

# CHINESE INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA AND ITS IMPACT ON UNITED STATES

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## Abstract

*China has been actively involved in the African continent since long time to fulfill its energy demands as today China import more than 30 percent of oil from Africa continent. To achieve those interests China has been assisting the states financially and building their infrastructure and investing in energy sector. With the increasing involvement of the China in Africa, United States feels that China is trying to occupy the continent for future conflict. As far as their trade has been concerned China replaced United States as number one trading partner of Africa, which has underlined the US influence, as Africa is now looking for Chinese power as its financial support demands only the Chinese access to their markets and energy corridors whereas United states has been involved in the political matters of the African states since long time. So Chinese involvement in the region has weakened the US influence which has made China an influential state which will control the future African energy resources.*

## Introduction

Africa has been a continent which from long time has been ignored and HIV/AIDS and poverty coupled with few tyrant rulers became the identity of the continent since long time. Africa is known as Dark Continent which covers an area of 30.2 million km<sup>2</sup> (11.7 million sq mi) (Wikipedia, 2013) with a population of over one billion people. The continent is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, both the Suez Canal and the Red Sea along the Sinai Peninsula to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The continent has 54 sovereign states, including Madagascar and various island groups (Wikipedia, 2013). After independence Africa had some economies that were dubbed

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success stories afterwards because they showed years of sustained growth, like Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Kenya and South Africa. But the 1970s were a turning point. During the economic crisis of the 1970s decade the African economy was severely struck (Custers & Matthysen, 2009).

Whereas China is the world's leading country in population and it has more than one billion population and has an estimated area of 9.6 million square kilometers (3.7 million square miles) (Wikipedia, 2013 ). It is one of the oldest civilizations of the world and 1949 Communist Revolution has brought the communist party rule in China and since 1978 its policy of opening up has been the centre to the foreign policy of China as China has become less active on political front and have emphasized more on economic front as a result today China stands one of the leading states in economy.

## **Chinese Involvement in Africa**

### **a) Sino - Africa Relations**

The relations between PRC and Africa were initiated in the era of Mao Tse Tung, as before that only little is available with the contacts between two lands as there are only earlier glimpses of travels from Ibn Batutta a 14<sup>th</sup> century traveler who traveled to China and Chinese voyages under Ming dynasty. China's relationship with Africa started to develop in the early 1950s. Before 1955, Africa was of no significant importance to China but from then onwards, China sought international recognition and political allies, hoping to strengthen international alliances against the capitalist West and the revisionist communist Soviet Union (Kanza, 1975). Since the establishment of official contacts, there has been lot of progress. Since 1997, 40 heads of states of African states have paid the visit to PRC. In 2000 Sino-African forum (FOCAC) was established to increase the cooperation between China and Africa.

During the 1950s China signed the bilateral trade agreements with Algeria, Egypt, Guinea, Morocco, and Sudan. Later in 1963-64 Zhou Enlai visited ten African nations. The earlier relations were focused on Cold war and communist ideology as a result they were the supporters of liberation movements in Africa, but with the worsening of relations with Soviet Union the policy was changed and it shifted its support to Pan-Africanist Congress. In 1971 African states supported the Chinese takeover of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seat from Taiwan.

Chinese influence and involvement nevertheless waned in the 1980s as it was unable to compete with western aid programs and no longer was as fearful of Taiwan's presence – though reducing recognition of Taiwan remained (and remains today) an important Chinese objective. What has changed in recent years, however, is China's emergence as a significant world player on the economic scene and its own need for oil and other natural resources. China returns to Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with not only a need for economic resources but with the cash to play the game dramatically and competitively (Lyman, 2005).

### **Chinese Access to African Energy Resources**

Africa has considerable oil and gas resources that can help accelerate growth on the continent if used strategically. Although new resources are discovered progressively, they are not equally distributed; indeed, 38 out of 53 African countries are currently net oil importers (AFDB & AU, 1999).

China has been heavily supporting the African regimes to get the oil it needed for its booming industries for that purpose they have provided millions of dollars to the African states.

