

Africa in China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract:-China's 'One Belt One Road' Initiative has been billed as its most ambitious project ever in trying to shape and influence behavior in the international system in line with her growing stature. At the same time, growing Sino-Africa relations have been the subject of scholarly debate with supporters taking an optimistic view, also presented by China herself, of this relationship being a win-win partnership. Critics led by the US argue China is just using Africa to extract resources for its use, an allegation she refutes. The authors therefore sought to look at Sino-African relations but focusing on the implementation of 'One Belt, One Road' in the African continent. Being the centre piece of China's foreign policy since 2013, a study on OBOR in Africa will give an understanding and hopefully answer some questions surrounding these relations. The lack of official bilateral agreements between China and some African countries has been examined, together with the possibility of expansion of the OBOR initiative to cover more African states.

Key Words: *China-Africa, One Belt One Road, Soft Power.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In a span of 3 decades, China has transformed from an agricultural, self-contained and inward looking state into a global economic powerhouse second only to the United States (Cheung & Lee, 2015). In line with her growing stature in the international system, China has sought to exert influence on the global stage, from Latin America, Middle East, South East Asia, to Africa (Freidberg, 2005). One way of achieving this and as part of China's 'global grand strategy' is the 21st Century Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative, informally known as 'One Belt, One Road'. In the same vein, Sino-African relations have grown exponentially since the 1955 Bandung conference. According to the 2011 economic outlook report, China has surpassed the US as Africa's single largest trading partner in volumes¹ from a paltry USD 1 billion in 1980 to USD 200 billion in 2014², leading to critics and supporters to hail and question this new partnership between Africa and China at the same time. This paper seeks to re-look at this partnership through the lenses of the 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative. It seeks to find answers to the extent of Africa's involvement in China's global strategy, its status in Africa, projected benefits and how they will be distributed between China and Africa, and future prospects. By answering these questions, the researcher hopes to shed more light on the position Africa holds in China's plans, China is important to Africa, but is Africa also important to China? Or is it a case of same path, different actors in perpetuating the bit-part player and down-trodden supplier of raw materials that Africa was relegated by the Western world, only that now, China is involved. China's deepening engagement with Africa has led to it being labeled as a new colonialism and or neo imperialism (Naidu, 2007).

1.1 The Initiative: A glimpse into China's Strategy

The original 'Silk Road' was established over 2100 years ago during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-24 AD) to promote trade and cultural development between China, Asia, Africa and Europe and covered over 7000km (Li et al, 2015). The 'New Silk Road Economic Belt' christened fondly as 'One Belt One Road' initiative or *Yidaiyili* was introduced by China's President Xi Jinping as the centerpiece of his foreign and economic policy in 2013. First to be introduced in September 2013 at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan was the 'Silk Road Economic Belt,' followed closely in October by the second part, the 'Maritime Silk Road' announced in Indonesia (Ravi, 2016). It is by far the most significant and far-reaching project China has ever embarked on (Varlare & Putten, 2015). However, first to moot the idea was a Chinese scholar, Wang who in 2012 wrote an

¹Pigato & Tang (2015) quote the Economic Outlook Report of 2011 and put the total trade volume at USD170 billion in 2013.

² Liu (2016) in his paper about China's Naval plans in Djibouti and its consequences.

opinion article to the Global Times conceptualizing this (Li, et al 2015; Callahan, 2016). The blue print dubbed 'Chinese Marshall Plan' by some critics and defended by supporters, will define his administration and legacy. The One Belt One Road project or OBOR is essentially comprised of two interdependent and interrelated concepts; the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the 'Maritime Silk Road'. Essentially, the 'belt' is comprised of a network of roads, rails, power grids and gas pipelines that run over land from Central China in Xi'an, the capital of Shanxi Province through Central Asia, to Moscow, Rotterdam and Venice (EURASIA). This conglomerate of infrastructural projects will therefore pass through a number of countries. The Maritime Silk Road (MSR) on the other hand is its oceanic counterpart. This involves the construction of a network of sea ports in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. It will essentially connect South East Asia, Oceania, East Africa and North Africa through the Mediterranean. The core pillars of the initiative are 'promotion of policy coordination, facilitating connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration people-to-people bonds' (Varlare & Putten, 2015). The African section of the belt and road is of concern for this paper. It covers three countries; Kenya, Djibouti and Egypt.

