

Assessing China's Growing Influence in Africa

Bates Gill, Chin-hao Huang
& J. Stephen Morrison

China's emergence as a rising global power garners increasing attention, much in Asia, but increasingly also in Africa. China's new strategic partnership with Africa, unveiled at the November 2006 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), marks an historic moment in China-Africa relations. China's highest leadership actively espoused FOCAC's ambitious vision, which was enthusiastically embraced by 43 heads of state and a total of 48 African delegations.

Following the summit, senior Chinese officials, including President Hu Jintao and then-Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visited 15 different African countries within the first quarter of 2007. Assistant Minister Zhai Jun's visit to Sudan, and the subsequent appointment of Ambassador Liu Guijin as China's special

Bates Gill holds the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Chin-Hao Huang is a research assistant with the Freeman Chair in China Studies. J. Stephen Morrison is the director of the Africa Program at CSIS.

China Security, Vol. 3 No. 3 Summer 2007, pp. 3 - 21
2007 World Security Institute

envoy for Darfur, in April and May 2007 respectively, drew considerable press attention. These steps are reflective of Beijing's acute sensitivities and perceived need to make a much higher diplomatic investment to work with the international community in moving the Annan Plan forward.¹ At this early stage, however, there is no guarantee for success with Beijing's approach. While Khartoum has expressed its intention to comply with the Annan Plan, its commitment to follow through is uncertain. As such, Beijing remains vulnerable to continued criticism from advocacy groups concerned with Darfur for enabling Khartoum's intransigence.

China's expansive engagement has raised hopes across Africa that China will turn its attention to long-neglected areas such as infrastructure and that its strategic approach will raise Africa's global status, intensify political and market competition, create promising new choices in external partnerships, strengthen African capacities to combat malaria and HIV/AIDS and promote economic growth. It also raises nettlesome policy issues and complex implementation challenges that China will increasingly confront in the future.

For the United States, China's growing engagement in Africa inherently carries significant implications. Like China, the United States is in the midst of an expanding phase of engagement in Africa.² The tripling of U.S. foreign assistance levels to Africa in public health, economic development and good governance, the substantial enlargement of military commitment since 9/11, and the increasing volume of two-way trade in the private sector, concentrated in the energy field, reflect rising U.S. interests in the continent. The George W. Bush administration has also made an unprecedented high-level commitment to Sudan. Up to now, however, the United States and China have each been largely absorbed in their separate, respective spheres, enlarging their presence and activities in Africa with little systematic or substantive reference to the other.

Evolving Approach

China has substantively shifted its approach to Africa. Beijing supported many liberation movements and other insurgencies in sub-Saharan Africa and

was quick to establish diplomatic ties and supportive economic relations with newly independent states as they emerged from the colonial era. Indeed, for more than half a century, the Chinese systematically cultivated solidarity and working relations with a range of African states. It was a profitable diplomatic investment which persisted into the post-Cold War era when Western powers were more inclined to scale back their presence.³

Today, China's Africa policy is carried out on a higher plane and is more complex, multidimensional, ambitious and, ultimately, entails greater risks. The China-Africa summit in Beijing in November 2006 featured an effusive exchange between Africa and China's leadership. China's rising economic engagement is tied to conspicuously strategic goals, centered on access to energy and other scarce high-value commodities. On the diplomatic front, Beijing has shown a new determination to complete the process of eliminating bilateral ties between Taiwan and a dwindling number of African capitals, and to use its accelerating entry into Africa to consolidate global allegiances and Beijing's putative leadership of the developing world. Beijing has also taken on a more active role in the security sphere. China's contributions of soldiers and police to U.N. peacekeeping operations, concentrated in Africa, have increased ten-fold since 2001. As of May 2007, China has provided over 1,800 troops, military observers and civilian police toward current U.N. peacekeeping operations. Three-fourths of current Chinese peacekeeping forces are supporting U.N. missions in Africa (primarily Liberia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).⁴

Today, China's Africa policy is carried out on a higher plane and is more complex.

