



# Harvard Model Congress

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# MILITARIZATION IN AFRICA

*By Bobby Current*

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## INTRODUCTION

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Millions of years ago, the ancient ancestors of the human race lived and evolved on the plains of Africa. Thousands of years ago, the first civilizations emerged in Africa and the Middle East, leaving an impact that is still felt in the modern day. On the world stage, Africa continues to be a continent of key importance, an importance that is not only a historical trend but surely one that is set to grow and reaffirm itself. The region itself is diverse, composed of low to middle to high-income countries. Recent predictions generated by the World Bank contend that the continent, offering vast natural resource pools and constituting the largest free trade area in the world, has high potential for inclusive economic growth (World Bank 2023).

As various countries in Africa look to a future of growth, the United States of America looks to a future fraught with geopolitical competition with China and Russia in Africa. With China and Russia building influence in Africa, the United States has begun to develop similar aspirations in an effort to remain competitive in the region (Gardner 2023). This briefing will delve into the history of this **geopolitical** tension in Africa, analyzing how it has evolved over time, where it stands today, and how the United States might position itself amidst what some have likened to the beginning of a second Cold War.



*The African continent is the second largest and second most populous in the world.*

*Source:  
Wikipedia.com*

**Geopolitical** – the influence of certain factors like geography and economics on the politics of a state.

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## EXPLANATION OF THE ISSUE

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### *Historical Development*

Throughout history, Africa has been known as a continent rich in resources and wealth, with the richest man in recorded history, Mansa Musa, being an African monarch from the Middle Ages (Mohamud, 2019). This wealth, however, has generally not been

**Scramble for Africa**—The name given to the way in which European countries brought nearly all of the African continent under their control as part of their separate empires.

**Cold War** – A period of geopolitical and ideological tension between the United States and the Soviet Union.



Patrice Lumumba, the first leader of an independent Congo

Source:  
BBC.com

used to benefit the people or nations of Africa. Instead, it became a target for the exploitation of its resources, particularly as Europe became more powerful over the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. European nations began taking control over large swaths of land due to their technological advantage over most of sub-Saharan Africa. What were initially coastal trading posts used to facilitate European trade in the Indian Ocean during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries became colonial possessions of Europe that took up much of the African continent. The **Scramble for Africa** occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and saw Europe split the continent amongst their major powers, with the United Kingdom and France benefitting the most while Italy and Germany also got territory out of the deal (Beck 2022). During this period, African resources would be extracted at the command and benefit of European nations, with much of the wealth never reaching Africa itself. Beyond this, colonial Africa was governed and administrated by European officials, with many Africans never having the opportunity of self-rule.

It would only be after World War II that African people began to finally achieve their independence from European nations. The war left much of Europe, especially the UK, too weak and in debt to keep control over the continent, resulting in many African nations finally achieving their independence throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Nearly all of Africa, with the notable exceptions of Ethiopia and Liberia, had been under European domination or influence at the onset of 1945, yet the continent was fully independent by 1990 when Namibia gained its independence from South Africa (Shah, 2020).

Due to colonization, Africa is full of new states with very little time or experience to create their own political norms or build strong and stable governments. This lack of experience in governance led to many African nations still being exploited by European powers today, with France especially having much greater control over its former African colonies than other European countries do (Maclean, 2022). Foreign intervention and the **Cold War** exacerbated these tensions, as both the United States and Soviet Union attempted to influence newly independent African states to support either capitalism or communism, respectively. Geopolitical competition between the two superpowers resulted in instability and conflict across the continent, with the US supporting American-friendly dictators rather than communist-friendly democratically elected governments. An example of this is the deposition of Patrice Lumumba, the first president of the independent Congo, who was targeted by the United States due to having alleged communist sympathies. He was killed by American-backed rebels in 1960, only a few months after taking office upon his nation's independence from Belgium (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2011). Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has mostly been involved in counterterrorism efforts

***ISIS** – The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a transnational terrorist organization that attempted, and failed, to create a government in modern day Iraq and Syria.*

on the continent, combating Somali piracy and **ISIS** cells across the region.

