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A Comparative Analysis: U.S. and Chinese Assistance to Africa

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Abstract

Great power competition between the United States and China has contributed to the exploration and expansion of global partnerships. Africa, in particular, is one region that has amassed substantive levels of assistance from China and the United States. In attempting to understand the strategic intent of catalyzing Africa's development, a comparative analysis steers the direction of this report following an introduction that contextualizes the current state of global competition. Thereafter, upon conducting original research in combination with a literature review based on existing work related to Sino-African and U.S.-African affairs, three key findings emerge from this study: (1) both U.S. and Chinese assistance to Africa impose conditionalities in return for aid such as market liberalization for the former and a One China principle for the latter; (2) assistance from the United States and China differs in that the former focuses on shaping a democratic governance structure whereas the latter generally employs a non-interference approach in domestic politics; lastly, albeit contrasting strategic intents in Ghana, both America and China are heavily invested in the country, thereby accentuating its geopolitical relevance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key words: Great Power Competition, foreign assistance, Sino-African relations, U.S.-African relations, comparative analysis

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Introduction

Since World War II, the United States has led the international order. This has contributed to an absence of direct warfare between great powers and increased health and prosperity across various populations throughout the globe. However, a global shift has occurred in the last twenty years, whereby China has risen in exceptional fashion. This reality is largely attributed to China's unprecedented rise in several dimensions such as its technology and economy. Thus, many stakeholders are prompted to re-evaluate the global order, particularly as it relates to international security and economic prosperity. With an emphasis on China and the United States, the global order can be analyzed from five different dimensions: technology, military, economic, diplomatic, and ideological. The intricacies of each of the aforementioned dimensions are discussed below.

Technology

China has neared, and in some cases surpassed, America in various indicators of technological aptitude. To start with, China has displaced the United States as the world's premier high-tech manufacturer, with exceedingly high values in the production of computers, automobiles, and smartphones (Allison et al., 2021). China's competencies in artificial intelligence, quantum information science, semiconductors, and green energy have also increased, justifying the country's categorization as a "full-spectrum competitor" (Allison et al., 2021). Furthermore, China's pool of talent completing education in computer science and STEM is greater than America's counterparts (Allison et al., 2021). Despite China's growing technological capabilities, the United States still has a competitive edge in overall research and development and its share of the top 10 most valuable AI startups (Allison et al., 2021).

Military

There is reason for America to show concern regarding China's growing power. America's military prowess is augmented by: (1) its power projection capabilities, (2) its extensive collective defense arrangement, and (3) its bases with a globally expansive reach. However, these factors are not sufficient in ushering a sustainable global hegemony. This is largely due to China's nuclear arsenal and its ability to reject America's dominance proximate to their land (Allison & Glick-Unterman, 2021).

America's military stance on China is evident from public facing documents by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). As proof, the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) communicates that the DoD seeks to interact with the People's Republic of China in cooperative and competitive fashions, where deemed appropriate (United States Department of Defense, 2022). The NDS is not the only document that accentuates America's strategy towards China. In fact, America's military posture towards China is apparent with an examination of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024. The NDAA's general function is to authorize critical defense priorities of the U.S. military. A segment of the NDAA prioritizes international security, specifically with an emphasis on strengthening U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific region. Some initiatives focus on empowering Taiwan's defense competencies while others concentrate on strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties with countries such as India, Australia, and Japan (United States Government, 2023). Should the United States actualize its objective to strengthen its posture in the Indo-Pacific region, it may very well contain China's influence.

Presently, there is growing tension in the Indo-Pacific region because of growing fears that China will invade Taiwan. President Xi Jinping of China seeks to "reunify" Taiwan with mainland China (Potter, 2024). Current U.S. President Joseph Biden has indicated that he'd be willing to deploy U.S. troops in defense of Taiwan should an attack occur (Potter, 2024). As of May 2024, U.S. marines are engaged in war games near Taiwan in the event that conflict erupted. Some experts believe that in the event that China should assault Taiwan, America's influence would not materially affect the outcome, partly due to a low number of American assets in the region (Allison & Glick-Unterman, 2021). This possibility reflects China's strengthened People's Liberation Army, and is prime for additional developments in the near future.

Economic

In recent times, China has reached economic levels comparable to the United States. To illustrate this point, the visualization below highlights changes in the United States and China's GDP across a 10-year time horizon. In fact, China's GDP appears to increase at a nearly proportional rate to that of the United States (Figure 1).

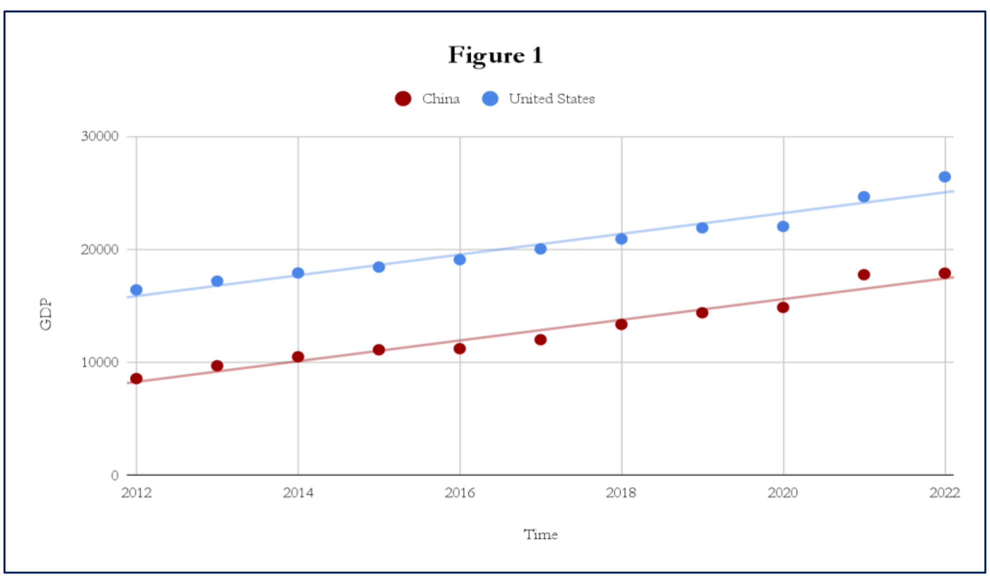

Figure 1: Value of the United States and China's GDP in USD (billions) from 2012 to 2022.
Data retrieved from https://data.bis.org/. Data last updated August 10th, 2024. Data last accessed August 9th, 2024.

While the figure above is not enough to echo the GDP of the United States and China into their own class, the one below accentuates just that. Out of the top 8 countries in the world presently excluding the United States and China, only Japan's GDP has exceeded 5 trillion USD between 2012 and 2022 - and on numerous occasions at that (in 2013, 2016, and 2018, for example). Still, however, the GDP of China and the United States is an estimated 13 trillion USD and 22 trillion USD higher than the third highest country as of 2022, respectively. This marks a 9 trillion USD difference in GDP between the United States and China.

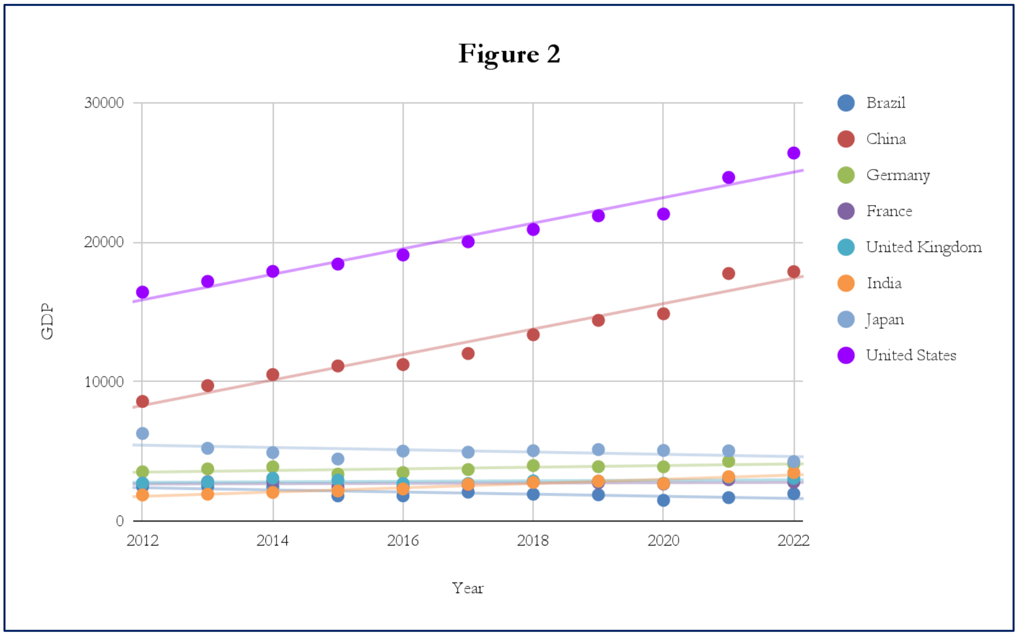

Figure 2: *Value of the top 8 GDPs globally in USD (billions) from 2012 to 2022. Data retrieved from https://data.bis.org/. Data last updated August 10th, 2024. Data last accessed August 9th, 2024. Top 8 GDPs sourced from https://www.forbesindia.com/.*

In some cases, China has exceeded America in specific indicators. For example, China has become the primary trading partner for a majority of countries globally. Further, China has rivaled the United States in gross R&D investments. Despite these positive hallmarks for China's economic growth, the United States Dollar is still the world's leading reserve currency, accounting for 60% of foreign exchange reserves whereas the Chinese Renminbi represents 2.3% in holdings (Allison, Kiersznowski, et al., 2022). America's economic prowess can also be seen in the size and maturity of its equity markets and the utilization rate of the United States Dollar in cross-border transactions, the latter amassing 38% with a notable edge over China's Renminbi (2.4%) (Allison, Kiersznowski, et al., 2022). Pursuant to manufacturing capabilities as of 2022, China (ranked second behind only Germany) slightly bests the United States (ranked sixth) in its production and exportation of manufactured goods according to the Competitive Performance Index (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2024).

