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Why the Increasing Presence of China in Africa is Perceived as a Threat to US — take Djibouti and Congo as cases

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Abstract

This project aims to explore the perception of China's increasing presence in Africa as a security threat to the United States, focusing on the cases of Djibouti and Congo. The objective is to examine how the US can counter this perceived threat through infrastructure development plans and discursive methods of framing China as a threat. The paper argues that the US's perception of the Chinese threat in Africa encompasses economic interests, political values, and geopolitical considerations. By employing securitization theory and constructivist theory, the research analyzes the US's framing of China as a threat and the factors driving this perception, such as China's military capabilities, economic influence, and ideological competition. The study also explores the export of political norms through Chinese initiatives and investment, further illuminating why the US sees China's presence in Africa as a threat to its political and economic interests. The project's findings contribute to a better understanding of the US-China competition in Africa and offer insights into potential strategies for the US to address this perceived threat.

Keywords: China, US, Securitization theory, Constructivist theory, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of Congo

Why the Increasing Presence of China in Africa is Perceived as a Threat to US

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Objective of the Project

Africa has become a key arena for geopolitical competition in recent years, with China increasing its economic and political influence on the continent while the US looks to maintain its strategic interests. This project aims to argue that the increasing presence of China in Africa is perceived as a security threat to the US and to examine how the US can counter this threat through infrastructure development plans and discursive methods of framing China as a threat.

To address this problem statement, this paper will argue that the threat, as understood from the US's perspective, has multiple facets that relate to economic interests, political values, and geopolitical considerations. To understand this better, the paper will analyze specific cases, starting with the military bases of the US and China in Djibouti. This case will illustrate why China's increasing presence in Africa has been perceived as a threat to the US. Then, the second case will be China's investment in minerals in the Congo, which will demonstrate the competition between superpowers in Africa.

The thesis will use securitization theory and constructivist theory to further understand the US's perception of the Chinese threat. Securitization theory posits that actors can construct security threats through discourse, and the US's framing of China as a threat can be seen as a form of securitization. By analyzing the US's feeling of insecurity, which is driven by factors such as China's expanding military capabilities, economic influence, and ideological competition, the paper will shed light on why the

US increasingly considers China a threat in Africa in terms of political values and economy. Besides, by examining the multiple threats, this paper will apply the constructivist theory of norm diffusion, to analyze how political norms can be exported through initiatives like investment. This will help us understand why the US increasingly considers China in Africa a threat to its political values and economy.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Therefore, the question of this thesis would be why the US has perceived the increasing presence of China in Africa as a security threat. To answer this question, some sub-questions need to be answered. First, the reason for America's changing approach to African countries is analyzed in this thesis. Then, this thesis tries to find out how the US has perceived the increasing presence of China in Africa as a threat and how the US has framed China's investment as a threat in terms of securitization theory and constructivist theory. To answer those questions better, this thesis uses two cases to analyze how America has perceived the increasing presence of China in Africa as a threat.

1.3 The Increasing Presence of China in Africa

Ever since China's opening to the Western world and its financial markets in 1978, the country has experienced massive growth and has consequently managed to expand its global influence. However, China has had a foreign aid policy since the early 1950s, and during this period there was a sense of solidarity between China and the rest of the developing countries (M. Huang & Ren, 2012). One of the milestones in China's development policy towards Africa was the former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's eight principles for Chinese foreign aid. These were proposed during the Premier's visits to Africa in 1963-1964 and set out guidelines that are still very much relevant to how China conducts its foreign aid today. Particularly the principle known

as “no strings attached” has garnered the attention of various Western scholars and other professionals. More importantly, in 2006, the first White Paper on a formalized Africa Policy was published by the Chinese government, marking an intensification of cooperation between China and Africa, as well as an institutionalization of relations (Wu, 2012, p.106).

Over the past two decades, China’s presence in Africa has grown significantly. By the 2000s, China had become Africa’s largest trading partner, and Chinese companies had invested heavily in the continent's infrastructure and resource extraction (Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, 2015). Chinese companies have invested heavily in African infrastructure, including ports, railways, and power plants. These investments have helped to improve the economic development of African countries and create jobs for local populations (Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, 2015). One of the most significant infrastructure investments that China has made in Africa is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is a development strategy that aims to promote economic cooperation and connectivity between China and other countries.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly enhanced China's influence in Africa. According to the official Chinese document, the BRI comprises five cooperation goals: policy coordination, connectivity of facilities, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds (Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, 2015). China has made notable progress in achieving these goals through the BRI.