## *Scope of the Problem*

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been involved in Africa for both military and humanitarian purposes. Militarily, the US has placed bases across the continent in an effort to extend American hegemony and fight terrorism abroad. Humanitarian efforts range from providing better access to health care to ensuring clean drinking water and food in more under-resourced areas (Devermont and Steadman, 2020). The US Central Intelligence Agency has remained tight-lipped about the true extent of American intervention in Africa, with the military's African Command falsely stating that they had only one military base on the continent (Turse, 2022). Nonetheless, American involvement and political relations within Africa have begun to see more transparency in the face of today's changing geopolitical climate, with the Biden Administration announcing a new US-Africa strategy in 2022 (Usman, 2022). The US's efforts have been viewed as a potential counter-response to rising Chinese influence in the continent, especially in light of the **Belt and Road Initiative**, a Chinese project with aims to build infrastructure across the world and bring China closer to various nations and regions (McBride and Chatzky, 2023). When evaluating the US presence in Africa, key considerations range from the United States' geopolitical goals within the context of evolving competition with China to global security more broadly and the potential for broad economic growth on the continent over the next few decades.

***Belt and Road Initiative** – A Chinese led infrastructure development project to extend Chinese trade and influence across the world.*

## Global Security

One factor often used as reasoning for continued US involvement in Africa, both currently and in the past, has been the efforts to stop terrorism both on the continent and globally. The US has led counter-terrorism operations in Africa potentially since the 1990s and definitely post the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks (Nsia-Pepra, 2014). There has been a degree of collaboration between the United States and various African governments, particularly with nations in East and West Africa where terrorism is more prevalent. As of late, the **Sahel** region of Africa has seen rising rates of terrorism despite a high US presence in the region. Recent estimates suggest that the Sahel is home to 40% of terrorism in Africa, more than any other region on the continent (Hussain, 2023). This is despite and, potentially because of, US involvement.

***Sahel** – A region in Africa between the Sahara to the North and the savanna to the South*

The efficacy of American involvement in counter-terrorism efforts is an area of debate. On one hand, American intervention seems to have protected some African democracies and has addressed some of the factors that cause terrorism. American



What the Sahel region really looks like

*Source:  
Center for  
International  
Forestry Research*

**African Crisis Response Initiative** – A training initiative program started by the US that would have equipped selected African militaries to best respond to crises or humanitarian missions across the continent.

intervention has, in some cases, supported the idea of civilian control over the military, which has prevented at least one coup on the continent (Devermont and Steadman, 2020). American presence in Africa has also been seen as useful in the event of natural disasters or humanitarian crises, with military presence facilitating a faster deployment of aid than would be possible without a strong presence on the continent.

However, American intervention in the African continent could be one of the root causes behind recent increased rates of terrorism, especially in the Sahel. This is largely due to the US method of supporting governments and government-armed forces through providing military aid and training. Some of those governments then go on to use their armed forces to oppress their own citizens, often along ethnic lines. Terrorist groups tend to exploit this conflict and violence. (Hussain, 2023). Other causes leading to the increased rates of terrorism and destabilization in some African countries include key socioeconomic and political issues such as high rates of poverty, hunger, and government instability (“Speakers Warn Security Council,” 2023). These factors, in conjunction with state-sponsored ethnic conflicts that the US might inadvertently worsen, have led to an increase in the rates of terrorism in parts of Africa and have cast doubt on the overall efficacy of United States terrorism missions.

Given such context, it is necessary to establish what exactly the United States facilitates and involves itself with in Africa. Traditionally, the US has been tied to selling weapons to various African states, providing military training and advice to some armed forces, helping set up intelligence gathering and security apparatus, and conducting joint military operations with allies (Nsia-Peptra, 2014). One example of this is the establishment of the **African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI)** in 1996, which was meant to facilitate peacekeeping on the continent by training certain African militaries to respond to peacekeeping operations. Another example is how American intelligence agencies share information with certain African militaries (Nsia-Peptra, 2014). It is also critical to grapple with the ethics of US occupation in (relatively young) independent countries. This is particularly important when considering the imbalanced nature of resources and political power in any given relationship alongside the US history of overthrowing legitimate governments in the name of “protecting US interests.”

## Economic Potential

With a fast-growing population and a potential to cultivate vast economic growth, Africa, both in the present and future, is home to powerful potential American allies or adversaries. This possibility forces the US to strategize and reevaluate its relationship with Africa over the coming years.

