

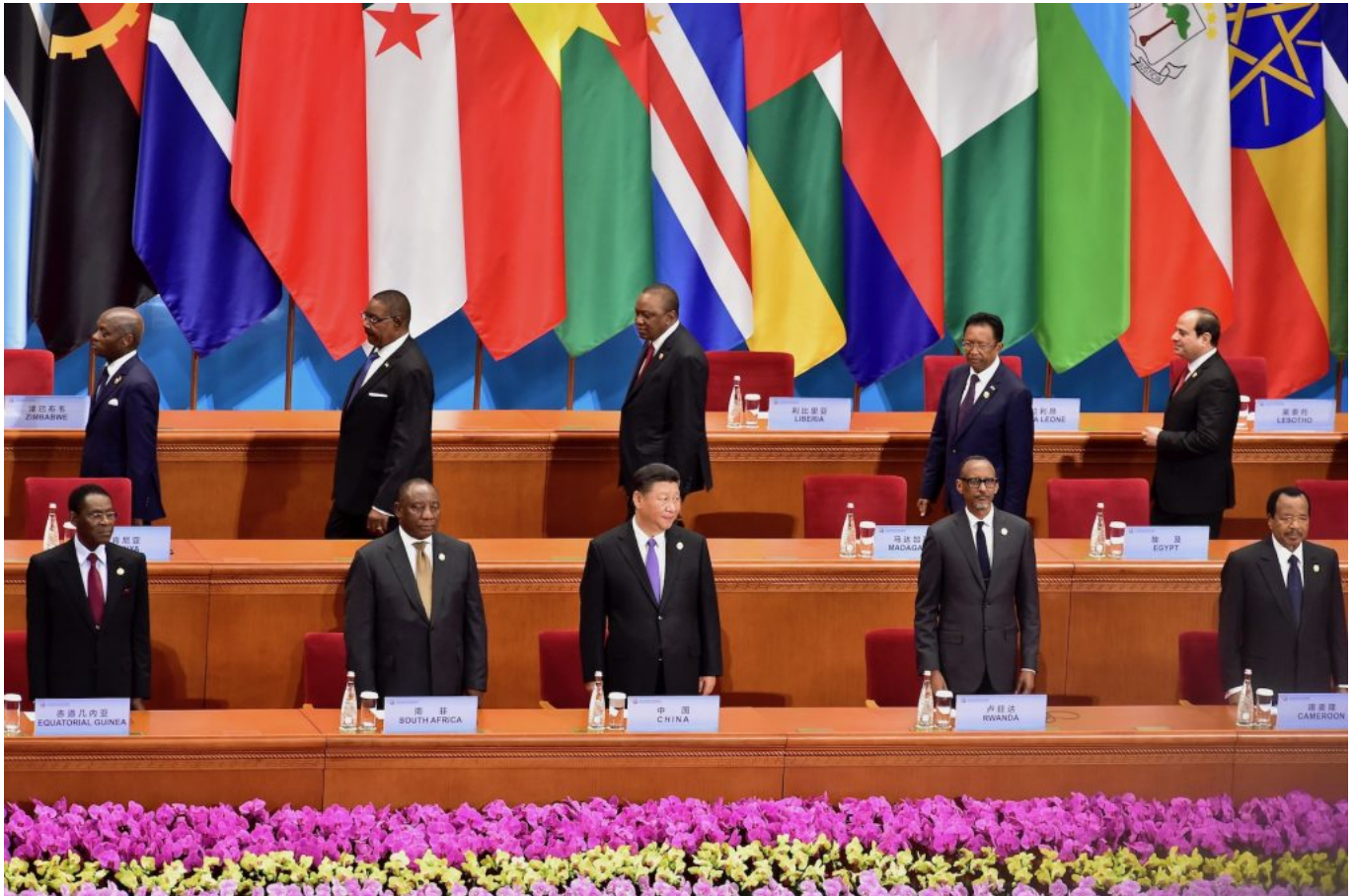
## Introduction

Economic relations between China and Africa date back to the [7th Century](#). China seeks resources from Africa for its growing consumption domestically while African Countries get funds from China to build infrastructure. China funds the construction of infrastructures such as roads, railways, dams, ports, and airports. Chinese state-owned firms build large-scale infrastructure in African countries in exchange for access to minerals or hydrocarbons, such as oil and use this as a way to pay for infrastructure.