Since its announcement by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the BRI has garnered significant international participation. A total of 145 countries and 32 international organizations have signed 206 cooperative documents related to the BRI (R. Jingjing & Wang, 2021). This widespread engagement underscores the global interest and recognition of the initiative's potential. Data published by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) indicates substantial achievements resulting from the BRI. By the end of 2020, the accumulated trade volume between China and countries along the Belt and Road exceeded US\$9.2 trillion. This trade activity has had a positive impact on

poverty reduction, lifting approximately 7.6 million people out of extreme poverty and 32 million people out of moderate poverty (R. Jingjing & Wang, 2021). These figures highlight the economic benefits and development potential that the BRI brings to participating countries, including those in Africa.

China's investments in infrastructure development, such as ports, railways, and energy projects, have contributed to improving connectivity and facilitating trade between China and African nations. These infrastructure initiatives have not only enhanced transportation and logistics capabilities but also stimulated economic growth and regional integration. Moreover, the BRI has promoted policy coordination and diplomatic relations between China and African countries. It has encouraged dialogue, cooperation, and joint decision-making on matters of mutual interest, fostering stronger political ties and partnerships (M. Huang & Ren, 2012).

Through the BRI's emphasis on people-to-people bonds, cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism have flourished between China and Africa. These interactions have fostered mutual understanding, cross-cultural appreciation, and the building of lasting connections between individuals, institutions, and communities. The BRI has demonstrated its capacity to promote economic cooperation, poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and people-to-people exchanges between China and Africa. As China's influence continues to grow through the implementation of the BRI, it is expected to further shape and strengthen the economic, political, and social dynamics of the region.

China has held The Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum twice. On 2019 the second summit forum, the Chinese government announced that the BRI had achieved a total of 283 items in 6 categories of cooperation on investment projects and project lists, financing projects, and cooperation projects carried out by Chinese and foreign local governments and enterprises under the platform of the multilateral cooperative framework (The Second Belt and Road Forum and International Cooperation, 2019). The formation of such a fund as a means of increasing Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in key sectors demonstrates the importance that Africa has for Chinese foreign policy, culminating in China becoming

Africa's main economic partner, with a trade exchange of USD 91 billion in 2015 (The Second Belt and Road Forum and International Cooperation, 2019).

By the end of 2020, China's direct investment in Africa had exceeded \$47.4 billion, covering more than 50 African countries. In addition, the role of the investment platform and the industrial agglomeration effect of the economic and trade cooperation zone are constantly emerging. By the end of 2020, there were 25 Chinese enterprises in non-economic and trade cooperation zones registered by the Ministry of Commerce of China, with 623 enterprises. There is a total investment of 7.3 billion US dollars. Besides, the amount of 1.47 billion US dollars in taxes is paid to the host countries, and 42,000 foreign employees are hired by Chinese enterprises (Xinhua, 2019).

China also sees in the African country a way to access natural resources, specifically oil and gas, since it is expected to import more oil globally than the United States by 2020. China is heavily investing in the oil sectors of Sudan, Angola, and Nigeria to ensure future supply. From another perspective, the investments in Africa represent a massive market for Chinese exports, which may aid China's efforts to restructure its own economy away from labour-intensive industries, particularly as labor costs in China rise.

As evidenced by the existence of FOCAC and CAD Fund, China currently perceives its relations with Africa “to be the backbone in South-South cooperation and a fine example in international relations” (Wang Yi, 2022). A partnership and an opportunity to promote elements of its foreign policy, practicing multilateralism and the 5 principles of peaceful coexistence first highlighted by Zhou Enlai, which form the basis of the elementary values of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which 53 African countries are part.

In the meantime, the one belt one road initiative mirrors the idea of a win-win cooperation according to the Chinese government. By establishing infrastructure and facilities for other countries, the Chinese government can “phase out backward and excessive production capacity in an effective way to improve the quality and efficiency of supply (Xinhua, 2019),” which has improved main interests and the

international images of China in international society. Furthermore, BRI refers to an excellent opportunity for the poor countries to develop themselves, which will create more jobs, deliver benefits to the local population, and achieve poverty alleviation in participating countries, so that their social and economic development will be improved. This is presented as beneficial to every stakeholder, which represents the BRI as a win-win cooperation from China's perspective (Xinhua, 2019).

According to the Chinese government, China will not take advantage of the BRI as a way of intervening in other countries' domestic issues (Xinhua, 2019). BRI is an international platform of cooperation offered by China so that other countries can take part in achieving common development, win-win cooperation and building the community of a shared future for mankind. According to the Chinese government, China have provided a new way of ideal development instead of a zero-sum game, which helps China integrate itself into the world and deliver greater progress and prosperity for both China and the world at large.

While China perceives its investment as highly positive with its 'win-win' cooperation rhetoric, the US has shown skepticism towards China's increasing presence in Africa, such as announcing China's investment as a "debt trap," preventing African countries from using 5G set up by Huawei, and more (Brahma Chellaney, 2017). With the insecurity of its power in African countries, the US has increased its investment in Africa.