Since November 2006, Beijing has taken steps to follow through with its commitments to African countries by announcing that it had canceled US\$1.42 billion of African debt and will cancel another \$1 billion in mid-2007.⁵ In May 2007, China captured international attention when it hosted the annual African Development Bank conference in Shanghai. China agreed to make an additional \$20 billion pledge for infrastructure development in Africa over the next three years. Its policy in many instances is tied to ambitious commitments to revitalize

China's FOCAC Action Plan Commitments

- Send 100 senior Chinese agricultural experts to Africa and set up 10 agricultural demonstration sites in Africa;
- Set up a China-Africa Development Fund gradually amounting to \$5 billion to support “well-established and reputable” Chinese firms investing in Africa;
- Increase the number (from 190 to over 440) of items exported to China from the least developed countries in Africa that have diplomatic relations with China and are eligible for zero-tariff treatment;
- Double development assistance to Africa by 2009;
- Provide \$3 billion for preferential loans and \$2 billion for preferential export buyers' credit to African countries in the next three years;
- Cancel the interest-free government loans that were due by the end of 2005, for African countries with diplomatic ties with China and are classified as heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC)s and/or least developed countries (LDCs);
Train 15,000 professionals from African countries in the next three years;
- Set up 100 rural schools and double the number of scholarships for African students to 4,000;
- Build 10 hospitals and 30 anti-malaria clinics, while providing approximately \$37.5 million for the purchase of anti-malarial drugs; and
- Send 300 Chinese young people to Africa over the next three years, under the Chinese Young Volunteers Serving Africa Program, to support education, agriculture, sports and health-related programs.

depleted critical infrastructures and invest in strengthening human skills on a substantial scale. It is not only official China that provides direct economic and diplomatic support, however, as Chinese companies have become far more active both as importers of African energy resources and raw materials, and exporters of Chinese goods and services.

The China International Poverty Alleviation Center, established in mid-2005 to strengthen international exchanges on poverty reduction and facilitate international collaboration on poverty reduction, has hosted two 15-day training courses, allowing visiting African officials to gain a first-hand understanding of China's poverty reduction programs in some of its poorest provinces. The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture had also jointly sent five working groups to more than a dozen African countries to plan the establishment of agricultural technology demonstration centers in order to enhance collaboration on seed production technologies, water-saving and biological technologies in agriculture, food security, and animal health and plant protection.

China's historical experience and development model resonate powerfully with Africa.

China has also deepened its commitments to help African nations tackle public health problems. In May 2007, at the 60th annual World Health Organization (WHO) meeting in Geneva, then-Minister of Health Gao Qiang announced that Beijing would donate \$8 million to the WHO to build African countries' capacity and response mechanisms to public health emergencies. Gao also called on other member states to increase their aid to strengthen public health systems in Africa and other developing countries.

Beijing's proactive engagement with Africa is based on several key factors that underlie the new Chinese approach.⁶ Chinese officials portray themselves as seeking only friendly and respectful political linkages with Africa, based on a legacy of over 50 years of solidarity and development assistance. In Beijing's view China's historical experience and development model resonate powerfully with African counterparts, and create a comparative advantage vis-à-vis the West. China emerged from colonial encroachment, internal chaos and economic destitution to achieve spectacular economic growth and infrastructure development. In the past two decades, its achievements have lifted over 200 million Chinese citizens out of poverty. In the meantime, China can claim that it has achieved political stability and increasing international clout. Such a national narrative, some have asserted, has a powerful resonance in Africa.

Chinese strategists maintain that Africa is on the verge of developmental take-off – another idea that is well received in the region – creating an opportune moment for a more expansive Chinese role. According to this view, Africa has realized a period of relative stability and calm as compared to the dark days of the 1990s, when protracted conflicts raged in more than a dozen countries. Chinese interlocutors recognize that while pockets of conflict still persist and require close international engagement, Africa, by and large, has emerged into a continent of relative peace and stability, poised to make major developmental gains. As such, Beijing is keen to get in on the ground floor and be an integral part of Africa's impending political and economic transformation.

China's policy-makers are also confident that a state-centric approach to Africa will build strategically on Beijing's core strengths and align with the stated preferences of African countries. For Beijing, such an approach plays to its strengths. Its Africa policy is not complicated by private domestic constituencies and inter-

Beijing's approach with Africa fits squarely within China's global foreign policy.

est groups, allowing quicker and more decisive action. China's largest economic and business activities in Africa are dominated by state-owned and/or state-influenced companies, giving official Beijing another leg up in political and economic competition in Africa. China lacks well-developed, independent business and civil society sectors, which for now leaves the full responsibility for carrying forward its vision in the hands of state leaders and official diplomats.