Diplomatic

In the last two decades, China has shifted its diplomatic engagements to exert dominance in bilateral and multilateral relations. Beginning with China's symbolic entry into the World Trade Organization, diplomatic engagements between the United States and China have looked quite distinct. On one hand, China initially focused on creating a "breathing space" to build itself economically by pulling domestic and international levers. This manifested into achievable assignments for Chinese diplomats, an increase in representation in international organizations, and hosting summits and one-on-one meetings with various heads of states. On the other hand, America's last twenty years of diplomacy has reflected some level of apathy from leaders in Washington, D.C. The denigration of diplomacy and divestments in its professionals reflects Washington's lack of prioritization relative to other tools of foreign policy. Among other points of consideration, critics of U.S. foreign policy claim that the last two decades have suffered from overmiliarization (i.e. deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq and Afghanistan in 2001) (Allison et al., 2022).

Ideological

The great power competition between China and the United States is understandable through a dissection of its ideological differences. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is considered a one-party authoritarian regime that embraces a state-run growth model. Through this framework of governance, China gains influence through transactional foreign policy, emphasizing the fortification of bilateral relations. To the contrary, the United States is aligned to liberal values, painting a picture of economic prosperity for those willing to shape their development in synonymous fashion with American ideals. In doing so, the United States has deepened its connectivity between market economies and imposed international norms through institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Mazarr & Wyne, 2020). To America's credit, China has routinely attempted to cede to U.S.-led initiatives (such as its initial attempt to join the World Trade Organization in the 1990s). Nonetheless, both China and the United States are faced with weaknesses in their model of foreign influence. China, for instance, is experiencing environmental degradation and a decreasing birth rate. America has its own issues, which includes reactive politics and short-term thinking (Mazarr & Wyne, 2020).

U.S.-China Competition in Africa

The United States and China have a shared interest in the stability of Africa, which has implications on great power competition (RAND, 2015). PRC has invested substantially in Africa, particularly in the continent's infrastructure and diplomatic alliances. China reportedly became Africa's largest trading partner in 2021, representing nearly 400% in value compared to U.S.-Africa trade (Davis, 2023). On the flip side, the United States has leveraged governmental agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development and the Export-Import Bank to drive growth in Africa, representing a model of empowerment. These two nation states have utilized different mechanisms of assistance to win favor amongst African nations, which will be a central point of analysis for the remainder of this paper.

Methodology

This paper begins with an introduction that contextualizes Africa's relevance to the Great Power Competition between the United States and China. Thereafter, a comparison between U.S. assistance to Africa and Chinese assistance to Africa occurs, emphasizing Ghana as a country case study. This report leverages data from official government papers, reports, and press releases in addition to analyses generally conducted by experts in either Sino-African or U.S.-African affairs. The comparative analysis was used to find parallels, discrepancies, and themes between U.S. and Chinese assistance to Africa. The study also discusses recommendations and limitations.

Historical Overview: U.S.-Africa Relations

The United States and Africa have a history of tactical engagement, as is notably evident in the 19th century. At this time, the American Colonization Society sought to send free black Americans to a colony in Africa (Little, 2023). The society eventually secured land in West Africa and struck a deal with local West African leaders to establish a colony at Cape Mesurado, located in modern-day Liberia (Little, 2023). From approximately 1820 to 1860, 12,000 freeborn and free slaves were sent to the colony (Little, 2023). In 1847, the colony's first Black governor declared Liberia's independence. However, America did not recognize Liberia's independence at this time. The colony eventually gained independence in 1862 during the American Civil War. Presently, Liberia and America are partners in a host of initiatives pertinent to the consolidation of democratic progress, the promotion of market-driven economic growth, and the professionalization of Liberia's military (United States Department of State, 2019). Liberia's history with the United States serves as one example that illuminates the history of diplomatic calibration in exercising benefits to Africa. Presently, U.S. foreign policy in Africa is focused on the rule of law, governance, and health interventions. There are several highly acclaimed initiatives that have positioned the U.S. to provide efficacious support to Africa. Some of these initiatives include the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), Africa Command, and Power Africa. A brief description of each of these initiatives is delineated below.

(A) *The African Growth and Opportunity Act:* This Act is intended to bolster U.S. economic policy and commercial engagement with Africa by providing eligible Sub-Saharan African countries with favorable trade conditions for nearly 2,000 products. AGOA countries must establish or take strides toward a market-based economy and the rule of law, among other requirements. Beneficiary countries must also support U.S. trade and investment through the reduction of barriers (United States Trade Representative, 2024). The recent AGOA Renewal and Improvement Act of 2024 introduces notable updates as AGOA is bound to expire in 2025. These updates include an extension of AGOA by 16 years, income graduation considerations, and eligibility clarification among other developments (Agoa.info, 2024).

(B) *Africa Command:* This U.S. command counters transnational threats to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional prosperity in African nations. With an emphasis on military-to-military activities and assistance programs as well as coordination with U.S. embassy country teams and African partner nations, Africa Command works to systematically improve the stability of recipient countries through security cooperation (i.e. foreign military sales and global peace operations) and other programs relevant to women, peace, and security (United States Africa Command, 2024).

(C) *Power Africa:* U.S. Congress established Power Africa under President Barack Obama's presidential administration through the Electricity Africa Act of 2015 (P.L.114-121). This initiative is a USAID-led electrification effort to increase access to power, including renewable energy. The primary focus of this initiative is to facilitate the private sector's power generation capacity so that it is worth 30,000 megawatts, thereby creating 60 million new connections in Africa. To this date, Power Africa has created 37.5 million new electricity connections and financially closed 14,000 MW (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2024b).

The U.S. government continues to allocate resources to nurture its relationship with African countries. In December 2022, President Joseph R. Biden hosted the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit. This event attracted senior delegation from 49 African countries and the African Union (AU). During the summit, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan expressed that the Biden administration would work with Congress to disperse 55 billion USD to a host of projects over three years. A portion of this disbursement is intended to support programs in food security and health workforce aid, digital transformation with Africa, and democratic and political transitions (The White House, 2022). Presently, it remains unclear what amount of the pledge has been dispersed and to which program. Upon requesting the Biden Administration's budget for Africa for FY2024, health assistance constitutes a significant share of the budget (73% of an 8 billion USD budget for Africa). Other important line items a part of the FY2024 budget include economic growth assistance initiatives (i.e. trade and investment and food security aid), peace and security initiatives (i.e. Peacekeeping Operations and Countering Strategic Competitors programs), and democracy, human rights, and governance programs (i.e. the African Democratic Political Transitions), which saw the greatest increase of any sector when compared to FY2022 allocations. To this day, some governmental leaders have expressed interest in further monitoring the programs that were pledged at the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit (Congressional Research Service, 2023a).

U.S. Strategy Towards Africa

While there is little information publicly available that explicitly explains a standard U.S. strategy towards North Africa, there is some emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa via the "U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa," a document released in August 2022. This strategic document asserts America's objectives to advance U.S. priorities with regional partners in Sub-Saharan Africa for five years amidst a climate crisis, democratic backsliding, and global food insecurity. With a reframed strategic intent, the United States seeks to leverage its policy resources to achieve the following:

(A) Foster openness and open societies: This calls for improvements in coordination among nation states in Africa so that internal obligations are met, thereby increasing synergy with working in common cause with America.

(B) Deliver democratic and security dividends: This measure signifies the obviation of costly interventions through the delivery of consolidated democracies that deliver public good.

(C) Advance pandemic recovery and economic opportunity: African countries faced huge setbacks catalyzed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. These setbacks have presented an opportunity for the U.S. to help build more stable and inclusive African economies to regain its trust in America's global leadership.

(D) Support conservation, climate adaptation, and a just energy transition: The U.S. is keen to realize energy access and energy security goals amidst expectations that climate change will continue to negatively impact Africa. The region is highly regarded for its diverse resources, and with the support of America it is primed to harness its resources to supply clean energy and achieve its climate objectives.

In consideration of America's lofty ambition, the country has clarified its approach to achieving the objectives above. Its approach is constituted by a revamp in public diplomacy efforts, the support of sustainable development and resilience, attention towards U.S. defense tools, strengthened trade and commercial relations, and a fortification of a digital transformation and urban hubs (The White House, 2022). These engagements will involve U.S. governmental agencies such as the Department of Defense, Prosper Africa, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. On the contrary, America's approach indicates its intent to undertake partnerships and discussions with the African Union, African militaries, and relevant parties on initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade area and others. Overall, America's current U.S.-Africa strategy lays out the blueprint for U.S.-African partnerships. By transcending geographical boundaries, the U.S. is bound to strengthen its influence in a competitive region.

