

Assessing the Impact of American and Chinese Economic Competition in Sub-Saharan Africa

by James Jacobs and Kevin Boldt

In 2015, *Scientific American* published an article which showcased how the continent of Africa is often sized on Mercator maps, in a similar fashion, to the island of Greenland, even though Africa is 14 times larger than Greenland.¹ In fact, the African continent is big enough to hold the continental United States, China, India, and much of Europe. Much like Africa has been underrepresented in many maps, the continent has been underappreciated for much of world history. Many early encounters between African civilizations and other civilizations took place on the periphery of the continent, especially in the north.

For China and the United States, their exposure to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) prior to the 20th century was quite limited. Nevertheless, the People's Republic of China has rarely missed an opportunity to highlight its centuries-old, albeit brief, connections to Africa when discussing foreign policy.² During the first half of the 15th century, the Chinese Ming Voyages, led by Admiral Zheng He, included at least three visits to the eastern coast of Africa.³ However, a long period of isolationism followed the Ming Dynasty's century of global exploration.⁴ China did not rediscover its sense of adventure until late in the 20th century after the communists expelled the nationalists and then took power. As a younger nation, the United States' first main exposure to SSA took place in the first half of the 19th century with the expeditions of the American Colonization Society, which intended to resettle free African-Americans and emancipated slaves to West Africa. In 1820, the first free African-Americans set sail for West Africa from the United States and established Liberia.⁵ From that time on, the United States maintained a pseudo-protectorate role for Liberia.

However, the limited U.S. role for Liberia would pale in comparison to how European powers

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divided and conquered Africa during the decades of colonialism. In 1884, the Berlin Conference brought together 14 nations, predominantly European powers. This conference officially marked the beginning of the “Scramble for Africa.”⁶ During this scramble, European nations staked claims to almost the entire continent and mainly focused on extracting resources.⁷ To put it lightly, European colonialism in Africa has had a lasting impact. In particular, the legacy of 10,000 polities turning into 40 European colonies and the use of local elites to rule on behalf of European powers remains relevant to the geopolitics of the continent today.

World War II (WWII) marked the beginning of the end of European colonialism in Africa. However, foreign intervention in Africa did not end with the fall of colonialism. After WWII, the Cold War dominated relationships in Africa as young nations attempted to rise from the ashes of colonialism. Throughout the Cold War, both the United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) supported various regimes in Africa and flooded the region with arms and other assistance. While this ideological and geopolitical stand-off benefited many of the ruling elites, most SSA nations did not see long-term economic growth.

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While the Cold War melted away after the fall of the USSR, today, Africa is experiencing rising tensions between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China. While much of the tension between the world’s two largest economies has, to date, focused on the East China Sea, Africa is fast becoming a proving ground for determining the balance of power in the 21st century. In some ways, the posturing by the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China over Africa is reminiscent of

the geopolitical dynamics of the U.S. and USSR during the Cold War. Today, both the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China are attempting to redraw the economic landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The current U.S. *National Security Strategy* highlights that across Africa “states are eager for investments and financing to develop their infrastructure and propel growth,” and then goes on to highlight that “the United States and its partners have opportunities to work with countries to help them realize their potential as prosperous and sovereign states that are accountable to their people.”⁸ According to the Brookings Institute, China pursues four broad interests in Africa: 1) Political support for its One-China policy; 2) Access to natural resources; 3) Protecting its diaspora and investments abroad; and 4) Ideological alignment.⁹ China has predominantly used the economic instrument of national power to pursue its objectives in Africa. Today, since 2009, China is the largest trading partner with Africa.¹⁰ While increasing its ties with Africa, China has also received some criticism for how it is potentially exploiting the natural resources from the continent at the expense of the local population.¹¹ However, to simply reject Chinese activities in Africa as evil misses the point. The Chinese will continue to be involved in Africa for decades to come. The *National Security Strategy* charges that the United States “must prepare for this type of competition” and “raise our competitive game to meet that challenge, to protect American interests, and to advance our values.”¹² Focused on economic and financial activities, this article conducts a comparison of the impact of U.S. and Chinese policies on SSA. By conducting a quick review of history, looking at the U.S. and Chinese approaches, and applying evaluation criteria to measure their effectiveness, the authors will answer the question “How does U.S. and Chinese competition impact Sub-Saharan Africa’s economic development?”

History of U.S. Involvement

In 1777, the Morocco became one of the first countries to seek diplomatic relations with the United States in the midst of the American Revolution.¹³ As a young nation, the U.S. foreign policy for the region focused on North Africa. For example, one of President Jefferson's first foreign policy challenges was dealing with the Barbary pirates off of the coast of present-day Libya.¹⁴ The United States did not become involved with SSA until the presidency of James Madison. President Madison secured the initial funding for the American Colonization Society.¹⁵ U.S. engagement with SSA became more direct once the first ship with free African-American settlers and several American Colonization Society members set sail across the Atlantic Ocean for West Africa. Over the course of several decades, more than 13,000 African-American settlers arrived to Liberia.¹⁶ In 1847, Liberia declared independence from the American Colonization Society in order to establish a sovereign state and create its own laws governing commerce.¹⁷

