
The African Boulevard of Broken Dreams

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Two major and interlinked issues of note include the perceived necessity to review the focus of current military engagement by both NATO and the EU, and the strategic importance of both the African Continent and the Atlantic Ocean, which are in fact interrelated and of vital importance to Europe. It is critical to increase serious investments in port facilities and services on the western seaboard of the African Continent, and in so doing to forge affiliations with the African States based on enduring historic relationships. We must deepen these relationships, with due recognition of national needs, heritage, and ambitions, and thus strengthen regional blocks of like-minded African nations. This article will try to fuel crucial discussions for unconventional and progressive approaches instead of characterizing them as “enemy thinking” or “perceived hostile acts.”

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It has already been established that the African continent has the fastest growing population in the world.¹ This boom will cause Africa to surpass both China's and India's populations by 2025, less than 15 years away. The combined populations of Asia,² including China and India, will still exceed Africa's.

This underlines the importance of the Indian Ocean as an economic lifeline for India³ and China to shape the conditions for crucial logistical lifelines. The expected population boom in Asia is also the reason for China to invest in harbor facilities along the East African coastline. But did you ever have a look at how Europe and the U.S. are securing their logistical lifelines along the West African coastline? If we look out to the year 2100, globally one in three people will be of African descent despite the likelihood that fertility rates will continue to decrease. Lower rates of mortality and increasing lifespan also contribute to the growing population on this vast continent. Within the continent, the populations of the eastern,

western, and central regions will grow at a faster rate than the northern and southern regions. In 2050, the populations of the eastern and western African nations are expected to exceed 650 million each.

Large population booms bring both advantages and disadvantages. Urbanization will be a key challenge in the near future as 70 percent⁴ of all African urban population growth is expected to be in smaller cities and those with populations of less than half a million. This is where the real urban transition of Africa is about to take place. Therefore, smaller cities will need increasing public investment to cater to this expected growth pattern.

If anything, worldwide, urbanization⁵ has been associated with expectations in terms of improved human development, rising incomes, and better living standards. However, these benefits do not come automatically. They require well-devised public policies that steer demographic growth, create healthy urban economies, and ensure equitable distribution of wealth. However, if that cannot be achieved within a realistic time span, we might see an altogether different scenario develop. As the U.S. economy is struggling, Europe and the euro face financial uncertainty while China constructs ghost cities to artificially inflate its GDP. To say that investors face a challenge is an understatement. However, there is one place that most U.S. and EU investors have never considered in their investment planning. The continent of Africa is arguably the most under-invested and under-researched economic region in the world. Too many U.S. and EU investors suffer from a myopic global outlook that rarely extends past the east or west coast except perhaps to the shores of Europe.⁶

Moreover, from a business perspective, it is China and India that especially embrace the opportunities in large, growing consumer markets. Africa is one of them.⁷ The African labor force is growing. Historically, Africa has been disadvantaged because most of its people were under the age of 15 years. For example, the number of people in the workforce in Africa currently is around 55 percent compared to about 70 percent in China. This is now changing as these young populations are maturing. By the

middle of this century it is expected that between 62 and 65 percent of the African population will be part of this workforce while the percentage of China's workforce will fall well below this figure as its population ages. China is very much aware of this challenge. This changing workforce has the potential to give Africa a distinct advantage globally, but also to require governments and private sector to proactively address the need for jobs to provide sustainable livelihoods. Like many countries, this issue is already being felt by African nations requiring new innovative solutions to this growing need.

In March 2006 Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) produced a report setting out projections for potential growth in GDP in 17 leading economies over the period to 2050. These projections were updated in March 2008. In 2010 PWC⁸ reviewed these projections again in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. PWC's key conclusion is that the global financial crisis has further accelerated the shift in global economic power to the emerging economies. Measured by GDP⁹ in "purchasing – power – parity" (PPP¹⁰) terms, which adjusts for price level differences across countries, the largest E7 emerging economies seem likely to be bigger than the current G7 economies by 2020, and China seems likely to overtake the U.S. by that date. India could also overtake the U.S. by 2050 on this PPP basis.

