

China in Africa

IS CHINA GAINING CONTROL OF AFRICA'S RESOURCES?

China is expanding its presence and influence across Africa. Sino-African trade has jumped nearly six-fold in recent years, and some 800 Chinese businesses operate across the continent. After centuries of enslavement, colonization and failed economic policies imposed by the West, Africans are attracted by China's no-strings-attached model of aid and investment. But while China is helping to build new ports and roads, it also is inundating Africa with low-cost goods and labor, resulting in the loss of many African businesses and jobs. Moreover, China's ever-growing demand for oil and other natural resources has led it to invest in oil-rich countries like Sudan, which have been condemned by the West for genocidal practices or human-rights abuses. In response, the United States and other Western nations are playing catch-up in the race for African oil, while scrambling to hold onto their once-historic dominance over Africa's other resources and markets.

Chinese President Hu Jintao welcomes Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to Beijing during the November 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation — part of China's campaign to increase its trade and investments in Africa.



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China in Africa

BY KAREN FOERSTEL

THE ISSUES

Billboards displaying elephants, lions and giraffes roaming African savannas hung from every street corner. Wood-carvings of antelopes and other safari animals lined the streets of the main shopping district. And everywhere posters proclaimed, “Africa, the Land of Myth and Miracles.”¹

The three-day Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing in November 2006 ranked among China’s biggest extravaganzas in years, with 43 of Africa’s 53 heads of state attending the meeting to discuss how the two regions could expand economic, political and social ties.²

No expense — or detail — was spared. African drummers and Chinese acrobats greeted delegates as they entered the Great Hall of the People for the opening ceremonies. A 30-foot image of the Egyptian Sphinx looked down on passersby in downtown Beijing. Even the grass around the airport and conference venues was touched up with green paint.³

But China was offering its visitors more than just a good time. President Hu Jintao pledged to double China’s assistance to Africa by 2009, an economic package that also included:

- Preferential loans and credits to Africa totaling \$5 billion;
- A promise to increase two-way trade to more than \$100 billion by 2010;
- A \$5 billion development fund to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa;
- Cancellation of debts owed to China from the least-developed African countries;



A Chinese supervisor (right) oversees Africans working on a Chinese-funded road project in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2007. Sino-African trade has increased more than sixfold in recent years, bringing Chinese investment and cheap consumer goods to the continent but generating fears China could become Africa’s newest colonizer.

AFP/Getty Images/Simon Maina

- Doubling exports to China from Africa’s least developed countries, which receive zero-tariff treatment, and
- Construction of 30 hospitals, 30 malaria treatment centers and 100 schools in rural Africa.⁴

Apart from the promised government aid, Chinese companies and African governments and firms signed \$1.9 billion in business agreements.⁵

“China is opening itself up to Africa, coming with assistance,” said Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe. “We have nothing to lose but our imperialist chains.”⁶

Many African leaders feel the same. After a history of often brutal and rapacious colonization and failed economic policies imposed upon them by the West, African nations are increasingly turning East. China presents itself as a partner that has never colonized

Africa nor enslaved any African. And it emphasizes the fact that it is a developing country, so it understands the many issues Africa’s developing nations face.

Since the Beijing forum, China-Africa trade has increased almost 30 percent, and Chinese diplomats have held nearly nonstop meetings with African leaders.⁷ In early 2007, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing took a seven-nation tour across Africa to discuss public health, education, agribusiness and other areas of economic cooperation.⁸ A month later, President Hu opened a Chinese-built hospital in Cameroon, a Chinese-funded malaria treatment center in Liberia and a Chinese-language after-school program in Namibia.⁹ In September, representatives from 48 African countries met with their Chinese counterparts

at U.N. headquarters in New York — the first such meeting of its kind between Africans and the Chinese.¹⁰

“African nations never had this level of attention before,” says Chris Alden, head of the China in Africa program at the South African Institute of International Affairs and author of a new book, *China in Africa*. “African leaders have often been treated by the West as tin-pot dictators. Now they are being treated by China with a level of respect that all leaders crave.”

And the attention is paying off — for both sides. Chinese firms have won contracts worth more than \$30 billion for infrastructure projects in Africa, and nearly 800 Chinese companies now operate in Africa.¹¹ In 2005, Africa’s economy grew a record 5.2 percent, which many credit at least in part to China’s growing engagement.¹²

China Is Making Oil Deals Throughout Africa

China is negotiating oil deals with 13 of the 19 African countries with proven oil reserves. Africa's total reserves are estimated at 103 billion barrels, or about the same as Kuwait.

African Countries with Oil Reserves



Source: Cindy Hurst, "China's Oil Rush in Africa," *Energy Security*, <http://leav-www.army.mil/fmsol/documents/chinaafrica.pdf>

"If these trends continue, China will be the dominant economic trader across the continent," says Alden.

But many wonder whether China — while certainly helping Africa develop — is also becoming the continent's newest colonizer, extracting its vast natural resources, supporting corrupt governments for financial gain and making the African economy dependent on Chinese aid. Chinese exports

— often surplus products that can be sold well below cost — are flooding African markets and putting many local manufacturers and companies out of business. Likewise, thousands of Chinese workers are streaming into Africa to build roads, hospitals and other infrastructure, displacing the African labor force. By some estimates, from 750,000 to 1 million Chinese now live and work in Africa.¹³

"The relationship between China and Africa does resemble the standard European relationship — you pay as little as you can for the resources you need," says Patrick Smith, editor and publisher of *Africa Confidential*, a London-based publication focusing on African issues and events. "There is a real risk of them becoming like Western colonizers."

While African leaders are embracing Chinese products and aid, average Africans increasingly are opposing the growing presence of China in their back yard. During the 2006 presidential election in Zambia, opposition candidate Michael Sata made China — and its growing control over the country's copper mines — a major platform of his campaign.

"Zambia is becoming a province — no, a district — of China," Sata said during his campaign.¹⁴

He threatened to cut diplomatic ties with China and instead support the Chinese breakaway state of Taiwan and its claim to regain its seat in the United Nations. Ultimately, Sata lost the election, garnering 28 percent of the vote. But his opposition Patriotic Front party won key seats in Zambia's mining regions.¹⁵

Anti-Chinese sentiment in Zambia grew in 2005 after 46 workers died in an explosion at a Chinese-owned copper mine. The blast was blamed on poor safety conditions.¹⁶

In addition to copper, timber, minerals and oil are all in high demand by China's rapidly growing economy. And as the Middle East becomes increasingly unstable, China and the West both are looking to Africa for oil supplies. Now the world's second-largest oil consumer behind the United States, China has negotiated oil deals in more than a dozen African nations and buys nearly a third of its oil from Africa — an amount likely to grow quickly.¹⁷

"The single, biggest future worry [for the West] is access to petroleum resources," says Stephen Chan, a professor of international relations at the

University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. "China is buying [oil-producing] acreage and putting a lot of sweeteners in the deals. . . . The real danger is about 20 years up the line. You will have intense competition."

China's growing thirst for oil has led it to deal with resource-rich nations that have been ostracized by the West for human-rights abuses. Sudan, for instance, where more than 200,000 people have died in fighting in the Darfur region since 2003, is one of China's biggest oil suppliers.¹⁸ China repeatedly has blocked efforts by the West to impose sanctions against Sudan and until recently was reluctant even to pressure the Sudanese government to curb the fighting.

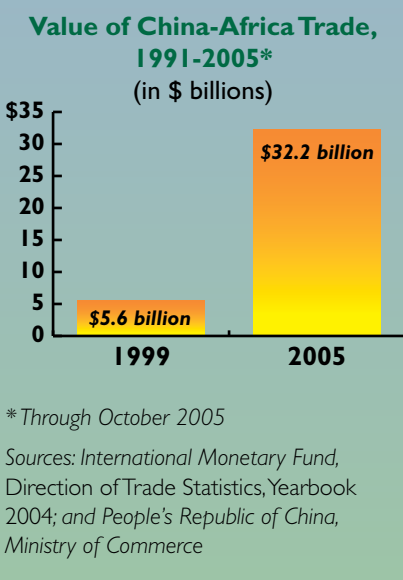
The West has condemned China's failure to demand that African nations comply with democratic, environmental or human-rights standards before receiving financial aid. Without such demands, the West says, loans and investments will benefit despotic regimes but do little for average Africans.

"There can be no sustainable development without good governance. Development is much more than just financial aid," says Amadeu Altafaj, a spokesman for the European Commission. "There must be links between security and development, social issues and development, the environment and development. China is not doing that" in its dealings in Africa.