Figure 1: The 21st Century New Silk Road



Source: Li, 2015

1.2 One Belt, One Road in Numbers

The Initiative cuts across 3 continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. It targets 4.4 billion people in 67 countries directly representing 63% of the total global population. At a GDP of 2.1 trillion US dollars, this represents 29% of the total world GDP (Leverett et al, 2015 as quoted in Fasslabend, 2015). Two financial sources, the Asia Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB, USD100 billion) and the Silk Road Fund (SRF) with a funding portfolio of USD 40 billion will bankroll the bulk of the projects within the belt and road (Cheung & Lee, 2015). The project impact as a conclusion of these numbers is therefore substantial.

II. STATUS OF 'ONE BELT, ONE ROAD' IN AFRICA

According to Xinhua News Agency, 3 countries in Africa are directly involved in the belt and road initiative; Kenya, Djibouti and Egypt. However, the extent of their involvement is unclear, with many documents indicating Egypt as the sole African state to be involved in this initiative. Various factors have been attributed for the inclusion of these sole 3 African states into the center piece of China's 21st Century diplomacy;

2.1 Realism, security and global geopolitics.

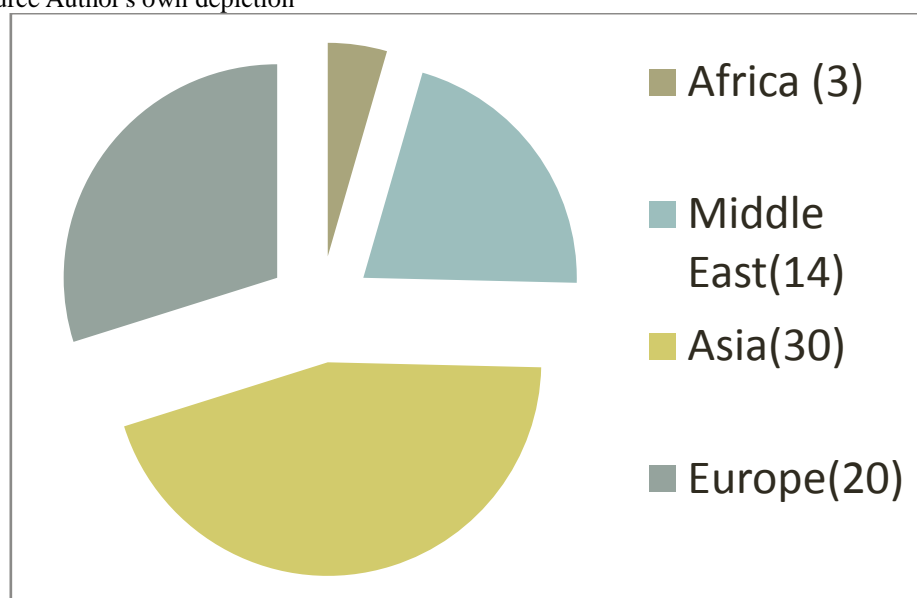
World politics has been characterized by power politics. The horn of Africa region and the Suez Canal has been traditionally a Western-controlled zone with the US and her allies being the primary guarantor for maritime security. Whichever powerful state controls the security of that region, also controls the maritime trade routes between Asia, Europe and Africa. Egypt and Djibouti, 2 of the three African states part of the OBOR are strategically located at the heart of global geo-politics playground. Djibouti is quite unique as it now hosts military bases for the US, France and now China. While the fight against pirates has often been cited as the propellant behind this, one can't quite push the power struggles as being the true variable for these great powers having such a heavy military presence in the region. The entry into Djibouti and the region by China could tilt and re-align security partnerships that have underpinned global order since 1945 (The Sun, 22nd August, 2016).

For Egypt, its strategic geographical location at the Suez Canal gives it an indispensable status, explaining why it's the only African nation to officially sign bilateral agreements with China on One Belt, One Road. The initiative simply can not afford to exclude Egypt. On the other hand, the inclusion of Djibouti has been a result of 'logical' assumptions than from official pronouncements. This can purely be explained under the quest for global dominance and the geopolitics of the horn of Africa as stated earlier. With 30% of world shipping going through the entrance of the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean and on to the Suez Canal, Djibouti and Egypt are very critical (Financial Times, April 1, 2016). Though Kenya is on the semi-official route map of the OBOR, no official declaration has been made by both governments. Its inclusion makes an interesting case as no direct security, political, economic or trade link can be noticed from the onset. Kenya is neither resource rich, nor is it a high trading partner to Beijing. Its location along the East African Coast of the Indian ocean, in relation to some key China partners however, can give pointers into why it was coopted into OBOR.

