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Competing or Colluding Commercial Interests?

Ports and Free Zones along China's Maritime Silk Road in Africa

DR. APRIL A. HERLEVI

Abstract

China's "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (MSR) uses state-owned enterprises to build and operate port infrastructure along the MSR path. Under the broader Belt and Road Initiative, the government of the People's Republic of China is clear about tying its economic and maritime goals together. What is less clear is how China's economic statecraft plays out in practice. While the bulk of MSR port activity in Africa has been focused on port construction, China Merchants now operates at least nine ports in Africa and is involved in multiple port projects in a subset of countries: Djibouti, Morocco, and Tanzania. Using China Merchants Ports' own "Shekou model" as a framework for comparison, this article evaluates the relationship between one commercial actor to describe how these projects are unfolding, assess whether they follow the Shekou model, and build a framework for understanding trends in port ownership in the shipping sector.¹

Introduction

Maritime port infrastructure has been a crucial part of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) global expansion. Is China building "debt-traps" in Africa, or are Chinese commercial enterprises bringing growth and development to the continent?² The short answer is that no *one* answer is correct, nor does it capture the nuance necessary to understand the various development projects being undertaken on the continent (and globally). PRC state-owned enterprises (SOE) have "gone out" in pursuit of their own financial objectives. Many projects preceded the official Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) guidance from the state, but the PRC government has built upon that commercial momentum by linking economic activity and its foreign policy objectives under Xi Jinping's signature effort. China's 13th Five-Year Plan states that the government and its associated actors "will actively advance the construction of strategic maritime hubs along the

twenty-first-century Maritime Silk Road [MSR], participate in the building and operation of major ports along the road, and promote the joint development of industrial clusters around these ports to ensure that maritime trade routes are clear and free-flowing.”³ China’s overseas port projects have steadily gained increased attention from policymakers, the scholarly community, and the media. Several databases have now been created that seek to examine China’s port infrastructure push.⁴

Leaders from China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPH) describe their intent in locations such as Djibouti as an attempt “to replicate the ‘Port-Zone-City’ model” used in Shekou, China.⁵ Shekou is the small enclave that was formed inside the original Shenzhen special economic zone (SEZ) in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 2017, the president of China Merchants Group, Li Xiaopeng, stated that the company was “making full use of Djibouti’s geographical advantages . . . making the country the ‘Shekou of East Africa’—a hub for regional shipping, logistics, and trade.”⁶ The “Shekou model” is more than an historic element of China’s own development path; it has now become a narrative that is actively used to promote modern projects.⁷ CMPH uses the “Port-Park-City” nomenclature in much of its corporate materials, and investigative journalists have taken to describing the success of China Merchants Ports’ “flying geese” formation (板块以雁形结构, *bankuai yi yan xing jiegou*).⁸

The main contributions of this article are threefold. First, it refines the theoretic understanding of how commercial actors carry out China’s foreign policy by outlining specific elements of China Merchants Port’s Shekou model. As David Baldwin reminds us, while nation-states may discuss economic imperatives, it is commercial actors that actually carry out those policies.⁹ William Norris disaggregates China’s SOEs and provides criteria for evaluating those state-commercial interactions.¹⁰ Identifying explicit criteria used by firms provides us with a clear framework to analyze state-commercial interactions. Second, this research illustrates that BRI projects in Africa are neither achieving “earthshattering effects” nor “significantly stalling or collapsing” as Jean-Marc F. Blanchard notes in his macro- and micro-level analysis of MSR projects.¹¹ Instead, individual projects vary greatly and, despite clever BRI branding, actual outcomes and economic effects are messy, contingent, and complex. The cases illustrated in this article show how specific projects are contingent on domestic political and economic realities in the host country and shaped by larger trends in the global economy.

In short, no project will look identical to industrial clusters created in China, but understanding the model that SOEs and host-nation governments are attempting to replicate helps us understand those messy and contingent outcomes. In the case of both Djibouti and Tanzania, China Merchants has explicitly argued

that the model is the Shekou model, and those specific projects each tout that model, despite distinctly different outcomes than Shekou.¹² In contrast, no such pronouncements have been made in the case of Moroccan ports. One reason for this difference is that the role of China Merchants in Morocco is quite different, and the Moroccan case sheds light on changes in the shipping industry writ large. This is important for understanding China's economic statecraft, because market structure and market concentration matter for how well the PRC can control its SOEs.¹³ Third, by holding constant the firm responsible for the project, we make apple-to-apple comparisons among PRC-run port projects. One challenge with blanket analysis of BRI projects is that different firms and a diverse conglomeration of interests in a particular project will affect how the project evolves. In this article, by focusing on one main SOE, we are not conflating distinct outcomes that could be accounted for by firm differences. By doing so, we can characterize elements of legal and regulatory policy in the home country and compare the "model" to the "reality" thereby improving our ability to enhance theory that takes firm differences seriously. Augmenting theories of economic statecraft in this manner establishes a foundation for further empirical testing.

Theory and Approach: The Shekou Model in Africa?

Economic statecraft is defined as "the use of economic resources by political leaders to exert influence in pursuit of foreign policy objectives."¹⁴ Under the BRI, many of the commercial actors carrying out those foreign policy objectives are state-owned enterprises (SOE). There is both explicit guidance and implicit assumptions that SOEs will carry out the goals of the PRC government. In practice though, Norris and Shu Guang Zhang have both shown that China's economic statecraft is much more contingent.¹⁵ Norris shows several instances in which particular SOEs and their business practices generated problems for PRC foreign policy objectives, such as in Sudan, and describes the range of interactions that can occur between PRC firms and the state.¹⁶ In the case of the MSR, the main shipping and port operation firms are SOEs, and in practice those SOEs have become an extension of the PRC government. However, even among SOEs, firms operate in distinct ways based on general business practices, organizational characteristics, and the "governance characteristics of the SOE groups" themselves.¹⁷ Thus, we must understand the frames, models, and references that those firms use to guide their own behavior and activities.

In China, the use of models has been a key component of the original Communist guidance. Even as China's economic systems has evolved, the use of models persists. According to Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach, "The production of policy through the production of 'models'—model people,

model factories, model villages—is a classic feature of socialist governance.”¹⁸ However, the strength of the so-called “China model” is that there is not simply one model but many potential models to follow. Tang Xiaoyang describes how China operates abroad as “co-evolutionary pragmatism,” noting that while China’s firms have embraced unwavering support for “productivity growth,” the corporate actors responsible for carrying out China’s economic policies have been quite willing to employ flexible approaches.¹⁹ Co-evolutionary pragmatism abroad builds on Yuen Yuen Ang’s description of adaption, which she labels “directed improvisation.”²⁰ In essence, the central government provides guidance and sets boundaries, and then “local authorities improvise a variety of solutions to locally specific and ever-changing problems.”²¹ In the case of the PRC, the central government has provided the general BRI and MSR guidance through Five-Year Plans and various strategic-level documents,²² but there are at least two sets of local actors. The first set of actors for MSR projects is the PRC firms undertaking the project or activity. The second set of actors is the local officials from the host government, whether it be national-level officials or lower-level authorities.

We begin from the perspective that China’s SOEs are shaped by their own domestic experience. While SOEs and other firms may (and likely do) learn and grow from their overseas experience, they still begin with a particular way of doing business that shapes how they undertake projects abroad. Sociological research describes national-level SOEs as a “networked hierarchy” because of the way that firms are “vertically integrated” under the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC).²³ While not all-powerful, SASAC’s purpose is to represent the party-state in its role as the controlling shareholder in national-level SOEs, and thus, there is an assumption that those SOEs will ensure the interests of the PRC government are represented.²⁴ China Merchants Group, Ltd. is one of SASAC’s 96 national-level SOEs.²⁵ As one of China’s national champions, China Merchants Group is a key actor in the BRI, but the company’s unique experiences in the early stage of reform and opening offer insights into how it does business. In China, there was not one model of development, and not even one model of SEZs. From 1984 to 2006, there were at least six different types of SEZs with different regulations governing their operation.²⁶ China Merchants was able to follow a unique path in its activities in Shekou, and that path evolved alongside the larger changes in the Shenzhen SEZ.

The MSR development agenda, and analysis of the firms that undertake those projects, raises several questions. First, what are the characteristics of China’s overseas ports and SEZs? Blanchard notes that while the infrastructure project themselves tend to garner the most public and media attention, “Less well known, but warranting attention, are special economic zones (SEZ), industrial parks, and

power distribution and generation facilities.”²⁷ I argue that those adjacent elements are in fact the core of China Merchants Port’s Shekou model. A port may be a necessary condition for the larger industrial enclave to be successful, but the presence of a port is not sufficient for replication of the Shekou model. Industrial enclaves and the regulatory environment for those zones guide how those distinct elements of the zone interact. Similarly, David Styan notes in his analysis of Djibouti’s ports that “there is relatively little literature which seeks to disaggregate disparate Chinese commercial and political interests within the overarching MSRI framework.”²⁸ This article contributes to closing that gap by focusing on the internationalization strategy of one SOE, acknowledging that some of the projects predate the official BRI strategy. The BRI is clever branding but not necessarily a causal factor; instead, PRC SOEs were undertaking projects for a variety of reasons but found labeling their projects under this purview to be a useful commercial strategy.

Second, how does the host nation’s legal and regulatory environment influence project evolution? As Deborah Brautigam and Meg Rithmire explain, while Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port is often held up as the example of “debt-trap diplomacy,” the role of the Rajapaksa family is equally important in understanding how that project progressed, as is the activity of PRC diplomats and SOEs. Similarly, in Djibouti, the country began a series of industrial zone policies before China Merchants was decisively engaged in the country. However, Djibouti needed loans and financing to achieve those development goals. PRC actors, such as the China Export-Import (EXIM) Bank, proved to be willing and useful partners. Examining both sides of these infrastructure projects is thus necessary when evaluating outcomes.

After surveying the current BRI literature, this article examines firm behavior in a subset of port projects, focusing only on CMPH for two reasons. First, by narrowing the focus to one SOE we can articulate the patterns specific to that firm. China Merchants explicitly notes that its activities abroad are modeled on its domestic experience. The Shekou Port near Shenzhen and its associated business operations remain a key component of China Merchants Group operations. However, Shekou has also become much more. Shekou has become *the* “story” of China Merchants and, thus, has its own narrative associated with it. To reconstruct that narrative, this article collects annual reports, corporate filings, and other primary source materials for CMPH for the country case studies presented.²⁹ Second, by sharpening our analysis of the patterns that occur when PRC firms undertake particular projects, we are able to compare our findings and assess whether there are consistent patterns across projects. After outlining the original Shekou model, this article examines China Merchants Port’s plans for industrial

clusters in three countries in Africa that have more than one PRC-led port project. The set of cases involves Djibouti, Morocco, and Tanzania.

China Merchants Port's Shekou Model

The Shekou Port and its adjacent industrial zone have been the flagship for CMPH since the zone's inception in 1979. Early on, prospects for success were uncertain, with development occurring in fits and starts throughout the 1980s.³⁰ Shekou was a "first mover" within China's political economy, but the Shekou model has now become a narrative used by the company itself to promote its global operations. From 2001 onward, every CMPH annual report references Shekou.³¹ Discussions throughout the 2000s centered primarily around the basic facts associated with the Shekou port. For example, the 2001 annual report simply noted that the mainland-listed subsidiary, China Merchants Shekou, was involved in ports, utilities, real-estate, petrochemicals, and various other business operations.³² As Shekou Container Terminals, another subsidiary of the larger corporate group, continued expanding in the 1990s, the company's growth allowed for further development elsewhere in China. By the mid-2000s, the legend of Shekou had begun to expand and, during this period, national guidance eventually culminated in the "Going Out" policy, begun under Jiang Zemin.³³

The Shekou trajectory tells us how weak institutions were used to build markets and how those initially weak institutions were able to stimulate follow-on policies that generated more mature market development. Ang terms this general pattern as variation, selection, and niche creation. Variation occurs because no markets exist or the institutions responsible for managing those markets are weak (or both).³⁴ In China during the early 1980s, central reformers provided some guidance but allowed considerable flexibility at the local level, and this stage captures the activities of the early Shekou industrial zone. Selection refers to how the PRC government rewarded officials for successful outcomes.³⁵ In our example, selection can be applied to how China Merchants Group, a national-level SOE, used its initial development experiences to expand to other markets in China. In the early 2000s, that growth meant that the port and container sector was set for expansion, and the company pursued investment "in the development of container terminal projects in Ningbo, Tianjin, and Qingdao."³⁶ China Merchants grew, in part, because of its expanded container terminal operations elsewhere in the country, and those projects preceded the company's larger global expansion. This latest phase coincides with what Ang refers to as "niche creation" and describes how particular actors, once established, use their influence to "preserve markets."³⁷ This is the phase that best accounts for China Merchants status within the PRC political economy.

For later comparisons, here I briefly sketch key aspects of the original Shekou model. The Shenzhen special economic zone is easily China's most famous SEZ, and while Shekou and Shenzhen are closely related, they are not identical.³⁸ Several questions guide our analysis for the case studies comparisons addressed in the next section:

- What were the rules for the port, port authority, and adjacent industrial areas?
- Who runs the port and SEZ, and how does that affect its operations?
- When and how was the project initiated? How does the state of international trade, domestic competition, or other factors affect the project's development?

According to the Shenzhen Museum, Shekou was the “reform and opening's initial blast.”³⁹ Shekou began as its own separate enclave; during its earliest period, China Merchants Port managed the enclave separately. Writing in 1984, one legal scholar argued that a key facet of initial implementation of SEZs in China was the “vagueness of the SEZ legislation and the reactive, piecemeal nature of its evolution.”⁴⁰ The vague legal framework at the outset shaped how the smaller industrial enclave of Shekou developed. The original idea for Shekou preceded formal approvals for the Shenzhen SEZ because China Merchants Steamship Navigation (CMSN), then under the direction of Yuan Geng, had been able secure land for the project.⁴¹ CMSN, at the time, was under the PRC's Ministry of Communications, and the company was looking to expand its operations.⁴² Specifically, CMSN planned to create a salvage operation to “scrap old ships” and provide steel for the Hong Kong construction industry.⁴³ Land was too expensive in Hong Kong for the project; so, China Merchants sought land in Shekou, and in January 1980, CMSN issued regulations for the “Shekou Special Investment Zone.”⁴⁴

The modern Shekou narrative ignores these early concerns about land use and the lack of clear regulations for zone operations. Initial guidelines, though, were clear on issues related to sovereignty. Because of the strong negative perception within China related to treaty ports, the initial Shenzhen regulations made it clear that the administrative authority was the Guangdong Provincial government and that “land rights are confined to rights of usage with China retaining ownership at all times.”⁴⁵ For Shekou, the land use rules were distinct from Shenzhen and even more restrictive; in essence, the land in Shekou was controlled administratively by China Merchants, and the industrial zone operated under the purview of the Ministry of Transportation.⁴⁶

The narrative has also been transformed to overlook these early challenges and focus on the later success. For example, in a tribute to China Merchants Port's head at the time, Yuan Geng, *Global Times*, credited Shekou's architect with "implant[ing] market-oriented DNA into the Shekou zone," noting that "Yuan was able to overcome a wide variety of difficulties to make Shekou a leading light of China's decades of reform."⁴⁷ Simultaneously, business-oriented publications have acknowledged the phases of Shekou's development, now referring to China Merchants Port's projects outside of China as the "Shekou Model 4.0" (蛇口模式 4.0, *Shekou moshi*).⁴⁸ This current stage of development is now deeply-rooted within China Merchants own narrative; in the company's 2018 annual report, CMPH states that it will "establish quality development models" by establishing itself as the "world's leading comprehensive port service provider."⁴⁹

Africa's Shekou? Analysis in Three Cases

What does this the Port-Zone-City model look like in Africa? To evaluate how CMPH is applying this model in practice, this study analyzes three case studies: Djibouti, Morocco, and Tanzania. Djibouti is the iconic case of China's development in Africa, in part, because it has matured from a primarily economic relationship to one that now includes important security dimensions.⁵⁰ Tanzania's projects are less well-known but built upon a long-standing relationship between the two countries. In contrast to Djibouti and Tanzania, Morocco's port projects do not follow the Shekou model but may provide a useful framework for how China Merchants Port's activities may evolve in the future.

Djibouti and Doraleh

Djibouti sets the foundation for the types of activities occurring along China's MSR in Africa and the most clear-cut case of the "security-development nexus" in modern China-Africa relations.⁵¹ From the development perspective, China Merchants has now undertaken several interrelated projects in Djibouti.⁵² Djibouti did not formally sign onto the MSR until September 2018, but the highest profile joint projects precede that date. During the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), in 2018, Pres. Ismael Omar Guelleh stated that Djibouti has "greatly benefited from Chinese investments in our ports, railways, and roads" and then officially signed onto the BRI.⁵³

Djibouti's SEZ program was launched in the 1980s, and originally it was Dubai Ports World (DPW) that saw the potential of its "geographic location and deep-water port."⁵⁴ The Djibouti Free Zone (DFZ), which began in 2004, offers office space and warehouses to foreign firms and exempts businesses from corporate

taxes if they setup in the zone.⁵⁵ The DFZ predates significant investment from China and is separate from the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone (DIFTZ), which is under the purview of China Merchants Group.⁵⁶ In the 2000s, the country's leaders cited Dubai and Singapore as potential models of development before taking up the mantle of the Shekou model, in 2017, with the opening of the Doraleh Multipurpose Port (DMP).⁵⁷ Essentially, Djibouti had decided to pursue the enclave model of development long before signing on to China's BRI, but financing and loans from China, along with the expertise from key PRC SOEs allowed the Djiboutian government to finally fulfill its goals as laid out in its Vision 2035.⁵⁸ In that long-term guidance, the Djiboutian government cited China as one of the "new growth poles of the South," but the two country's economic cooperation had only just begun to expand.⁵⁹

The Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA) manages all zones in Djibouti. In 2013, the DPFZA formed a joint venture with China Merchants to create the Port de Djibouti Societe Anonyme; through that joint venture, China EXIM Bank provided a \$340-million loan, which would finance construction of the DMP.⁶⁰ The Doraleh Multipurpose Port Phase 1 opened in 2017 and included "container, general and bulk cargo facilities."⁶¹ In July 2018, the next major phase of the project began and the DIFTZ began its initial operations.⁶² Despite the focus for China Merchants on the port complex and the adjacent free zone, in official BRI publications, the railway projects connecting Djibouti to Ethiopia, rather than the port itself, are emphasized as the necessary component for the project's long-term success.⁶³

China Merchants' internationalization strategy highlights two trends relevant to Djibouti. First, China Merchants signed a long concession term contract (99 years) to ensure viability of the project and ample time to achieve the broader development objectives. Long concession term contracts have been cited as an indication of China's "debt-trap diplomacy."⁶⁴ Of the more than 50 ports operated by PRC firms abroad (as of mid-2020), eight have longer than average concession terms as compared to industry norms, and half these ports are operated by or have involvement from China Merchants.⁶⁵ Both ports with China Merchants involvement, including the Port of Djibouti and the DMP, have 99-year concession terms. Thus, long concession terms may be a unique facet of China Merchants business operations ensuring that port-adjacent industrial areas have sufficient time for development in the long term.

Second, China Merchants has begun to use the DMP as a platform for expansion of its "Global Port Alliance," which is an e-payment system intended to link ports across the MSR.⁶⁶ China Merchants describes the objective as an effort to "enhance the communications with the shipping companies and promote further

exploration of strategic alliances between terminals and shipping companies.”⁶⁷ Integrated payment shipping and advanced communications are good for the financial bottom line of companies, but these objectives are also consistent with larger PRC efforts to expand information technology as part of a “Digital Silk Road” (数字丝绸之路, *shuzi sichou zhibilu*).⁶⁸ According to the Global Port Alliance’s website, the “joint venture company Silk Road E-Merchants . . . has covered 29 ports and 55 wharfs in the world, with annual cargo handling capacity of 80 million standard containers.”⁶⁹

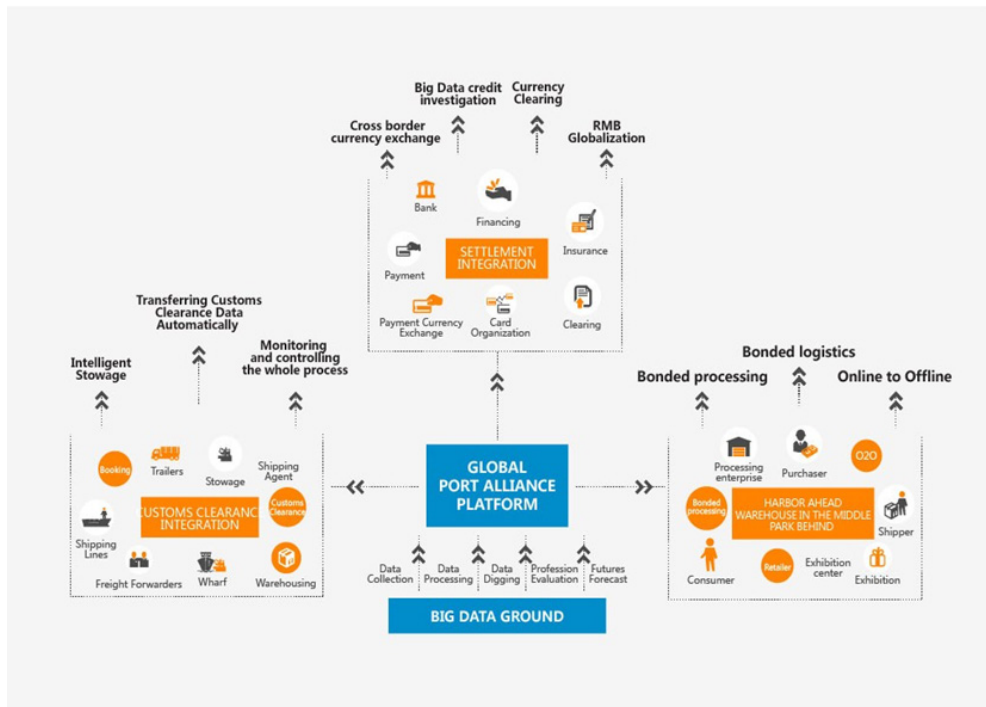


Figure 1. Global Port Alliance Platform. (Global Port Alliance, “About port alliance,” n.d., <https://www.izptec.com/>.)

The security-development nexus is most clear in Djibouti since the country is home to China’s first overseas military logistics facility. While not mentioned as the explicit reason for China Merchants pursuing its projects in the country, the two efforts have been complementary. Jean-Pierre Cabestan notes that “one of the six berths of the DMP was for the PLA’s exclusive use.”⁷⁰ One question now is whether the creation of the Port-Park-City enclave and the DMP will see the kind of growth that Shekou saw in its early stages or fall prey to debt-trap diplomacy.⁷¹ While Doraleh may not yet have achieved the economic success of Shekou, this is more likely due to lack of planning and external circumstances. Styan describes the evolution of debts in Djibouti as “debt leverage,” which “is not

an intentional tool of China's BRI policies but [rather] reflects of lack of foresight and adequate planning by both African and Chinese sides."⁷² This debt leverage relates to the ability of Djibouti to pay back the loan and whether loan concession length terms help or hurt the ability of the industrial zones to achieve their long-term financial and development goals. Both topics should be explored further as the Shekou of East Africa continues to evolve.

Tanzania: Land, Controversy, and Stagnation

The Tanzanian case highlights three key issues in the relationship between the PRC and East Africa. First, like Djibouti, economic ties have provided a foundation for stronger security ties. Second, control over land and related regulatory systems have created serious challenges for China Merchants Port's business model. Third, duplicative construction has generated competition among projects in the country, which has altered the timelines for particular ports.

Policy-oriented analysis often fixates on the most recent diplomatic and economic interactions. However, in the case of Tanzania, there is a long-standing relationship that must be understood to evaluate how joint development projects grew out of that relationship. According to Zhang, as African countries began to secure independence in the 1960s, "the PRC selected Tanzania as a primary target of its economic and technical assistance . . . and immediately extended diplomatic recognition to the country" upon its independence.⁷³ The most famous of these projects was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, which began in the late 1960s. Throughout the 1970s, "China provided a loan of \$286 million and a grant of an additional \$28.6 million . . . and dispatched more than 50,000 engineers, technicians, and even laborers to work on-site at different times."⁷⁴ Thus, massive infrastructure projects via loans, grants, and imported workers were not necessarily a new phenomenon in the China-Tanzania relationship. This history is important because, far from trapping Tanzania in debt, the PRC government has been willing to forgive that debt when the projects fail.⁷⁵

The second major issue as it relates to the creation of ports in Tanzania centers around land policy. PRC SOEs operate two major port complexes in Tanzania. The main port is located in Dar es Salaam, and the second major project is the port in Bagamoyo. China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) is currently upgrading the Dar es Salaam Port. China Harbour stated that the goal of the port upgrades is so that it can handle "26 percent more cargo per year."⁷⁶ The country's main port in Dar es Salaam handles "about 95 percent of Tanzania international trade."⁷⁷ Separately, the Bagamoyo Port is also being developed and was officially agreed to as an idea during Xi Jinping's state visit to Tanzania in 2013. On 14 January 2013, China Merchants and the Tanzania government signed "an agree-

ment on the implementation for Bagamoyo Project . . . laying a platform for CMHI [China Merchants Holdings International] to work towards developing a port zone.”⁷⁸ The overall project is being managed by China Merchants but has also received funding from Oman’s sovereign wealth fund, the State General Reserve Fund.⁷⁹ According to a promotional video, the Bagamoyo Port would connect to landlocked countries in Central Africa via road and railway connections with the road and rail links provided by the Tanzanian government.⁸⁰ Like the China Merchants projects in Djibouti, Tanzania has been added to the list of countries following the Shekou Model 4.0 and the Port-Park-City framework.⁸¹ Planning documents show space allocated for the port, logistics zones, and various other adjacent industrial zones; this type of integrated whole has become the hallmark of the China Merchants Shekou model.⁸²

However, in 2018 and 2019, the project ran into serious challenges, and CSIS reported that the project had “stalled indefinitely.”⁸³ The Tanzanian government expressed concerns about expanding ports elsewhere in the country and decided to “focus on the ‘expansion and modernization of its [overloaded] Dar es Salaam port’.”⁸⁴ Rumors abounded that China Merchants requested no other ports be built between in the vicinity of the Bagamoyo Project.⁸⁵ Concerns over land use near the SEZ also arose, and the director of the Tanzania Ports Authority noted that “land is for Tanzanians” and that he wanted to ensure that any development that occurred at Bagamoyo would be favorable to the local population.⁸⁶ Concerns about sovereignty, along with the desire to shape the development outcomes associated with port expansion, have repeatedly arisen in the Tanzania case. In this way, Bagamoyo is reminiscent of the early debates and controversies in Shekou itself. In both cases, local leaders wanted to expand development but not at the expense of control over the land. Yet, the story of Bagamoyo is not yet over. In June 2021, Tanzania’s president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, said “the country will look to revive the port project.”⁸⁷

Morocco’s MSR?