But even as the West criticizes China's policy of non-interference, it is taking notice of China's rapid success in Africa and beginning to play catch-up. In an obvious effort to counterbalance Beijing's spectacular Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the European Union (EU) this past December hosted the EU-Africa Summit, which brought leaders from 53 African nations to Lisbon, Portugal, to discuss how to strengthen and expand political and strategic ties with Europe.¹⁹ Although the EU says the summit was

China's Trade with Africa Skyrockets

Sino-African trade jumped nearly sixfold since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000. The trade includes cheap manufactured goods from China and oil, commodities and raw materials from Africa.



not a reaction to China's influence in Africa, the EU's own summary paper about the summit opens by describing China's growing trade and economic power in Africa:

"China . . . has rapidly emerged as Africa's third most important trade partner [behind the United States and the European Union] with total trade amounting to about €43 billion [about \$32 billion] in 2006. . . . If the EU wants to remain a privileged partner and make the most of its relations with Africa, it must be willing to reinforce, and in some areas reinvent, the current relationship — institutionally, politically and culturally. . . . [I]t is now time to move on from a strategy for Africa towards **a political partnership with Africa.**"²⁰ As China's

influence continues to grow across the African continent, here are some of the questions analysts are beginning to ask:

Is China benefiting Africa's economy?

While the \$70-billion U.S. trade with Africa overshadows China's \$55.5 billion total, business between China and Africa is growing at a much faster pace.²¹ Sino-African trade more than quintupled between 1999 and 2004 — rising from roughly \$5.6 billion to \$29.5 billion — while U.S.-African trade doubled to \$58.9 billion during that same period.²²

Beijing, meanwhile, has overtaken the World Bank in lending to Africa. In 2005, for instance, China committed \$8 billion in loans to Nigeria, Angola and Mozambique while the World Bank distributed just \$2.3 billion throughout the continent.²³

China's increasing investments in Africa's oil fields, roads and telephone networks appear to have helped the currency of many African nations to rise in value. According to the Standard Bank Group, the Kenyan shilling, Nigerian naira, Zambian kwacha, Angolan kwanza and Ghanaian cedi have all gained strength this year.²⁴

At the same time, China's growing exports to Africa have inundated the continent with low-cost consumer goods. Televisions, washing machines and cell phones are now available to many Africans who previously couldn't afford such items. But critics say the influx of cheap goods is forcing many African retailers and manufacturers out of business.

"A large proportion of our population is very poor, so they have to buy the cheapest products available. So, yes, there is a positive impact," says Brian Brink, executive director of the South African Textile Federation. "But if that continues, there won't be anyone with jobs and money in their pockets. [Chinese goods are] destroying a lot more jobs" than they are creating.

Oil-Rich Countries Get China's Transport Help

Energy-hungry China is giving low-interest loans to oil-rich sub-Saharan countries to help overhaul aging roads and rail lines. Major projects funded in 2006 included:

- **\$1 billion to repair Nigerian rail lines and supply new equipment;**
- **Rebuilding nearly half of Angola's 754 roads;**
- **\$500 million to overhaul Angola's railways and**
- **An offer of \$1.5 billion to upgrade other parts of Angola's transportation network.**

Source: Raphael Kaplinsky, et al., "The Impact of China on Sub Saharan Africa," Institute of Development Studies, April 2006

As a result, tensions between African and Chinese merchants are on the rise. Fist fights and even riots have been reported in street markets across the continent, according to Brink and Chan. And migrant Chinese workers create additional tensions among average Africans by forming isolated communities across the continent.

"The Chinese tend to live in enclaves and don't contribute to the local economies where they're living," says Elizabeth Economy, director of Asian studies at the influential Council on Foreign Relations, a New York-based think tank. "If you export labor, people expect [them] to buy things [on the local market]. But the Chinese are very self-sufficient. It doesn't breed a sense that it's benefiting the local people."

And although Sino-African trade is growing rapidly, most African nations have a mounting trade deficit with China.²⁵ Many also worry that China's massive loans to African nations will plunge the continent deeper into debt. In 2006, the EU's European Investment Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that China's emergence as a major creditor was creating a wave of new debt for African countries, and the U.S.

Treasury Department labeled China a "rogue creditor" practicing "opportunistic lending."²⁶

"Africa sells raw materials to China, and China sells manufactured products to Africa. This is a dangerous equation that reproduces Africa's old relationship with colonial powers," said Moeletsi Mbeki, deputy chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs. "The equation is not sustainable for a number of reasons. First, Africa needs to preserve its natural resources to use in the future for its own industrialisation. Secondly, China's export strategy is contributing to the de-industrialisation of some middle-income countries."²⁷

Chinese officials tried to allay those concerns in May 2007, when Shanghai hosted the annual meeting of the African Development Bank. "We are truly sincere in helping Africa speed up economic and social development for the benefit of the African people and its nations," said Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.²⁸ China then pledged an additional \$20 billion for African infrastructure development over the next three years.²⁹

China had already invested billions in Africa's infrastructure. In Angola — desperate to rebuild after a 27-year civil

war — China International Fund Ltd., a Hong Kong construction company, funded a \$300 million project to repair the heavily damaged Benguela Railroad. In Sierra Leone, also recovering after years of conflict, China has paid for the construction and repair of government buildings, bridges, hydroelectrical facilities, Sierra Leone University and the national football stadium.³⁰

Western nations either have been reluctant to invest in these war-torn countries or demand preconditions many African nations are unwilling or unable to meet. "The Chinese are doing more than the G-8 to make poverty history," said Sahr Johnny, Sierra Leone's ambassador to Beijing, referring to the world's eight largest economies. "If a G-8 country had wanted to rebuild the stadium, we would still be holding meetings. The Chinese just come and do it. They don't hold meetings about environmental impact assessment, human rights, bad governance and good governance."³¹

Nicole Lee, director of TransAfrica, a Washington D.C., organization that promotes human-rights policies that benefit Africans and those of African descent, says China gives African leaders more power to decide what is best for their countries. "They can make their own choices and don't have to take loans from the U.S. with all these conditions and attachments," Lee says. "There may be some bad impacts from China, but African countries are being treated as partners, not subjects."

Indeed, she notes, Western preconditions on aid do not guarantee benefits to Africans. Often, those conditions — such as requiring aid recipients to slash public-sector work or privatize businesses — are designed only to "ensure that multinational corporations are getting rich off the privatization of Africa," says Lee. "But they are not always good for the lower or middle classes."

The Council on Foreign Relations' Economy says Africans have "a lot of mixed feelings" about China. "Certain

people benefit, some don't. But the more China engages, the more the picture is mixed."

Do China's policies threaten human rights in Africa?

China's drive for oil and natural resources has prompted it to forge close relationships with many governments that have been condemned by the West for corruption and human-rights abuses.

In 2003, China gave Angola a \$2 billion loan in exchange for 10,000 barrels of oil a day, with no strings attached.³² That allowed Angola to avoid good-governance conditions demanded by the IMF before it would provide aid. Shortly after the loan was granted, Transparency International ranked Angola as one of the world's most corrupt nations.³³

In Sudan — where the government is accused of condoning years of wholesale rape, murder and pillaging by Arab *mujabadeen* in the Darfur region — China has invested billions in the oil sector, imports 60 percent of Sudan's oil and is Sudan's largest source of weapons.³⁴

In May 2007, the United States imposed economic sanctions against Sudan, barring 30 companies controlled by the Sudanese government from using the U.S. banking system. The sanctions also specifically prohibited three individuals — including Sudan's minister for humanitarian affairs — from doing business with U.S. companies or individuals.³⁵

Until recently, China had been reluctant to leverage its billions in investments to demand that the Sudanese government halt the murder and destruction in Darfur. Instead, China had followed a policy of "non-interference" in countries where it does business, refusing to become involved in internal conflicts and often ignoring human-rights abuses, corruption or other social problems.

China respects the sovereignty of African nations to "independently resolve African problems," according to



AFP/Getty Images/Peter Parks

Chinese soldiers and engineers train in China before shipping out to Darfur in western Sudan. China recently agreed to send engineers, medics and transportation specialists to join U.N. peacekeepers in the war-torn region, partly to rebut Western criticism that China enables genocidal atrocities in Darfur by trading arms to the Sudanese government for oil. China has more than 1,200 peacekeepers building infrastructure and monitoring troubled villages in Africa.

the declaration adopted by China and 48 African nations during the 2006 Beijing forum.³⁶

"Business is business. We try to separate politics from business," Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong said in 2004, when asked about his government's cooperation with Sudan. "Secondly, I think the internal situation in the Sudan is an internal affair, and we are not in a position to impose upon them."³⁷

That attitude rankles human-rights groups. Amnesty International says the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country "must not become an excuse to remain silent when such states violate the human rights of their people. . . . Economic profits for China should not be built on the killings and displacement of Africans."³⁸

Besides buying Africa's natural resources without demanding reforms, China provided one-tenth of the arms bought in Africa between 1996 and 2003.³⁹ In 2004, China sold arms to

Zimbabwe, ignoring a U.S. and EU arms embargo imposed because of human-rights abuses. In Zimbabwe, where acute food and commodities shortages threaten social collapse and unemployment has reached 80 percent, China sold \$200 million worth of military aircraft and vehicles.⁴⁰ Chinese businesses also reportedly designed Mugabe's 25-room mansion and provided radio-jamming equipment to block anti-government broadcasts.⁴¹

In the past year, however, China has begun to distance itself from Mugabe and other governments condemned by the West. Li Guijin, China's special envoy for Africa, announced last September that Beijing had halted development aid to Zimbabwe and would only provide humanitarian assistance. "China in the past provided substantial development assistance, but owing to the dramatic currency revaluations and rapid deterioration of economic conditions, the economic outcomes of these projects have not been so good."⁴²

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Voracious China Threatens the Environment

African forests are most at risk.