Geographically, Kenya borders South Sudan which is a key exporter of oil to China. With the violence between North and South Sudan being far from over, the need for an alternative route to export oil to China is real³. Kenya offers this alternative hence perhaps explaining her inclusion in OBOR.

2.2 OBOR presence by region

Figure 2: Source Author's own depiction



Looking at the geographical reach of this initiative, out of a possible 67 countries that are a part of it, only 3 countries (representing a paltry 4%) are from Africa. The World Bank estimates a cumulative GDP of USD395.8 billion for these three African countries combined, with Egypt contributing the largest share of 330.8 billion US dollars in GDP (World Bank, 2016). Together, these countries also have a combined population of over 138 million people.

III. CORE PROJECTS AND PROJECTED IMPACT BY COUNTRY

3.1 Projected Impact in Kenya

With a GDP of 63.40 billion US dollars and a population of 46 million as at 2015 (World Bank, 2016), Kenya is the point of entry for the maritime silk road into Africa from Asia. Through an analysis of documents and news items, the projects linked to OBOR initiative could be deciphered. Amongst the core projects are upgrading of the Mombasa Port, building of a new ultra-modern port in Lamu, building a new standard gauge railway line linking Mombasa port, the capital Nairobi, and the land locked neighboring countries. The railway and pipeline is envisaged to link the ports in Kenya, to oil fields in South Sudan and Uganda, while also joining with Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi facilitating exports for these countries' products.

The railway line is expected to cover 2,700km with phase I, the 610 kilometer stretch from Mombasa to Nairobi construction underway. The estimated cost is 25 billion US dollars, with China's Exim Bank being the principal

³ Zhou (2014) argues that the 15 month long stand off caused by disagreement on transit fee remittance between the two Sudans affected oil production and export to China.

financier covering 90% of the costs.⁴ Financing for the construction of the new port and the pipeline is unclear, with ambiguity on what role the OBOR institutions AIIB and SRF have in the Kenyan chapter of this initiative. Worth noting here is the lack of a clear bilateral agreement specifically highlighting how Kenya and China will work towards the new Silk Road venture.

In Kenya the most salient impact is on the infrastructural front, with an estimated foreign direct capital investment of USD 25 billion on the railway modernization, pipeline from Kenya to South Sudan at USD 4 billion, while Lamu port and associated infrastructure investment will be USD 27 billion when complete (Daily Nation, March 6 2016). This is capital which Kenya as a country cannot raise, but OBOR and its associated financial institutions can come in and bridge the deficit. When fully operational, these projects will benefit oil export from Uganda and South Sudan, whose conflict with Sudan has led to challenges on exporting her oil to China and other countries. At the height of successful oil production by Sudan before the conflict, China imported 5% of its oil from the country (Shinn, 2014). However, due to the conflict and resultant separation between the North and South, Sudan retained 25% of the oil fields, while South Sudan retained 75%. With conflict still persisting, China's investment in Sudanese oil is not bearing fruits as optimum production of oil has not been attained. The Kenyan route therefore offers an opportunity for South Sudan to export her oil to China without being frustrated by the North, a win-win situation for South Sudan and China. On the same breath, discovery of oil fields in Northern Uganda also diversifies oil import source markets for China. Uganda can export her oil through Kenya, as she is landlocked. With the Kenyan route secure, China has also taken care of any prospects for future OBOR expansion into the African hinterland, while getting a strategic port of call in the event of any security challenge in the horn of Africa region.

3.2 Projected Impact in Egypt

Tiezzi (2016) argues that, without Egypt, the Maritime Silk road is unfeasible. This makes Egypt an indispensable member of OBOR. In fact, its centrality to the initiative explains why it's the only African country whose President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi formally signed a memorandum of understanding with China with regards to the OBOR initiative in January 2016. The Suez Canal is the transit point between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. As an added sweetener financing to the core project with the 'road' China gave USD 1 billion to Egyptian central bank, and USD700 million loan to the National Bank. Separately, the expansion of the Suez Canal over a 10-year period, and building of a new administrative capital for Egypt have been initiated, with the colossal sums of USD 230 million and USD 45 billion respectively being the costs that China will foot.