In terms of following the Shekou model, China Merchants Port’s basic strategy has the least explanatory power in the case of Morocco. In Morocco, CMPH operates two ports: Somaport in Casablanca and Eurogate Tanger in Tangiers.⁸⁸ Both ports are operated through the Terminal Link alliance, of which CMPH holds a 49-percent stake.⁸⁹ For Somaport in Casablanca, the 30-year concession was agreed upon in November 2006, prior to the involvement of China Merchants.⁹⁰ The legal economic framework for export processing zones has existed in Morocco since 1995⁹¹ but has not been a selling point in terms of the larger China Merchants strategy. For example, China Merchants Port’s most recent an-

nual reports simply list the two Moroccan ports by name with no fanfare about adjacent industrial areas or other related projects.⁹²

Despite little association with the Shekou model, the projects in Morocco highlight several other trends in the shipping industry. The use of equity joint ventures in the shipping industry has increased, and the Terminal Link joint venture typifies this sort of consolidation. In June 2013, CMHI “completed the acquisition . . . of a 49 percent stake in Terminal Link, SAS.”⁹³ CMA CGM, a French container and shipping firm, owns controlling shares of Terminal Link (51 percent).⁹⁴ Terminal Link is an important joint venture to monitor to understand whether China is operating ports in a way that makes them “susceptible to Chinese influence”⁹⁵ or whether international business practices are constraining the way in which China’s SOEs operate while abroad.

The Eurogate Tanger port is also a 30-year concession, but this project is a joint venture with several other firms. The Eurogate Tanger project is the second container terminal in the port and began operations in 2008.⁹⁶ While China Merchants lists the Eurogate Tanger project in its corporate materials, the company’s annual reports do not provide any amplifying details. In terms of timing, the overall project precedes both China’s BRI and China Merchants Port’s involvement in the Terminal Link joint venture. Eurogate Tanger is a large consortium project primarily controlled by European-based corporations, including Contship Italia, Mediterranean Shipping Company, and the Terminal Link consortium.⁹⁷ One shipping industry expert noted, “I don’t think European countries feel threatened because in almost all cases the landlord function remains in the hands of the local countries.”⁹⁸

Key to understanding the operations of China Merchants in Morocco are trends in the shipping industry toward consolidation and increased linkages between firms. Francesco Parola, Giovanni Satta, and Simone Caschili examined more than 400 terminals and more than 200 container port operators using network analysis to show that “international terminal operators (ITOs) . . . have growingly resorted to equity joint-ventures (EJVs) to develop new infrastructures and share project risks.”⁹⁹ Large ITOs consolidate their operations and partner with other terminal operators to reduce the risks associated with any one project. Parola, Satta, and Caschili also found that, on average, major terminal operators “held stakes in 15 container terminals.”¹⁰⁰ Shipping operators—such as PSA, DPW, and Hutchison Ports—have been very active in the creation of EJVs, and “co-operation is a key strategic option” for firms in this sector to remain financially viable.¹⁰¹

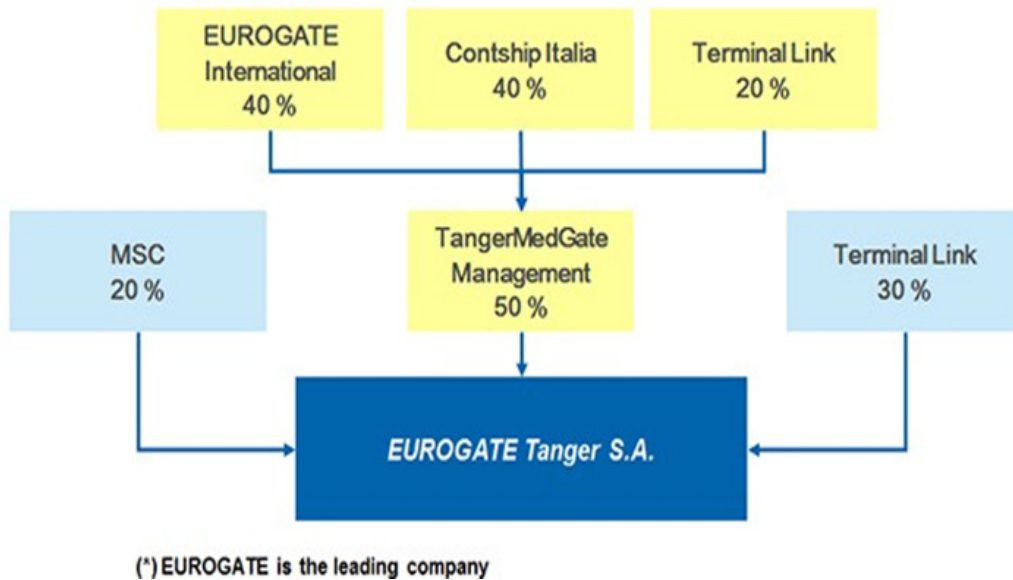


Figure 2. Eurogate Tanger corporate structure. (Tanger Med Port Authority, “Eurogate Tanger,” n.d., <http://www.tmpa.ma/>.)

Terminal Link is an excellent example of the kind of equity joint ventures that have become more common in the shipping industry. Terminal Link began in 2001 as a joint venture headquartered in Marseille, France.¹⁰² CMA CGM owns the controlling shares of Terminal Link and joined forces with CMPH in 2012.¹⁰³ Similarly, the Eurogate Tanger is also an EJV, and one that includes the Terminal Link consortium. Given the complicated corporate structure of this project (*see* fig. 2), there are at least five separate shipping firms with a role in the project. Eurogate International, Contship Italia, and Terminal Link jointly own the Tanger Mediterranean Gate Management company.¹⁰⁴ Tanger Mediterranean is owned by Terminal Link (30 percent) and Mediterranean Shipping Corporation, which holds 20 percent shares.¹⁰⁵ As such, CMPH is only one firm with an interest in the port operations in Tangiers and, thus, has very little control over the port’s day-to-day operations. Eurogate has four total projects with Mediterranean Shipping Corporation and operates 11 terminals.¹⁰⁶ Morocco may not be the Shekou of North Africa, but it does illustrate the complexity of corporate ownership arrangements in the shipping industry.

Implications and Conclusion

The maritime goals laid out by the PRC in the 13th Five-Year Plan have now been expanded and intertwined with Xi Jinping’s commentary on “building a

strong maritime nation.”¹⁰⁷ Inherent in this updated guidance is the focus on “deepening the study of Xi Jinping’s teachings.”¹⁰⁸ That guidance highlights the necessity of SOEs to abide by the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party leadership. Instead of simply “Going Out,” Chinese firms must go out and build a strong maritime economy and ensure the protection of China’s maritime rights.

There are three main implications of this research. First, countries may find the rhetoric of the China model or Shekou model convenient, but the ability of host nations to replicate these models is far more contingent in practice. In each of these cases, there are opportunities for integrated development projects for the host nation, but the ability of those countries to take advantage of those opportunities relies on how local authorities implement the projects. Simultaneously, there are opportunities for collusion among Chinese firms. For Djibouti, the host-nation government and port authority have been able to leverage the country’s unique locational advantages despite its “small state” status.¹⁰⁹ In Tanzania, the fact that there were multiple projects in the country detracted from the ability to enact those projects.

Second, China Merchants Port’s Shekou model is simple in theory but quite difficult to implement outside of the Chinese context. In the PRC in the 1980s, while there was considerable room for experimentation, the issue of sovereignty over land was never in question. As the Tanzania case illustrates, negotiations over land use and who benefits from the port project have been under debate for more than eight years, and those disagreements over control of land are likely to continue. Controversies over land and sovereignty in Tanzania highlight the fact that countries have agency and can shape how PRC-funded BRI projects come to fruition. Yet, controversies around sovereignty are not unique and should be expected as they too were a crucial aspect of the development of China’s original Shekou zone. These types of controversies—and the risks associated with them—may be one reason China Merchants has sought long concession terms for a handful of its flagship projects abroad. Longer time horizons allow additional time to sort out these controversies while also allowing sufficient time for the SEZs to become operational.¹¹⁰

Third, the Moroccan case provides a different lens on the global reach of PRC SOEs. Terminal Link was part of China Merchants globalization strategy in an increasingly consolidated port and shipping industry.¹¹¹ Firm takeovers have implications for the long-term structuring of shipping that supports global trade, the oligopolistic nature of the shipping industry, and how state-owned firms may be able to undertake unique forms of collusion. This article contributes to our understanding of state-firm behavior and raises important questions for future research.

First, how do Chinese firms balance the need to achieve their commercial goals while also ensuring that they are acting in a manner consistent with PRC goals? While the two goals are often compatible, they are not the same thing. For SOEs, they must do more than simply go out and build ports under the mantle of the BRI but must also contribute to China's maritime strategy in other ways. Djibouti is an excellent example of the development-security nexus and shows how commercial relations can support expansion of military ties. Simultaneously, Djibouti shows that developing those ties is a slow process. Second, how will the evolving nature of the shipping industry influence PRC port projects in Africa? The oligopolistic nature of the shipping industry and the ability of state firms to undertake unique forms of collusion may mean that new development patterns are emerging. As referenced at the outset, the maritime goals laid out in the 13th Five-Year Plan were relatively straightforward, but now those goals have been expanded and intertwined with Xi Jinping's commentary on the "building a strong maritime nation" (建设海洋强国, *jianshe haiyang qiangguo*). Yet, port projects in Africa are not all identical as illustrated with the differences in projects and outcomes in Djibouti, Tanzania, and Morocco.

At its core, one key question for future research is who is benefiting from this model of development.¹¹² Is the mode of integrated port development truly "win-win" as China asserts, or is it primarily benefiting the SOEs that undertake these projects? Additionally, non-economic outcomes of zone-based development remain underexamined. Industrial plans, land use, and concession terms all have implications for how successful port projects will be and whether they contribute to the domestic economy. Parola, Satta, and Caschili note that "cooperative ventures in the container port industry" are increasingly common, but cooperative commercial ventures do not fully capture the ways in which collusion could be occurring among Chinese firms. Contract terms have influence over land use in a particular jurisdiction, the rules and regulations for the port and SEZ, and which companies operate within that zone. Each of these factors has implications for national sovereignty, corruption, local politics, debt, and the success or failure of these port projects. Much more work needs to be done, and that analysis must be conducted with an appreciation of Chinese plans and intentions, PRC SOE behavior, and the role of local and national authorities in those projects. ★

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Notes

1. Research on China’s original (domestic) special economic zones, and Shekou in particular, was supported by the University of Virginia’s Bankard Fund for Political Economy and the Dumas Malone Graduate Research Fellowship. Creation of the port operations dataset was funded by the National Bureau of Asian Research’s 2019 National Asia Research Program (NARP) Fellowship.

2. Deborah Brautigam, “Misdiagnosing the Chinese Infrastructure Push.” *The American Interest*, 4 April 2019, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/>; Deborah Brautigam, “A critical look at Chinese ‘debt-trap diplomacy’: the rise of a meme,” *Area Development and Policy*, 5, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/>; and Deborah Brautigam and Meg Rithmire, “The Chinese ‘Debt Trap’ Is a Myth: The narrative wrongfully portrays both Beijing and the developing countries it deals with,” *The Atlantic*, 6 February 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/>.

3. National Development Reform Commission, “The 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China, 2016–2020,” Translated by the Compilation and Translation Bureau, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 2016, <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/>.

4. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) catalogs ports in Sub-Saharan Africa; see: Judd Devermont, Amelia Cheatham, and Catherine Chiang, “Assessing the Risks of Chinese Investments in Sub-Saharan African Ports,” 2019, CSIS, <https://csis-ilab.github.io/>. Kardon (2020) provides a list of port projects in his testimony appendix; see: Isaac B. Kardon, “China’s Development of Expeditionary Capabilities: ‘Bases and Access Points,’” 2020, <https://www.uscc.gov/>. Pekkanen and Pearson (2018) provide a set of case studies related to controversial port projects; see: Saadia M. Pekkanen and Margaret M. Pearson, “Limits to Maritime Power: The Politics of Controversy over Chinese Infrastructure Investment,” Working Paper, 2018.

5. Deng Yanzi, “CMG wants to make African port of Djibouti ‘new Shekou,’” 2017, *China Daily*, 7 March 2017, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>; Erica Downs, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick deGategno, “China’s Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China’s First Overseas Base,” 2017, <https://www.cna.org/>.

6. Deng, “CMG wants to make African port of Djibouti ‘new Shekou.’”

7. Deng, “CMG wants to make African port of Djibouti ‘new Shekou’”; and Gao Jianghong, “Shekou 4.0’ Lands in Djibouti, China Merchants Goes to Sea,” *21st Century Business Herald*, 5 July 2017, <http://epaper.21jingji.com/>.

8. Gao, “Shekou 4.0 Lands in Djibouti.” Gao does not define the “flying geese” concept, but the name is likely drawn from Japan’s rhetoric of development in the 1970s and 1980s. During that period, Japan’s business conglomerates were described as the “lead” of a flying formation of Asian countries that would include Southeast Asia. For more on Japan’s development strategies in Asia and how they compare to China’s efforts, see: Jonathan E. Hillman, *The Emperor’s New Road: China and the Project of the Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

9. David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

10. William J. Norris, *Chinese Economic Statecraft: Commercial Actors, Grand Strategy, and State Control* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

11. Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, “Problematic Prognostications about China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): Lessons from Africa and the Middle East,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29, no. 122 (2020): 159–174.

12. Deng, “CMG wants to make African of Djibouti ‘new Shekou’”; and Gao, “Shekou 4.0 Lands in Djibouti.”

13. Norris, *Chinese Economic Statecraft*, 2016.

14. James Reilly, *China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power* (Sydney: Lowy Institute, November 2013), 2.

15. Norris, *Chinese Economic Statecraft*; and Shu Guang Zhang, *Beijing’s Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949–1991* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

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17. Li-Wen Lin and Curtis J. Milhaupt, “We Are the (National) Champions: Understanding the Mechanisms of State Capitalism in China,” *Stanford Law Review*, 65, (2013): 697–759.

18. Mary Ann O’Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach, “Introduction: Experiments, Exceptions, and Extensions,” in *Learning from Shenzhen: China’s Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, ed. Mary Ann O’Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), Kindle edition.

19. Tang Xiaoyang, “Co-evolutionary Pragmatism: Re-examine ‘China Model’ and Its Impact on Developing Countries,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 126 (2020): 853–70.

20. Yuen Yuen Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

21. Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, 17.

22. NDRC, “13th Five-Year Plan,” 2016; Xi Jinping, PRC State Council, NDRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce, “Full-text: Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative,” 30 March 2015, <http://english.www.gov.cn/>; “Chronology of China’s ‘Belt and Road’ initiatives,” *Xinhua News*, 5 February 2015, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/>; and PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries,” 7 September 2013, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/>.

23. Lin and Milhaupt, “We Are the (National) Champions,” 700.

24. Jude Blanchette, “From ‘China Inc.’ to ‘CCP Inc.’: A New Paradigm for Chinese State Capitalism,” *China Leadership Monitor*, Winter 2020, no. 66 (1 December 2020), <https://www.prcleader.org/>; and Lin and Milhaupt, “We Are the (National) Champions.”

25. State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, 央企名录, *Yangqi Minglu* [List of central enterprises], 24 June 2021, <http://www.sasac.gov.cn/>.

26. April A. Herlevi, "Economic Growth or Sowing the Seeds of Destruction? The Role of Economic Development Zones in China," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 22, no. 4 (2017): 675–89, <https://doi.org/>. In 2006, there was an effort to close many of these zones, but in the past five years in China, "special zones" and SEZs are once again being created to manage development including the new Xiong'an zone near Beijing and the designation of all of Hainan Island as a "free trade zone."

27. Blanchard, "Problematic Prognostications," 161.

28. David Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road and Small States: Lessons from the Case of Djibouti," *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 122 (2020): 191–206, <https://doi.org/>.

29. This research has been part of a larger research project funded initially by the NBR's National Asia Research Program (NARP). I collected corporate records for China Merchants, China Ocean Shipping Corporation (COSCO) Shipping Group, and other PRC shipping companies with port projects abroad and created a dataset of overseas port operations with indicators for concession term length, ownership shares, and the role of the Chinese firm. For more information on that data, see: April A. Herlevi, "Building China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road: Port Management Operations as Economic Statecraft," Working Paper, 2021, (currently under review).

30. Ezra F. Vogel, *One Step Ahead in China: Guangdong Under Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Tu Qiao [涂俏], 袁庚转: 改革现场1978-1984 [Biography of Yuan Geng: Site of Reform] (Beijing, China: Writers Publishing House, 2008).

31. China Merchants did not formally begin publishing annual reports online until 2001; author dataset contains all CMPH reports from 2001 to 2021.

32. China Merchants Port Holdings Company Ltd., "Annual Report 2001," 2001, <https://www.cmcdi.com.hk/>.

33. According to one China scholar, Ni Shixiong (2009), Jiang Zemin reportedly said, 为祖国和同胞走出去 (*wei fuwu zuguo he tongbao zou chu qu*), "For the service of the motherland and its compatriots, go out." Ni Shixiong, 《江泽民与中美关系》 [Jiang Zemin and China-US Relations], Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping Theory Research 6 (2009): 56–64.

34. Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, 15.

35. Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, 16.

36. China Merchants Port Holdings Company Ltd., "Annual Report 2002," 2002, 18, <http://www.cmport.com.hk/>.

37. Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, 14.

38. At the outset, Shenzhen was known as an "Export Commodity Base," according to the Shenzhen Museum, Shenzhen, China, June 2016. Later, because the focus on trade appeared too controversial for some PRC leaders, Deng Xiaoping changed the name to "special economic" area.

39. Shenzhen Museum, Shenzhen, China, June 2016. The phrase used was: 改革开放的 "第一炮" (*gaige kaifang de "di yi pao"*) [Reform and opening's "First blast"].

40. Ann Fenwick, "Evaluating China's Special Economic Zones," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 2 no. 2 (1984), 378.

41. Vogel, *One Step Ahead in China*, 130–131.

42. Fenwick, "Evaluating China's Special Economic Zones," 379. China Merchants remained a state-owned enterprise under the PRC, but the company's headquarters was in Hong Kong. See also: Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

43. Vogel, *One Step Ahead in China*, 132.

44. Fenwick, "Evaluating China's Special Economic Zones," 379.
45. Fenwick, "Evaluating China's Special Economic Zones," 381. Quote is drawn from Article 12 of the *Regulations for Guangdong Special Economic Zone*.
46. Mary Ann O'Donnell, "Heroes of the Special Zone: Modeling Reform and Its Limits," in *Learning from Shenzhen: China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Jonathan Bach (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), Kindle edition.
47. Li Qiaoyi, "Tributes to Yuan Geng reflect nation's belief in need to stick with reform program," *Global Times*, 2 February 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/>.
48. Gao, "Shekou 4.0' Lands in Djibouti."
49. China Merchants Port Holdings Company Ltd., "2018 Annual Report," 2018, <http://www.cmport.com.hk/>.
50. Downs, Becker, and deGategno, "China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti."
51. Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) China Africa Research Initiative (CARI), "Development-Security Nexus," *6th Annual Conference Strategic Interests, Security Implications: China, Africa, and the Rest*, 22 September 2020. See also: Ilaria Carrozza, "New Perspectives on China's Relations with the World," in *China's Multilateral Diplomacy in Africa: Constructing the Security-Development Nexus*, ed. Daniel Johanson, Jie Li, and Tsunghan Wu (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2019), 142–58.
52. In this analysis, we do not cover the Ghoubet Port, which is being built by China Harbour Engineering Company with funding from the China Export-Import Bank. For that project, see: Downs, Becker, and deGategno, "China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti," 9.
53. Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road and Small States," 192.
54. Thomas Farole and Gokhan Akinci, eds., *Special Economic Zones: Progress, Emerging Challenges, and Future Directions* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011). Launch dates for the program are mentioned in table 3, page 68, while the quote is drawn from page 160.
55. Africa Economic Zones Organization, "Djibouti," <https://www.africaeconomiczones.com/>.
56. US Department of State, "2020 Investment Climate Statement: Djibouti," 2020, <https://www.state.gov/>.
57. Downs, Becker, and deGategno, "China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti," 10–13.
58. Republic of Djibouti, "Vision 2035," 2014, accessed in the IEA Renewables Policies Database, <https://www.iea.org/>, last updated 19 May 2016. Djibouti Vision 2035 was officially launched in 2014.
59. Djibouti, "Vision 2035," 96.
60. Downs, Becker, and deGategno, "China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti," 10.
61. Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road and Small States," 196.
62. Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road and Small States."
63. PRC State Council, et al., "Full-text: Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative." Hillman (2020) also notes that a BRI focus on railway projects, explicitly citing the railway project in Laos, which has questionable long-term prospects.
64. John Pomfret, "Opinion: China's debt traps around the world are a trademark of its imperialist ambitions," *Washington Post*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>. The Center for Global Development also listed Djibouti as high-risk for future debt distress, see: John Hurley, Scott Morris and Gailyn Portelance, "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and

Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective,” Center for Global Development Policy Paper, March 2018, <https://www.cgdev.org/>.

65. Author dataset, as described in “Building China’s 21st Century Maritime Silk Road: Port Management Operations as Economic Statecraft,” Working Paper, 2021, (currently under review). *Long concession terms* are defined as longer than 50 years. According to shipping industry and academic publications, 25 to 40 years has historically been the norm for concession term lengths. See: Joseph Botham, “Concession Choices,” *Strategy: Ports and Terminals*, 2014; and Christophe Theys and Theo Notteboom, “Determining Terminal Concession Durations in Seaports: Theoretical Considerations, Applicable Techniques and Current Practices,” *Journal of International Logistics and Trade* 8, no. 1 (June 2010): 13–40, <https://doi.org/>.

66. Styan, “China’s Maritime Silk Road and Small States,” 201.

67. China Merchants Port Holdings, “2018 Annual Report,” 25.

68. PRC State Council, et al., “Full-text: Action plan on the Belt and Road Initiative.”

69. Global Port Alliance, “About port alliance,” n.d., <https://www.izptec.com/>.

70. Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “China’s Military Base in Djibouti: A Microcosm of China’s Growing Competition with the United States and New Bipolarity,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29, no. 125 (2020): 731–47, <http://doi.org/>.

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Comparing the Strategic Worldviews of the United States and China

Implications for Strategy and Engagement with Africa

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Strategy is a master narrative, a story that we tell ourselves and others about how we see the world and our role in it; in other words, strategy communicates a particular worldview. Strategic worldviews exert a powerful influence on our priorities, policies, decisions, and activities and are best examined with a reflexive approach. In the field of Western security studies, there is no shortage of research into Chinese activities, which are typically (and not altogether wrongly) characterized as insidious, nefarious, and malign. From embedding surveillance technologies in cooperation with autocratic regimes to enriching Chinese and African elites at the expense of African populations and their resources, there is certainly much to critique regarding the Chinese approach to Africa. Yet, these critical lenses are rarely applied to the West, and specifically to the United States by American authors, with the same vigor. The aim here is neither self-flagellation nor Chinese apologia (or parroting its propaganda). Rather, I argue that if we continue to have a selective memory and a largely unexamined Americentric worldview, our strategic communication will continue to be tone deaf, and worse, US policy toward Africa will remain underprioritized and not as productive as it could be. For if US policy toward Africa were more prioritized, productive, and focused on Africa in its own right—and not mostly a (reactionary) “China in Africa” policy—there would be enormous potential to truly “build back a better world” with a more broadly beneficial transatlantic political economy supportive of more sustainable national and collective security.

Examining Worldviews, Contextualizing the Competition

While Anchorage is a long way from Addis Ababa, the following scene of geopolitical theater reflects fundamental dynamics at play globally, with supposedly “off-script” comments revealing “a new world view” that China brought to the table.¹ Deviating from protocol (after accusing US representatives of doing the same), Yang Jiechi, director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission Office, remarked:

What China and the international community follow or uphold is the United Nations-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law, not what is advocated by a small number of countries of the so-called rules-based international order. . . . I don't think the overwhelming majority of countries in the world would recognize that the universal values advocated by the United States or that the opinion of the United States could represent international public opinion, and those countries would not recognize that the rules made by a small number of people would serve as the basis for the international order.²

Blustering and at times deeply ironic/hypocritical as this entire statement was, and perhaps aimed as much or more at his domestic audience than the assembly, Director Yang has a general point here: the rules-based international order is not universally perceived and understood; neither does everyone around the world view the United States as an unblemished white knight upholding such an order. Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded that the hallmark of American leadership is its willingness to acknowledge, not ignore, our faults as “a constant quest to . . . form a more perfect union.”³ National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan added that “a confident country is able to look hard at its own shortcomings and constantly seek to improve,” calling this characteristic America’s “secret sauce.”⁴ I take their responses as a bit of inspiration for this article.

It is easy to critique China and react with utter alarm at its presence and growing influence in Africa—and more difficult but ultimately perhaps more fruitful to be reflexive in developing our own strategy. Indeed, one reads and hears much more about the former and much less about the latter. African partners may acknowledge their position in the current world order and have pragmatically sought to get what they could out of it from whomever. However, for most African states their positions were hardly advantageous, even in the vaunted post–World War II rules-based order, and Americans should not assume that all thought highly of such an order. Millions of African troops fought and died during the world wars, even for the victors, and were denied the benefits and ability to set the terms for the new order after victory. Neither should Americans expect that our current primary focus on (bordering on fetish with) China and the Chinese presence in Africa will be always and everywhere appreciated. Being a Cold War proxy or now a pawn in others’ great game is just not appealing. Even if it were a zero-sum game (which it is not), without appeal, there is limited influence—and without influence, you lose.

For all the negativity directed at Chinese activity and for all the charges of neocolonialism, survey data indicates generally favorable ratings for both the United States and China in Africa.⁵ Although more recently “Beijing’s influence

has weakened in popular perceptions . . . many Africans welcome both Chinese and US engagement with their country.”⁶ We need to think beyond demonizing China, making heroes of ourselves, and treating Africa like cake to be carved up, a prize won in a game, or some damsel in distress whose affections we need to court.⁷ Some frank truth-telling about our histories and current trajectories, and some inquiry into these “metaphors we live by,” is warranted.⁸ Acknowledging the limitations of the practice of anthropomorphizing countries—and generalizing entire continents—this article will attempt to examine and compare the ways in which the United States and China perceive Africa and their roles in and relationship with the continent. Ultimately, and taking seriously the declaration that “our world is at an inflection point,” I contend that practicing reflexivity and proactively shifting our strategic worldview will lead to better policies and outcomes.⁹

US Lenses and Liabilities

One of the main faults of both the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) and the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) is their facile historical context—if not selective memory and outright amnesia. While the 2017 NSS decries the international institutions that rivals have manipulated against us, the 2018 NDS takes the so-called US-led rules-based international order (RBIO) as a given—and good and true, “free and open,” if only it went unchallenged. The current administration has also referred to the RBIO as if it is entirely noble and universally understood. If ever there were a historical moment to take more honest and fuller stock, it seems as though now is the time for strategists, particularly those in the West, to acknowledge that the international state system as we know it today was largely designed and came to exist in the context of colonialism and imperialism, both in imagination and in practice. As the self-appointed leading power of this international order, the United States can claim no immunity (as we may like to compare ourselves more favorably to the Europeans in Africa especially).¹⁰

Far from being a gift of a “free and open order” given by the victors of World War II to the rest of the world, the underlying imperial structures have given way, yet Western powers have often continued to meddle, enabling in those post/neo-colonial states leaders given to autocracy and extraversion.¹¹ Many African citizens, at least those outside of patronage networks plugged into largely predatory and/or weak states, have too frequently been left with less than ideal options amid a globalizing, neoliberal political economy with very little stability and security. Regardless of just who or what structures and constraints are to blame, it should be plain enough to agree that this order has not enfranchised or protected populations to even minimally acceptable levels in too many places. And we should acknowledge that marginalization and disenfranchisement are significant, if not *the*,

drivers of violent extremism, conflict, and migration; they are the root causes of what the West perceives as threats.