While European powers pursued their "Scramble for Africa", the main U.S. connection remained its relationship to Liberia, which retained a pseudo-protectorate status and received some economic assistance, especially from the 1870s and onwards.¹⁸ The World Wars caused an increase in activity in Africa. Liberia's decision during World War I to remain allied with the U.S. and to declare war on Germany, up until then a major trading partner, led to a German U-boat shelling Monrovia, Liberia's capital city.¹⁹ Liberia's financial dependence on external assistance became a vulnerability which the United States exploited in the aftermath of World War I. In the 1920s, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company negotiated a 99-year lease for a rubber plantation in Liberia, which tied Liberia's highs and lows for the remainder of the 20th century to fluctuating commodity

prices.²⁰ WWII brought renewed American attention to Africa and resulted in a major Allied offensive in North Africa. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the first serving U.S. President to visit SSA during a visit to Liberia in 1943.²¹

In the post-WWII era, the rising Cold War tensions with the USSR led the U.S. to give more emphasis to Africa.

As European powers pulled or pushed away from Africa in the aftermath of WWII, the U.S. and USSR competed for ascendancy.²² In the post-WWII era, the rising Cold War tensions with the USSR led the U.S. to give more emphasis to Africa. In 1958, the U.S. Department of State established the African Bureau.²³ This was also around the same time that countries such as Ghana were declaring independence from the European colonial powers. Furthermore, during this timeframe, the U.S. began to use soft power to extend its influence in Africa. President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps to provide technical assistance and other support to the developing world. In 1961, the first Peace Corps volunteers arrived to Ghana and Tanzania.²⁴ In 1974, the world stage arrived to Kinshasa, Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of the Congo) for a heavyweight boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman.²⁵ While the United States did pursue constructive policies such as Peace Corps and other development initiatives in Africa, the Cold War's ideological battle and associated geopolitics still dominated the continent for most of the second half of the 20th century. The proxy wars in Angola and Mozambique provide examples of the Cold War's impact on the continent.²⁶ Scars and a lot of armaments from the Cold War remain present today in many parts of SSA.

After the fall of the USSR, the U.S. needed to

determine how to lead in a unipolar world. Africa provided unlikely case studies for the U.S. to figure out its new international role.²⁷ The deaths of 18 U.S. service members in October 1993 in Somalia served as a shocking wake-up call for the American public and highlighted that good intentions were not enough for implementing foreign policy. Within six months of the failed mission, portrayed in the Hollywood film *Black Hawk Down*, the U.S. withdrew its military forces from Somalia.²⁸ While Africa took a backseat for the U.S. military after Somalia, the U.S. government continued to provide financial assistance, support global health initiatives, and promote democratic values as part of the Clinton Administration's "doctrine of enlargement."²⁹ However, Osama bin Laden's bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in April 1998 demonstrated the danger and complexity of the operational environment.³⁰

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The beginning of the 21st century elevated the U.S. interests in SSA. In 2000, President George W. Bush signed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) into law. This act, with subsequent revisions over the years, has provided incentives for African countries to liberalize their economies and to increase trade with the U.S.³¹ From a security perspective, the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001 raised the importance of national security and demonstrated how violent extremist organizations could take advantage of weak or failed states. Additionally, President Bush pushed for a sizeable increase in global health spending. Significant aid increases since 2001 reflect, in part, changing perceptions of Africa's importance to U.S. national interests and security.³² Three U.S. presidential administrations have maintained quite consistent

policies towards SSA.³³ However, the Trump Administration has yet to indicate if it will follow suit or disrupt those norms.

History of Chinese Involvement

China's engagement with SSA dates back to Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) when Admiral Zheng led expeditions to East Africa. China's first interactions with Africa did not mature into significant, political relationships until the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Support from 26 African nations helped the People's Republic of China to secure the permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council from Taiwan in 1971.³⁴ While Chairman Mao Zedong initiated political and economic relationships with numerous African nations, it was not until the 21st century that the People's Republic of China started to forge deeper ties with SSA.

Since 2000, China's economy has grown rapidly, which has further increased the need for natural resources. One place that China has turned to quench its resource thirst is Africa. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, created in 2000, is an official forum between China and African states with the objective to strengthen Sino-African economic cooperation and trade relationships and to establish a new international order that will better reflect the needs and interests of China and Africa.³⁵ President Xi Jinping took over as president of China in March 2013. In a break of precedence, President Xi's first trip overseas was to Africa in 2014.³⁶ In 2015, President Xi participated in the second summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in South Africa where he pledged \$60 billion in support of African development.³⁷ President Xi has also emphasized China's security interests in Africa. In addition to protecting its investment, China is concerned about protecting the Chinese people who live and work in Africa. According to the *Wharton University of Pennsylvania's*, public policy forum approximately one million

Chinese workers, both private entrepreneurs and employees of state-run companies, were living in Africa in 2013.³⁸ China's establishment, in 2017, of its first overseas military base in Djibouti demonstrates China's increasing role in both SSA and global affairs.³⁹