## **Catch-up Effect –**

*An economic theory based around the idea that all economies eventually converge in per capita income. The catch-up effect in particular deals with the idea that underdeveloped economies experience rapid growth to catch up to the per capita income of developed economies.*

In the present day, Africa is host to some of the world’s fastest-growing economies, many with expectations of continuing growth (“Africa’s Economic Growth,” 2023). It is expected that Africa, similarly to Asia over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, could experience rapid economic growth over the next few decades, yielding power and new markets for various businesses and nations. This could potentially be explained through the **catch-up effect**, an economic theory that asserts that developing economies will eventually grow to match the per capita incomes of more developed economies, usually through a period of rapid economic growth (Kenton, 2022). Economic growth tends to slow down as underdeveloped economies become more developed and their per capita income rises to match that of other developed economies, but it can be rather rapid up to that slowing point. An example of this is China. China saw massive economic growth over the last few decades, but its economy is growing at a slower rate than prior, with economists predicting that the nation will not see double-digit economic growth again for the foreseeable future (Gibson, 2023). Their economy is expected to continue to grow, but not at the rate it did over the 1990s and 2000s. The same will likely be the case with certain African nations as well.

Another factor to be considered is the actual population of some African nations. Overall, the continent has a rapidly growing population, with the United Nations predicting a total population of over 2 billion people in 2050 and over 4 billion in 2100 (Anoba, 2020). With a growing population combined with strong economic growth, Africa’s geopolitical importance will thus likely increase even more rapidly over the next few decades.

## American Geopolitical Goals

A key factor dictating how the United States interacts with Africa moving forward is its geopolitical goals and strategies. The US and its allies are in rising conflict with China and its allies for economic and military influence throughout the world (Oyewole and Benoit, 2022). In effect, China and its allies represent a challenge to the US-led global order.

In the status quo, the United States has had few military interactions with African countries; nonetheless, China is clearly more dominant over economic and domestic links to various African states (Oyewole and Benoit, 2022). This is in large part due to the aforementioned Belt and Road Initiative, a Chinese program to build infrastructure across various nations in an effort to build trade and economic links with those countries. While the initiative was initially more focused on Asia and Europe, it has since taken on a more global lens, with Africa being a large recipient of its policies (Broadman, 2021). Presently, there are 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa with Belt and Road Initiative projects.



A map showing the extent of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and how many places across the world are impacted.

Source:  
[Clingendael.org](http://Clingendael.org)

The Belt and Road Initiative has built critical infrastructure in participating African countries, lending to economic development and higher standards of living. Even so, the program also draws many African countries into debt with China, a preexisting issue that has only been made worse (Broadman, 2021). Thus, while the initiative is oftentimes helpful for African states, it gives China economic influence over them as well, both for helping fund and build these projects and for the debt that is incurred in doing so. Whether through goodwill or economic power, the Belt and Road Initiative allows China to extend its influence throughout the African continent. The United States currently offers no alternative to this initiative; moreover, for many African nations the benefits of the initiative may outweigh the costs of potential debt.

While China's influence in Africa has mostly been economic thus far, Russia's has not. Russia has increased its military ties with many African states through use of the **Wagner Group**, a private military company with links to the Russian government (Rampe, 2023). The Wagner Group is a technically private company that hires out its services to fight in various conflicts. They are effectively mercenaries, and they have been spotted in several African countries (such as Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Mali, and more), Syria, and, most notably, Ukraine (Kirby, 2023). Even though it is technically private, the company is a way for Russia to extend its influence across the world without using significant state resources (Rampe, 2023). Wagner operations in Africa are varied, including fighting both for rebels and for governments. They provide a potential alternative to American and Western military involvement on the continent. The group has also been implicated in disinformation and propaganda campaigns against the West, in such a way as to benefit Russian foreign policy goals (Rampe, 2023).

While China does not compete with America's military presence on the continent, Russia, through the Wagner Group, is a direct challenge to the United States' role as a military force and power broker on the continent. US intervention in Africa is thus questioned by both China's economic approach and Russia's military pursuits.