U.S. Financial Assistance to Africa

A large portion of U.S. assistance to Africa is allocated to health and peace and security. The majority of funds are spent on health programs and interventions. In FY2022, the United States spent 3.82 billion USD on HIV/AIDS, followed by 687 million USD on malaria and 385.9 million USD on maternal and child health. By operating units, Nigeria (573.0 million USD), Mozambique (490.5 million USD), and Tanzania (489.7 million USD) were among the three largest recipients of health assistance (Congressional Research Service, 2023a). Furthermore, in FY2022, the United States spent 780.9 million USD on economic growth assistance for Africa. Through an emphasis on program areas such as agriculture, the environment, clean energy, and modern energy services, the U.S. has showcased a belief that it is worth investing in mechanisms that can promote Africa's economic growth. Lastly, peace and security assistance stressed military partnerships and capabilities, counter-terrorism, and citizen security and law enforcement in FY2022. In this time frame, the total for peace and security assistance expenses was 446.5 million USD (Congressional Research Service, 2023a). This financial assertion is largely aligned with protecting America's national security, as instability, particularly stemming from nation states whose ideologies are contrary to democracy, can, in theory, pose a threat to America's position to maintain its geopolitical dominance. However, America's sheer obligations towards Sub-Saharan Africa for FY2022 (2.13%) shed light on a reality where other parts of the world such as Ukraine, Yemen, and Jordan are for a number of reasons likely more significant in geopolitical relevance (FY2022 disbursement values for Sub-Saharan Africa possibly resemble some similarity to obligations for the same time period) (Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, 2023).

The United States has distinct regional focus areas in Africa that are generally represented by an organization constituted by member states. The Economic Community of West African States (or ECOWAS) is one regional organization that promotes economic and political advancement in West Africa. ECOWAS has 15 member states, including the likes of Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana. Some nation states that have recently experienced coups are also part of ECOWAS. However, ECOWAS has suspended these member states. Recent suspensions have been applied to Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali. Nonetheless, ECOWAS receives a considerable amount of financing from America in the form of obligations and disbursements.[1],[2] These financing archetypes total approximately 16.167 billion USD and 14.343 billion USD, respectively, from FY2016 to FY2021. As can be seen below, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali have received the largest number of obligations in USD from FY2016 to FY2021. In total, they represent an estimated 69.76% of all U.S. obligations to the ECOWAS region within this time span.

[1] According to ForeignAssistance.gov, obligations are binding agreements that will result in outlays, immediately or in the future. Budget resources must be available before obligations can be legally incurred. In current USD as of May 31st, 2024.

[2] According to ForeignAssistance.gov, disbursements are amounts paid by federal agencies, by cash or cash equivalent, during the fiscal year to liquidate government obligations. In current USD as of May 31st, 2024.

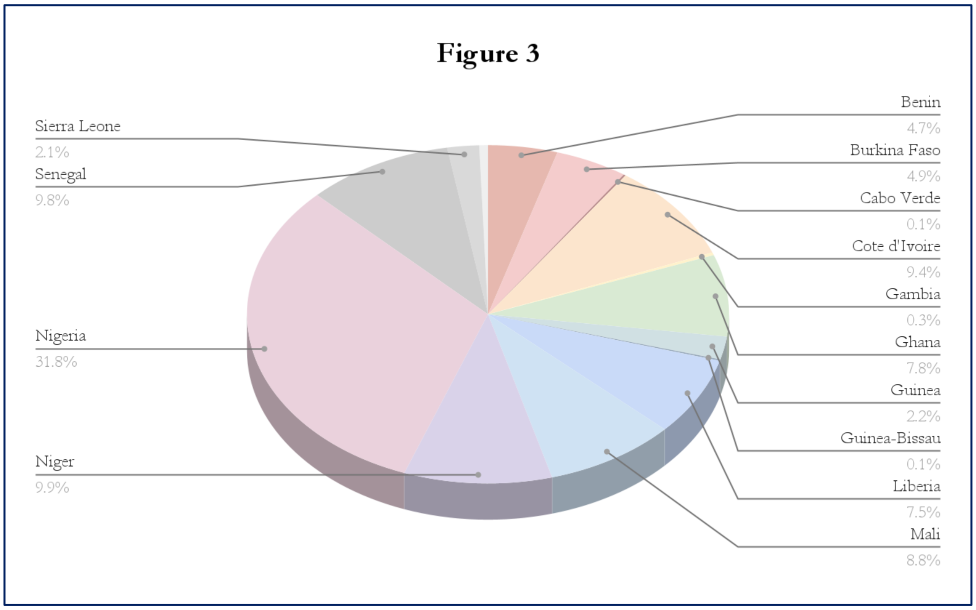

Figure 3: *ECOWAS obligation allocation (%) by member from 2016 to 2021. Data retrieved from ForeignAssistance.gov Database. Data last updated July 25th, 2024. Data last accessed August 8th, 2024.*

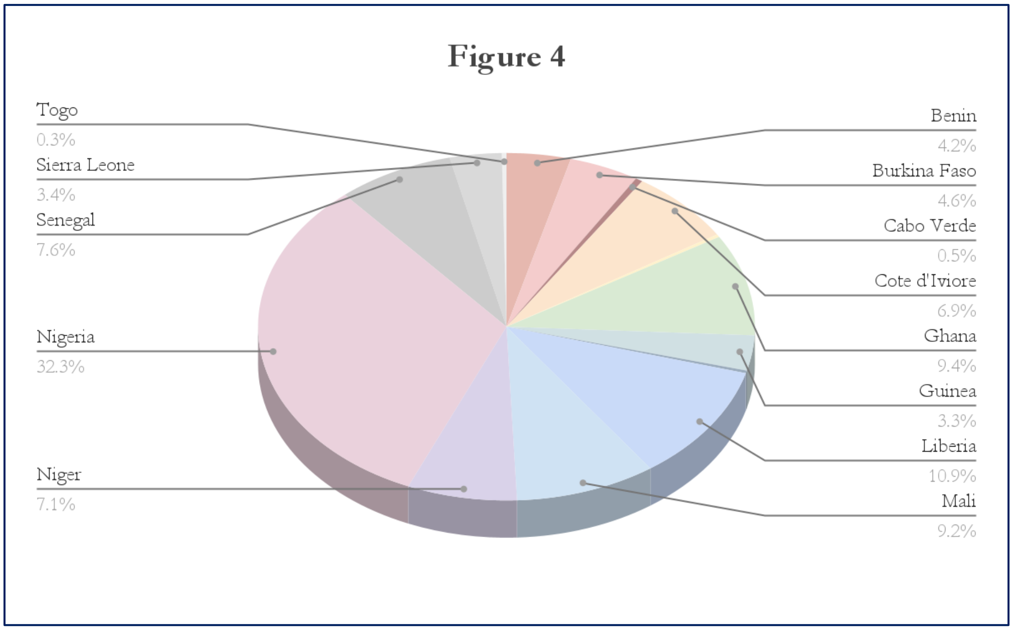

Figure 4: *ECOWAS disbursement allocation (%) by member from 2016 to 2021. Data retrieved from ForeignAssistance.gov Database. Data last updated July 25th, 2024. Data last accessed August 8th, 2024.*

These numbers and the representation of countries slightly change when looking at total U.S. disbursements to ECOWAS from FY2016 to FY2021. In this case, the top five ECOWAS countries to receive aid are Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. These countries represent approximately 69.30% of U.S. disbursements to ECOWAS in the aforementioned time frame.

The United States has expressed interest in supporting the development of infrastructure in Africa. This can be seen with headway pertaining to the Lobito Corridor and the Zambia-Lobito Rail Line. In support of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zambia, the United States and European Union signed a seven-side Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in October 2023 (United States Department of State, 2023). The MoU reflects a collaborative spirit to enhance regional trade and growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. Presently, the United States has pledged 250 million USD in government funds to support the project. Other parties consist of Italian, Swiss, Portuguese, and German stakeholders (Misteli, 2024). With all that said, there are several tools that the U.S. government utilizes to support African infrastructure currently, some of which are as follows:

1. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC): A bilateral agency committed to just and democratic governance and economic freedom (MCC, 2024). MCC provides time-limited grants aimed at promoting economic growth for its recipient countries (MCC, 2024). This agency supports infrastructure development with compacts, concurrent compacts for regional investments, and threshold programs (Auth, 2024).
2. U.S. African Development Foundation: A U.S. government agency responsible for investing in African grassroot enterprises and entrepreneurs. The agency provides grant capital, capacity building assistance, and convening opportunities. This agency provides infrastructure development by providing grant capital up to 250,000 USD to help grow small businesses (USADF, 2024).
3. U.S. Department of Commerce: The Department of Commerce is a U.S. agency responsible for driving U.S. economic competitiveness, helping to accentuate America's comparative advantage (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2024). This agency supports infrastructure development with an advocacy center, a gold key service, trade missions, and a U.S. commercial service (Auth, 2024).
4. U.S. Department of Energy (DOE): The DOE is an executive department of the U.S. federal government that oversees four core areas: (1) U.S. national energy policy, (2) energy production, (3) nuclear power research and development, and (4) energy conservation (Department of Energy, 2024). The department supports infrastructure in Africa by facilitating partnerships in clean energy technology and deployment (Auth, 2024).
5. U.S. Department of State (DOS): The DOS is an executive department of the U.S. federal government that oversees America's foreign policy and relations (U.S. Department of State, 2024). The department advises the U.S. president and engages in diplomatic affairs such as representing the U.S. at the United Nations (U.S. Department of State, 2024). The DOS supports infrastructure development in Africa by offering infrastructure transaction advisory services to country governments (Auth, 2024).

6. Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII): PGII is a G7-led initiative that seeks to increase infrastructure development in low-and middle-income countries. The initiative has presently resulted in the deployment of billions of dollars in infrastructure financing. PGII represents action towards presenting innovative solutions to addressing the global infrastructure gap with an emphasis on blended finance (The White House, 2023).