While China is focusing largely on Africa's oil, it is also reaching deeply into Africa's forests. China imports half of all the tropical trees being logged around the world, making it the world's largest importer of tropical timber. In the past 10 years, China's wood imports have jumped more than 400 percent — much of it harvested under conditions outlawed by local and regional laws from forests around the globe.¹

Nearly half — 46 per cent — of Gabon's forest exports go to China, making it Gabon's largest timber trading partner.² Although Gabonese law requires timber to be processed before exportation — increasing its export value — China, with its abundance of cheap home-grown labor, wants only unprocessed logs. As a result, China encourages “flagrant disregard for the law,” according to the Web site of GlobalTimber.org.uk, which compiles data and studies on the international trade of wood products. According to the group, 80 percent of Gabon's timber exports to China are illegal.

China's timber imports from other African nations are just as shady, according to the group. Eighty percent of wood exports from Cameroon to China are illegal, as are 90 percent of the wood exports from Equatorial Guinea and Congo, the group says.³

Ironically, China's growing demand for wood stems from recent policies it has enacted to protect its own forests. After deadly floods along the Yangtze River in 1998, the Chinese government instituted environmental protections aimed at preventing future disasters, including new restrictions on timber harvesting and reforestation projects to combat erosion.⁴ While those strategies may be helping to protect China's forests, they are prompting China to look elsewhere for timber.

China's demand for oil also has caused environmental degradation in Africa's forests. Gabon recently forced China's Sinopec oil company to stop exploring for oil in a national forest after the company was found to be polluting, dynamiting and carving roads through the forest.⁵

African governments often are reluctant to prosecute China for its environmental activities because they “want the investments,” says Elizabeth Economy, director of Asia studies at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations.

But with pressure mounting from environmentalists, Beijing last August issued new guidelines to encourage Chinese logging companies working overseas to carry out their operations in a sustainable manner.⁶ In November, China and Brazil announced they would give Africa free satellite imaging of the continent to help it respond to threats from deforestation, desertification and drought.⁷

And in June, B&Q — one of China's largest home-improvement retail chains — announced it would guarantee that timber prod-

ucts in all its 60 stores come from legal sources. Moreover, the company pledged that within three years all its product lines will come from certified, ecologically responsible forestry operations. The move won high praise from the environmental group Greenpeace.⁸

But there is still concern that China will continue to put its need for resources above its concern for habitat protection, and that African leaders — desperate for Chinese investments — will ignore environmental regulations.

In October, environmental activists in Gabon expressed outrage over a deal they say could destroy one of the most beautiful natural waterfalls in central Africa. The watchdog organization Environment Gabon said the deal between Gabon and a Chinese iron mining consortium would exempt from taxes for 25 years the Belinga iron ore mining project — run by a predominantly Chinese company — and free it from responsibility for any “environmental consequences.”⁹

The project is set to be powered by a hydroelectric dam built at the spectacular Kongou Falls. No environmental-impact studies have been conducted — as required by Gabonese law — but construction has already begun, authorized by Gabon's Ministry of Mines.¹⁰

The Chinese firm reportedly is ready to conduct environmental assessments if authorities request it. But Gabonese officials say the socio-economic benefits of the project outweigh environmental concerns.

“Belinga just reveals the tensions born of overlapping interests between the necessary development of the country and protecting the environment, as well as Chinese penetration into Africa,” said a government official.¹¹

¹ Tamara Stark and Sze Pang Cheung, “Sharing the Blame: Global Consumption and China's Role in Ancient Forest Destruction,” Greenpeace, March 28, 2006, p. 1.

² Michelle Chan-Fishel, “Environmental Impact: More of the Same?,” *African Perspectives of China in Africa*, p. 146.

³ GlobalTimber.org.uk.

⁴ Alex Kirby, “Plan to tame Yangtze floods,” BBC News Online, Oct. 12, 2001.

⁵ Ian Taylor, “China's environmental footprint in Africa,” *chinadialogue*, Feb. 2, 2007.

⁶ “China issues rules on overseas logging by its companies,” Associated Press Worldstream, Aug. 29, 2007.

⁷ “China, Brazil give Africa free satellite land images,” Agence France-Presse, Nov. 28, 2007.

⁸ “Greenpeace applauds B&Q's initiative to clean up timber trade in China,” Greenpeace press release, June 12, 2007.

⁹ Francesco Fontemaggi, “Chinese iron mine project in Gabon pits greens against developers,” Agence France-Presse, Oct. 16, 2007.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

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Meanwhile, after years of blocking U.N. efforts to impose sanctions on Sudan, China now is joining Western forces in peacekeeping missions. In 2007, China sent hundreds of engineers, medics and transport specialists to join U.N. forces sent in to keep peace in Sudan until 2011. It is China's longest peacekeeping mission to date. Across Africa, China now has more than 1,200 peacekeepers building infrastructure and monitoring troubled villages.⁴³

"China's policy of non-interference is coming apart at the seams," says Smith of *Africa Confidential*, because it is finding that doing business with corrupt, unstable governments is often less than profitable. Continued fighting in Sudan threatens oil production, and China is losing money on its investments in Zimbabwe, he says.

And, as China strives to become a global superpower, it apparently is beginning to pay more attention to Western criticism. "China wants to be seen as a serious, international player," Smith says.

China contends that — as a developing nation that has overcome imperialism — it has a sincere interest in helping Africans also succeed and thrive. In fact, China considers "economic rights" and "rights of subsistence" as the most important human rights for citizens in developing nations, more important than the personal, individual rights promoted by the West.⁴⁴

China sent its first medical team to Algeria in 1963 and has since dispatched more than 15,000 medical professionals to 47 African countries. In addition, China has sent more than 500 teachers to Africa and trained more than 1,000 Africans in various professional skills. Each year, China provides more than 1,500 scholarships for African students.⁴⁵

Chinese officials and others cite the hypocrisy they see in Western nations

that criticize China for supporting tyrants in Africa while they themselves do business with despots elsewhere. "The United States is in Saudi Arabia," says Economy of the Council on Foreign Relations. "Chevron is in Burma. I'm certainly not an apologist for China, but before we call the kettle black we have to be very, very careful."

Are China and the West headed for a showdown over Africa's natural resources?

Western countries buy much more of Africa's oil than China does. China bought only 9 percent of Africa's petroleum exports in 2006, while the United States took 33 percent and Europe 36 percent.⁴⁶

But both China and the West are growing increasingly dependent on African oil as oil-rich Middle Eastern nations become less stable. China already imports more oil from Angola than it does from Saudi Arabia, and the United States has nearly doubled its oil imports from Africa since 2002.⁴⁷ In 2006, Africa provided more than 15 percent of U.S. oil imports. Experts say recent explorations in the Gulf of Guinea region show potential reserves that could supply 25-35 percent of U.S. imports within the next decade.⁴⁸

As China's economy expands, its future oil needs are expected to have consequences for the West on several levels. "Chinese demand is driving up commodity prices," says Alden at the South African Institute of International Affairs. "It's making the cost of energy more expensive for the West."

Ian Taylor, a professor of international relations at Scotland's University of St. Andrews, said there might be another concern for the West. "Chinese oil diplomacy in Africa has two main goals: in the short-term, secure oil supplies to help feed growing domestic demand back in China; and in the long-term position China as a global player in the international oil market," Taylor wrote. "The recent up-

surge in Chinese oil diplomacy may be linked to Chinese strategists at the national level who may well first and foremost be paying attention to the long-term goal of being in charge of oil resources at their source in a strategy to manipulate future prices."⁴⁹

Some say China's strategy to bypass international market pricing by controlling products at the source does not stop at oil but includes nearly every natural resource Africa has to offer. "Thus the price that China pays for specific commodities will be negotiated at source with recipient governments rather than the price determined by the 'market,'" charges a report conducted by the Centre for Chinese Studies at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. "This is the underlying factor of China's strategic engagement of African commodity- and energy-endowed economies."⁵⁰

Others, however, say China is not deliberately trying to push Western companies out of Africa's oil market but has simply made the most of the opportunities available to it to meet its energy needs.