Methodology

We started this article by reviewing the history of U.S. and Chinese involvement in SSA. Next, we will use available literature to assess the current state of both U.S. and Chinese relationships with SSA. In order to answer the primary research question—"How does U.S. and Chinese competition impact Sub-Saharan Africa's economic development?"—we need to establish evaluation criteria to measure the impact of the U.S. and Chinese economic and financial initiatives. Evaluation criteria will be developed to enable the identification of the best available answer to the primary research question. Evaluation criteria are used for both military and civilian purposes because these criteria can help establish if actions are suitable to achieve the desired results and "determine if the course of action is the best course of action to accomplish the mission."⁴⁰

We will apply the evaluation criteria to assess the impact of the U.S. and Chinese economic and financial initiatives. Once the evaluation criteria have been applied, we will aggregate the findings to answer the primary research question: "How does U.S. and Chinese competition impact Sub-Saharan Africa's economic development?" To comprehensively assess the impact of the U.S. and Chinese economic and financial initiatives on SSA, we use the Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, and Events (ASCOPE) framework. The ASCOPE framework is one of many tools that the military uses to understand the operational environment. While integrating multiple tools would help to foster a "system of systems approach," the scope of this project required the authors to follow a more focused

approach. By using the ASCOPE framework, the authors will make the assessment, and provide justification, as to where the impact falls on the three-part scale: adequate (1 point), better (2 points), or best (3 point). The aggregation of the results will provide the determination of the measured degree of impact. The authors will then evaluate the criteria and provide justification as necessary. Ultimately, this work will lead to answering the primary research question: How does U.S. and Chinese competition impact Sub-Saharan Africa's economic development?

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A Quick Summary of Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa offers two stories. On the macro-level, the amount of resources, especially its young, growing population, offers great potential. According to the World Bank, nine of the ten countries with the highest fertility rates are found in SSA.⁴¹ However, SSA is not one entity, and, on the micro-level, its people, organizations, and markets do not march to the same beat. The economy is the foundation for increasing people's quality of life. It is the economy that provides the means to build new wells, clinics, schools, and necessary income for people to support their families. The weak and fragmented economies of SSA have resulted in many of the nations lagging behind.⁴² A quick summary of the physical environment using ASCOPE provides background for understanding some of the dynamics of SSA. After providing this overview of key components, we will then look at what impact the U.S. and China have had on SSA since 2000. As previously noted in the respective history sections on each country, the years 2000-2001 marked key milestones in SSA engagement for both the U.S. and China.

Areas

Sub-Saharan Africa is a region that has had some bright spots. From 2001-2010, six of the fastest growing economies in the world were in SSA and had economic growth at around a 5.0 percent annual growth rate.⁴³ After a slowdown in recent years, growth is returning to Africa, with regional projections of 3.1 percent growth in 2018 and 3.6 percent in 2019-2020.⁴⁴ This rapid economic growth—coupled with young demographics, wide uptake of technology (particularly cellphones and associated applications), and a growing middle class—has led to a new perspective on the potential of Africa.⁴⁵ While economic growth has rebounded, many of the region's economies are over-reliant on agriculture and have low levels of output. African markets have been especially grounded in the following two areas: agriculture and raw materials. These industries compose about 2 percent of all world trade.⁴⁶ This is a staggeringly low number considering the tremendous amount of natural resources of oil, diamonds, and gold paired with agricultural products such as coffee, tea, and cocoa. Additionally, agricultural practices lag behind industry trends in other parts of the world. African farmers generally work small plots of land without the assistance of modern farming practices and technology such as machinery, capital, and fertilizer. Developed states employ less than 10 percent of their labor forces in agriculture, while African agriculture often employs almost two-thirds of all workers while accounting for less than a quarter of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁴⁷

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Structures

Out of the continents, Africa conducts the least amount of intracontinental trade.⁴⁸

African leaders are working to tear down the barriers which hamper local and regional trade. In March 2018, 44 African nations signed the Continental Free Trade Agreement, which seeks to slash tariffs across the continent in order to create a “single continental market for goods and services.”⁴⁹ Besides trade barriers, physical barriers impede products from getting to the market. Missing across much of SSA are the roads, rails, ports, airports, power grids, and information technology backbone needed to lift African economies.⁵⁰ The lack of infrastructure inhibits the growth of imports, exports, and regional business for one of Africa's biggest employers, agriculture. Dilapidated transportation increases the cost of goods and reduces the ability to bring products to the market. Poor networks also inhibit efficient distribution of inputs such as seed and fertilizer. Investment in centralized infrastructure would reduce the cost for consumers to purchase food as well as to increase the supply and encourage cross-border trade. Increasing efficiencies and leveraging export markets for surplus producers could liberate unproductive farmers to shift to higher order economic activities.

