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## Implications of the US-led War on Terror for Africa-China relations

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Cover: A member of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) holds his newly issued badge. <http://www.hoa.africom.mil/>

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## ABSTRACT

From the start of the new millennium, China came to rapidly match – and in some instances replace – the US as the pre-eminent economic and political player in the East African region. This paper examines whether this was due to the launch of the War on Terror by the US in 2001, a development which many scholars claim associated that country with insulated (and sometimes controversial) priorities; a disregard for international institutions and laws; an ill-received bellicosity against African states and African allies; and above all, political ‘interference’ and even regime change in countries in several world regions, including Libya and Iraq.

In theory, all these factors could have diminished American influence and created a vacuum that came to be filled by China which, while fighting its own war on terror (Liu 2012; Malik 2002: 252), has avoided playing this out on the international arena and shunned interference, thereby bolstering its ‘soft power’ appeal among African countries.

It finds, however, that the ‘war on terror’ only led to the US being displaced by China in one of the four East African countries studied, namely Sudan. In the others, Uganda, Kenya and Djibouti, the war on terror actually strengthened US involvement. But China’s presence in these states has strengthened at the same time. Therefore, if not due to adverse responses to the US-led War on Terror, what accounts for China’s rise?

Ironically, the study shows that US-led efforts against terrorism in African countries have helped to make them safer for Chinese investment as well. Ultimately, then, China’s rise on the continent can be attributed to a combination of efforts to create a safer environment as well as heightened levels of Chinese foreign aid, trade and FDI. Additionally, it points to important conclusions about how most African states view international engagement involving the US and China.

Rather than applying the bipolar Cold War lens of maintaining relations with one major power only (either China or the US), states such as Kenya, Uganda, and Djibouti are open to engagement on a positive-sum basis with both these countries insofar as both have developmental routes to offer that are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, those states that have severed relations with the US due to the War on Terror – Gaddafi’s Libya and currently Sudan – already had poor relations with it previously. Therefore, we can conclude that an even more active Chinese role in peacekeeping and anti-terror efforts on the continent will not have any negative repercussions.

Keywords: Africa-China relations, Africa-US relations, non-interference, War on Terror, FOCAC, AFRICOM.

## INTRODUCTION

Each epoch is marked by a defining issue that dominates the political environment, and from which few states and institutions are insulated. The War on Terror has been such an issue. As such, it is plausible to assume that the triadic relationship among Africa, China and the United States has been affected by the US-led War on Terror launched in the wake of 9/11. As Pham (2006: 39) put it in an article in the journal *Comparative Strategy*,

while the countries of the greater Middle East have figured most prominently as theatres of operations in that conflict, other areas of the globe, including Africa, have likewise experienced a shift in U.S. patterns of engagement as well as the underlying reassessment by American policy-makers and analysts of their place in the overall global geography of security and other interests.

The full import and complexities of the US-led anti-terrorism campaign on the economic and political relationships among Africa, China and the US remain understudied. This study seeks to assess whether it has reduced US influence in East Africa on the one hand, while enhancing China's role as a key investor and political ally on the other.

It concludes that despite the 'neocolonial' character of some US interventions, such as its advocacy of regime change in Iraq, Libya and North Korea, the War on Terror has not weakened ties between the US and East African countries. Indeed, it can be argued that the reverse has happened; since terrorism also threatens African countries, their relations with the US have actually been strengthened, due to increases in arms supplies and other forms of support for combating terrorism. Therefore, the hypothesis that the War on Terror created a 'soft power' vacuum that was exploited by China does not seem to hold for countries in East Africa, except for Sudan. However, its relations with the US were already poor prior to the launch of the War on Terror.

Ultimately, then, it seems that China's improved relations with countries in the region are not due to a growth in anti-West sentiment but rather a growth in pro-China sentiment built on China's own soft power in the form of

development assistance, trade, and foreign direct investment. As a result, it could be argued that Chinese investment in African countries has been boosted by the fact that the War on Terror has made them safer places for investment. If anything, therefore, this paper is a clear indicator that greater Chinese involvement in ensuring a safer Africa will have a favourable outcome. This is already evident in Djibouti, where China will build its first ever foreign naval base.