U.S. Assistance to Ghana

The U.S. established diplomatic relations with Ghana in 1957. Both countries work together to address defense and law enforcement issues. U.S. assistance to Ghana is evident through initiatives led by USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Prosper Africa, and other agencies and initiatives. Holistically, investments have sought to improve Ghana's power sector, increase food security, and enhance basic health care. Further, Ghana is host to the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub, which provides technical assistance for small businesspeople to scale their businesses in the U.S. and West Africa. In addition, the Peace Corps has notable involvement in Ghana and works on a range of projects related to education, agriculture, and health.

The U.S. is Ghana's largest bilateral donor. A significant share of funding is allocated by USAID. Presently, the Country Development Cooperation Strategy articulates USAID's strategy in supporting Ghana (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2024a). This strategy seeks to address the short and long-term needs of Ghana by reducing the negative implications of COVID-19. Coupled with initiatives in driving employment, enhancing quality service delivery systems, and fostering sustainable development in Ghana's northern region, USAID desires to help the country move towards self-reliance.

In terms of obligations, the top five projects in fiscal year 2022 were either in health; economic development; program support; education and social services; and peace and security. Other programs include sectors such as the environment or democracy, human rights, and governance (United States Department of State & United States Agency for International Development, 2024). Roughly 88.16% of these initiatives were managed by USAID (United States Department of State & United States Agency for International Development, 2024). The remaining initiatives were managed by a non-exhaustive list that includes the Department of Labor, the Department of State, Peace Corps, and the Department of Health and Human Services. The stakeholder representation for fiscal year 2022 is similar for disbursements. From FY2017 to FY2022, U.S. obligations to Ghana equated to 761 million USD (Figure 5). In FY2022, America's obligations to Ghana amassed 210 million USD. In terms of obligations, the top five projects in fiscal year 2022 were in health, economic development, program support, education and social services, and peace and security.

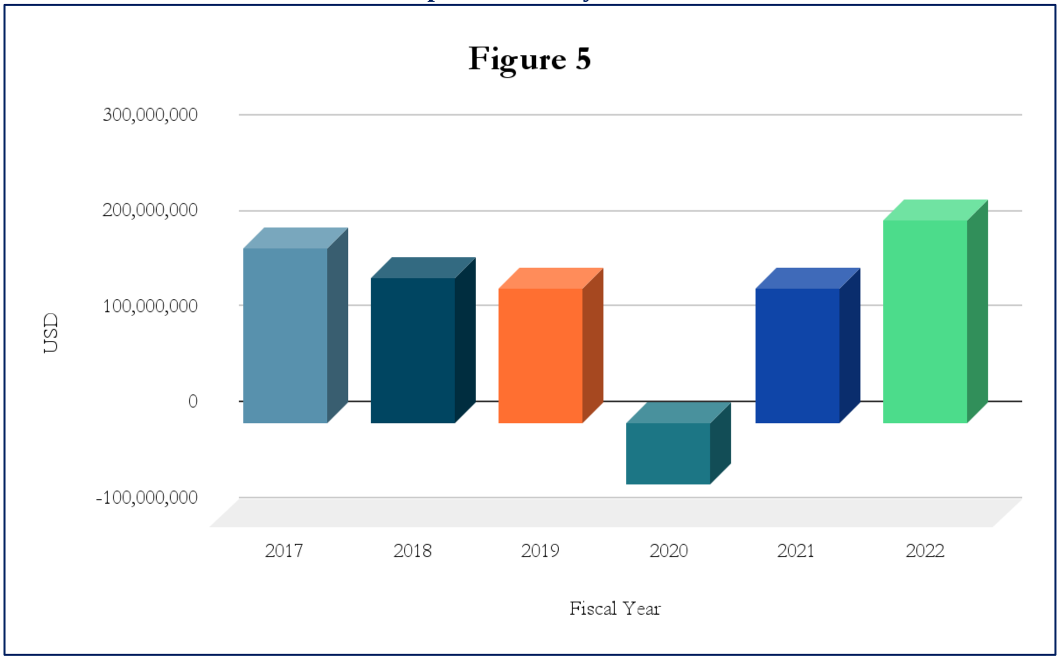

Figure 5: *Total U.S. obligations to Ghana from 2017 to 2022. Data retrieved from ForeignAssistance.gov Database. Data last updated July 25th, 2024. Data last accessed August 8th, 2024.*

Contrary to obligations, the U.S. has dispersed 1.352 billion USD from FY2017 to FY2022 (Figure 6). This value peaked in FY2017 at 274 million USD.

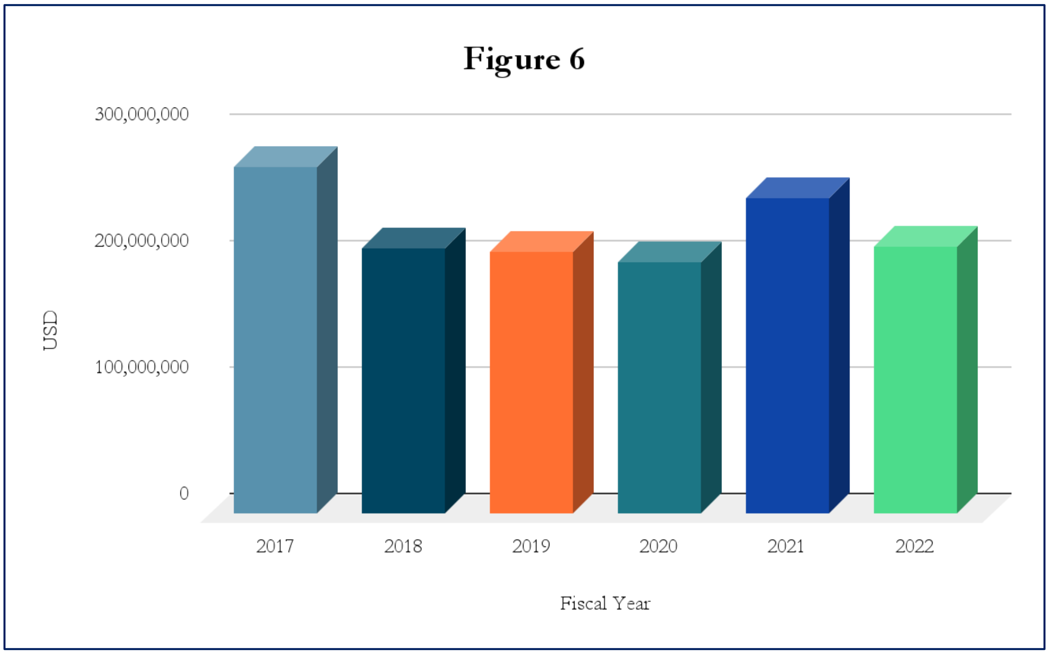

Figure 6: *Total U.S. disbursements to Ghana from 2017 to 2022. Data retrieved from ForeignAssistance.gov Database. Data last updated July 25th, 2024. Data last accessed August 8th, 2024.*

Assistance Restrictions

While there is an increased appreciation for bolstering U.S.-Africa relations through foreign assistance, there are some restrictions that limit pathways for aid. These restrictions are subject to provisions in appropriations measures or other laws. Some provisions are country-specific, while other restrictions are triggered upon a country's failure to meet conditions salient to governance, human rights, and other issues. The executive branch usually has the discretion to designate countries for sanctions or restriction waivers. In any case, noteworthy laws and considerations include:

(A) Section 7042 ("Africa") of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Appropriations Act, 2023 (Division K of P.I. 117-328): The governments of South Sudan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe are not permitted to receive authorized monies unless specific requirements are satisfied, as stated in this section (Congressional Research Service, 2023a). Further, Section 7042 considers certain types of International Military Education and Training (IMET) programming for some African governments located in the Great Lakes Region (Congressional Research Service, 2023a). More information on how Section 7042 applies to the aforementioned countries are included in the table below.

South Sudan	Sudan	Zimbabwe
Assistance: Funds should be made available for democracy programs.	**Assistance:** Funds support a civilian-led transition in Sudan and Abyei through agriculture and economic growth programs, and economic assistance for marginalized areas. **Consultation and Notification:** Funds appropriated by this Act and prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs that are made available for any new program, project, or activity in Sudan shall be subject to prior consultation with the appropriate congressional committees.	**Instruction:** The Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the United States executive director of each international financial institution to vote against any extension by the respective institution of any loan or grant to the Government of Zimbabwe, except to meet basic human needs or to promote democracy, unless the Secretary of State certifies and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that the rule of law has been restored, including respect for ownership and title to property, and freedoms of expression, association, and assembly.

Note: Data on the application of Section 7042 to three case studies is sourced from the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Appropriations Act, 2024.

(B) Section 7008 in annual SFOPS appropriations legislation: This Section restricts certain U.S. assistance following a coup d'etat (Congressional Research Service, 2023b). In determining the practicability of Section 7008, pertinent stakeholders consider: (1) the role of the country's military in the change of power and (2) whether the overthrown leader was "duly elected," an undefined term in statute (Congressional Research Service, 2023b). The restrictions apply to categories of bilateral economic assistance, international security assistance, multilateral assistance, and export and investment assistance. Moreover, this Section exempts democratic aid. As of September 2023, this section was in effect with regard to Burkina Faso (2022), Guinea (2021), Mali (2020), and Sudan (1989) (Congressional Research Service, 2023a).