The US, UK and France were important participants and competitors to China in the economic and diplomatic drive into Africa. However, [China surpassed the US in 2009 and became the largest trading partner of Africa](#).

In 2014, China built a rail system in Kenya from Nairobi to Mombasa that covers a distance of 300 miles in four hours. It was the most expensive infrastructure after Kenya's independence.

The estimated amount of the project was \$3.6 billion which the Exim Bank of China accounts for 90% of the project. [Today 72% of Kenya debt is owed to China](#) as many projects do not result in supporting the environment but are left with a huge giant debt. In 2012, China showed up interest to built new parliament buildings in seven different countries in Africa and has granted \$32 Million for the regional headquarters of [Economic Community Of West African State \(ECOWAS\)](#) Nigeria. "A country can be conquered and enslaved by only two ways: by sword or by debt," John Adams once stated. A similar case could be elucidated in the China-African context under which the African countries are spiralling into debt.



Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit 2018/ Image source: SupChina

## Budding Cooperation

Initial contact between China and Africa dated back to the mid-8th century during China's [Tang Dynasty](#). However, China's first significant contact occurred with Africa during [Ming Dynasty](#). After taking power in 1912, [Sun Yat-Sen](#) and the Republic of China (ROC) developed official relations with South Africa.

China and Africa share a mutually beneficial economic, political, and regional partnership. Chinese oil companies had gained commendable experience of working in African nations that prepare them for larger projects for the world market. Chinese industry sees African markets for manufacturing goods at low cost. This helps China to gain profit in the global market by selling the same at their set prices. African leaders earn legitimacy through this partnership. Structural Infrastructure helps Africa to avoid the "[resource curse](#)" - Countries with abundant natural resources have lower economic growth, democracy and development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources.

At Bandung Conference in 1955, China showed interest in becoming leaders of the third world along with Africa. The era was referred to as the 'Golden Age' of Sino-African relations. The [Chinese monarchy](#) collapsed in 1912 with the [Xinhai Revolution](#), when the Republic of China (ROC) replaced the [Qing dynasty](#) China was invaded by the [Empire of Japan](#) during World War II. The Civil War resulted in a [division of territory](#) in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the People's Republic of China on the [mainland](#) while the [Kuomintang](#)-led ROC government retreated to the island of Taiwan. Both claim to be the sole [legitimate government of China](#), although the United Nations has recognized the PRC as the sole representation since 1971. Thus, a growing number of African countries switch their recognition from the Republic of China (ROC) to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

## Chinese dominance in Africa

Africa is no longer subservient to the United States. Almost the whole continent is economically and politically allied with China, the world's fastest-emerging powerhouse, which has poured billions of dollars into Africa's continents. Over consumption by China is abusing Africa's natural resources. China is Africa's most important trade partner. In 2016 there was a [trade of \\$48 billion](#) between the US and Africa whereas [\\$128 billion](#) between China and Africa.

China was first and foremost interested in natural resources, particularly oil and gas. Beijing is heavily investing in oil industries in African countries, which has resulted to natural resource exploitation, in order to import more oil globally. Between 2020 and 2027, the European Union's global gateway sought to provide [€300 billion](#) to help rebuild the world. President Biden and [G7 leaders](#) launched a renewed global cooperation.



## Political Legitimacy

China believes that if Sino-African ties function effectively, China's power will rise, culminating in a steady increase in global influence. China has more humanitarian goals than Western governments and companies. Africans believe that China's investment will help to expand infrastructure and transportation in their nations, as well as increase job opportunities.

Beijing's meddling in the domestic regulations and decision of Africa to further their objective which ultimately leads to the legitimate dependence of Africa on Chinese capital. Beijing always used [contractual mechanisms](#) to mandate its involvement in the decision-making process of African governments. By using the broad definition of state interests to reduce the independence of African governments in determining their foreign policies in accordance and in the Interest of china which gradually increases China's legitimacy in Africa.