## *Congressional Action*

There is not much past well-known congressional action regarding US-Africa relations. Currently, there are some bills going through Congress that touch on the subject. One such bill originating in the Senate aims to increase the amount of US exports to Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean by 200% within 10 years. The hope of the bill is to create more US jobs through exports to such regions ("S.158-118<sup>th</sup> Congress," 2023). That bill has not been voted on in the Senate so far. Another bill was introduced in 2022 that would have "promoted trade, investment, and strategic partnerships between the United States and countries in Africa" ("H.R.6455 – 117<sup>th</sup> Congress,"

**Wagner Group** – A  
Russian  
paramilitary  
organization.

2022). The bill called for the creation of an initiative called the Prosper Africa Initiative to coordinate and prioritize trade between the US and Africa. It would have also called on the president to meet with the heads of state of African nations every two years to share priorities and strengthen partnerships (“H.R.6455 – 117<sup>th</sup> Congress,” 2022). Due to the bill having been introduced during the last session of Congress, it cannot be passed now unless it is reintroduced to Congress. It was only introduced to the House and was not yet voted on.

### *Other Policy Action*

While Congress has not taken much action regarding US-Africa relations, the Biden Administration has made some large moves lately. In late 2022, President Biden announced a new strategy for how the United States will interact with Africa going forward. The strategy reaffirms America’s support for democratic governance and aims to strengthen American influence on the continent while also recognizing and respecting the agency of African states themselves (Schneidman and Signé, 2022). It discusses climate issues on the continent and reaffirms that the US will work with African nations to help them develop their economies while also mitigating the impact of climate change. The strategy does not force African nations to choose alliances between the US or others (Rajj et al, 2022), but rather makes the US a viable option going forward. It also discussed the COVID-19 pandemic and allocated \$55 billion over the next three years for the economic, health, and security support of African nations (Rajj et al, 2022).

## IDEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

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### *Conservative View*

The Republican Party, the main conservative party in American politics, views the African continent as an important arena in the political and economic struggle for dominance against China (Rajj, 2022). With the US entering what some Republicans are calling a second Cold War with China, they view it necessary to increase American presence on the continent in a way that serves to weaken Chinese and Russian influence. Republicans are likely to support more bold and direct efforts to spread American influence in Africa rather than more indirect solutions, with the past Trump Administration being much more rhetorically open about its desire for African nations to choose the US over China than the Biden Administration presently is (Rajj, 2022).

## *Liberal View*

Liberal-leaning individuals in the US, represented by the Democratic Party, are likely to agree that the US should increase its influence in Africa and combat Chinese and Russian influence, but not necessarily in the same ways Republicans are likely to do. Democrats are more likely to attempt to increase American influence without making African nations ally with any certain side, something which is a goal of the Biden Administration (Rajj, 2022). Progressives are also much more likely to oppose the use of military action and influence in Africa and would likely favor economic incentives instead (Sitaraman, 2019). Supporting and spreading democracy in Africa is also a large part of the Biden Administration's efforts to extend American economic, political, and military ties on the continent (Usman, 2022).

## AREAS OF DEBATE

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If maintaining influence within Africa is a policy goal, the United States will have to contend with growing Chinese and Russian influence. The US could use economic, diplomatic, or military tools to achieve such goals on the continent and potentially prevent its geopolitical rivals from further extending their influence. While some potential solutions are outlined below, there are undoubtedly many more.

*While China is America's chief economic competitor, Russia is America's biggest military competitor in Africa.*

## *The Status Quo*

One route for the United States to take is to simply maintain the status quo. This could mean that the US should neither extend nor decrease its military or economic presence on the continent, just keeping its level of commitment relatively the same across the board. Maintaining the status quo could also mean that the US could attempt to prevent China or Russia from gaining any more influence over the continent than they have now while not going out of its way to reduce their influence. This might call for greater involvement of American military forces or more economic initiatives with African nations.

This policy might not result in large strides for American geopolitical goals. Without more investment, either militarily or economically, the US might be unable to prevent certain African nations from aligning with Russia and China.

If the US attempts to maintain the status quo on the continent through the second option, by preventing the spread of Chinese or Russian influence without necessarily decreasing their influence, things become a little different. While China already has vast influence on the continent (Broadman, 2021) and Russia is

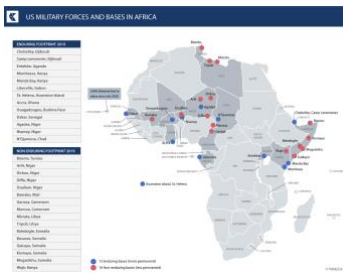


spreading their influence through the Wagner Group (Rampe, 2023), the African continent is not under the direct sway or jurisdiction of any outside country. While China is Africa's biggest trading partner (Vines et al, 2022), the US is still a valued ally. Furthermore, while the Wagner Group extends Russia's influence throughout the continent and can take a more direct role in some conflicts than the US might, the United States remains the main foreign military power on the continent, attempting to maintain its ideals across African countries (Devermont and Steadman, 2020). This policy option would also likely be cheaper than other solutions that may be more likely to reduce the influence of China and Russia on the continent.

