources of data from academic publications, current affairs, and official government documents on trade statistics.

## II. U.S. Africa Relations in Cold War Era

United States relations with Africa can well be traced after the end of World War II when U.S. and her Western Europe allies were at forefront in reconstituting and establishing liberal international order. Most of the African countries were at this time still under European colonial dominance and it is after later years that U.S. would engage African countries diplomatically. As most African countries gained independence in early 1960s, they found themselves in the ensuing ideological rivalry between U.S. and U.S.S.R. It is then that U.S. would get more involved in Africa in a bid to contain spread of communism. Coincidentally for U.S. interests, the newly independent African states were under sphere of influence of her key allies France and Britain. Never the less, the continent would still become a battle ground for proxy war for U.S. and U.S.S.R. as

they competed for client states(Kraxberger 2005, 50). U.S. policy makers' perception on the significant of the African continent was to check domino effect on spread of communism in different regions of the world as expressed by President Eisenhower(Kraxberger 2005, 50). U.S. involvement in Africa from early 1960s to late 1980 was therefore an era when U.S. policy towards Africa was guided by geostrategic interests of containing communism than any other interests.

Worth to note also during cold war era is the inconsistency of U.S. policy on democratic promotion, human rights and good governance in Africa. Numerous examples across Africa exist demonstrating how U.S. would forego democratic ideals in support of autocratic leadership at the expense of security consideration of containing communism(Gwaambuka 2017, Clough 1992). It is within this period that U.S. would support some of Africa's oppressive regimes like that of Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire current Democratic Republic of Congo, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia while also supporting anti-communist guerilla movement of Jonas Savimbi in Angola(Lawson 2007, 1-15 ). U.S. support to these regimes was largely in form of military aid as means to bolster coercive instruments of partner states(Broich 2017, 18; Schmidt 2013, Bayne 2013, 101-123). In more than nine tenures of different U.S. presidents during cold war, strategic security interests informed much of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. Never the less, there was also economic interests that dictated U.S. conduct in the continent.

Africa was significant to U.S. in economic interests in providing natural resources needed to drive U.S. domestic industries. To this end, U.S. through its subsidiaries and Multi-National Corporations(MNCs) were involved in extraction of various natural resources, packaging and selling and marketing in international market(Onimode 1988, 5;

Jackson 1982, 185). Key among these resources was oil which constituted the largest percentage of U.S. Africa trade relations. It is on this basis that U.S. trade relation was equally narrow with specific natural resource abundant countries. For example in late 80s and early 90s, U.S. import and export to Africa in percentage was distributed as follows; South Africa accounted 46%, Nigeria 10% Angola 3% while the rest accounted 41%(Clough1992, 19). In terms of U.S. foreign direct investment in Least Developed Countries, Africa accounted for less than 2%, as compared to Latin America at 17% while Asia was 6%(Clough 1992, 19). This indicates of marginal role Africa played in U.S. trade and investment matrix. Other regions of the world proved more invaluable as signified with military and security treaties entered into. For the case of Western Europe, North Atlantic Treaty Organization(NATO) would suffice, while in Asia there were bilateral securities agreement in form of hub and spoke system. U.S. did not have such guarantees in Africa, implying Africa region did not have much strategic importance than other regions of the world like Europe and Asia. The minimal role U.S. played in Africa's trade and investment can be explained on the fact that her European allies had a grip to the continent traced back to their colonial ties(Bright and Brownfoot 1987, 39). From the foregoing therefore, it is evident that Africa played a minimal role in U.S. strategic considerations which was mainly checking spread of communism through client states in the continent. Further, Africa accounted miniature proportion of U.S. global commercial interests. This is evidenced with low level and narrow trade relation which was mainly restricted to natural resources especially oil. Former colonial masters seem to have played part in supplementing U.S. involvement in the continent.

### III. Post Cold War Era: Selective and Limited Engagement

The end of cold war marked end of direct threat to U.S. strategic security interest of containing communism globally and at regional levels. Shift of power to a unipolar system meant that U.S. strategic interest of containing communism in Africa was no more. This would also mean further erosion of U.S. direct interest in the continent. To demonstrate how Africa ranked low in U.S. strategic considerations is official policy statements as captured in 1995 by U.S. Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, which succinctly stated that “there is very little traditional U.S. strategic interests in Africa” (U.S. DoD 1995, 3). U.S. low regard towards Africa since the end of cold war till early years of 21<sup>st</sup> century was characterized with a mixture of ‘selective and limited engagement’ or what Brennan has termed as an era of empty promises and retreat (Kraxberger 2012, 50-53; Yohannes 2002). This was as a result of ambivalent conduct of U.S., on issues and events that affected the continent.