The infrastructural impact has already been highlighted. However, aside from this, the OBOR initiative in Egypt is expected to have other positive impacts. The China-Egypt Suez Economic Zone a result of the initiative will create over 10,000 jobs for Egyptians. Egypt will also get a brand new administrative capital aside from Cairo. President Al-Sisi gets to have a partner in China for his ambitious projects. On the Chinese side, with the completion and operation of the Suez Canal falling under Chinese control, this comes with substantial influence on power and security dynamics within the region previously dominated by the West. Tiezzi (2016) says "imagine the New Suez Canal, completed with Chinese financing and managed by a Chinese company as the gateway between Europe and Asia". The benefits will be immense. Chinese footprints in matters of global security, and specifically the Mediterranean region will be felt.

3.3 Projected Impact in Djibouti

The involvement of Djibouti in OBOR is not as clear as Egypt's. However, there are 14 megaprojects funded by China as part of the belt and road initiative, worth 9.8 billion US dollars. These are aside from the military base at port Dolareh, which is the main investment aimed at cushioning the maritime route's security interests in East Africa and the Indian Ocean (Edens, 2015). This base is of strategic importance to China as it is the first Chinese military base of any kind, outside of Chinese soil (Linehan, 2016). Officially, the base is to shove up anti-piracy in the area, but speculation is rife that it could be used to guard the trade artillery linking Asia and Europe, through the Suez Canal which China is modernizing. The base will act as 'comprehensive supply point' for Chinese ships, with berths for loading and off-loading cargo. The estimated cost for construction of the military base is USD 590 billion, and will mainly be supported by China (Liu, 2016). Military expert Li Jie summarizes the significance of this undertaking, "the depot will play an important role in

⁴ BBC (May 12, 2014) and CNN (May 15, 2016) reports how the East African community will eventually be linked together by the railway line, with China being the principal financier.

the 'one belt, one road' strategy and enable China to respond rapidly to emergencies in North Africa, Middle East and South Asia"⁵.

With a population of 887,900 in 2015, and a combined GDP of 1.589 billion US dollars, Djibouti does not offer much in terms of market and trade for Chinese products. Other reasons besides trade therefore informed China's decision to enter Djibouti into the MSR initiative. China's entry into the country with a military base makes Djibouti to be the most important ally in political and security matters for 3 of the 5 permanent members of the UNSC. Aside from China, Djibouti also hosts a French military base and the biggest US base in Africa, Camp Lemonnier. Russia is also thought to harbor ambitions of setting up a base here (Edens, 2015; Linehan, 2016). This has propelled the small horn of Africa nation to the coveted status of being almost invincible in world politics. Aside from the politics, economically, the USD 1.589 billion dollar GDP African country (World Bank, 2015), is in dire need of capital. As part of the OBOR financing, China will inject 9.8 billion US dollars to infrastructural projects other than the military port base, which will cost a further USD 590 billion⁶. This is a substantial improvement in its infrastructural investment. China on the other hand, gets a strategic position in the geo-politics of North Africa, Middle East and Europe, a sphere previously dominated by the US. It's reported that China's entry into Djibouti was actively opposed by the US, even going as far as proposing the US to double its rent for Camp Lemonnier, due to its implications to the geo-politics of the region⁷. China has therefore clearly scored one against the US in the horn of Africa. This, coupled with her control of the Suez Canal, will give her immense powers.

IV. OBOR IN AFRICA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As earlier shown, Africa's inclusion in the Belt and Road Initiative is minute. While much has been said about growing Sino-African relations, a study of Africa in China's most ambitious ever project does not support the importance that China places in Africa as a region and continent. 3 countries out of 67 in the OBOR do not in any way support the claim that Africa is an important ally to China. In fact, China's '2015 in Africa' policy paper does not mention 'One Belt, One Road' in Africa. In its current states, what opportunities and challenges does OBOR have in Africa?

4.1 Opportunities

Current Infrastructural Projects in Africa

The 1,780km Tanzania Zambia Railway line (TAZARA) has symbolized China's presence in Africa since the 1970's. Currently China is involved in numerous mega infrastructural projects in Africa. For purposes of this paper, some of those which lie within the mandate of OBOR will be highlighted. Top on the list is the 2,700km East African Railway line. This includes Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. As indicated earlier, extent of involvement of OBOR affiliated institutions in financing the Kenyan part are not clear, though China's Exim bank has been linked.⁸ Another major railway project is the 1,315km Kano-Lagos railway line in Nigeria, the 1,302km Bengue railway line in Angola (which brings to total 4,000km railway in Angola constructed by China), 560km Belinga-Santa Clara railway in Gabon, 172km railway in Libya and 430km rail in Mauritania to name but a few. To put this into perspective, the entire African rail network is 50,000km (Executive Research Associates, 2009). On the other hand, China is constructing port facilities in Kenya, Tanzania, Gabon, and Djibouti among others, with most road construction being handled by Chinese contractors, using Chinese financing. The 1302km Angola railway line will be linked with Angola-Zambia and TAZARA in future. On port construction, China is involved in construction of the Lamumega port in Kenya, Bagamoyo port in Tanzania, Santa Clara deep water port in Gabon amongst others⁹. It's safe to say even without OBOR therefore, China is heavily involved in opening up Africa.