Most important, Beijing's approach with Africa fits squarely within China's global foreign policy, including important initiatives in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Africa is seen as integral to Beijing's strategic ambition to advance a "new security concept" that can ensure China's peaceful rise as a global power and strengthen relations with key neighbors and regions. Through its overarching global approach, China's leadership seeks to sustain China's internal development and political stability at home, legitimize the historic benefits of China's rise within the international community, and achieve its long-term goal of a more multi-polar, equitable and "democratic" in-

ternational system. In the words of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Liu Jianchao, today, “China needs Africa.”⁷ It needs Africa for resources to fuel China’s development goals, for markets to sustain its growing economy and for political alliances to support its aspirations to be a global influence.

Emergent Challenges

The payoffs to China financially and politically may ultimately be very significant and alter Western understanding of what kinds of intervention can achieve durable results. However multiple risks also attend China’s expansive engagement in Africa. Business calculations on major investments are murky, and many will likely turn out bad. The bet that China can transform Africa’s infrastructures where others have failed awaits proof of success, and challenges are surfacing for Beijing in translating its vision of a strategic partnership with Africa into a sustainable reality.

The expectation that China can have significant sway politically and displace the influence of others must take into account Africa’s sensitivity to anything that smacks of neocolonialism, and how callous and indifferent “petropowers” in Africa have become as global energy markets tighten. In selecting energy-rich Angola and Nigeria as preferred partners, and in choosing to closely support Zimbabwe, China has selected three of the most corrupt and difficult environments to build relations in. In Ethiopia, Niger and Nigeria, the wave of kidnapping incidents demonstrates that Chinese investments are becoming increasingly vulnerable to local conflicts and instability. In Sudan, Beijing finds its partner embedded in enormous political and moral controversies of its own making. In South Africa, it has entered a place of acutely high sensitivities to encroachments upon sovereignty.⁸

Beijing is beginning to encounter serious challenges, such as criticism by a Zambian presidential candidate during the 2006 elections that China engages in unfair mine labor practices⁹ and South African trade union opposition to the flooding of South African markets by Chinese textiles.¹⁰ In addition, environmental networks, human rights advocacy groups and a widening array of civil society

organizations in Africa have begun to exert a stronger push back.¹¹ Some adjustments in approach, such as voluntary textile export quotas for South Africa, have now been set in place. While in Namibia in February 2007, Hu made a special point to meet with Chinese entrepreneurs and expatriates in the region, urging them to respect investment rules, labor issues and broaden their engagement with the local community.

As China deepens its economic and corporate engagement in Africa, it is beginning to sense increasing tensions and competing interests between the various government agencies involved, which includes the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission and provincial governments.¹² Different government actors bring different interests and leverage points to the debate about Africa policy, as well as varying capacities to see those interests served within China and with regard to Africa. For example, increasingly market-oriented Chinese enterprises – and their state-related shareholders back in China – are primarily interested in profit-making in their international operations. While understandable, it is unclear how these enterprises will proceed if profit-seeking complicates or contradicts broader Chinese government policy in Africa. In short, the complex web of internal decision-making processes, the stove-piped nature of the Chinese bureaucracy, and the government's limited capability to dampen the "reputational risks" posed by the Chinese diaspora business community all reflect the increasing difficulties for the central government to coordinate and implement official policies.

In addition, China will need to work assiduously to overcome obstacles tied to language, culture, religion and racial bias. Because Chinese is not widely spoken in Africa, Chinese diplomats, businessmen, technicians, doctors, peacekeepers and other "cultural ambassadors" must learn languages widely spoken in Africa – such as English and French – in order to be most effective. Similarly, future Chinese engagement in Africa will need to take into greater account the exceptional religiosity of African societies and develop an official approach, now largely absent, for engaging religious leaderships. Religious organizations, Muslim and

Christian alike, provide a broad and widening range of social services, especially in education and health; have extensive linkages with their counterparts outside Africa; and have a strong public voice on matters of public debate. Within the global Christian world, the Protestant and Catholic communities in Africa are the fastest growing in terms of membership and participation. Africa's 300 million Muslims comprise highly complex, dynamic and variegated communities.

