

CHINA'S AFRICA POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

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Abstract. Africa has great importance in global politics today. Most of the powerful countries of the world are actively engaged to increase their economic and strategic statures in Africa. China and India are also having important stakes in Africa. China has its economic and strategic interests in the region and its dream of reviving 'One Belt One Road'. China is investing multi-folded projects in Africa and the increase of hard power along with soft power to counter the presence of other actors. India also shares very close ties with African countries, but the enmity between India and China has accelerated a competitive environment between both countries. China has a greater economic and strategic investment than India, but the growing stature of India in Africa has become a concern for China. As a result, China is trying to expand its naval presence in the Indian Ocean which creates tensions for India's Security. This article will explore China's strategy of deepening ties in Africa and its implications over India. Further, it will also discuss India's response to deal with the Chinese presence in Africa.

Keywords: Economic, Strategic, Indian Ocean and Security.

1. Introduction

China is growing rapidly in the global world order and it has expanded its involvement across the world. African continent is an emerging destination for countries in terms of strategic and economic purposes. Its vast natural resources, big markets and geostrategic importance have made Africa an attracting destination for the powerful extra-regional actors. In the past, European powers have enjoyed a monopoly over the African continent and exploited their natural resources, but the post-war period witnessed the emergence of new centers of power, and they are now expanding their presence in Africa. Even after the decolonisation process, western powers had a tight grip over these ex-colonies, but

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the strategic importance of Africa is increasing in international relations. New emerging powers in this continent like China, India, Brazil and Russia have challenged the superiority of Western powers. The world after the post-Cold War has changed as the hegemony of the USA world is shifting to the multipolar world order, and new players mainly China are tightening their grip in the African continent.

China has become an important economic investor in Africa and its increasing engagement is changing the scenario of international politics. China is enhancing its influence in the region by enhancing trade and investing in strategic areas. A large amount of aid for infrastructure development has increased the credibility of China in the region and access to market and natural resources giving more leverage to its economic interests. Africa is the new destination where development is in the running phase and the emergence of the new middle class in many African nations is attracting economic power houses to grab the market for the sale of their products. Developing countries like India, China, Brazil, and ASEAN members are expanding their areas of investment and trade. Newly developing economic powers have greater scope in Africa than the developed world, as they share the common background of economic transition. Trade relations with these new economic powers provide African countries with a more sense of equality in terms of a win-win situation. The process of globalisation has expanded the scope of trade, and multiple economic players enhance the choice of African countries which decrease the chances of falling into the trap of monopolistic control in the hands of Western powers.

2. Economic Engagement

China has a great economic stake in Africa as its major government and private actors have much economic interest such as the requirement of natural resources, expansion of market base for the finished products and chance to get more global experience for the Chinese firms to gain employment. Chinese Journey in Africa started in the 1950s when Mao extended his support towards the independence struggle in Africa and shared solidarity with the newly independent countries of Africa. During the 1950s, China was not the economic giant but China still extended economic aid to African countries amounting to 2.5 billion USD (Liang, 2012). Despite being a non-democracy Chinese economic model has influenced many and its adoption of the open-door policy in the late 1970s was the major development in the Chinese rise in the global economy. Many of the authoritarian regimes in Africa were influenced by China rather than the democratic West. The way China started the drive of poverty alleviation, it inspired many of the newly independent countries (Liang, 2012).

3. Resource Diplomacy

Africa is advantageously central to China for several reasons. Growing domestic demands of China and need for raw materials for the industry have made China to adopt the strategy of “resource diplomacy”. Africa is rich in resources and this makes it a natural choice for China to fulfil its commodity and energy requirements. China imports 28% of its oil from 13 oil-producing countries mainly from Sudan, Congo and Angola. These are also the major trading partner of China, mainly in oil. Chinese interest in Africa is not restricted to the oil. It includes many natural resources like copper from Zambia, Platinum from Zimbabwe. China has also established its fishing ventures in the Zambia and Gabon. Except for the oil bucket of the china from Africa followed by iron ore, cotton, diamonds, timber, and copper. It is the well-known reality that China has become the production house of the finished goods all over the world, but for the production of the finished goods, it needs vast resources of the raw material and for this purpose (Liang, 2012).