Capabilities

SSA has made solid progress in telecommunications coverage over the past 25 years, expanding at a fast pace across both low- and middle-income countries.⁵¹ However, much work remains to be done. African countries need to increase access to electricity and invest in roads. Only 35 percent of the population has access to electricity, and SSA is the only region in the world where road density actually decreased in the last 20 years.⁵² In order to catch up economically, SSA must engage in higher order economic activities such as manufacturing or focus on the service industries such as communications, transportation, education/research, and personal services. Recent reforms should increase the ease of doing business in

SSA. According to the World Bank, SSA nations account for five of the ten top improvers for *Doing Business* in 2013-2014. The region also accounts for the largest number of regulatory reforms (75 of the 230 worldwide in the past year) making it easier to do business.⁵³ More than 70 percent of SSA economies carried out at least one such reform. Primary economic activities such as agriculture and resource extraction are more susceptible to risk, shortages, and market prices while earning less from human input and capital than higher order activities.⁵⁴ Africa needs to focus on activities that have more added-value like manufactured goods and services that capture a higher profit and are less susceptible to international market fluctuations. However, establishing higher order economic activities requires capital. Largely due to lower commodity prices as well as traditionally-low tax collection (e.g. tax-to-GDP ratio), debt is steadily rising in many SSA countries.⁵⁵ The level of the total agreed amount of the International Monetary Fund's outstanding programs with SSA countries rose nearly fivefold between 2014 and 2017 from \$1.8 billion to \$7.2 billion.⁵⁶ Without fresh credit or reform to economic policies, many SSA countries could either have growth negatively impacted by this debt burden, or worse, be frozen out of the global financial system.

Organizations

In the years since independence, SSA countries have attempted to use regional integration as a means to industrialize. Many of these regional organizations built off of cross-border colonial arrangements such as the African Financial Community and Southern African Customs Union.⁵⁷ However, in recent years, African leaders have looked to wider economic and political integration beyond regional apparatuses. The Abuja Treaty, signed in 1991, provides the framework for the creation of an African Economic Community.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the evolution of the Organization for African

Unity into the African Union “has significantly strengthened the movement towards the goal of Pan-African political and economic union.”⁵⁹ However, economic integration still has a long way to go. As noted earlier, the Continental Free Trade Agreement could provide the next step toward economic integration in SSA. However, the SSA's two biggest economies, Nigeria and South Africa, have yet to sign onto this trade agreement.⁶⁰ Time will tell how significant of a role the Continental Free Trade Agreement will play in disrupting trade dynamics of SSA.

Africa's population is set to double by 2050 to almost a billion young people.

People

While many regions around the world are facing aging populations, SSA is expecting around a 70 percent rise in its share of its working-age population. Africa's population is set to double by 2050 to almost a billion young people. At the same time, SSA will have the youngest population by median age, at around 25 years old.⁶¹ This demographic dividend could be a huge consideration on which the region can capitalize. However, major health and economic factors must be addressed to unleash SSA's economic potential.

Africans have better access to safe water than previous generations. In 1990, 51 percent of the population had access to safe water. In 2015, 77 percent had access.⁶² While Africa has made good progress on health issues, the continent still bears the brunt of the world's global health challenges. According to a World Health Organization report, for every 10 percent increase in life expectancy at birth, there is a corresponding rise in economic growth of 0.4 percent per year.⁶³ Many SSA nations are grappling with some of the world's highest rates of malnutrition, infant mortality, and poor maternal and child health. The continent

is home to approximately 90 percent of global malaria deaths, two-thirds of all people living with HIV, and one-third of all tuberculosis cases.⁶⁴ A healthier population leads to a stronger economy. If SSA can collectively tackle some of these challenges, then the region will be better postured to achieve its potential.

Critical economic factors such as low employment growth rate, high youth unemployment rate, and high proportion of low-wage incomes also hinder SSA nations' abilities to cash in on the demographic dividend. A region with a rising working age population is an asset if its people are equipped with the right skills. However, SSA ranks the lowest of the world's regions on the human development index.⁶⁵ Some of the key components of this index include GDP Purchasing Power Parity to determine a standard of living, a social measure using the education index to include literacy rates, and a demographic dimension for health in the form of life expectancy.

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Low literacy rates are one of the core components keeping many working-age Africans on the farm and limiting economic development. SSA's average literacy rate has improved from 53 percent in 1990 to 63 percent in 2015.⁶⁶ However, compared to the average world literacy rate of 86 percent, SSA's literacy rate is an appalling statistic. Literacy gives a person the basic ability to read and write and enables access to further education and employment opportunities. Literacy is directly correlated with earning potential, however the linkage between a country increasing their education input to achieve economic growth is debatable. "What is proven is that countries with a larger stock of

stock of human capital or rate of human capital appreciation do experience faster economic growth"⁶⁷ The latest United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Global Education Monitoring Report, based on current trends, predicts SSA will not achieve universal secondary school completion until after 2080.⁶⁸

Events

Climate change will impact both the human and physical geographies of SSA. In particular, more frequent extreme heat events, increasing aridity, and changes in rainfall will reshape economies and ways of life.⁶⁹ Based on the dominance of agriculture for many economies, the effects of climate change will likely be even more pronounced.

The United States' Impact in Sub-Saharan Africa

While the U.S. leadership role has increased in recent decades, the economic significance of Africa for U.S. foreign policy remains limited. For example, in 1960, the whole African continent took only 4 percent of the U.S. exports and supplied only 3.7 percent of U.S. imports.⁷⁰ Over the subsequent decades, U.S. policy towards SSA has become distinct from policy to North Africa (which is now often clustered with the Middle East). Looking at 2016 data, the SSA exports to the U.S. accounted for 5.78 percent of the partner share, while imports to SSA from the U.S. accounted for 5.67 percent of partner share.⁷¹ In 2017, the U.S. had \$38.9 billion in total (exports plus imports) trade with SSA countries.⁷² In recent years, the amount of imports from SSA has been lop-sided, resulting in an increased trade-deficit. The fluctuation in commodity prices and preferential treatment for imports from SSA enabled by AGOA are two of the reasons for this recent trend.⁷³

The U.S. role in SSA is not limited to trade. For decades, the U.S. has led in global health initiatives. Additionally, through institutions

such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the U.S. has been able to extend its influence. Furthermore, the U.S. has flexibility in Africa, as it is not locked into major treaties or geopolitical alliances like in other parts of the world (e.g. Europe, East Asia, etc.). The following ASCOPE assessment summarizes the impact that the U.S. has had in SSA since 2000.