The following section will provide a brief overview of critiques of the War on Terror by some African leaders as well as China. The next section will reflect the findings of four case studies, namely Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. The following section will discuss the significance of these findings, notably the implications of the War on Terror for Africa-China relations. The paper will conclude with a brief overview of its main findings and arguments.

### ***African and Chinese critiques of the US-led War on Terror***

The War on Terror has been internationally divisive, with some arguing that not enough is being done, and others that it has gone too far in curtailing civil liberties and transgressing international law, failing, in the process, to address the root causes of terrorism. This view is held by some African countries as well as China.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, the Chinese government lit up the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai in the colours of French national flag to show its solidarity with the EU, as did many other governments, organisations and civil groupings worldwide. Three days after the attacks, however, the government-affiliated Beijing Review ran a cover article which carried the subtitle 'The West's moral paralysis contributes to the rise of extremism' (Tiezzi 2015a). The article criticised the 'cynicism' and 'double standards' displayed by the US and its allies in Syria, particularly in respect of the 'role of nation states in upholding a defensible view of what constitutes right and wrong' (Tiezzi 2015a). It concluded that the US 'has too often resorted to bombing as a solution' (Tiezzi 2015a).



Like the US and the West more broadly, China has not been insulated from the effects of Islam-based terrorism. In December 2015, two weeks after members of ISIS had executed a Chinese national in Syria, the terrorist group released a four-minute song in Mandarin calling upon the million Muslims in Xinjiang province to 'wake up, take up weapons and fight' against the Beijing government (Liu 2016). The fact that ISIS directed its message at this province is telling, as the Chinese government has long had to deal with sporadic attacks by a secessionist movement in the region, as it has in Tibet. China has designated these two regions as Autonomous Administrative Regions, characterising them as marked by the 'three evils of separatism, terrorism and religious fundamentalism' (Chung 2002). China, however, has a somewhat different perception and interpretation of terrorism than the US.

In February 2015, as the Obama Administration was preparing to host a high-level anti-terrorism summit in Washington, an article in the Chinese state-owned newspaper *Xinhua* argued that the US strategy against terrorism had only served to 'destroy states' and further 'unleash radical forces' (Tiezzi 2015c). Another article in the same issue stated that 'Uncle Sam has effectively played the role of a terrorist breeder, when the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria turned the region into a burning battleground with no peace, security and stability in sight' (Tiezzi 2015c). For China, therefore, the biggest problem with the US-led War on Terror has been its repeated interventions in sovereign countries, which has tended to make things worse instead of better.

African states have criticised the War on Terror in similar terms. Indeed from the outset the campaign was very unpopular in Africa. To begin with, only five African states joined the 'coalition of the willing' which assisted the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Many African leaders, including Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela and Robert Mugabe, opposed the way in which the War on Terror took shape. Indeed, Mandela declared that, by invading Iraq, President Bush sought to 'plunge the world into a holocaust'.

(Indeed, it has emerged that Mandela even planned a trip to Iraq, along with the British business tycoon Richard Branson, to try to convince Saddam Hussein to step down. However, the bombing began before they could

leave. See *The Scotsman* 2017).

Firstly, the War on Terror has been characterised by interventions in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. Having just emerged from the shadow of the Cold War, many African countries were once again threatened with becoming proxies in a war they had not started. They might be affected by 'moral drainage' surrounding the US, as well as 'tied aid', or fresh, politically motivated conditionalities for development assistance.

Indeed, in 2009 the US withheld \$50 million in food aid from the al-Shabaab-controlled territory in southern Somalia, saying that it 'had no alternative' but to do so (Perry 2011: 25). And in 2010, the US instructed aid workers not to pay tolls in terrorist-controlled territory. While this strategy succeeded in weakening al-Shabaab, it also brought millions of Somalis to the brink of starvation (Perry 2011: 25).