"There is a race for these resources," says Helmut Reisen, coordinator of the Finance for Development Unit at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris. But he says China has monopolized African oil markets "only where the West deliberately leaves an empty space. Zimbabwe, Sudan, Angola — that's exactly where the Chinese have jumped in."

The vast economic resources of China's state-controlled oil companies have enabled China to attach billions in development aid to oil contracts and out-bid international companies for rights to Africa's petroleum reserves. For example, in 2004, as India was preparing to close a \$620 million deal to buy shares in an oil field in Angola, China at the last minute offered an additional \$2 billion in aid for various projects in Angola. Not surprisingly, China got the contract.⁵¹

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"The Chinese don't just go after the extractive resources," says Alden. "They produce a whole package. They build roads, hospitals and other things."

BP and ExxonMobil refused to comment for this report on China's growing hold on African oil. But during a September 2007 speech before the German Council for Foreign Policy, BP's regional president for Asia, Gary Dirks, said the West should not be concerned.

diversify portfolios. We don't fear a monopoly."

But others say there is evidence the West is more than just concerned about China's oil investments in Africa. The United States, they charge, is in fact beginning to use its military to maintain control over Africa's oil. In October 2007, the United States announced creation of AFRICOM, a new military headquarters devoted solely to Africa. It will be located near the Gulf of Guinea — home to one of the

cludes the question: "Is this an effort by the United States to gain access to natural resources (for example, petroleum)? Is this in response to Chinese activities in Africa?" AFRICOM's reply: "No. Africa is growing in military, strategic and economic importance in global affairs. We are seeking more effective ways to bolster security on the continent, to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises, to improve cooperative efforts with African nations to stem transnational terrorism, and to sustain enduring efforts that contribute to African unity." ⁵⁵

But many are skeptical. "I think it has everything to do with China and oil," says TransAfrica's Lee. "China has between 10 to 20 oil platforms off the coast. That is an absolute threat to our own energy interests in the Gulf of Guinea. The United States does not want to give up its hold there."

U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat from Ohio, agrees. "The hot, new area, of course, for exploration is Africa, and I imagine that may be a reason President Bush this week announced a new U.S-Africa Command," Kaptur told House colleagues last February. "China is interested in Africa's natural resources, including oil. And now the Bush administration is trying to play catch-up." ⁵⁶



Senegalese shop assistants in Dakar wait for clients under the watchful eye of the Chinese owner's sister — a visible sign of China's deep penetration into Africa's economies. Up to 800 Chinese companies operate in Africa — buying oil and raw materials, building infrastructure and helping China become a player in the continent's telecommunications and textile industries.

"Some rather simplistically see China as the root cause of rising oil prices. Others doubt the adequacy of the world's energy resources to meet the growing Chinese demand," Dirks said. "My own more narrow perspective is that the world has enough energy resources to meet growing energy demand for the foreseeable future, including from China, provided adequate investment is made in a timely manner." ⁵²

EU spokesman Altafaj agrees. "Most African countries are smart enough to

largest untapped oil reserves in the world. ⁵³

By some estimates, by 2010 the gulf will contribute at least one out of every five new barrels of oil used on the global market. ⁵⁴ The oil fields are scattered off the coast of southwest Africa in territorial waters claimed by Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and others.

AFRICOM's Web site denies that the new military force has anything to do with oil or China. Its homepage in-

BACKGROUND

Breaking Colonial Ties

China's first encounter with Africa dates back to the early 15th century, when Admiral Zheng He led some 300 ships on seven journeys across the globe. Although his celebrated expeditions between 1405 and 1423 took him as far as the eastern coast of Africa, China had little to do with

Africa for the next 500 years. Western nations, on the other hand, spent those centuries enslaving Africans and later colonizing the continent and extracting its raw materials to supply the needs of an industrializing Europe.

For more than 300 years, Europeans ran a lucrative and brutal trans-Atlantic slave trade, bringing an estimated 10 million Africans to the Americas — mainly Brazil.⁵⁷ After Britain abolished slavery in 1807, the Europeans began exploring Africa's interior, and by the late 1800s Europe's "Scramble for Africa" was in full swing. The colonial powers — primarily Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Germany — competed for vast tracts of Africa. And while they did build roads, railroads and other infrastructure — primarily to facilitate their exploitation of Africa's vast resources — millions of Africans died in the process.

As European nations expanded their control over Africa, they began to fear competition from one another for the continent's resources. In 1884, the European powers gathered at the so-called Berlin Conference to divvy up control of the continent. By 1902, all but 10 percent of Africa was under European control.⁵⁸

But by mid-century the colonial powers had been weakened by the First and Second World Wars and could no longer afford to maintain vast colonies abroad.⁵⁹ Before World War II, Africa had only three independent countries: Liberia — which was founded by freed American slaves and declared itself independent in 1847; Ethiopia, which was never colonized by a European power; and Egypt, which had achieved independence in 1922.⁶⁰

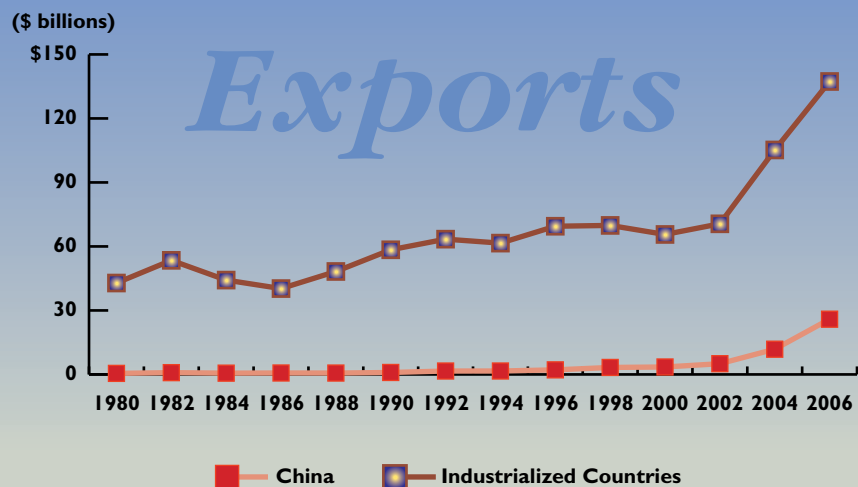
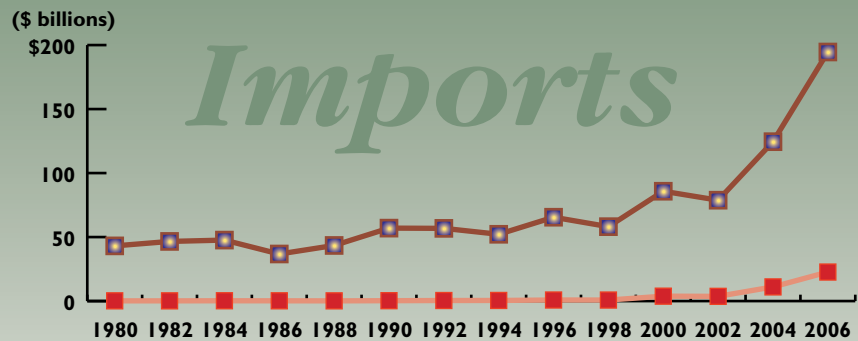
As Europe's colonies around the world gained independence after World War II, Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence — achieved in 1947 — inspired similar efforts across Africa in the 1950s.⁶¹

During that time, China began reaching out to Africa. In 1955, emerging

West Is Still Africa's Biggest Trade Partner

Sub-Saharan Africa's trade with China — the value of both exports and imports — has grown dramatically since 2000, but its trade with industrialized countries is still far bigger. Africa's trade with China reached nearly \$50 billion in 2006, or about one-seventh of its trade with the West.

Sub-Saharan Africa's Trade with China and the Industrialized Countries, 1980-2006



Source: Raphael Kaplinsky, et al., "The Impact of China on Sub Saharan Africa," Institute of Development Studies, www.uk.cn/uploadfiles/2006428172021581.doc

independent African and Asian countries gathered in Indonesia for the Bandung Conference — the first meeting of Third World nations — to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and spur political autonomy from the West. Attendees also launched the Non-Aligned Movement, pledging to support neither the

United States nor the Soviet Union in their Cold War struggles.⁶² Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai played a particularly strong role in the conference and launched China's first foray into international politics. The first Sino-African diplomatic ties were established with Egypt in 1956, and within 10 years China had solidified relations



AFP/Getty Images/Martin Van Der Beelen

A Chadian soldier mans a Chinese-made armored vehicle in April 2006 that reportedly was seized from rebel forces. Chad has accused neighboring Sudan — which gets most of its arms from China — of forming a new rebel army to attack Chad. China provided one-tenth of all arms bought in Africa between 1996 and 2003.

with more than a dozen African countries.⁶³

In the early 1960s, as African countries were gaining their independence, Zhou made a 10-country tour across the continent offering China's support. His trip was seen in part as a way to ensure Africa's opposition to Taiwan and to counter growing influence from the United States and Soviet Union, which supported "proxy" wars in Africa as offshoots of the global Cold War. China began sending doctors to Africa and provided aid to more than 800 projects across the continent, ranging from sports stadiums and the Tanzam railway — between Tanzania and Zambia — to providing scholarships to African students to study in Beijing.⁶⁴

"People forget how much goodwill China gained in Africa during this liberation era," says Chan of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. "Africans were struck by the mes-

sage Zhou Enlai put to them. It sustained the relationship between Africa and China. There was a genuine solidarity and empathy involved. Africans never forgot that."