The PWC model's assumption is that long-term trend growth is driven by the following four factors:

- Growth in the physical capital stock (capital investment net of depreciation).
- Growth in the labor force of working age (consult the 2009 UN population projections¹¹).
- Total factor productivity (TFP) growth, which is measured in Technology Growth and Efficiency regarding technological progress and catching up.
- Increase in average education levels across the adult population.

As such, the PWC Report notes that India's growth trend is expected to overtake China's at some point during the next decade. However, India will only fully achieve this anticipated potential if it continues to pursue the growth-friendly economic policies of the last two decades. The PWC Report's authors argue that particular priorities should be in maintaining a prudent fiscal policy stance, further extending its openness to foreign trade and investment, significantly increased investment in transport and energy infrastructures, and improved educational standards, particularly for women and those in the rural areas of India. In this particular area of gender-related

issues, India as well as most African countries (and most Middle Eastern countries alike) share a very similar cultural challenge.

Consequently, what will the answer of the "Coalition of the Willing" look like? The question here is whether this "coalition" is "willing" to evolve its traditional military way of thinking into an interagency¹² way of acting in which the armed forces are to assist in shaping the conditions for development, economy, security and diplomacy. To achieve this, one has to develop an emphatic mindset concerning the ethics, values, norms, and cultures in the area of operations (AO) and in those areas that influence the AO directly or indirectly. For instance, the "developed" countries' perspective with regard to the African problems is quite different than the view the African world has (if one could speak about *Africans* as a generic term). The human nature and habit of perceiving worldwide problems from our own values and norms are one of the characteristics in which "we" recognize ourselves. The freedom and democracy "we" like to bring "them" is something "they" experience quite differently.

Let us have a quick scan of China's possible strategy to overcome its growing hunger for energy and labor forces. The Chinese perception on Unrestricted Warfare¹³ (1999) provides remarkable insights: (page 6)

When people begin to lean toward and rejoice in the reduced use of military force to resolve conflicts, war will be reborn in another form and in another arena, becoming an instrument of enormous power in the hands of all those who harbor intentions of controlling other countries or regions.

China is spending a significant amount of money and support in the form of infrastructure, like medical facilities in Afghanistan. The cooperation between China and Africa has grown with enormous speed (for instance, building a huge road network in Kenya). China is helping the deteriorating Greek economy (China will double its 5 billion dollar trade with Greece in the coming five years and will support the extension of key Greek harbor facilities). Cosco, a Chinese company, has a close cooperative relationship with Greece's Piraeus harbor and also shows interest in the Thessaloniki harbor. China sees these harbors as the gateway to Europe. Are the economical gateways of Italy and Turkey the next countries to be embraced by China's economic support?

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We all have an opinion about China. Let us forget that opinion and have a look at China from the inside out. The symbol for China (chung) means "center." Traditionally and historically, China has never cared about what is outside its borders; in fact, the Chinese have enough to worry about domestically, although India gives them some worries...economically. Anything the Chinese government does outside of China has more to do with domestic issues than anything else. Its big issues are internal stability and the power struggle between central and local government, which is why the "Taiwan Card" is played to unify the country with a common enemy, although in reality the very same dynastic families control both countries. They are close, just not openly. In this way the Chinese government intelligently uses Europe and the U.S. like puppets on a string.

Chinese GDP is currently 50 percent property-related, which is not good. Half of the world's concrete is poured inside China. The fractional reserve ratio of the central bank is 12 percent, which is better than the U.S. ratio at 10 percent. Hence, the Chinese still can print lots of money based on that alone. This gives them a real edge when they go shopping. The side effect is inflation, which is quite high these days ... because Chinese goods are being traded in U.S. dollars. Like other Asian countries, the Chinese tend to make the step to the euro as a trading currency.

Unlike many Europeans and Americans, the Chinese really do know history. For instance, the Chinese have been studying Rothschild and the history of the bank of England as a way to guide their present monetary policy. Chinese key leaders know all about gold and its value, which is why they have been "playing" the U.S. by liquidating their U.S. Treasury bond holdings, shorting the market, and then forcing physical delivery of gold and silver to China. This was the real cause of the recent U.S. diplomatic presence in Asia and why President Obama and others are so keen to show how much they want to invest in China. The U.S. and the European sphere of influence is decreasing as China buys up true value assets, from mines to production to know-how, on a truly epic scale. China, Russia, India, Brazil, and Venezuela have formed a pact to undermine the U.S. dollar as international business currency, and even now 50 percent of the oil from Saudi Arabia goes to China, which is indirectly traded in RMB (Chinese yuan) rather than the U.S. dollar.