There are also increasing pressures on China to embrace greater transparency and do more to harmonize its donor activity in Africa with ongoing international assistance, especially with respect to debt. Chinese practices of tying loans to African commodity exports are contradictory to existing lending practices set forth in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) agreements. In late 2006, the European Investment Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that China's emergence as a major creditor is creating a wave of new debt for African countries.¹³

China must work assiduously to overcome obstacles tied to language, culture, religion and racial bias.

The question of debt sustainability was also raised by the former World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz in October 2006.¹⁴ Washington is particularly concerned with Africa's borrowing patterns and the impact this may have on the long-term effectiveness of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative and the related \$31 billion debt relief package for Nigeria, concluded at the 2005 Group of Eight Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland. Most dramatically, in September 2006 the U.S. Department of the Treasury reportedly labeled China as a "rogue creditor" practicing "opportunistic lending."¹⁵

A large part of Western concerns over Chinese lending practices stems from the fact that at the present time there is no systematic sharing of data by Chinese ministries with international and bilateral donors deeply invested in Africa, or with African participants in the emerging strategic partnership launched in Beijing. Effective bilateral or multilateral mechanisms have yet to be established at a broad international or country level for integrating assistance and avoiding duplication. China's approach makes little reference to how its efforts will relate

to those of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the IMF, World Bank and other international assistance organizations. There is mounting concern that Chinese lending practices undermine the debt relief strategies devised over the past decade in cooperation with African states and regional bodies that have dramatically reduced the debt burden in Africa. The fear is that Chinese lending practices may encourage the rapid recurrence of an unsustainable debt burden in Africa.

In May 2007, the World Bank and the Chinese Export-Import Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would enhance collaboration on road and energy investment projects in Uganda, Ghana and Mozambique.¹⁶ The MOU is a step in the right direction to further engage China to become an important actor in the global donor system and creditor to African nations.

Darfur: The Elephant in the Room

The question of responding to humanitarian crises, such as Sudan's Darfur region has become one of the most formidable challenges for Beijing in translating its vision of a strategic partnership with Africa into a sustainable reality. It is facing persistent pressure to support humanitarian interventions, and Beijing has begun to realize that adhering to a formal policy of noninterference and putting it into consistent practice will be difficult.

U.S. critics often focus narrowly on China's pursuit of energy as the best explanatory lens through which to understand China's policies in Sudan. Some American voices argue that the Chinese engagement in Africa is predominantly a form of crude mercantilism and political interventionism that directly threatens U.S. interests and calls for confrontation, condemnation and containment. An array of human rights advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations, for example, have placed intense pressure on the U.S. government to take decisive, punitive measures in response to the situation in Darfur, including calls for forced humanitarian intervention and branding the 2008 Beijing Olympics as the "Genocide Olympics."¹⁷

In fact, China's expansive engagement in Sudan (and in Africa on the whole)

is a complex new reality which we only partially grasp: fast moving, multidimensional and long range in its various impacts. The Darfur issue, in particular, is a case in point where Chinese policy has made subtle, incremental shifts. China faces increasing debate and complexity over its policy choices.¹⁸ Progressives in the Chinese policy-making elite argue that Sudan's oil assets are not worth pursuing in the long run, and have suggested scaling back relations with Khartoum in an attempt to burnish China's image and international reputation. Conversely, there is a tendency among Chinese conservatives to argue that the United States and other Western countries are merely trying to force China out of Sudan to get to its oil.¹⁹ Chinese critics are also quick to point out that the United States – by dealing closely with such countries as Equatorial Guinea – is just as likely to engage in an uncritical embrace of autocratic, corrupt and unstable regimes.

No less important is the fact that Chinese views on Darfur are shaped by discussions with African states. Many leaders in sub-Saharan African states find Khartoum's actions in Darfur offensive on human rights, religious and racial grounds. Khartoum's full compliance to follow through with the Annan Plan is questionable, and the inability of the international community to bring greater stability to Sudan mean in practice that African Union peacekeeping forces, including troops from South Africa, Rwanda and Nigeria, remain under grave strain and cannot be reliably sustained, placing the force under considerable risk. China for its part is susceptible to be called to account within Africa for enabling Khartoum's intransigence and impeding the efforts of the African Union.