China imports more than 40% of its oil with 13% of annual growth. It is estimated that Chinese demand for oil will increase to 13.2 million barrels per day (mbd) and its own production will be around

4.0 mbd, which will compel China to increase its oil import.

- a) The case of Darfur, a forbidding piece of sunparched real estate in southern part of Sudan, illustrates the new Cold War over oil, where the dramatic rise in China's oil demand to fuel its booming growth has led Beijing to embark on an aggressive policy of ironically dollar diplomacy (Engadhal, 2007)

### **Rise of Chinese Muscle in Africa**

In 1992, two –way trade between China and Africa stood at just \$1 billion. But Chinese demand for oil, gas iron ore and other raw materials for its rapidly growing economy has spurred trade and investments in Africa in recent years (Mail & Guardian, 2010).

Chinese trade with the African nations has grown at a rapid pace due to the interest shown by the PRC to invest in Africa as in 1999 Sino-African trade reached at US\$ 6.5 billion, but in 2006 it has become the second largest trading partner of Africa after US. As Sino-African trade reached to 55 US billion dollars in 2006, which is left behind only by the US whose trade is US\$ 91 billion in 2006.

China is looking for its oil supplies from Africa as its one –third oil supply is from Africa and they are involved in different projects to explore the African for oil resources which could support the need of growing Chinese energy demands. China has invested more than US \$ 7billion until the visit of President Hu Jintao in 2007 which reflects that China is trying to increase their investment in Africa.

China's trade with Africa has soared to 114.81 billion in the first 11 months of 2010, according to the Chinese government's first white paper on its economic and trade cooperation with Africa. To put the huge number in perspective, the paper pointed out that China-Africa bilateral trade volume was a mere \$12.14 million in 195 (Lepore, 2010). This figure of \$ 114.81 billion has put China on the

top trading nations with Africa.

China is the largest investor in Africa. During the President Hu Jintao's visit of 8 African states he announced that they would establish China-Africa development fund up to \$ 5 billion, a he announced to create special economic zones in Africa. China heavily invests in state run projects such as infrastructure building. The trade balance is in favor of China. Trade between different African nations has been increasing at a very fast rate. African states Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and DRC are the largest exporters of oil to China. China is trying to increase its demand of oil from Africa as in 2005 bought 50-60% of Sudan's oil and 45% of Nigeria's offshore oil and gas field. Chinese success in buying oil is due to the fact that Chinese policy of investing in different infrastructure projects has helped it achieve its interests, as it did in Angola.

Chinese foreign policy objective has been to convince the states to "One China Policy" i.e., not to recognize Taiwan as an independent state, and that policy has brought fruitful results in Africa as number of African states have recognized Chinese *One China Policy* since the end of the Cold War. These states include Chad, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. China has been able to establish China-Africa forum in 2000.

Since then China has been focusing on the region and the visits of their high level officials shows their interest in the continent. As during the period of April 2006 to February 2007 Chinese president Hu Jintao paid visit of 17 African states, which is the highest number of any head of foreign state to Africa.

The second important factor that works for the Chinese foreign policy is the aid given to African states to achieve its interests in the continent. As more than 90% of the Chinese companies working in Africa are state owned and they are working for the interests of the state. China is providing significant help to Africa particularly in the

field of health. China according to World Food Programme report that during mid 2006 china has become the third largest food donor to Africa.

Chinese success came to Africa due to their policy of not intervening in the affairs of the states and respecting the sovereignty of the state. Its non-interference in the matters of the states particularly in Africa has been criticized by the international community that china is not only supporting the African states on international forums, particularly in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as the case of the Sudan where China protected Sudan over the Darfur crisis.

There is lot of examples which according to the west is not suiting their democracy but china is supporting the states on those issues. Those affairs include: Chinese support for Morocco for its western Saharan autonomy plan, Cot d' Ivore's president Gbagbo since 2004, its cooperation with Zimbabwe, Angolan has been receiving aid from China even IMF has denied it. But the largest criticism comes on Sudan as China used its veto in UNSC to protect Sudan from international sanctions, as a result according to west UN has been unable to stop the carnage at Darfur.