4. Trade and Investment

In Africa, China has extended its economic muscles which has many reasons, such as extending economic aid to the African counterparts, more investment, aid, grants, loans and debt relief. Commercial actors of China in Africa are both private entities and state-owned corporations as well, but the activity of the latter is more considerable than the private entities. The share of Chinese import and export in China has surpassed the trade of other influential overseas trade partners of Africa, although no country is in the position of monopoly control. The interest of China in Africa is mainly two-pronged; one is trade and another is investment. Post-2000, trade between Africa and China has increased 17-fold, and the investment of China in Africa has been augmented by more than 100-fold. China's trade with Africa has expanded after the first meet of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 (Adejumobi, 2003). A trade deficit in Africa also increased with China gradually after 2013. In 2001, Africa's imports from China were 4% but this figure increased to 16% by 2018 at the 19% annual rate increase. In terms of exports from Africa to China was only 3% in 2001, but it rose to 15% by 2018. If one looks at the difference between the import-export variable it is important to notice that the goods China exports to Africa include mainly high value-added products, but imports from Africa mostly consist of low value-added products which shows that the trade between China and Africa does not consist of a win-win situation for both sides. Currently, China is the biggest trading partner of Africa as the trade between Sino-Africa has crossed the mark of \$200 billion per year. In the African continent, more than 10,000 China-owned firms are operating

which amounts to more than two trillion. To increase this existing economic presence in Africa, China has announced a \$1 billion fund for the Belt and Road Africa infrastructure project, along with China's whopping African aid package worth \$60 billion. China is now involved as the largest player in Africa's infrastructure projects, claiming 40% of the total share and it is continuing to rise. This sharp rise of China in the infrastructure sectors of Africa has lowered the position of Western investors like the USA and the European Union. The decline of Europe is from 44% to 34%, and the presence of the United States has fallen from 24% to 6.7%. Investment of China in Africa is mainly in the form of loans and credits generated from the People's Bank of China, the Export-Import Bank of China, the China Development Bank, and the China-Africa Development Fund. The investment made by the Chinese banks and other sources such as contractors and the government consists of more than \$86 billion between 2000 and 2014. Major recipients of these investments are the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan. This large amount of money has also raised the concerns of economic experts that African countries can fall into the debt trap and the fear of neo-colonialism from China in Africa has become part of the debate.

5. Strategic Engagement

China has a security interest in Africa to safeguard its established economic and political influence in Africa. The major security concern is to protect the increasing diaspora and infrastructure from terrorism and unwanted overseas threats. China has a large strategic and economic interest in Africa which can be protected by enhancing security infrastructure. Another security dimension of Chinese interest in Africa is to increase its global stature and counter of other extra-regional powers already dominating in the same region. At present, China has more than 15000 overseas enterprises and out of this more than 2000 are in the African region. The recent explosion of the Chinese economic stakes in Africa is making it important in the security dimension of Chinese security policies (Thrall, 2015). China's increasing presence in Africa can be linked to its mercantilist policies and the growing number of its investments and workers in the region. Security threats against the investment and Chinese citizens are compelling China to set up their position for the protection of the same. Another reason for the growing security set ups in Africa is also to boost the image of China as a responsible power that provides public good for the global community.

China's political interest in the region is less critical than its economic interest, major political goals are the improvement of the image of China and expanding its influence in Africa. China is trying to become the new superpower in the world and to counter the

hegemony of the West it is looking for more economic and diplomatic partners in the region. African countries have the influential number in the United Nations and it carries one-fourth of the UNGA votes. On the diplomatic issues, their votes are important such as isolating Taiwan, influencing the international rules or other important diplomatic or economic decisions. African Countries played an important role in the accession of the PRC in the United Nations Security Council in the 1970s. The Human Rights Council of the United Nations has raised the issues of human rights violations in China in such cases. Support of African countries is critical to China and it wants African support for such issues.

6. Domestic Drivers: 'Going Out' Policy and Belt and Road Initiative

Security strategy of China in Africa can be broadly inspired by domestic and external drivers. Domestic drivers include the security of the Chinese investment and the infrastructure in Africa, along with the large presence of Chinese workers in Africa also compel China to increase its strategic footprints in Africa. "Going out" policy of China which started in 2001, was launched to strengthen its increasing presence in Africa. Its major aim was to encourage the state-owned enterprise to venture in other nations, to obtain natural resources and to access new markets for the Chinese-made products. Oil in Africa is very important for the Chinese players, although China reached late in Africa after the Cold War. The strategy of China to gain access to the oil in Africa needs high exposure including security risks. In 2013, China's Belt and Road Initiative was launched in eastern Africa and later it expanded in the whole of Africa which can be seen as the enhanced version of the "Going Out" policy of China (Alves, 2013). Security is an important concern for the Chinese investment in Africa. African countries are facing security issues due to the high involvement of the non-state actors and it makes investment vulnerable in Africa. More exposure to investment and Chinese workers attract more threats to security in Africa.