The War on Terror has been actively fought in sub-Saharan Africa due to the truly international nature of the terrorist organisations designated as antagonists by the US and its allies. However, unlike the Middle East, where the US sent in its own troops, US-designated terrorists in Africa have been fought by African states themselves, with US assistance. Al-Shabaab gained notoriety for the 2013 attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in which 67 people were killed and 175 were injured. This was an act of vengeance following the deployment of Kenyan troops against the fundamentalist militia in Somalia a few weeks previously.

The War on Terror can also not be divorced from the Palestinian question. Many African countries oppose what they perceive to be the repression of Palestinians by the Israeli government, with US support (Othman 2004). Going back to the famous Afro-Arab-Asian Bandung Conference of the early 1950s, many African countries still pledge solidarity to Palestine, and see the War on Terror as a means of avoiding the real issue, namely the future of Palestine, the cause of many 'terrorist' originations, whose members are therefore regarded as 'freedom fighters' (Othman 2004). Given this, they are depicted in much the same way as African 'freedom fighters' in the colonial era (Tiezzi 2015c).

**Table 1: Favourable views of the US in seven sub-Saharan African countries, 2014-15**

Country	Favourable view of the US (%)	
	Pew 2015	Gallup 2014
Kenya	84	58
Nigeria	76	60
Uganda	76	48
Ghana	89	54
South Africa	74	58
Tanzania	78	49
Senegal	80	81

Source: Pew Research Centre 2015; Gallup 2014.

## FOUR CASE STUDIES

The principle of non-interference has played a major role in African relations with the developed world. In light of previous experiences under the notorious Structural Adjustment Programmes introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Africa has sought to attract investors and development partners who, while investing in infrastructure, business and social projects, would also adopt a hands-off approach towards issues of governance, human rights, and the expenditure of aid. The salience of this can perhaps be best demonstrated by the growing unpopularity of the IMF and the World Bank in Africa. Against this backdrop, African countries have increasingly looked towards China as an alternative source of investment as well as aid, due to its policy of non-interference in the domestic policies and politics of receptor states (Shah 2013: 6). The fact that the growth in Chinese investment in Africa coincided with the advent of the War on Terror is also significant.

According to Tiezzi (2015c: 3), the US, which has a longer history of political involvement in Africa, 'lags behind China in its ability to effectively use strategic investments in Africa as tools for developing relationships of geopolitical importance, a diplomatic advantage that China has used to its advantage in Africa.'

In 2011, Chinese exports to African countries amounted to \$73.4 billion, more than those from any other country, and more than double the value of US exports to Africa, which stood at \$31.5 billion. China's trade with Africa rose to \$200 billion in 2013, still more than double that of US-Africa trade. In the decade from 2005 to 2015, Chinese FDI in Africa increased to \$2.5 billion in 2012 (FOCAC 2016), and development assistance in the form of 'unconditional', interest-free and concessional loans totalled \$14.41 billion between 2010 and 2012 alone (FOCAC 2016).

Table 1 reflects favourable views of the US in seven sub-Saharan countries in 2014 and 2015. It shows high and increasing levels of favourable views in all seven countries. In 2014, favourable views of China (70%) were higher than of Europe (41%), Asia (57%), and even Latin America (57%). According to Dollar (2016: 2), this probably reflects China's positive impact on economic growth in Africa. He also notes that 89% and 75% of respondents in Nigeria and Kenya respectively, the two largest economies in their subregions, had positive views of China.

However, the US presence in Africa has continued to expand and has reached new heights, despite not keeping up with that of China. This shows that there has been no dramatic disengagement between Africa and the US due to disapproval of the War on Terror. Therefore, while

in principle the War on Terror should have turned popular opinion in Africa against the US, and diminished its influence, quite the opposite seems to have happened.

Before and after the 9/11 terror attacks on targets in the US, transnational terrorists sought refuge in weak or failing African states. While this may at first seem to be a security issue, Gaibulloev and Sandler (2011: 90) have drawn attention to its economic significance, and the fact that, in Africa, terrorist groups have sought out economic targets. This included the Luxor massacre by the so-called Islamic Group on tourists in Egypt in late 1997, in which 62 people were killed and 24 injured, and the car bombing of the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa on 28 November 2002 by al-Qaeda-related terrorists from Somalia in which 16 people were killed and 80 injured. On the same day, two surface-to-air-missiles were fired at an Israeli charter airliner taking off from Mombasa airport, narrowly missing their target.