1.4 America's Foreign Aid Policy and its Increasing Investment in Africa

The United States foreign policy toward Africa differs significantly from that of China. Africa is not the primary strategic focus of the US on a political level, and while both China and the US have their national interests in political exchanges with Africa, the US seeks to promote the Western democratic system in Africa. The US

government's report, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, proposed the strategic focus of the US towards Africa, with the consolidation of African countries being one of its core interests (The White House, 2012). Similarly, in the National Security Strategy issued in December 2017, the Trump administration stated that the US supports African countries in improving governance, enhancing the rule of law, and building systems and will continue to pay attention to human rights in Africa (The White House, 2017).

The resources in Africa are also a critical factor in America's foreign policy towards African countries. Oil has been the primary product imported by the US from Africa, accounting for 90% of its total imports from Africa. However, with the development of shale gas and the application of new energy sources, US oil imports from Africa have been declining, which is the primary reason for the continued decline in trade between the two sides (Meltzer, Joshua, 2016).

However, Africa is not a key investment region for the US and can even be considered a “neglected region”. Since the Obama administration, the US has gradually changed its position towards Africa from an aid recipient to an equal economic partner to promote US-Africa economic and trade cooperation. The first US-Africa Summit in 2014 was a concrete manifestation of this change, with the US announcing a \$33 billion investment and financing plan, promoting US companies to invest \$14 billion in Africa, and the US government providing \$7 billion in loans to support exports and investments in Africa. Furthermore, the US private sector, the World Bank, the Swedish government, and others co-funded \$12 billion to support Obama’s Power Africa initiative (PBS News Hour, 2014).

Although the US government has increasingly focused on the opportunities presented by Africa’s development and has led companies to increase their investment in Africa, progress has been limited. The stock of US direct investment in Africa grew from \$11.9 billion in 2000 to \$54.8 billion in 2010, with an average annual growth rate of 43%. However, US investment in Africa slowed after 2010, peaking at \$66.4 billion in 2014 and declining thereafter, falling to \$57.4 billion in 2016 (PBS News Hour, 2014). US investment in Africa is mainly concentrated in the resource and

energy sector, with mining accounting for about 60%. The US investment in Africa is concentrated in Nigeria, Mauritius, South Africa, and Ghana, with the above four countries accounting for 40% of the total US investment in Africa. In 2016, in terms of total US investment abroad, Africa accounts for only a small portion of it, with the total stock of US direct investment abroad totaling US\$5.33 trillion, with Africa accounting for only 1.07% (Statista, 2022).

Compared to the Trump administration, the Biden administration seems to have a different approach toward Africa in terms of investment. The Biden government attaches great importance to global governance and multilateral cooperation. At the beginning of its administration, it announced that the United States would rejoin the Paris climate convention, stop the United States from the World Health Organization exit formalities, and join the commitment to promoting the fair distribution of vaccines through the "new crown vaccine global access mechanism (The White House, 2022)." These measures rely on international, multilateral cooperation. For African countries, this is good news. The former means that the United States will increase investment in climate change and the joint response to climate change through technology, capital, and improving the ability of African countries to deal with climate change. The latter will help African countries in the COVID-19 outbreak, especially with urgently needed and scarce vaccines.

In addition, the Biden government frequently conveys positive information to African countries, expressing the United States' desire to strengthen cooperation with Africa. On February 6, 2021, President Biden said in the African Union 34th summit video that the United States would help African countries with the COVID-19 outbreak, strengthen economic cooperation with African countries, and support African countries' political democratization (Nebe Cai, 2021). Technically, the Biden government's efforts to reshape the American image in Africa are effective, as these practices are in line with the expectations of some African countries and have won praise from some African leaders. As South African scholar Sithembile Mbete said, "It is these direct changes that have changed the face and interaction (Nebe Cai, 2021)" between the United States and Africa.

Since 2021, the U.S. government has assisted in the closing of more than 800 bilateral trade and investment agreements across 47 African nations, with a total estimated value of over \$18 billion. In addition, the U.S. private sector has completed \$8.6 billion worth of investment agreements in Africa (The White House, 2022). In 2021, the United States traded \$83.6 billion worth of goods and services with Africa. The PGII, Prosper Africa, and Power Africa overarching initiatives are supported by these investments and projects (The White House, 2022).

Besides, the Biden administration held the US-Africa Summit Forum for the second time in history. The first was held in 2014, during the Obama presidency. The Biden administration has shown more attention to African relations, with increased diplomatic efforts, the U.S.-Africa Business Summit, Secretary of State Blinken's visit to Africa, and the publication of the U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa in August 2022. The strategy's four main goals include fostering open societies, delivering democracy and security dividends, enhancing post-epidemic economic recovery, and supporting environmental, climate, and energy transformation.