The strategic worldview that we even have an order upright and good for all, underwritten by the torchbearers for freedom, if only the emerging, so-called great—but also nefarious—powers would not compete for and destabilize it, is at least incomplete if not deeply flawed. What is worse is this worldview convinces the purveyors of such prideful perspectives that they should either run or save the world, engineering systems and solutions for other societies they do not understand well enough. In actuality we are relatively naïve about “the way the world actually works,” especially in societies foreign to ours; we wind up picking winners and losers either inadvertently or for expedience. As we have seen in this century, and too often during Cold War-era puppeteering as well, this willful ignorance about the world combined with a hubris and drive to remake it in our image or just to serve (what we think are) our interests has consistently led to strategically catastrophic results. And so a purely Americentric worldview, particularly when myopically focused on a singular boogeyman, whether communist, terrorist, or Chinese, must be guarded against with continual discipline.

We also need to get real about our self-image. As much as Americans like to say we did not have colonies in Africa (with the special case exception of Liberia), we have not exactly been on the side of African independence movements and black liberation per se. Our own national narrative championing the ragtag colonies’ defeat of the British crown and our ascent to “the world’s lone superpower . . . [being] a testimony to the strength of the idea on which our Nation is founded”¹²—liberty and justice for all—serve as a cover for all the ways we have accrued power that had more in common with British imperialism than we would like to acknowledge. Immigrants and rugged pioneers of European descent moving west may have helped build this country, but so did enslaved peoples of African descent. The United States should not just suddenly recognize Africa’s importance because China has made major inroads there in the last decade—Africa has always been part of what made America.

Because so much of this history was suppressed and lost, much of our intellectual inheritance is from Europe, which includes Enlightenment ideals of reason, liberty, equality, and brotherhood—but also a persistent imperial imagination. The ideologies of manifest destiny, the white man’s burden, and American exceptionalism—as rationale for ongoing civilizing missions and sociopolitical engineering—are foundational to an American worldview. And these are not nineteenth-century ideas long forgotten. As recently as last year, a presidential Fourth of July speech referenced and reiterated this mythology, delivered while

standing in front of Mount Rushmore no less, on Sioux sacred land, a dissonance that was amplified on Twitter using decidedly twenty-first-century social media.¹³

For the West, perhaps no continent has been as wholly Othered as Africa. As Mbembe reminds us: “It is now widely acknowledged that Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.”¹⁴ And this assertion of difference meant not just defining (neutral) categories but that the West was different in the sense of being set apart, chosen, called, and, yes, exceptional and superior. Africa has served as a sort of foil: the dark negative to Western self-image, the wild to be tamed, the savage to be civilized. Critical to this effort was the social construct of race as something inherent, natural, and biological that signified human evolution and justified that white might made right. Speaking of notions, we would do well to acknowledge and conjure so as to exorcise them—this is definitely one such notion. Such a mentality leads to misadventures at best and profoundly destabilizing violence at worst.

Again, the US strategic worldview is not imperialist or inherently racist in an entirely totalizing sense. Neither do I necessarily refer to the obvious evidence (e.g., referring to “shithole” countries or wearing pith helmets on safari).¹⁵ Rather we can think of these ideas and practices as a sort of repertoire from which we borrow and reenact in ways both obvious and subtle. This repertoire is primarily revealed through the still-operative notions of a tiered world, strategic priorities based on a hierarchy of humanity and human societies, and in the unexamined ethnocentrism and default paternalism deeply embedded in so much of what we still think, design, and do. When US–Africa policy and decision makers get around the conference room table in our various working groups or task forces in Washington and Stuttgart, to what extent are African voices heard and integrated? Even though we repeat the mantra, “African solutions for African problems,” which if any African voices drive decisions?

The strategic worldview that we can remake entire societies and institutions in our image, especially when knowing so little about them, is also imperialist in nature. So can be a great power competition (GPC) framework, through which we can carve up a continent in competition with other powerful states outside that continent. At least the colonial project more effectively utilized anthropologists as handmaidens; since 9/11 we have relied more on one-hour briefs and culture smart cards and sent our military to do far more than that for which we have properly trained them, when they often should not have been the instrument of choice in the first place. That we do not demonstrate the proportional amount of investment required to develop any real, deep knowledge and expertise on any respective locale, that our systems are *the* systems and should work for so-called

less-developed societies, reeks too of the civilizing mission, of bringing light to darkness and our shining city to the bush.

Furthermore, from the eras of colonialism and African independence movements, to Cold War struggles via African proxies, to a prioritized Global War on Terror (GWOT), and to now China and so-called great power competition—have we ever really strategically prioritized relations with Africans themselves? Has Africa ever mattered to US foreign policy in its own right, or mostly as a secondary backdrop (at best) to these primary threat-based concerns?¹⁶

Chinese Lenses and Liabilities—and Comparative Opportunities

China does see its Belt and Road Initiative as a pathway to Europe, a reenactment of the ancient Silk Road, and one could argue its engagement with Africa is secondary to a prioritized Europe as well. One could also argue any Chinese prioritization of Africa has more to do with resource extraction to serve China's own economic growth rather than any African benefit. However, China does not suffer from the same historical liabilities of former colonial powers in the West and has been able to credibly claim and demonstrate solidarity with Africa, providing inspiration for the Global South with its model of development. Colloquially referred to as China's "second continent," Africa has become more central to Chinese strategic worldview as a key testing ground for "the China dream": "If they can demonstrate the efficacy of China's model in Africa, Chinese strategists hope that this model can be spread across the global South, eventually reshaping the world."¹⁷

China's self-image is also informed by its longer history, centered in the world as the Middle Kingdom, with the glories of the Silk Road as its mythological repertoire. Through international institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, from which the United States has withdrawn, China is documenting ancient land and maritime silk road heritage and enshrining more and more sites as world heritage sites, thereby granting legitimacy to its narrative that China has supported global trade, driving development as the central connector of civilizations for centuries—as it positions itself to play that role again. For example, as Chinese state media reported last year at the kickoff to the China–Italy "year of culture":

Chinese Minister of Culture and Tourism Luo Shugang recalled the historical ties between the two countries centuries ago, when western travelers—such as Marco Polo and priest Matteo Ricci—travelled through Asia along the ancient Silk Road to China. "We represent two different civilizations that have relations since ancient times, and, in this historic framework, the Silk Road has provided us a hint that is still valid today," the Chinese minister told the forum.¹⁸

As China attempts to reestablish these connections to Europe, it has even fewer problematic pathways to renewed engagement with Africa. After the Western colonial project, decades of Cold War proxy warfare and neoimperialist meddling, and more recent unilateral Western/NATO militarism from Afghanistan to Iraq to Libya, is it any wonder why those Africans who did not benefit from such a Western-led order might find a vision of renewed global trade—and not global forever war—appealing? This is not to say that China did not also support warfare in Africa during the Cold War—it did, only it was in support of independence and revolutionary movements against European colonialism and later the Western bloc. China's emergence out of its own "Century of Humiliation," marked by occupation and subjugation to Western (and Japanese) powers and referencing more favorable histories of support to African liberation from shared sources of oppression, bolsters its credibility in claiming South–South solidarity.¹⁹

The United States has had some level of concern with Chinese activities in Africa for quite some time,²⁰ but current dynamics do not reflect a "new Cold War," as Chinese engagement has changed in both degree and kind and our globalizing political economies are more entangled instead of purely oppositional systems. While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is communist in the sense of centralized political authority, it is hardly passing out little red books anymore; its model is more hybrid and less totalizing or rigid, what some have labeled "developmental authoritarianism."²¹ China continues to use the language of creating a global "Community of Common Destiny" and "common prosperity" in selling the China Dream. Yet this China Dream seems somewhat familiar to the American one, promising economic advancement for hard work and determination. Indeed, it is less the ideological affinities of communism that have motivated African engagement with China in the last decade and more the business that can be conducted and the money that can be made. That communist China is beating the United States—the greatest engine of globalizing capitalism, promoting neoliberal economics, and privatization—in terms of trade and investment in Africa is perhaps ironic.

Sixty years ago, China's economic power was less than that of many newly independent African nations; now it is a powerhouse and an example for what African countries could become.²² Indeed, whoever delivers in ways most mutually beneficial will have the most credible, sought-after voice and vision to shape any future order. Furthermore, Africans often point to continued Western influence as having arrested their development compared to developing economies in Asia. In terms of African perception, there is something about being seen, of not existing only beyond the gaze of African populations wary of the opaque machinations of power in this world, populations who are tired of the arrangements

corrupt leaders make with faceless multinational conglomerates, populations who have watched the wealth underneath their feet become extracted and accumulated sums in Swiss or Chinese banks. To see Chinese workers, even foremen, on the streets building infrastructure, rather than disembodied multinationals taking from a distance, helps China differentiate itself from the West.

The Chinese worldview, while not suffering from the white man's burden, nevertheless does contain its own elements of exceptionalism and a superiority complex, especially as a model for so-called developing countries in Africa. This complex has perhaps been more notable in recent years after the rise of Xi Jinping, expressed in his speeches and those of his foreign minister, Wang Yi. But China has also faced blowback for talking too presumptively and dictating terms to smaller countries. Being the preferred partner also means managing one's hubris, a lesson the CCP may also need to learn, particularly as BRI spending has leveled off in recent years.²³

This "Wolf Warrior diplomacy" aims to project a more confident image of China. In addition to Chinese media outlets propagating in the region and carrying favorable messages to African audiences, other forms of Chinese cultural production reveal a Chinese vision for their place and role in the world.²⁴ Perhaps no single piece is more revealing than the highly successful action film series of the same name, *Wolf Warrior*, with its second installment released in 2017 and set in a nameless African country experiencing rebellion and civil war, featuring American mercenaries as the primary villains. Wu Jing, the film's director and lead, characterized so much of Chinese cinema and its war movies as being preoccupied with the Opium Wars and times when China was struggling to resist imperialism.²⁵ He argued that the opportunity for Chinese audiences to see themselves out in the world, protecting their citizens and their African friends, respecting the United Nations and being respected as the country that answers the 9-1-1 call globally (but does not act unilaterally) was an appealing self-image that accounted for the film's massive success.²⁶

A decade ago, when China became the leading trading partner with Africa and "China in Africa" became a matter of American policy makers' attention, we could more credibly talk about the United States and China as operating in different lanes. The United States was promoting democracy, providing aid and security cooperation through our 3Ds: diplomacy, development, and defense. And when it came to defense, we were fighting a GWOT the Chinese were not, and so our emphasis on counterterrorism and "advise and assist" was our lane, and we were global standard-bearers for special operations. Where we would make engagement and assistance dependent on meeting certain democratic standards, the Chinese posture was one of "noninterference," focusing instead on making deals

with African elites for energy and resource extraction, and later for massive infrastructure projects. Most American interests in these sectors were separate from state and US government initiatives, certainly when compared against the entangled nature of China's state-driven mercantilism.

We were perhaps too slow to officially shift to a government-led and -supported emphasis on fair trade, instead of relying on an aid model that suffered from too much inefficient bureaucracy and paternalism. The Chinese are not so much interested in fair trade per se, but they were not as interested in aid as charity for the general population; they do not share the intellectual history of the Western civilizing mission. Rather, they have historically and presently still frame their engagement—at much higher levels, both in terms of budget and ministerial/presidential engagement—as more peer-to-peer, South–South solidarity. The narrative is more “we are all up-and-comers, ending our respective centuries of humiliation, and resisting Western hegemony which has exploited us all.” In promoting of their rising power, China can less problematically reference past greatness, as the historical center of commerce and exchange over the centuries—without the colonial/imperial exploitation, and now with only traces of a more Maoist ideology. A zero-sum, black-white worldview, reductive of complexity, intolerant of ambiguity and hybridity, will also not serve us well. After all, we are now entangled with a China “that is both bright red and wildly capitalist, a synthesis that the West thought would be impossible to achieve between these two seemingly incompatible ideologies.”²⁷

What Now, Then?

Perhaps due to transition in US administrations in the last year and the number of high-level positions given to those with significant Africa experience (e.g., UN ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, USAID director Powers), there has been some hope from Africa-watchers that the region may receive more attention (and resourcing) than it has under prior administrations. And there has been no shortage of excellent suggestions on how to rethink US–Africa policy.²⁸ While more comprehensive policy proscriptions are beyond the scope of this article, I will conclude with examples of how a shift in strategic worldview could affect our strategy and engagement.

Broader Security Frames

For an example of the sort of worldview shift involved, if we want to demonstrate resolve and leadership in the RBIO, and truly recommit to multilateralism beyond rhetoric, perhaps we should commit more troops to UN peacekeeping

operations. The United States may pledge the most for the bill, but that is not as seen and appreciated as we might like—especially since we are currently in arrears and compared to our own defense budget our pledge is miniscule. Beyond writing checks, deploying personnel would give our service members a “broadening assignment” par excellence and invaluable experience in working with multinational teams, preparing them for leadership roles interoperable with foreign partners; meanwhile, closing the credibility gap with our rhetoric that America is back and ready to reassume its fuller participation and leadership role in the RBIO. As of now, China has paid its bills to the UN and sends thousands of peacekeepers every year (compared to our approximately 120 pax); we are in an awkward position to claim they are undermining an order we are not exactly supporting with the full weight of our own military-industrial complex, which is perhaps the greatest the world has ever seen by most metrics aside from productive strategic impact.²⁹

Wars do not end where you want. We may want to “pivot to Asia” or reorganize toward great power competition and/or revise it to strategic competition, but terrorist organizations, insurgents, narco-traffickers, banditry, small arms trafficking, ethnic- and resource-based conflict, and the like will continue to dominate the security landscape in Africa for quite some time. Finding ways to build and right-size partner capacity for the threats and challenges they face, without protecting autocratic regimes and empowering security forces respective populations equally fear, remains a sort of holy grail for our security policy. I have witnessed other general officers smirk at AFRICOM Commander Gen. Stephen Townsend’s suggestion that we think of GPC as *global* power competition and that both building partner capacity (BPC) and countering violent extremism (CVE) is GPC, but he has a point.³⁰ When the RBIO fails to protect villagers from slaughter in the Sahel, for example, witnessing such widespread insecurity and violence while leaders of the order are relatively indifferent also discredits it.³¹ Just because the US military is not optimized for counterinsurgency or small wars, or because violent extremist organizations do not pose existential threats to our republic, does not mean we should let the region burn and not strive for better ways to collectively counter violent extremism and growing insecurity in Africa, lest we create too many openings for Chinese and Russian weapons sales, Wagner goons, and ultimately influence—after we have built \$100 million drone bases in the desert only to potentially abandon them. Can we continue to establish bases not as imperialist outposts of some dark forever war but as logistics and rapid response depots that enable African militaries to provide population-centric collective security regionally?

There is a difference between selling Nigeria attack helicopters and providing Niger with C-130s that can be used to fight the infamous “tyranny of distance”

(and less than optimal road networks) to support UN peacekeeping operations or intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance technology that can provide the warnings and indicators that prevent continual attacks on military bases and police stations, which has consistently proven to further undermine state capabilities and credibility. And what if we made the Economic Community of West African States stronger instead of the republican guard special forces that either protect or overthrow particular autocrats? We all want to be Wolf Warriors, when world peace and our national interest (and treasure) would be better served if we were UPS men, leveraged our logistics and mobility capabilities instead of just our special operations, and encouraged our private sector to invest in ways for Africans to add value to their industries and products, instead of encouraging them to remain victims of exploitative, extractive economies that benefit the few and kleptocratic regimes.

Continuing to prioritize Europe at the expense of Africa is also short-sighted. NATO is the greatest alliance globally, but renewed emphasis on the transatlantic partnership needs to more heavily and fundamentally include Africans.³² We need to accept and understand Africa on its own terms, value its security, not just the threats that may emanate from there to Europe, for example. General Townsend's recent comments about creating a firebreak with the littoral states to prevent the fire in the Sahel from spreading betrays a certain strategic worldview that undeniably prioritizes Europe over Africa. Europe would likely be more secure moving away from a border control paradigm and toward political and economic solidarity with Africans, which could address root causes of migration. To take another major example, privileging NATO and mostly ignoring the pleas of the African Union prior to the 2011 Libyan intervention is a set of choices we remain reminded of by African partners to this day, and rightly so. We need to cut down on these inconsistencies: We project ourselves as the preferred partner but still act in major ways that seem to disregard African partners in discussion and planning efforts, treat them more like pupils and pawns than peers—if considered at all—and then destabilize entire regions for years to come because of this Eurocentrism.

Globally, perhaps the United States' most significant turning point and glaring liability to its credibility to uphold a rules-based international order was the 2003 invasion of Iraq and continued strategic prioritization—and perhaps disproportionate fixation—on the Global War on Terror, often at the expense of our other stated priorities and policies, such as promoting the rule of law, protecting human rights, and good governance. In Africa in particular, being a dependable security and counterterrorism partner inadvertently served to cover a multitude of other sins and abuses committed by various authoritarian, or at least nondemocratic,

regimes (e.g., Chad, Cameroon, Uganda)—and it may be better to not make such tradeoffs. Because the GWOT was not China's to fight, and their supposedly lofty principle of "noninterference" meant nonconsideration of and nonaccountability for any of these abuses, China did not have to make such strategic tradeoffs. China (and other competitors, most explicitly Russia) has and will continue to frame US and Western power as being defined by these lapses in judgment, arguing that these are not simply missteps in what are otherwise sound policies and productive activities but instead evidence of a systemically heavy-handed and needlessly violent philosophy focused on militarization—further framing US appeals to shared values and attempts to stake moral high ground as being ultimately hypocritical.

The point here is not to absolve either of these so-called great powers of their own abuses and hypocrisy regarding their key principles such as noninterference and respecting sovereignty (of the authoritarians they have often bought off and protect). Both China and Russia have also leveraged and even constructed their own neocolonial networks with aplomb, exploiting resources and making money with African elites, while ordinary African citizens see no such benefit, oppressed by the very regimes they have helped to empower. But not all Chinese activity is entirely malign. Having new stadiums and roads is nice. Moreover, the United States has a credibility gap when it comes to warning of the dangers of, say, China's export of surveillance technology to authoritarian regimes, when we have courted and strengthened some of the same and similar regimes because of their alleged indispensability as a security partner, even though they may be acting in dangerously undemocratic ways (e.g. Museveni)—which ultimately does not bode well for security and stability. Plus, if we are to take the information environment seriously, these are the narratives propagated against us, and it is important to recognize the shape of these discourses so as to counter them or, better yet, demonstrate an alternative vision.

Democratic Principles, Representative Governance

How might we prioritize political reform, as well as protect and enfranchise various constituencies and marginalized communities, instead of incentivizing militarization, especially in the image of a more kinetic-minded military such as ours? One approach is not to compromise standards on the protection of human rights with regard to security cooperation and foreign military sales. If African partners have to use Chinese drones in service of ultimately counterproductive counterterrorism efforts, we cannot stop them. Rather than a total washing of our hands, however, we should have deep, frank conversations with African partners and develop better options together through a more complete understanding of

the local social, political, and economic dynamics that fuel conflict—instead of arguing over who sells the superior technology or the most weapons. The most intractable security crises on the continent—which, again, should not serve to define Africa, its populations, and dominate our own worldview—are the result of “the manipulation of identity for political purposes and the breakdown of traditional dispute management mechanisms [that] aggravate tensions and conflict,” which foreign security assistance missions—particularly those that protect specific regimes and groups at the expense of others—do little to truly and productively address and may actually exacerbate. We need to go to school to know our partners and their social realities before we roll out around the world to show them what right looks like, especially if we have not done enough to study the potential (and somewhat predictable at this point) second- and third-order effects of what our resources and presence actually are, particularly in terms of entrenching dependence and fueling corruption.

China’s strategy of building infrastructure appears to be inherently productive (whether it is or not, and for whom, is a separate consideration), certainly more so than support to endless counterterrorism operations or “advise and assist” missions that do not always add up to much in the way of capable security forces or just, sustainable police and military institutions—and which may be a liability not only for US strategic communications but also in that the local populace suffers from “collateral damage” that may beget yet more violent extremism. To take just one example: the decades of training to the Malian military that was simply and rather easily overrun by Tuareg rebels and the jihadists that coopted the rebellion in 2012. At the time of writing, nearly another decade later, Mali’s military remains incredibly vulnerable in the field and seems more effective when conducting coups—and appealing to assistance from Russia and China in the meantime. Nearly a decade ago, Mark Quarterman warned, “Countries and international organizations interested in helping Mali should not succumb to this election fetish,” which has been persistent.³³ As Debos writes: “In Chad, as elsewhere, it is easier to organize elections than to restructure the state administration and to alter the mode of government. Previous elections have not modified the rule of the militarised political field.”³⁴

Leaders like Chadian president Idriss Déby had learned to use the West’s preoccupation with terrorism and support to such “militarised political fields” to their advantage, to hold onto power and dodge accountability. One wonders with the (hopes of) GWOT waning, and with the recent deaths of leaders like Déby and Our Man in Africa before him, the convicted war criminal Hissène Habré, that we might take this opportunity to reconfigure our worldview and our understanding of these relationships.³⁵ Large swathes of the Sahel may still be on fire and,

especially in the short term, cannot be doused by the Peace Corps per se (or any outside force), but one wonders if supporting more legitimate forms of governance attuned to local conditions would do better than the last twenty years and the Cold War before it could.

Probably too many officially postcolonial African countries were characterized by, as Piot notes regarding Togo, “military control and dictatorial authority—a style of government that was largely, of course, an imitation of the brutal absolutist rule of the colonial era.”³⁶ After choosing largely not “to be on the side of the natives”³⁷ in liberation movements against their former colonial masters/our European allies, US policy seemed too often to consist of endless attempts to find “Our Man in Africa,” with logics heightening in the Cold War but persisting even now—and which would be a mistake to continue as we compete against China, setting our autocracies against theirs, all while rhetorically promoting democracy. Often our fears of Soviet or communist influence, combined with black/white either/or thinking—again and again *our* categories imposed—led us to label African leaders as communist when often they simply and reasonably wanted to rid themselves of European exploitation and pursue a more independent path. As Stephen Walt has opined regarding Middle East policy: “The playbook we’ve been using since the 1940s isn’t going to cut it anymore. We still seem to think the Middle East can be managed if we curry favor with local autocrats, back Israel to the hilt, constantly reiterate the need for US ‘leadership,’ and when all else fails, blow some stuff up.”³⁸

Such a playbook needs an overhaul when engaging Africa as well, especially if we want to build credibility in the long term, particularly for a continent awash in cell phones and cameras, wielded by younger populations with other aspirations who can surveil the state back and connect to global protest movements. If one tends to view the continent through the lens of chaos, any protest or unrest will simply confirm these biases more than right-size the negative phenomena and results vis-à-vis those more positive or productive aspects of instability that may be threatening in the short term but that ultimately produce a more durable peace and a more just system. We seek stability via the status quo when the status quo is not as stable as it seems; even if these more autocratic models of governance were more stable in the past, they sowed the seeds of contemporary unrest. If the status quo does not serve people, it will not hold. The power of incumbency is just not quite what it used to be, which, while making the once-comfortable now uncomfortable, nevertheless must be reckoned with, as is the need to be nimbler and more responsive to a rapidly changing world. American strategists are understandably wary about the promotion of democracy—especially if we see elections as signifying it—but the issue was less democracy than it was democracy at gun-

point, with foreign intervention and models of governance. But in addition to the promotion of democratic, representative governance and the protection of human rights being the right thing to do, it also should disempower the autocratic model upon which China relies.

From a report written nearly a decade ago, with warnings we may have heeded:

By 2050, one in every four humans will be African. At the end of the century, nearly 40 percent of the world's population will be African. Yet, instead of preparing to build a relationship that can grow with the continent, based upon diplomatic cooperation, the United States is doubling down on more than a decade of reliance on its military as the primary vehicle of engaging with Africa. The consequences, as one might expect, are overwhelmingly negative.³⁹

The military instrument will be necessary, but the question really is what manner of military engagement, and what our and partner militaries will be doing. Training special operations forces or advising and assisting 19-year-old infantrymen to shoot and move in a predominant counterterrorism frame is a quite different proposition and posture versus supporting United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief within a broader human security frame, as is establishing professional military educational institutions and exchanges for members ranging from junior NCOs to senior officers throughout their careers. While easier to measure bad guys killed in action in short deployment cycles, this kind of longer-term relationship and institutional development will be more productive.

And as I contend, beyond just greater or lesser use of the military, the real need is to reimagine just how the military is used and to monitor the mentality we have in these engagements. The continued drumbeat of partnership, interoperability, and dialogue is best practice,⁴⁰ and I have witnessed numerous instances where these exchanges invoke profound moments of listening, learning, and the development of mutual respect—just as I have witnessed and heard from too many African officers who have been disrespected and marginalized and who remember such experiences over a decade later. We must continue to be vigilant against our own paternalism, as it clearly does not build durable partnerships and strengthen alliances.⁴¹ The larger question for me, beyond whether US policy toward Africa is too militarized, is whether Africa is simply underprioritized; regardless of which 3D or DIME-C variable is relatively larger—they are all too small.

Currently I fear we are like the frustrated bull fixated on the waving red flag, ignoring neighbors in Central and South America and all potential partners across the Atlantic. Undoing the negative effects of neo/colonialism and moving beyond an imperial imagination for GPC will make us more secure. The path to

more democratic and representative governance will be bumpy in the short term but more durable in the long term.⁴² Autocrats have appeal in times of instability—times that they often generate.⁴³ And an American-style electoral democracy will not work for all—one could argue about its effectiveness for us at times—but most people around the world do not want corrupt kleptocracies and dysfunctional systems, which are neither responsive to nor protective of them. And they will agitate, as perhaps they should. In short, most generally want what we claim to champion—and for all the faults that we must admit, including gerrymandering, conflict over voter access, and just the sheer monetary expense of campaigning, we have the edge in democratic credentials compared to China and Russia. The key is to champion our values without being self-righteous and without imposing our models wholesale. A winner-take-all two-party system may not actually be the best or the most functional, anyway; depending upon the case, a multiparty system that forces compromise and coalition-building across diverse constituencies may be better suited for African politics. Recognize Somaliland, for example, which found a way to incorporate clan-based politics into state governance in spite of—and perhaps rather because of—relatively little outside involvement and no formal recognition from the international community.⁴⁴

Again, this article is not to suggest detailed lists of particular policy prescriptions but rather to examine how these worldviews (particularly a go-it-alone attitude, with a self-image we presume most others to have of us, as well as a technological superiority complex that covers for our lack of strategic and political imagination) affect policy-making—and how cleaning our windshield and identifying blind spots may help us build more productive and enduring partnerships in Africa. Put simply: acknowledging where we have gone wrong to build credibility to promote where we want to go right. Currently—and this may never be the best approach if emphasized—calling out detrimental Chinese activities rings hollow. What can the United States point to in terms of what it offers not just to political elites but to average citizens?