Given this, Gaibulloev and Sandler list five ways in which terrorism threatens African economies and therefore African development.

- Firstly, terrorist attacks enhance uncertainty, which limits investments and diverts FDI to 'safer venues'.
- Secondly, augmented security outlays by a targeted government crowd out productive public and private investment.
- Thirdly, an anti-terrorism campaign increases the costs of doing business through, for example, more expensive insurance premiums, higher wages, and higher security expenditure, which erodes profits and undermines productivity.
- Fourthly, terrorist attacks destroy or degrade the key infrastructure that facilitates commerce, such as transport, communication and electricity.
- Finally, terrorism impacts on specific industries and sectors, such as airlines and tourism, with a direct bearing on economic growth. This is especially true when terrorists target assets in an export-led economy, which may result in importing states sourcing their

products from more reliable countries (Gaibulloev and Sandler 2011: 91-92).

This may have contributed to African support for the War on Terror, and specifically in East Africa. In February 2007, President George W Bush announced the creation of the Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa (AFRICOM), which covers all of Africa except Egypt, which continues to fall under the Central Command (CENTCOM) (McCarthy 2011). Moreover, the top five contributors to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) are Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Burundi.

Analysts point on that anti-terrorism campaigns also provide rulers with the means to stabilise their regimes, and remain in power. One example is Uganda, which gets arms from the United States and its allies due to its compliance with the War on Terror. Another example is Djibouti, whose geo-strategic location directly opposite the Middle East has gained its favour with the US and France (Trofimov 2016: 2). As long as the War on Terror continues, it is unlikely that the West will stop militarily aiding its African allies (Trofimov 2016: 2).

Case studies of four East African countries follow, aimed at assessing whether their political and economic ties with the US have diminished; whether this decline has strengthened their ties with China; whether they have sought to maintain relations with both the US and China; and the role of the War on Terror in this triangular relationship.

## ***Djibouti***

Strategically located at the meeting points of the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, Djibouti 'has become a new and vital US ally as the War on Terror increasingly focuses its efforts on the Horn of Africa' (Giralt 2003: 1). In exchange for training to strengthen border security and military assistance, the country assists the US through intelligence-sharing as well as overflight rights and access to military bases and airfields.



**Table 2: Top 10 countries exporting goods to Djibouti, 2014**

Rank	Exporting country	Djibouti imports	
		Value (US\$000)	% imports
1	China	1 127 833	38.4
2	Indonesia	306 828	10.5
3	India	297 623	10.1
4	US	125 554	4.3
5	France	93 019	3.2
6	Ukraine	89 529	
7	Ethiopia	79 576	2.7
8	Turkey	60 142	2.0
9	South Korea	58 052	2.0
10	Thailand	56 599	1.9
Others		639 736	21.6
Total		2 934 491	

Source: International Trade Center, 2017.

After 9/11, the US established the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in Djibouti. It works with East African countries to ‘detect, disrupt and defeat transnational terrorism in the region’ (Giralat 2003: 2). By 2003, some 2000 US troops were thought to be in Djibouti to monitor terrorist movements in the region as part of the new task force, and by 2000 US troops based in Djibouti also conducted military exercises in preparation for the war in Iraq. US forces have also undertaken humanitarian work in the country, including renovating hospitals. In an interview with the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), Djiboutian President Ismail Guelleh said this had ‘definitely had a positive effect on Djibouti’ (Giralat 2003:1-3).

Yet the US is not Djibouti’s leading export partner; instead, it is fourth. The number one position, and by a margin of 28%, is occupied by China. In other words, Djibouti cooperates with the US in respect of counterterrorism, and with China in respect of trade. These two factors are related in that the US provides an environment that is receptive to investment (i.e., less vulnerable to terrorist disruptions), paving the way for international invest-

ments, notably from China (Table 2).