Next, we will analyze the reasons why the increasing presence of China in Africa has been perceived as a threat to the US, the reasons for increasing investment in Africa by the US, and how the US has framed China's investment as a "trap" for African countries.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The research methodology employed in this study combines qualitative and quantitative research designs to comprehensively examine the changing foreign policy approach of the United States towards African countries and the reasons behind the perceived threat of China's increasing presence in Africa. By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play.

To achieve the primary objective of comprehending the United States' approach to China's presence in Africa and the challenges faced by China, the research begins with an initial analysis of China's relations with African countries. This analysis involves reviewing historical data, examining trade and investment patterns, and studying diplomatic engagements between China and African nations. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the motivations and strategies employed by both China and the United States in their interactions with African countries.

Furthermore, the study incorporates quantitative analysis by examining relevant economic and geopolitical indicators, such as trade volumes, investment flows, military expenditures, and diplomatic engagements. By quantifying these variables, the research can identify trends, patterns, and correlations that contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the United States' foreign policy approach towards Africa and its perceptions of China's presence.

To address the research problem, the study adopts the securitization theory as a framework to analyze the challenges faced by China due to the United States' policy in Africa. The securitization theory provides a lens through which the research can understand why and how the United States frames China's investment in Africa as a threat. By analyzing discourse and policy documents, the study examines how the

United States constructs China's presence in Africa as a security concern, drawing attention to the potential risks posed to American interests. The qualitative analysis involves content analysis of speeches, official statements, and media coverage to identify the discursive strategies employed by the United States to securitize China's activities in Africa.

Additionally, the study employs constructivist theory to understand the underlying structure in which the United States operates and how it shapes its perceptions and responses to China's presence in Africa. Within this constructivist framework, the research examines how the United States, as an actor, constructs its identity in opposition to China through its interactions with African countries. By studying the norms, values, and historical narratives that inform American foreign policy, the study reveals how the United States positions itself as a defender of certain political and economic principles in contrast to China's engagement in Africa.

This analysis further informs the research of how the United States, as an actor, is influenced by China's increasing presence in Africa as a structural force, while also exploring how the United States, as an actor, can influence the structure. By analyzing the normative dimensions of the relationship between the United States and China, the study uncovers the complexities of their interactions in Africa and the implications for their broader geopolitical rivalry.

By incorporating both securitization theory and constructivist theory, this thesis provides valuable insights into the reasons behind China's increasing presence in Africa, perceived as a security threat by the United States. The application of these theories allows for a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted dynamics between China, the United States, and African countries. It helps uncover the motivations, perceptions, and interactions of these global actors, shedding light on the complex interplay of interests, values, and power dynamics. This research approach contributes to a nuanced understanding of the evolving relationship between China, the United States, and Africa, and offers insights for policymakers and scholars seeking to navigate these complex dynamics in the future.

2.2 Data Collection

To initiate the research, a comprehensive review of sources was conducted to assess data availability and locate relevant information. The examination of these sources aided in identifying the research objectives based on accessible information and suggestions for further investigation. Various keywords were employed during the source collection process to retrieve relevant journal articles and newspaper publications. Terms such as "New Africa Strategy," "America and China in Africa," and "Great power in Africa" were utilized to gather information on the subject matter. Keyword searches were utilized as a technique to streamline the data collection process and eliminate extraneous information. Data collection is a crucial component of any research study and can be accomplished through various methods (Bryman, 2012).

For this case study, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data was used. Qualitative research focuses on words and meanings, exploring social phenomena and interpersonal relationships (Bryman, 2012; Grix, 2004). This approach allows for a careful examination of the subject matter from the perspective of the individuals being studied. Qualitative data was obtained through primary and secondary sources, including speeches, white papers, and press releases from the Chinese and American governments. These sources provide insights into the interests and viewpoints of the respective governments and help identify recurring themes and attitudes. However, it's important to acknowledge the potential bias inherent in official records, necessitating the selection of data from multiple angles to ensure a more objective analysis.

On the other hand, quantitative research emphasizes numerical data, seeking to describe and test causal hypotheses (Bryman, 2012; Grix, 2004). This approach allows for the examination of variables, their interactions, and the establishment of broader patterns. Quantitative data, which is objective and replicable, supports the theories under investigation. In this study, quantifiable variables were utilized, enabling statistical analysis. The quantitative data was derived from secondary sources, ensuring objectivity and reliability. In order to find the variables and examine

their interactions, this particular research methodology is utilized when the researcher wants to test theories or hypotheses and establish broad patterns (Creswell 2009, 4).