(C) The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA, P.L. 106-386, as amended) and related legislation: Subject to a waiver, this Act limits "non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance" and specific other forms of assistance to countries that the State Department finds do not fulfill minimal requirements for ending human trafficking. Pursuant to this Act, the State Department listed Chad, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, and South Sudan as Tier 3 (worst-performing) (Congressional Research Service, 2023a).

(D) The Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA, Title IV of P.L. 110-457, as amended) and related legislation: This Act limits several forms of security aid to nations where child soldiers have been recruited or utilized by state-sponsored militias or security forces. The CSPA was cited by the State Department in its 2023 TIP report for the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mali, Rwanda, Somalia, and South Sudan. President Biden lifted some of the related sanctions for Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic (Congressional Research Service, 2023a).

U.S. Aid Criticism

Based on the information above, it is clear that the United States government has created robust programs to support Africa's development. Particularly in an era of Great Power Competition, some critiques exist which demonstrate some level of concern with American assistance in Africa. These concerns are discussed further below.

Corruption Enablement

Peter Bauer, a former development economist, previously asserted that government-to-government aid is insufficient to actualize positive economic development trends, as it increases the strength of foreign governments and promotes the misallocation of resources (Park, 2019). This reality contributes to the amalgamation of aid flows that exceeds private capital inflows, characterizing Africa's present condition (Park, 2019). In translation, despite the inflow of government-to-government aid, the promotion of resources can accentuate corrupt practices and stunt economic development. This is evident by Somalia's historical experience in receiving foreign aid. The country has received over 55 billion USD from 1991 to date; however, Somalia has had several incidents of unaccounted funds and embezzlement, contributing to the country's low placements on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (Izobo, 2020).

Ineffective Stakeholder Engagement

In addition, there is also some discussion that U.S. foreign aid, in some instances, does not adequately engage the core stakeholders required to achieve desired outcomes. This can be seen in America's nutrition aid strategy of 2021. In this document, there has been a shift in priorities from the small and medium-sized farmers to factory-scale agribusinesses. This approach is believed to be contrary to research as it appears to push commodities best suited for food manufacturing (instead of nutritiously diverse food), and is thus viewed as a miscalculated approach to address food insecurity (A. Park & Vercillo, 2021).

Short Term Security Focus

The recent military coups in the Sahelian region substantiates some reassessment of current U.S. military and security strategy. This is partly due to U.S. security assistance's historical record of providing short-term solutions that embrace military aid to recipient countries. As a consequence of this aid, terrorist threats and abusive behavior by the partner's military can arguably be seen in country case studies that include Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Ethiopia, which often has negative consequences on the countries that receive military aid from America (Lobe, 2023).

Destabilization Influence

Countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Niger have recently experienced coups. Officers who partook in these coups received U.S. training and learned about safeguarding democracy and human rights (Seligman & Toosi, 2023). These coups, in some ways, have promoted political instability and economic disruption in their respective countries, presenting an opportunity for likely contenders such as China and Russia to move into the vacuum of influence.

Foreign Aid Dependency

Criticisms around U.S. aid to Africa are often predicated upon its facilitation of foreign aid dependency for a recipient nation. Without foreign aid, some African countries are not able to carry out basic provisions of public service, such as carrying out education and health initiatives (Izobo, 2020). This reliance creates a dependency by recipient countries to accept foreign aid to take action central to their basic governmental functions.

Historical Overview: China-Africa Relations

Ever since the Chinese Civil War ended in 1947, Africa has played a pivotal role in China's foreign policy (Vines & Wallace, 2023). This can be seen with the 1955 Asian-African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia, which signified the People's Republic of China's (PRC) initial significant engagement in Africa. At the time, Premier Zhou Enlai spearheaded the Chinese delegation, engaging with representatives from six African countries—Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, and Sudan during this historic conference, establishing a foundation for long-term diplomatic relations between the PRC and several African nations. Further, during the Cold War, China backed a number of African liberation movements, and the PRC's foreign minister made their first visit to an African nation every year but one since 1950 (Vines & Wallace, 2023). Furthermore, the PRC took over China's membership in the UN General Assembly and Security Council in 1971 thanks in large part to the votes of African nations. This resulted in the displacement of representatives from Chinese nationalist forces, who had lost the civil war and were now in charge of Taiwan. China's priority in Africa shifted in the ensuing decades to removing the Taiwan government's last vestige of recognition. Senegal, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Liberia, and others shifted from recognising Taiwan to the PRC. In 2023, Eswatini was the sole country in Africa to continue to recognize Taiwan's government.

China launched its "Going Out" plan in 1999 to entice its businesses to make investments outside of the country. This increased China's trade activities with Africa. As a result, a new phase of Chinese engagement in Africa was initiated, primarily driven by investments in infrastructure. Chinese nationals employed on these new infrastructure projects found it to be a significant source of employment as well. Fast forward, in October 2000, Beijing hosted the inaugural tri-annual Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit. The formation of the FOCAC signaled China's expanding strategic ambition in Africa and served to enhance collaboration between China and African countries. The formation of FOCAC 24 years ago was in response to Africa's quest for more intense collaboration in their bilateral relationships. FOCAC focuses on economic cooperation, diplomacy, peace and security, development, and cultural exchange. At the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC held in Dakar, Senegal from November 29th to November 30th, 2021, the two sides agreed that Africa is working to create an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent, and that China, the fastest developing nation, has built a moderately prosperous society in all respects and is now working to realize its second centennial goal and the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. Together, China and Africa are dedicated to strengthening their all-encompassing strategic and cooperative partnership and creating an even more robust China-Africa community with a common destiny. Out of the last FOCAC conference in 2021, China pledged for the next three years, to lend to its financial institutions 10 billion US dollars in short-term trade credit based on market principles in an effort to increase African exports (McBride et al., 2023). Over the years, Africa's trade items used to be minerals such as cotton and phosphate however, recently the continent has added other commodities such as oranges from Egypt, wine from South Africa, cocoa from Ghana and among others (China-Africa Business Council, 2024). To conduct trade innovation and industrial cooperation, Hunan Province and Zhejiang Province will work together to build a China-Africa Belt and Road industrial park.

Another notable initiative that has influenced Africa is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). President Xi Jinping introduced BRI in 2013, with the goal of revitalizing the former silk trade route that hugs the coast of East Africa (McBride et al., 2023). Theoretically, Chinese investment should have been centered in East Africa at this point, but the BRI swiftly gained momentum as other African states looked for opportunities. Under the BRI, numerous notable infrastructure projects were constructed throughout Asia and Africa with funding from Chinese lenders. During this time, some African nations received extensive financing from China. The peak of Chinese investment occurred around 2016. Since then, Chinese loans to African governments have drastically decreased from 28.4 billion USD in 2016 to 1.9 billion USD in 2020. This decline can be attributed in part to shifting domestic political priorities in China as well as the difficulties African nations face in repaying their debt (Vines & Wallace, 2023).

China Strategy Towards Africa

Over the last two decades, China has positioned Africa at the heart of its global efforts to revise the world order (Nantulya, 2024). Africa, since 2012 and under the leadership of the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping, has served as an active recipient of Chinese assistance, constituted by a state-led economic growth governance system under one-party, authoritarian rule.

China Financial Assistance to Africa

In the last decade, China has emerged as one of the major development partners of Africa, albeit the country's recent strategic shift marked by a decrease in Chinese loans from 2016 to 2020. China has adopted various forms of development aid/assistance strategies to support many African countries. The nature of Chinese aid has provided a clear picture of the country's aid strategies, its foreign policy as well as its economic statecraft. It also portrays how it differs from other donors or financial assistance. On record, the bulk of Chinese financing in Africa falls under the category of development finance, but not aid (Yun Sun, 2014). Most official financial assistance from China comes in the form of grants, zero-interest loans, debt reliefs, and concessional loans (usually referred to as Official Development Assistance (ODA)), preferential export credits, market-rates export buyers' credits, as well as commercial loans from Chinese financial institutions and other collaborations such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Below, information is presented in regards to China's various forms of aid to Africa and critiques by development experts.

ODA: Grants, Zero-Interest Loans, and Debt Relief

China used to provide financial assistance using grants and zero-interest loans until 1995 when it introduced concessional loans. In a white paper released by the Chinese State Council on April 21, 2011, it reported that almost about 40 percent of China's aid has been funded using grants. Zero-interest loans have also been one of the instruments of China's aid. In 2000, Beijing launched a debt relief programme which focused on overdue zero-interest loans for cancellation. About 3.76 billion USD was canceled with about 2.79 billion USD forgiven in Africa (Brautigam, 2011). In June 2020, for instance, Ghana and China signed a new agreement as part of the Joint Commission on Economic, Trade and Technical Cooperation to allow Ghana to benefit from 60 billion USD Chinese support for Africa (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2024). As part of the agreement, Ghana received some financial support meant for the development of sectors such as power, transport, telecommunications, education, and municipal construction. In 2019, China also signed a grant agreement of 42.62 million USD for economic and technical projects implementation.

ODA: Concessional Loans

Chinese governments also fund larger projects (minimum size approximately 2.4 million USD) which uses about 50% of Chinese goods and services like Chinese construction firms for capital projects on a concessional basis. Since the end of 2009, China has provided about 10.8 billion USD in funds on a concessional basis to about 76 foreign countries, supporting 325 projects (Brautigam, 2013 cited State Council 2011:5). In Africa, Chinese concessional loan programmes have expanded rapidly. By the end of 2005, China's Eximbank had cumulatively supported Africa with concessional loans to the tune of 800 million USD on 55 projects (Broadman, 2006). The number rose to 87 after 2 years with a cumulative value of about 1.5 billion USD. In Ghana, the Chinese-Built Vocational Institutions Upgrade Project was completed on April 12th, 2022 (Xinhua, 2022). The project forms part of China's effort to help develop vocational education in Ghana. The project contractor, AVIC International Holding Corporation, noted that the project started in November 2019 specifically to build a new examination center for Ghana's Ministry of Education and 15 vocational training institutions. It was funded by China in the form of a concessional loan to Ghana.