Notably, in 2016, China completed its first ever foreign military base in Djibouti. Rather than choosing to host either US or Chinese bases, Djibouti has chosen to host both, thus implying that this is not a matter of choosing either the US or China, but rather of maximising security, and therefore investment.

## Kenya

When polled in November 2011, most Kenyans (82%) held a favourable opinion of the way in which their government and the US were handling the threat posed by al-Shabaab (Afrobarometer 2017). Kenya and the US have a long-standing history of cooperation on combating terrorism, dating back to the attacks on the US Embassy in Nairobi in 1998. Subsequent to the 9/11 attacks and the attacks on the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, ‘a key target city due to the high numbers of tourists and the very visible presence of US naval vessels’, this partnership grew stronger, and ‘in light of the instability of surrounding countries, Kenya has remained a stronghold for the US in its fight against al-Qaida’ (Lindenmayer and Kaye 2009: 2).

Table 3 (overleaf) reflects trade flows between the US and Kenya in 1999-2016. It shows that Kenya’s trade relations with the US have strengthened consistently since the early 2000s, with minor declines during recessions (2008-2010). This demonstrates that the War on Terror has had no adverse impact on political or trade relations with the US.

At the same time, China has been a continual lender to Kenya for a decade or more. In fact, it is Kenya’s number one bilateral lender, with up to 19.4% of the total external debt in the second quarter of the 2016/17 financial year owed to China (Kibii 2016: 2). Kenya’s total external debt stood at Sh1.83 trillion at the end of 2016 (Kibii 2016: 2). Like Djibouti, therefore, Kenya does not see cooperation with the US and China as mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, even though China was the fourth country to open an embassy in independent Kenya, trade relations strengthened during the presidency of Mwai Kibaki, who adopted a stronger-anti-terrorism stance, and height-

**Table 3: US-Kenya trade flows, 1999-2016**

Year	Total annual US exports to Kenya (US\$m)	Total annual US imports from Kenya (US\$m)
1999	189.01	106.4
2000	237.5	110.2
2001	577.6	128.1
2002	271.3	188.6
2003	196.5	349.3
2004	347.5	352.2
2005	573.4	348.0
2006	430.7	353.7
2007	520.4	325.0
2008	442.4	343.5
2009	653.6	280.6
2010	375.3	311.1
2011	461.4	381.6
2012	568.6	389.5
2013	635.7	452.3
2014	1 640.7	591.3
2015	943.4	573.1
2016	393.9	551.5

Source: US Department of Commerce International Trade Association 2017.

ened the crackdown on al-Shabaab on the Somali border. Therefore, a safer Kenya might again have facilitated Chinese investment in Kenya.

## Sudan

US-Sudan relations were poor even before the launch of the War on Terror. Indeed, according to the official history on the US Department of State website (2017):

Sudan broke diplomatic relations with the United States in 1967 after the start of the Arab-Israeli War. Relations were re-established in 1972. Sudan established links with international terrorist organizations

resulting in the United States’ designation of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1993 and the suspension of U.S. Embassy operations in 1996.

Although the US Embassy was reopened in 2002, Sudan has until recently been subject to sanctions for its lack of cooperation with the US on countering terrorism, and is still labelled as a sponsor of terrorism.

The main player in Sudan has been China. Chinese-Sudanese relations date back to 1959 when Sudan became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to recognise the People’s Republic of China. Today, China is the biggest investor in Sudan. However,

China’s relationship with Sudan is exceptional because of the absence of competition from the United States. Sudan has been under U.S. sanctions since 1995 in part due to the country’s past ties to terrorists like Osama bin Laden. That same year, President Omar al-Bashir signed Sudan’s first oil deal with China (Hammond 2017: 2).

Given this, the situation in Sudan seems to conform with the hypothesis examined by this paper, namely that the War on Terror resulted in a power vacuum that has been filled by China. Today, China controls about 75% of Sudan’s oil industry. Nevertheless, President Omar al-Bashir has announced intentions of creating new business opportunities with American companies and the wider world. Indeed,

as the result of an intensive bilateral effort focused on achieving progress by Sudan in five key areas of engagement (countering terrorist groups, ending the threat of the Lord’s Resistance Army, ending the Government’s offensive internal military operations, ending Sudan’s destabilizing role in South Sudan, and improving humanitarian access), on January 13, 2017, the United States announced the broad lifting of certain long-standing sanctions against Sudan (US State Department 2017: 1).