Often African partners' criticism of democracy is not so much against democracy itself or against some form of electoral or representative governance—which has majority support—but is more a reaction to democracy or election evangelism combined with finger-wagging from the Western-led international community, particularly if it is hypocritical, disingenuous, and/or certain powers have intervened or meddled in decidedly undemocratic ways in the past or are perceived to currently. Promoting democratic principles without interfering can be a bit of a tightrope walk, but better to make missteps with our diplomacy than with our military. As Ochonu reminds us:

Democratic failures do not discredit democracy as a generic set of ideas connoting accountability and representation, nor do they call for the abandonment of democracy altogether. What is required is a reimagining of democracy and, along with this reimagining, a willingness to redesign and redefine it to take into account and respond to each country's peculiar socioeconomic and demographic circumstances.⁴⁵

Joseph Siegle, director of research at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, has called this “a time of testing” for African democracies and good governance. Others warn of “democratic backsliding.” I would agree and further argue that this is true not only for Africa but also for the rest of the world's more democratic governments, the United States included. After all, we are just months removed from an event that, if it occurred in Africa, would likely have been perceived and breathlessly reported as an “ethnic [or even ‘tribal’?!] militia attack on the National Assembly” as it attempted to certify an election. Furthermore, while the institutions held, much of the dynamics and threats remain with one party of essentially a two-party system still loyal to a would-be autocrat and his cult of personality. If the United States is to lead, it should do so with humility: less with a sense of a civilizing mission we are preordained and called to carry out, and more with acts of solidarity with those vast majorities yearning to breathe free and stumble however unevenly toward more perfect unions and representative systems of governance—and improvements to their socioeconomic conditions, with states more supportive and functional than abusive and corrupt. Speak frankly, acknowledge error, and reconcile toward progress. Let China proceed with hubris and a template for empire that will no longer win the world in any sustained way.

We simply cannot make progress with an ethno/Eurocentric worldview, which has been the hallmark of Western grand strategy (such as it has been) for centuries. Global security will not be improved with neo-imperialism, Western, Chinese, or otherwise. Whoever has the imagination for a world order more broadly beneficial wins; self-centeredness makes us all less secure, particularly when many of the most impactful, actual, material threats are posed by global pandemics and climate change—issues that require, if I may redefine the GPC acronym, global partner cooperation. Or maybe the winner is whoever fields the most tanks and ships and develops the most AI-infused drone swarms, space lasers, and nukes and pours more of its national treasure into conventional military capabilities.

Perhaps the most fundamental worldview shift we require is to move away from a forever war mentality, or the assumed realism that war is inevitable and that we need to dominate every inch of the globe and remake it in our image. Instead of getting caught in tit-for-tat cycles of mutual demonization, whether with terrorist groups or China, we should reflect more and recognize self-fulfilling

prophecies when we see them; to see the world for its opportunities instead of mostly reacting to its threats, looking to shore up social, political, and economic solidarity in Latin America and Africa. Moreover, the West should be wary of giving in to its own economically powerful interest groups in ways that exploit and reinforce a tiered world and that empower globalizing oligarchies and authoritarian states to which they are connected. Even as we must maintain vigilance and hold China accountable, do not let China become a fetish; work on building back better regardless. If we repair the relationship between the Global North and South, with humility and recognition of our faults, acting according to the rules we claim to uphold, we will be fine. That would be a world-winning strategy.

Let us not plan and act from an odd mixture of trauma-driven anxiety and power-projecting hubris and make up for decades of strategically misguided GWOT by comfortably planning for—and perhaps triggering—a conventional high-end fight. Pay more attention to the information environment. Learn languages and understand societies—not just so we too can deceive and divide people but so we can communicate and engage them for the better and together develop stronger immunity from and protection against misinformation campaigns. What hope do we have to win this great power or strategic competition, or to have lasting influence for the betterment of our own national and global security, if we cannot see things from multiple perspectives, whether allied, adversarial, and/or ambiguous? Hopefully the upcoming Summit for Democracy becomes more of a laboratory to do just this sort of critical perspective taking and less of a series of lectures.⁴⁶

The conclusion to the *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* includes a promising recognition:

This moment is an inflection point. We are in the midst of a fundamental debate about the future direction of our world. . . . Amid rapid change and mounting crisis, the system's flaws and inequities have become apparent, and gridlock and inter-state rivalry have caused many around the world—including many Americans—to question its continued relevance. The United States cannot return to business as usual, and the past order cannot simply be restored.⁴⁷

Every state seeks to protect its own interests. The argument here is that it is in our national interest to not just consider our interests. The questions I am left with: Do we have to compete with Chinese expansionism and imperialism with our own? Or does our national security, and the global security it depends on, require a different sort of order altogether? ☸

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Djibouti

The Organizing Principle of the Indo-Pacific

DR. SANKALP GURJAR

The making and remaking of geographic imaginations are a function of military and economic interests. Asian economic resurgence in the era of globalization has made older geopolitical concepts irrelevant. The “Asia-Pacific,” for example, served as a useful framework to analyze regional security and political affairs during the Cold War. After the Cold War, however, rapid technological developments, which resulted in the compression of geographic distances, coupled with the economic rise of Asia necessitated the fashioning of a new geographic concept: that of the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific transcended the confines of subregions and, in fact, was a call to think about the broader region between India and the Pacific Ocean as a single continuum. Global shipping, economic interdependence, and geostrategic interests accelerated the creation of this new framework. However, the Asian economic resurgence was intricately linked with energy and resource supplies from the Middle East and Africa. The growing power of these emerging Asian states was being projected into Africa and the Indian Ocean to protect their vital interests as well as to expand their influence. Therefore, subregions of the Indian Ocean beyond India’s western coast had become integral parts of the strategic considerations of rising Asian economies. As a result, the definition of the Indo-Pacific must expand to include the eastern and southern African seaboard, and the region can be defined as the one stretching from Kilimanjaro to California.

Including East Africa in the Indo-Pacific was not a smooth process. Although diplomatic and military professionals were acting within a framework of the Indo-Pacific that considered Africa as an important theater of strategic rivalries, the remaking of official definitions took some time. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe’s two speeches, presented nearly a decade apart: the Confluence of the Two Seas speech delivered in 2007 in India, and the unveiling of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy in 2016 in Kenya; were instrumental to making and remaking the Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile, the economic and military interests of major global powers (and including rising Asian economies) had compelled them to pay greater attention to the developments in the East African maritime and continental space and had made active efforts to regularize their military

presence through antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, which includes the coastline of Djibouti.

Four major Indo-Pacific powers—the United States, France, China, and Japan—now operate military bases in Djibouti. The French and American bases serve as a vital cog in protecting their interests in the Indian Ocean and Africa. The Chinese and Japanese bases enable greater diplomatic, economic, and military presence in the Indian Ocean, Africa, and the Middle East. Other East Asian navies such as South Korea are routinely deployed to the Gulf of Aden, and Taiwan is deepening ties with the breakaway region of Somaliland. Russia has established a base in Sudan and is now increasing its military presence in the Western Indian Ocean.

India has historically been an important player in eastern and southern Africa. Growing economic and military capabilities and interests are pushing India to play an increasingly influential role in the region, which stretches from Djibouti to Japan. Therefore, the Western Pacific–East Asia strategic rivalries are being played out in Djibouti, and the developments in and around Djibouti have been of interest for major powers ranging from India and Russia to Japan and China. Therefore, Djibouti has emerged as a lens through which the international politics of the Indo-Pacific can be observed and analyzed. In that respect, Djibouti is the organizing principle of the Indo-Pacific and is likely to assume increasing strategic importance as rivalries sharpen.

This article is divided into seven parts. Following the introduction, the article locates Africa in the Indo-Pacific. It then explains the strategic importance of Djibouti and underscores how the tiny East African nation is now emerging as a playground for major powers. The bases of France and the United States at Djibouti were operational even before the reality of the Indo-Pacific became apparent. The key role in this regard is played by China's and Japan's military bases in Djibouti and their naval presence in the Gulf of Aden. The article considers the military and economic presence of these two Pacific Ocean powers in the Indian Ocean as facilitated by their bases in Djibouti. The article then moves to Russia and South Korea, two other important Pacific Ocean powers who have devoted considerable resources and energies to the Western Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, Taiwan's deepening ties with Somaliland also add an interesting dimension to the evolving geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific. Then the article considers the role of India, as it remains pivotal to the making and remaking of the Indo-Pacific. Finally, the conclusion ties together all the arguments presented here.

Locating Africa in the Indo-Pacific

Shinzo Abe, Japan's former prime minister, was one of the earliest and most enthusiastic proponents of the idea of the Indo-Pacific. He imagined the Indo-Pacific as a single strategic geography as far back as August 2007, when he delivered what is now widely believed to be the first articulation of the concept of the Indo-Pacific by an influential policy maker, the Confluence of the Two Seas speech in the Indian parliament. In that speech, Abe had referred to the coming together of the "Pacific and the Indian Oceans," which was "now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity." He called it the "broader Asia" that "broke away geographical boundaries" and was "now beginning to take on a distinct form." Abe believed that "this 'broader Asia' will evolve into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely." The speech, despite acknowledging the interests of India and Japan in the security of the sea lanes, which "are the shipping routes that are the most critical for the world economy," did not include the eastern and southern African seabords as part of this evolving geography.¹ However, the speech was important, as it initiated a process of introducing a new geopolitical concept to the lexicon of international politics.

The Indo-Pacific gradually replaced the familiar Asia-Pacific organizing principle and emerged as a primary strategic concept when discussing the geopolitics of the region between India and the Western Pacific. It was implicit that economic, military, and political interconnections in this vast strategic space were unifying several subregions, as expressed in the membership of the 18-nation East Asia Summit, and was fast emerging as a more appropriate framework to pursue the foreign policy objectives of regional states. The rapid economic rise of India, China, and other East Asian economies, coupled with their critical dependence on the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean for Middle Eastern energy supplies, accelerated the process of integrating the geopolitics of the Western Pacific with the Indian Ocean and enabled the emergence of the Indo-Pacific. However, defining the geographic extent of the Indo-Pacific remained a work in progress.

Nearly a decade after the Confluence of the Two Seas speech, on 27 August 2016, PM Abe unveiled Japan's strategy of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" at the opening session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD) in Nairobi, Kenya. Abe noted that, "when you cross the seas of Asia and the Indian Ocean and come to Nairobi, you then understand very well that what connects Asia and Africa is the sea lanes." He argued that "the enormous liveliness brought forth through the union of two free and open oceans and

two continents” will “give stability and prosperity to the world.” In this pursuit, Abe believed “Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.”² The choice to unveil the strategy in Kenya and the content of his speech were significant: they signaled the inclusion of East African littoral states located on the Indian Ocean as an integral part of the Indo-Pacific in the Japanese view.

As the construct of the Indo-Pacific has assumed wider acceptability, its boundaries have been redefined to include Africa. Among the participating countries of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, better known as the “Quad,” India and Japan were the first to recognize the necessity of bringing Africa into the matrix of the Indo-Pacific. When India launched its Indo-Pacific policy in June 2018, PM Narendra Modi’s speech referred to the region as “from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas.”³ Just before Modi’s speech, the US Pacific Command was renamed as the Indo-Pacific Command. It was a recognition of the growing interconnections between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and an acknowledgment of India’s critical role in the Indo-Pacific. Australia and the United States initially did not consider Africa as part of the Indo-Pacific, and their definition included the region between India and the Western Pacific. However, the growing strategic convergence between the four countries in the framework of the Quad, along with the recognition of the evolving geopolitical realities of this strategic geography, has resulted in the United States redefining its conception of this region. The United States now defines the Indo-Pacific as the region stretching from Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) to California, and this definition is likely to shape the view of other actors regarding the concept of the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, as a result of the United States’ aligning of the “definition of Indo-Pacific to match that of Japan and India and Australia,” Quad countries now “have a common vision, at least geographically, of the Indo-Pacific region.”⁴

Interestingly, while there have been debates at the official level regarding the geographic shape of this region, the increasing range of economic, military, and diplomatic activities of major Pacific Ocean powers in the East African maritime and continental space were already fashioning the geostrategic reality of the Indo-Pacific. Since 2008, China, Japan, and South Korea have sent their naval warships for the counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and southern Red Sea. They have also deployed their militaries for peacekeeping operations in the Horn of Africa and over the years have steadily strengthened defense and economic relationships with African littoral states. China and Japan even established military bases in Africa and acquired a firm foothold in the region.⁵ Besides those nations,

global powers including the United States, France, and India—all of whom have substantial interests in the Indian and Pacific Ocean—are also active in the geopolitics of the Western Indian Ocean. As a result of the growing presence of major global powers in the eastern and southern African seaboard, strategic rivalries between these powers are being played out in the Western Indian Ocean region. These processes have played a major role in making African littorals an integral part of the Indo-Pacific strategic matrix with the broader Western Indian Ocean region forming the western flank of this dynamic geopolitical space. No other country in the eastern African seaboard signifies the evolving shape of regional geopolitics as does the tiny state of Djibouti.

Djibouti and the Indo-Pacific

Djibouti, the third-smallest African state with a population of less than a million, enjoys an enviable strategic location. The tiny nation sits at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean. It is a member of the Arab League, the African Union, and La Francophonie and therefore is considered as within the Arab world, the broader African continent, and Francophone influences. Djibouti shares borders with Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somaliland (Somalia) and is located just 18 miles across the sea from Yemen. It is positioned off the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, which connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb is critically important for global energy security, international shipping, and the world economy.⁶ Therefore, any power that has a foothold in Djibouti can monitor the maritime traffic and international trade passing through the strait. The port of Djibouti is a primary access point to sea for Ethiopia, the second most populous African state. Since independence in 1977, Djibouti has been a stable state in an unstable neighborhood.⁷ Djibouti has assumed increasing strategic importance in the evolving geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific.

Djibouti was a French colony from 1889 until 1977 and even now hosts the largest French overseas military base.⁸ The opening of the Suez Canal, its location near the Middle East (an energy heartland of the world), the rise of terrorism in East Africa and the southern Arabian Peninsula, and the rapid economic growth of countries such as Ethiopia have all contributed to dramatically increasing the strategic importance of Djibouti in world politics. In the past, Djibouti and the port of Aden (in Yemen) were important relay points for Western navies going to the Far East. For France, Djibouti served as the critical strategic point for refueling ships and maintaining communication links with its colonies in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific.⁹ Therefore, in French strategic calculations Djibouti, in effect, served as the most significant outpost for protecting French interests in the geopolitical space that is now known as the Indo-Pacific. It also helped France to

project its influence in the Western Indian Ocean, East Africa, and the Middle East. (It now plays a similar role in Chinese strategy.) Djibouti's indispensable role in French global strategy continued even after its decolonization and France continued to preserve a great deal of influence in this tiny country. Until 2001, Djibouti remained the most important French outpost in the northwestern Indian Ocean.

The importance of Djibouti's location heightened after the 11 September 2001 terror attacks in the United States. As the United States launched the "Global War on Terror," it decided to establish a military base at Djibouti in 2002. It is the only permanent US military base in Africa. The base hosted the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa and also aided US troops in their operations in Iraq. The base, with its 4,000 troops and substantial air, naval, and ground assets, proved useful in conducting antiterror operations in Somalia and Yemen and in keeping a close watch on the developments in the Horn of Africa—especially Sudan—and the southern Arabian Peninsula. Djibouti also proved useful in expanding the US footprint in the northwestern Indian Ocean and linked up the United States' interests in the Indian Ocean and Africa as several smaller military installations were established in Indian Ocean African countries like Kenya, Somalia, and Seychelles. It emerged as a crucial logistics point for the US military and remains a centerpiece of a network of drone and surveillance bases.¹⁰ However, until 2007–08, the strategic importance of Djibouti was limited primarily to monitoring and influencing developments in the geographic space spanning East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East.

The emergence of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Somalia's inability to contain it combined to form a turning point in the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. Pirates operating out of Somalia threatened the maritime space between the southern Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. This maritime space was critical for global shipping, as it linked Europe with the economically dynamic Western Pacific. (The recent episode of accidental blockage in the Suez Canal highlighted the importance of this sea lane for the global economy.) The Arabian Sea is a principal sea route for transporting Middle East energy supplies to East Asia. Therefore, maritime piracy threatened the economic well-being of the major trading nations of the Western Pacific as well as those of Europe and North America. In response, multinational maritime security efforts were launched. European navies along with the United States, in the framework of Combined Task Force-151, began to engage in antipiracy operations. Other major global powers including India, China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia also sent naval warships to patrol the piracy-affected region.¹¹

Maritime piracy provided an excellent, albeit benign, opportunity for China, South Korea, and Japan to regularize their military presences in the region. Even Russia sensed an opportunity and returned to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, even though instances of piracy declined after 2012, these states continued to deploy navies to the region. The regular military presence of Pacific Ocean powers in the northwestern corner of the Indian Ocean signaled the rise of the Indo-Pacific construct in the domain of security. The clearest expression of the amalgamation of security concerns of the Indian and Pacific Oceans arrived when Japan and China opened military bases in Djibouti in 2011 and 2017, respectively. Therefore, from a relatively insular French colony, Djibouti came to be known as the Indo-Pacific's "most valuable military real estate," with major powers competing with each other to project maximum influence in the region.¹²

As of now, Djibouti hosts military bases belonging to France, the United States, Japan, and China. It is the only country in the world that hosts both US and Chinese military bases. The French military base also hosts German and Spanish military units. India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have also demonstrated interest in opening bases at Djibouti.¹³ Rent paid by these bases is a major source of Djibouti's national income. Djibouti has succeeded in leveraging its geostrategically important location to deftly play major powers against each other for its own benefit. Interestingly, major powers came to Djibouti to fight nontraditional security threats such as terrorism and maritime piracy and, after entrenching their military presence in the region, now engage in traditional major power rivalries.¹⁴ Therefore, the military presence in the region deals with a large spectrum of threats from terrorism to major power rivalries and is emerging as a principal instrument of power projection. Consequently, Djibouti has been transformed into the key strategic hotspot in the evolving geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. As the establishment of a Chinese base in Djibouti has intensified major power strategic rivalries, it is necessary to focus on the Chinese base in Djibouti.

China in Djibouti

The year 2017 was seminal in the Chinese strategy toward the world in general and the Indian Ocean in particular. In May that year, China hosted the first summit of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Beijing, which was attended by 30 world leaders. The BRI is an ambitious economic and foreign policy initiative of Chinese president Xi Jinping with clear strategic implications. The BRI seeks to link Asia with Europe and Africa through an overland and maritime network of trade, industrial, and connectivity corridors. The summit was a demonstration of growing Chinese power and signaled the wider acceptability of the Chinese initiative.¹⁵ In August, China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti.¹⁶ In

fact, Djibouti became the pivot around which evolving Chinese military strategy was manifest. And finally, in December 2017, it was announced that Sri Lanka would hand over the strategically important, Chinese-built port of Hambantota to China in a debt-for-equity swap.¹⁷

China's military base at Djibouti is a culmination of a decade-long, ever growing security engagement with the Horn of Africa. Since 2008, China has sent its naval warships to conduct antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. These antipiracy deployments have continued ever since and facilitated China's expanding military presence in the Western Indian Ocean. In 2011, in a major operation involving the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), China evacuated 35,000 Chinese citizens from Libya, which was engulfed in a civil war.¹⁸ Since 2013, China has deployed nuclear submarines to the Indian Ocean under the pretext of antipiracy operations, and the region has been emerging as a key theater for Chinese power projection as China attempts to undermine the influence of regional powers such as India.¹⁹ In 2015, China also managed to evacuate hundreds of its nationals from war-torn Yemen. Chinese troops have been participating in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).²⁰ The growing array of complex and difficult military activities far away from the mainland necessitated that China obtain a forward military foothold to support its increasing security-related engagements in the region.

China's military strategy, which was released in 2015, took note of China's growing security interests in the Indian Ocean region, especially in the maritime domain, and noted that it needs to "develop a modern maritime military force structure commensurate with its national security and development interests" to "safeguard its national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, protect the security of strategic SLOCs and overseas interests, and participate in international maritime cooperation, so as to provide strategic support for building itself into a maritime power."²¹ As per the strategy, China's "armed forces will continue to carry out escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and other sea areas as required" and will "enhance exchanges and cooperation with naval task forces of other countries, and jointly secure international SLOCs [sea lanes of communications]."²² Moreover, "China's armed forces will engage in extensive regional and international security affairs."²³ For a nation that had no maritime strategic orientation for the previous 500 years, the aspiration to build a modern maritime military force and the willingness to conduct military operations to protect overseas interests underscored the growing role of seaborne international trade in national economic prosperity. It also drew attention to emerging vulnerabilities within the Chinese economy.²⁴

The base at Djibouti was an indication that China is going to ensure forward military deployments in regions that are of critical strategic importance. China holds considerable economic interests in the regions that are in proximity to Djibouti. Middle East powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran are major sources of oil for China, and Sudan and South Sudan have been recipients of massive Chinese investments in their oil industry.²⁵ Africa and the Middle East account for about 80 percent of Chinese oil imports.²⁶ In a big infrastructure push, China has been developing large ports in Djibouti, Kenya, and Tanzania and has built modern railway lines in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.²⁷ It is a close economic and defense partner for other important states in the Western Indian Ocean region such as Seychelles and Madagascar.²⁸ China has been engaged in defense diplomacy in the Indian Ocean through naval port visits and arms supplies. It is also increasing its activities in the region as could be seen with the two naval exercises carried out in the Western Indian Ocean with Russia, Iran, and South Africa in 2019.²⁹

Energy and mineral resources imported from countries in Africa and the Middle East underpin Chinese prosperity, which is intimately linked with its domestic social and political stability. Therefore, China has to stay engaged with resource-rich countries for continued economic growth.³⁰ Many African countries have also welcomed Chinese infrastructure investments, as they come without conditionalities to promote democracy and human rights. Sea lanes of the Indian Ocean facilitate the flourishing engagement with the Middle East and Africa, and therefore it was no surprise that China took an active interest in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. China has also been dependent on the Strait of Malacca, which links the Indian Ocean with the Pacific, for its trade and energy supplies and is making efforts to reduce its dependence on the narrow waterway.³¹ Therefore, developing ports and building energy pipelines in Pakistan and Myanmar are of crucial strategic importance, as they will contribute in mitigating China's so-called Malacca Dilemma. However, given the fragile security situation in Pakistan and Myanmar and heightened concerns for stability in the Xinjiang region of China, which will be connected to the Indian Ocean through the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, greater engagement in securing these infrastructure projects is necessary.³²

Looked at through a strategic prism, China has built a dual-use web of ports, energy pipelines, and railway infrastructure in the littoral states of Indian Ocean, extending from Tanzania in East Africa to Myanmar in Southeast Asia, with the base at Djibouti facilitating military protection and political support. These states are part of different subregions and yet have to be considered together for comprehending a clear and complete strategic picture of Chinese strategic engagements. The framework of the Indo-Pacific is useful in this regard, and in this

context the long-delayed extension of the definition of the region to include the eastern and southern African seabords was necessary. The base at Djibouti and regular deployments of PLAN (at any given time there are a half-dozen or more Chinese warships operating in the Indian Ocean) are enabling gradual expansion of China's footprint in the Indo-Pacific.³³ The base at Djibouti coupled with the upcoming base at the Chinese-developed deep-sea port of Gwadar in Pakistan and the already acquired foothold at Hambantota in Sri Lanka are likely to enable China to loom large over the strategically important waters of the Western Indian Ocean.

China's growing engagement with Djibouti has had an ominous impact on the tiny country's strategic position. Djibouti has become a playground of strategic rivalries between major powers. To boost its power projection capabilities, China has expanded the capabilities of its base to host an aircraft carrier.³⁴ In the last few years, coinciding with the deepening of China–Djibouti partnership, Djibouti's debt has grown to an alarming level as a result of Chinese loans extended to the country. Djibouti owes more than half of its total debt to China, and the inability to pay back loans can result in a situation similar to Hambantota, where a country might be forced to surrender control over a strategically important asset.³⁵ Under Chinese pressure, Djibouti has also kicked out the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from the Doraleh port development project. The growing closeness between Djibouti and China, and consequently China's increasing influence, have served to highlight the role of other major powers who have also acquired a foothold in the country.

The Japanese Base in Djibouti

Japan is probably the first country that recognized the strategic reality of the Indo-Pacific. Acute dependence on Middle East energy supplies, the consequent necessity of ensuring security of the sea lanes of communications (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean, and the meteoric economic rise of China were key drivers behind the articulation of the framework of the Indo-Pacific.³⁶ Japan considered the eastern and southern African seabords as part of the Indo-Pacific and became the first East Asian power to establish a military base in Djibouti. Just like other major global powers, Japan had been sending its naval warships and air assets for antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2009. By 2011, Japan realized the need to acquire a permanent foothold in the region, through which it could monitor regional security affairs and secure its vital interests, and decided to open a base in Djibouti. It is the first overseas base of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) since the end of World War II.

Japan had supported antipiracy efforts in Southeast Asia as well and throughout the 2000s gradually expanded its strategic horizons.³⁷ It funded the establishment of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, which has now become an important regime in the Western Indian Ocean for antipiracy and maritime security-related activities.³⁸ Japan assisted Djibouti's coastguards in augmenting their capabilities, as insecurity in the waters around Djibouti was not in Japan's interests.³⁹ The base at Djibouti plays a major role in Japan's diplomatic and military strategies toward the Middle East and Africa. In the context of China's growing presence, US-Japanese cooperation in Djibouti is likely to assume increasing strategic importance. Japan had contributed troops to UNMISS, and the base at Djibouti proved useful in providing logistical support, as the country is located close to South Sudan. In 2013, Japan sent medical assistance to Algeria, which was hit by a terrorist attack. In 2016, when Japanese diplomats and nationals were to be evacuated from South Sudan, the base at Djibouti proved invaluable.⁴⁰ As military-diplomatic activities expanded, Japan has been thinking of deploying a long-range C-130 military transport aircraft and armored vehicles to Djibouti, which demonstrates the changing priorities of Japanese base.⁴¹

When China opened its base in Djibouti in 2017, the importance of the Japanese base went up considerably. Meanwhile, Japan had also started to expand the operational scope of its base to train and exercise with other regional militaries. Underlining the strategic importance of the base, Japan appointed a former Maritime SDF (MSDF) admiral as the ambassador to Djibouti in 2020. The admiral views the military presence at Djibouti, which enjoys domestic support in Japan, as essential for global peace and security.⁴² As the base completes a decade, it is also expected to serve as the gateway for the Japanese investments in the economically vibrant markets of eastern and southern Africa. Japan already has invested about \$9 billion in Africa, and a foothold in Djibouti is critical for protecting and enhancing these trade and investment linkages.⁴³

In the context of the Indo-Pacific, for Japan, India is probably the most important strategic partner in the Indian Ocean region. Japan views India as central to the geopolitical frameworks such as the Confluence of the Two Seas and the Indo-Pacific as well as security initiatives such as the Quad. Over the years, Japan has deepened its strategic partnership with India, engaged in military-to-military exchanges, and established several high-level dialogues involving ministers. Both countries recognize the challenge posed by China and are enhancing their economic, technological, and defense cooperation.⁴⁴ It is expected that by signing the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement for military logistics, the Indian navy would be able to access the Japanese base at Djibouti.⁴⁵ Japan is also a regular participant in the Indo-US Malabar naval exercises.⁴⁶ In 2017, while China

was busy launching the BRI, India and Japan had also launched the Asia–Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), which was widely seen as the counterweight to China’s BRI. Although so far, the AAGC is yet to demonstrate any concrete progress, a deepening Indo–Japanese partnership and the Japanese presence in Djibouti certainly would be beneficial if and when the AAGC takes off.⁴⁷

Japan has also stepped up its engagement with other Western Indian Ocean states such as Mauritius and Kenya. In fact, Japan’s FOIP strategy was launched in Kenya. Japan’s regular deployment of MSDF warships to the Indian Ocean and its increasing focus on defense diplomacy conducted through port visits reflect the growing realization in Japan of maintaining forward naval presence in the maritime space that is of utmost importance to Japan’s economic and political interests.⁴⁸ Consolidating the Japanese military presence in the Indian Ocean is also intricately linked to the wider effort of playing an activist role in regional and international security efforts and projecting Japan as a benign actor. The base at Djibouti is a critical element in this strategic imagination, and the importance of the base is set to rise even further as Indo–Pacific rivalries sharpen in the coming years. Apart from China and Japan, Russia, South Korea, and Taiwan have also been expanding their engagements with the Indian Ocean littorals of Africa.