Based on the relevant materials reviewed, it becomes evident that the United States encountered a multitude of challenges and conflicts arising from China's escalating influence in Africa. To delve deeper into the intricacies of this complex issue, the research incorporates discourse analysis as a valuable tool for scrutinizing the textual sources. Through discourse analysis, we aim to gain a more profound understanding of the arguments presented by the involved stakeholders and uncover any underlying or implicit meanings concealed within official documents. By employing this method, we can decipher the motivations that drive the actions of various players, which may not be explicitly stated. This analytical approach enables us to extract valuable insights from the data and shed light on the broader dynamics at play.

In our comprehensive case study, we adopt a multi-faceted approach by drawing upon diverse sources of information. This study specifically focuses on the examination of military bases in Djibouti and the mining contract in Congo. To ensure a well-rounded analysis, we incorporate policy papers, research journals, and news articles obtained from a wide array of sources with distinct perspectives, encompassing both Western and Chinese viewpoints. This inclusive selection of sources allows us to consider multiple angles and viewpoints on the subject matter, thereby enriching our understanding of the complex relationship between the United States, China, and Africa.

By combining the utilization of discourse analysis and a diverse range of sources, our research endeavors to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the issues surrounding China's growing influence in Africa and its impact on US interests. Through this approach, we aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and generate valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and further research in this field.

2.3 Description of Case Study

The selected cases of Chinese investment in the military base in Djibouti and Chinese investment in mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) serve as crucial focal points for examining the escalating tensions between the United States and China in Africa. By employing the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and securitization, this thesis aims to comprehensively analyze the diffusion of norms and uncover the underlying motivations behind the actions of the United States.

China's establishment of its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017 has sparked significant debates and concerns among American policymakers. The Chinese government claims that the base is intended to supplement local infrastructure and protect its economic and strategic interests in Africa and the Middle East, primarily through peacekeeping and anti-piracy operations (Edward Paice, 2017). However, the United States perceives this military base as a direct threat to its own presence in Djibouti due to its proximity. Moreover, the United States has framed China's investment in Djibouti as a "debt trap," implying that China's intentions are rooted in exploitative economic practices. These factors have further intensified the contention between the two nations, fueling the existing rivalry (Edward Paice, 2017).

In the second case, China's extensive mining investment in the Democratic Republic of Congo has garnered significant attention and raised profound concerns. Initially initiated as a strategic alliance aimed at bolstering China's influence in Africa and the international arena, Chinese aid to the DRC has evolved into a multifaceted trade partnership that promotes bilateral trade and attracts private investments from Chinese multinationals. Chinese state-owned mining companies have emerged as key players in the development of the DRC's mining sector, acquiring majority stakes in the country's largest copper mine as well as a significant copper and cobalt mine (Edward Paice, 2017). However, China's investment in the DRC has been subject to criticism in American media, which perceives it as resource plundering in Africa. This thesis seeks to analyze the reasons behind this portrayal and provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved.

Applying the securitization theory and constructivist theory will enable a nuanced analysis of the portrayal of China's investment in the American media, specifically examining the negative intentions ascribed to China. By exploring the impact of China's investment on Africa, this research aims to uncover the underlying reasons that have shaped this portrayal. The securitization theory will facilitate an understanding of how the issue of Chinese investment became securitized and the subsequent implications for security dynamics. Meanwhile, the constructivist theory of international relations will shed light on the evolving relationship between China and Africa, elucidating the factors and processes that have shaped their interactions over time.

Furthermore, it is imperative to consider the perspectives of African countries regarding China's investment in the continent. Many African nations regard Chinese investment as a vital source of funding for infrastructure development and economic growth. According to McKinsey, China has been the primary funder of approximately 90% of new infrastructure projects in Africa in recent years, with the total investment exceeding \$300 billion (Adedokun et al., 2019). Moreover, African countries have experienced substantial gains from enhanced trade relations with China, as evidenced by the consistent annual growth rate of nearly 20% in trade volumes between China and Africa over the past decade (Adedokun et al., 2019).

In summary, this thesis seeks to unravel the diffusion of norms and the motivations behind US actions in Africa through the analysis of Chinese investment in Djibouti and the Democratic Republic of Congo. By employing constructivism and securitization as theoretical frameworks, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the relationships between major global actors while considering the perspectives of African countries. Through this analysis, we can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of the US-China rivalry in Africa and the implications for regional and global security.

Chapter 3: Theory

3.1 The Characteristics of Securitization Theory

Securitization theory, developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver of the Copenhagen School, provides a valuable framework for comprehending the intricate dynamics of security issues. This theory challenges the conventional notion of security as an objective and fixed concept and instead emphasizes its socially constructed nature. According to securitization theory, security does not reside inherently in specific objects or issues; rather, it emerges through a process of societal agreement and discursive construction (Buzan, 1997).