As a result, a gradual shift in Chinese thinking is exhibited in several concrete actions taken by Beijing to exert additional pressure on Khartoum. The Chinese ambassador to the United Nations, Wang Guangya, has become very active and was widely credited in gaining Sudanese acceptance for the Annan Plan in November 2006.

In February 2007, there were unrealistically high hopes that Hu might compel Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to accept the hybrid force. In public, China continued to emphasize its economic ties with Sudan and made new pledges of support, including aid for the building of a presidential palace. Understandably, these announcements drew international opprobrium.

In private, Hu reportedly personally intervened to press al-Bashir to stick to his commitments. And prior to leaving Sudan, Hu delivered a rare public statement that outlined “four principles” as the basis for an international approach to Darfur.²⁰ The first, not unexpectedly, reaffirmed the principle of noninterference. But the fourth principle seemed to contradict the first, saying that “it is imperative to improve the situation in Darfur and living conditions of local people.”²¹ That is about as close as a Chinese leader has come to publicly support the emerging notion within the United Nations and the broader international community that governments have a “responsibility to protect” their citizens from harm.

Furthermore, in March 2007, China's main economic planning agency, the National Development and Reform Commission, released a public document in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce, noting that Sudan had been removed from the latest list of countries with preferred trade status.²² According to the announcement, Beijing would no longer provide financial incentives to Chinese companies to invest in Sudan. This latest move appears to be a signal of Chinese disaffection with al-Bashir's unwillingness to comply with his commitments to implement the Annan Plan.

The announcement was welcomed by the U.S. State Department and came shortly before Chinese Assistant Minister Zhai Jun arrived in Washington to meet with Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer for the second round of U.S.-China subdialogue on Africa in March 2007.²³ The inaugural dialogue was formally launched in November 2005 under the auspices of the U.S.-China Senior Dialogue process initiated by former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick.²⁴ While the first bilateral meeting on Africa focused largely on formalities, the second subdialogue in early March 2007 focused on the specific issues of debt sustainability, peacekeeping operations, Chinese companies' reputational risks in Africa, and transparency in the extractive industries. On Sudan, the Chinese reportedly acknowledged the need for the international community to step up efforts and become more active in leveraging their respective influences on Darfur.

In April 2007, Assistant Minister Zhai Jun visited Sudan to get a fuller understanding of the tense political relations between Darfur and government leaders

in Khartoum. Zhai was also the first senior Chinese official to visit the internally displaced person (IDP) camps and to meet with a wide range of faction and military leaders as well as local refugees in Darfur. The visit has allowed Beijing officials to engage in a dialogue with the concerned parties and to make a clearer assessment of the current realities of the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Shortly after Zhai's visit, Beijing announced the appointment of Ambassador Liu Guijin as the special envoy to Africa. Liu, a seasoned diplomat, has taken on the Darfur issue as a top priority. Liu has visited Sudan at least twice since his appointment and conducted diplomatic consultations with concerned parties in Addis Ababa, Brussels, Paris and Pretoria to help move the agenda forward in Darfur. Following Khartoum's acceptance of an expanded peacekeeping force in Darfur in June 2007, Liu reportedly stated that Beijing had been using "very direct language" as well as its "own wisdom" to persuade Khartoum to accept the A.U./U.N. hybrid force.²⁶

China is susceptible to be called to account within Africa for enabling Khartoum's intransigence.

At the fourth round of the U.S.-China Senior Dialogue held between June 20 and 21, 2007, discussions between Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo covered a range of key bilateral and global issues, including Darfur. A couple of constructive developments resulted from this meeting. First, the State Department's official statement at the end of the dialogue acknowledged the Chinese characterization of Darfur as a "humanitarian crisis" (as opposed to genocide).²⁷ Second, the two sides agreed that the various subdialogues, including those about Africa, should continue in order to deepen mutual understanding and enhance collaboration in areas of common concern.