Areas

In 2017, U.S. total trade (exports plus imports) with SSA totaled \$38.9 billion.⁷⁴ The top exports from the U.S. to SSA were machinery for digging/construction, aircraft, and motor vehicles. The top five SSA destinations for U.S. exports were South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, and Ethiopia.⁷⁵ Currently, thirty-nine of the forty-nine countries in SSA are eligible for benefits under AGOA. Based on the extension signed into law by President Obama, AGOA is set to remain in effect until at least 2025.⁷⁶ Top imports from SSA to the U.S. were oil (mainly crude), diamonds/platinum, vehicles, and cocoa beans. The top five SSA sources of imports to U.S. were South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), and Chad.⁷⁷ AGOA has especially helped agricultural products from SSA make it to the U.S. market. The value of agricultural exports headed to the U.S. increased from \$59 million in 2001 to \$261 million in 2014.⁷⁸ The main exports of agricultural products to the U.S. are cocoa paste/powder, citrus fruits, nuts, wine, unmanufactured tobacco, and vegetables.

Structures

U.S. trade with SSA nations is largely based on unilateral preferences as outlined in AGOA. The 2015 extension of AGOA empowers the President of the United States to “make an on-demand call for an assessment of a country’s eligibility in addition to yearly reviews.” AGOA has also had a positive impact on U.S. direct investment in SSA.⁷⁹ In 2017, U.S. direct investment in the region grew to \$57.5 billion,

the highest level ever. U.S.-run programs such as African Seeds for Hope and Millennium Challenge Corporation have helped to improve infrastructure in Africa.⁸⁰ The U.S. is currently immersed in a whole-of-government initiative to facilitate private-sector investment in electricity-generation capacity across the African continent. As noted earlier, many SSA governments have improved the investment climate in their respective countries through regulatory reforms. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency functions as the U.S. government’s project preparation agency. This agency’s goal in Africa is to create more bankable projects that are attractive to investors by increasing the due diligence on projects which reduces the risk.⁸¹ The U.S. Trade and Development Agency is working to make investment opportunities more bankable, which would help to unleash more private capital to build the infrastructure in SSA.

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Capabilities

In recent years, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has operated 27 bilateral and regional missions in sub-Saharan Africa. These missions have provided bilateral assistance to 47 sub-Saharan African countries.⁸² For example, total bilateral U.S. development assistance from USAID and the Department of State to SSA nearly quadrupled from roughly \$1.94 billion in Fiscal Year 2002 to an estimated \$7.08 billion in Fiscal Year 2012.⁸³ The U.S. government uses a three-pronged approach—diplomacy, development, and defense (3Ds)—to promote and protect U.S. national security interests abroad.⁸⁴ While the Department of State (diplomacy) and USAID (development) have been in SSA for decades, the Department of Defense’s U.S. Africa Command

(AFRICOM) is the “new kid on the block” as it only stood up in 2008.⁸⁵ The country teams at the respective U.S. embassies in each SSA country remain the center for 3Ds collaboration, but the growing presence of AFRICOM in many SSA nations has started to shift the influence away from embassy staffs. Besides the shift in influence, AFRICOM provides dynamic distribution capabilities that previously did not exist. For example, over the past couple of years, AFRICOM developed the West Africa Logistics Network to facilitate distribution from a primary logistics hub to support 11 named operations across a 13-nation region in West and Central Africa.⁸⁶

According to a poll by the Pew Research Center, nearly 80 percent of respondents in SSA have a positive view of the U.S.

Organizations

The U.S. has leveraged the following tools and initiatives to engage SSA: AGOA, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Power Africa, the Young African Leaders Initiative, and the Security Governance Initiative.⁸⁷ AGOA is the centerpiece of U.S.-African engagement on trade and investment and provides duty-free entry into the U.S. for almost all African products.⁸⁸ Indirectly, the U.S. has also worked through the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, UN, and the African Union to extend its influence. Though President Trump did meet with the chair of the African Union and 37 foreign ministers from the continent for two days in November 2017, the administration’s policies for SSA remain unclear.⁸⁹

People

The U.S. has traditionally used small numbers of Americans in limited capacities

to assist in development projects in Africa. One noteworthy example is the Peace Corps. U.S. leadership on global health initiatives has established goodwill between the American people and with the populations of many SSA nations. Health experts predict that investing in global health will likely save the lives of millions of children and adults over the next 20 years.⁹⁰ According to a poll by the Pew Research Center, nearly 80 percent of respondents in SSA have a positive view of the U.S.⁹¹