Official Commercial Loans

Furthermore, competitively priced policy loans are also provided by the China Development Bank (CDB). While its primary area of operation has always been within China, the CDB has started to grow internationally in recent years. As of March 2007, the CDB stated that it had provided funding for 30 projects in Africa, totaling about 1 billion USD (Xinhua, May 14, 2007). A bank executive, speaking to Xinhua three and a half years later, said that as of September 2010, the bank had committed over 10 billion USD to projects in Africa and had provided "5.6 billion USD in financing to 35 projects across over 30 African nations" (People's Daily, 17 November, 2010). This again shows a quick expansion (and, considering the volume of projects in 2010, implies that the 2007 numbers are pledges rather than payments). China Development Bank offers commercial loans based on London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) plus a margin, often of at least 200 basis points, rather than official development funding.[3]

In Ghana, China's official bilateral loans account for less than 5% of its total debt (Reuters, 2023). In total, Ghana owes China approximately 1.7 billion USD according to the International Institute of Finance (Reuters, 2023). In ECOWAS, countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Benin have received an estimated 47.4% of the total Chinese financial commitments from 2016 to 2021 (Figure 7).[4] However, Cabo Verde (4.1%), Mali (4.7%), and Niger (4.8%) have received the least financial commitments in the ECOWAS region (Figure 7). Aside from Benin, a country recognized for its low domestic resource mobilization levels, the influx of financing towards countries such as Nigeria and Ghana could indicate that China's assistance is largely focused on resource-rich countries perhaps to maximize the likelihood of a win-win collaboration in exchange (World Bank, 2024).

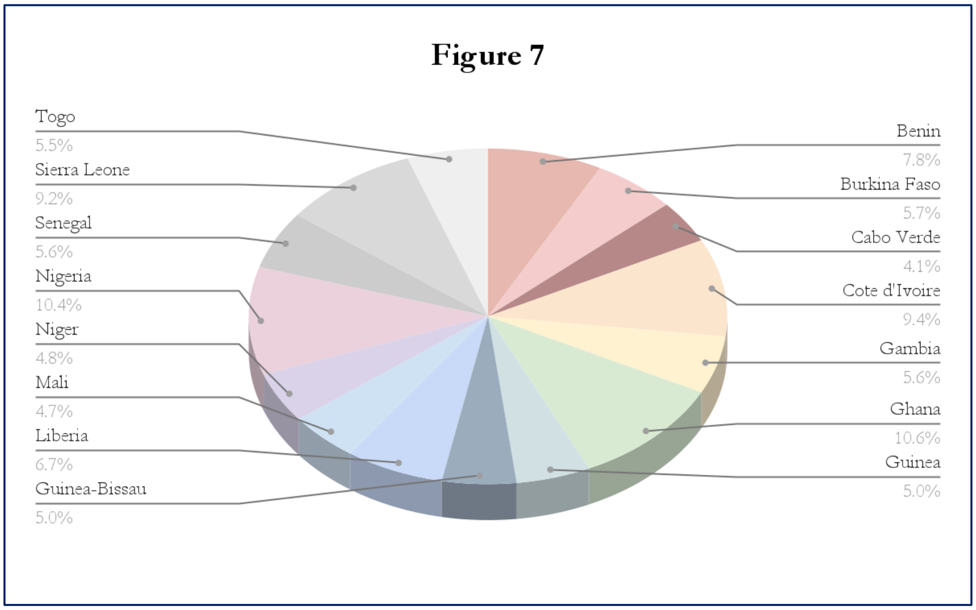

Figure 7: *Chinese financial commitments (%) to ECOWAS countries from 2016 to 2021. Data retrieved from* *https://china.aiddata.org/#*

[3] The OECD defines Official Development Funding (ODF) as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. ODF is normally provided on a concessional basis where the interest on the loan is less than 25%. This differs from Commercial loans which have interest rates above 25%.

[4] Commitments (i.e., within 2016 and 2021) are measured in constant 2021 USD and exclude "rollover" amounts under emergency rescue lending and PBOC swap facilitates in accordance with https://china.aiddata.org/#

Changing Nature of Chinese Financial Assistance

China's financial assistance still appears to be significant although its nature is changing. China's annual lending commitments peaked in 2013 after the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (Belt and Road Portal, 2024). After 2013, the funding started to decline, reflecting debt sustainability concerns and structural transformation issues raised by China. As a result, countries where Chinese lenders prioritized were those that were considered less risky and had not previously requested debt relief from Chinese banks. Not one of the top five borrowers in 2019 had previously asked China for debt restructuring or experienced financial difficulties. Another change in the nature of Chinese debt structure was the rise in commercial bank loans from China Development Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Bank of China (BOC), syndicated loans coupled with Chinese and non-Chinese banks' participation, and Chinese companies' funding. Furthermore, 2019 marked the year in which many previously large Chinese borrowers received minimal financial assistance. Countries such as Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Cameroon all received small loans or no loan after negotiating for debt restructuring over the previous years. This contributed to the slight drop in Chinese FDIs to Africa in 2019 by 1.713 billion USD (Figure 8).

In Africa, the trend of Chinese FDI flows in the continent has been relatively unstable. After peaking in 2018 (GH$ 46,103.52 million), it fell subsequently in 2019 and further in 2020 due to the less funding criteria for countries asking for debt relief and the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. It surged in 2021 when the continent was experiencing general economic recovery (44.186 billion USD) but subsequently fell again to 40.902 billion USD in 2022.

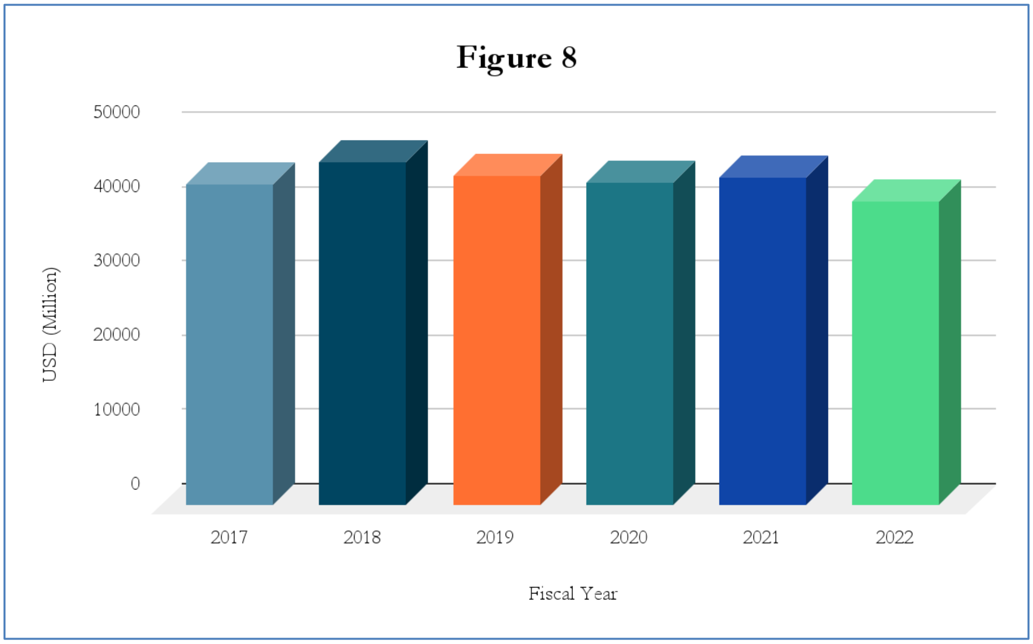

***Figure 8**: Chinese FDI Stock in African Countries from 2017 to 2022. Data retrieved from Johns Hopkins University SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative. Retrieved from: https://www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa*

Infrastructure Projects

In literature, Mlambo, (2012) has stated that infrastructure is one critical factor for future sustainable economic development and is regarded as a propeller of the efficient allocation for resources, enhances higher productivity, and improves economic growth. The degree of infrastructure development in a nation can be ascertained by its availability and caliber. Africa has historically been an example of a continent that struggles to thrive due to inadequate infrastructure. Many African states lack the basis for economic growth and development because of their antiquated and inadequate infrastructure. As such, Africa has found it challenging to invest in infrastructure due to a lack of funding. About 31 billion USD is thought to be the infrastructure finance shortfall in Africa (Songwe & Moyo, 2013). Therefore, China's ambition to assist Africa in investing in its infrastructure comes as a huge benefit to the continent. So far, China has participated in a number of initiatives to enhance infrastructure. With several significant infrastructure projects signed, China remains Africa's greatest partner and a leading funder for Africa's infrastructure after overtaking the World Bank within the last two decades (OECD, 2012). In Ghana, several infrastructure projects by China can be identified. Notable among them is the Bui Dam Hydroelectric power project which lies on the Black Volta River. The 400-megawatt (540,000 hp) project was completed through the partnership between Sino hydro and the government of Ghana on May 3rd, 2009.