What Can OBOR Offer On Infrastructure?

⁵2(b)Liu clearly highlights the fact that though China pushes the narrative of OBOR being an economic idea, security and geo-political implications will be felt with its entry in Africa through their base in Djibouti.

⁶2(c)

⁷2(d)

⁸ These figures are quoted from The Executive Research Associates 2009 report on 'China in Africa' and more rail projects are expected to have been undertaken since then.

⁹ 8(b)

Firstly, with China involved in all these infrastructural projects in Africa, coupled with OBOR's vision for improving connectivity among countries, the initiative will offer a centralized, clear vision, and concerted effort in streamlining infrastructural development in Africa. A case in point is the railway line in Angola which is complete on their side of the border, but under-utilized because neither Democratic Republic of Congo nor Zambia have linked up to connect to the port, hence hindering efforts to export their products. Secondly, capital for infrastructural development in Africa comes from various Chinese bank loans under individual bilateral agreements entered into by these countries. Through OBOR, the capital inflow can be clearly centrally monitored through the AIIB and the SRF. This need is further strengthened with China signing a memorandum of understanding with the African Union (AU) in January 2015 to connect all 54 countries with high speed rails, ports and roads. The traditional 'equatorial land bridge' which is the natural trade route between East and West Africa can be a good starting point for OBOR in Africa expansion. This route begins in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo's, Central African Republic, to the West in Douala Cameroon.

Figure 3: The Equatorial Land Bridge, Source



Trade

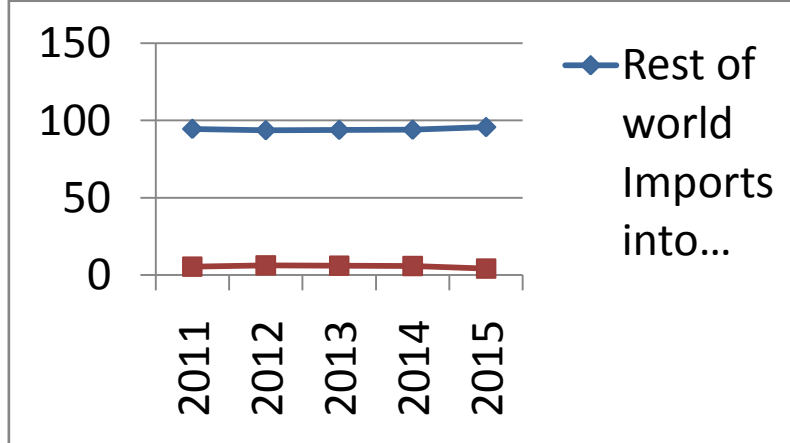
According to the 2011 Economic Outlook Report as quoted in Pigato and Tang (2015) posit that, China has surpassed the United States in Africa in terms of trade and investment. China represents 1/4 of trade for sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) up from 2.3% in 1985, with 1/3 of China's energy imports coming in from SSA.¹⁰ This trade is however, both incoming and outgoing. Trade between China and Africa reached a new high of 126.9 billion US dollars in 2010 (Lu, 2011). China imports from Africa mainly natural resources like oil (64%), iron ore and metals (24%), food and other agricultural products (5%), the remaining 7% is comprised of finished products.¹¹ Africa on the other hand offers a ready untapped market for Chinese products. One of the core partners in BRICS is South Africa.

¹⁰1(b) Pigato and Tang also quote data from UNCTAD to show that over 2,200 Chinese enterprises operate from Africa, with a bulk of these being private firms.

¹¹ Lu Yong (April 25, 2011) in his article gives a breakdown of how trade is conducted between China and some select African countries.