End of cold war meant that patron states of U.S. and U.S.S.R. reduce their direct involvement in supporting client states across the world Africa included. This exposed weakness of some regimes in Africa that led to systematic state collapse (Zartman 1995). Humanitarian assistance would later be a guide to U.S. policy to African countries experiencing internal strives and civil wars. It is on this basis that U.S. would intervene on humanitarian grounds in a number of African countries like Liberia and Somalia. However, U.S. would also not get involved in other cases that deservedly required international attention as was the case with genocide in Rwanda in 1994 (Kraxberger 2012). U.S. domestic politics would dictate how much, when and which

state in Africa they would intervene. This further demonstrates lack of a U.S. coherent policy towards Africa. Biel attributes lack clear U.S. policy on Africa to U.S. policy makers' poor perception of the continent and bureaucratic challenges in framing Africa's cause(Biel 2003, 82).

To further demonstrate low level priority given to Africa post cold war era was the reduction of foreign aid assistance extended to African countries(Thompson 2004, 460). Focus on U.S. engagement in Africa was shifted with more emphasis being placed on trade and good governance. This would be anchored on neoliberal policies which were considered to more sustainable means to spur meaningful economic growth and development change in Africa. Former client states during cold war, would find themselves under immense pressure to liberalize political and economic space as third wave of democratization(Huntington 1993) was sweeping across the world. U.S. engagement with African countries would be pegged on target states implementing democratic reforms as means to gain benefits from international world order controlled by the U.S. These conditions would see a number of African countries opening up political space with re-introduction of competitive multi-party politics. Push for democratic reforms in Africa rested on the argument that democracy leads to market reforms which in return creates an avenue for support of free trade(Milner and Kubota 2005). The link between democracy, market reform and free trade was considered key ingredients to Africa's growth and development(Milner and Kubota 2005). This would perfectly match with Bill Clinton policy on democratic engagement and enlargement across the world.

President Clinton guided by neoliberal policy would later change how foreign aid had occupied a central to U.S. policy towards Africa.

A dictum of “Trade not Aid” was adapted to guide U.S. relations with the continent(Thompson 2003). The pronouncement on trade instead of aid was later crystallized with U.S. Congress enacting Africa Growth and Opportunity Act(AGOA) as policy document to dictate U.S. trade relations with African countries. Since its inception in 2000, the policy has undergone two major reviews that culminated it being extended to 2025. The framework allows eligible least developed beneficiary African countries to export more than 6,400 products to U.S. market tax free(William 2004, 585-597). The policy places a number of liberalization conditions on Sub Sahara African countries as the basis for duty free access to U.S. market. These conditions include; initiating a market-based economy, observing rule of law and human right, eliminating trade barriers, implementing economic policies that reduce poverty, combating corruption and not threatening U.S. national security.

Since its inception, AGOA has had varied impact as trade data indicate there has been an increase in trade relation between U.S. and Africa. From select Africa countries, specific imports especially on apparel products and raw natural resources like oil have been on increase(Van de valle 2010, Frazer and Van Biesebroeck 2010). In AGOA’s first phase for example, export from Sub Sahara Africa to U.S. raised from \$22 billion to \$82 billion(Prinsloo 2018). Notwithstanding AGOA provisions and increased trade volume, U.S. trade pattern with Africa has not changed much. According to government statistics of 2016 U.S. trade data on import and export with Sub-Saharan Africa amounted to \$33.7 billion which accounted to barely 0.93% of U.S. total trade with the rest of the world(Thompson 2003, 461; Congressional Research Service 2008; U.S. Department of Commerce 2016; AGOA 2018). In the same year U.S. export and

import to Africa totaled to \$13.6 and \$20.1 billion respectively. In both cases U.S. export and import to Africa, South Africa, Nigeria, Angola Equatorial Guinea featured as top trade partners accounting for more than 80% of the trade relations(Thompson 2003, 461). This can be explained by the fact that U.S. trade with majority of African countries is dominated by natural resources in these countries. Oil has over time occupied more than 80% of Africa's export to U.S. (Zhenxing 2013; Schneidman and Westbury 2013, 2-3). Equally is the fact that U.S. and Europe account for 32% and 33% of Africa's oil production. Further, in a wider perspective Africa only accounts approximately 1% of U.S. foreign investment which incidentally is concentrated in mineral resources in Africa(Thompson 2003, 461). While acknowledging narrow nature of U.S. trade and investment relation with Africa being concentrated in natural resources, other sectors like textile, service sectors still thrive only that their proportion is relatively minimal.