7. External Drivers: Old and New Security Threats in Africa

Growing economic interdependence between Africa and China has broadened the security interest. Securing maritime shipments along important sea lanes connecting eastern Africa to Chinese ports from the pirates' attacks has been a major interest of China since the 2000s. The security of the Chinese workers working in Africa is also an important external driver of China's security policy. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab are active in the Horn of Africa peninsula and the Sahel area which creates a security threat

to the Chinese nationals working in Africa. They could also cause economic loss to the going on projects of China worth of \$20 billion, it also compels China to tighten the security arrangements in Africa. During the civil war in Libya, more than 35000 Chinese citizens were evacuated through the sea and air routes. China has to strengthen its maritime capability as the lack of naval capabilities also put pressure on its ability to secure its nationals in far off seas. To defend its interest in the overseas region, china needs to boost its maritime power. China is also giving importance to enhance non-combat responsibilities of its forces, which include international peacekeeping under the UN, counter-piracy tasks and evacuations labelled as “military operations other than war” (MOOTW). In 2015, china started a new security strategy for Africa which trying to enhance the naval capacity of China to conduct overseas military operations to secure its national and economic interests. According to the 2015 Military strategy, the PLA Navy will “shift its focus from offshore waters defence to the combination of offshore waters defence and distant sea protection and build a combined multi-function, and efficient maritime combat structure.”

8. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a triennial ministerial summit that was started in 2000. It aimed to bring together China with those African countries that believe in the one China policy. This forum consists of other objectives such as making stronger bilateral ties with African countries and attracting African nations to pursue the China model to deliver a good governance model in their countries and to create a pull effect on the African countries that share diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In a result of this, it can be seen that in July 2019, one kingdom of Eswatini, former Swaziland in maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan. FOCAC has made its presence in the whole African region and Chinese relations have been institutionalised with the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities. In the first FOCAC meetings, only economic issues were dominating and security issues were marginal but they became important after China threatened to veto UNSC action when Sudan’s Darfur crisis received strong global criticism and it provoked China to give up its non-interference policy and change to a gradual engagement in the security and peace in Africa. FOCAC’s action plan of 2006 announced China’s pledge to work with the African Union to ensure peace and security in Africa. It aimed to support the AU in resolving the African security crisis and participation in the UN peacekeeping operation. These initiatives in the security area were motivated by China’s wish to establish itself as a major global power in Africa and as an alternative to Western players.

China is contributing AU through financial and logistic support for the AU Peace and Security Architecture (AUPSA). In recent years China has announced a large amount of military aid worth from \$60 million to \$100 million which seems modest in comparison of the EU funding for the peacekeeping operations of the African Union. In 2018, there was an announcement in the FOCAC plan that the China-Africa peace and security fund would be created to enhance the cooperation on peace and security in Africa. Not just military aid China also conducts a joint military exercise with African countries to boost its ties in the region. In 2014, the first-ever joint drill was performed by the PLA with Tanzania, along this anti-piracy exercise was conducted with Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon in 2018.

9. China's African March: Implication for India

India shares traditional relations with Africa, economic, cultural, political and strategic aspects are the most important part of India's foreign policy in India. In the post-war era, the Indian government was very much interested in maintaining relations with the African countries and it extends its support to the decolonisation process of the African countries. After independence, India was working with African countries through NAM and other international forums. Economic relation of India was not much stronger with Africa until the adoption of the new economic policy of 1991. Post 1991 period started a new era of close economic ties with Africa. Politically, Africa is an important aspect in the foreign policy of India. Support of the nations of the African continent is very crucial for India's bid for the permanent seat in the United National Security Council. Africa is also crucial in the security perspective of India, especially in the Indian Ocean region. India has been shown its commitment to the development of Africa and through different routes, India is investing for infrastructure development in Africa.

Africa has become a new epicentre for business activities in front of the whole world. Relations of trade and investment motivate India and Africa to have a positive economic environment which is very influential in today's changing international order. India is strengthening relations with Africa both economically and strategically due to its investment in Africa. India mainly exports manufactured goods petroleum product vehicles etc. to Africa and in return, India imports edible oil, natural resources, raw material, edible fruits and nuts etc. Trade between India and Africa has increased by thirteen times from 2001 to 2018 and by 2018 India's trade with Africa was \$ 68.46 billion.