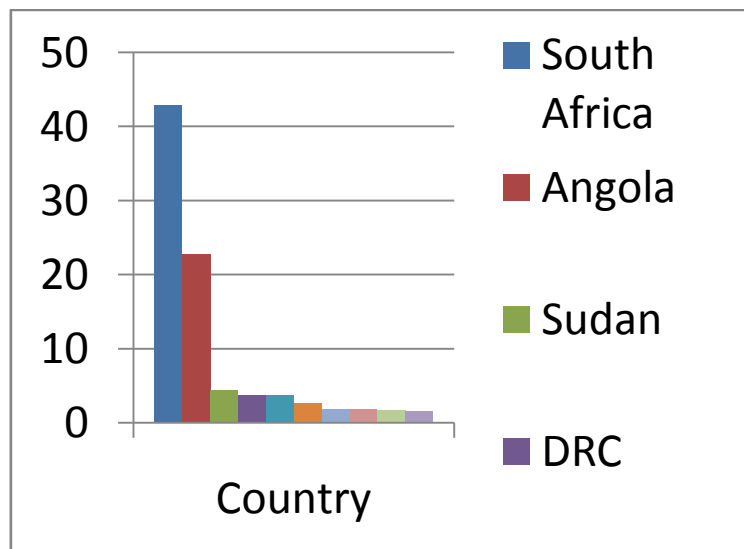
However, there remain concerns over the serious trade imbalances that exist between African countries on one hand and China. BBC and Xinhua report that in 2015, imports from Africa to China declined by up to 40% while commercial relations shrunk by 18.3% compared to 2014. This can be attributed to the maturing and slowing down Chinese economy in general. (Mail & Guardian, 13th Jan 2016)

Figure 4: China's Trade with Africa versus the rest of the World % trade



From the chart above, Sino-African trade, as a percentage of her total global trade, stands at 4%. There is need for more concerted efforts to improve this, and OBOR offers an ample opportunity for redress. A look at the top trading partners who constitute this percentage of trade is necessary to give more perspective.

Figure 3: China's Top Trading Partners in Africa 2015



Source: Tralac, Trade Law Centre www.tralac.org

From the Trade Law Centre data, none of China's top 10 trading partners in Africa is involved in the OBOR. Why China's main trading partner and fellow BRICS partner South Africa is not part of the OBOR initiative is difficult to explain. It would therefore make economic sense to include the 'great equatorial land bridge' as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which would at least connect Sudan, the two Congo's and Angola close by, which together are part of the top 10 China's trading partners in Africa. Those countries not directly on the equatorial land bridge route are at least close by and expansion can be done in future to accommodate them. Successful implementation of the OBOR throughout the African continent will have the added effect of improving intra Africa trade. Currently standing at about 10-15%, trade among African countries is the lowest

compared to all the other continents (North America has 40% while Europe has 60% intraregional trade)¹². The multiplier effect this has would most definitely propel Africa into the growth path.

With a combined GDP of USD1.572trillion according to purchasing power parity¹³, an Africa that is interconnected to the rest of world and China in particular, offers a ready market for Chinese goods in an era of its slowing down economy, while also diversifying sources of raw materials for Chinese industry.