As much as AGOA has been the policy guideline on trade relations with U.S., the policy is marked with several contradictions at implementation stage. This is more evident when U.S. extends free market provision to African countries that go against AGOA policy eligibility criteria of liberalization agenda. A number of African countries that fair badly on market reforms and democratic governance yardstick seem to benefit AGOA provisions. Eligibility criteria have been relaxed to admit some countries that are not necessary least developed countries or democratic. South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana do not belong to category of least developed countries are included in the list of beneficiary countries. The same can be said of Ethiopia and Angola which fair badly market reform and global yardstick on democratic governance(Freedom House

2018). This inconsistency only proves the hypocrisy of U.S. rallying behind democratization mantra. In condition where material interests in form commercial interest and security interests are at ply, ideational interests of good governance is ignored as demonstrated with inclusion of these countries as AGOA beneficiaries.

Beyond, AGOA, President Bush further came up with initiatives that benefits African countries pegged on liberalization agenda. The initiatives, President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief(PEPFAR) and Millennium Challenge Account(MCA) are humanitarian and development initiatives(Congressional Research Service 2008, 131-132). The two promotes democratic governance, human rights, and good policies on investment, health and education as pre condition for African countries to have access to these initiatives' assistance. Conditional engagement pegged on promoting democratization has been a major hallmark of U.S. policy to Africa in post cold war era. This has been the case even when U.S. has sometimes overlooked democratic principles when dealing with some countries that have poor governance records in Africa.

In the recent past since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2002 terrorist attack, under President Bush U.S. policy towards Africa also had some shift. Security threats posed by weak Africa states necessitated U.S. to establish United States Africa Command(AfriCom). The outfit is currently stationed in Stuttgart German meant for U.S. military operations in Africa and military relations with African militaries. To augment U.S. military presence in Africa is a U.S. military base in Djibouti which has played a role in fighting terrorism with partner states in horn Africa. Global war on terror and fight against Islamic fundamentalism has dictated U.S. relations with African countries. Combating terrorism has however also, exposed U.S. double

standards as they collaborate with host of African countries that fare poorly on democratic governance and protection of human rights. U.S. collaboration with undemocratic governments in Africa is akin to cold war era when U.S. placed security threat posed by spread of communism and the U.S.S.R. at the expense of good governance in the continent. This further highlights inconsistencies, incoherence and lack of U.S. overarching policy towards Africa.

From the foregoing therefore, U.S. relation with Africa has been characterized with incidences of engagement retreat and ambivalence. U.S. during cold war era was more concerned with security interests of containing communism. Economic imperative was insignificant based on the fact that European allies had already entrenched themselves in the continent dating back to colonial era. Post cold war era only saw minimum changes on how U.S. related with Africa with more emphasis being placed on democracy promotion and liberalization agenda. With opening up of the economies and implementation of neoliberal policies in Africa, there could only be modest increase in trade relations. Mineral resources concentrated in specific countries would still dictate U.S. Africa trade relations. Still Africa account approximately less than 1% of U.S. foreign direct investment highlighting marginal role Africa is in U.S. global context. Having examined U.S. involvement in Africa, the next section turns to China role in Africa

#### IV. Sino Africa Relations: Political and Economic Motivations

China engagement in Africa can be understood from three different historical phases guided by political and economic motivations. The earliest contact can be traced back to 15 B.C. era when imperial China made contact with North and East Africa coast in search for allies and trading opportunities (Alden and Christina 2008, 46). The second epoch which is more modern and laid the basis for contemporary Sino-Africa relations is mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in post independent Africa. After protracted civil strife that culminated to the establishment of modern China in 1949, China desire for recognition internationally meant she had to look for allies far and beyond. Post independent Africa and other developing countries of the world would provide much needed legitimacy and recognition. This was more imperative then when China still sought recognition at United Nations and attempt to isolate break way province of Taiwan as the true representative of Chinese people (Taylor 1998). China would invoke a shared history of colonialism from European powers and common development aspirations with African countries to cement their relationship. It is in this regard that China would be involved supporting pro-independence movements in Zimbabwe and Angola. To demonstrate willingness to empower African economically, China in mid 1970s would extend its foreign aid towards the construction of Tanzania Zambia Railway (Hilsum 2005, 420).