The Chinese communist party (CCP) began to more aggressively and overtly promote its governance model through three principal means in Africa: [party-to-party exchanges](#) and technical training; [export of surveillance technology](#) and associated norms around the use of technology for citizen control; and [information operations](#) to shape the narrative around a

country's partnership with China and, by association, the ruler or ruling party supportive of the relationship.

CCP training efforts in African countries are expansive. China has pledged 50,000 training to leaders of African civil society, government, and to members of ruling and opposition parties. These efforts have resulted in some successes for the CCP.

In South Africa, the [African National Congress](#) sought to advance its ties with the CCP in the run-up to the 2019 elections to learn about “party discipline and loyalty, as well as “communication machinery and propaganda diffusion”. The CCP welcomed the opportunity to “educate fraternal African political parties on China’s experience in economic development and political governance”. Similarly, Kenya’s ruling [Jubilee Party](#) has also lavished praise on the CCP’s development and governance strategy, and its ability to “unify” China, with President Kenyatta underscoring that Kenya can learn from China’s experience in establishing a united and powerful ruling party to achieve development and social stability.

## **China’s Debt Trap Diplomacy**

Debt-trap diplomacy is a term used in international finance to describe when a creditor country or institution extends debt to a borrowing country in order to boost the lender’s political leverage, either partially or entirely. When a debtor country is unable to meet its repayment obligations, the creditor country is said to lend excessive credit with the goal of obtaining economic or political concessions.

China is currently involved in an estimated 35 African countries and has made contributions to infrastructure including ports, railways and power plants. China has invested more than \$340 billion in Africa. In 2008 China and the Democratic Republic of Congo agreed that the Chinese company would finance \$3 billion worth of infrastructure to build \$3.2 billion [copper and cobalt project](#).

Tonga received a loan from China in 2006 to modernize its infrastructure. as it was facing a financial crisis during 2013 and 2014 when the Exim Bank of China refused to write off the loan expenses, which totaled 44 percent of Tonga’s GDP (GDP).

## **Countries that have fallen into China’s Debt Trap**

### **COUNTRY DEBT TRAP**

ZAMBIA	In 2018, Zambia to sale the entire control of the National Electricity Company, ZESCO to China worth \$548 Million over unpaid debt.
KENYA	Borrowed \$3.6 Billion from the Export-Import Bank of China to build a railway from Mombasa to Nairobi. It then borrowed \$1.5 Billion for extending the railway to Naivasha.
NIGERIA	Next country that might fall into the debt trap of China as it has borrowed a loan of \$3.121 Billion till now.

## China's social engineering - The new oil

Social engineering can be performed anywhere where human interaction is involved. It is the act of exploiting a human weakness to gain access to personal information and protect the system. It is more about manipulating individuals rather than hacking. It includes false promises, false alarms and fictitious threats, a series of cleverly crafted lies, scam emails and text messages with malicious links, and jobs scams which make their attack less suspicious.

Does technology have a normative function to shape human behavior?

In the absence of strong safeguards with fragile democracy, Africa becomes a testing ground for tech-enabled social engineering!

Information disorder expert Eleonore Pauwels argues that the convergence of artificial intelligence and data capture capability is a threat to take out institutions that are [the bedrock of democracy](#).

The rapid emergence of artificial intelligence tech tools across Africa with powerful social media platforms has made data a commodity. Some commentators call it the new oil. Tech tools include biometric databases for tracking population movements at borders, registering voters before elections or documenting key life events like birth, marriage and death. Besides capturing human behavior, likes and preferences, technology potentially has the power to shape it. [Institute for security studies \(ISS\)](#) research shows that '[digital exhaust](#)' we leave behind on the internet and personal biometric information captured on CCTV cameras in shops or when we registered to vote or apply for a driving license provides the raw material for data manipulation in Africa. Human beings are rapidly becoming '[data points](#)' or 'digital bodies and minds' whose exact location and the biometric feature can be matched in real-time, this can have profound implications for personal privacy and security.

It was shown by a case study of how personal data was illegally acquired by political parties

and utilized as [communication strategy by Kenya's election](#) of 2013 and 2017. Social media platforms have already been shut down in Uganda and Ethiopia due to national security threats.