## Political Perspectives on this Solution

Politically, this solution would likely not be well liked by neither the Republican nor Democratic parties. The Republican party would almost certainly oppose this policy due to it not being aggressive enough in the competition against Russia and China (Rajj, 2022).

Democrats are likely to agree with the Republican view on this issue, especially where a lack of increased investment is concerned. With that being said, Democrats may be more open to a strategy that simply prevents America's rivals from gaining more influence rather than one that aims to supplant their influence with that of the US, as it could be a cheaper policy option that still prevents Africa and its potential from being closed off to the US. Hints of this are seen in the Biden Administration's Africa policy. (Rajj, 2022).



A Map of US military bases across Africa

Source:  
*Pangea-risk.com*

## *The Military Option*

One potential policy option for the US is to further increase the degree to which it is militarily involved in Africa. With the Belt and Road Initiative being so extensive and having over a 10-year head start over any similar program the US may come up with, it could be advantageous to focus on the military component of competition and cede much of the economic influence in the region to China. Doing this would have some advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage of this policy would be the potential of a relatively decreased cost compared to a policy that focuses more on economic initiatives. If the United States is to be Africa's chief trading partner, it would likely take billions of dollars of investment and years of sustained cooperation across the continent. China has been investing billions of dollars in Africa each year for most of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vines et al, 2022). The United States would have to not only match but also surpass the Chinese commitments on the continent to fully cement its role in Africa. Focusing on military relationships and cooperation on the continent could be less expensive and would be playing to America's current strengths against China's and Russia's current weaknesses.

Regarding Russia, if the US were to take a military rather than economic approach, it would afford the US the power to root out Russian influence and potentially leave the Wagner Group with little to no patrons on the continent. Of its major geopolitical adversaries, Russia is the sole challenger in terms of military influence in Africa to the US (Rampe, 2023). Those who advocate for a focus on military intervention, argue that it may allow the US to end or severely diminish Russian influence on the continent.

Some believe that increased US investment in Africa and cooperation with the continent militarily may lead to the spread of democratic ideals both politically and through diffusion of contact. This could make it harder for potential coups to succeed and could further bring stability and democracy to the continent (Devermont and Steadman, 2020). One must also consider, however, the consequences and ethics of tactics that emphasize military intimidation or violence.

American military cooperation with Africa also has some disadvantages. For one, while US cooperation has shown to support the rule of law, it is also true that military officials trained by the US military have conducted multiple successful coups in various African states over the past few years (Hussain, 2023). While the United States itself cooperates with African governments and there is evidence that such cooperation can safeguard African democracies, it is also the case that American military training African forces can better enable military officials to stage successful coups against their governments (Hussain, 2023). If the United States were to get more militarily involved in the continent, it would have to find a way to decrease the risks and increase the benefits of military cooperation both for themselves and for African nations.

Another potential issue with a solely military focused strategy is that it would effectively leave Africa vulnerable to being economically influenced or exploited by China. Much of the African market and its potential may be cut off from the US support. There is also the potential risk that, if sufficiently powerful, China may be able to use its economic leverage to force various African nations to stop cooperating militarily with the United States.

There is also the US military itself to consider here. The United States African Command has been rather secretive about its involvement in the continent, even when Congress itself is concerned (Turse, 2022). This would have to change if the US were to further invest in its military cooperation and resources on the continent. The military would have to be much more transparent about what it does on the continent if America was to successfully foster more military cooperation there. Doing otherwise could lead to a disjointed and confused effort, potentially sabotaged by either the military or Congress acting without awareness of the actions of the other.

## Political Perspectives on this Solution

This solution would likely be received with mixed feelings across the American political spectrum. Democrats would be more likely to dislike this solution due to its reliance on the military and its lack of overt economic incentives and cooperation. They would be more likely to support policies that are more well-rounded and economically focused rather than militarily focused. The Republicans, on the other hand, are more likely to support this solution due to their support of the military and the decreased cost of this solution compared to one that focuses on both military and economic routes. Some Republicans may be more likely to see this strategy as a way to play by America's strengths in solidifying its military hold over Africa and denying China and Russia the chance to encroach on American military interests in the region.