Chinese Assistance to Ghana

Ghana and China have had different cooperation agreements covering many fields since independence. The two nations decided to assist one another on matters pertaining to sovereignty and territorial integrity as part of their diplomatic cooperation. Ghana's sustained adherence to the "One China Policy," which regards Taiwan as an integral part of the People's Republic of China, is the most significant aspect of this agreement (Questions and Answers Concerning the Taiwan Question, 2022). This agreement serves as the cornerstone of all bilateral cooperation because China will not continue diplomatic or economic relations with any nation that acknowledges Taiwan's independence. Additionally, China and Ghana have decided to look at ways to work together more closely in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations (UN), and other regional and international organizations. Furthermore, as part of efforts to promote African progress, China has supported the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in several ways.

China and Ghana have also reached an agreement to work together in the fields of infrastructure, trade, investment, and agriculture. Exchanges in irrigation, agro-processing, agricultural technology, and infrastructure development have all been made easier in the field of agriculture. In terms of investment, the two nations have agreed to promote joint ventures and investigate new investment opportunities. Furthermore, the Chinese government has made the decision to support several Chinese banks in the establishment of the China-Africa Development Fund, its total reaching 10 billion USD (China-Africa Development Fund, 2024). The fund also assists respectable Chinese businesses in making investments in African projects that generate employment, and advance both technology and overall development.

China and Ghana have reached agreements to increase and improve the balance of trade between each other. Additionally, China has consented to expand the range of goods from Africa that can be sold into its markets. For example, the volume of exports to China that can be charged zero tariffs has grown from 190 to more than 440. Moreover, Ghana and China also collaborate mostly in the field of infrastructure, and over the years, a number of agreements have been drafted enabling Chinese companies to participate in building initiatives. They have included building highways, structures, and most recently a hydropower dam.

From Figure 9, aid from China to Ghana peaked at 1,831 million USD in 2019 and then began to fall in 2020 and subsequently. By 2019, Ghana had not requested for any debt reliefs unlike other countries hence, making it a favorite country for China to support.

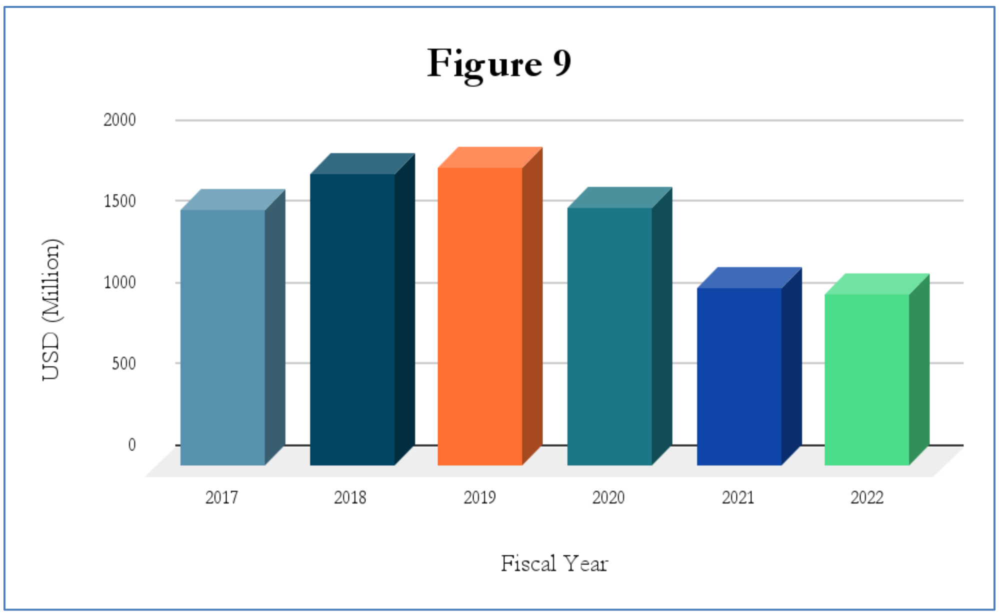

Figure 9: *China FDI Stock to Ghana from 2017 to 2022. Data retrieved from John Hopkins University SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative. Retrieved from:* https://www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa

China Assistance Restrictions/Conditionalities

Regarding conditionality in Chinese loans, Sun Xue Feng of Carnegie-Tsinghua organized a roundtable discussion with Matti Nojonen and Mikael Mattlin of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs in 2012. Several additional international experts joined them. Several Chinese conditionalities or restrictions were discussed at this roundtable discussion, and they are as follows:

- *Political Conditionality:* *A* recipient country from China cannot have formal relations with both Taiwan and mainland China and must uphold the one-China concept in order to be eligible for help and loans. China withdrew assistance from Vietnam in 2006, when Vietnam welcomed Taiwanese officials to the APEC meeting (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).
- *Embedded Conditionality:* Any country that receives aid from China must consent to employing Chinese labor and resources and follow any rules set forth by Chinese businesses. For some projects, only a small portion of domestic labor and capital can be employed; however, Chinese enterprises perform the majority, if not all, of the work on important projects (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).
- *Emergent Conditionality:* There is evidence to suggest that numerous countries that have received Chinese help have developed a strong reliance on China in key economic sectors. This is a structural effect that develops over time as these vital sectors are fueled by investments led by China. Thus, institutionalized dependency arises from the requirement to benefit from Chinese resources (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).
- *Cross Conditionality:* Chinese banks' funding gives China or Chinese businesses the power to exert pressure on the receiving country and impose conditions beyond the terms of the aid and loan agreements. For instance, China stopped providing energy development funds to Indonesia in 2009 because the country refused to buy Chinese planes (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).

Chinese Aid Criticism

Despite the plethora of information justifying China's immense assistance to Africa, several experts have expressed concern about the approach China has adopted in assisting Africa. This section discusses some of these concerns:

China's Non-interference Approach

Moyo (2009) and similar studies criticize China's non-interference approach in the governance of African nation states. These studies report that democracy has stagnated as a result of China's alleged ignorance of human rights violations and authoritarian control in a number of African governments. Aid has frequently been employed as a tactic to obtain influence over African politics or resources. This is the reason why a number of experts have questioned China's motivation for helping Africa (Chileshe, 2010; Lum, Fischer, Granger, & Leland, 2009). Furthermore, it appears unlikely that China will actively combat corruption in recipient nations given its policy of non-interference in their internal affairs. In contrast to donors like the World Bank that have a well-defined anti-corruption policy, it appears unlikely that the Chinese presence should entail heightened oversight and delegitimization of corrupt behaviors. In addition, although governments in recipient nations typically interpret the idea as evidence of China's respect for their sovereignty, some see it as a handy justification for China's economic engagement with despotic and corrupt regimes, and they contend that it makes Chinese aid easily exploitable by politicians.

Chinese Control over Aid Projects

In another perspective, some experts regard China's approach to aid as unique in terms of the level of control the country has over the implementation of its aid projects. China tends to retain control over the projects it funds from the project initiation phase to the project completion phase, in contrast to other donors who frequently use local implementing agencies. Chinese contractors are frequently used for work done in the recipient countries. This does not encourage local participation at the managerial level of the projects.

Transparency

The Chinese government has also not been regular in the dissemination of information on its international assistance, in contrast to the contributors in the OECD-DAC. As a result, China's help to Africa has been a topic of much debate because of its lack of transparency, which has made evaluating Chinese aid difficult. However, rigorous quantitative examination of Chinese assistance flows is now feasible thanks to a new comprehensive dataset on Chinese Official Finance to Africa released by the Aid Data research laboratory (Aid Data, 2017).

New Form of Neocolonialism

The possibility that China is enacting a new kind of neocolonialism has also been one of the primary defenses used against the country's aid in Africa. China is accused of controlling natural resources in Africa through a new form of neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is an indirect kind of control used by powerful nations to take advantage of the labor and resources of the "colonized countries" by using their cultural, economic, and political clout for their own gain (De Freitas, 2023). Arguments suggest that China obtains control via financial agreements, investment tactics, debt-trapping, and discriminatory investment policies are a few examples of this (De Freitas, 2023). These practices mostly result in greater dependency because of unequal trade and resource exploration, including biodiversity.

Debt Trapping

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has the potential to re-establish the hegemony of China in Asia and Eurasia by contributing to a new geopolitical order, has provided Africa with significant funding. Since its inception in 2013, the BRI has been a crucial instrument of Chinese diplomacy, despite strong criticism from the United States. The media has frequently brought up the debt-trapping issue, which is the assertion that China is enticing nations into unaffordable loans in order to construct needless infrastructure and to increase its military and strategic influence. This has been especially evident in the wake of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port crisis (Anjana, 2022).

However, rather than the debt service it owes China, Sri Lanka's default was more closely linked to its economic woes brought on by the decline in tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the BRI has been recipient-driven from its beginning, with countries choosing the projects or what would be built under its umbrella, refuting the claim that China is engaging in debt-trapping. Due to its history and the fact that other industries would not pay Chinese corporations the same multiples they find in their own country, China has a strong desire for massive infrastructure projects (De Freitas, 2023). To another point, the objectives and demands of local governments are reflected in BRI projects, as China does not set construction priorities. Some of these initiatives have run into issues related to local governance, which can have negative effects on the economy, the environment, and politics. Beijing has periodically been obliged to modify direction and policy as a result of these circumstances.

Nonetheless, Chinese investments have been accused of debt-trapping in Africa due to the high levels of indebtedness and financial vulnerabilities in some nations. This accusation has its roots in China's substantial contribution to the provision of financing for infrastructure projects with advantageous conditions, including long repayment terms and cheap interest rates. These loans can stop being economically feasible, leaving nations with debt they might not be able to pay back. Furthermore, Chinese loans in Africa have come under fire from Western critics for their lack of transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny (De Freitas, 2023).