Increase China's Soft Power

China's fellow competitors in global influence, enjoy considerable advantage in Africa due to colonialism and history that exists between Africa and the West. Joseph Nye (1990) defines soft power as when 'one country gets other countries to want what it wants'. This means, the country uses attraction to get support by other states rather than the traditional use of military force and coercion. China has over the years strived to increase its soft power over other competitors. Through her slogan of 'peaceful development' (*hepingfazhan*) she has sought to create a niche for herself as a peace loving, development minded global citizen, who has noble intention in her relations with other states. (Yuan-kang, 2010). Indeed, this rhetoric has been repeatedly cited by Chinese diplomatic officials, and has earned China many friends. OBOR as a grand strategy, squarely falls within the realm of peaceful development as espoused, with its commitment to peace and economic prosperity along the belt and road, and amongst all states involved. In a world dominated by the US hegemony and influence in virtually all the spheres, perhaps building soft power is the only way China can earn the trust of her neighbors, while at the same time building a modern state both in terms of her people, economy, and military. Any other strategy other than a soft peaceful rise, might trigger US counterbalancing measures and perhaps destabilize Chinese society, leading to civil unrest and other issues that might curtail accumulation of power and her rise. Assigning primacy over economic matters therefore is designed to prevent drawing attention to her military pursuits, which would attract counterbalancing measures leading to a Soviet-style collapse, while earning China allies both regionally and globally (Goldstein, 2005 as quoted in Yuan-kang, 2010). This is essentially, one goal of OBOR. In essence, through OBOR, China's vision of a new modernity, characterized by free flowing ideas, goods, services and people to people engagement, and that shared economic future, common prosperity, would replace suspicion, competition and power play.¹⁴ Callahan (2016) argues in his paper 'China's "Asian Dream": The Belt Road Initiative and the new regional order' that Beijing is using new ideas like 'China dream' and 'Asian dream' to build what Chinese leaders call a 'community of shared destiny.' This community begins in Asia which China at the epicenter, and would gradually aim to conquer the global order. This is the gist of China's new vision of global governance to replace the Western fronted status quo. Compared to the US, UK, Germany and Japan, China has less soft power abilities in Africa. These countries have for many years used language and culture (largely due to colonization), and through aid and donor agencies. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has acted to instill democratic ideals of the US in Africa, the Bretton woods institutions have propagated Western free-market policies, while United Kingdom Agency for International Development (UKAID) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have served to further UK's and Japan's soft power aspirations. China on the other hand has risen largely on a different path. It has none of these organizations to further her soft power in Africa. OBOR as a source of soft power is not on the projects themselves being implemented in Africa, but the 'Beijing consensus' which offers an anti-thesis to the 'Washington consensus' (Gill & Huang, 2006). The 'Beijing consensus' is one which does not give a standard solution to all situations, but which encourages development based on the unique circumstances of individual states, and a 'ruthless willingness to experiment and innovate'. While for very long the US and her allies pushed the rhetoric that economic freedom is intertwined with political freedom (Washington consensus), over the years, the Chinese model has earned many admirers all over the globe. An Australian opinion piece entitled 'Chinese model passes the test' and *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman's confession that he was 'envious of the Chinese political system, where leaders can, and do, just order that problems be solved' are prominent examples of admiration of the Beijing consensus¹⁵. As part of this new idea from China, OBOR will add

¹² United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration (uneca.org).

¹³ World bank (2015) databank.worldbank.org

¹⁴ Ravi (2016) argues that, Silk Road is a brand that envisions cooperation amongst all states in an equal footing, cooperation and togetherness as opposed to super power relations witnessed now. The Silk Road brand would therefore gain track and improve China's ranking in the world.

¹⁵ Friedman (2009) in his New York Opinion piece entitles 'Our One Party Democracy' showed a changing opinion about Washington and Beijing consensus.

credence to China's claim of inclusive development, as opposed to similar initiatives by the US (like the Marshall plan for rebuilding Europe).¹⁶

OBOR's focus on trade between Africa and China, and the inclusion of the continent in this initiative will boost further the commitment China shows to Africa, not due to any ulterior motives but as a true ally of Africa, thereby furthering the narrative in support of the 'Beijing consensus' as the best for Africa to replace the failed 'Washington consensus' fronted by the Bretton woods institutions and the West for many years. While the West emphasized on governance, political and economic reform along what they thought was acceptable to them in order to access development funds in the 1990's (through the Structural Adjustment Programs by World Bank and IMF), OBOR and affiliate financial institutions are cognizant of the fact that one-size-fits-all solutions are not realistic. Hence, they let states handle their own internal matters while helping them access the funding they require for their infrastructural development. The immense 'soft power' that will arise from this will propel China into great heights in global politics.

4.2 Challenges to OBOR in Africa

Intra and Inter-State Conflicts

The biggest challenge to OBOR in Africa is the state of perpetual warfare experienced throughout the continent. War and conflicts have exacted a heavy burden to Africa's development since time immemorial. Zeleza (2008) as quoted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) highlighted the five different types of conflicts that have plagued Africa; anticolonial, imperial, international, intra-state and inter-state conflicts. At present, many countries in Africa are experiencing wars of 'regime change' with the Democratic Republic of Congo being a perfect example, while the Greater Sudan 'War of Devolution' led to splitting into North and South. In time though, South Sudan has also started experiencing its own war, what can be called 'inter-communal insurrection'.¹⁷ Conflicts are not limited to these, with Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo Brazaville, Angola, Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Libya, Central African Republic, just a few of the African states to get into war and violence within the last decade or so. Greig, Mason and Hamner (2016) have identified and georeferenced over 73 different civil conflicts in Africa. In their paper, they argue that, conflicts begin, continue and end from depending on the logic behind the war.¹⁸ The potential gain from these wars is mostly control of massive natural resources which motivates parties to engage in long and drawn out wars. These wars have come with massive economic and infrastructural damage to the countries affected. In South Sudan alone, China imports 5% of its oil when operations are at full capacity.¹⁹ However, the civil war within South Sudan itself, and conflict with the neighboring Sudan, has disrupted oil production from the oil fields, and subsequent shipping of this oil to China. Zhou (2014) goes further to posit that, the war in Sudan means production was reduced by over 30% capacity from 245,000 barrels of oil per day, to less than 160,000 barrels per day. Operations in oil blocks 1, 2 and 4 were completely shut down in December 2013 following outbreak of war, and Chinese oil personnel evacuated from site. This is aside from the shutdown occasioned from conflict between the two Sudans with regards to transit fees between the two Sudans. While Sudan was demanding a fee of 30 USD per barrel of oil pumped through its pipeline, South Sudan wanted to pay the standard worldwide fee of 3USD per barrel.²⁰