It is important to note, however, that both Democrats and Republicans have been skeptical over the increased militarization of US-Africa relations during the Obama Administration, a feeling that is shared by many African nations (Schneidman and Signé, 2022). This wariness would be another obstacle in the way of this solution being put into effect.



Africa's population growth will likely give it huge economic potential

Source:  
*The Guardian.com*

## *The Economic Route*

Of course, the United States could also choose to take the economic route instead. This would entail more economic action and investment than military operations, though would not necessarily mean that there could not be a smaller military component to such a policy. An economically focused policy would be aimed at helping different African economies develop and become more integrated into the wider global economy, creating new markets for American companies and new opportunities for African nations. The US could use this to also support African democracies, either by only working with democratic governments or by giving them more support than more authoritarian ones. An economic plan may also be able to help the United States combat China and Russia ideologically, supporting the ideas of the free market over those of command economies.

An attempt at an economic-focused policy by the US could be aimed to supplant Chinese influence on the continent. Due to the extensive nature of the Belt and Road Initiative, it would be more expensive for the US to curb Chinese influence than to combat it, but it is still possible for the nation to do so. An economic plan may be more costly for the US to implement, but it may also have a greater reward due to the eventual cooperation and economic integration between the US and Africa.

An advantage to this solution is that it would be more likely to open African economies to the US and would allow the US economy itself to grow and prosper alongside those of African countries. With

African nations having such great economic potential due to the catch-up effect and the expected rapid population growth over the next century, it would be short-sighted for the United States to not attempt to work with a continent bound for economic success. Another advantage of this solution is that it may be longer lasting than a military solution. With the US military presence in Africa having various positive and negative impacts on the continent (Devermont and Steadman, 2020 and Turse, 2022), it is possible that many nations may be more hesitant for further military cooperation than they would be for economic cooperation. There is also the fact that, hopefully, terrorism in Africa will eventually decline and there may not be as much of a perceived need for the US military to be operating in Africa. An economic plan could be viable even after the majority of African economies are fully developed and integrated into the global economic system, as African nations would still be likely to see the US as a valuable trade partner.

One of the biggest disadvantages of an economic plan would be the high cost. While any viable policy would likely be expensive, one with the aim to replace China as Africa's biggest trading partner would likely be very costly. The US would have to spend billions of dollars to help build infrastructure, develop economies, increase standards of living, and more. The long-term costs of such policies on the United States itself would be notable, as the deficit and debt would almost certainly grow even further. Another potential disadvantage of this policy would be the potential neglect of military assets. If the US pursued a total economic policy and conducted a military drawdown on the continent, it would leave a power vacuum perfect for Russia or China to exploit. Russia already has the Wagner Group in Africa, so they would be able to immediately expand their influence there and take the place of the US in many circumstances. China, while not having much military assets in Africa at time of writing, could also capitalize on such a power vacuum and begin to have a greater military presence in Africa.

### Political Perspectives on this Solution

This solution would likely be relatively liked in the US. Conservatives and the Republican Party would appreciate that it would allow the US to directly compete with Chinese influence in Africa. They would also like that it would allow American businesses to conduct more services with Africa, helping the US economy while serving geopolitical needs. Democrats would also support this solution, due to its use of economic cooperation rather than military cooperation. They would also like it as a more long-term solution than just the military options.

With that being said, some, especially Republicans, are likely to see the potential costs of such a program as being too high, as the federal debt and deficit would likely both massively increase.

Republicans would also probably like to see some sort of military approach to whatever policy the US pursues with African states, as the party generally is more likely to support the military and its usage over the Democratic Party.

## *Withdrawal and Refocus*

While it would be advantageous for the United States to pursue closer relations with Africa to better combat China's growing influence across the world, it does not necessarily mean that the US has to do so. As Russia and China threaten the US-led global order, it may be advantageous for the US to look to other parts of the world to shore up support and allyship. The United States could decide to withdraw or not invest more in Africa and to instead focus its energies in other areas such as Europe, the Pacific, the Middle East, or Latin America. With the war in Ukraine, NATO and Europe have seen a resurgence of importance for America's geopolitical strategy. The Middle East is essential for global oil production, and the US would do well to ensure they have a strong well of support in the region. Latin America, a region historically under US influence, has been more and more under Chinese influence through the Belt and Road Initiative and other projects (Roy, 2022). With the potential of armed conflict with China over Taiwan (Makichuck, 2021), it is essential that America cultivates a network of allies across the Pacific to either fight in such a war or to prevent one from starting in the first place. There is a myriad of places that the US could focus its energy and resources, with Africa just being one of them.