China has also been a friend of African states who is not only proving financial assistance but also providing military equipment without intervening in the domestic affairs of the states. Zimbabwe the second largest platinum deposits in the continent has gone to China for arms due to the sanctions imposed by west. China has close military cooperation with the Sudan, Nigeria, Senegal, Central African Republic, Chad and Liberia.

## **United States Interests and Policies in Africa**

### **US- Africa Relations**

Africa has never been regarded as an important region in the US foreign policy as they have treated it as a backwater. Africa's first republic, Liberia was founded in 1822 as a result of the efforts of the American Colonization Society to settle freed American slaves in West Africa. The society contended that the emigration of blacks to Africa was an answer to the problem of slavery and the incompatibility of the races. Over the course of forty years, about 12,000 slaves were voluntarily relocated. Originally called Monrovia, the colony became the Free and Independent Republic of Liberia in 1847 (Infoplease, 2013).

The fact remains that until the Cold war era US was not eager in Africa. But during the cold war they saw the Africa with interest as they have been active in the Containment policy. So prior to Cold war era only state where US was interested was Ethiopia, but during the Cold war era their policies were shifted and they became active in Africa and their alliances shifted to the states surrounding pro-Soviet Ethiopia.

In 1957 US vice president Richard Nixon traveled Africa for more than twenty days to see the situation in Africa and as a result he recommended president Eisenhower to create a separate Africa Bureau within the state department, but the situation doesn't become much changed as US hadn't provided much material support to African states. However US had developed special relations with mineral rich Congo and South Africa during the cold war years to contain communism and have supported the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko in Congo and apartheid regime of South Africa.

In 2009 US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton paid a ten day visit of Africa, and in her visit she traveled to Kenya, South Africa, Angola,

Congo, Nigeria, Liberia and Cape Verde Islands. During the same year US president Barack Obama also visited Ghana. US president's visit came after the visit of Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's visit of Egypt, Namibia, Nigeria and Angola a month earlier. But the greatest concern of the US was Chinese president Hu Jintao's visit of Africa the same year.

### **US Interests in Africa**

US have been actively involved in few African states to support its interests as it sees the continent as a bed for achieving the natural resources. The most important interests of US in Africa are:

### **Ending the Conflicts in Africa**

There are currently fifteen African countries involved in war, or are experiencing post-war conflict and tension. In West Africa, the countries include Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo. In East Africa, the countries include Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda. In Central Africa, the countries include Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda. In North Africa, the country is Algeria and in South Africa, the countries include Angola and Zimbabwe (Africa Sun News, 2013).

The basic root causes of the conflicts in Africa are to control the natural resources which are present in these poor regions such as timber oil and diamonds, foreign intervention in some cases the funding of foreign companies/governments to certain groups to controls the natural resources, the lack of respect for law, human rights violations, and the unjust partition of the Africa where colonial powers have ignored the ground realities of the continent which has caused on of the major conflicts in human history.

During the Cold War years US and USSR has found the African continent as a test ground for their cold war mechanizations. And to achieve their goals they supported the dictators in Africa and have



provided the financial and military aid, which have resulted in bloody civil wars in Africa. At the end of the cold war US with western states remained engaged in Africa to achieve its interests and extract the raw materials of vastly unexplored continent.

US has become successful in ending few conflicts through supporting the negotiations and those include the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, North-South Sudan, Ethiopia-Eritrea and Angola.

USAID fosters long-term partnerships with international agencies, African organizations, and regional bodies such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. USAID's activities to mitigate conflict, promote reconciliation, and strengthen security focus on combating the threats such as terrorism, trafficking and crime that undermine stability, and encouraging good governance and development in Africa (USAID, 2011).

