

# 2007 Model Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings Simulation

## Topic 2: China's Growing Charm Offense in Africa

### *Subcommittee on African Affairs*

Chairman: Russell D. Feingold (D-WI)  
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#### **Introduction**

China's economic growth now rivals that of the United States. American scholars, the media and government officials are closely monitoring China's emergence as a global power, trying to understand the full dimensions of its economic growth and what this expansion means for the U.S.'s global standing. American policy makers are also carefully observing how China's rapidly growing economy is impacting its conduct in foreign affairs.

Many see China's top priority as sustaining its economic growth, a priority that is driving its foreign policy. As a result, the Chinese government appears to be pursuing a non-aggressive foreign policy approach (with the exception of its continuously contentious position toward Taiwan), and, instead, is trying to polish its global image through diplomatic, cultural and economic exchanges. In this respect, China works hard to convince other nations of the mutual benefits obtained by working with an economic powerhouse. China is looking to invest and trade with other nations with the idea that their fundamental economic growth relies on securing new markets and, even more importantly, gaining access to raw materials.

The term "soft power" refers to the expansion of a country's influence through diplomatic and cultural channels rather than through the demonstration of military strength. American foreign policy analysts are now examining how China's growing use of soft power to influence many oil and resource-rich African countries impacts U.S. foreign policy goals in that region of the world.

#### **What does China want?**

China strives for two interconnected goals: to become a leader in world affairs and to maintain its economic growth. The latter fuels the former. China's economic growth enriches its population and the country as a whole and has led to the modernization of everything from cities to military and technological infrastructure. This economic growth is predicated upon being heavily involved in trade, which in turn provides China with the opportunity to extend its influence across the globe. By becoming a wealthy state, China now stands as an international power with great influence over global affairs. However, in order to sustain its economic growth, China not only must make sure its domestic

mechanisms continue to run efficiently but must also ensure the continuous in-flow of raw materials like iron ore and petroleum. With this in mind, Chinese officials have been focusing soft power on nations rich in natural resources. China's engagement with these resource-rich countries, in turn, bolsters China's global profile.

### **China's Soft Power in Africa**

China's quest for raw materials has led it to Africa (along with Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East). China is now heavily invested—through government aid/grants and state-owned/private Chinese companies—in extracting natural resource, such as copper from Zambia and oil from Angola, Sudan and Nigeria. The strategy of the Chinese involves heavily investing in these poor nations and, in return, asking only for the non-recognition of Taiwan as an independent state. Since it does not typically interfere in the domestic politics of its trading partners, China has garnered popularity among many African governments. Also, such investment is highly advantageous to the African states as it allows for an influx of cash which, in turn, funds domestic projects. Moreover, China invests in dual-use infrastructure such as roads, railways and ports, all of which are needed to extract the minerals but are further utilized by the host country to increase its trade. For these reasons, the Chinese government has highlighted its investment in the region as a “win-win” scenario.

China's soft power diplomacy is also conducted through other means, including the deployment of doctors, teachers and engineers throughout the African continent as well as opening Chinese universities to African students. China's influence in Africa expands continuously with trade agreements, economic investment in infrastructure, and cultural, health and educational exchanges. Its decision not to challenge the authoritarian regimes or human rights records of some of its African trading partners only serves to enhance China's appeal and influence in this part of the world. Consequently, the wielding of soft power in Africa not only renders the continent more receptive to Chinese trade but also more open to adopting China's way of looking at the world and, more specifically, Chinese values, culture and policies.

### **The Down Side**

Some observers say that China's investment undermines Western efforts to curtail the corruption that plagues many African governments. Additionally, some argue that China's refusal to take a political stance on despotic regimes while, at the same time, lending economic support to a country also indirectly supports these regimes. A case in point is China's relation with its oil trading partner, Sudan. China's investment in Sudan's oil industry helps fund the war being raged in the Darfur region of the country. China imports more than 60% of the oil exported from Sudan and, in return, is the largest supplier of arms to Sudan. Consequently, for economic reasons, the Chinese have consistently blocked the UN Security Council in its attempt to halt the bloodshed in Darfur.

Speculation also exists that many African nations will try to emulate China's governance model, a system that supports the co-existence of a robust capitalist economy and an authoritarian government.

### **Purpose of Hearing**

There are many reasons why the United States should be concerned about China and its use of soft power in Africa. While China may or may not be building a lasting sphere of influence with which to counter U.S. influence, the United States nonetheless has to compete with China over the direction of Africa's development. Of most pressing concern to many is China's reluctance to assist international efforts to protect civilians and quell the violence that has ravaged Darfur. Additionally, Africa may serve as a model with which to better understand China's rise and its impact on the world. Finally, the Senate should reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of America's soft power and its emphasis on promoting democratic institutions and good governance.

### **Questions**

1. How involved are the Chinese in Africa? Where? Why?
2. How much influence does China achieve for its involvement?
3. What are the implications for the U.S. and other pro-Western nations?
4. What steps, if any, can or should the U.S. government take to offset China's growing influence in this area of the world?
5. What are some of the negative effects stemming from China's influence in Africa (example: Sudan)? What measures can the U.S. government take to minimize some of the more negative consequences of China's involvement in Africa?

### **Witnesses**

**Jendayi E. Frazer**, *Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs*

**Joshua Kurlantzick**, *Scholar, China Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

**Peter Brookes**, *Senior Fellow, National Security Affairs and Chung Ju-Yung Fellow for Policy Studies, Asian Studies Center*

**Bates Gill**, *Freeman Chair in China Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies*

**Jenny Kehl**, *Assistant Professor, Rutgers University*

**Drew Thompson**, *Director of China Studies and Starr Senior Fellow, Nixon Center*

**David Lampton**, *Director of China Studies, John Hopkins University*

**John Mearsheimer**, *Distinguished Service Professor and Co-director of the Program on International Security Policy, University of Chicago*

**Alex Vines**, *Head of Africa Programme Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs*

**Joshua Eisenman**, *Fellow, The American Foreign Policy Council*

**Howard French**, *Journalist, New York Times*

**Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt**, *International Affairs Expert, Council on Foreign Relations*

**Evan S. Medeiros**, *Political Scientist, Rand Corporation*

**M. Taylor Fravel**, *Assistant Professor, MIT and Harvard University's Olin Institute for Strategic Studies*

## **Resources**

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