The African continent holds a very important place in India's foreign policy in terms of security. India shares the Indian Ocean with Africa and the Island countries such as Mauritius and Seychelles are very important in India's security policy. Under the 'One Belt

One Road Program', China is investing in massive infrastructure and port construction, which has become a challenge to India's sovereignty in the Indian Ocean. India's security experts fear that in future, China may use these ports for military use as it has been indicated in its policy of string of pulse. In response to that India is also strengthening its position in terms of security. For example, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, India patrols its respective region in the Indian Ocean and also takes action against pirates. In countries like Seychelles, there has been investment in the port infrastructure so that the pressure of China can be overcome in the region. India donated coastguard ships to the island country in 2006, 2014 and 2016, Dornier-228 aircraft has also been given for airspace surveillance in 2013. In 2015, during his first visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed on security cooperation.

India is also working in cooperation in terms of security in the African continent and has participated in almost all operations in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Africa. Today, more than 6000 Indian troops are deployed in Africa as Peace keeping Force. India also trains soldiers from many countries of the continent at its military academy. India is making deeper ties in terms of security with African countries, as the African delegation also takes part in the defence exhibitions, such as the Defence Expo and Aero India. The desire of the countries to increase more security relations with India has become responsive that those countries that have the capability of making weapons as in South Africa, Algeria, Morocco and Nigeria can become an important part of India's Make in India Initiative. The presence of China in Africa poses a Political and military challenge to India. China has made a deep impact on Africa's regional and economic presence. In recent years China has become the largest trading partner of Africa and new joint military cooperation initiatives have made it closer to the African countries. India's engagement in Africa is increasing but it has limits due to lack of its economic capacity, on the other hand, China has more economic muscles than India and it garners far greater influence. In 2014, China had around \$220 billion bilateral trade with China and India's bilateral trade with Africa in 2017 was \$52 billion (Pathak, 2009, p. 84-85).

In 2018, Prime Minister Modi visited Uganda and Rwanda before reaching South Africa for the BRICS summit. He is the first Indian prime minister to visit East Africa. His visit was an attempt to set new dynamism in the India-Africa relations. In Uganda, Modi addressed a meeting and urged for holistic cooperation between both countries in sectors like health, agriculture, education, defence, infrastructure and energy sectors. Modi's forays to Rwanda and Uganda, before landing in South Africa for the BRICS Summit, was an attempt to bring about new dynamism in the India-Africa relationship. In Rwanda, which has China as its largest trading partner and had inked a strategic partnership with Beijing

just last year, Modi became the first Indian leader to visit the country and signed several agreements on trade, agriculture, and defence. To be definite, India and China have moderated the Sino-Indian competition factor in respectively the country's arrangement in Africa. To downplay the strategic and economic competition in Africa between India and China, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang in a press briefing said that "both China and India are willing to help Africa within the South-South cooperation framework to accelerate its industrialization and achieve self-driven development." China and India are on the same page in this regard. But even as Chinese spokespersons make such statements, Xi has signed several agreements furthering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), many components of which have been objected by India. Through Chinese infrastructure projects, the large number of Sino diaspora is increasing in Africa, but in this case, India has better outreach in the African society as Indian diaspora in many African countries has better economic and prosperous conditions and they also have their presence in the politics as well. In the globalised world, trade competition can be taken as healthy competition but in Africa, India and China have more stakes than the trade, which is the IOR and it is becoming the region to show hard power, both the China and India (Cheru and Obi, 2011). This region has very much strategic importance for India and China is also stretching its military muscle in the region by making ties with the francophone Africa countries which share boundaries with the Indian Ocean. The strategy of China in the IOR is long-term to secure its maritime position by using its soft power.

China's long-term geostrategic plan is slowly building military muscles and influence which will directly challenge India's position in the future. The string of Pearls was part of its strategy to build-up an alliance with countries that shares the Indian Ocean to counter India. To counter this India announced the plans to have a fleet of aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines at sea in the next decade and recently tested nuclear-capable missiles that put China's major cities well in range. It is also reopening air force bases near the Chinese border. Another important issue is the oil dominance which is the factor having a long-term impact on the security environment in the IOR. The energy needs of India and China can compel both countries to enhance their presence. It is no exaggeration to say that whoever controls the Strait of Malacca will also have a strong hold on the flow of the world's energy and the energy route of China (Pathak, 2009).

10. Conclusion

China has established a greater influence in Africa, both military and economically. On the other hand, India has also made sizeable footprints in the African region. The growing economy of China as soft power is helping it to utilize the drivers of its hard power and it is

posing a challenge to the Indian position. China and India need Africa as the destination of resources and markets, along with this large number of countries in the region can help their agenda in the UNO. India as a contender for the permanent seat in the Security Council needs their support. The soft power of India, such as trade commerce, diaspora etc. plays an important role to create more holistic relations in Africa. The challenge of China for India in Africa can be seen positively, as India's growing footprints shows that India is tackling Chinese presence through their ways.

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