The Copenhagen School conceptualized securitization theory as a speech act (Buzan, 1997). A speech act occurs when an actor seeks to portray an issue as more than just a matter of politics; it becomes a question of security, necessitating the adoption of measures or actions (Buzan, 1997). The label of security should be attached to issues that are presented as existential threats to referent objects by a securitizing actor, thereby generating endorsement of emergency measures that go beyond ordinary rules (Eroukhmanoff, 2017). The securitizing actor endeavors to persuade the audience of the threat through their speech act, which involves presenting the nature of the threat, establishing a regime of truth, emphasizing the point of no return, and proposing a solution (Skidmore, 1999).

Expanding on securitization theory, rooted in constructivism, it is a security analysis method proposed by the Copenhagen School, renowned for its research on security. The central idea of securitization theory is that security is not objective; rather, it is the outcome of a specific societal process (Eroukhmanoff, 2017). According to Barry Buzan, securitization can be viewed as an extreme form of politicization (Buzan, 1997). Guided by this theory, the process of a security issue unfolds in three stages.

The first stage is non-politicization, where public issues are not addressed by the

government and remain undiscussed and unaddressed by the public (Buzan, 1997). In this stage, countries may shift their attention towards non-conventional security issues, such as norm diffusion, which they perceive as a threat to their culture, standards, and norms, thereby affecting their identity.

The second stage is politicization, which involves certain issues that require the allocation of resources or the adoption of special governance mechanisms and become part of public policy. In this stage, the issues gain recognition and become subject to political debate and decision-making processes. They enter the public sphere and are included in the political agenda.

The third stage is security, where certain issues are defined as existential or potential threats, demanding urgent action from securitizing actors (Buzan, 1997). In this stage, the securitizing actor successfully persuades the audience that the issue poses a grave risk to their referent objects, such as the state, society, or identity. The securitization process grants extraordinary powers and justifies the adoption of exceptional measures to counter the perceived threat.

By understanding securitization theory, researchers and analysts gain insight into how issues are framed and transformed into matters of security. It highlights the role of language, rhetoric, and persuasive communication in shaping the perception of threats and the subsequent policy responses. Moreover, securitization theory helps to uncover the power dynamics involved in defining security issues and the implications for governance, policymaking, and international relations.

Hence, securitization signifies that an issue is accorded special attention and resources to ensure its security, indicating its prioritization. Ole Wæver, a scholar from the Copenhagen School, explains that securitization occurs when a securitizing actor claims an existential threat to a valued referent object through a specific speech act, convincing the audience to tolerate extraordinary measures that would otherwise be unacceptable (Ole, 2004). In other words, a non-existent security issue can be transformed into a potential and existential threat through discourse among securitizing actors within the social structure. Dealing with such issues becomes a political matter that can be regarded as a security issue.

Based on the aforementioned content, the process of securitization primarily involves two phases. Firstly, securitizing actors describe specific issues, individuals, or entities as existential threats to society's security. Secondly, they adopt exceptional measures to impact the relationship between the audience and the perceived threat (Wæver, 1998). The success of the second phase depends on the effectiveness of the first phase, which is influenced by the power and influence of the securitizing actor (Wæver, 1998).

In another word, the discourse through power would guide the approach of securitization. As a way of narrative, securitization theory connects the construction of society, power, narrative, discourse, and entities, reminding us that the individual field can be considered as a whole when it comes to the security issue. Therefore, this theory is suitable for analyzing the discourse of the United States regarding China's increasing presence in Africa.

Within securitization theory, there are five sectors: the societal, military, economic, political, and environmental sectors (Wæver, 1998). In each sector, there is a referent object, which represents the main interest of the securitizing actor. In this project, we will use speech acts—analyzing the discourse of the speech act—under the guidance of securitization theory to analyze the narratives of the American side and analyze the referent object.

This brief overview shows that securitization theory is not a political statement on the part of the analyst but rather a theoretical tool of analysis that allows the analyst to trace incidences of securitization. In terms of securitization theory, although China insists that its investment in Africa is not a military action, some scholars believe that China's investment in Africa still threatens American interests (Emmers, 2016).

At the same time, China's investment has reshaped the norms and values in Africa since Chinese companies have diffused their own values through their infrastructure projects, which is seen as a threat from both conventional and non-conventional perspectives from the West. The US is already in the first stage of securitization since it labels China's investment as a "dangerous practice" (Emmers,

2016) and has taken actions to prevent China from increasing its presence in Africa.

In conclusion, securitization theory, developed by Buzan and Wæver, offers a valuable framework for understanding security dynamics by emphasizing the socially constructed nature of security issues. Through speech acts, securitizing actors transform certain issues into existential threats, leading to the adoption of extraordinary measures. The process of securitization involves stages of non-politicization, politicization, and security, with the success of securitization relying on the persuasive power of the actors involved. By applying securitization theory to analyze the discourse surrounding China's presence in Africa from the perspective of the United States, we can gain insights into the construction of security narratives and the identification of referent objects in different sectors.