Along with its ideological goal of spreading the "people's revolution" against Western imperialism, Communist China's outreach to Africa was also an attempt to counter Soviet influence. For instance, in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) — which did not gain its independence from Britain until 1980 — China backed the liberation movement of Robert Mugabe's Zanu party, while the Soviet Union backed that of Joshua Nkomo's Zapu party. In response, Mugabe's party turned profoundly anti-Soviet.

When Mugabe was elected prime minister in March 1980, Zimbabwe's close relationship with China was cemented. The two countries announced diplomatic ties on April 18, the day Zimbabwe won its independence from

Britain. Shortly after that, Foreign Minister Simon Muzenda visited Beijing to thank the government for its support, and Mugabe himself went to Beijing the following year.⁶⁵

Colonialism's Legacy

By the early 1980s, China had established diplomatic ties with nearly 40 African nations. However, during the political turmoil that followed the death of Chairman Mao Zedong in September 1976, China turned inward, and its influence and involvement in Africa waned.⁶⁶ But China's ideological goal of revolution and independence in Africa had been largely achieved. And having forged strong relationships with African leaders, China was not as fearful of Taiwan's influence in the region.

Despite their independence, African nations still faced many problems. Many lacked the technical and administrative skills needed to create healthy economies, and support structures — such as higher education, communications and armed forces — were poorly developed.⁶⁷

During the post-independence era, the United States thought Africa did not have sufficient natural resources to warrant large U.S. investments, which could have helped to stabilize and strengthen the new African nations. "It is highly unlikely that most African countries will obtain external assistance or investment on anything approaching the scale required for sustained economic development," said a 1965 CIA assessment. "No African raw materials or other resources are essential to U.S. security."⁶⁸

After the colonial rulers left, ethnic violence erupted across Africa in nations where colonizers had drawn artificial boundaries without regard to traditional tribal territories. Many of the new African countries also embraced

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Chronology

1400s-1900s

Chinese explorers make first contact with Africa. Europeans expand across Africa, enslaving, colonizing and exploiting natural resources.

1405-1423

Chinese Admiral Zheng He reaches the east coast of Africa.

1515

Portugal ships the first slaves from Africa to colonies in the Americas.

1884-1885

German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck convenes major Western powers to negotiate colonial control of Africa.

1914

Europeans finalize plan to divide Africa among themselves into 50 countries. Great Britain colonizes much of eastern and southern Africa, while France takes much of West Africa, and Portugal takes Mozambique and Angola.

1950s-1960s

African nations begin fighting for — and gaining — independence. China establishes diplomatic relations with more than a dozen African nations by 1969.

1955

Africa-Asia summit in Bandung, Indonesia, promotes economic and cultural cooperation and opposes “colonialism in all of its manifestations.”

1956

China establishes diplomatic relations with Egypt, the first official Sino-African ties.

1959

China establishes diplomatic relations with Sudan; then with eight more African countries, including Uganda, Congo, Kenya and Somalia.

1963-1964

Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai makes a 10-country tour across Africa offering China's support for the continent's growing independence.

1980s-1990s

After turning inward following Mao Zedong's death in 1976, China reemerges and rapidly expands its outreach to Africa.

1980

After years of support from China during its struggle for independence, Zimbabwe and China establish diplomatic relations on the same day Zimbabwe gains its independence.

1983

China establishes diplomatic ties with Angola.

1996

Chinese President Jiang Zemin tours six African nations, promising financial aid “without political strings.”

1998

China begins a 957-mile-long pipeline in Sudan, the largest foreign oil project in China's history.

2000s

China invests billions in Africa, securing its hold across the continent.

2000

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is founded, sparking

increased trade between the two regions.

2003

FOCAC holds its second ministerial meeting in Ethiopia, during which China cancels \$1.27 billion in African debt and vows to increase overall Sino-African trade to \$28 billion by 2006. . . . China gives Angola \$2 billion in exchange for 10,000 barrels of oil a day, allowing Angola to avoid IMF good-governance requirements.

2004

Trade between China and Africa reaches \$29.5 billion. . . . China becomes second-largest consumer of oil, behind United States. . . . China sells Zimbabwe \$200 million in arms, despite U.S., EU embargos.

2005

Nigeria signs \$800-million deal to supply 30,000 barrels of crude oil per day to China.

2006

Forty-eight African nations attend FOCAC's Third Ministerial Meeting in Beijing, where Chinese President Hu Jintao announces \$5 billion in preferential loans and credits to Africa and pledges to increase Sino-Chinese trade to \$100 billion by 2010.

2007

China hosts African Development Bank's annual meeting in Shanghai, promising \$20 billion for infrastructure development in Africa over the next three years. . . . European Union holds an EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, amid controversy over the attendance of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, condemned by the West as a dictator and suppressor of human rights.

China Floods Africa with Cheap Textiles

Hundreds of thousands of Africans have lost their jobs.

Since China began exporting large quantities of cheap clothing and fabric to Africa about seven years ago, more than 80 percent of Nigeria's textile factories have been forced to shut down, and an estimated 250,000 workers have been laid off.¹

"It's very serious," says Brian Brink, executive director of the South African Textile Federation. The Chinese can supply materials at prices that are "very much below" local prices, and sometimes even "below the cost of raw materials. That's usually bloody impossible."

Africa's textile and clothing industry — perhaps more than any other sector — has been hit hardest by China's economic expansion across the continent. And South Africa and Nigeria have suffered the most.

In South Africa, textile business membership in Brink's federation has declined by nearly half — dropping from 75 to just 40 in the past seven years. If the trend continues, Brink says, the 150,000 textile and apparel workers across Southern Africa face a troubled future.

"Those who are less resilient will pack up and close their doors," he says. "There will be others that survive in areas that China is not yet operating in, such as in the technical areas, products supplied to technical specifications. China is not there — yet."

About 90 percent South Africa's clothing imports come from China, according to the federation, most of it surplus items from orders destined for the U.S. market. That's what allows China to sell them in Africa for below cost — despite South African regulations that prohibit such "dumping" trade practices.

Brink said relations between Chinese businessmen in South Africa and local textile workers have grown so tense that fist fights regularly break out in local markets. In the face of growing resentment that Africans feel toward Chinese businesses, Beijing officials have voluntarily agreed to cut back on textile exports to South Africa and to provide technical training and assistance to African textile manufacturers.

"The Chinese government does not encourage Chinese enterprises to take other countries' markets by purely increasing the quantity of their exports," President Hu Jintao said during an eight-nation tour of Africa in early 2007.²

Meanwhile, Chinese Commerce Minister Bo Xilai met last fall with his counterparts from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo to discuss how China can help the cotton industry in West Africa. In addition to sharing technology and

sending experts to help increase production, China pledged to build clothing and textile factories and import more cotton from West Africa to boost textile jobs in Africa.³

Brink says those moves will help Africa's textile industry but won't solve all the problems. He admits that many African retailers are contributing to the flood of cheap Chinese goods by undervaluing or not declaring imports in order to avoid paying duties.

Cheap Clothing Means Lost Jobs

Since China began exporting low-cost clothing to Africa, many textile workers in Southern Africa have lost their jobs. More than half the textile workers in Swaziland, for instance, lost their jobs between 2004 and 2005.

Decline in Textile Jobs in Southern Africa, 2004-2005

	2004	2005	% decline
Kenya	34,614	31,745	9.3
Lesotho	50,217	35,678	28.9
S. Africa	98,000	86,000	12.2
Swaziland	32,000	14,000	56.2

Source: Raphael Kaplinsky and Mike Morris, "Dangling by a Thread: How Sharp Are the Chinese Scissors?" Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England, 2006

"It's not just China being efficient. It's not just the little beavers working hard," Brink says. "There is illegal activity, and that takes two to tango. We have to get our own house in order."

¹ Chris Alden, *China in Africa*, p. 81.

² "China, Africa build new partnership on old ties," Xinhua General News Service, Oct. 2, 2007.

³ "Chinese minister meets officials on boosting cotton industry in west Africa," Xinhua News Agency, Oct. 2, 2007.