Comparative Analysis

By examining the information presented above, it is apparent that there are similarities and differences between aid to Africa from the United States and aid to Africa from China. Relevant similarities, differences, and themes are delineated below.

Similarities

To begin with, there are aspects of economic collaboration, diplomatic relations, peace and security, as well as development and cultural exchange initiatives between the United States of America and Africa, as well as between China and Africa. Moreover, Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast have become significant recipients of aid from both China and the USA. These nations account for more than 50% of China's financial pledges made between 2016 and 2021, and they have received 30% of USA commitments from 2016 to 2021. Both the USA and China incorporate conditional aspects into their aid, raising worries about dependency. For China, it can be suggested that numerous recipient countries have become dependent on Chinese investments in essential economic sectors, leading to a lasting institutionalized reliance. Likewise, while USA's aid is sometimes criticized for encouraging dependency, it also includes conditionalities that may influence its effects or impact on nations receiving it.

Differences

While there are many similarities, distinctions between assistance from China and the USA are significant. The historical diplomatic relationships between the United States and Africa are far more extensive than those of China (shaped after the formation of the People's Republic of China beginning in 1949) when considering the time that each country reached a formal independence. It is arguable that this difference in time has shaped their contrasting methods of providing aid in the region. On one hand, China's strategy in Africa emphasizes supporting the autonomous development of countries without interfering in their internal politics. On the other hand, the United States aims to promote open societies, democratic governance, and security, while also facilitating energy transitions. The United States employs a combination of trade tools, public diplomacy, and digital initiatives whereas China focuses on development financing, especially through loans, a capability that America is prioritizing as evidenced by its Better Utilization of Investments Leading to a Development Act of 2018, which established the United States International Development Finance Corporation (*S.2463 - BUILD Act of 2018*, 2018). Furthermore, from 2016 to 2021, U.S. obligations to ECOWAS totaled $16.167 billion, compared to China's commitments of $63.338 billion. Across this time span, it is interesting to note that the United States provided the least aid to Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Gambia, while China's lowest funding went to Cabo Verde, Mali, and Niger. Lastly, U.S. assistance is usually regarded as more transparent than the Chinese counterpart. However, America's specific challenge lies in shifting from publication to engagement, wherein local decision making and ownership is enabled with partner countries (Ingram & Paxton, 2020).

Themes

In comparing Chinese and American aid to Africa, four key themes emerge:

1. **Varied Approaches to Development and Diplomacy:** Both nations engage in economic collaboration, diplomacy, and development efforts in Africa, but their methods reflect their unique diplomatic histories and strategic priorities. As mentioned earlier, the United States concentrates on promoting democratic governance, security, and energy transitions through trade, diplomacy, and digital initiatives. In contrast, China focuses on supporting autonomous development without political intervention.
2. **Primary Recipients of Aid:** Nigeria, Ghana, and Ivory Coast are significant recipients of aid from both China and the U.S., highlighting the strategic relevance of these nations in the regional economic and political landscape. The commitments from China and the obligations from America emphasize their importance within the broader framework of international aid strategies.
3. **Conditionality and Dependency Concerns:** Both China and the U.S. apply conditionalities to their aid, raising concerns about the potential for creating dependency in recipient countries. This issue underscores the possible long-term effects of aid on the sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency of African nations.

4. **Differences in Transparency and Financial Commitment:** A notable difference in the aid strategies of the two countries lies in the scale and transparency of their financial contributions. China's aid commitments are approximately four times larger than those of the U.S. Meanwhile, U.S. aid strategies are generally viewed as more transparent than China's, prompting questions regarding the visibility and accountability of aid initiatives.

Case Study: Ghana

With spotlight on Ghana, it becomes apparent that there are overlapping similarities, differences, and themes with the section above. These observations are included in detail below.

Similarities

The United States and China have established strong diplomatic ties with Ghana and participate in significant economic collaboration aimed at advancing the country's development. Both countries emphasize enhancing Ghana's growth through investments in key sectors like infrastructure, trade, and agriculture, though their methods differ. Additionally, their aid initiatives are designed to foster long-term growth in Ghana, with the U.S. focusing on sustainable development and self-sufficiency, while China prioritizes large-scale infrastructure projects and economic growth. Ultimately, both U.S. and Chinese assistance have experienced notable increases, highlighting their commitment to Ghana during critical times of need.

Differences

The United States and China have notably different strategies when it comes to supporting Ghana. The U.S. prioritizes the promotion of democratic governance, health, education, and sustainable development, utilizing a diverse array of financial instruments like grants, technical support, and public diplomacy efforts. On the other hand, China focuses on economic collaboration, particularly through infrastructure projects, trade, and maintaining a hands-off approach regarding Ghana's internal affairs, primarily relying on loans and direct investments. While U.S. aid is steady and distributed across multiple sectors, China's support is largely directed towards significant infrastructure initiatives, experiencing a marked increase in 2019. These contrasting approaches underscore the unique strategic goals and methods each nation applies in their involvement with Ghana.

Themes

Three takeaway themes from the similarities and differences between U.S. and Chinese assistance to Ghana are:

1. **Divergent Strategic Approaches:** The United States and China both contribute significantly to assistance efforts in Ghana, yet their strategies are quite different. The U.S.

prioritizes governance, health, education, and sustainable development, aiming to enhance self-reliance and support democratic values. In contrast, China's strategy is primarily economically focused, emphasizing infrastructure development, trade, and a hands-off approach to local politics. This contrast illustrates the distinct strategic priorities and foreign policy approaches of each country.

2. **Sectoral Focus and Financial Mechanisms:** Although both nations seek to enhance Ghana's economic growth, they utilize different sectoral focuses and financial resources. The U.S. implements a wide array of initiatives in health, education, and economic development, typically relying on grants and technical support. Conversely, China focuses on large infrastructure projects and trade, primarily utilizing loans and direct investments. This difference showcases how each country capitalizes on its strengths and resources to fulfill its foreign aid goals.
3. **Impact and Scale of Assistance:** Both the U.S. and China have extended considerable financial aid to Ghana. However, the scale, timing, and impact areas differ significantly. China's aid has reached much higher levels in recent years, particularly in infrastructure, whereas U.S. assistance has been steadier and more diversified across various sectors. This distinction highlights the differing influences each country holds in Ghana and the broader consequences of their aid strategies for Ghana's development path.

Recommendations

Based on the information in this report, there are three potential pathways for the United States and China to each bolster their engagement strategy with African nations:

1. **Recommendation 1:** To help reduce the incidence of coups in Africa, either nation state can support democracy and deter leaders who overstay their terms by changing their constitutions as necessary. This recommendation would require China to specifically abandon its non-interference approach, though it may elicit an architecture of political stability underpinning democratic governance and sustained economic growth for participating African nations.
2. **Recommendation 2:** China and the United States should directly help Africa to maximize its benefits from its own natural resources, which may reduce aid dependency in the region: a present concern of foreign assistance. This may look like bilateral advocacy for fairer royalty agreements between private mining corporations and governments in various African countries, or leveraging strategic financial instruments catapulted by the U.S. or Chinese government’s resources to construct refinement facilities in Africa.
3. **Recommendation 3:** China and the United States should advance their internal competencies to invest in infrastructure in Africa, emphasizing the importance of equitable contractual legal mechanisms within contracts to shape timely and sufficient debt

repayments and debt restructuring processes while encouraging mutually beneficial financial lending transactions to macroeconomically and politically volatile markets.

Limitations

As with any research study, there are limitations that were not fully addressed in this report. For starters, in synthesizing data about U.S. assistance to Africa, the data available on ForeignAssistance.gov does not include non-concessional foreign development finance activities. Aside from the United States Development Finance Corporation's (USDFC) data on concessional assistance, the ForeignAssistance.gov excludes USDFC's non-concessional activities. Thus, for simplicity of this study, non-concessional activities, such as from the USDFC are not included in the analysis of financing from the United States. However, both concessional and non-concessional financing from China is included in this study. Additionally, data from ForeignAssistance.gov indicates that not all financing for regional and worldwide programs may be obtained. For this reason, while the data on the United States is substantive in depth of transparently communicating the country's financing mechanisms, there is a lack of dimensionality with reference to the analyzed data which may or may not distort the robustness of the comparative analysis.

Moreover, this study largely focused on the financial assistance Africa receives from the United States and China. Other collaborative exchanges, such as culture, though significant and quickly evolving, were not analyzed with great emphasis in this study. China, for example, is gradually setting up its Confucius Institutes across several African universities. These institutes are based on principles of mutual respect, friendly consultation, and more. Some believe that these institutes exist to project their culture to the youths of Africa. Both countries seem to have also opened their shores for African students to have world standard education via programs such as study abroad. This study did not capture the long-term effect of education in China on participating African students or alumni.

Conclusion

In Ghana and across Africa, a geopolitical rivalry continues to unfold between China and the United States, as they employ different tactics to shape the continent's future and advance their interests. The United States leverages its diplomatic clout and varied aid programs to promote democracy, health, education, and sustainability, with a significant emphasis in Ghana. Meanwhile, China invests heavily in infrastructure and economic partnerships, providing loans and direct investments to boost trade and development in Ghana and Africa at large. Their approaches reveal contrasting priorities: the U.S. seeks long-term stability and self-sufficiency through a multifaceted approach, while China focuses on economic growth and infrastructure, often with minimal political involvement. The differing aid strategies and impacts of these two global powers underscore their ongoing competition for influence and partnership in Africa.

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