3.2 The Characteristics of Constructivism Theory

Constructivism, a prominent theory within the field of international relations, emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a response to the limitations of realism and liberalism in explaining the interests and actions of states in international politics. Constructivists sought to understand how states identify their interests and how these interests are socially constructed. Unlike traditional theories that focus on power and material interests, constructivism highlights the social and ideational aspects of international relations, emphasizing the role of ideas, norms, identities, and social constructs in shaping global interactions (Wendt, 1992).

One of the defining theorists of constructivism, Alexander Wendt, posits that the attribution of meaning to objects is a fundamental principle of social constructivist theory (Wendt, 1992). According to Wendt, individuals and states act towards objects, including other actors, based on the meanings they assign to them. In constructivist thought, relations between objects and actors are socially constituted, and the meaning attributed to objects encompasses not only ideational elements but also material

relations grounded in social concepts such as ideals and beliefs (Wendt, 1992). This highlights the interplay between social constructions and material realities in shaping actors' behavior and interactions.

Central to constructivist theory is the notion that agency and structure are mutually constitutive, with agency influencing structure and structure influencing agency. Agency refers to the ability of individuals to act, while structure refers to the international system comprising material and ideational components (Hopf, 1998). Constructivists are particularly interested in intersubjective knowledge, which focuses on jointly shared concepts and the patterns of behavior they generate (Wendt, 1999). Agents confront intersubjective knowledge as external, objective, and coercive social truths, including norms, regulations, institutions, and ideologies (Durkheim, 1998). These intersubjective knowledge structures have their own ontological position and are somewhat independent of agents, with agents possibly having incomplete or incorrect knowledge of them and their influence (Wendt, 1999).

Another distinguishing aspect of constructivist theory is the concept of identities and interests. Agents are not passive entities determined solely by the structure; they possess reflexivity and agency capability that is somewhat independent of it. The third postulate of constructivism states that "identities are the proximate causes of decisions, preferences, and behavior" (Hopf, 1998), in addition to being influenced by the structure. Identity informs the agent about who they are, but self-understanding is also contingent upon recognition by others, thus implying an intersubjective element. Consequently, the identity of a larger state entails a different set of objectives compared to a smaller state, with larger states being more concerned with external influence rather than survival, which varies according to the specific context.

In the constructivist understanding, interests within international politics are inherently social. Martha Finnemore argues that state interests have meaning and social value, constructed in relation to the international society in which states and their populations exist. States are socialized to desire certain things by the international society they belong to (Finnemore, 1996). Interests are also shaped by experienced events. For instance, the horrors unleashed by nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and

Nagasaki have significantly influenced the meaning attributed to nuclear weapons. Although nuclear attacks have not been repeated, the collective historical experience and friend-enemy relations have constructed varying degrees of 'hostility' around nuclear weapons.

Interests are constructed based on identities, where state identities serve as the foundation for state interests. According to Wendt, state identities are created through relations with other states and are instrumental in defining interests. Identity encompasses both how states perceive their own role and how they are perceived by other states in the international society (Wendt, 1992). States' self-definition and the perception of their role by other states collectively constitute the structure of the social world (Wendt, 1992). The structure of the social world is in constant interaction with actors. According to Hurd, structure is constituted by institutions and shared meanings within the international system, and actors operate within the context created by the structure (Hurd, 2008). The structure is determined through constant interaction among actors, and at the same time, actors shape the structure through their shared beliefs and values. As Wendt puts it, "it is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions" (Wendt, 1992).

To fully comprehend the connection between China and Africa, it is necessary to analyze how this relationship has been constructed and transformed over time by agents acting under the influence of evolving ideas and structural conditions. Unlike competing schools of thought that employ a single level of analysis, the constructivist approach is both historical and empirical. It adopts a constructivist lens by integrating narratives of Sino-African linkages that combine agential and structural, ideational and material components. Constructivism does not seek to replace one reality with another; rather, it asks: what does reality signify for actors in a particular time and space? Intersubjectivity, which involves the sharing of subjective states by two or more people, has the potential to either uphold or alter norms and standards (Finnemore, 1996).

By applying constructivist perspectives, we can gain deeper insights into the complexities of international relations, understanding how ideas, norms, identities, and social constructs shape the behavior and interactions of states. It allows us to recognize

that interests are socially constructed, influenced by historical experiences and the collective meanings ascribed to events. Furthermore, constructivism emphasizes the interplay between agency and structure, where identities play a crucial role in defining interests and shaping state behavior. Through the lens of constructivism, we can better analyze the dynamic and multifaceted relationship between China and Africa, exploring how it has been shaped by changing ideas and structural conditions over time.