Domestic politics in China would also dictate how China related with rest of the world Africa included. When China was undergoing numerous internal transformations like cultural reformations among other internal policies experiences, China become more inward

looking. This explains why China minimally got involved in Africa in post independence era except the aforementioned cases of supporting pro independence movement in Africa and construction of Tanzania Zambia Railway. China came back to Africa in late 1990s and later increased their presence in the continent in 21<sup>st</sup> century(Taylor 1998). This was after internal and external transformations that would make China get more involved in international political economy. Internally, economic reforms of late 1970s and early 1990s characterized with a move towards state capitalism, availability of cheap labor coupled with other internal factors laid foundation for China becoming major economic players at global level. Externally, the end of cold war and integration of China in global trade by her accession in World Trade Organization(WTO) best explains increased Chinese involvement international affairs. As a result of these changes China would later register unprecedented economic growth averaging 10% of GDP over the years(Lin 2016, 213-218).

China re-entry in Africa in 21<sup>st</sup> century is what has attracted attention because of nature and character of her involvement in the continent and across the world. Different explanations have been adduced as motivation for Chinese increased engagement at global stage and regional levels like Africa. Scholars contend that there are both push and pull factors that best explain Chinese increased involvement in Africa. The push and pull factors range from; Chinese huge capital and foreign reserve in need for investment opportunity abroad, desire for mineral resources to drive domestic industries, search for market of Chinese products and the need to diversify investments in foreign markets by taking advantage of global liberal environment created at the behest of the west(Biggeri and Sanfilippo 2009; Kragelund 2009, 480). It is also argued that

Chinese involvement across the world is still guided by ever political interest of isolating Taiwan at international stage(Medeiros 2009).

Chinese engagement in Africa has taken different forms and shape. There is multiplicity of actors both state and non-state actors which are involved in diverse sectors in Africa. Multiplicity of actors entails both public which are State-Owned Enterprises(SOE), and private, big and small enterprise in different industries and sectors(Holslag 2011, 377) that this paper has generalized as Chinese involvement in the continent. A policy guideline better known as 'Go Out' policy(*zou chuqu*)(Osondu 2016, 62; Lauren 2015, 391; Biggeri and Sanfilippo 2009; Kragelund 2009, 33) would be the basis upon which various Chinese entities base their foray in foreign ventures across the world. To augment the internal policy of going out strategy with respect to Africa, China initiated a tri-annual multilateral forum with African government as the basis to anchor Sino-Africa relations. Forum on China Africa Cooperation(FOCAC) as it is known, has become a multilateral platform where Chinese and African policy makers meet to discuss issues of mutual interests on trade, diplomacy, security, investment among other issues(Aullo 2012, 15). In recognition of the role Africa play in China's broad global strategic interests, Chinese policy maker would adopt a Policy Paper on Africa in 2006(Inyambo 2008). The policy paper focused Sino-African cooperation in a wide range of areas including; political, economic, human resources development and peace and security, covering what can be considered to be the most important areas in any inter-state bilateral relations. While FOCAC and African Policy paper are multilateral in nature, China's engagement in Africa is mostly on bilateral terms with individual countries.

Still on policy arena, China has in recent past came up with yet a

detailed initiative better known as, “One Belt One Road” (OBOR) initiative also referred to as “the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road” as a guide to her foreign policy framework. The initiative which has been likened in some quarters to U.S. Marshall Plan for reconstruction of Western Europe in post second world war was introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. The OBOR is development oriented plan that entails China funding (through concessional loans or at market rate) the construction infrastructural projects such as roads, pipelines, railways, and seaports across Asia, parts of Europe and Africa following the footsteps of ancient Chinese trade routes(Shatz 2016; Murphy 2016, 93). In 2015, Chinese president pledged more than \$95 billion towards projects in Africa as part of the OBOR initiatives (Ibid). While African countries with access to the seas like Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, and Angola have been at fore front of OBOR, more African countries are being enlisted in Chinese ambitious plan in developing Africa’s infrastructure(Breuer 2017). China is taking credit of transforming transport infrastructure in the continent as evident with completion standard gauge railway connecting land locked Ethiopia with Djibouti as that in Kenya connecting coastal city of Mombasa to Nairobi with plans under way to extend it to Uganda and Rwanda.