Events

The U.S. has been quick to respond to natural disasters. For example, in response to the Horn of Africa drought and subsequent famine in the summer of 2011, U.S. emergency food aid programs provided \$740 million to Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.⁹²

China’s Impact in Sub-Saharan Africa

The People’s Republic of China’s relationship with SSA stretches back for decades. However, China’s resource-intensive economic growth has spurred its increased interest in resource-rich SSA. Sino-African trade has especially deepened since 2000. As the Chinese economy grows, so does its trade and direct investment with SSA. In 2002, the total trade between Africa and China was below \$10 billion, with China exporting to Africa and China importing from Africa roughly equal. In 2014, the trade spiked to over \$200 billion.⁹³ Africa imports machinery, transportation, communication equipment, and manufactured goods from China which totals 14-21 percent of the continent’s total imports.⁹⁴

China also maintains an unparalleled ability to provide low-cost financing and cheap labor for infrastructure projects. From 2000-2015, the Chinese Government, banks, and contractors (often the lines are blurred between these entities) extended \$94.4 billion worth of

loans to African governments and state-owned enterprises, with Angola receiving the most at \$19.2 billion in cumulative loans. In 2000 the loans disbursed were below \$1 billion, peaked in 2013 at \$17 billion, and then settled at \$12 billion in 2015. In 2015, the top recipients were Uganda, Kenya, and Senegal.⁹⁵ The following ASCOPE assessment summarizes the impact that China has had in SSA since 2000.

Areas

Chinese state-owned enterprises have primarily focused on natural resource extraction in SSA. China consumes 15-16 percent of SSA's exports. The following products are exports particularly in high demand: mineral fuel, lubricant, iron ore, and other metal products.⁹⁶ While China has largely focused on natural resource extraction, China does have other business interests. China's diversified portfolio consists of energy, mining, telecommunications, as well as large-scale construction projects such as roads, railways, ports, airports, hospitals, schools, and stadiums. Small and medium-sized Chinese firms are less focused on natural resource extraction. The two primary investment areas are the service sectors and manufacturing, which to date have received positive reception from local African economies.

Structures

Africa is known for its infrastructure deficiencies. Over \$30 billion of external financing is received in Africa to finance infrastructure development. Slowing domestic economic conditions and global slowdown provoked China to export its surplus industrial capacity in line with its "going global" strategy.⁹⁷ China makes up one-sixth of this global investment. Traditional finance from multilateral development banks has been focused on basic human-necessities such as water supply and sanitation and private donors are bridging the telecommunications gap. On the other hand, China is focusing its one-sixth investment

in the niche role of transportation and power. Infrastructure investment in Africa fits into President Xi Jinping's developmental framework of "one road, one belt" which is a cross-continental economic belt and maritime road to promote cooperation and interconnectivity from Eurasia to Africa and emphasizes regional connectivity through ports and infrastructure projects.⁹⁸ Increasing its rapport with SSA governments, China has experienced a rise in contracts (especially for large-scale construction projects) in Africa. For example, gross annual revenues from Chinese construction company projects in Africa have risen in 2000 from levels under \$2 billion to over \$50 billion in 2016.⁹⁹ In a bid to demonstrate China's wholistic approach to Africa, senior Chinese officials now claim that China's investment in African energy sector only makes up 20 percent of China's total investment in Africa.¹⁰⁰

Chinese state-owned enterprises have primarily focused on natural resource extraction in SSA.

Capabilities

In recent years, China has sponsored the following set of major development initiatives: the One Belt One Road Initiative in 2013, the New Development Bank in 2014, and the Asian Infrastructure Bank in 2015. These initiatives both complement and rival the activities of traditional donor institutions in developing countries—such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—particularly regarding infrastructure finance.¹⁰¹ China has attempted to position itself as an alternative source for loans and other economic assistance through its claim of "no (political) strings attached."¹⁰² Chinese Overseas Direct Investment in Africa is largely composed of loans provided by the Export-Import Bank of China and China Development Bank. China provides one-sixth of the \$30 billion in total, annual infrastructure

investment in Africa.¹⁰³ China's investments fill an international gap. Chinese investment dollars are indifferent to the governance environment and are relatively high in resource rich regions with poor governance, such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Sudan, which Western money traditionally avoids. While China has traditionally used diplomatic and economic power to promote its interests in Africa, the People's Republic of China's announcement of establishing its first overseas military base in 2017 highlighted how China is trying to expand its capabilities.¹⁰⁴ If U.S. AFRICOM is the "new kid on the block", then the Chinese military is the "newest kid on the block." The Chinese Foreign Ministry justified the decision by explaining how the opening of the military base would enable China to "better perform the international obligations of the UN escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters as well as humanitarian relief, help with Djibouti's socio-economic development, and allow China to make greater contributions to the peace and stability of Africa and beyond."¹⁰⁵

A rift has risen in Africa as Chinese companies have provided highly skilled labor at a lower cost which crowds out local African workers.