### **Controlling the Natural Resources**

Africa holds 7% of world oil reserves and comprises 11% of world oil production. Along with Latin America, West Africa is expected to be one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market", as was described in the US National Energy Policy of May 2001. The general conclusion was that a concentration of world oil production in any one region of the world was a potential contributor to market instability. The Policy stated, Growing levels of conventional and heavy oil production and exports from the Western Hemisphere, the Caspian and Africa are important factors that can lessen the impact of a supply disruption on the US and world markets (National Energy Policy, 2001).

US has been seeking the control of natural resources everywhere since the Cold war era as they sees that natural resources are essential for their energy demands and particularly since 1973 when

Arab states blocked the oil supplies to US has realized the importance of oil as a result almost major portions of the world oil are under the US influence particularly of the Middle East. Since the world powers have sought for the alternate areas for the natural resources such as oil and gas they have invested in non traditional areas like Central Asia and Africa. US have also been looking for these vast resources on a vastly unexplored continent of Africa.

Africa has been providing 15% of the oil to the US, and a result US is the largest buyer of African oil but due to its less dependency over African oil, it has shown very little interest in Africa. But there are still factors that can influence the US policy makers to consider their approach to deal with Africa as Nigeria is the fifth largest oil supplier to US, Angola the 9<sup>th</sup> largest supplier of oil shows that there are few states where US has such valuable interests that it cannot ignore the African continent. US has also economic interests in seven African states and those are Kenya, South Africa, Angola, Nigeria, Congo, Liberia and Cape Verde Islands.

### **Containing Chinese Growing Influence**

China has remained the major threat for the US as it has replaced the US as number one trading partner of Africa which has caused the greatest threat for US. As Chinese are investing heavily in the Africa particularly in energy sectors. Chinese demand for the energy resources has been growing day by day and their 30% need is filled by the African reserves and in future it will also increase.

China poses the major challenge to the United States in Africa as Chinese growing influence in Africa has shifted the balance against the US and the African dictators are seeing China as a replacement for the US as it does not interfere in the political affairs and provide the financial support on soft terms in reply for the access to their natural resources... many analysts expect that Africa will increasingly become a theatre for strategic competition between the United States and its only real near-peer competitor on the global

stage, China, as both countries seek to expand their influence and secure access to resources ( PHAM , 2007).

The US administration believes that China's growing influence in Africa may lead to serious negative consequences for the United States. The Pentagon pays special attention to this issue. The department announced the establishment of a new military command, the Command for Africa, in October 2007. It officially became the tenth command department within the structure of the Pentagon (Anokhin, 2009).

### **Establishing Friendly Relations with African States**

US wants to establish friendly relations with African states but since long time their policies has been centered on few African states which has caused the grave danger to their interests as the other powers particularly China and European states have established the friendly relations which US has been ignoring them.

### **Countering Terrorist Activities in Africa**

Terrorism has been a menace and a great thereat to the security of the world since 9/11, 2001 and it has caused a grave danger in Africa in 1998 attack on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya by the Al-Qaeda. This shows that terrorists are present everywhere and they have supporters in every corner of the world. No state has been able to find that they are free of the terrorists as they are the non state actors and they have been traveling frequently without coming to the eyes of the security agencies. There is also the terrorists networks in Africa who have been targeting the western interests in the region and US feels that they should also combat terrorists here so that they can protect their interests as they have already been targeted by terrorists in 1998.

## **Promoting Democracy in Africa**

Africa has been known mostly for the warlords and corrupt rulers and US has been the champion of the democracy and has been working on to bring the democratic system rather we call it a market economy based system. A number of obstacles hinder the consolidation of democratic political systems in Africa: entrenched political leaders, a lack of checks and balances, the high incidence of conflict, endemic corruption, and legal restrictions on civil society, ethnic grievances, and a lack of a democratic political culture. A recent spate of coups, ethnic conflict, suppression of civil society, and political stalemates between opposing factions suggest a trend of democratic backsliding across all regions of Africa ([www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)). United States has been not always the advocate of the democratic values in African continent as during the Cold war years they have been supporting the authoritarian regimes of African states like apartheid regime in South Africa .But with the end of the Cold war the US aspect has changes as it has spent more than \$ 250 million for the promotion of democracy in North African region with the collaboration of NGOs in the period of 1991-2001.