**Table 4. US-Uganda trade flows, 2007-2016**

Year	Total annual US exports to Uganda (US\$m)	Total annual US imports from Uganda (US\$m)
2007	80.3	26.7
2008	88.5	52.7
2009	119.1	88.1
2010	93.5	57.7
2011	94.0	45.9
2012	100.1	34.5
2013	122.7	47.1
2014	78.3	46.1
2015	88.3	64.1
2016	69.1	51.5

Source: US Department of Commerce International Trade Association 2017.

## Uganda

Among East African countries, Uganda has been the most active in cooperating with the US in its War on Terror; indeed, it was the first to deploy troops under AMISOM in Somalia in March 2007. As Young (2010:2) has noted, ‘alignment with US-backed efforts to see Somalia pacified – so as to prevent the incubation and export of terror – serves both to smooth relations and to attract US logistical and training support for the Ugandan army’.

To date, Uganda has deployed 12 battle groups in the mission area. Given that this has been accompanied by US aid, it has been portrayed as a ‘proxy war’ on behalf of the US (Trofimov 2016). Moreover, in exchange for putting Ugandan troops at America’s disposal, Uganda has received some US\$15 billion in foreign aid from the West since 1990 (Epstein 2016: 1). Uganda also has stable and growing trade relations with the US (see Table 4).

At the same time, however, the trade volume between China and Uganda in 2012 came to \$575.5 million, comprising some \$546 million in Chinese exports to Uganda, and \$29 million in Chinese imports from Uganda. Put differently, Uganda exports to China amounted to just five per cent of imports from China (Jaramogi 2014: 1).

In 2016, Warmerdam and Van Dijk conducted a survey of Chinese private enterprises active in Kampala, Uganda., aimed at establishing their motivations for coming to Uganda. They found that privately owned enterprises mentioned access to local markets as a motivation more frequently (92% of all interviewed) than state-owned enterprises (67%) or hybrids (83%). Some 56% of SOEs had come to Uganda for Chinese government-funded projects, but non-governmental projects, projects funded by international organisations such as the World Bank and African Development Bank, and Ugandan government-funded projects were also important motives.

On the other hand, a sizeable number of Chinese POEs (17%) and SOEs (8%) were attracted by the perception that Uganda had a stable, safe and secure investment climate (Warmerdam and Van Dijk 2013: 5), thus replicating the findings in respect of Kenya and Djibouti.

## IMPLICATIONS AND PROSPECTS

Figure 2 (overleaf) depicts the gains made in Africa from US and Chinese involvement following the US-led War on Terror.

Chinese and Western investments in Africa are similar in that they gravitate towards larger markets and resource-rich countries. However, Western investors tend to stay away from countries with poor governance records in respect of property rights and the rule of law. Given that they are able to take greater risks than private US companies, Chinese investing agencies are indifferent to those factors (Chen, Dollar and Tang 2016: 3), and Chinese SOEs have worked with African countries in times when they have been regarded as unstable and conflicted (Konings 2007; Large 2008: 50). For example, China has been both willing and able to invest in Africa when western

Figure 2: Gains in East Africa resulting from US-led War on Terror



Source: Developed by the author.

financiers have been averse, as in the case of Nigeria’s oil sector as well as Sudan, which, after being classified as a ‘sponsor of terrorism,’ experienced substantial divestments by the US and the West at large (Ngwenya and Prinsloo 2016).

Nevertheless, China also values and needs stability on the continent, and Chinese investments are largely directed at more stable countries (with South Africa being its leading trade and FDI partner). Indeed, Chinese soldiers are already on the ground in Sudan, Liberia, and the DRC. A senior military officer has declared that African stability is ‘in the global interest’ (quoted in Alden and Wu 2017: 61). China has to profit from its investments, and for that reason the PRC, like any investor, has largely invested in low-risk states with minimal levels of extrajudicial violence such as terrorism. This is largely due to US efforts against terrorism, especially in the Horn of Africa, where it recently opened its first foreign naval base.