Organizations

Since 2000, China has mainly used the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation to strengthen its relationships and multilateral cooperation with the 51 African nations. Bilateral relationships are still the name of the game for how China engages SSA nations with China's diplomatic interest being the most important factor for determining aid recipients.¹⁰⁶ According to some researchers' predictive model, if African countries voted with China an extra 10 percent of the time, they would get, on average, an 86

percent bump in official aid.¹⁰⁷ China has also supported other African political bodies such as the African Union. In 2013, China provided \$1 million in assistance to the African Union to support its mediation and coordination efforts in the Mali conflict.¹⁰⁸

People

A rift has risen in Africa as Chinese companies have provided highly skilled labor at a lower cost which crowds out local African workers. The highly competitive Chinese companies have been presented with a trade-off, either conducting quick and cheap construction versus facilitating long-term development of the local African construction industries¹⁰⁹. Chinese workers in Africa peaked at around one million workers in 2013. The following five countries account for approximately 65 percent of all Chinese workers in Africa: Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya.¹¹⁰ Opinion surveys show that a majority of African countries favorably view China's influence and contributions to the continent's development. According to a 2016 Afrobarometer poll, 63 percent of Africans view China's economic and political influence as positive.¹¹¹ Some Africans think China can relate to Africa's struggles more than Europe and the U.S. can since China has recently overcome large-scale poverty. Demonstrating this sentiment, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade provided the following assessment: "China, which has fought its own battles to modernise, has a much greater sense of the personal urgency of development in Africa than many western nations."¹¹² The number of Chinese workers in Africa is disproportionate to the amount of financing. The workers bring skills and entrepreneurship, but in large quantities, they also compete for a scarce amount of job opportunities. If not managed properly, the contentious issue of employee sourcing could disrupt the common rapport that China has with many SSA nations.

Events

China has not been as robust with humanitarian assistance in SSA as the U.S. However, its spending has increased, sporadically, in the last decade. For example, China's humanitarian assistance increased "to nearly \$90 million in 2011, when it drove \$68.5 million to the East Africa food insecurity crisis."¹¹³ Provided in context, though, Chinese spending was only about a tenth of what the U.S. provided for the same food crisis in the Horn of Africa. After that crisis, China's humanitarian assistance in SSA dropped for several years before rising to \$50 million in 2014, when China helped respond to the Ebola crisis with about \$47 million.¹¹⁴ Again, though, this level of spending was miniscule compared to the \$2 billion plus that the U.S. provided.¹¹⁵

Evaluation of Impact

This article is focused on answering the primary research question: "How does U.S. and Chinese competition impact Sub-Saharan Africa's economic development? To comprehensively assess the impact of the U.S. and Chinese economic and financial initiatives on SSA, the authors use the ASCOPE framework, make the assessment, and provide justification as to where the impact falls on the three-part scale: adequate (1 point), better (2 points), or best (3 point). The aggregation of the results will provide the determination of the measured degree of impact. The following table shows the authors' assessment of the impact of the U.S. and Chinese economic and financial initiatives on SSA.

The following key takeaways correspond with each of the components of the ASCOPE framework.

Areas

Both the U.S. and China have focused on commodity markets in SSA. However, especially

thanks to AGOA, the U.S. also expanded its influence into other markets and sparked SSA export opportunities. One area that has not received much attention is agriculture. Trade barriers continue to hinder agriculture as well as other industries. According to one study, complete elimination of tariffs on agriculture exports from SSA would increase exports over \$105 million compared to what it would otherwise be in 2025, with large gains in areas such as sugar and fish exports.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, establishing reciprocal trade agreements, especially if both China and the U.S. are on board, could spark market dynamics across the continent.

Structures

Antiquated trade agreements and a historic focus mainly on regional integration has hindered SSA countries from increasing their competitive advantages and achieve economies of scale. Going forward, a U.S.-Africa trade relationship based solely on unilateral preferences no longer provides a sufficient basis for building more robust trade relations. Progress in expanding trade in manufactured goods, services, and digital trade more broadly is needed.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, closing the infrastructure quantity and quality gap relative to the best performers in the world could increase growth of GDP per capita by 2.6 percent per year.¹¹⁸ The largest potential growth benefits would come from closing the gap in electricity-generating capacity, an area on which the U.S. is already focused.

Capabilities

The U.S. and China have largely conducted development projects and provided other assistance in SSA separately, with little to no coordination. The People's Republic of China does not publicly release the amount of money that it spends on foreign aid. Nevertheless, researchers have attempted to compare the efforts of the world's two large economies in Africa. According to AidData, a research lab at

	U.S.	China
Areas (bazaars, shops, markets)	2	2
Structures (banks, markets, storage facilities)	2	3
Capabilities (access to banks, ability to withstand natural disasters)	2	2
Organizations (banks, large land holders, big businesses)	2	3
People (bankers, landholders, merchants)	3	2
Events Economic –(drought, harvest, business open/close)	2	1
Aggregate	13	13
Benchmark Scoring Adequate = 1, Better = 2, and Best = 3		

Figure 1: Evaluating U.S. and Chinese Approaches in Africa
Source: Modified by authors using information from the Marine Training Command.

William & Mary, China committed \$350 billion to foreign aid between 2000 and 2014, running close to the U.S. total of \$394.6 billion.¹¹⁹ The assumption is that the uncoordinated efforts of foreign assistance by the U.S. and China has created inefficiencies which have resulted in the benefit of the ruling elite at the expense of the general populations of SSA.