A Chinese engineer and a local construction worker work on a section of the Mombasa-Nairobi standard gauge railway (SGR) in Emali, Kenya October 10, 2015. The China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) tasked with the construction work at a cost of 3.8 billion U.S. dollars is due for completion in mid-2017. REUTERS/Noor Khamis - D1AERZDORFAA

### **China's Dumping Strategy:**

Dumping occurs when exporting country sells a product at a lower price than it sells the same product in its domestic market or below production cost. However, Dumping is not prohibited under the [policies](#) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The local market is a [dumping ground](#) for the excess goods of an exporting market when the latter sells its products in the former at extremely low prices.

China's dumping of cheap products in South Africa destroyed the local market and affected people's health and wellbeing. Impact of China's cheap products in South Africa, adopting secondary research formed data collection. China's unresolved dumping of cheap and illegal

goods in South Africa devastated the local markets to the extent that they shut down as they failed to compete with imported goods, contributing to unemployment.

Products that were significantly affected by Chinese imports are textile, clothing, footwear, leather, electronic products and machinery. In Africa, many textile industries have gone under pressure due to China's domination. Several African manufacturers closed down losing 37% of domestic production capacity, due to job losses 250,000 people lost their livelihoods.

### **Belt and Road Initiative:**

China has made significant inroads into Africa under BRI. It has invested in 52 out of 54 African countries at the bilateral level. African Union has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on BRI cooperation with China. It has signed agreements worth [\\$11 Billion](#) with Mali to finance two cross-country railway projects.

Sao Tome and Principe switched alliance in May 2017 from Taiwan to [One-China Policy](#).

### **Significant trends emerge from China's BRI project in Africa**





## China's aid to Africa

China provides eight types of loan which includes - complete projects, goods and materials, assistance, emergency, Technical cooperation, human resource development cooperation, and debt relief. China's aid to Africa covers agriculture, education, transportation, energy, communications and health. According to the Chinese scholars since 1956 china has provided almost 900 Aid projects to African countries, also including the infrastructure projects in Africa.

China's investment in Africa grew from US\$ 20 million in 2000 to US\$ 3.17 billion in 2011. The billions of dollars that China commits to Africa are repayable in the long-term loans. From 2009 to 2012 China provided US\$ 10 billion to finance Africa which turns out to be US\$ 20 billion in the year 2013-2015.

China provides low-interest loans to nations that rely on commodities such as oil, mineral and resources.

**Country**                      Angola Sudan Ethiopia Nigeria Zimbabwe Kenya

**Loan (In Billion)** \$13.4   \$10   \$14   \$7.23   \$6.08   \$5.7

## Conclusion

China has grown as an economic powerhouse, which has resulted in the. China's communist authorities are enormously strong, having the potential to influence and punish other nations for perceived offences by imposing trade restrictions, taxes, and other barriers on imports entering the country. China aspires to be the dominant power in Asia, both regionally and in terms of population size and defense.

China emphasizes that its ties with Africa are diverse and substantively different from those with the West. Nonetheless, the nature of its North-South trading links with Africa may force Beijing to follow Western methods rather than retaining the friendship of most unequal equals. To market their goods, the Chinese get raw resources such as agricultural items such as cotton. Obtaining raw resources and selling goods involves more than a good marketing agency.

Chinese have been successful in creating a market for its products and services in Africa. They have also successfully developed their own marketing channels deep into the interior of many African countries. At the same time, this makes China a serious rival for local industries and Chinese imports have forced many local factories to close down resulting in job losses in African nations.

Chinese officials also aim to gain political support in Africa by highlighting that China is a Third World country. They, on the other hand, aspire to be a superpower. Chinese diplomats benefit from the global characteristics when advancing Chinese interests in international institutions where African nations may form a significant voting bloc. China is hell-bent on becoming a worldwide power. We cannot afford, like any other global power, to ignore the question of whether it will be a peaceful or menacing player in the global arena. Many signs also point to China's desire to become a military powerhouse.



**CERTIFICATE COURSE IN  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

SIX-WEEK ONLINE COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BY THE KOOTNEETI

**JOIN TODAY!**

team@thekootneeti.com  
courses.thekootneeti.in  
(+91) 120 4565994

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team*

Facebook Comments