Russia

Owing to its vast geography, Russia is as much a Pacific Ocean power as it is a European power. Russia’s second largest port of Vladivostok is located in the North Pacific, and the country is a major stakeholder in the security affairs of Northeast Asia. It is a member of the East Asia Summit, which brings together all the major stakeholders in the geopolitics of the East Asia–Western Pacific region.⁴⁹ Therefore, Russia’s increased activities in the Western Indian Ocean can be viewed through the Indo–Pacific framework. The Russian navy has been active in the antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2009, and Russia is keen on opening a base in the Western Indian Ocean.

Russia had demonstrated interest in opening a base in Djibouti. However, Djiboutian officials refused to host a Russian base to avoid getting entangled in major power rivalries.⁵⁰ Therefore, Russia turned to Sudan to establish a military base at Port Sudan. The base would be located on the Red Sea and would represent Russia’s return to the Indian Ocean. The Russian base would be able to host four warships and 300 soldiers.⁵¹ Russia has emerged as a strong strategic partner for the terror-affected Mozambique and reportedly had also sent mercenaries to support the regime in its battle against terrorists. Russian operatives had also been spotted in Madagascar in 2018 and apparently were sent to prop up the regime of President Hery Rajaonarimampianina before the elections.⁵²

Russia was considering establishing a base in Yemen before it plunged into civil war, as the strategic location of this Arab country would have facilitated greater Russian presence in the Gulf of Aden. Russia is engaged with Eritrea to open a logistics support facility.⁵³ Moreover, the Russian navy has been conducting military exercises in the region. In 2019, Russia conducted naval exercises with China, Iran, and South Africa and in 2021 with Iran and Pakistan.⁵⁴ These steps point toward growing Russian engagement with Indian Ocean littoral Africa. Interestingly, Russia is opposed to the framework of the Indo-Pacific, as it believes that the concept is being deployed to contain China; currently Russia attaches great value to its relationship with China. However, just like China's activities, Russia's activities in Indian Ocean littoral Africa underscore the growing relevance of the framework of the Indo-Pacific.

South Korea

In 2008–09, South Korea also began to send naval warships to the Gulf of Aden for antipiracy patrols. Just like Japan, it is keen on protecting the region's vital SLOCs, as its economic prosperity and energy security depend on them. South Korea is also interested in projecting its growing military power in strategically important regions. Since 2013, along with China and Japan, South Korean troops have been participating in UNMISS.⁵⁵ It has also deployed special forces units in the UAE for the purpose of training.⁵⁶ Unlike China and Japan, however, South Korea has not established a permanent military base in the region, but the South Korean navy has succeeded in regularizing its presence in the Gulf of Aden. The country seeks to play a role that is proportionate with its economic muscle, and anti-piracy operations as well as peacekeeping missions provide seemingly benign opportunities to do so.⁵⁷

Taiwan

Taiwan has emerged as an interesting actor in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa and needs to be considered in the discussions of Africa in the Indo-Pacific. In 2020, Taiwan established diplomatic relations with Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia. Taiwan is engaged in competition with China for recognition. It is recognized by only a handful of countries, whereas Somaliland does not even enjoy that recognition.⁵⁸ However, many important players maintain unofficial contacts with both countries through their trade offices or other such mechanisms. Somaliland's geostrategic position, which is probably as attractive as that of Djibouti, is of immense value for the evolving geopolitics of the Western Indian Ocean. The port of Berbera, which was once an important port in the northwest-

ern Indian Ocean and even hosted a Soviet naval base, lies in Somaliland and is being developed by the UAE.⁵⁹ Once developed, it will compete with Djibouti.⁶⁰

Just like Djibouti, Somaliland can also leverage its location for economic and political benefits. In the evolving geopolitics of the region, a Taiwanese presence in Somaliland may perhaps prove useful, as China's rivals may seek to utilize Somaliland's location, which is close to Djibouti, to keep a watch on Chinese activities in the Horn of Africa. Somaliland can also be helpful in monitoring terrorist activities in Somalia. Therefore, strengthening ties between Taiwan and Somaliland adds an interesting dimension to the strategic rivalries in the region. Moreover, it also contributes to the inclusion of African littorals in the Indo-Pacific as a smaller Pacific Ocean power such as Taiwan establishes its presence in the Indian Ocean.

India, Djibouti, and the Indo-Pacific

India's growing economic and military capabilities and consequently expanding interests were major reasons behind the rise of the unified, geopolitical space of the Indo-Pacific. For India, the idea of the Indo-Pacific included the Indian Ocean in its fullest—including the eastern African seaboard. India and Japan were the two strongest proponents of expanding the definition of the "Indo-Pacific," and China's growing presence in Africa provided a sound strategic logic for doing so. India has always maintained robust ties with Africa, and the eastern and southern African seaboard remains an integral part of the Indian navy's area of primary interest. India had also sent its navy to combat piracy and ensure maritime security in the Gulf of Aden since 2008. India is, in fact, considered to be the net security provider for the region; when required, the Indian navy has provided maritime security and other related assistance, including food and medicines, to states in the region such as Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, and Mozambique.⁶¹

Owing to India's growing military capabilities and economic links with countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea, it has emerged as a major stakeholder in the security and stability of the Western Pacific as well. India has demonstrated its interest in the region through naval deployments, military exercises, and the operationalizing of its Act East (which was earlier known as the Look East) policy.⁶² More than half of India's international trade passes through the South China Sea, and some of India's strongest strategic partners, including Japan, are located in the Western Pacific region.⁶³ Therefore, India's imagination of its core strategic interests spans the entirety of the Indian Ocean, including Africa, and extends into the Western Pacific, thereby making India one of the linchpins of the Indo-Pacific framework.

India has reasons to worry about the growing Chinese presence in the Western Indian Ocean, and in fact it is bolstering its strategic presence in the region. India was reportedly keen on establishing a base at Djibouti. It has established several listening posts in Indian Ocean littoral countries to track and monitor the activities of China.⁶⁴ Moreover, due to the signing of logistics support agreements, India is likely to obtain access to the French, American, and Japanese bases at Djibouti. Given India's naval prowess, such access will boost its presence even further. India has recently opened a diplomatic mission in Djibouti, and Indian navy ships, which were sent to provide food assistance to the Horn of Africa (including to Djibouti) in October 2020, made a port call at Djibouti.⁶⁵

As China's PLAN becomes more active in the Indian Ocean, the strategic importance of the Indian navy's deployments, especially in the Western Indian Ocean, is likely to increase even further. In fact, when India's foreign minister S. Jaishankar visited Kenya recently, the joint statement that both sides issued contained a reference to the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific, highlighting the growing prominence of Africa in the Indo-Pacific for India's foreign policy. As Africa and the Indo-Pacific assume prominence in foreign and strategic policies, India's economic and military capabilities and diplomatic willingness will be key contributing factors to the evolving trajectory of the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

As originally conceived, the Indo-Pacific did not include the eastern and southern African seaboard; instead, the region was described as spanning "Bollywood to Hollywood," that is, from the western coast of India to the West Coast of the United States. However, the launch of Japan's FOIP strategy, which was unveiled in Kenya in 2016, was perhaps the turning point in bringing Africa into the Indo-Pacific. India also considered Africa as integral to the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, India along with Japan were the two strongest supporters of the logic of viewing the eastern African seaboard in the geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific as they had more holistic view of the Indian Ocean. Their collaborative effort of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor also signaled Africa's relevance to the Indo-Pacific. The United States, at the policy level, harmonized its geographical definition of the Indo-Pacific in 2020 with India, Japan, and Australia, and now all these four Quad countries are on the same page when it comes to defining the geographical outlines of the Indo-Pacific. However, the US military still faces challenges, as the geographic boundaries of the Indo-Pacific Command still does not incorporate Africa.

The rise of piracy in the Gulf of Aden in 2007–08 and the consequent launch of antipiracy efforts by major global powers provided an excellent opportunity to regularize their naval presence in the region. Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea were the major beneficiaries of this opportunity. Prior to antipiracy patrols, the economic presence of East Asia powers in East Africa was already rising. The combined effect of military and economic activities indicated the integration of the geopolitical space from the Western Pacific to the Western Indian Ocean. Global shipping and geostrategic considerations played a major role therein. The rise of India and China, and the resulting enhanced economic links between the Western Pacific and Eastern Africa, accelerated the process of emergence of a definitive framework for the Indo-Pacific.

Djibouti, located at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean, hosts military bases of four powers—the United States, France, China, and Japan—all of whom have major stakes in the geopolitical space from the Western Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Djibouti has become an important space for major powers and is now a key location for their ascendance over the Indo-Pacific. Signaling the rising prominence of Djibouti's location astride the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have reached out to the nation to host military bases. As the military presence of major powers in and around Djibouti intensifies, the strategic importance of this tiny African state is set to rise even further.

As a result of evolving strategic rivalries, Djibouti is no longer an insular French outpost in East Africa. It is perhaps the “most valuable military real estate” in the world. Djibouti demonstrates the clearest manifestation of the integration of the eastern African seaboard in the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. China has emerged as the major economic and strategic partner for Djibouti, and there are concerns about the political impact of Chinese loans to Djibouti. In Chinese strategy, Djibouti along with Gwadar in Pakistan and Hambantota in Sri Lanka are enabling a larger Chinese strategic naval presence in the Indian Ocean, which is likely to undermine the influence of regional powers including India. For France, Japan, and the United States, their bases at Djibouti are useful to increase their reach into the Middle East, Africa, and the Indian Ocean. In coming years, how those military bases fit into the major powers' global strategies will determine the future course of geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific. ★

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Regional Security Complexes and African Foreign Policies

DR. STEPHEN BURGESS

Barry Buzan and Ole Waever define the web of structured relationships that states develop to survive and strengthen their security within a geographical area as “regional security complexes” (RSC), which may differ from geographically defined regions.¹ Furthermore, they define an RSC as a “group of states whose security cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.” Given state fragility, African leaders conduct foreign policies and “securitize” a range of external and domestic challenges as part of efforts to guarantee regime and state survival.² I argue that RSCs are structured relationships that provide utility with which to analyze African foreign policies, given their survival imperative. RSC concentration and thickness of power as well as levels of amity and enmity explain how various African states and their leaders conduct their foreign policies.³

Buzan and Waever assert that RSC theory has become increasingly applicable in explaining foreign policies since the end of the Cold War and the end of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union to dominate Europe and the Third World. However, in 2003, they struck a note of pessimism about the applicability of RSC theory to Africa (in comparison with Asia), because “in most of Africa the transplant (of the European-style state) has to varying degrees failed. Consequently, Africa has kept some of the superficial diplomatic appearance of a Westphalian-style state system over the past 40 years, in the continued diplomatic recognition of its states, but it has had little of the political, social, or economic reality of functioning states.”⁴

Several African states remain juridical rather than *de facto*,⁵ and they experience difficulties in governing much of their territory due to a lack of capacity.⁶ Consequently, several RSCs are emerging and are exemplified by low levels of interstate competition and conflict. There are still regions in Africa, such as the Sahel and parts of Central Africa, where there is insufficient thickness of power for RSCs to develop.⁷ However, in this century, there has been sufficient development of many African states and some RSCs, which justifies an exploration of the theory’s applicability in analyzing foreign policies. High rates of economic growth and ongoing political development since 2000 have led many African states to grow stronger and more functional. Further evidence for RSCs includes African

leaders and states developing and using regional security organizations and defense pacts to deal with a range of challenges that they have securitized. Leaders have formed coalitions of willing states to deal with security issues, such as in the fight against al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region. In some places, interstate competition and thickness of power create greater prospects for interstate conflict. Examples include the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria as well as the confrontation between Ethiopia and Eritrea that led to war from 1998–2000.

Regional Security Complex Theory and Foreign Policies

In asserting that RSC theory has been more applicable in explaining foreign policies since the end of the Cold War, Buzan and Waever point out that states increasingly have conducted foreign policies on a regional level. They find this especially true in Asia where Northeast, Southeast, and South Asia RSCs broke free of superpower hegemony, resulting in more regionally centered dynamics and foreign policies. Subsequently, China helped create an Asian “super-complex,” in which it became an increasingly powerful actor, around which other powers revolved. As the South Asian RSC merged with the Asian super-complex, foreign policies evolved from a primarily bipolar interstate confrontation between India and Pakistan into a tripolar one involving China.⁸

The analysis draws on constructivist and neoclassical realist theories of international relations and foreign policy decision-making.⁹ Both constructivist RSC theory and neoclassical realism include levels of thickness and concentration of power and levels of dispute management as factors that shape foreign policies.¹⁰ The thicker the power, the more likely there will be a concentration of power—unipolar or multipolar. Below a threshold of thinness of power, regional states may not exercise sovereignty over much of their territory and an RSC will not exist.¹¹ In addition, RSC theory emphasizes levels of analysis and “patterns of amity and enmity” across a complex, which is dependent on the actions and interpretations of leaders and other actors in the system. Neoclassical realist theory also focuses on regions, disputes, and levels of analysis and how leaders and other actors settle disputes, either through conflict or compromise.¹² The assumption is that patterns of enmity and amity develop over time and are hard to alter, even when conditions change. Therefore, adversarial states may find it difficult to bury the hatchet when it is in their interest to begin cooperating. Conversely, friendly states, especially democracies, may think twice about defending their interests by using force and escalating to war against each other.¹³

Variation in RSC power thickness, power concentration, and levels of amity and enmity correlate with variation in foreign policies. Growing complex thick-

ness and amity can bring greater collective security, while greater complex thickness and enmity produces greater competition and can result in conflict. State size matters in terms of the foreign policies of states in RSCs. Large states look to use concentration of power in their hands to conduct foreign policies that either seek to lead in or develop hegemony over an RSC and possibly supply the bulk of collective security goods. Small states can bandwagon with, balance against, or hedge in relations with large states. Patterns of amity and enmity help determine whether RSC foreign policies tend toward cooperation or conflict. Some RSCs succeed in supplying public security goods in the form of mechanisms and actions that supply reassurance for states concerned about their survival. Multipolar concentrations of power tend to produce foreign policies that are competitive and adversarial, and states are less effective in supplying positive security goods. A multipolar, developed RSC depends on states using foreign policies, especially diplomacy, to create a balance of power and keep the peace.¹⁴

In Europe, RSCs featured multipolar concentration and increasing thickness of power before 1945, which resulted in foreign policies focused on alliance formation, interstate war, and keeping peace through power-balancing. The RSCs grew thicker as economies industrialized, infrastructure developed, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita rose. Growing thickness and multipolar concentration of power resulted in militarized competition and arms races. As power thickened during the nineteenth century, the major powers became stronger and developed highly mechanized forces that threatened each other. Another basis came from a pendulum that swung from cooperation and amity to confrontation and enmity. In Europe, the leaders of Germany and France were intertwined in enmity and a worsening security dilemma from 1870 to 1944 that helped to shape the RSC and competitive and conflictual foreign policies. Rising enmity between France's and Germany's leaders combined with the multipolar concentration and increasing thickness of power, resulting in the highly destructive world wars of 1914–18 and 1939–45. The level of dispute management was unable to manage the rising level of enmity. After 1918, foreign policies to prevent another war focused on collective security through the League of Nations and arms control conferences and less on power-balancing. After World War II, the concentration of power was bipolar, with the United States and the Soviet Union controlling blocs in Europe and competing for influence in Asia and Africa. Germany's defeat in World War II and bipolarity muted the enmity within the European RSC and limited its autonomy. The United States led in forging cooperation and managing competition within the Western Europe RSC with the creation of NATO in 1949. US and French leaders' promotion of regional cooperation led to a qualitatively different RSC with the development of integration and amity and the development of

the European Union (EU) from the late 1940s to the Maastricht Treaty in 1991. There was high concentration of power in the hands of the United States and increasing thickness of power with economic recovery and growth and the fading of enmity and development of amity. Bipolar deterrence between the United States and the Soviet Union forestalled enmity and confrontation from developing into conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs. After the Cold War, European leaders sought to develop their own security vision and institutions and a common foreign policy that diverged somewhat from those of the American superpower.¹⁵

In Asia, power thickened after 1945, especially with decolonization and industrialization. Enmity grew between India and Pakistan in South Asia and Japan and China in East Asia. The rapid rise of China and the thickening of power in the 1990s brought the Northeast, Southeast, and South Asian RSCs closer together and led toward a super Asian RSC. India had been the dominant power in South Asia but, with the thickening of power, found itself competing with China, and the intensity of negative and positive interactions increased. In 2011, the concentration of power in China's hands compelled the United States to announce a "pivot to Asia."¹⁶

In Africa, from the 1960s to the 1980s, newly independent states' struggle to survive included foreign policies that featured bandwagoning with the United States or Soviet Union or attempting to play one superpower against the other.¹⁷ The only interstate wars in eastern Africa occurred in the late 1970s. Ethiopia, backed by the Soviet bloc, defeated an invasion by Somalia, and Tanzania retaliated against an incursion from Uganda by overthrowing the Amin regime. After the Cold War, states could no longer look to the United States or Soviet Union to bolster them. For example, the United States did not come to the rescue of Liberian president Samuel Doe in 1989–90, and the Soviet Union did nothing to stop the overthrow of Ethiopia's Derg regime in 1991. With the end of the Cold War and disappearance of US and Soviet aid, African states increasingly worked together with their regional counterparts, using collective security arrangements to meet challenges and help faltering states survive. France was the only outside power to remain engaged—and only in its former colonies in West and Central Africa. In addition, regional rivalries developed, some of which led to enmity and conflict. The most significant examples were Ethiopia and Eritrea, which fought a bloody war between 1998 and 2000, and several states whose armies fought each other in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the Second Congo War, 1998–2003.¹⁸

Power in Africa's RSCs is not as thick as in Asia, which helps to explain the lower level of interstate competition and conflict. African states are poorer, and

most cannot afford large militaries that can wage interstate war. They are also weaker than their Asian counterparts and more absorbed with internal security. As in other RSCs, higher power concentration and thickness in African RSCs tend to produce unipolarity, as in the case of South Africa's hegemony in Southern Africa. Higher thickness and less concentration bring multipolarity, as in the dyadic rivalry between Algeria and Morocco in North Africa. The lower the thickness and concentration, the weaker the RSC and the greater the chance that an RSC is in formation. Patterns of amity and enmity have developed across Africa. On one hand, RSC enmity has grown in rivalrous dyads, such as Morocco vs. Algeria, Ethiopia vs. Eritrea, and Rwanda vs. Uganda. Some states' rivalry and enmity have made their security dependent on being able to stand up to their adversaries. On the other, the evolution of RSC amity has been accompanied by regional security cooperation, with many African leaders and states taking collective action, creating security arrangements and architectures, and making one state's security dependent on that of others.¹⁹

African RSC foreign policies have featured considerable diplomatic activity, institution-building, and episodic use of sanctions and military force for regional collective security. African Union member states and some in regional economic communities (RECs) have signed on to rules that suspend countries from their organizations when they undergo unconstitutional changes in government. RSC states have occasionally intervened when misrule within a country becomes so egregious that it causes spillover with flows of insurgents and refugees. However, African states also have the tendency to devise new regional institutions but struggle to act, which is symptomatic of sovereignty's strength and "symbolic diplomacy" within relatively weak RSCs.²⁰

A varying combination of regional security crises and rivalries provide the impetus for RSC formation. For example, the confrontation between apartheid South Africa versus the Group of Frontline States helped to shape the Southern African RSC's formation, while Nigeria versus France and francophone states shaped the West African RSC's development. The rivalries of Ethiopia versus Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea influenced the Horn of Africa RSC's emergence, and Rwanda versus Uganda and Burundi that of the Great Lakes RSC. Regional security crises, such as the 1985 Horn of Africa famine, spurred the securitization of drought and food shortages and RSC development. The Horn of Africa RSC came to be characterized by the struggle for food security and famine prevention, as well as by conflict management in Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan and interstate enmity between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The identity clash between Morocco and Algeria helped to create the North African RSC, with a security dilemma and enmity hampering the development of cooperation.²¹

Both constructivist RSC theory and neoclassical realism include a focus on economic and environmental security. Some African states and RSCs have focused on the environment and food security and set up organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD). Others concentrated on economic security, such as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, which focused on economic separation from apartheid South Africa and development in the 1980s and became the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992. Some states used RECs to institute security architectures and mutual defense pacts that helped to shape RSCs. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a mutual defense pact in 1981 after Libyan provocation in the region, which paved the way for Nigeria to lead the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, followed by the establishment of a security architecture.

Approach

I examine the relationship between African RSCs and the foreign policies of their constituent states and demonstrate how the RSC model is a useful way of explaining African foreign policies, especially after the Cold War. First, an analysis of three cases of RSC development in the most advanced RSCs (North, West, and Southern Africa) shows their impact on foreign policies. This includes description how the RSCs originated, developed, and changed decade by decade and the variable impact of RSC power thickness and concentration on foreign policies of key states. Second, comparison of the RSCs leads to explanation of their differences and similarities.

In part, power concentration is measured by the regional distribution of gross domestic product, and thickness is measured by the level of regional GDP per capita. RSCs' levels of power concentration and thickness and levels of enmity and amity tend to cause certain types of foreign policy behavior (e.g., bandwagoning, balancing, "soft balancing,"²² or hedging as well as cooperating, competing, or fighting). Changes in RSC power distribution and in levels of amity and enmity lead to changes in foreign policy behavior. Concerning levels of analysis, RSCs explain how states behave in their interactions with other states and the behavior of leaders, most of whom try to centralize power in the face of foreign and domestic threats and uncertainty. The RSC level affects foreign policy behavior at the state and individual levels and supplies the basis for comparison.

Southern Africa's RSC and Foreign Policies

The Southern African complex has featured a higher degree of thickness compared to other African RSCs, due to the regional mining industry and supporting infrastructure, as well as majority ruled states' solidarity with armed liberation movements from the 1960s to the 1990s. There is a unipolar concentration of power in which South Africa has had by far the most economic and military power and is the regional hub. From the 1960s until 1994, African-ruled countries and liberation movements confronted apartheid South Africa and its allies, resulting in intense rivalries, enmity, and insurgencies. The first sign of an emerging complex was with the independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and the creation of the Group of Frontline States (GFLS) to support the liberation movements fighting against apartheid South Africa and white-ruled Rhodesia. The same states plus others came together in 1980 to form the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (an emerging REC that became the SADC in 1992) to supply economic security in the face of apartheid South African blandishments and threats. The foreign policies of Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, and Mozambique and the liberation movements focused on implementing the dual strategy of armed struggle and negotiations with Rhodesia and South Africa, as well as cultivating solidarity among the independent African states. The Cold War enabled the liberation movements and the GFLS to secure support from the Soviet bloc, China, and nonaligned states, as well as pressuring the United States to work for change in Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa.

With the end of the Cold War and dissolution of superpower interest, the RSC developed into a complex where conflict and confrontational foreign policy gave way to cooperation mixed with competition and some resistance to leadership by the new South Africa. In 1992, Southern African states transformed the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) into the SADC, with the aim of a more formal REC similar to the EU, but which also formed the basis for the reconfigured RSC. Despite increased regional cooperation, several states pursued their own foreign policy agendas that contradicted and occasionally clashed with each other. The competitive side became clear soon after a democratic South Africa joined the SADC in 1994. The new South Africa did not face a major adversary in the region and was by far the largest economy, but it still had to win the trust of regional leaders and states and slowly develop cooperation and amity. While South African leadership and soft power combined with the prospect of increased aid and investment were attractive to many African leaders and states, several resisted South Africa. Resistance particularly came from autocratic leaders who were fearful of regime change.

In the early 1990s, Southern African countries' foreign policies centered on helping to manage postconflict transitions in Namibia (leading to independence from South African colonial rule in 1990), Angola (leading to contested elections and renewed war in 1992), Mozambique (leading to peace in 1994), and South Africa (leading to majority rule in 1994), as well as trying to prevent the conflicts from reigniting and spilling over borders. Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and other states supported the African National Congress in negotiations with the apartheid regime from 1990–94 and prepared for the spread of violence from South Africa. In 1992, the Angolan peace process collapsed, and conflict spilled over into Zambia, Namibia, and Zaire. Southern African states made several interventions to persuade the Angolan regime of President Eduardo dos Santos and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) rebel movement of Jonas Savimbi to cease fire and restart the transition process. However, two ceasefires—partly brought about by Zambia and other neighboring states—and two United Nations missions failed, leading to strengthening of the conflict and an eventual merger with the DRC wars from 1996–2002.

As the RSC developed in the 1990s, the new South Africa proceeded cautiously in its foreign policy, though it achieved some early diplomatic successes. In the latter half of 1994, South African diplomacy helped to reverse a military coup in Lesotho and restore democracy. In 1994, South African leaders intervened with their Mozambican counterparts to persuade both sides to follow through with multiparty elections and successfully complete the UN peacekeeping mission there. Only intervention prevented failure of the peace process and spillover to the rest of Southern Africa.

Some leaders resented a more powerful, influential South Africa that led to resistance and “soft balancing.”²³ The prospect of President Nelson Mandela and South Africa leading the region threatened the power and prestige that Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe, Mozambique president Joaquim Chissano, and Angola president Jose Eduardo dos Santos had accumulated as well as jeopardized the civil war that dos Santos was waging to consolidate his rule.²⁴ In resisting and balancing against South Africa, Mugabe and dos Santos led in founding the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense, and Security (OPDS) in 1996 as a military-oriented body that would be able to provide mutual defense and deal with civil wars and other issues of instability. They excluded South Africa from the leadership troika. In opposition to Zimbabwe and Angola, South Africa worked with Botswana, Tanzania, and Mozambique to ensure that the OPDS would be primarily a peacemaking body, committed to upholding democracy and human rights.²⁵

Southern African RSC competition and contention centered especially on the civil war that ended the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko and the Republic of Zaire, gave birth to the DRC, and claimed more than a million lives. In May 1997, South African officials took the initiative in negotiations to persuade Mobutu to resign and leave the DRC, after they had gained the trust of Paul Kagame and Laurent Kabila, the leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Army and Congolese rebel force, respectively.²⁶ In addition, South African generals convinced Mobutu's generals to end resistance and dissuaded foreign allies of Mobutu from intervening. After Mobutu's departure and Kabila's establishment of the DRC, Southern African leaders invited the country to join the SADC in September 1997, which began the process of incorporating the DRC into the Southern African RSC. Subsequently, several Southern African states and Rwanda, Uganda, and the Angolan UNITA rebel group began a struggle for power and influence in the DRC. This led to a resurgence of civil war in August 1998, as President Kabila turned against his Rwandan allies and asked that Southern African countries come to defend him from retaliation. In September, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia's answered Kabila's call for help and intervened in the DRC. As Rwanda and Uganda and the three Southern African countries struggled over spheres of influence in the DRC, the civil war turned into an interstate war on Congolese soil.

Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia proclaimed that their intervention was "in the name of SADC" with a mandate from the OPDS troika and in response to a request from a SADC head of state (Kabila). However, all three countries had ulterior motives and did not consult other SADC leaders, tainting the legitimacy of the intervention.²⁷ In response, other SADC leaders called on the three countries to withdraw—without success. Subsequently, the anti-interventionist states proposed a diplomatic solution to put an end to the war. Zambia took the lead in negotiating the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in July 1999.²⁸ As the war dragged on, South Africa took over the diplomatic initiative and led in negotiating the Sun City Agreement of April 2002. With the withdrawal of foreign forces from the DRC in 2003, President Joseph Kabila and his regime were beholden to the Southern African states that had come to the rescue. Also, there had been close ties between Southern Africa and mineral-rich Katanga Province for decades, and the war and its aftermath accelerated the process of incorporating the DRC into the Southern African RSC.²⁹

Soon after the DRC intervention in September 1998, South Africa and Botswana intervened militarily in Lesotho to stop a military mutiny and preserve democracy. In contrast to the DRC intervention, the Lesotho intervention met no regional opposition, but the excessive use of force in the intervention tarnished

the image of the new South Africa as an emerging benign hegemon and showed that it had much to learn in the use of power in its foreign policy. The controversies and interventions demonstrated that the Southern African RSC at the end of 1990s was not well institutionalized and that foreign policies were more about competition than cooperation.

In the 2000s, the Southern African RSC became less divisive, as leaders constructed institutions to help in the management of disputes, grew to accept South African leadership, and practiced more cooperative foreign policies. Southern African leaders approved a process for OPDS decision-making and for authorizing collective action to avoid squabbles over “intervention in the name of SADC.” In 2003, leaders agreed to a SADC mutual defense pact that focused on conflict resolution and laid the groundwork for developing the capabilities for more effective collective security.³⁰ With the creation of the African Union (AU), the African Peace and Security Architecture, and plans for an African Standby Force (ASF), Southern African states began to develop one of the five regional ASF brigades to organize and move toward operationalization, which promised to add to regional collective security capacity within the RSC. With the founding of the AU and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), several Southern African countries submitted themselves to the NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism, starting in 2004. The new international institutional setting divided those Southern African regimes that were willing to undergo peer review and those who refused to move outside the shadow of sovereignty, causing tensions within the RSC.³¹

Economic interactions help define RSCs, and free trade areas (FTA) tend to diminish discord in an RSC. In the 2000s, South Africa began expanding the Southern African Customs Union nonreciprocity arrangement to the rest of the SADC. In 2008, SADC states agreed to a FTA, with plans for a customs union leading to a common market and monetary union. However, resistance from several states and the imposition of nontariff barriers hampered trade expansion. At the same time, South Africa and other Southern African states sought their own free trade deals with the EU, which weakened the drive toward an FTA. Therefore, the FTA effect on the RSC and cooperation was not as great as it may have been if states had fully implemented the agreement.³²

In the 2000s, Southern African states undertook diplomatic initiatives to bring peace to the DRC and political reform to unstable autocracies in Angola, eSwatini (Swaziland), and Zimbabwe. Southern African states played a key role in ending the DRC war, culminating in the 2002 Sun City peace agreement. Afterward, Southern African countries sent peacekeeping troops to the UN Mission in the DRC to help oversee the withdrawal of foreign forces and try to stabilize the

east of the country. In 2006, the Southern African election observation delegation's quick endorsement of the election of Joseph Kabila as DRC president further elevated the region's standing with the regime and helped to draw the beleaguered country further into the RSC.³³

Resistance to Southern African diplomacy came from autocratic leaders who were fearful of the prospect of intervention to stop massive human rights abuses and to enact regime change. After resisting diplomatic solutions for almost a decade, President dos Santos continued to oppose efforts to reform his regime and reach out to the democratic opposition movement, even after the end of the Angolan civil war. Even though eSwatini was virtually surrounded by South Africa, King Mswati III continued to oppose diplomatic efforts to reform his near-absolute monarchy.³⁴

While the RSC featured growing institutionalization, cooperation, and acceptance of South African leadership, the crisis in Zimbabwe spurred a new round of regional contention and foreign policy challenges. In 2000, Mugabe lost a referendum on land reform and ordered the seizure of white commercial farms, which devastated the economy and resulted in hyperinflation. In March 2002, presidential elections between Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai of the rising Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) featured assaults on opposition party officials and white commercial farmers combined with unfree and unfair election procedures. The repressive actions led to EU and US sanctions and Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth. However, the Southern African election monitoring team downplayed election irregularities, and Southern African leaders asserted that sanctions would worsen the chances for conflict resolution. From 2002 to 2008, Zimbabwe deteriorated with hyperinflation and continued repression. Most Southern African leaders chose a foreign policy approach of solidarity and quiet diplomacy over effective action, though they did prevent Mugabe and his subordinates from holding leadership positions in the SADC. This position reflected regional solidarity with a leader who had supplied support during the liberation struggle. In 2008, the MDC won parliamentary elections and the first round of presidential elections. After massive repression and election fraud, Mugabe claimed victory in the second round, which Southern African observers certified as free and fair. Despite the flagrant abuses of democratic and human rights norms, most Southern African governments continued to oppose sanctions and hoped that quiet diplomacy would end the crisis.³⁵ The result of negotiations was that Mugabe remained as president in a power-sharing arrangement with Tsvangirai and the MDC. The crisis in Zimbabwe demonstrated the continuing power of the personalist "presidents' club" and "liberation movement solidarity" that characterized much of the region's foreign policies.³⁶ Thus, excessive amity with

Mugabe and fear that enmity with the regime would cause conflict prevented pressure for reforms that would have stabilized Zimbabwe and regenerated US and EU support. Only a few leaders were willing to speak up against misrule in Zimbabwe. President Mwanawasa in neighboring Zambia deplored the negative spillover from Zimbabwe into his country. President Ian Khama of Botswana was conspicuously outspoken during the 2008 crisis and criticized Mugabe and the Southern African old boys' club of aging autocrats. The Zimbabwe crisis, Mugabe's undemocratic and economically disastrous behavior, and the failure of Southern African leaders to act decisively to reform dictatorships and end repression harmed the image of the region and its good governance initiatives and demonstrated the limits to foreign policy that would effect change.³⁷

In the 2010s, enmity, competition, and soft balancing in the RSC continued to fade, as amity and cooperation developed. South Africa continued to act as a restrained regional hegemon, while also acting concretely on the continental stage and symbolically on the global stage. There was symbolic foreign policy innovation in the RSC with limits on implementation and substance. Conflict management continued to be a major part of the foreign policies in the RSC. In 2009, Southern African states suspended Madagascar from the SADC and imposed sanctions after a military coup. They lifted the suspension and sanctions in 2014 after Madagascar implemented a process to restore civilian rule. In 2013 in the eastern DRC, South Africa, Mozambique, and Tanzania deployed the UN Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) to the eastern DRC to augment the UN Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) and defeated the M-23 rebels who were committing massive human rights abuses and who had captured the regional center of Goma. While the FIB remained in the DRC in case of emergency, Southern African states also continued to make significant contributions to the stabilization of the DRC.³⁸ Southern African states pressured DRC President Joseph Kabila to hold elections in 2018 and transfer power to Felix Tshisekedi, as well as intensify efforts to stabilize the east of the country, so that Southern African states could begin to gradually withdraw their forces.

In November 2017, Zimbabwe returned as a foreign policy concern, after a military coup. Mugabe's wife led a group that tried to seize control of the government and oust Mugabe's heir-apparent and security chief, Emmerson Mnangagwa. The Zimbabwe military switched their support from Mugabe to Mnangagwa and seized power, ending 37 years of strongman civilian rule. Even though Southern African states should have suspended Zimbabwe from the SADC as they had Madagascar, they avoided admitting that the military intervention was a coup. This would lead one to conclude that Zimbabwe ranked higher on the Southern African pecking order than Madagascar. Instead of suspending Zimba-

bwe from the SADC, Southern African states intervened diplomatically and helped pave the way toward elections in 2018. However, under President Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe sank deeper into misery, and Southern African states continued to manage the fallout from a chronic crisis. In 2018, South Africa's new President, Cyril Ramaphosa, reenergized South Africa's leadership role in the Southern Africa RSC and pressured Mnangagwa to make reforms to save Zimbabwe's sinking economy with limited results.³⁹

In 2018, in another display of RSC collective security, Southern African countries deployed troops to Lesotho to stop another military mutiny and coup. However, the limits of collective security have been demonstrated recently by the reluctance of Mozambique's President Felipe Nyusi to allow a Southern African security force to enter northern Cabo Delgado Province and counter an insurgency involving a local franchise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant that had been operating since 2018. One of the reasons cited for his reluctance was the apparent desire of Mozambique's leaders to leave Cabo Delgado insecure and lawless, because they were benefiting from a lucrative drug trade that a regional security force might disrupt. Mozambique's leaders were also concerned about the threat to the lucrative gas business in the north and had hired Russian and South African mercenaries over whom they had more control than a regional force. However, after considerable pressure from Southern African states, Mozambique agreed to allow a SADC force of 3,000 to deploy to the conflict zone.⁴⁰

An analysis of the Southern African RSC's development and its foreign policies illustrates how the RSC model explains foreign policies. The hegemony, and the change from apartheid to democracy, were correlated with change in foreign policies—from enmity and resistance by independent states through a transition period in which Zimbabwe and Angola soft-balanced against South Africa toward eventual regional amity and acceptance of South Africa's leadership role. The thickness of power in the RSC enabled states to pursue foreign policies that secured the region and reached out to help stabilize the DRC and draw it into the region. However, the persistence of personalism prevented states from pursuing foreign policies that consistently employed sanctions to deal with regional challenges. Southern African RSC development coincided with the transformation of one REC (the SADC) into an organization that managed collective security and shaped regional foreign policies.

North Africa's RSC and Foreign Policies

This RSC developed from the 1960s onward, eventually reaching a similar level of thickness as Southern Africa (in terms of relatively high regional GDP) but with contrasting foreign policies, stemming from a bipolar concentration of power

in the hands of Morocco and Algeria—two of the strongest states in Africa. Morocco has a GDP per capita of more than 9,000 USD and Algeria more than 16,000 USD (due to oil and gas exports), and both have developed two of the strongest militaries on the continent, with high levels of defense spending and sophisticated weapons procurement due to their rivalry as well as the domestic influence of their militaries.⁴¹ This RSC configuration and clashing constructions of identity have led to rivalry, enmity, and foreign policies that feature competition, confrontation, and occasional conflict, though with periods of reconciliation and efforts at institution-building. The bipolar RSC has led the two main antagonists to conduct foreign policies that have reached outside the region to garner support for their contending positions.

The roots of the RSC lie in the two historical paths that Morocco and Algeria followed and their conflicting constructions of identity. The Kingdom of Morocco descended from an empire that once controlled much of Maghreb North Africa, and its leaders have long considered the region within its sphere of influence. Algeria emerged in 1962 from a revolution against French settler colonialism as a struggling republic, supported African independence movements from their European colonizers, and rejected the concept of a “greater Morocco.”⁴² While Morocco supported the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale struggle against French occupation, Rabat maintained historically based claims on the Algerian provinces of Tindouf and Bechar. In 1963, Morocco sent troops across the border to fulfill its claim, starting the Sand War, which lasted for a month but sparked the enmity between the two states that persists today.

For five decades, the main point of contention has centered on the status of Western Sahara. In 1974, Spain began the process of decolonization of its territory. The Saharawi Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (POLISARIO) movement and Algeria pressed for independence and self-determination for the Saharawi people. Morocco and Mauritania claimed that the territory was part of their respective empires and had been illegally separated from them by Spain. In 1975, the International Court of Justice ruled that the people of the Western Sahara had the right to self-determination and independence, even though the court recognized that Morocco and Mauritania’s historical claims had some merit. In November 1975, Morocco invaded the territory. POLISARIO responded with guerrilla warfare, backed by Algeria, which lasted until a ceasefire agreement in 1989. Rabat saw Algiers’s support of the POLISARIO liberation movement’s struggle to create an independent Western Sahara as an assault on Moroccan sovereignty, while Algerian leaders viewed Morocco’s seizure of Western Sahara in 1975 as thwarting a fraternal liberation movement and Saharawi national self-determination. Algeria led efforts in the Organization

of African Unity (OAU) that recognized the independence of Western Sahara and POLISARIO as the legitimate representative of the Saharawi people. In protest, Morocco left the OAU in 1984.

While Morocco and Algeria struggled against each other, the Maghreb countries were united in the Arab League behind the Palestinian cause and developed foreign policies of nonalignment. Tunisia and Libya composed the other significant parts of the RSC and tended to be forces for regional cooperation and unity. Egypt was never heavily engaged in the North African RSC, due to its rivalry with Israel and focus on the Middle East. During the 1970s, Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba undertook several campaigns to unify the Maghreb states. In 1974, the revolutionary Colonel Muammar Qaddafi and Bourguiba agreed to unite Libya and Tunisia, but the plan collapsed due to a lack of popular support in Tunisia. Afterward, Libya formed a defensive alliance against Morocco, and Qaddafi began supplying the POLISARIO guerrilla campaign in Western Sahara. In addition, Qaddafi sponsored insurgents throughout Africa and the Muslim world and promoted pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism with the aim of increasing his regime's influence.

In the late 1980s, with the winding down of Soviet support for Algeria and Libya and with negotiations to resolve the Western Sahara conflict, relations among Maghreb states improved. International mediation brought the Western Sahara ceasefire agreement and a UN peacekeeping mission (MINURSO) that deployed in 1992. In 1988, Tunisia hosted the Maghreb Summit, which initiated efforts to form a REC. In 1989, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was born. The AMU had the aim of reinforcing the independence of its member states and safeguarding their economic assets. The AMU could have been the basis for more cooperative foreign policies in the North African RSC.⁴³ However, renewed feuding between Algeria and Morocco extinguished those hopes. After the deployment of MINURSO, a planned UN-sponsored referendum foundered on the issue of who was a Saharawi. POLISARIO and Algeria claimed that only those who lived in the territory in 1975 had the right to vote in the referendum, while Morocco asserted that the descendants of tribe members who were driven from the territory by the Spanish in the nineteenth century could vote. In 1994, renewed rancor over Western Sahara culminated in a dispute over the transfer of the AMU presidency from Algeria to Libya. As a result, Colonel Qaddafi opined that the AMU deserved to "be in the freezer."⁴⁴ Since that time, AMU heads of state have failed to meet, and the organization has been moribund. Consequently, the foreign policies of Morocco and Algeria returned to confrontation and competition and oriented toward garnering support for their respective causes in sub-Saharan Africa, the Non-Aligned Movement, Europe, and the United States.

With Morocco supplying aid, investment, and peacekeepers throughout much of Africa, the country gained influence and was readmitted to the AU in 2017.

After failing to achieve Arab or Maghreb unity, Qaddafi turned to a pan-Africanist foreign policy in the late 1990s and led the transformation of the OAU into the AU from 1999 to 2002. In 2003, AU defense ministers, in agreeing to form the ASF, designated the AMU as the lead organization in developing the North African Standby Brigade. Due to Moroccan–Algerian enmity, the brigade turned out to be a nonstarter. As a result of the Morocco–Algeria standoff, the AMU failed in the economic and security sectors.⁴⁵ However, with the spread of violent extremism from Algeria in the 1990s, Algeria and Morocco as well as Tunisia and Libya cooperated to mitigate the impact.⁴⁶

In 2011, the Arab Spring started in Tunisia and affected the entire North African RSC. The Moroccan government responded by instituting reforms and the Algerian regime deflected popular dissatisfaction. Qaddafi tried and failed to suppress mass uprisings and was killed in October 2011. The Libyan state fractured with two opposing poles in Tripoli and Benghazi and an on-again, off-again civil war. This led to foreign policies in the RSC to revive Libya, with the other North African states mediating and struggling against spillover. Although Morocco and Algeria occasionally cooperated, their rivalry proved difficult to overcome.⁴⁷ In 2020, as Morocco's position in Western Sahara strengthened further, POLISARIO announced that it was renewing military operations in the territory with Algerian support.

The North African RSC and its states' foreign policies followed a different pattern from the Southern African RSC, where enmity and soft balancing toward the South African hegemon transitioned to amity and cooperation. Morocco and Algeria's differing constructions of North Africa crystallized in the Western Sahara dispute and fueled enmity. In contrast, South Africa came to accept the African nationalist construction of Southern Africa, culminating in granting independence to its illegitimate colony, which became an independent Namibia. The North African bipolar balance of power meant that neither country could prevail over the other. The end of the Cold War and mediation by Tunisia, Libya, and the international community led to a brief period of cooperation that soon returned to enmity and confrontation. The North African RSC resembles the South Asian one, with the intense rivalry between India and Pakistan, based on differing constructions of the subcontinent, preventing the development of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Although India is the hegemon in South Asia, Pakistan has countered by sponsoring violent extremist organizations (VEOs) as asymmetric means of opposition, backed by a strong military and nuclear weapons. In contrast to North Africa, France and Germany overcame

enmity and differing constructions of their region's identity from the late 1940s onward and led in creating the EU. In the 1990s, Brazil and Argentina did the same in leading to create MERCOSUR, as well as Indonesia and Malaysia in leading to develop the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the 1970s.

West Africa's RSC and Foreign Policies

Power in the West African RSC is thinner and less concentrated than in the Southern African and North African RSCs, and some states have struggled to survive. The RSC features a range of fragile to moderately stable states that have overcome postcolonial rivalries to exercise foreign policy cooperation in organizations, including through ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Nigeria has the region's largest GDP but is not a hegemon or a strong state and struggles to exert its power in the region and within its own boundaries. An outside power, France, has shaped the identity of francophone West Africa and played a key role in regional security, most recently in stabilizing two of its former colonies, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. According to Buzan and Wæver's definition, continuing French involvement means that the West African RSC struggles to become a fully-fledged complex where states' foreign policies would be focused on each other.

During the Cold War, West Africa featured a mix of foreign policies primarily intended to ensure the survival of states in formation, especially as a wave of military coups swept over them. France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom all intervened in West Africa to stabilize friendly regimes and destabilize ones that infringed on their interests. Until Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, he led Ghana, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, and other countries in the pan-Africanist movement, seeking to undermine French neocolonial identity and create a united West African identity. The 1967–70 Nigerian civil war led some francophone states to back the Biafran secession as a way of weakening the potential hegemon. Nigeria's triumph in the civil war and the use of its oil wealth in foreign policy led to rapprochement with Francophonie and the emergence of policies of cooperation, highlighted by the 1975 founding of ECOWAS to promote regional economic integration. In 1980, Qaddafi's invasion of northern Chad, as well as his sponsorship of several West African insurgent movements, led regional states to agree to an ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Defense Assistance in 1981.⁴⁸

With the end of the Cold War, the emerging West African RSC and its foreign policies developed toward self-reliance and self-containment, especially with the Nigerian-led ECOMOG interventions to make peace in Liberia and Sierra

Leone. Within the RSC, personalist, ideological, and security factors explain West African states' conflicting foreign policies in the 1990s. In Liberia, the withdrawal of US support for the Samuel Doe regime in Liberia opened the door to insurgents led by Charles Taylor and backed by Libya, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire. In August 1990, President Doe called on West African states to come to the rescue. Nigeria and Ghana invoked the ECOWAS defense pact, proposed a ceasefire, and sent troops to Liberia. Although there was no peace to keep and Doe was killed in September 1990, ECOMOG stayed and defended a transitional government and the capital, Monrovia, from insurgent assaults. Senegal sent troops to demonstrate that a francophone state was willing to support the ECOMOG mission but soon withdrew after several soldiers were killed.

The Nigerian dictator Ibrahim Babangida had developed close personal relations with Doe and was unconstrained in spending substantial amounts of financial and human resources in forcefully trying to make peace and stabilize Liberia. Nigeria and Ghana sent troops also because they were concerned about spillover from Liberia throughout West Africa. Babangida and his successor, Sani Abacha, also wanted to improve the image of Nigeria tarnished under a brutal military dictatorship.⁴⁹

Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso opposed the ECOMOG intervention. Burkina Faso had experienced a revolution the 1980s and continued supporting the insurgency. Ivoirian president Felix Houphouët-Boigny supported the insurgents and opposed ECOMOG for personal reasons, as Samuel Doe was responsible for the execution of the president's daughter alongside her husband, Liberian president Tolbert, in 1980. Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso pushed back against Nigerian hegemony in a form of soft balancing that resembled that practiced by Southern African states against the new South Africa in the 1990s. In 1992, the two opposing sides reached the Yamoussoukro Agreement. Subsequent negotiations patched over the enmity in West Africa and set the stage for 1997 elections in Liberia and a temporary peace.⁵⁰ In 1997, ECOWAS states deployed ECOMOG troops to Sierra Leone to reverse a military coup and escalation by the Revolutionary United Front that led to a siege on the capital, Freetown. ECOMOG succeeded in stabilizing the country and handed matters over to a UN operation in 2000.⁵¹ The last ECOMOG operation of the 1990s took place in Guinea-Bissau—a country that was riven by factionalism and coups.⁵² In the 1990s, the West African RSC developed into one that was largely self-sufficient in security, thanks to personalist largesse by Nigeria's dictators, and where personalist soft balancing gave way to cooperation, due to West African diplomacy.

In the 2000s, RSC foreign policies focused on strengthening security cooperation and building amity. ECOWAS established the Mechanism for Conflict Pre-

vention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, with a security architecture including an ECOWAS Peace and Security Council that set up procedures for authorizing more legitimate, orderly, and humane peace operations than the ones in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, as well as an Early Warning Mechanism plus a Council of the Wise to mediate in disputes and conflicts.⁵³ Starting in 2003, West African states took steps toward developing a standby brigade as part of the ASF. The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy set the stage for other interventions in the region.⁵⁴ The ECOWAS protocol strengthened norms against military coups and other unconstitutional changes in government, such as presidents unilaterally ending term limits. Civilian governments were fearful of more military seizures of power and were especially interested in the ECOWAS anti-coup norm.⁵⁵

West African states provided leadership against coups and other unconstitutional seizures of power. In 2003, they helped to reverse a military coup in offshore Sao Tome e Principe. In 2005, they became involved in the transition process in Togo after the death of the dictator Gnassingbe Eyadema and an attempted military coup. Because of pressure from West African states, the military backed down and allowed free and fair democratic elections and a constitutional conclusion. However, the result was that Eyadema's son, Faure, won the election and carried on the dynasty.

While the level of West African RSC institutionalization rose in the 2000s, the amount of collective security dropped in 2000, with the end of the Nigerian military dictatorship and the new civilian leadership's unwillingness to continue to spend the same level of blood and treasure to stabilize West Africa. In 2000, Nigeria withdrew its troops from Sierra Leone as part of a ceasefire agreement that ended ECOMOG and stood up the UN Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).⁵⁶ When UNAMSIL faced a crisis later in 2000, Nigeria was unwilling to return its troops, so British troops helped rescue the mission. When West African troops reinforced UNAMSIL from 2000 to 2003, they were not self-sustaining as in the 1990s but instead were supported by the UN in a peace support operation. In addition, West African states took part in a peace support operation in Liberia from 2003–17. The operation became necessary in 2003 after Liberian rebel groups closed in on the capital Monrovia and the warlord President Charles Taylor. A few West African states played the leading role in negotiations to end the civil war and remove Taylor to smooth the transition. In September, several West African states conducted a three-week ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) intervention that removed Taylor, replaced him with a transitional government, and quickly handled over peace support to the UN. In October, a UN Mission took over from ECOMIL and supported the transition to a democratically elected

government led by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and spearheaded security sector reform.

The 2002–11 Côte d'Ivoire civil war and crisis demonstrated the West African RSC's dependence on France and the UN as well as the limits to the West African RSC's foreign policy autonomy. France intervened in 2002 to stop civil war in Côte d'Ivoire from ravaging the country. An ECOWAS deployment proved to be too small and weak to maintain the peace and merely supplemented French forces. The UN deployed United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) peacekeepers in 2004 and superseded the West African mission. In 2010, French troops had to forcefully intervene to ensure the ascendance of newly elected Alassane Ouattara to the presidency and the removal of defeated President Laurent Gbagbo. Therefore, in the 2000s, the West African RSC came to depend increasingly on UN and French intervention and leadership for stabilization, and foreign policies became more externally oriented.⁵⁷

In the 2010s, the Western African RSC confronted the rise of VEOs in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, which presented a more fanatical and militarily adept threat. In March 2012, Tuareg separatists took over northern Mali and declared the Republic of Azawad. In response, Captain Amadou Sanogo led a military coup that caused ECOWAS to suspend the country. In June, VEOs took over the north from the Azawadis and threatened to take over the rest of the country and the entire Sahel. West African states took part in delicate diplomacy to persuade Sanogo and the military to transition to a civilian government and agree to allow an AU force—African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA)—to guarantee the transition and restore Malian sovereignty in the north. In January 2013, West African states deployed air and ground forces to Mali. However, when the extremists began to advance toward the Malian capital, Bamako, AFISMA was not capable of stopping them. France had to intervene with Operation Serval, which temporarily defeated the VEOs and paved the way for a UN force. Since 2013, the continuing dependence of Mali on France's Operation Barkhane and the UN for security rather than West African states once again demonstrated the limited autonomy and power of the RSC.⁵⁸ Also, VEO activity spread to Burkina Faso and western Niger and threatened the entire Sahel. In 2020 and 2021, two successive military coups in Mali brought renewed ECOWAS sanctions, the French announcement of the end of Barkhane, and a heightened threat to the West African RSC.⁵⁹

The RSC's weakness was also demonstrated by the inability of Nigeria to subdue the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies from 2009 onward.⁶⁰ In 2014, as the situation in northeast Nigeria deteriorated, the Multinational Joint Task Force Lake Chad Region was formed and intervened, allowing forces from Chad, Cam-

eroon, and Niger to enter Nigerian territory.⁶¹ Despite tactical successes by the task force, Boko Haram and especially ISWAP continue to operate in the Lake Chad region.

West African states continued to deal with unconstitutional changes in government. In 2009, ECOWAS and the AU suspended Guinea-Conakry for a military coup. However, they did not suspend Niger for an unconstitutional change. In December 2016, Nigeria and Senegal led ECOWAS in acting to restore President-elect Adama Barrow to his rightfully elected position in Gambia, deploying troops, and forcing out the dictator Yahya Jammeh.⁶² The intervention proved that West African states could succeed in acting with a modest operation to uphold democracy and human rights. This contrasted with AFISMA's failure in January 2013 to stop the advance of extremist forces in Mali.⁶³

The West African RSC's power thinness and dispersal and the surge of VEOs in the region have led to foreign policies with limited regional security cooperation and increasing dependence on France, the UN, and the United States for security. The West African RSC's weakness also explains why states have struggled to implement an ECOWAS free trade agreement and plans for a common currency and common investment market.⁶⁴ The West African case demonstrates the fact that RSCs can rise and decline.

Additional RSCs and Findings from the Comparative Analysis

The emerging Eastern African RSC spans three RSCs (the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes, and East African) in different stages of development, as well as three regional organizations—IGAD, East African Community (EAC), and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region—and three long-running intrastate conflicts (Somalia, South Sudan, and the eastern DRC). The degree of thickness and concentration of power varies within the Eastern Africa RSC. In the Horn of Africa RSC, power is thinner than in Southern and North Africa and concentrated in subhegemonic Ethiopia, which is weakened by internal conflict like Nigeria. Sudan and Eritrea have ranged from cooperation with Ethiopia, to competition, to conflict. In East Africa and the EAC, power is dispersed among five states (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi), thicker than in the Horn, and foreign policies range from competitive to cooperative (in both security and economic terms). In the Great Lakes RSC, power is dispersed among four states and relatively thick among Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, which compete, but thin in the eastern DRC where a UN Mission (MONUSCO) has maintained security for more than two decades and where Rwanda and Uganda maintain spheres of influence.⁶⁵

Starting in 2004, Eastern African states began to develop the East African Brigade of the ASF that spanned most of the larger RSC, ranging from Ethiopia to Burundi and from Comoros to Sudan. In 2007, Uganda and Burundi commenced the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) to stabilize Somalia and stop spillover into the region. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti joined AMISOM in 2011, which constituted another step toward a larger Eastern African RSC—bound together in the Somalia peace enforcement and reconstruction project. However, the AU, ASF, and AMISOM and the emergence of the larger RSC were dependent on funding, logistics, and training from the EU, United States, and UN.⁶⁶

The Central African RSC is one of the weaker emerging complexes with less thickness and concentration of power than other RSCs. Central African states have been unable to resolve two major intrastate conflicts in the region—in the Central African Republic and the DRC—and have depended on external support from France, the UN, and Russia.⁶⁷ The RSC has been dominated by a personalist old boys' club, in which presidents tend to support each other and refrain from criticizing or sanctioning their peers for misrule and unconstitutional changes in government (such as ignoring term limits), thereby maintaining a veneer of amity and stability. Central African leaders fear that sanctioning one of their neighbors may destabilize that country and spill instability over into their own territory. Also, sanctions by some states against another could lead to increased enmity by the criticized country, which may start an insurgency targeted at its critics. When an RSC features enmity and instability, it is often difficult to prevent conflict from spinning out of control.