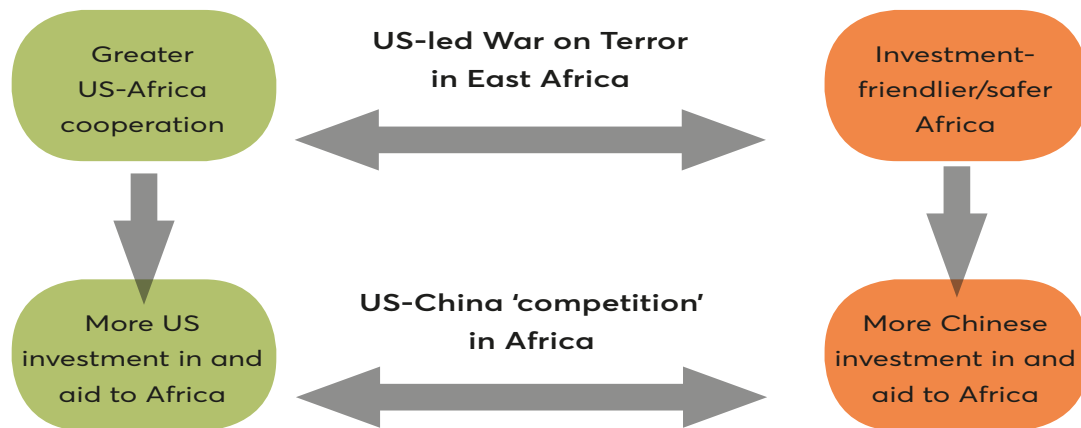
Besides safer environments, Chinese involvement in Africa has benefited from unmatched resources as well as effective timeliness. In other words, China’s rising presence in East Africa since 2000 is due to a combination of the region being marginally safer as well as the foundations that were laid in the 1990s. China identified Africa as a key market in the early 1990s. Jiang Zemin, President of the PRC from 1993 to 2003, stressed the guidelines of

China’s Africa policy as ‘equality, sincere friendship, unity and co-operation, and common development’ (Shelton 2001: 114). In 1996, President Jiang visited a number of African countries to consolidate Sino-African relations. During the visit, 23 economic and technical agreements were signed to establish what Beijing saw as a foundation for long-term co-operation based primarily on enhancing trade links. In fact,

By the end of 2000, Chinese companies had established 499 companies in Africa with a total contractual investment of \$990 million. According to official statistics, the total trade volume between China and Africa increased by 63% in 2000. The privatisation policies adopted by many African countries since the late 1980s have led to the opening of African markets to external investment (Giralt 2003:2).

The Forum on Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) has played a major role in enhancing China’s role in Africa (Wenping 2016). Serving as a conduit for Chinese soft and economic power into Africa, it has fostered cooperation in such diverse areas as infrastructure, education and training and the environment, and platform for working out economic deals including interest-free loans as well as FDI. Another area of cooperation is laid out in the Johannesburg Action Plan, emanating from the sixth FOCAC summit held in South Africa in 2016, for clamping down

Figure 3: Gains in East Africa from the US-led War on Terror, with Chinese feedback loop added



Source: Developed by the author.

on terrorism (FOCAC 2016: 34). This speaks to our conclusion that China has benefited from and therefore has a stake in a safer East Africa, and Africa in general.

Scholars with a ‘scramble for Africa’ perception see China and the US as locked in a renewed contest for African resources. China and Africa are competing over global, and therefore also East African, markets. It is therefore ironic that China’s growing presence on the continent, at least partly enabled by the increased stability brought on the US counter-terrorism campaign, may have resulted in the US remoulding its African foreign policy. In other words, China’s growing presence may have prompted the US to re-evaluate its relationship with the continent. In what economists term the ‘crowding-in effect’, the Obama administration began to seek a new, China-like path into the continent (Burnett 2014).