Continued from p. 12

socialism, prompting the United States — fearful that the continent might tilt toward the Soviet Union — to provide economic and military support to anti-

communist despots or rebel groups. The beneficiaries of U.S. funding during this period included notoriously corrupt strongmen such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Re-

public of Congo), Jonas Savimbi of Angola and Hiseene Habre of Chad.⁶⁹

In the 1980s, African nations borrowed heavily from the West. By 1986 Africa's foreign debt had reached \$162 billion,

and interest payments alone were eating up two-thirds of all the money the continent received in foreign aid. By 1989, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were forcing 30 heavily indebted sub-Saharan African nations to submit to “structural adjustment” programs designed to institute more market-oriented policies.⁷⁰

The countries were forced to lower the value of their currencies to make their exports more attractive, shrink bloated budgets and bureaucracies and privatize state-run enterprises. But the spending limits kept many economies in deep recession and hurt Africa’s poor. And although the requirements were initially said to be temporary, they soon become permanent World Bank and IMF policy.⁷¹

As the 1980s came to a close, African nations grew disillusioned with Western financial aid and the economic and political strings it carried. Many African leaders felt China could offer an alternative model in which “bread comes before the freedom to vote,” in the words of Ndubisi Obiorah, director of the Center for Law and Social Action in Lagos, Nigeria.⁷²

China’s Return

As the 1990s dawned, Africa’s economy continued to falter, Taiwan reached out to African leaders for support in regaining its seat in the United Nations and China re-emerged across the continent.

Earlier, African nations grateful for China’s support during their struggles for independence had voted in 1971 to strip Taiwan of its U.N. seat and reassign it to China. But in the 1990s, several African leaders began playing politics with their allegiances, switching back and forth between China and Taiwan. As a result, both Asian governments sent economic aid to Africa in hopes of winning African support at the U.N.⁷³ In 1996, Senegal moved



Kidnapped Chinese oil workers land in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, last April after being released. Anti-government rebels held the six men for nearly a week after attacking a Chinese oil refinery in Ethiopia. Attacks on Chinese businesses have been on the rise in Africa.

AP Photo/Xinhua/Wang Ying

its embassy from Beijing to Taipei, Taiwan’s capital — for the third time — after receiving a large development aid package. Gambia got \$48 million from Taiwan the previous year when it moved its embassy from China to Taipei.⁷⁴

Shortly after the Senegal move, Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a six-nation tour of Africa, promising financial assistance “without political strings” and pledging that “hand in hand the two sides will march towards the 21st century.”⁷⁵ During the trip he offered Zaire \$10 million for a cobalt and copper mining project, plus a “gift” of \$3.6 million.⁷⁶ Also in 1996, China announced a \$24 million investment in a gold mine in Sudan, despite U.N. Security Council sanctions against the country for “terrorist” activities.⁷⁷

Besides countering Taiwan’s influence, China was interested in Africa’s consumer markets for its burgeoning exports and commercial enterprises. China’s economy has grown an average of 9 percent each year over the last two decades.⁷⁸

In 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was founded to promote stronger trade and investment relations between both the public and private sectors in China and Africa. It was wildly successful: Sino-African trade more than quintupled between 1999 and 2004 — from \$5.6 billion to \$29.5 billion — and continued to grow to \$32.2 billion by the end of October 2005.⁷⁹ At the second FOCAC meeting in 2003, China promised to help train 10,000 African professionals,⁸⁰ cancel \$1.27 billion in debt to 31 African nations and increase overall Sino-African trade to \$28 billion by 2006 — a target that was far exceeded.⁸¹ During the third FOCAC meeting in Beijing in 2006, China dramatically pledged to increase Sino-African trade to \$100 billion by 2010 and to pour billions more into financial aid, infrastructure development and social services.

China also has expanded its cultural ties to Africa, offering more than 18,000 government-sponsored scholarships to Africans through 2005, signing 65 cultural agreements with

African countries, implementing 151 cultural exchanges and organizing visits by performing-arts troupes from each African region.⁸²

"China is the largest developing country, and Africa is home to the largest number of developing countries," President Hu told the 2006 FOCAC summit. "Building strong ties between China and Africa will not only promote development of each side but also help cement unity and cooperation among developing countries and contribute to establishing a just and equitable, new international political and economic order."

He added: "We in China will not forget Africa's full support for restoring the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. Nor will we forget the sincere and ardent wish of African countries and people for China to realise complete and peaceful reunification and achieve the goal of building a modern nation."⁸³

Resource Envy

Many analysts believe China's biggest motivation for expanding its influence in Africa is its growing need for natural resources. Until the 1990s, China could meet its own energy needs by tapping its massive oil reserves in Daqing in northern China.⁸⁴ It also relied heavily on coal. But because of coal's low efficiency and negative environmental impacts, China has increasingly switched to gas and oil.

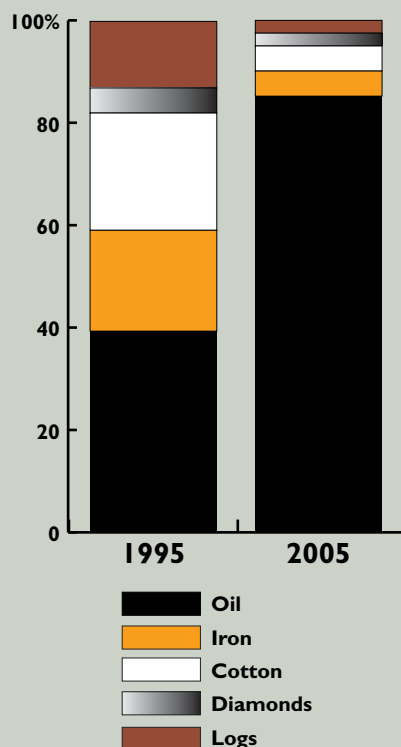
Once Asia's largest oil exporter, China became a net importer of oil in 1993. Between 1995 and 2005 oil consumption in China doubled to 6.8 million barrels per day.⁸⁵ In 2003, China became the world's second-largest oil consumer, behind the United States, and its oil demand is expected to continue growing steadily.

China has spent the last 10 years negotiating deals with African nations to secure oil supplies. In 1998, China

Oil Comprises More of Sino-African Trade

Oil represented 85 percent of Africa's exports to China in 2005, more than twice the amount 10 years ago.

Percentage of Africa's Exports to China, 1995 and 2005
(by commodity)



Source: Sanusha Naidu and Martyn Davies, "China Fuels its Future with Africa's Riches," South African Journal of International Affairs, Winter/Spring 2006

sent 7,000 Chinese engineers and construction workers to Sudan to build a 957-mile pipeline, the largest contracted foreign oil project in China's history.⁸⁶ The project — Sudan's first step into oil exploration — was seen as a possible panacea to the war-torn country's problems.⁸⁷ Since then, China has become the leading developer of Sudan's oil reserves, importing 60 percent of the country's output.⁸⁸

Using a combination of political prowess and technological contributions, China also has made oil deals with Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria and others.⁸⁹ To gain a foothold in Nigeria, for instance — where Western companies had dominated the oil reserves for decades — China has promised to build and launch a communication satellite. In 2005, China and Nigeria signed an \$800 million deal to supply 30,000 barrels of crude oil per day to China. More recently, China and Nigeria agreed China would provide a \$4 billion infrastructure investment package in exchange for first-refusal rights on four oil blocks. Many believe China could easily replace some Western firms when their drilling licenses come up for renewal.⁹⁰

Besides oil, China has an unquenchable thirst for minerals needed to produce everyday items, such as door knobs, faucets and cell phones for its 1.3 billion population.⁹¹ "Anywhere there are extractive resources, if China hasn't moved in yet, they will," says Alden, of the South African Institute of International Affairs.

In 2004, China bought 14 percent of Africa's timber exports and 85 percent of its cobalt.⁹² South Africa is China's fourth-largest supplier of iron ore. Gabon, South Africa and Ghana are among China's top five manganese suppliers and together account for more than a third of its total manganese imports. Minerals accounted for 97 percent of Sierra Leone's exports to China in 2005 and 87 percent of Zambia's. Minerals accounted for 92 percent of Tanzania's exports to China in 2004.⁹³

"China's primary goal is to import from Africa those key raw materials that will sustain its booming economy," says David Shinn, former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso and currently an adjunct professor at The George Washington University. "The Communist Party is more or less predicated its future on maintaining booming

economic growth, and if it should stumble, then I think the party is in danger of losing power.”⁹⁴ ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Communism to Capitalism

Today, China’s outreach to Africa is no longer driven by ideological goals but by the economic and energy resources it needs to become a global superpower. “The West is worried about the impact of Chinese capitalism, not communism,” says Alden.

China is Africa’s third-largest trading partner, behind the European Union and the United States.⁹⁵ And it’s doing everything it can to gain on the competition.