This analysis of African RSCs and their foreign policies has demonstrated significant differences. The concentration of power in South Africa and relative thickness of the Southern African RSC have produced foreign policies that evolved from enmity, confrontation, and destabilization through a transition period of soft balancing to one of amity, cooperation, and collective security. The Southern African case shows how change is possible in an RSC with a change in regime. In contrast, the North African RSC's bipolar concentration of power and clashing identities have led to long-lasting enmity as well as competitive and conflictual foreign policies. The West African RSC's relatively weak development demonstrates how RSCs can rise and decline. This weakness is also evident in the Eastern African RSCs and Central African RSC. There is considerable overlap and interaction between security complexes, especially in Eastern Africa. Table 1 encapsulates the variation in thickness and concentration of power in RSCs and emerging RSCs and the differences in foreign policies:

Table 1: Regional Security Complexes and Foreign Policies

Thickness of power by concentration of power			
	Thick	Less Thick	Thin
Concentrated	Southern Africa (1990s soft balancing by Zimbabwe, Angola vs. hegemonic South Africa) Post-2000 cooperation)	Horn of Africa (soft balancing by Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea vs. hegemonic Ethiopia)	None
Less Concentrated	North Africa (bipolar → Morocco balancing vs Algeria)	West Africa (1990s soft balancing by Francophonie vs. hegemonic Nigeria. Post-2000 cooperation)	Central Africa (personalist cooperation by autocrats)
Dispersed	East Africa (competition & cooperation by Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda)	Great Lakes RSC (competition by Rwanda vs. Uganda, Burundi, DRC)	Lake Chad Region (Post-2014 Nigeria cooperates with Chad, Niger, Cameroon vs Boko Haram)

Conclusion

Comparative analysis of African RSCs and their foreign policies has demonstrated the utility of regional security complex theory in explaining foreign policies as well as the theory's limits. Variation in thickness and concentration of power in three RSCs has been shown to help cause variation in foreign policies. Relative thickness of power and a bipolar concentration and conflicting constructions of identity are associated with foreign policies featuring enmity and power-balancing. Regional instability and a multipolar concentration and thickness of power help increase interstate competitive behavior and enmity. A bipolar rivalry between two more developed North African states has stymied regional foreign policy agency and the development of regional cooperation. Also, constructivism is significant in explaining the strong rivalry between a state based upon the remnants of empire and a new state based upon a revolution.

In contrast, a similar level of thickness and unipolarity and a conflicting construction of identity were initially related to foreign policies of enmity and soft balancing against the hegemon. However, the hegemon's regime change and a more accommodating leadership's different construction of regional identity led

to change in RSC foreign policies—from soft balancing and distrust to growing amity and cooperation. However, the Southern African RSC's unipolar economic structure has led to the slow development of an FTA and customs union, due to the caution of other states.

RSCs with less thickness and concentration of power have led to cooperative foreign policies to prevent conflict and spillover caused by VEOs. However, leaders and states have experienced greater difficulty in mobilizing sufficient cooperation to deal with security issues, especially where states have failed and insurgents operate. Especially in such cases, leaders securitize a range of challenges and reach out to external powers to provide multidimensional forms of security to slow decline and prevent collapse. The weakness and dependence of certain African RSCs validate Buzan and Waever's contention that some regions do not have fully formed complexes where their states' foreign policies focus on each other and where they can provide their own security. Instead, those states' foreign policies are focused as much on dependence on external powers as they are on interaction with regional states. Therefore, Buzan and Waever's skepticism about African states, RSCs, and foreign policies, given state weakness, still has validity. Only the Southern and North African RSCs are fully developed and autonomous from external powers.

The analysis provides findings about the formation and rise and decline of RSCs and their effect on foreign policies. In North Africa, power was sufficiently thick and concentrated and states were strong enough to ward off security challenges, which enabled the RSC to form and develop with foreign policies that were focused mainly inward. Similarly, in Southern Africa, the hegemon's regime change transformed the developing RSC and its foreign policies developed toward amity and cooperation. The West Africa RSC formed and developed with the end of the Cold War and with the willingness of Nigeria to expend resources to act as a hegemon that led to soft balancing at first and cooperation later. However, the thickness and concentration of power were never great enough to enable the West African RSC to stabilize once Nigeria reduced its resource expenditures and hegemonic behavior. The weakness of some states and security challenges from insurgents led to the decline of the RSC and to foreign policies that became externally oriented. A similar RSC rise and decline occurred in the Horn of Africa. Central African and the Great Lakes RSCs never fully developed, and dependence remains. One must conclude that RSCs can change and can be weakened by external and internal forces. Intervention by external powers to bolster security in West, Central, and Eastern African RSCs varies from complex to complex, based upon the interests of those powers, and affects foreign policies in

those RSCs. Eventually, external intervention is intended to strengthen RSCs and make them self-sufficient, but RSC regeneration is a long-term process.

This examination of African RSCs and foreign policies has demonstrated the utility of constructivism, neoclassical realism, and different levels of foreign policy analysis. Conflicting constructions of regional identity have played a role heightening enmity among leaders and states, an inability to compromise in resolving disputes, and insecurity. Congruent constructions of identity and the development of personal relations among leaders have led to regional solidarity, cooperation, and compromise in dispute resolution. However, personalism and solidarity in foreign policies often prevent states from applying the pressure for reforms that could make an RSC more durable in the long run. ★

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Africa, America, and China

Estimation or Underestimation?

LTC ROSS COFFEY, US ARMY

China and Africa are mentioned in tandem with increasing frequency. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend's 2021 testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee called for caution and concern toward Chinese activities in Africa, stating that the United States cannot afford to underestimate Africa's economic potential and its strategic consequences.¹ Unlike the United States, China is heavily invested in African infrastructure, telecommunications, and government-to-government ties. What accounts for this investment? And has the United States underestimated Africa?

There are several possible answers to this first question. First, China's interest in prestige and respect might be driving its interest in Africa. Or, it might recognize its domestic economic pressures and is seeking an outlet to ensure regime stability. Last, it may be hedging against future war and is therefore working to gain access to twenty-first century minerals. Against these reasons, might the United States be underestimating Africa?

Africa's Constrained Potential

To the question of underestimation, it's necessary to first establish Africa's geopolitical situation and its potentials and pitfalls, both of which are significant. Africa accounts for 20 percent of the world's landmass but, as a result of Mercator map projections, its true size is often underrepresented on two-dimensional maps. Compared to the world's most populous or most developed nations, Africa is larger than all of them combined. The 54 nations on the African continent represent the largest voting bloc in the United Nations, and these countries are represented by the African Union as a singular intergovernmental, continental-level organization. There is no shortage of natural resources there, and Africa has many marketable and valuable commodities. These include petroleum in the north and on the Atlantic coast, precious and rare minerals in the center of the continent, and agricultural products such as timber and fish across its coastlines. It stands astride the world's busiest shipping lanes.

Beyond these natural resources, there is also human potential. Africa has a growing population, with the population of Nigeria expected to exceed that of the United States in the coming years.² Gross domestic product has been steadily

increasing—particularly since before the turn of the century. In many cases, growth of its countries has proportionally exceeded that of the United States. Africa is a continent of the young. It is a continent of significant diversity, as evidenced by the 200-plus different ethnicities present there.

Pitfalls compete to offset these potentials. Africa remains largely underdeveloped, and there are more persons living in extreme poverty in Africa than in the rest of the world combined. Compared to the rest of the world, Africa has been largely unable to escape poverty: although the percentage of Africans living in poverty has technically decreased, the number of Africans living in poverty increased by almost 50 percent in the past 30 years.³

Geography poses a challenge to addressing underdevelopment and impoverishment. Despite the large expanse of arable land in the center portions of the African continent, its development—and associated aspects of transportation and commerce—have historically been constrained by the area's physical geography as the high plateaus render many of its longest rivers unnavigable. To offer a pair of examples: Rapids and waterfalls prohibit navigation through the majority of the Zambezi River basin, and the Congo River's downstream rapids similarly limit movement into the heartland—and therefore inhibit effective access to its abundant natural resources. Infrastructure is of no help either; even today, there exists little transcontinental rail access to move goods and to support the movement of services either on Africa's north-south or, for the most part, its east-west access. There are only a few air transportation hubs on the African continent, and Africa has a comparatively low volume of power lines.

Historical disadvantage further challenges African potential, although the continent didn't necessarily begin that way. Africa has historically been self-governing, with major empires such as the Songhai, Mali, Ghanan, and Zimbabwean Empires recognized as effective governing bodies while tribal and ethnic structures provided small-scale governance in areas beyond the reach of the historical empires. Succeeding these historic empires, though, are several external influences that have contributed to the underdevelopment and impoverishment that exist today.

First, the slave trade starting in earnest in the seventeenth century and climaxing in the nineteenth century is estimated to have caused the removal of 18 million able-bodied Africans from their home continent, degrading relations between communities and corrupting legal structures in the process. Many African countries still have not recovered from the slave trade, as evidenced by Nathan Nunn's 2008 economic study, using ship registers and family names to calculate slave exports for each modern-day African country. Comparing the low and high slave export countries against their gross domestic product growth, he found a

robust negative relationship between slave exportation and economic development. This suggests that the slave trade from centuries ago continues to impact Africa today.⁴ If the slave trade weren't destructive enough to the natural economic development of Africa, nineteenth-century colonialism further worsened Africa's prospects. In the few decades following the 1884 Berlin Conference, Africa was almost entirely colonized at the outset of World War I. Only the kingdom of Ethiopia and Liberia remained uncolonized—the latter retained its freedom as originally established only through the repatriation of slaves from the Americas.

Although African countries started gaining their independence in the years following World War II, African heads of state opted to retain preexisting borders—meaning that externally derived boundaries would continue to shape and constrain African politics and political economies. Differences in language, different postcolonial systems of governance and governing, and even currency issues—such as how the Central African franc (minted in Cameroon) and the West African franc (minted in Senegal) are both held in reserve by the French treasury—impact how African states internally and externally act.⁵ The so-called inviolability of borders likely masked inherent weaknesses of the African states, weaknesses that became exposed as they declared independence from colonialism, and therefore account for generally unfavorable assessments of its governments and their degrees of freedom.⁶ This and the preceding governance and economic factors challenge African potential.

Security & Human Security Issues Further Impact African Potential

Apart from governance and economics, other challenges persist on the African continent. Clearly, Africa remains gripped by violent conflict. In spite of both African and international interventions, terrorism persists in the Horn of Africa, the Maghreb, the Sahel and Lake Chad regions, and, as a recent development, in southern and central Africa.⁷ The historic trading routes transiting the Sahel and the Sahara, lacking effective governance, are now used in trans-Saharan trafficking and threat finance, and both Central Asian heroin and South American cocaine travel through Africa toward Europe.⁸ Looking beyond the humanitarian aspects, the illicit ivory trade and other poaching threaten African environments and tourism opportunities, and African coastlines remain the most affected by piracy in terms of hijackings, boardings, and armed robberies. Topping off these threats posed by nonstate actors, there remain state-level issues such as the recent Western Saharan cease-fire cessation with Morocco as well as emergent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Security challenges also include human security challenges. Illegal, underreported, and unregulated fishing in African exclusive economic zones limits economic development and causes environmental and food security concerns. Migration to Europe has destabilizing effects on both the African and European continents, and the Mediterranean is without question the deadliest sea crossing. Environmental concerns are plentiful, with decreases in rainfall in the Sahel, rises in sea level across the Indian coast, droughts in southern Africa, low crop yields in eastern Africa, and weaker trade winds in the Atlantic coast further exacerbating an already tenuous security situation. In addition to illegal fishing, food insecurity has stressed African countries in the Sahel and in Libya; reached crisis levels in parts of eastern, central, and southern Africa; and is at emergency levels in northeast Nigeria and South Sudan.⁹ Climate change grips the Sahel and East Africa and, beyond the global impacts of COVID-19 (and its likely impacts on an already weak African economy), infectious disease greatly effects Africa—with HIV being particularly acute in southern Africa and malaria endemic to the majority of the continent. On top of all these security challenges, state fragility in many parts of Africa creates security concerns and security risks.

China's Unquestionable Interest in Africa

Having established the potentials and pitfalls of Africa against the backdrop of several factors, understanding Chinese interest in Africa is also necessary to determine whether Africa is being underestimated by the United States. Despite the historical and geographic factors constraining African potential and the confluence of both national security and human security challenges, China is interested in Africa—across a variety of indicators. China has invested significantly in African ports.¹⁰ Chinese loans have steadily increased,¹¹ as has Chinese direct foreign investment.¹² China is without question the largest trading partner for most African states. China's first overseas military presence is on the African continent with a naval base in Djibouti. China is increasingly interested in the African cellular sector, and it is building the information technology background that serves as the foundation for smart cities throughout many African countries.¹³

In addition to business ties, there are governmental, educational, and perceptual connections. Chinese senior leaders are routinely visiting Africa,¹⁴ in contrast to a comparative lack of interest on the part of the United States;¹⁵ upon taking office, three of Chinese president Xi Jinping's first four overseas trips were to Africa: Tanzania, South Africa, and the Republic of Congo.¹⁶ (The fourth was Russia.) African students are increasingly studying in China,¹⁷ and due to the

likely combination of all these factors, Africans across the continent generally take a positive view toward China.¹⁸

China might take a similar view, and Chinese interest in Africa could be explained through a few theories spanning the elements of national power and their possible uses. China might first recognize the historical perspectives of African nations and their struggles for literal and figurative independence throughout the centuries. By posturing itself as the champion of African governments, China might be seeking the affirmation of the sizable UN voting bloc resident on the African continent, courting votes in the UN General Assembly. This could increase its comparative diplomatic and informational power on the international stage. Among the UN Security Council's five permanent members, China provides the largest contribution, the majority of which is posted in Africa. This additionally speaks to China's interest in diplomatic prestige.

Another reason speaks to economics. While China is heavily invested in African infrastructure, it implements these investments largely through Chinese workers and Chinese companies as opposed to locally available African manpower. These investments might curry favor with African governments, but they might not garner the same from African citizens. China is likely cognizant of this situation, but due to its need to maintain its own economic workforce, it is probably determining how to keep its own workforce employed even if it means the benefactors of that work and workforce aren't the average Chinese.

Military power provides a third explanation. Africa is rich in the minerals commonly used in telecommunications, space technology, and information technology. China possibly recognizes the opportunity to extract coltan, titanium, and the like to support its own military research and development. It also offers another explanation for why China would heavily invest in infrastructure beyond its borders.

Comparing and Assessing US Investments and Interest

Having established the Chinese interest, the question of underestimation exists within a sphere of several US investments in Africa, investments that are of a dissimilar, apples-to-oranges nature. The US Agency for International Development has been heavily invested in the health sector for years, offering HIV/AIDS relief and retrovirals to relieve human suffering from that disease.¹⁹ The United States convenes forums to address malaria and other infectious disease. The United States routinely deploys capabilities to address humanitarian disasters and emergencies such as its 2014 support to Liberian Ebola relief efforts and tropical cyclone Idai affecting Mozambique and southeastern Africa in 2019.

The United States also supports African militaries' responses to security challenges.²⁰ Its train-and-equip programs to support African peacekeeping capabilities date back more to the 2000s, and it has supported African counterterrorism responses to varying degrees in the Horn of Africa and in northern and western Africa. It has delivered sophisticated aviation capabilities to several African countries and built border response units, counterterrorism companies, and logistics formations. Its maritime exercises and capacity-building programs dwarf those by any other state.

Considering the types of American and Chinese investments, then, it's clear both countries view Africa differently. To China, Africa is viewed as an opportunity to increase Chinese prestige and power across several different measurements of national power. From an American perspective, Africa conversely represents one of many regions where the United States remains engaged, at varying degrees, not only for its own national interests but also for those African national interests intersecting with American interests. Perhaps the United States has underestimated Africa, but only due to the challenges to American leadership, values, and interests in other global regions.

Fortunately, America has several comparative advantages in its approaches to Africa. America typically seeks comprehensive solutions in that it includes local sustainability into either the development or defense activities in addition to relief of suffering or the delivering of security capabilities. It values human rights and other commonly accepted international norms of behavior, sometimes withholding aid and assistance if receiving governments are complicit in activities considered unacceptable such as human trafficking or the use of child soldiers.

In view of these comparative advantages, then, the United States must come to terms with Chinese investment in Africa and not try to compete investment-for-investment. There is scant American domestic support to improve other nations' infrastructure before its own. The United States is already a recognized global leader, so China's efforts to increase its prestige merely reflect its perspective that it remains affected by American global leadership and in a manner greater than the United States is affected by China. The United States enjoys universal access to Africa, and while the Chinese command one base in Africa, the United States enjoys cooperative security agreements in a far greater number of locations.

This comparison and assessment conclude on a positive note: while the United States might have underestimated certain aspects of Africa, and might have done so for too long, America retains a predominant position even despite Chinese advancements and initiatives across recent decades. Africans remain respectful and appreciative of American cooperation; if America chooses to make Africa a

priority, any Chinese comparative advancement will be erased. It is now up to America to decide how it views Africa. ♣

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Counterbalancing Chinese Influence in the Horn of Africa

A Strategy for Security and Stability

MAJ RYAN CK HESS, USAF

By all appearances, we are in a period of diminishing US engagement in East Africa, extending back to 2017. Perhaps the starkest example was in January 2021, when the United States followed through on the Donald Trump administration's promise to remove all military personnel from Somalia. According to military sources, 600–800 troops have departed Somalia and been transferred to the neighboring East Africa nations of Kenya and Djibouti.¹ Though US forces assert that they “retain the capability to conduct targeted counterterrorism operations in Somalia and collect early warnings and indicators,”² the benefits of a physical presence in the country will be difficult to replace. These concerns are not limited to Somalia, however. Further US disengagement from East Africa would create greater instability in an already unstable and strategically critical region. Moreover, the vacuum left by US disengagement is likely to be filled by great-power rivals such as China and Russia. The ultimate reality is that African issues—especially those endemic to the Horn of Africa—often have global effects. Therefore, I argue that the United States should increase its engagement in East Africa to not only help maintain security and stability in this strategically significant region but also to counterbalance Chinese influence and power.

To be clear, I am not advocating for a dramatic increase in direct military support or more boots on the ground. On the contrary, while a military presence is an important part of the engagement I advocate, the other soft-power elements of statecraft—diplomatic, informational, and economic—are likely to be equally important in the future of US relations with East Africa. The withdrawal of US military forces from countries like Somalia is shortsighted and ill advised, but the failure to apply other soft-power tools, or an overreliance on military power, risks a more severe deterioration of influence in the Horn of Africa, in addition to the alienation of potential allies in a strategically vital region.

The Strategic Importance of the Horn of Africa

For the purposes of this article, the Horn of Africa will be defined as five countries: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Some wider contexts may also include Sudan, South Sudan, and Uganda. As previously mentioned, the Horn of Africa maintains a strategically important place on the global stage geographically, politically, and economically. It is the source of the Nile and the primary entrance to both the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The area attracts international attention due to its major ports, resource potential, and proximity to some of the world's busiest sea lanes.³

Any country looking to establish a presence in the region “will almost certainly engage with actors in China’s Belt and Road Initiative or any competing bloc or country’s strategies to tap African markets and resources.”⁴ The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, Turkey, Russia, Europe, and the United States have all identified the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea as being a hub of geostrategic competition and are actively pursuing interests in the area. On 23 March 2021, the world was given a lesson in the importance of the Suez Canal—and by extension the surrounding region—when a container ship called the *Ever Given* became stuck in the canal, cutting off all trade into and out of the Red Sea. Though the blockage was cleared in less than a week, it ground to a halt a trade route that accounts for over 12 percent of global trade and costs \$9 billion daily when stopped. The incident put immense strain on already burdened supply chains and resulted in a dramatic slowdown in global commerce.⁵

The most notable evidence for the region’s strategic importance is the ever-increasing presence of international military forces. Perhaps the most well-known base is Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which plays a crucial role for US military operations in both US Central Command and US Africa Command. However, Djibouti also hosts a Chinese People’s Liberation Army support base, as well as military personnel from Japan, Italy, Britain, and France.⁶ Similarly, Kenya and Somalia (until recently) have both been home to several US military outposts and bases. The increasing military presence in the Horn, along with its location and economic and political importance, make it one of the most strategically significant regions in the world.

Chinese Influence

Given the significance of this region on a global scale, it should come as no surprise that China has also identified the Horn of Africa as a focal point for significant economic, political, and military growth opportunities, with the obvious objective being to secure a foothold in East Africa, resulting in increased

control and the strategic advantages therein. Of all the countries in China's crosshairs, Ethiopia stands out as a country with immense political and economic potential. It has the second-largest population in Africa, is relatively politically stable, has proven to be a regional leader on the continent, and is poised to have significant economic growth this decade. As a result, China has purchased or supported several high-profile construction projects in Ethiopia, such as a light rail and the new headquarters of the African Union. The Ethiopian government joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2018⁷ and sees itself as crucial to Chinese interests in East Africa.⁸ Similarly, Beijing sees Ethiopia as a nucleus for the Belt and Road Initiative and thus has heavily invested in it to earn its goodwill.

Beijing has also sought to ensure its military foothold in Djibouti. On 1 August 2017, China officially opened its support base just a few miles from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. The base's stated primary mission is to protect Chinese commerce in the Gulf of Aden—along with intelligence collection, logistical support, and counterterrorism operations. Its existence also represents a significant augmentation in China's power projection capabilities. Perhaps more importantly to the Chinese is the influence that accompanies such a base. As a component of improving Sino-Djiboutian relations, China has provided 40 percent of the funding for infrastructure and loaned Djibouti \$1 billion for investment projects.⁹ Such engagement is likely an indication of things to come, with Djibouti serving as only one piece of China's much larger Belt and Road Initiative, much of which is extensively focused on the nations of East Africa.

Where China appears to have a grand strategy of engagement with East Africa, the United States seems to be two steps behind and in a permanent state of reevaluating its place in the region especially vis-à-vis great-power competition. The United States has shown an unwillingness or inability to articulate its strategy for countering Chinese influence in the Horn or across the rest of the continent. As written by retired four-star Admiral James Stavritis, "Unlike China, which has a finely crafted strategy for Africa and is moving swiftly to execute it, US efforts are relatively small and not well aligned between the military, economic and diplomatic."¹⁰ America's strategy for Africa is often inconsistent and, consequently, creates disadvantages compared to other great-power competitors. As the United States focuses more on great-power rivals, its focus shifts away from Africa and the willingness (or the perception of willingness) to engage on the continent decreases. Such inconsistent messaging, coupled with actual physical withdrawal, represents a lost opportunity to challenge China and other great-power rivals indirectly. Perhaps more damaging, as the United States relinquishes its influence, it permits these countries to manipulate the power vacuum to their own ends.¹¹

In the context of Africa, there is an additional consideration that one must assess when considering the present day US-Chinese rivalry. It is highly unlikely that a direct, conventional conflict will take place between the two countries in the near term. On the contrary, the most likely scenario is that the conflict will be a war of ideas and a battle for influence. As Professor Sean McFate says in his book *The New Rules for War*, “weaponizing influence and controlling the narrative of the conflict will help us win future wars. . . . The West needs to update its information warfare game. Until it does it will continue to be outplayed by its enemies that wage war in the information space.”¹² The objectives of such a war will not be military dominance, but influence and indirect power. Economic, diplomatic, and informational tools of statecraft will consistently rise to the top of the priority list for great powers who wish to attain victory by controlling the narrative.

Beijing understands this concept. Its ability and willingness to provide Ethiopia, Djibouti, and even Somalia with economic and political support typifies their strategy of utilizing influence and soft power to bring about political objectives. The goal is not military supremacy or even economic advantage, but rather “the power to exercise predominant influence over the defining ideas, rules, and institutions of world [or, in this case, regional] politics.”¹³ Political and economic expansion is a means to that end. To counter these efforts, the United States must first solidify a strategy in the Horn of Africa and ensure that strategy is directed at augmenting its engagement in the region, thereby countering (or at the very least balancing) efforts from Beijing.

Providing a Soft-Power Counterbalance

As discussed in the beginning, the soft-power tools of statecraft are going to be the most effective means by which to provide the counterbalance to China’s growing influence. This is due to practical concerns like resource constraints as well as more intangible ideas like public perception of the United States. On paper, America has already enumerated a strategy for beginning this counterbalance. The 2021 “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance” says that “We will also continue to build partnerships in Africa. . . and support [African countries’] economic and political independence in the face of undue foreign influence.”¹⁴ Again, efforts to fulfill this strategic vision will need to involve a coordinated plan featuring both military and security aspects, as well as soft-power influence through diplomatic, economic, and informational channels.

Diplomatic Counterbalance

This article has already addressed the security aspect of the US presence in the Horn of Africa. From a diplomatic perspective, US policy toward Africa is in dire need of adjustment. To again quote Judd Devermont, “From travel bans and proposed budget cuts to derogatory statements made by senior U.S. officials, many African leaders and publics have deplored what they regard as a neglectful, mean-spirited, and China-obsessed U.S. foreign policy.”¹⁵ To address this issue, the Biden administration should reverse the previous administration’s policy of leaving key state department posts unfilled. A relatively simple first step to signal US commitment in Africa would be filling key diplomatic positions on the continent and in the Horn such as an ambassador to Kenya and an assistant secretary of state for African affairs. Once key officials are in place and prepared to present and support US foreign policy, they can begin the process of finding what programs, policies and investments will benefit both the partner nation and the United States.

In a globalizing world, diplomatic engagement is more than just philanthropy or kindness. Properly executed, such engagement can help in a myriad of ways—from supporting human rights, to increasing standards of living and expanding development, to implementing more effective governance. Further, it can have positive effects beyond that country’s borders, extending to its neighbors, the region around it, and even how that country interacts with great powers. Governments with a free press, independent courts, functional legislatures, and a respect for human rights are more likely to cancel corrupt or unsound deals with countries such as Russia and China.¹⁶ Through constructive, effective diplomatic engagement, the United States can maintain a positive influence in Africa, while simultaneously presenting a counterbalance to great-power rivals.

Despite the perception of decreasing commitment, the United States remains one of the most prominent powers on the continent. As such, the government should use its still-considerable influence to play a pragmatic and neutral role in resolving (or supporting the resolution of) regional disputes. By partnering with European and other international actors to solve issues on the continent, the United States can act as a diplomatic force multiplier and hasten effective resolutions to these issues—such as the dispute between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan over Nile water usage and the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. With sufficient diplomatic tact, the United States may even be able to play the role of peacemaker in Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict. Regardless of what issues the United States chooses to address, the reality is that such efforts are only possible with increased diplomatic presence in the Horn.

