Rising China and Africa

Spring Semester 2016
IAFF 6118.12
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Monday 5:10 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Room B-16 – Elliott School
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Course Description and Objective
This course looks at the totality of the China-Africa relationship historically, currently and into the future. It follows six years of research and writing for a book that I co-authored with Josh Eisenman published in 2012 by the University of Pennsylvania Press and titled China and Africa: A Century of Engagement. The course, which covers both North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, will give special attention to the security interests of China in Africa’s 54 countries.

Required Reading
In addition to the book cited above, which is available in the university bookstore, the readings for each class come from chapters in other books, recent academic articles, reports/studies prepared by governments, think tanks, NGOs, international organizations, scholars and journalistic accounts. All required reading except for the text is available by direct link, on the Gelman Library E-Journal system or on Blackboard.

Basis for Grading
Three-quarters of the grade will be based on two papers mutually agreed upon by the student and professor. Please provide on 25 January a one paragraph (double spaced) proposal
that outlines the first paper, which is due 29 February. The one paragraph proposal for the second paper is due on 7 March and the paper itself is due 18 April. Each paper should be double-spaced, 12-point, no less than 10 full pages and no more than 12 pages, including footnotes. In addition to a paper that is strong on substance, I put a premium on clear and concise drafting and accurate footnotes that follow the Chicago system. Do NOT include a bibliography as good footnotes make it unnecessary for short papers. Late papers will be penalized. A 10 page paper will be graded the same as a 12 page paper. I am looking for quality, not quantity. Early in the course, I will email to each student my China-Africa bibliography, which is now about 180 pages. The entries cover all topics dealing with China-Africa relations and should help you identify sources on whatever topic you wish to write about.

One-quarter of the grade will be based on class participation. This is a seminar; regular attendance and student contributions are essential. Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time and have read all required reading. On 1 February, I will ask students to select a subsequent week when each student will make a five to ten minute oral presentation on the seminar topic for that day. These presentations will constitute much of the grade for class participation. Please do not exceed 10 minutes and do NOT summarize the required reading for that day. Pick an issue related to the required reading for that day and expand upon it beyond the required reading. Originality and use of new material will result in a higher grade.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should have a solid understanding of the development and current state of China-Africa relations, where China excels and where it faces major challenges. Students will also learn how China interacts with African regional and sub-regional organizations and other emerging non-African powers on the continent. Finally, they should have some understanding of the implications of China in Africa for the United States and the West generally.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to comply with the strict standards of the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity which can be found at https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/sites/studentconduct.gwu.edu/files/downloads/130722%20Code%20of%20Academic%20Integrity%20-%20Final.pdf. All members of the GWU academic community are expected to demonstrate honesty in all of their work, including the preparation of papers.
Class Schedule

UNIT 1


The first part of the class will be devoted to a review of the syllabus, administrative issues and asking each student to say a few words about himself/herself. In the remaining time, I will comment on the themes in the introductory chapter of Shinn/Eisenman and provide an overview of the China-Africa relationship.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 1 – Introduction.


President Xi Jinping, “Text of Speech at 6th FOCAC Summit on 5 December 2015.” Direct link: http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/12/05/4083s906994.htm.

UNIT 2

1 February: The History of the China-Africa Relationship.

Most of this session will consist of a lecture on the development of the China-Africa relationship since 1949, although I will encourage students to ask questions and contribute their own views. We will also use this class to determine which of the next twelve sessions you want to select for your oral presentation.

Be prepared to select a unit for your oral presentation (maximum 2 students per unit).

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 2 – A Historical Overview of China-Africa Relations.


UNIT 3
8 February: The Importance of State-to-State Relations and FOCAC.

China’s strength in its ties with Africa is the fact that 50 countries recognize Beijing (three recognize Taipei and Gambia recognizes neither as of this writing) and China has cordial relations with all 50 governments. China emphasizes the state-to-state relationship above all else. It has institutionalized this relationship with the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Required Reading:


UNIT 4

22 February: Political Relations and the Role of the CPC.

China’s political relations with Africa have been based on support for state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries. China makes frequent use of senior Communist Party of China (CPC) officials in its interaction with both government and party leaders in Africa. The leaders of ruling African political parties are also often the guest of the CPC. This interaction, with a few exceptions, does not extend to African opposition party officials. This unit also covers some of China’s sensitive internal issues that have implications for its relations with African countries.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 3 – Political Relations.


UNIT 5

29 February: China-Africa Trade Relations.

In 2009, China passed the United States and became the largest trading partner with Africa’s 54 countries by dollar value. China’s trade lead has grown in subsequent years. While total African trade is roughly in balance with China, many individual African countries have huge trade surpluses or deficits with China. Some of the African countries with large trade deficits are becoming concerned about the trade imbalance. Perhaps more than any other sector, trade defines the importance of the China-Africa relationship.