Organizations

Public-private partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa remain a very small market, with projects concentrated in only a few countries, namely, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda.¹²⁰ Electricity has proven to be the bright spot for public-private partnership. This model, as seen in Power Africa, should be applied to other industries.

People

Currently, people in SSA generally have favorable opinions of both the U.S. and

China. However, China's bigger focus on resource extraction and less consistent effort on humanitarian assistance have caused some tension with segments of the local populations in SSA. As a result, the U.S. is more trusted in Africa than China, whose vast investments have at times sparked comparisons with colonial exploitation.¹²¹ China's greater focus on extracting natural resources raises the risk of China being viewed as a neo-colonialist.

Events

Changes in the climate will be more harsh and frequent in the coming years. Both the U.S. and China have been reactive in what aid they provide. Very little assistance is allocated toward disaster prevention and preparedness.¹²² The U.S. and China could contribute more resources and expertise toward these areas to achieve a reduction in loss of life and the need for large international responses to disasters.¹²³

Conclusion

Since 2000, the U.S. and China have marched to separate drum beats in their engagement strategies for SSA. While both the U.S. and China have national interests in SSA, their interests are more subdued than other parts of the world (e.g. East China Sea). Promoting economic growth in SSA benefits both the U.S. and China and also helps to stabilize the region. Going forward, shared interests in SSA provide the opportunity for collaboration between the U.S. and China.

The first step to increasing collaboration is to meet. To date, China and the U.S. have maintained separate, semi-regular forums with SSA leaders. Outside of UN events, the U.S. and China have not met together with SSA leaders. In the next year, the U.S. and China should, together, convene a summit with SSA nations. Such a meeting will provide the U.S. and China to work together or at least align efforts.

One important area in which the U.S. and China need to align efforts is with improving infrastructure in SSA. To foster sustainable economic growth, infrastructure is critical. SSA needs infrastructure “hardware” such as power, transport, and telecommunications, while also building the “software” of integration (e.g. investment capital, efficient customs administration, reasonable control over corruption, and secure property rights).¹²⁴ This is an opportunity for the U.S. and China to work in unison to achieve economic development in Africa with each country specializing in hardware or software development, though the efforts will not be mutually exclusive. The cost to produce energy, build transportation networks, and provide internet is among the highest in the world. The lack of infrastructure makes sustainable economic growth difficult and prohibits international access to markets.¹²⁵ While infrastructure alone will not solve SSA’s challenges, infrastructure can provide a

foundation on which to develop other initiatives which promote political stability and fuel economic growth.

Another important issue that SSA needs to tackle to close the infrastructure gap is improving the investment climate. SSA nations have made the biggest gains in the world to improve the business environment. However, many of these gains are reversible, and so concerted effort must be maintained to safeguard these reforms. Indirectly, a potential threat to the business environment is the rising debt burdens that many SSA nations are facing. One recommendation for providing better transparency is to publish foreign debt loads and associated sovereign debt burdens.¹²⁶

In the next year, the U.S. and China should, together, convene a summit with SSA nations.

While infrastructure projects take time and cost a lot of money, a more dynamic recommendation is to improve access to mobile phones in SSA. Africa has been able to skip landline phones in many areas and go right to mobile phone adoption. Leveraging the proliferation of mobile phones in SSA could have profound impacts in two major areas: banking and agriculture. First, Kenya provides a case study of the power of mobile banking. Through mobile banking, Kenya increased the share of Kenyans with access to financial accounts from 42 percent in 2011 to 75 percent in 2014.¹²⁷ One study found that, in rural Kenyan households that adopted the country’s popular mobile-money system, incomes increased by 5-30 percent.¹²⁸ Instead of waiting for the roads and bridges to be built so that citizens can drive to the bank in the town center, mobile banking facilitates financial inclusion today. Mobile phones also offer promise for improving the antiquated farming practices found in many parts of SSA. Senegal offers one example of

how mobile phones could help to implement reforms. Small farmers there used smartphones to receive weather updates, market reports, even new seed technologies. This integration of mobile phone technology helped to raise profits for those farmers.¹²⁹ The U.S. can provide tax incentives and grants to promote technology investments in SSA.

However, the solutions cannot just be focused on infrastructure and technology. Ultimately, a human element is important to any strategy. As noted, China's predominant use of its own labor force for construction projects and extracting natural resources has raised tensions with the local populace in many parts of SSA. Going forward, China must balance the short-term benefits of using its own Chinese workers with the long-term benefits of developing the skills of African workers. China should work with African governments to encourage Chinese firms to hire and train African workers and to limit the flow of labor to amounts designated by African countries.¹³⁰ Private firms recognize the changing labor supply and rates in China. The Chinese working population is peaking. As the labor supply tightens it results in average wage increases. Potentially lower wages in Africa represent an opportunity to move the manufacturing value chain from China to Africa. Africa will become the world's primary source of net labor force growth, therefore with a long-term vision in mind, Africa has the human capacity to be the next manufacturing hub. In addition to a large labor pool, China benefits by moving their manufacturing value chains to the lower-wage location as AGOA enables goods to be imported to the U.S. duty-free.

The U.S. and China have found success in some of their individual efforts. However, by identifying common ground for key initiatives in SSA, the two countries can align shared interests and have a greater impact on the economic and financial development of the region. **IAJ**

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