¹⁶ In the Marshall plan, states access to funding for development was strictly tied with certain political and economic conditions given by the US being met. On the contrary, OBOR offers the exact opposite as it stresses on non-interference in matters within states.

¹⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues war of regime change is one which is geared towards toppling the existing leadership of a country and replacing it with another. War of devolution is where an ethnic or religious marginalized group fights against the dominant group, while intercommunal insurrections is between sporadic and historically charged conflict between mutually suspecting communities.

¹⁸ The logic informing the choice of decision making in a war stems from (1) Spoils from winning as opposed to losing, (2) probability of winning, (3) and accumulated costs of war.

¹⁹ Zhou Hang (2014) in an article shows how Chinese return on investment in South Sudan has been affected by unending civil war.

²⁰ This impasse led to complete shutdown of oil production in December 2011 over the fees. While most of the oil fields are located in South Sudan, Sudan owns the entire pipeline network which transports this oil from the fields to the port. (ColombantNico, VOA, 2012)

On the physical infrastructure, conflict has a damaging impact on roads, railway lines and other infrastructural developments. A case in point is in Angola where over 4,000km of its rail network was destroyed in conflict and had to be repaired before it could be operational again.²¹

As a prototype example therefore, the success of OBOR expansion in Africa would depend on how China navigates the conflict terrain of the African jungle for full potential to be realized. With conflicts experienced in DRC, CAR, Burundi, instability in Egypt among other countries, China's resolve will be tested in launching and sustaining the OBOR initiative in Africa.

Domestic Opposition to Projects

In many countries in Africa, civil society is present and highly vibrant. This has witnessed to opposition by civil society groups to various infrastructural projects which are deemed to have adverse effects on the community. In Kenya as a case in point, government has had to pay millions of dollars to communities affected by the standard gauge railway line as compensation for the project to take off. In some instances, the project had to be suspended by the courts until compensation has been carried out.²² In another case, environmentalists took the government to court in opposition of the railway line passing through the Nairobi National Park, arguing it will adversely affect the natural habitat of wildlife within the park.²³ Though ultimately the project will continue, civil society in Kenya and many African countries is a challenge that has to be overtaken, more so by Chinese firms who might be experiencing this for the first time. They will increase costs to the projects, while duration of implementation might also be lengthened to counter for court appearances and consultations with the communities involved. Encouraging though is the fact that Egypt and Djibouti, the other two African countries currently in OBOR have not experienced similar opposition from civil society.

V. CONCLUSION

China continues to be an important ally for the African continent to date. The One Belt One Road Initiative offers an opportunity to deepen Sino-Africa Relations and should be explored further by the leadership of both China and Africa. The current status of OBOR in Africa is minute. As it is, OBOR in Africa, when looked at in terms of the importance that China puts in Africa does not mirror the optimism that Sino-African relationship has attracted in the recent past. It shows a discord between the rhetoric about the significance and growth in the relationship, vis a vis the reality, which is that Africa remains a footnote in China's plans globally. 3 countries out of 67 involved in the project do not give an optimistic picture. However, the opportunity for further cooperation is still there. PRC can seize the opportunity presented by OBOR to streamline its foreign direct investment in the continent to leave lasting foot print. Indeed, successful implementation will result into firmly entrenching China as a 'true friend' for Africa. China has global ambitions, while Africa is in dire need of capital for infrastructural development, and OBOR offers the best platform to pursue this.

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²¹Cascais (2015) in his article gives a variety of reasons why Africa's rail is not advantageous.

²²Munyanga, P Business Daily (July 21, 2016) reported suspension of the project when one land owner went to court. Construction stopped until compensation was effected.

²³Anami, L (2016) in an article in The Standard Newspaper reports how the government was sued by environmental activists for not undertaking an impact assessment on the section passing through the national park. The case is still going on.

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