In assessing the March and June 2007 dialogues between Washington and Beijing, it appears that there is greater consensus on hot spots in Africa such as Darfur, in part because there is congruence in Beijing's evolving approach and Washington's outlook. As such, continuing to see China's economic, political or diplomatic activities in Africa as a zero-sum game would be counterproductive. This emerging trend is an encouraging sign in the early stage of this debate; the challenge will be for Washington to make a strong commitment to sustain the

momentum at a high diplomatic level to understand the Chinese perspective and continue to test China's intentions systematically.

Africa: Test-Case for U.S.-China Relations

China's ambitious, new high-profile role in Africa challenges the United States to think far more comprehensively and strategically about how it will engage China on Africa matters in the future. It comes in a period of major parallel expansion of U.S. commitments in Africa, propelled by growing U.S. national interests in Africa in terms of global infectious diseases, energy security, counterterrorism and global security, and the promotion of good governance. The tripling of U.S. foreign aid that has occurred during the Bush administration has included the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a five-year \$15 billion program, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a major initiative aimed at strengthening the economic performance of well-governed states, many in Africa. U.S. military engagement in Africa has expanded significantly, especially in the Horn of Africa, the Sahara/Sahelian zone, and the Gulf of Guinea maritime zone. In 2007, for the first time ever, the United States has announced its intention to create a separate U.S.-Africa combatant command. Following the ouster from power of the Islamist movement ruling in Mogadishu by the Ethiopian military, U.S. forces in early 2007 significantly stepped up counterterrorism activities in southern Somalia, targeting suspected al-Qaida members. U.S. investment in Africa's energy sector, and its dependence on Africa to meet its rising energy needs, have both steadily expanded, in parallel with a similarly robust pattern of rising Chinese oil dependency on Africa. Within the next decade, the United States will rely upon Africa for 20 percent to 25 percent of its oil imports.

Given the rising parallel interests in the continent, what direction should U.S.-China relations take regarding Africa? First, and most importantly, there is a need for a more strategic approach by the United States if a costly U.S.-China clash in Africa is to be avoided and if opportunities for fruitful collaborations are to be pursued effectively. A strategic approach can build on the reality that, broadly speaking, the United States and China share a range of common interests in seeking a more collaborative and constructive bilateral relationship. Most ob-

viously, the two sides have become deeply intertwined economically. In addition, recent experience has affirmed that the two countries stand a far better chance of dealing effectively with the many security challenges they face – from stemming the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea to securing energy supplies to tackling the problem of global climate change – through cooperation and healthy competition rather than confrontation.

This deepening interdependence also underscores the need for a strategic vision in the U.S. approach to China-African relations that recognizes that U.S. action taken in one sphere can have unintended and potentially negative repercussions in another. That was demonstrated dramatically in CNOOC's defeated bid to purchase UNOCAL, which was widely

A far more strategic approach is needed if a costly U.S.-China clash in Africa is to be avoided.

believed within Chinese policy-making circles as proof of U.S. determination to prevent the rise of a Chinese global energy firm and became an impetus to accelerate the formation

of strategic relationships in Africa.²⁵ China is increasingly in a position to move resources and make decisions in the context of Africa in response to U.S. actions elsewhere that touch on China's perceived global interests. The United States should assume there will be additional unforeseen surprises of this kind in the future, but work to avoid them as much as possible.

Integral to any such approach, however, will be the expectation that – owing to weak state institutions, high incidence of conflict and relative economic fragility of most African countries – developments in Africa, independent of U.S.-China relations, will repeatedly test U.S. and Chinese approaches and their resolve to work collaboratively. It will be no less important to anticipate that enduring philosophical, ideological and programmatic differences, mutual suspicions and misunderstandings, and competitive tensions will sustain the risk of a clash of U.S.-China interests in Africa. Hence the special need to anticipate flash points in approaches to Africa and manage them preemptively: most importantly, at this point, are crises such as Darfur, sensitive assistance issues such as debt and harmonization of donor approaches, and access to energy resources.

For the United States, such a strategic and anticipatory approach to China-Africa relations will demand a greater openness to engage China through multi-lateral channels, such as within the United Nations, within major international economic and financial institutions, and within Africa-based multilateral bodies such as the African Union. The slower pace and tough diplomatic work of consensus building will prove frustrating, but has the potential to pay long-term dividends in providing greater awareness of Chinese policies and preferences and fostering more constructive and cooperative responses from China.