Increased presence of different Chinese actors in Africa has correspondingly seen the raise of Chinese FDI in many of the African countries. Recent data has indicated China being single largest contributor of FDI in a number of African countries(Dibie 2017). However, others have challenged this claim arguing it is really hard to ascertain actual Chinese FDI flow due to lack of official data and transparency when China signs commercial bilateral agreements(Wenjie, Dollar and Tang 2018). Other sources indicate

China still trails traditional Africa's sources of foreign direct investment. According to latest World Investment Report of 2018 by United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development(UNCTAD), China stock in Africa in 2016 was \$40 billion, ranking fourth after US at \$57 billion, the UK at \$55 billion, and France at \$49 billion(Zhan et al., 2018, 38). Above all, significance of Africa to Chinese FDI is relatively low as it only accounts for less than 4.4%(Dollar 2016, ix). Notwithstanding the challenges in establishing the true nature of Chinese FDI in Africa, it is evident Chinese FDI has been on increase(Dollar 2017, 4). Chinese FDI in Africa is from diverse sources both private and public although the later constitute the largest share. Public FDI have channeled through public entities in form of Chinese State-Owned Enterprises(S.O.E) that are involved in diverse of activities in the continent. These S.O.Es either get their financial support from central or provincial governments to undertake various tasks as enshrined in China going out strategy(Biggeri and Sanfillipo 2009; Holslag 2011, 46).

Chinese S.O.Es have had favorable conditions working in Africa due to the fact that they have had easy access to facility from Chinese the government-run banks(Krangelund 2009, 486). Further Chinese development aid on infrastructure projects in Africa are tied to being executed by Chinese S.O.Es. This is in addition to set conditional provisions on buying Chinese goods and services in the construction of these infrastructure projects(Rehak 2016, 111). It is such clauses that create room to question Chinese involvement for not making use of locally available goods and services. On other instances, Chinese enterprises are also known to quote low prices in contract bidding relative to local or western entities(Geda and Meskel 2009, 28; Sautman and Hairong 2007, 91). Because of their

close contacts with government and access to finances, Chinese have been able to invest in risky and conflict prone areas shunned by traditional western development partners. This explains why China engages all kinds of states from democratic South Africa to not so democratic like Sudan and Zimbabwe which are Chinese major clients.

It has been argued that China has been more interested in resource rich African countries, however, evidence suggest Chinese presence also in non-resource rich countries. The emphasis on resources has been dominated by the role of oil in China-Africa relations. It is estimated that by 2035 China will become world's largest consumer of oil thus overtaking the United States(Hanauer and Morris 2014, 5). With such projections and the fact Africa has got huge percentage of oil reserves, it goes without saying China will be more interested accessing Africa's huge oil deposits. Indeed significance of oil in Sino-Africa relation is reiterated in Chinese White Paper by Ministry of defense of 1998 which acknowledged energy as a key component of China national security(Tull 2006, 468). This explains China engagement with oil-rich countries of Angola, Nigeria and Sudan who have proved to be key sources of oil for China. It is estimated that Africa accounts for more than 30% of China oil imports with Angola accounting more than 50%(Osondu-Ot 2016, 51). Angola-China relations deserves special mention with regard to their unique arrangement where China extended more than \$2b to fund infrastructural projects in exchange for Angolan oil "the Angola Model" (Sautman and Hairong 2007, 79-86). It is such arrangement that have been termed as win-win for both parties. China has also been the mainstay of oil rich but pariah state Sudan. China through state-owned China National

Petroleum Corporation(CNPC) has a controlling stake of more than 40% of Sudan oil reserves(Taylor 2008, 79). Other natural resources also play part in Sino-Africa relations as observed resource-rich countries i.e; Copper in Zambia, Gold and Diamond in Zimbabwe, timber in Congo and Madagascar etcetera.