The Chinese attitude about the world changed a while back and now the Chinese government understands that in order to maintain governance it needs to ensure economic growth. Without growth it all falls apart and the present government is finished. China has changed a great deal.

There are two distinct layers inside the Chinese government: the old guard that is rapidly falling away and the younger generation. The younger generation cares about good governance, is very well-educated, and is well-travelled. It wants the same standards as in the West and desires accountability. Based on sentiment analysis, i.e., what people are saying in electronic forums, etc., the old guard would use it to identify and eliminate opposition; the new guard would use it as a tool, not caring about individuals, and use it to stop problems before they become big by adapting policy to match public expectations. Hence, change inside China is happening everywhere.

The major area in which China could help the West is by international power-brokering. The U.S. still thinks it is the only power in the world; the reality is that no one trusts the U.S. any more after the Bush administration. Consequently, in an area like Iran, the only real player that could help is China. These are reasons enough to treat China as a serious partner and include it to stabilize Iran instead of bombing it back to the Stone Age, creating a massive load of insane terrorists.

And what about Africa? China's huge demand for Africa's commodities has created new opportunities for African governments to realize the hopes of their people (or the "elite"?) for a better life. Countries which set their house in order can position themselves to benefit, while those that do not will find their resources continuing to be simply a "curse"—with or without China, and widening the gap between poor and rich.

China has ratcheted up its manufacturing investment in Africa, where new industries are urgently needed to counter decades of deindustrialization *by neglect*. China has established investment funds to promote Chinese investment in Africa. Teams from China have visited Mauritius, South Africa, and elsewhere—scouting locations for enterprise zones and industrial districts, which would join Chinese industrial zones in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Nigeria with Chinese factories making batteries in

Mozambique, shoes in Nigeria, ethyl alcohol in Benin, and a host of other products across the continent. It would be interesting to investigate how China is handing over to Africa the lessons it learned from its own development.¹⁴

It seems that what may appear to be crass commercial moves are actually the result of careful thinking about mutually beneficial activities. According to the “Unrestricted Warfare” publication¹⁵ (page 189):

All of these things are rendering more and more obsolete the idea of confining warfare to the military domain and of using the number of casualties as a means of the intensity of a war. Warfare is now escaping from the boundaries of bloody massacre, and exhibiting a trend towards low casualties, or even none at all, and yet high intensity. This is information warfare, financial warfare, trade warfare, and other entirely new forms of war, new areas opened up in the domain of warfare. In this sense, there is now no domain which warfare cannot use, and there is almost no domain which does not have warfare’s offensive pattern.

This is an astute way to illustrate how China is redefining the stovepiped idea of war into another form on the African continent, and most likely not only there.

For its part, China is merely following in the footsteps of other major global powers, which have established military bases abroad to secure their interests. There is only one kind of great power, and one kind of great power tradition. China will not be any different; power is necessarily expansionist.¹⁶

Chinese factories offer not only jobs—they also use production technologies that African entrepreneurs can easily adopt. Chinese firms act as catalysts and models for the African diaspora to invest their investment capital in Africa. Taiwanese and Hong Kong firms stimulated a rush of copy-cat local investment in Nigeria (see page 9 of the PWC paper and check out the forecast for Nigeria¹⁷) and were catalysts for the boom of local investment.

In August 2010 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao delivered a prominent speech warning that China’s economy and national modernization process would be jeopardized if the country failed to undertake systemic political reform. This was an interesting statement which should be analyzed in greater detail. Would this be an opportunity for Europe and the United States to persist in seeking common ground on issues such as energy, global trade and finance, and regional security?

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How about the European Union—is there one? France, Germany, and the UK seem to have their own agendas to fulfill, seeking some common ground on issues such as trade, finance, and regional security. Why should cooperation with the U.S. Africa Command¹⁸ be enhanced?

European colonial powers gradually were forced out of Africa from the 1960s onward. They left the continent with a heritage of a corrupt upper class (the leadership or the “elite”) and a generally uneducated lower class. The former colonial powers failed to create a middle class of well-educated, conscious governmental representatives that were capable of running a country.