More specifically, a strategic approach can also be strengthened through a deliberate focus on strong, shared interests in Africa. In the sphere of public health and infectious diseases in Africa – such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and avian influenza – the United States and China have both taken global leadership positions and aim to improve their policies in addressing the weakness of infrastructural capacities and health workforce shortages.

On matters of conflict resolution, peacekeeping capacity and counterterrorism in Africa, there is a substantial convergence of perspectives and approaches. Differences persist with respect to Darfur, yet in the U.N. Security Council there has been recent progress in quietly aligning diplomatic approaches to Sudan. In their shared role as permanent members of the Security Council, China and the United States have shared decision-making power in shaping U.N. peacekeeping operations

A greater role for China must be tempered by Beijing's support for state sovereignty and noninterference.

in Africa, which account for 65 percent of total operations worldwide. Each has professed a rising interest in investing in African peacekeeping capacity. On matters pertaining to al-Qaida's threat to

Africa, there are no significant divergences of opinion or approaches. Indeed, improved future maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, for instance, will benefit China's energy security as much as that of the United States. At the same time, U.S. encouragement of a greater role for China will need to be tempered by Beijing's continued traditional support for state sovereignty and nonintervention.

The same inherent shared economic and political interest exists with respect

to ensuring predictable, long-term and stable governance in Africa, better integrating Africa into the global economy, building trade capacity and lowering poverty. The measure of success in the coming years will be whether the United States and China build a record of concrete collaborations in Africa that create new facts on the ground, reveal the scope of shared interests, promote African well-being and guard against impulsive action that aggravates tensions and results in a damaging confrontation.

Finally, with urgent foreign and security policy concerns elsewhere around the world, and with several major and growing U.S. diplomatic, humanitarian, developmental and security initiatives in process in Africa already, there is a risk that U.S. policy-makers will be unwilling or unable to give China's expansive presence in Africa the priority, time and policy energy it requires: this would be a mistake. The opportunities and interests present themselves now as a chance for the United States to assess China's approach to Africa more accurately, engage China more effectively, and work to shape outcomes in Africa that are beneficial to Africans, as well as Chinese and Americans. ☺

Notes

¹ The November 2006 Addis Agreement (also known as the "Annan Plan") called for a three-step expansion of an A.U./U.N. hybrid force in Darfur and for Khartoum to commit to a ceasefire in the region.

² For the latest literature on the growing importance of Africa to U.S. strategic interests and expansive Chinese engagement in Africa, see Gill, B., Huang, C. and J. S. Morrison, *China's Expanding Role in Africa: Implications for the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Independent Studies, 2007); Lyman, P. and J. S. Morrison, *More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006); Vines, Alex, "China in Africa: A Mixed Blessing?" *Current History* (May 2007) pp. 213-219; Broadman, Harry, *Africa's Silk Road: China and India's New Economic Frontier* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2007); Goldstein, A., Pinaud, N., Reisen, H. and X. Chen, *The Rise of China and India: What's in it for Africa?* (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006); and Alden, Chris, "China in Africa," *Survival*, Vol. 47 No. 3 (Autumn 2005) pp. 147-164.

³ Yu. George, "Africa in Chinese Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28 (1988) p. 8.