Africa's natural resources that have come to define Sino-Africa trade relations in the recent past. It is on this basis on Africa's reliance on volatile natural resources commodity trade that explains the oscillations of trade relations being either surplus or deficits as dictated by world market. On different occasion the continent has registered surplus trade with China, however economic downturn has sometimes led to deficits as witnessed in 2008. Chinese economic growth and appetite for Africa's natural resources contributed to her replacing traditional western partners as Africa's largest trading partner(Wenjie, Dollar and Tang 2018; Lauren 2015, 386). Since market liberalization and Chinese comparative advantages in production of goods and services, China emerged a world factory and exporter of goods and services. Cheap Chinese products have managed to get ready market poverty stricken regions of the world including African continent(Tull 2006, 646). Latest statistics of 2018, from China's ministry of Finance and Commerc(MOFCOM) indicate a China-Africa import and export trade volume worth US\$16.5 billion. Chinese export and import from Africa was US\$8.31 and U.S. \$8.19 billion respectively registering slight deficit with the continent(Ministry of Commerce PRC, 2018). Since China became number one trading partner with Africa, she accounts 20% and 15% of Africa's import and export market(Financial Times 2015). Resource-rich countries account for largest share of Sino-Africa trade relations. As production costs increased in China, Africa has proved next frontier

to set up industries. It is on this basis that China has gone into collaboration with African government to set up Export Processing Zones(E.P.Z.) i.e in Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Mauritius(Lim 2012, 548; Alden and Hughes 2009, 584).This initiative is an attempt to take advantages of cheap cost of production in Africa that China once enjoyed in early days of market liberalization.

From the foregoing, Chinese engagement in Africa from a historical perspective was initially motivated largely by political interests. In contemporary settings however, political interests of winning African hearts in multilateral diplomatic circles and commercial interests have defined modern day Sino Africa relations. Chinese engagement in Africa consists of multiple of actors which could be public or private, large S.O.E., to small and medium size enterprises. This multiplicity of actors and diversity in areas of operation explained the increased level of Chinese FDI to African countries. To cement Sino-Africa relation registered improved trade relations between the two continents, China now being Africa's largest trading partner. The increased Chinese presence in African countries socio-economic and political spheres is what has invited claims that China has overtaken U.S. role in the continent. The section that follows analysis this claim with view to understanding the extent to which China has replaced or threatens U.S. interests and influence in the continent.

## **V. China and U.S. in Africa: Not Yet Strategic Rivals**

Chinese engagement on trade and investment especially on oil sector and ambivalent to democracy in Africa have been cited as the main threat to U.S. interests and influence in the continent. Close attention to these areas shows Chinese modest engagement relative to U.S. interests. To both China and U.S., Africa constitutes a very small percentage of their global trade and investment. U.S. and China trade and investment in Africa is however majorly driven by appetite for Africa's natural resources especially oil. As demonstrated in the preceding section of this paper, for example oil constitutes averagely 80% and 60% of U.S. and China imports from Africa respectively. This is a clear indicator Africa's export to China is more diversified than that to the U.S. Never the less, Africa oil constitutes 20% of both U.S. and China overall oil imports from abroad. There are claims that China's mercantilist approach on Africa's oil is an attempt to 'lock up' oil supplies to the detriment of U.S. interests. However data indicate U.S. and Europe still account for 32% and 33% of Africa's oil production while China only controls 9% which is majorly concentrated in Sudan. To further debunk Chinese lock up theory on oil, is the fact that China is technologically challenged compared to oil western companies on offshore drilling where Africa's best oil reserves are located. In any case, Chinese involvement in Africa's oil industry has mainly entailed her taking up oil fields previously rejected or abandoned by western oil companies as was the case in Sudan after sanctions and civil war. U.S. and European major oil companies still lead in Africa's top oil producing countries i.e Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial

Guinea and others, thus invalidating China threat theory on African oil. On general increased level of Sino-Africa trade relation, there is no clear evidence of trade diversion where China has gained at the expense of U.S. Chinese involvement in Africa has therefore entailed China creating own niche or taking up new opportunities if not the one left by western powers as it is the case of Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Chinese involvement in Africa has also been considered to be a threat to U.S. policy of promoting democracy and human rights in the continent. This has been on the premise that China has been cozy with Africa's pariah states and autocratic leadership with example of Zimbabwe and Sudan. However, history of U.S. policy in Africa is not any different. During cold war in a bid to contain communism, U.S. gave support to some of Africa's worst dictators in history. In more contemporary settings, U.S. has been in good books with African countries that fare poorly on democratic scores like Angola, Ethiopia on purely material interests of oil and fighting terrorism respectively. China has had to engage with Pariah states because that is where opportunities are with minimum competition from the west. Generally U.S. and China do not really differ much on type of governments they engage in Africa. Never the less, U.S engagement with non-democratic countries in Africa does not validate China to also support autocratic and repressive regimes in Africa. The point for this paper is, for a sustainable form government that best serves ordinary citizens to exist, internal forces should be ideal determinant on form and type of government in any country in Africa, without undue outside interferences. In defense of China good relations with undemocratic regimes in Africa, some studies have demonstrated how Chinese involvement has not undermined in

any way U.S. and her western allies policy of democracy promotion and human rights in Africa(Hackenesch 2015). It is an evident that Chinese policy of non interference on internal affairs of a host country can coexist with western policy of strengthening governance in third world and in Africa. Another case study has even evidenced that increased Chinese role in different spheres in Africa goes a long way in promoting human rights of Africa's people(Webster 2013).

On other fronts, China has become more involved in Africa's security architecture as demonstrated with increased military ties with African governments. In recent past China has joined U.S. in establishing military base in Djibouti to coordinate her increased military engagement in the continent. Chinese military ventures can be observed with her increased role in U.N. peace keeping missions in a number of conflict areas in Africa like Sudan and South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and previous involvement in Liberia. Chinese military has also been engaged in fight against piracy in horn of Africa Gulf of Eden and Indian Ocean. This on realization as they invest more in Africa, peaceful and conducive environment is paramount for their engagement in the continent. While Chinese military base in Djibouti could raise concerns within Washington's top military echelon, China military endeavors in Africa could be legitimate concomitant with increased Chinese investment in the continent. Further this is not a zero sum game akin to cold war era where Chinese move would imply U.S. has lost.

## VI. Conclusion

Raising China and corresponding Chinese presence in Africa has invited a dichotomous perspective on their role vis-à-vis that of U.S. interest as a global hegemon. While they've been claim of Rise of China and its threat to U.S. interests, this study has attempted to illustrate China is not an immediate threat to U.S. interests in Africa. This premised on the fact that Africa plays a minimal role to the strategic interests of both power in the past as it is today. China threat to U.S. interests especially oil is not valid since U.S. and her European allies still command largest share of Africa's oil. Further, China cannot be accused to undermine Africa's democratization when U.S. has also shown inconsistency in promoting democratic governance at the expense security and accessing oil in Africa.

Going forward, both powers stand to mutually benefit from their engagement in Africa. Learning from the lesson and debacle of ideological rivalry between U.S. and U.S.S.R., both power need to avoid cold war scenario happening again for there is more they can gain than lose. Chinese involvement in Africa's infrastructural development, facilitating in development of nascent industries through special economic zones serves to benefit all. Where there is divergence of interests between two major powers involved in Africa, there is need for dialogue to harness their engagement through mutually agreed institutions, rules of engagement based on international norms and order. This will prevent a zero sum game between the two powers, while Africa stands to benefit from what each has to offer for the continent's economic growth and development.

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<Abstract>

## China and U.S. in Africa: A Case of Exaggerated Rivalry

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Rise of China has correspondingly seen increased Chinese involvement at global stage and regional levels in different parts of the world. This has attracted claims of strategic competition and rivalry between China and U.S., as China is said to be working towards replacing hitherto U.S. influence. Consequently there have been calls for U.S. to counter increased Chinese involvement to safeguard U.S. influences and interests. This study aims to contribute to this debate by examining the extent to which increased Chinese involvement in Africa has, if any, supplanted U.S. strategic interests in the continent. The study contends that, Chinese involvement in Africa has entailed China creating own niche that does not necessary threaten U.S. interests in the continent as widely portrayed and imagined. This is premised on the fact that, U.S. has historically had relatively minimal strategic interests in Africa as compared to other more strategic parts of the world that China could significantly threaten. Seen in this way, increased Chinese penetration in Africa has not had immediate threats to U.S. core strategic interests, thus explaining U.S. measured response to counter Chinese presence in Africa.

**Key words** : Strategic Interests, Influence, Trade and Investment, Foreign Policy