In the first quarter of 2007 senior Chinese officials — including President Hu and then-Foreign Minister Li — visited 15 African countries.⁹⁶ Besides hosting the African Development Bank’s annual meeting in May and promising \$20 billion for infrastructure development, Beijing pledged \$8 million to the World Health Organization to beef up African countries’ capacity to respond to public health emergencies.⁹⁷ In September China agreed to lend the Republic of Congo \$5 billion in exchange for access to the country’s extensive timber, cobalt and copper. Congo said the loan will help build roads, hospitals, housing and universities.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, China is strengthening its political ties with Africa. In September, the first annual political consultation meeting between Chinese and African foreign ministers was held at U.N. headquarters in New York. Foreign ministers and representatives from 48 African countries attended the



Getty Images/Per-Anders Pettersson

Youngsters — some only 8 years old — work at a copper mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The mineral-rich country’s huge copper deposits are helping to fuel China’s economic boom. To help move the minerals, China is investing \$5 billion in Congo to build nearly 2,000 miles of roads and rail lines plus 31 hospitals, 145 health clinics, two new universities and 5,000 housing units.

event chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit.⁹⁹

“China has a long history of relationships with African countries,” says Economy, of the Council on Foreign Relations. “The development aspect — providing doctors and engineers — has remained fairly constant. But now there’s an extraordinary jump in the level of Chinese business deals. They’re not pushing communism anymore.”

Africa Reacts

African governments are welcoming China’s financial aid and business investments. The African Union accepted China’s offer to build — free of charge — a new conference center for the organization next to its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.¹⁰⁰

For many Africans, China has become the new symbol of prosperity, replacing the United States as the land of opportunity. “The United States is a nice

place to visit,” said Ahmet Mohamet Ali, a trader in Chad who returned from his first trip to China in October. “China is a place to do business.”¹⁰¹

Direct flights to more than 20 African cities leave weekly from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Regular flights from the United States, on the other hand, serve only eight African cities.¹⁰²

In fall 2007, Chinese officials held a university exposition in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi to recruit even more African students for study in China. African students made up about 2.3 percent of the 162,000 foreign students in China last year. The Chinese government, which already allocates one-fifth of its international scholarships to Africans, plans to double the number of scholarships for Africa to 4,000 by 2009.

According to the official Xinhua news agency, more than 8,000 African students studied Mandarin last year.¹⁰³

Violence against China and its businesses in Africa, however, is increasing. President Hu was forced to cancel a February 2007 trip to Zambia



AFP/Getty Images/Kambou Sia

Tons of fish were seized from two Chinese ships caught in Ivory Coast waters in December 2007. Fishing groups claim Chinese fleets are exploiting Africa's resources by illegally "bottom trawling" — which some equate with clear-cutting the ocean bottom of all flora and fauna.

because of threats of massive protests against China's growing hold over the country's copper mines and poor labor policies toward mine workers.¹⁰⁴ In the past year, numerous Chinese businesses in Africa have been attacked. Rebels attacked a Chinese-run oil refinery in Ethiopia, killing 74 and kidnapping six Chinese employees. In Nigeria — where militants are seeking greater local share of oil revenues — 16 Chinese oil workers were kidnapped in three separate incidents. And gunmen in Kenya killed a Chinese engineer working on a highway project and injured another. Chinese officials, however, have pledged not to let the attacks hinder their business investments in Africa.¹⁰⁵

Competition Heats Up

Western nations continue to criticize China's business practices in Africa while stepping up their own efforts to reach out to the continent.

"The increasing presence of China in Africa has worked as kind of a

wake-up call among some European nations," says the European Commission's Altafaj. "We had a feeling that many Europeans didn't put Africa as high as it should be on its list."

In December, the European Union hosted an EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, in order to develop joint strategies on such issues as trade, human rights, climate change and security. The meeting had originally been scheduled for 2003 but was cancelled because of controversy over whether Zimbabwe's President Mugabe should be allowed to attend. Western countries condemn Mugabe as a dictator who uses violence against his opponents and has expropriated land from white farmers and plunged the country into economic collapse. The same controversy threatened to derail the December summit when Prime Minister Gordon Brown vowed that neither he nor any senior British cabinet member would attend if Mugabe participated.¹⁰⁶

African leaders angrily threatened to boycott the summit if Mugabe was excluded and accused the West of resorting to its colonial ways. "This is again

another way of manipulating Africa," Gertrude Mongella, the Tanzanian president of the Pan-African Parliament, said in response to Brown's boycott. "Zimbabwe is a nation which got independence. In the developed countries there are so many countries doing things which not all of us subscribe to. We have seen the Iraq War — not everyone accepts what is being done in Iraq."¹⁰⁷

Despite Brown's opposition, other European leaders were quick to insist that Mugabe be allowed to attend. "There has been enough moralization from Europe," says Altafaj. "We should not underestimate the negative impact of former colonizers lecturing Africans. This summit will be a good opportunity to have conversations about good governance. We do not intend to give lectures." Earlier, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said it was up to African leaders to decide who should represent them at the summit — a sign of the growing pressure European countries feel to strengthen ties with Africa in the wake of China's influence.¹⁰⁸

And U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson made a six-day tour to Ghana, South Africa and Tanzania in November to "shine a light" on a part of the world that investors have overlooked. At the end of the tour, President Bush pledged \$250 million to start three government funds that will invest in African debt, stocks and companies.¹⁰⁹

Robert Mosbacher, Jr., president of the Overseas Private Investment Corp., which will administer the government funds, said U.S. companies had to do "a bit of catch-up" in Africa after having focused in recent years on Eastern Europe, Russia and parts of Latin America. "There's no doubt the U.S. can do more to take advantage of growth opportunities in Africa," he said.¹¹⁰

As the West is taking notice of China's activities in Africa, China is beginning to listen to Western criticism of its dealings with African nations.

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Is China becoming Africa's newest colonizer?



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WRITTEN FOR *CQ GLOBAL RESEARCHER*, DECEMBER 2007

Every time the colonial question is raised in relation to China's ties with Africa, the Chinese refute it. But the question cannot be easily whisked away.

Now casting itself as the world's largest developing country, China associates its destiny with that of Africa, insisting that both were once humiliated by foreign imperialists and colonial rulers.

But despite its claim that it wants to contribute to Africa's development, a closer look shows another face of China. No longer promoting "international proletarianism," China now strives to gain access to Africa's natural resources and isolate Taiwan. In the process, a colonial power with an Asian face may have entered the continent. And like previous colonizers, China, too, is in Africa to achieve a colonial strategy.

China's goal in Africa is geared toward fulfilling narrow national interests, and the goodwill surrounding it can be perceived as the softer side of a hard-core project. For all its debt cancellation and financial support of Africa, China gets even more in return. While grabbing Africa's natural resources, China dumps its cheap exports in Africa. So far, China's business investments have not reversed the unequal terms of trade that attracted criticism for Western colonizers of the past. The ports, refineries and railways being built by the Chinese serve China's eagerness to "exfiltrate" Africa's resources. And its equity investments in energy and mining industries are all part of its long-term interests.

Meanwhile, cynicism is China's watchword. Under the guise of non-interference and respect for sovereignty, China closes its eyes to lapses in good leadership, corruption, arms sales and violations of human rights and democratic norms.

Giving legitimacy to "rogue states" and providing loans under dubious conditions, China has indirectly rehabilitated political authoritarianism in Africa. Many African leaders now brag about China's achievements in poverty alleviation and economic recovery. Hailing this "model" from the East, they say that it "works" and does not "dictate." Contrasting it to the "failed" Western solutions, these leaders are too happy to have found in China their new tutor. They are no longer orphans of the demise of the Cold War nor do they need to go, bowl in hands, begging the now-discredited World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Yet the ruthless, capitalistic behavior of China's businessmen in Africa is bound to produce a backlash. Soft-power alone will not prevent it.



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Colonialism consists of intricate politico-economic-juridical and socio-cultural structures. Traditional colonizing powers maintained authority and control by ruthless use, as necessary, of police power. By this definition, China is clearly not seeking to colonize Africa.

But China is seeking to increase its influence in Africa. For more than 50 years, China has had a strategy of developing soft power in Africa. They have been quietly making a place for themselves across the continent. The Chinese have established hundreds of businesses across the continent and have poured billions into roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Chinese officials meet regularly with African leaders.

We are seeing the product of years of careful planning. The Chinese worked closely with many African nations during their struggles for independence in the 1950s and '60s. Understanding Africa's resentment toward Western colonialists and the possibilities of exploiting that resentment, China moved into an influence vacuum when colonialism ended.

In desperate need of oil and working hard to become a global superpower, China is doing whatever it needs to do to achieve those goals. In the process, China has made mistakes, rousing the anger of some Africans and prompting many to accuse it of colonialism. Through grants and loans, the Chinese government has helped many small Chinese businesses open up shop in Africa, competing with Africans and forcing many workers to lose their jobs. And Chinese businesses in Africa are known for their poor labor rights and low wages.