Africa needs a think tank comprised of the best minds that can develop a form of democracy that speaks uniquely to the African experience, considering what's in the best interest of the country, considering tribalism and inclusive of advice from traditional elders. In tribal tradition, when one of the "sons" of the tribe is running for office, it is expected that most members of the tribe will support him.

As this western-style democracy pits tribe against tribe, there are forces at work dividing the Nations of Africa: The North Africans (Arabs) against the Sub Saharan Africans (Blacks). As Africa fights, America and France are planning to build military bases on African soil. Africa is struggling to maintain its freedom and self determination, allowing military bases will erode this freedom...All

across Africa, African leaders seeking to be elected are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to fund these multi-party elections patterned after western style democracy, a path that Africa should not and must not follow. In America, the cost of the current 2008 presidential elections will exceed \$2 billion (Muhammad, 2008).

### **Improving the Economies of the African States**

Africa is the poorest continent of the world. There are few African states which are growing at a fast pace such as Mauritania with 19.8% of annual growth, Angola 17.6%, Sudan 9.6% and Mozambique 7.9%, which is due to the international investment particularly of china and US has helped to improve their economies.

The history of the Africa has been famous by the ancient Egyptian empire as it was one of the great powers of the world around 3000 B.C and known as the one of the earliest civilizations of the human history. Western powers came to Africa in 15<sup>th</sup> century AD when Portuguese first traded with Guinea, and later the western powers followed and as a result Africa was colonized, during the colonial era Africa has taken very little advantage in improving their economies. It was not possible until the Africa got independence and in 1950s the African economies were booming due to their trade with the outside world, but their economic boom was halted by the high oil prices in 1970s when the Oil shocks taken place as a result Africa was again become one of the poorest regions of the world. Since then African continent has been trying hard to recover and prosper their economic growth.

US have been the largest donor to Africa since their end of colonial rule to improve the economies of Africa. US provide the huge amount of aid to the Africa which reaches up to US \$ 7.6 billion annually. The International Monetary Fund predicts sub-Saharan Africa—a collection of 47 countries—will grow 5.5% this year and 6% in 2012. Over the next five years, the IMF predicts that average growth of sub-Saharan countries will be higher than other regions.

The African Development Bank Group estimates a new consumer class on the continent of 300 million people (Wonacott, 2011).

US believed that economic growth in Africa will help the stability of the political systems in Africa and reduce the conflicts and as a result the living standard of the African people would be improved. US believes that the with the increase of the trade by African nations would improve the economic situation of African continent as African trade is only 1.5 percent of the global trade which is very less than other third world regions.

### **Impact of China-Africa Relations over United States**

Both the states have increased their involvement in African continent. In 2007 the USA caused some controversy in les when it announced that all its African military interests (with exception of Egypt) would in future be consolidated under a single new control centre called Africa Command, or AFRICOM. IN the past, US military matters in Africa were steered from the separate units: the European, Central and pacific Commands (Andreas, 2008). The new body was created so that the goals would be achieved so that economic and political stability would be achieved in Africa. AFRICOM mission is to promote financial, diplomatic and humanitarian aid to African states.

But the reasons behind establishing are different as AFRICOM will be able to stand in the African continent and will safeguard the American interests there, and will ensure the access to the African natural resources particularly oil , which in 2015 America will be importing a quarter of its oil from Africa.

The main reason is to counter the Chinese influence in Africa. For that purpose AFRICOM has been working with USAID in different projects in Africa so that it can increase its influence. AFRICOM has also established intelligence and counter terrorism bases in African states like Djibouti, Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania, Ghana, Gabon,

and Senegal. They have also trained the local forces to establish peace in their respective countries.

The critics in America particularly raised the fingers on AFRICOM activities in Africa as they points out that their activities are harming the sovereignty of African states, which is a clear violation of the international law, and as a consequence they may be used by foreign powers to achieve the interests of outside powers which will exploit the natural resources of Africa for their industries.