- ⁴ For a specific breakdown of Chinese contribution to the various U.N. peacekeeping missions, see http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2007/may07_1.pdf.
- ⁵ Wallis, W. and G. Dyer, "Wen Calls for more access for Africa," *Financial Times*, May 17, 2007, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/34e52c64-0365-11dc-a023-000b5df10621,dwp_uuid=5cdb1d20-feeaf11db-aff2-000b5df10621.html.
- ⁶ The following points draw from Gill, B., Huang, C., and J. S. Morrison, *China's Expanding Role in Africa: Implications for the United States*, pp. 6-13.
- ⁷ Gill, B., Huang, C. and J. S. Morrison, *China's Expanding Role in Africa: Implications for the United States*, p. 5; also see Swann, C. and McQuillen, "China to Surpass World Bank as Top Lender to Africa (Update 2)," *Bloomberg*, Nov. 3, 2006, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=afUHTifuOkR0>.
- ⁸ Baldauf, S. and J. J. Schatz, "Chinese leader's almost triumphal trip to Africa," *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 9, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0209/p01s04-woaf.html>.
- ⁹ Liu, Melinda, "Pragmatism or Principle?" *Newsweek International Edition*, Nov. 10, 2006, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15661052/site/newsweek/page/0/>.
- ¹⁰ "Never too late to scramble," *The Economist*, Oct. 26, 2006, http://www.economist.com/world/africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8089719.
- ¹¹ Schearf, Daniel, "Environmental Groups Say China's Role in Africa Leading to Backlash," *Voice of America*, May 18, 2007, www.voanews.com/english/2007-05-18-voa26.cfm.
- ¹² Gill, B. and J. Reilly, "The Tenuous Hold of China Inc. in Africa," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30 No. 3 (Summer 2007), pp. 37-52.
- ¹³ Parker, G. and A. Beattie, "EIB accuses China of unscrupulous loans," *Financial Times*, Nov. 28, 2006, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/added3c2-7f4e-11db-b193-0000779e2340.html>; Beattie, A. and E. Callan, "China loans create 'new wave of Africa debt,'" *Financial Times*, Dec. 7, 2006, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/640a5986-863a-11db-86d5-0000779e2340.html>.
- ¹⁴ "Paul Wolfowitz - Interview with Les Echos, Oct. 19, 2006," World Bank, see <http://econ.worldbank.org>.
- ¹⁵ Phillips, Michael, "G-7 to Warn China over Costly Loans to Poor Countries," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 15, 2006, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB115826807563263495.html>.
- ¹⁶ "China Eximbank and World Bank Come Together to Sign Cooperation Memo," The World Bank, May 21, 2007, <http://go.worldbank.org/HPL4J9FEG0>.
- ¹⁷ "China and Darfur - the Genocide Olympics?" *The Washington Post* Dec. 14, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/13/AR2006121302008.html>.
- ¹⁸ See official Congressional record for written statement of J. S. Morrison and B. Gill on "China and Sudan," submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on Feb. 8, 2007, available at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/33109.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ Robinson, Simon, "Time Running Out," *Time*, Sept. 10, 2006.
- ²⁰ "Diplomat Views China's Role on Darfur Issue, Stresses 'Even-Handedness,'" *Qiushi*, June 1, 2007.
- ²¹ "Hu puts forward principle on Darfur Issue" *China Daily* Feb.5, 2007, <http://www.china->

daily.com.cn/world/2007-02/05/content_801432.htm.

²² McGregor, Richard. "Iran, Nigeria, Sudan off China incentive list," *Financial Times*, Mar. 2, 2007, <http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?queryText=Iran%2C+Nigeria%2C+Sudan+off+China+incentive+list&cy=1&aje=true&x=18&id=070302001014>.

²³ The Senior Dialogue was between the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State and his Chinese counterpart, the Vice Foreign Minister. Both sides discussed the broader strategic vision of U.S.-China relations at this level. They agreed that discussions on the specific issues (e.g., on Darfur, the Middle East, etc.) will be conducted through "subdialogues" between the relevant U.S. Deputies Under-Secretary of State in charge of the different regions of the world and their Chinese counterparts at the Assistant Ministerial level.

²⁴ At the official level, the United States and China in 2005 began to take some steps to think through their increasingly complex and interdependent relationship in a more constructive and strategic way. This effort, known at the "senior leaders' dialogue," was led by the United States then-Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, who called for China to join the United States in becoming a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system. Both sides agreed to hold bilateral subdialogues on key regional issues. The door was thus opened in Washington to begin thinking more seriously about an effective U.S. strategy for engaging China on Africa.

²⁵ "CNOOC seeks expansion in Africa," PRC Ministry of Commerce, Jul. 20, 2006, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/newsrelease/commonnews/200607/20060702680521.html>.

²⁶ Russell, A. and W. Wallis, "China puts Private Pressure on Sudan," *Financial Times*, June 19, 2007. See also "Special Representative of the Chinese Government on the Darfur Issue Holds a Briefing for Chinese and Foreign Journalists," PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 29, 2007. See www.fmprc.gov.cn.

²⁷ "Conclusion of the Fourth U.S.-China Senior Dialogue," U.S. Department of State Media Note, June 21, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2007/jun/86997.htm>.