The sole African country that shows a steadily growing economy is Botswana, recently followed by Tunisia.¹⁹ It is interesting to briefly analyze the background of this phenomenon. At the attainment of independence, when other African nations were lost in the euphoria of what would prove to be a false start, Botswana’s leadership saw beyond the dependency on international loans, donor funds, etc. The leadership took hard decisions that now yield economic returns for the benefit of the general Botswana population.

Unfortunately, the dialogue on population in Africa still focuses on the negatives of poverty and disease instead of innovative solutions that contribute to solving these problems, uplifting people, and creating strong local economies. It is not so remarkable that Africa is still self-centered because of long-lasting governance issues, poverty, civil war, and underdevelopment. The challenge here is to make African countries into independent “welfare states” with self-sufficient mechanisms to sustain themselves over time. It would be wrong, let alone impossible, to take advantage of the commitment of the international community to resolve every single crisis.

On April 5, 2011, Equatorial Guinea’s President Teodoro Obiang Nguema spoke about what had been an almost 3-week-long war waged by the U.S. and its NATO allies against Libya: “I believe that the problems in Libya should be resolved in an internal fashion and not through an intervention that could appear to resemble a humanitarian intervention. We have already seen this in Iraq.” He added: “Each foreigner is susceptible to proposing erroneous solutions. African problems cannot be resolved

with a European, American or Asian view.”²⁰ Would it NOT be wise to include certain African powers instead of “us” bringing “them” stability?

We are witnessing a great wave of self-change in Northern Africa and in the Middle East, where people have come together as one to fight for what is right and overthrow oppressive, selfish regimes that for years had no consideration for their needs. And what is the common Western reaction to it all? Just pop a democracy pill...and everything will be fine. But the rhetoric surrounding the perceived “need” for democracy appears to be at odds with the reality on the ground, especially with regard to multinationals and industries operating in complicity with, and sustaining, some very brutal regimes (let alone China’s “no strings attached” form of investment!).²¹

Cooperation as part of a comprehensive approach in which the UN, EU, AU, NGOs, and IOs feel committed to share is also crucial.

Rather than imposing political (and economic/social) structures, perhaps it would be more sustainable, not to mention successful, if actors worked with (but not within) the framework of existing knowledge, adapting traditions and systems that are indigenous to the environment. Knowledge is crucial, with any approach needing to be context-specific as opposed to the current, generalized “one size fits all” approach. Cooperation as part of a comprehensive approach in which the UN, EU, AU, NGOs, and IOs feel committed to share is also crucial. Therefore, how do we deal with the heritage, as mentioned earlier, of a corrupt upper class (the leadership or elite) and a generally uneducated lower class? How do we effectively create a middle class of well-educated, conscious governmental representatives that are capable of running a country?

The answer to this is not rocket science, although it needs a firm commitment from the “Coalition of the Willing.” It would be beneficial if either the UN or EU deployed civil servants from crucial workplaces and from several levels of the “Coalition of the Willing’s” own governmental management to work as a coach for their fellow civil servants. What is needed is a kind of a left-seat/right-seat activity in which they guide their (mostly former military)²² colleagues through governmental processes and procedures.²³

Nearly every approach to operations by the military,²⁴ NGOs, IOs, and the UN alike is self-centered and lacks the

“overall picture.” Unfortunately, there is still ample evidence of the lack of a comprehensive approach,²⁵ as every organization is driven by the stovepiped vision of the “guys in the lead” and the money of the sponsors.²⁶ It is even more remarkable that almost every program lacks an inclusive comprehensive psychological-social approach toward the population.

Until now there is little proof of awareness, recognition, or acknowledgment in our approaches to most African countries which exist with a traumatized population, possibly the sole common denominator that the African population shares mutually (victim, perpetrator, and spectator alike). The Western answer until now is that “we” still see “Africa” through a neo-liberal prism of our (the West’s) own construction, tinged with colonial guilt—as “we” think it *should* be, rather than for what it actually *is*, motivated to some extent by altruism and national needs creating a contingent of beggars. Are you already changing your idea about the American²⁷ approach? Or the Western²⁸ approach? Or the Asian²⁹ approach?