The US presence in Africa representing a great balancer to the rising China as US has the base in Djibouti and has established AFRICOM to counter the rising influence of China in the continent. US plays the role of real hegemon in Africa as its forces are present in Africa and it seeks the intervention in domestic affairs of the states as in January 2007 US has made two air strikes over Somalia. US with the west have been involved in different African states to improve their economies and to bring the democracy in the continent, where the dictators and warlords are ruling the different parts of the continent.

Chinese policies of the equitable relations and the non-interference in Africa has been realized states like South Africa, Angola, Nigeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe as a balancer against the western powers particularly US power in the continent. Chinese growing need for the energy resources has compelled it to develop strong ties with Africa as it can provide energy resources to help the booming Chinese industries' demands. Africa is already providing 30% of oil to China. Chinese supremacy in the continent does not look possible as there are also other powers who are opposing Chinese growing influence in the continent as South African business interests in the continent can be harmed by China whereas Angola has used the Chinese assistance to strengthen its power in the region as a result in 2007 Angola became the member of the OPEC, and even in Sudan Chinese influence has been challenged by Arab League and OIC has huge interests and they will remain the major players in the

country's politics.

The most important rival of the China is the United States which has provided huge sums of aid to the African states since the end of the Second World War. US fear that China is countering its influence in the continent. Both US and China wants to secure the energy supplies as they both knew that in future growing energy demands can be fulfilled by controlling the huge energy resources present in the regions like Central Asia, Caspian, Middle East and Africa. US since 1973 oil shocks have realized the importance of oil to the economy as a result they are trying to control the energy resources as much as they can. As a result today US stand in a dominant position in Middle East, and is a major partner in Central Asia and Caspian region. Even they are playing a pivotal role in Africa particularly in energy sector and with the growing influence of china in Africa particularly its growing demand of African energy resources has put it in direct competition with the United States. As a result US sees china as a threat to its interests in Africa.

US has remained the global leader in oil import as in 1973 it only imports 36% of oil, whereas today its import has risen to 55% and it is estimated that within twenty years time there oil imports will rise to 70%. On the other hand china imports 40% of the oil in which 30% comes from Africa so the African continent will much more be focused by China in future than US because the chunk of their oil comes from the African continent.

The role of China and US has increased in this context as US has been already playing a major player in securing the energy corridors around the world, because energy resources are situated in the politically volatile regions of the world, and US has committed its military, politics, and financial resources to control and stabilize those regions so that energy supplies would not be disrupted, and they cannot risk another oil shock. For that purpose China is also willing to involve in making the energy corridors secure because



they want the unhindered supplies of energy to their economies as their energy demands can be increased up to 156% within the period of 2001-2025.

As a result of these energy demands China will look towards closer cooperation with oil producing African nations, as a result china will be the major competitor of the US in Africa and even on global thirst for energy due to its rising energy demands.

## **Conclusion**

Africa is a vastly unexplored continent and its rich discoveries in oil filed shows that it has vast oil reserves as it holds around 8% of the world oil reserves and producing around 11% of the world oil. The deep water oil discoveries in Angola, Nigeria, and Equatorial Guinea in recent years show the potential of Africa in energy sector.

Chinese rise to the world economic power and its rising influence in global matters has made the US to consider China as their number one rival in world who is challenging the US supremacy in global affairs. Chinese involvement in the Africa has been on such a large scale that today china became the number one trading partner of Africa with a trade volume of over \$100 billion dollar between China and Africa. African natural resources particularly oil represents an attraction for Chinese investment in the region as china imports 30% of oil from Africa compared to 15% of US.

African states looks towards US with suspicion due to its policies of hegemonising the region, whereas china has been welcomed in Africa as it is not interfering in the domestic affairs of the states, but also trying to improve their infrastructure and investing in the states, and improving economies. China has been the counter-balancer to the power of the US in the continent. China does not force its ideals over the African states as the US who forces the states to the western notion of democracy and human rights.

Despite China's increasing trade and military cooperation with Africa it is not becoming a hegemon power in Africa as it has bound to the policy of mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of the African states.

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