Economic Counterbalance

Diplomatic efforts as outlined here would also clear a path for economic investment. China has already identified Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti as opportunities for investment, especially in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. Beijing sees the Horn as part of a chain of investments spanning the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and across the continent. To be a counterbalance, the United States must also see Africa as a similar source of economic opportunity. To that end, Washington could encourage private sector expansion in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti, while simultaneously incentivizing investment in those economies. Some programs like this are already in the works, such as the International Development Finance Corporation's plan for investing \$5 billion into newly privatized Ethiopian markets. More programs like this will benefit not just the countries and businesses directly involved but will also have positive ripple effects for the rest of East Africa.

Security and Stability in the Horn

Compared to great-power competition, counter violent extremist organization operations have been deemphasized in the security sector—but in East Africa these organizations still represent the most acute threat. Therefore, the most immediate and obvious reason for maintaining US presence and influence in the region is security, especially in Somalia itself. Though increasing direct military support to Somalia is likely not the right answer, neither was the removal of what few US forces were still in the country. The US, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and Somali security forces had made significant gains against the main regional antagonist, al-Shabaab, but those gains have only been possible through the cooperation between African and US forces. Without the US military, the reality on the ground is that no Somali force is ready to take the fight to al-Shabaab alone. The Somali military is far from ready to take over the counterterrorism mission, and the Somali Danab special forces units continue to rely heavily on American training, equipment, and support.¹⁷ Moreover, AMISOM is increasingly looking as though it will follow America's lead and withdraw its forces by year's end. Without the United States or AMISOM, it is likely that al-Shabaab will experience a violent resurgence and imperil whatever fragile stability has been gained.

It bears repeating that problems in Africa, particularly in East Africa, can have ripple effects on a worldwide scale. As articulated by Judd Devermont, the Africa program director at CSIS, "What happens in Africa does not stop at the water's edge. Africa's setbacks and advances are reshaping how the world works."¹⁸ The

concept is particularly true of Somalia. The US withdrawal endangers not only our ability to maintain security in the country itself, but it dramatically diminishes our intelligence collection capabilities in the region. This is incredibly dangerous with a group like al-Shabaab that has, on several occasions, proven its willingness and ability to strike outside the borders of Somalia. According to Katherine Zimmerman from the American Enterprise Institute, “al Shabaab intends to attack the US homeland and is pursuing the capability to bring down commercial planes. . . . The group copied a laptop bomb from al Qaeda’s Yemeni branch in 2016, and al Shabaab operatives have been arrested trying to take flying lessons, copying the 9/11 hijackers.”¹⁹ Despite Pentagon assurances that the United States can maintain its ability to collect early warnings and indicators regarding threats to the homeland,²⁰ withdrawal will inevitably have a detrimental effect on the quality of US intelligence related to al-Shabaab that thus potentially endanger regional interests or even America itself.

While not as acute as security in Somalia, continued diplomatic, economic, and military involvement by the United States will have a stabilizing effect on the region, especially in Ethiopia. As one of the most important nations on the continent, Ethiopia has a significant effect on regional stability. A strong and stable Ethiopia is likely to engender stability in the surrounding countries. For the United States, the country has consistently proven to be a linchpin in US counterterrorism operations and, with American financial and military support, has been strategically vital. However, over the last four years, the United States has begun to decrease support both fiscally and, as a result, militarily. “The recent decline of financial support brought significant impact. Despite its committed engagement to fight al-Shabaab, the past four years (2014–2017) peace and security budget aid by the US government to Ethiopia had been declined.”²¹ Given its importance in the region and largely productive past relationship with the United States, a recommitment to Ethiopian stability would represent a recommitment to stability in the Horn and greater East Africa.

One cannot discuss partnering with Ethiopia without addressing the current turmoil in the Tigray region, but that, too, serves to illustrate the importance of continued US engagement in Ethiopia. The United States has already condemned the violence, called on the Ethiopian government to hold those responsible for human rights violations to account, and demanded the removal of Eritrean troops in the Tigray region. Moreover, as of 26 May 2021, Secretary of State Blinken announced visa restrictions along with restrictions on economic and security assistance to Ethiopia and Eritrea until such time as both countries change course.²² While these actions are both laudable and understandable, they lack real effectiveness in an environment of decreased engagement. Continued

retreat from its African commitments leaves America less able to effect positive change when conflicts such as this arise.

The opportunity exists, however, to adjust US strategy, especially as the new administration begins. There are a multitude of diplomatic actions which have the potential to help the Tigray crisis, while at the same time demonstrating the United States' willingness to remain partnered with Ethiopia for the benefit of both countries. The Biden administration can and should appoint a special envoy to the Horn of Africa with the explicit objective of revitalizing relations. Additionally, the United States should work with multi-national organizations like the African Union and the UN Security Council to prioritize the cessation of hostilities and stabilization of the Tigray province. Finally, the United States should ensure that an impartial investigation into the conflict is completed and work with Ethiopia and other partners in Africa so that any human rights violations are addressed and efforts toward reconciliation can begin. As Cameron Hudson, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Africa Center, put it in his article *The Case for U.S. Reengagement in Ethiopia*, "Ethiopia is too important a strategic partner for the U.S. to alienate. But allowing its transgressions to go unchecked is too big a price to pay."²³ The only realistic way for the United States to strike that balance is to remain engaged in Ethiopia and the greater Horn of Africa.

To maintain security and stability in the strategically vital region of the Horn of Africa, the United States must increase its engagement with the nations therein. The same is true for any goals of providing a counterbalance to Chinese influence. While it can be tempting to set the main objective of any Africa strategy as a direct counter to China, it should instead be dedicated to building and strengthening mutually advantageous alliances and partnerships within the continent. Again, from the *National Defense Strategy Summary*: "By working together with allies and partners we amass the greatest possible strength for the long-term advancement of our interests, maintaining favorable balances of power that deter aggression and support the stability that generates economic growth." By focusing on increasing its diplomatic, economic, and military engagement with the countries of the Horn of Africa, and ensuring those relationships remain mutually beneficial, the United States can continue to be both a bulwark of stability and, by extension, counter Chinese influence in the Horn of Africa. 🌟

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China's Military and Economic Prowess in Djibouti

A Security Challenge for the Indo-Pacific

DR. INDU SAXENA

ROBERT URI DABALY

ARUSHI SINGH

Djibouti is a democratic sovereign and an indivisible republic, to which its citizens solemnly proclaim the principles of democracy, as well as the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, as per the terms of the nation's constitution. Islam is the state religion, and the constitution prescribes for the government to be of the people, by the people, and for the people. Djibouti is a developing country that strides toward its economic development agenda with foreign facilities from the United States of America, the European Union, and China among others to deteriorate poverty, as well as to promote the growth of domestic industries. The United States, European Union, and China consider the nation's geographical location vital to the progression of their respective multidimensional interests. Djibouti owes a tremendous amount of funds to several competing and powerful countries that intend to hold the nation's strategic location to safeguard military capabilities in the region and beyond its coast.

A fairly large portion of Djibouti's debt is from bilateral economic and infrastructural agreements with China. This has placed the country in a quagmire, and some consider the debt unrealistic to defray without providing China concessions. The challenge the country must deal with is the fact that the United States and the European Union may consider such concessions to be prejudicial to diverse activities and multilateral arrangements in the sovereign that are intended to enhance global financial security based on the principles of democracy.

China's Economic Influence

China jumped into Djibouti at the most opportune moment to shackle the country's desire for economic prosperity with that of other nations to pave the One Belt One Road Initiative (now known as the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]). That initiative represent China's attempt to forge economic, political, and security

ties with Djibouti.¹ The financial investment disbursed by China for Djibouti's major infrastructural projects, including rail, roads, and port development, outweighs the debt owed to the United States, as well as the European Union and others, considerably.² These projects are expected to create thousands of new jobs and to elevate the volume of trade in and out of the country. Technology is another attribute of China's plunge into Djibouti's economy, by the introduction of an undersea fiber-optic cable to link the country with other nations aligned with China's vision; and the project is being undertaken by Huawei Marine.³ China's approach is commercially extensive and offers Djibouti long-term growth projection as economic momentum intensifies with the completion of infrastructural and technological necessities.⁴ The country's "Vision Djibouti 2035" is an ambitious agenda to transform the nation into a viable commercial trade hub for the rest of the African continent and to progress into a middle-income economy by catering to regional transportation and logistics.⁵

The massive debt owed to China appears to frighten the United States and other nations in tune with Djibouti's reality of being susceptible or vulnerable to interference within its governance structures,⁶ especially when combined with the lack of transparency on the terms or conditions of the loans obtained from China.⁷ Further, there are legitimate concerns with respect to the security of data carried by Huawei undersea fiber-optic cables and that malicious cyber actors, or "red hats," may potentially utilize smart cities to conduct espionage, as well as other nonkinetic subversive measures to compromise critical national infrastructures or corporations within countries of the BRI.⁸

The United States or the European Union may consider it impractical to set up mechanisms to contain the pressures of economic and political migration to China within the African continent, especially in Djibouti.⁹ Therefore, it may be appropriate to accommodate and cautiously nurture China's investments to avoid unruly confrontation, as well as to invest aggressively in the private sector.¹⁰ The barren landscape of Djibouti can be utilized to generate and export renewable energy to the United States or the European Union.¹¹ Europe managed to persuade Morocco to adopt a renewable policy that targets its solar energy and gains value from the generation of the same.¹²

China's Military Influence

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) constructed its first overseas military base at the mouth of the Red Sea, contrary to a long-established policy against such troops being stationed abroad, and the naval base has the conspicuous vantage point of a major strategic checkpoint in proximity to vigorous shipping sea lanes,¹³ and it steps on the toes of the US naval foothold in the deep-water port complex;

¹⁴ however, it appears that the United States can counteract China's unprecedented arrival through the US Naval Forces Europe–Africa/US 6th Fleet. ¹⁵

China's military influence in Djibouti is problematic with respect to the United States or Europe's immediate operational and counterintelligence capabilities since the Indo-Pacific—stretching from the United States' West Coast to the eastern coast of Africa—is considered a hippodrome wherein China's competitiveness will be negotiated.¹⁶ The United States should consider a multifaceted approach to confront China's expanding presence, which means augmenting existing partnerships and maintaining supremacy as a security assistance provider.¹⁷

Stability of Djibouti is of mutual importance between foreign rival countries, and areas of cooperation can still exist—even with the decline of piracy—in peacekeeping operations; the security of global trade is of undeniable shared significance.¹⁸ Consequently, mutually beneficial prospects can set a good precedent for the future of the United States, European Union, and/or China in relation to interoperability to address insurgency and violent conflict-ridden regions within Africa. ¹⁹

With respect to Djibouti's dilemma, the United States and the European Union must maintain transparency, cooperation with the state, efficacy of service delivery, and reliability in times of calamity. This should directly or inadvertently hinder China's influence in the independent governance of the sovereign and heal the wounds caused by the previous colonial regime, which drowned the aspirations of Djiboutians. The past must inform the solutions of the future, and therefore defeating violent extremism requires great thought, especially in regions with citizens that profess Islam as their faith or national religion. Kinetic or nonkinetic warfare must be actualized diligently, especially under circumstances that invite the use of airstrikes or asymmetrical lethality. Consequently, extrajudicial killing of perceived insurgents must be looked at, and this may be achieved through the provision of concrete intelligence briefs, with the approval of the respective governments, and with amplified domestic public awareness. Otherwise, China will relish in any failure and embolden its efforts to subvert democratic ideology.

US–China Strategic Competition

Djibouti has been referred to as a “flashpoint” in the strategic competition that is emerging and expanding between the United States and China. China's strategic strength on the continent has been primarily derived from its economic prowess, including in Djibouti, where Beijing has provided loans and investments to fund infrastructure programs as part of its Digital Silk Road.²⁰ For its part, the United States has been focused extensively on a transition from improving defense ties to enhancing geostrategic linkages in the country. ²¹

Another point of contention has been the use of technology, specifically data transfer infrastructure, to gain leverage in the country. Chinese giant Huawei and its subsidiaries are constructing an undersea fiber-optic cable designed to transmit data from Djibouti to Pakistan and beyond.²² Furthermore, these developments have empowered the president of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh, to acquire considerable concessions and payoff from great powers operating in the region.

Consequently, Djibouti has also been keenly participating in the BRI. Djibouti's inclusion in the BRI has allowed China to expand into areas of strategic importance, such as ports in the country. China Merchants Group, China's biggest port operator, has signed a \$350 million investment deal with Great Horn Investment Holding to transform the Port of Djibouti into a global commercial hub. Other Chinese investments have concentrated on a railway, airports, and a pipeline expected to transport water to Ethiopia. Furthermore, the pursuit of Vision Djibouti 2035, an ambitious aspiration to change the country into an essential regional transport and logistical center for Africa, parallels China's strategy to intensify investment on the continent.²³ Notably, Djibouti foreign minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf was reported to have remarked that "China is elbowing Americans out of the strategic East African footprint."²⁴

Security Challenges for the Region

The United States and various countries from Europe and West Asia are currently engaged in the region and in the military buildup, which appears to be escalating in the region's air and maritime domains.²⁵ Bases established by various countries in the region have also been afforded access to different defense hardware for antiterror and antipiracy missions in the African continent and West Asia. Subsequently, China's base in Djibouti was billed as highlighting China's "military expansion beyond the Asia-Pacific region" and being instrumental in swiftly brandishing military deterrence or intervention.²⁶

Increased Assertiveness of Regional Powers in the Horn of Africa

Experts have promulgated the major powers to be competing and showcasing their assertiveness in the region, leading to concerns regarding the risk of increased militarization there. These powers are also focused on seeking to fulfill their security agendas, including counterterrorism and peace operations in the region.²⁷ For instance, Turkey has been endeavoring to project power from the "Persian Gulf to the Horn of Africa to the Mediterranean." According to strategic analysts, these excursions have also heightened apprehensions in Riyadh and

Abu Dhabi, which has in turn contributed to the conversion of the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea into a single theater of competition.

Scholars have also propounded that Turkey's involvement in Libya under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could be part of a larger inclination to intensify immersion in disputes in the Horn of Africa if by doing so Turkey could achieve a competitive edge in the region. This could be accomplished through state-sponsored militias, foreign fighters, and weapons transfers. Turkey has also been focused on the modernization of its fleet; it has participated in maritime exercises with Saudi Arabia, France, and Russia.²⁸ Other initiatives include Ankara's establishment of a new base on the Red Sea shoreline,²⁹ supplying the equipment to the Federal Government of Somalia to create a coast guard, and initiation of deliberations with Djibouti for a logistics zone located close to the Bab-al-Mandeb.

The region has also witnessed the emergence of the Council of Arab and African States Bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, whose members include Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. The organization has been designed to focus on hierarchy and on security-related issues. However, Saudi Arabia was instrumental in the establishment of the Council and has purposed it to be able to counter Iranian reach in the region.³⁰

At the same time, Tehran's influence in the region has been expanding. Iran has signed various agreements with Eritrea, which have provided the pretext for acquiring facilities from the government in Asmara for the "Iranian Navy in the Gulf of Aden near the Red Sea," along with obtaining permission to construct a military base in Assab for naval vessels which are supposed to be an all-time presence in the region. Commentators have posited that these vessels have been used to train Houthi rebels. Iran has, additionally, secured the privilege to build and maintain the Assab Oil Refinery, which has provided Tehran with inroads in the energy infrastructure of the country.³¹

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has likewise been working diligently to acquire rights to ports in the region and has a base in Eritrea, which signifies long-term strategic thinking. Moreover, UAE's armed forces have maintained their presence in Berbera in Somalia and have also purportedly been debating the expansion of Kismayo, which is in Jubaland federal state and has been subject to opposition by the Somali federal government. Qatar has similarly been trying to gain a foothold in the region through investments and cooperation with the defense forces of the regional powers.³²

Meanwhile, Israel has been focused on retaining its competitive edge in the region by depending on advanced nuclear submarines. Tel Aviv has further been asking for the "internationalizing of security of the Red Sea" to prevent other nations from gaining excessive leverage, which might be detrimental to Israeli

interests in the region, such as increasing the vulnerability of the Israeli port of Umm al-Rashrash at Eilat. Additionally, Israel's maritime strategy is dependent on preserving its strategic depth, which ensures its manifestation in the Horn of Africa.³³ These developments have led experts to propound that "the presence of state-to-state rivalries is an enduring feature of the Red Sea space."³⁴

Maritime Security

The Red Sea region has been subject to attacks on maritime vessels, which has resulted in disruption of transport and supply of hydrocarbons through the region's chokepoints. As the Red Sea is situated in the region that is the connecting link between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal, any disruptions lead to increased transit time and costs as the alternate route through the Cape of Good Hope on the Atlantic Coast of the Cape Peninsula in South Africa must be taken. Strategic analysts posit that these persistent attacks can also result in creating difficulty for the counterterrorism efforts of Saudi Arabia and the United States in Yemen.³⁵ One such prominent attack has been attributed to the Houthi rebels on Singapore-headquartered shipping company Hafnia's tanker while it was delivering its consignment in the vicinity of Jeddah port.³⁶ Houthis have also previously threatened to block the Red Sea shipping lane in their attempt to receive political concessions.³⁷

Apart from terrorism and piracy, other maritime concerns include the use of advanced techniques of human and arms trafficking by regional violent nonstate actors, floating armories that are susceptible to annexation, as well as increasing threats emerging from the cyber realm, including illegal commandeering of navigation systems and hacked hydrocarbon infrastructures.³⁸ Tackling these challenges has also provided powers such as China, Japan, and South Korea through their counterpiracy missions—and the UAE through its training of the Puntland Maritime Police Force—a pretext for greater involvement in the region.

Rapid Militarization of Red Sea

The Houthis have utilized drones, mines, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with IED switches and electronics originating in Iran to attack Saudi Arabia's hydrocarbon infrastructure and to weaken Riyadh's economic heft.³⁹ The Red Sea region has been subject to the "same geographic and geopolitical threats as the Persian Gulf" due to war in Yemen and Iran's state sponsorship.⁴⁰ Egypt has been focusing on building a Southern Fleet Command to patrol the region. In Ethiopia, debates and deliberations commenced on the restoration of its naval force.

The UAE has likewise seen its threat perceptions heightened and has acquired “multiple military anchors” with bases in Somalia and a future military installation with an airport on Mayan Island, which is strategically situated between Yemen and Djibouti and in the middle of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. These developments would provide the UAE and its allies (encompassing Saudi Arabia, the United States, and even China) with greater access to the Red Sea.⁴¹ The UAE has additionally been investing in more military hardware, such as the acquisition of multi-mission Go-wind combat-type corvettes with Raytheon Evolved Seasparrow Missiles and MBDA Exocets. Extraregional powers also consider the strengthening of Japan’s military presence near Djibouti as vital to Japan’s global role. Rapid militarization in the region can lead to a mounting regional security dilemma and ultimately result in the escalation of the US–China competition, for instance, through the emergence of China’s Djibouti–Gwadar naval axis.

Conclusion

There is an ideological battle that the United States or European Union must conquer to leverage the democratic will of the Djiboutian electorate. Djiboutians must be able to identify with the goodwill of the free world, and this requires the United States, as well as the European Union, to perform continuous deep dives to address abscesses created by China’s engagement in the region—and also to redefine investment strategies that outmaneuver or complement China’s projects in Djibouti. Breaking the chain of debt would require the United States and the European Union to rain investments into Djibouti that address its socioeconomic needs, as well as to deploy innovative technologies to rejuvenate or optimize arid environments and create new avenues of well-being for the citizenry.

Sometimes African communities find it challenging to establish who the peacekeepers are and who the warmongers are. The United States, European Union, and China must carefully navigate the thin blue line to avoid being deemed as oppressors from foreign lands. Common ground can exist between competing states, and peacekeeping is a remarkable demonstration of the same. These three countries must express a commitment to actualize peace through multidimensional mandates anchored on protecting human rights and adherence to humane interpretations of distinction, proportionality, and necessity whenever mitigating armed conflicts. Africa needs peacekeepers, and thus there should be continuous incremental financial resources funneled to United Nations peacekeeping operations to address violent extremism, radicalization, and nonstate armed groups and to protect vulnerable humans encamped in acute conflicts. Additionally, the introduction of modern mechanical and technological instruments is necessary to enhance survivability, situational awareness, and lethality of peace operators. Fur-

thermore, modern multi-domain peacekeeping operations can ensure extensive reconnaissance and agile surveillance to improve the capabilities of peacekeeping operations to settle or diffuse armed conflicts. ★

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Peacekeeping Operations to Address Counterinsurgency and Criminal Deviance in Mozambique

ROBERT URI DABALY

The gas-rich province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique is a hotbed of insurgency and violence. Homegrown extremists have held the province hostage and contrary to the interests of the Mozambique government.¹ It is challenging to establish whether there is a genuine presence of partiality. As events continue to unfold, however, the warriors of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standby forces are dedicated to achieving their strategic objectives and have been charged with the responsibility of liberating the province from the control of criminals.² The aim of the SADC missions is to divide the citizenry from insurgents and install the rule of law, although potentially such efforts may tear apart the citizens of Mozambique. There is a revolution at play, and the real revolutionaries will have to be able to amalgamate, as well as harmonize, communities with the nation's development agenda or popular sovereign interests in the province.

There are underlying socioeconomic rights that have not been realized due to instability in the province, and the need for energy generation must be held in a delicate equilibrium to prevent the relocation and abandonment of the most marginalized communities in Cabo Delgado.³

Tension between the Rules of Engagement and Law of Armed Conflict

International humanitarian law (IHL) is applicable to contesting parties within the domain of international armed conflicts,⁴ and its principles maintain jurisdiction in a state engaging in kinetic warfare against nonstate armed groups (NSAG).⁵ IHL established a distinction between non-international armed conflicts,⁶ and thus insurgents qualify as NSAGs under the Geneva Convention.⁷ These dissident armed forces operate under responsible command, exercise control over territory, and are capable of carrying out sustained operations.⁸ There are two essential criteria conditions that determine whether combative interactions between a state and NSAGs constitute an armed conflict. The first condition is that hostilities must reach a minimum level of intensity of violence that mere law enforce-

ment cannot counteract and therefore is obliged to invite military force.⁹ The second condition is that NSAGs must be considered parties to the conflict, which means that they have organized armed forces and that such armed forces have a command structure with the capacity to sustain armed operations.¹⁰ Consequently, individuals involved in the Mozambique conflict are obligated to uphold the principles of the law of armed conflict and can be held liable for failure to adhere to them.

Uniformed soldiers are usually highly disciplined, educated, physically fit, and generally responsible humans performing functions for the welfare of their country. However, that does not prevent competent or well-trained warriors from being unaware of their dispositional, situational, and/or systemic circumstances evolving while on duty, as well as when performing critical tasks under deployment. Soldiers follow orders from responsible commanders and execute them in accordance with their code of conduct, training, and constitutional or legislative mandate that bestows such warriors with the authority to exercise lethal measures on perceived enemies.¹¹

In an ambush scenario, warriors find it extremely difficult to respect the law of armed conflict but are usually aware of the concept of humanity that forbids the infliction of inhuman or degrading treatment and/or destruction that is not necessary to accomplish the realization of legitimate orders.¹² Consequently, warriors must not use lethal force on wounded, fleeing, and/or captured enemy combatants, since such humans are no longer able to participate in the armed conflict and do not threaten the safety of persons or infrastructure.¹³ The pillars of distinction, proportionality, and necessity embodied within IHL require that warriors undertake reasonable efforts to minimize injuries to civilians, medics, and noncombatants and property. However, these pillars are not always considered relevant where civilians are working with an enemy contingent and are perceived to have elected to side with it; thus, some warriors may determine that kinetic measures can be deployed against such persons.¹⁴

The current solution to insurgency in Mozambique is concerning and indicates an intention to neutralize, destroy, and/or deter extremism by infusing fear in settlements harboring insurgents. However, this may have disastrous outcomes, even though the intention is to secure the interests or territorial integrity of the SADC. The ramifications of offensive kinetic measures on a domestic community from which such criminals are birthed can propel unforeseeable radicalization.

Mozambique's approach to insurgency is aggressive and counterproductive, as it can be disastrous for the prosperity of the country. The elimination of perceived enemies can lead to unintended animosity that festers within the communities

subjected to lethal domestic or foreign firepower against members of their sovereign.

Peacekeeping Operations

Peacekeeping operations are anchored on the solemn objectives of protecting vulnerable communities, promote socioeconomic engagement through multidimensional mandates, and strive toward the realization of modest peace, as well as consciously navigating acute conflicts to set boundaries to secure paths for general domestic stability.¹⁵ Oversight of peacekeeping missions is also crucial, and there are United Nations agencies as well as independent organizations that audit the efficacy of such missions, which is vital to ensure that peace operators address the specific needs of certain communities residing in areas accustomed to political instability, insurgency, and/or ethnic clashes.¹⁶

Peace operators from different continents are essential, since such operators or law enforcement tend to appear neutral to natives, and most probably exhibit protective efforts for the security of marginalized civilians that provides positive reassurance of goodwill, especially within locations that have experienced native criminals terrorizing every custom in their formerly civilized community.¹⁷

Radicalization and Extremism

The effect of kinetic warfare can be retrogressive, particularly where some insurgents are parents or children, as there is a potential for relatives to bear arms in the pursuit of justice for the blood that has been shed by nonnative combatants, within or outside the boundaries of their communities. Consequently, there can be an endless cycle of violence and enduring hatred within a fragmented citizenry. Extrajudicial neutralization of criminals or perceived insurgents can unintentionally promote extremism and further the entrenchment of radicalization.¹⁸ The SADC standby force should consider embracing peacekeeping as its *modus operandi* to achieve stability or security in Mozambique instead of utilizing an asymmetrical standby force with kinetic measures to impose dominance over communities struggling with poverty or illiteracy.¹⁹

Peacekeeping can potentially tackle criminal deviance by expending resources that disintegrate the dispositional, situational, and systemic evils that appear to prevail within the province. Ultimately, the SADC should consider focusing on the governance and executive delivery structures to assess whether essential or security services are efficient and adequately equipped to address insurgency in the long run.

Conclusion

There is a range of options available to Mozambique, and if appropriately applied, this should be sufficient to deal with any challenges that can be addressed under the existing domestic criminal justice system. Extrajudicial neutralization should be reserved for acute circumstances involving combatants exercising lethal offensive measures or guerrilla warfare against domestic or foreign populations that requires immediate lethal response and/or asymmetrical self-defense. The threats faced by the country are existential and dynamic. However, it may be prudent to build law enforcement capabilities as well as disseminate educational information to communities dealing with extremism through active community engagement or participation in awareness campaigns.²⁰

Independent oversight authorities should be conducting humanitarian surveillance, and the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) can complement such oversight to ensure that kinetic measures executed by warriors in armed conflicts are held to account, especially where civilians are encamped or potentially exposed to the effects of lethal force. UASs can collect audio-visual evidence for evaluation and can be essential for disciplinary proceedings. They can also be necessary to support effective counterinsurgency strategies to ensure that warfare does not deteriorate from the principal objectives of the SADC or peacekeeping operations more generally.

Blue helmets signify something profound to civilians who are trapped or encamped among insurgents or cartels that exercise tyranny over them and citizens of foreign countries. After insurgents complete their operations, some return to their communities and consequently find refuge or hide among civilians who sometimes lack awareness of the terrible conduct of such criminals, as well as their transnational criminal deviance, but find themselves unable to resist the lure of radicalization or consider it impracticable to deter homegrown insurgents to avoid possible inhumane punishments. ★

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