While such a strategy would allow the US to shore up its efforts in other regions of the world, or even on domestic issues, it does have some disadvantages. If the US totally withdrew from the continent, it could cause regional instability in the short term and potentially brew resentment among African nations toward the US in the long term. The nation would be willingly giving up the economic potential of African markets, as well as the chance to spread democratic ideals through economic and military partnerships. There are advantages of the US withdrawing from Africa, but they would have to be weighed against the potential heavy cost of such an action. After all, even though Africa is expected to be a powerhouse of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, it is not certain that the region will see its economy boom to the extent that the UN projects (Anoba, 2020).

### Political Perspectives on this Solution

This solution would be distasteful to people across the political spectrum. Republicans and Democrats alike would likely find it to be too weak on China and Russia. Nonetheless, some more progressive individuals may have concerns about the effects of what could be called American imperialism and, as such, might appreciate less US involvement abroad in general.

*There are a myriad of places that the US could focus its energy and resources, with Africa just being one of them*

## BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

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Regardless of what the United States decides to do, the future of US-Africa relations will likely be costly. Already, the Biden Administration had dedicated itself to spending \$55 billion over the next three years, and more is likely to follow. China has been spending a lot of money in Africa over the last few years, which is why much of the continent is in debt to them. At the height of its spending in 2016, China spent \$28.4 billion in Africa loaning money to African nations (Vines et al, 2022). The US military, meanwhile, spends about \$2 billion out of its \$700 billion budget in Africa (Zimmerman, 2022), an amount that is almost certain to increase if the nation decides to dedicate further military assets to the continent.

*Every course of action is very expensive to undertake, likely costing many billions of dollars over time*

## CONCLUSION

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The fate of the geopolitical balance of power is more than likely tied up with the fate of Africa itself. Due to its massive, expected population growth and economic potential, the continent of Africa could make or break the global order of the next few decades and centuries. It is because of this that the United States must decide how it will proceed in its interactions with Africa over the next few years. China is already ahead on the economic front of whatever struggle is going to happen on the continent, but the US still maintains the military edge. If America wants to have a strong role over the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be a major player in African affairs, its leaders must balance the needs and desires of its own populace, of African nations themselves, of its geopolitical goals, and of the broader global community in terms of climate change and economic development.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER RESEARCH

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Official government websites, such as Congress.gov and the state department website, are good sources for this research. Considering its focus on Africa and the actions of executive agencies rather than Congress, reports from the UN or the White House are also useful. Media sources addressing the topic of the United States and its future with Africa, whether economic or military, are also quite useful for someone looking for more information. Anyone looking further into the issues brought up by the briefing should look for content about congressional or executive action concerning Africa, any major changes with Russia or China, or a major change in the United Nations predictions for the continent. Getting a better idea of the American partisan divide over this issue, as much as it exists, would

not be amiss as well. Additionally, it's essential to gather a diversity of sources from the African continent as well. Perspectives coming out of Africa may provide key information about the reality of the situation on the ground.

### GLOSSARY

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**African Crisis Response Initiative** – A program started by the US that would have allowed selected African militaries to respond to crises across the continent.

**Belt and Road Initiative** – A Chinese-led infrastructure project designed to extend Chinese trade and influence across the globe.

**Catch-up Effect** – An economic theory based on the idea that all economies eventually converge in per capita income. The catch-up effect in particular deals with the idea that underdeveloped economies experience rapid growth to catch up to the per capita income of developed economies.

**Cold War** – A period of geopolitical and ideological tension between the United States and the Soviet Union

**Geopolitical** – the influence of certain factors like geography and economics on the politics of a state.

**ISIS** – The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a transnational terrorist organization that attempted, and failed, to create a government in modern-day Iraq and Syria.

**Sahel** – A region in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the savanna to the south.

**Scramble for Africa**—The name given to the way in which European countries brought nearly all of the African continent under their control as part of their separate empires

**Wagner Group** – A private military company with links to the Kremlin, they allow Russia to spread its influence at a lower cost to the Russian government, also giving Russia plausible deniability whenever necessary.

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