The first paper is due today.
UNIT 6

7 March: China’s Investment in Africa and Africa’s Investment in China.

No one knows how much money Chinese companies and individuals have invested in Africa. As of July 2015, China’s official cumulative FDI total for Africa was $27 billion, although other tracking organizations put the figure as high as $61 billion. It is not clear what China considers as FDI and it acknowledges that its figure only captures investment that is reported officially. It misses investment that goes through tax shelters such as Hong Kong and the Cayman Islands. Chinese investment flows to Africa in recent years seem to be about the same as those from the United States. Cumulative FDI from the United States and other major European countries exceeds the cumulative figure for China as these countries have been investing over a longer period. Information on African investment in China is equally sketchy but an interesting area for research.

The one paragraph for the second paper is due today.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 5 – Investment and Assistance – pp. 128-43.


UNIT 7

21 March: China’s Aid to Africa.

Although reliable Chinese aid statistics for each African country are not available (China treats bilateral aid figures as a state secret), China is becoming an increasingly important aid donor. In the past couple of years, its annual OECD-equivalent aid to Africa has probably reached about $2.5 billion. This compares to $8 billion from the United States. Most of the aid is in the form of concessionary loans. There are also some cash and in-kind grants. China has a good record on debt cancellation. More than half of China’s global aid goes to Africa. China emphasizes that its aid, unlike that from the West, has no political conditionality.

Required Reading:


UNIT 8

28 March: Media, Educational and Cultural Links.

This is perhaps the softest of China’s soft power effort in Africa. China has emphasized all three areas since the beginning of its interaction with Africa in the late 1950s. The media engagement has evolved from an early ham-handed approach by Xinhua to a much more sophisticated operation that has become the largest news service in Africa. It has been joined by increasingly strong programming from China Radio International and China Central Television. China offers about 5,000 fully paid scholarships annually, although the program remains hindered by the language issue. It also pays considerable attention to cultural exchanges but has been unable to compete with Western music and films, European football and even Indian films. Confucius Institutes are among the most recent additions to China’s soft power in Africa.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 7 – Media, Education, and Cultural Relations and Ties with Chinese Communities in Africa.


Africa is a low security priority for China compared to countries on its periphery and Western powers. Nevertheless, Africa has grown in importance because of China’s reliance on African oil and minerals. China is a major arms supplier to Africa and has at least a minimal security relationship with all 50 countries that recognize Beijing. The estimated one to two million Chinese nationals living in Africa have also experienced increasing security threats. Finally, China is a significant provider of troops to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa.

**Required Reading:**


UNIT 10

11 April: China’s Naval Expansion into the Western Indian Ocean.

All of the oil and minerals exported from Africa to China pass through the Western Indian Ocean. Safe transport of these products in addition to other imports and China’s exports to Africa constitute a growing security concern. Chinese vessels and crews have been subject to attack and capture by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. As China expands its nuclear submarine fleet and builds its carrier capacity, it clearly has in mind a naval role that goes well beyond the South China Sea. This includes the Western Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa. Eventually, China can be expected to extend its naval interest to Africa’s entire coast line.

Required Reading:


UNIT 11

18 April: China’s Interaction with African Sub-Regional and Regional Organizations.

Little has been written about China’s interaction with African sub-regional and regional organizations such as the African Union, Southern African Development Community, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. This is an increasingly important part of China’s engagement with Africa, especially at the economic level, and merits more attention than it has been given. It is also a sector where China has accorded a higher priority than many Western countries.

The second paper is due today.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 4 – Trade Relations – pp. 121-27.


Francis Ikome, “The Role and Place of the African Union in the Emerging China-Africa Partnership,” in Chinese and African Perspectives on China in Africa (eds.) Axel Harneit-
UNIT 12

25 April: Implications of Rising China-Africa Ties for Other Emerging Nations in Africa.

China is not the only country rising in Africa. The goal here is to underscore that China is not only competing with Western nations but other emerging nations, which compete with each other, with Western powers and with China. All of these new players increase both the opportunities and challenges for African countries and complicate the diplomatic playing field on the continent.

Required Reading:

David Shinn, “BRICS and Africa,” Remarks at the National Defense University (19 March 2013). Direct link: [http://davidshinn.blogspot.com](http://davidshinn.blogspot.com) (Go to right hand column under Other Issues.)


UNIT 13

26 April: Implications of Rising China-Africa Ties for the United States and the West.

The rise of China in Africa presents challenges for the United States and the West but also opens some areas for cooperation. There is obvious competition in trade, investment and the winning of contracts and potential competition for access to strategic resources and sometimes support for political positions in international forums. But there are possibilities for cooperation in peacekeeping, supporting political stability in Africa and enhancing economic development, especially in the areas of health care and agriculture.

Required Reading:


UNIT 14

27 April: The Future of the China-Africa Relationship, Challenges and Lessons Learned.

China is in Africa to stay. The relationship is important to both sides. But the more engaged China becomes in Africa the more complicated the relationship becomes and the more problems and challenges both parties must confront. There are many more Chinese living in Africa than Americans and, increasingly, they are encountering problems. The impact of China’s activities in Africa and its policies on human rights, democratization, the environment, respect for labor laws, and competition with African traders and small industry presents challenges for China. For their part, individual African countries must maximize the benefits they obtain from such a huge player on the international stage.

Required Reading:

Shinn/Eisenman – Chapter 12 – Conclusion: Looking Forward.