Notes

¹ <http://www.bitsofscience.org/population-growth-africa-cities-568/>.

² In 2050 nearly 70 percent of the world’s population will live in Asia on around 30 percent of the land mass.

³ http://www.africa-business.com/features/india_africa.html.

⁴ <http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/SOAC10/SOAC-PR1-en.pdf>.

⁵ We need to realize that the increasing population growth, combined with ever-expanding urbanization, will have a decreasing effect on maneuver space for traditional warfare.

⁶ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/61188779/US-and-EU-Investors-Should-Realize-Opportunities-From-Africa>.

⁷ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201102281008.html>.

⁸ http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/world-2050/pdf/world-in-2050-jan-2011.pdf.

⁹ GDP, or gross domestic product, is one of the primary indicators used to gauge the health of a country’s economy. It represents the total currency (like euro, dollar) value of all goods and services produced over a specific time period; one can think of it as the size of the economy. Usually, GDP is expressed as a comparison to the previous quarter or year. For example, if the year-to-year GDP is up 3 percent, this is thought to mean that the economy has grown by 3 percent over the last year.

¹⁰ PPP, purchasing power parity, is an economic technique used when attempting to determine the relative values of two currencies. It is useful because often the amount of goods a currency can purchase within two nations varies drastically, based on availability of goods, demand for the goods, and a number of other, difficult-to-determine factors. PPP solves this problem by taking some international measure and determining the cost for that measure in each of the two currencies, then comparing that amount.

¹¹ http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WPA2009/WPA2009_WorkingPaper.pdf.

¹² <http://www.sfcg.org/Documents/CPRF/CPRF-Summary-090414.pdf>.

¹³ Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf.

¹⁴ <http://www.bol.com/nl/p/engelse-boeken/dragon-s-gift/1001004006438815/index.html>.

¹⁵ www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf.

¹⁶ http://www.japanfocus.org/-Harsh_V_-Pant/3353.

¹⁷ http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/world-2050/pdf/world-in-2050-jan-2011.pdf.

¹⁸ <http://www.aficom.mil/>.

¹⁹ <http://www.africa-business.com/features/tunisia.html>.

²⁰ <http://www.modernghana.com/news/323903/1/from-ivory-coast-to-libya-and-beyond-the-conquest-.html>.

²¹ In the case of Zambia, China's support for its independence in 1964 contributed to a long-term relationship between the two nations. But to solidify their economic relations, China has turned toward trade and business, investing one billion dollars in Zambia last year. In contrast, trade between the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa remains resource-heavy and low compared to nations like China. With only 3 percent of U.S. imports coming from Sub-Saharan Africa, "China has overtaken the United States as Africa's top trading partner" (Bloomberg).

²² Have a look at Southern Sudan. The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) exists based on former military. To be frank, military personnel are not sufficiently qualified nor educated to run a country. Most African leadership consists of former military personnel.

²³ Cross-training, cross-learning, cross-teaching at several administrative levels...without trying to copy "our" democratic values onto a country that is founded on quite another culture. <http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/may2006/a052506tj1.html>. "Nothing is more important, Admiral Hunt said, than recognizing that success in the region requires interagency cooperation. "We need to bring all elements of national power together," he said. Working with embassy teams, reaching back to U.S. Central Command in Tampa, FL, and to federal agencies in Washington will help. The bottom line, though, is the area needs "sustained, long-term leadership from the interagency process," the admiral said.

²⁴ <http://www.eurasiareview.com/africa-global-nato-seeks-to-recruit-50-new-military-partners-21022011/>.

²⁵ The primary behavior we would like to influence is in urban areas. Future conflicts arise in part from the need for political freedom, power, water, food, energy, and living space.

²⁶ These are reasons enough for a drastic change. See http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/aldafrica2011_en.pdf, especially the conclusion at page 121. Without the "pain" of a comprehensive approach there will be no gain.

²⁷ <http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/may2006/a052506tj1.html> <http://www.aficom.mil/> <http://www.hoa.aficom.mil/hoaFreshening/index.asp>.

²⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/20/europe-africa-david-cameron-trade>. The West's relationship with Africa is becoming "trade, rather than aid."

²⁹ <http://businessjournalist.blogspot.com/2011/06/adb-african-development-bank-to-set-up.html>.



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