But China doesn't have any intention of colonizing Africa. The Chinese are firmly planted in their own environment. Their concerns are with their homeland.

And Africans will not allow themselves to be re-colonized. Already, we have seen Africans protesting Chinese policies that hurt their livelihoods. Africans will simply not put up with another colonial power. By 2020, Africa will still be Africa. It will not be China. Africans don't plan to be dominated again. Africans will retain their concept of who they are and who they want to be.

Does China want to have influence? Yes. Does China need to use its military to colonize Africa? No. They've demonstrated that their investments in Africa's infrastructure can win and influence people. The Chinese are doing things the West did in the past to profit from Africa's resources. But the Chinese are doing it better and without the need to colonize.

Continued from p. 18

After years of blocking U.N. sanctions against Sudan, China last year agreed to send more than 300 peacekeepers as part of the U.N. mission to end years of bloodshed in Darfur.¹¹¹

In fact, President Bush's special envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, last fall credited China for its work to help end the fighting in Darfur. It was Chinese influence, Natsios said, that finally convinced the Sudanese government to accept a July Security Council resolution to authorize a 26,000-member U.N. military and civilian peacekeeping operation in Darfur. "The Chinese are like a locomotive that is speeding up," he said. "They are even doing things we didn't ask them to do."¹¹²

Many observers say China is working hard to improve its global image with the approach of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. "It's about reputational risks, especially with the build-up to the Olympics," says Alden, of the South African Institute of International Affairs. "They don't want to be seen as an evil face." ■



To protest the genocide in Darfur, actress Mia Farrow holds an Olympic-style torch at a rally last Dec. 10 outside the Chinese Embassy in Washington. Activists are pressuring Beijing — which hosts the Olympics this summer — to use its influence in oil-rich Sudan to stop the killing.

AP/Getty Images/Alex Wong

vestment. But China has proven that Africa can be a powerful ally.

"It's not too late [for the West], but it's getting late," says the European Commission's Altafaj. "We better upgrade our relationship now — for the benefit of both sides."

But along with China and the West, India, Russia, Brazil and others also are expected to look increasingly toward Africa as their energy needs grow and business opportunities expand. Russian trade with Africa has tripled since 2000, up to \$3 billion a year. Russia also has invested \$3.5 billion in oil exploration across the continent in recent years, and new energy deals in Algeria have been accompanied by \$4 billion in arms sales.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, Africa is relishing its newfound international popularity — opening its doors to a multitude of investors. "Angola and others have discovered it's in their best interest to stay diversified," says Reisen at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. "You don't want to replace one monopolizer with another."

But some fear the new flood of investments — especially from countries such as China that put no restrictions on the funding — will actually feed the continent's already serious corruption problem.

"The Chinese are much more prone to do business in a way that today Europeans and Americans do not accept — paying bribes and all kinds of bonuses under the table," said Gal Luft, codirector of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, a Washington educational organization focusing on energy security. "These are things that have been rampant throughout Africa. . . . It will be much easier for those countries to work with Chinese companies rather than American and European companies that are becoming more and more restricted by this 'publish what you pay' initiative and others calling for better transparency."¹¹⁵

OUTLOOK

Belle of the Ball

China is expected to honor the promises it made at the Beijing summit to rapidly expand its business, cultural and infrastructure investments across Africa. In part, that commitment is dictated by China's need for resources. By 2020, analysts say, China will have 120 million private cars on the road and be forced to import at least 60 percent of its oil.¹¹³

But Western countries also are expected to invest more financial and diplomatic energy in Africa. "The West

is already beginning to get off their duffs. This could mean greater trade and aid from the West," Alden says. "I sense the West is going to increasingly feel China as a source of pressure and provide more assistance and government investment to Africa in the coming years."

Increased attention from both the East and the West will undoubtedly inject much-needed infrastructure and economic support into developing Africa, which could benefit both sides. For decades the West has ignored the continent's potential as a business and political partner, generally seeing African governments as too corrupt or too weak to provide healthy investment environments. Or they saw Africa as a disaster zone — plagued by famine and disease — worthy of humanitarian assistance rather than financial in-

International pressure is also forcing China to play a bigger role in confronting human-rights abuses in Africa. China has already softened its policy of “non-interference” and sent peacekeepers to Darfur. “The pressure on China is immense, especially with the Olympics coming up” in China, says the Council on Foreign Relations’ Economy. “China is getting the message that it’s not enough just to be a global superpower.”

It is unclear, however, whether China’s recent actions to protect human rights in Africa is simply a short-term public relations campaign or a long-term change in policy. “If you’re a glass half-full person, then you’ll say there won’t be that much difference between Western policy and Chinese policy in the future,” says Alden. “If you’re a glass half-empty person, you’d say it’s just window dressing.”

But Africans say the onus is not just on China. Africans themselves must act to ensure they do not fall prey to yet another colonial power.

“China’s stance on Africa is likely to harden in the long term, with more manipulation and exploitation and less benefit for the continent,” said Moreblessings Chidaushe, a lobby and advocacy program officer with the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, based in Harare, Zimbabwe. “One way out would be the development of a comprehensive African policy on China.”

Chidaushe called on the African Union to “increase African countries’ security” and make it easier for them to deal with China — which she called a “superpower wannabe” — rather than making individual approaches “that are easily susceptible to manipulation.”¹¹⁶

Some say China’s growing involvement in Africa is giving leaders across the continent the power they need to improve social conditions and human rights. “Human rights cannot be imposed upon a nation. It’s indigenous,”

says TransAfrica’s Lee. “China is opening more options for these governments and for their people. Africans now have more room, more flexibility to determine how they can improve their countries.”

But even those who question China’s motives, business practices and human-rights policies say the renewed interest could benefit the continent economically, politically and socially. “Africans will rise up significantly in the coming years,” says Chan at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. “They will rise up with the assistance of everyone — not just China.” ■

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The Next Step:

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Flamini, Roland. "Nuclear Proliferation." *CQ Global Researcher* 1 Apr. 2007: 1-24.

APA STYLE

Flamini, R. (2007, April 1). Nuclear proliferation. *CQ Global Researcher*, 1, 1-24.

CHICAGO STYLE

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Voices From Abroad:

JACQUES CHIRAC

Former President, France

Cooperation is positive, even for Europe

"With China's heft in the international arena growing, China's role in Africa is also increasing. I think it is a positive thing. It is good for China, Africa and Europe because [in this process] China has gained new room to develop itself, Africa has got new investment and Europe has been stimulated to be competitive."

Xinhua news agency (China), December 2007

LIU JIANCHAO

Foreign Ministry
Spokesman, China

Our projects do no harm

"When China is building roads and schools and providing health infrastructure and agricultural technology to African countries, are we damaging human rights in Africa? Are we hurting good governance in those countries? African people are benefiting from China's projects."

The Associated Press, November 2006

AMARE KIFLE

Small-business Contractor,
Ethiopia

Doing it our way

"We are tired of the condescending American style. True, the American government and American companies have done and do a lot here, but I always feel like they think they are doing us a favor . . . telling us how to do things and punishing

us when we do it our own way. These Chinese are different. They are about the bottom line and allow us to sort out our side of the business as we see fit."

The Christian Science Monitor, June 2007

SPOKESMAN FOR NIGERIAN MILITANTS (Anonymous)

Colonialism abounds

"The Chinese used to be more populist. But now they are turning into colonialists themselves."

The Boston Globe, June 2007

EDMUNDO VAZ

Former Adviser, Guinea-
Bissau Finance Ministry

We need money, no strings attached

"China is not like the World Bank. They don't attach all these conditions on the money. The West makes us wait, but we're a poor country, we don't have time to wait."

Chicago Tribune, January 2007

EDITORIAL

New Vision, Uganda

Understanding China

"Before declaring China as a close and dependable friend, African policymakers need to ask themselves one important and valid question: That is, does Africa understand communist China well? If the answer is no, then, Africans need to find a way of understanding this . . . emerging Asian economic giant."

July 2007

NEVA SEIDMAN

MAKGETLA

Economist, Congress of
South African Trade
Unions

No benefits for the poor

"There's no question that for upper classes, [China's trade with South Africa] is a boon. The problem is any lower-class South Africans would rather have a job."

The Washington Post, June 2006

WANG HONGYI

African-relations Specialist,
China Institute of
International Studies

We don't impose our values

"The Western approach of

imposing its values and political system on other countries is not acceptable to China. We focus on mutual development, not promoting one country at the expense of another."

The New York Times, November 2006

FESTUS MOGAE

President, Botswana

We are equal in Chinese eyes

"China treats us as equals, while the West treats us as former subjects. That is the reality. I prefer the attitude of China to that of the West."

China-Africa Co-operation Summit, Beijing, November 2006



Gavin Coates/Hong Kong