In 2014, in what Lauren Dickey (2014:1) labelled the ‘belated beginning ... of America’s treatment of Africa an economically and politically strategic continent’, the US held a US-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington. It was the first time a sitting American president had called all African heads of state to a single event ‘to discuss regional issues and the macro US-Africa relationship’ (Dickey 2014: 1).

At the meeting, Obama, among others, committed US companies to investing some \$14 billion in the African construction, manufacturing, energy, finance, and technology sectors (Dickey 2014). This was said to be an attempt to match \$75 billion in Chinese aid to Africa from 2000 to 2011 (Dickey 2014: 2). Indeed, even AGOA.Info, the website linked to the US African Growth and Opportunity Act, acknowledges that the US is wrestling with the growing presence of China in the region:

China’s efforts to cement political and economic ties with Africa have long been overstated by the West as posing a threat to the continent. US media outlets even called on Washington to contain China’s ascent in Africa to protect its strategic interests in the continent (AGOA 2014).

This allows us to extend the model in Figure 1, reflecting the feedback loop in Chinese and US investments in Africa (Simmons 2014: 1). It now works like this: the US-led War on Terror helps to stabilise Africa. This allows China to enhance its investments in Africa, which leads to enhanced American investment in turn. This self-reinforcing process could continue ad infinitum.

It is clear that China wants a more peaceful Africa, for the returns on Chinese investments can only be maximised in a secure environment. This is why the PRC has partici-



pated in anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden adjacent to the Horn of Africa as well as the Gulf of Guinea, and in peacekeeping efforts in Liberia, the DRC and Sudan. This is why it has established its first foreign military base at Djibouti, and why, at the 2016 FOCAC summit, it promised that:

The Chinese side will provide the AU with US\$60 million of free military assistance over the next thirty years, support the operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture, including the operationalisation of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis and the African Standby Force (FOCAC 2016: 34).

And further:

The two sides will strengthen information and intelligence exchanges and experience sharing on security, and will share this information timeously to support mutual efforts in the prevention and fight against terror (FOCAC 2016: 35)

Rapidly increasing overseas interests in Africa and growing numbers of expatriate labourers has made China more vulnerable to global terrorism (Tiezzi 2015c: 3; Bassou 2016), as both these investments and human resources are deployed in parts of the world in which China has no jurisdiction. This may eventually force China to contravene the non-interference principle. China is aware of this (Beech 2016; China Real Time Report 2016). It will be interesting to watch events unfold over the next 30 years, as successive African, US and Chinese governments seek to minimise terrorism and maximise returns on investment. Will this be an area of trilateral cooperation?

Clearly, terrorism is a global problem requiring a global response. When it comes to terrorism in East Africa (and on the continent as a whole), all three actors have different but converging reasons for cooperating on clamping down on terrorism. For Africa, it is about territorial integrity and economic development; for China, it is about securing its investments and being a responsible member of the international community; and for the US, it is about homeland security. None of these aims contradict

one another, but perhaps all three parties need to sit down and formulate a joint strategy.

As this paper has shown, a number of assumptions about the Africa-China-US nexus need to be reconsidered; among other things, there is no basis for the assumption that African states see their foreign policies in either/or terms when it comes to China and the US. Equally, the paper's findings have problematised the widely held view that African states see any form of major power involvement as unwanted interference.

In light of this, further research could assess whether similar conclusions can be drawn about the effects of the French-led campaign against terrorism in Central and West Africa.

## CONCLUSION

Rather than weakening the Africa-US relationship, opinions polls show that the US-led War on Terror has garnered growing support on the continent. Moreover, it has increased rather than decreased US engagement with Africa in the form of US military bases, joint military exercises, and aid. Most interestingly, the War on Terror has also fuelled Chinese engagement with Africa by creating a better environment for Chinese investments. This could trigger increased US investment in turn, since the hegemon has committed itself to matching or exceeding investments from China, with which it is in partial competition. Contrary to popular perceptions, therefore, the US-led War on Terror has served as a catalyst for Chinese investment in and aid to Africa.

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