In conclusion, constructivism offers a valuable framework for understanding international relations, providing insights into how states' interests and behavior are socially constructed. By considering the role of ideas, norms, identities, and social constructs, constructivism enriches our understanding of the complexities of global politics.

The examination of China's relationship with Africa through a constructivist lens allows for a comprehensive analysis of how this relationship has been constructed and remade over time, shedding light on the interplay between agency, structure, and intersubjectivity. By studying the social and ideational dimensions of international relations, we gain a deeper appreciation of the diverse forces that shape the global landscape.

3.3 Application of Theories to the Problem Statement

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between China, the US, and Africa, it is crucial to employ theoretical frameworks that can illuminate the multifaceted dynamics at play. Two such frameworks that will enhance our understanding are Securitization Theory and constructivism.

Securitization Theory provides a lens through which we can examine how the US perceives China's presence in Africa as a security threat. This theoretical framework challenges the notion that security threats are objective and fixed, instead

emphasizing the role of discourse and practices in constructing security issues. By employing discourse analysis and content analysis techniques, we can analyze how the US frames China's growing influence in Africa as a security concern within the broader context of US-China relations. This allows us to understand the motivations behind the US's actions and policies, such as its efforts to counter China's influence and protect its strategic interests. We can explore the discursive strategies used by the US to securitize China's activities in Africa, including the portrayal of China as an economic competitor and potential disruptor of regional stability. By examining the securitization process, we can uncover the underlying dynamics and interests driving the US's perception of China in Africa.

On the other hand, constructivism offers insights into the relationship between China and Africa by focusing on the social and ideational aspects of international relations. Constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, and social constructs in shaping actors' behavior and interactions. Through a constructivist lens, we can examine how the West, including the US, constructs its identity in opposition to China and how this influences its perceptions and responses to China's activities in Africa. This involves analyzing historical narratives, cultural values, and normative frameworks that shape the West's understanding of China's engagement in Africa.

By doing so, we can challenge simplistic characterizations of China as engaging in a "new colonialism era" and instead uncover the complexities and nuances of their relationship. Furthermore, we can explore the role of the Western media in shaping public opinion and discourse surrounding China's role in Africa, considering both the structural forces at play and the agency of media actors in influencing perceptions.

By combining Securitization Theory and constructivism, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations, perceptions, and interactions between China, the US, and Africa. This approach allows us to move beyond narrow perspectives and explore the underlying dynamics that shape international relations. We can uncover the securitization strategies employed by the US, as well as the social constructs and normative frameworks that influence the West's perception of China's engagement in Africa. This comprehensive analysis contributes to a more nuanced

understanding of the China-Africa-US relationship, highlighting the complexities and multidimensional nature of their interactions. Ultimately, such insights are valuable for policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders seeking to navigate the evolving dynamics of global politics and foster mutually beneficial engagements between China, the US, and Africa. By doing so, it would be easier for us to understand the reason of America has perceived China's increasing presence in Africa as a security threat.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Analysis

In this chapter, our analysis aims to delve into the reasons behind the increasing contention displayed by the United States towards China's presence in Africa. To accomplish this, we will employ the theoretical frameworks of Constructivism and Securitization Theory. By utilizing these frameworks, we can gain a deeper understanding of the US's approach to China's investment in Africa. To conduct our analysis, we will draw on a range of sources, including official speeches from the US, materials from American think tanks, and newspapers.

The Constructivist approach provides valuable insights into how the US perceives and positions itself in opposition to China based on its interpretation of China's initiatives in Africa, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Through the lens of Constructivism, we can explore how the BRI serves as a broader structure within which Africa acts as an actor. This perspective allows us to examine how norm diffusion occurs within the context of the BRI and how it influences US interests in Africa, ultimately shaping the US's behavior towards the continent.

Furthermore, the application of Securitization Theory, as formulated by the Copenhagen School, offers valuable insights into the US's employment of speech act-discourse analysis to label China's investment in Africa as a security threat. This theory enables us to understand the specific security concerns raised by the US, such as human rights, the unity and stability of African countries, and economic security in Africa. Through Securitization Theory, we can unravel the underlying reasons behind the US's shifting stance towards Africa and its increasing emphasis on security dimensions.

To validate and illustrate these theoretical perspectives, we will focus on the case studies of Djibouti and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These examples will provide concrete instances to demonstrate how the application of Constructivism and Securitization Theory adds new dimensions to the discourse on Africa and helps us better comprehend the growing discontent surrounding China's expanding presence in

the continent.

By employing these theoretical frameworks and conducting a comprehensive analysis of the US-China-Africa relationship, we aim to uncover the nuanced motivations and dynamics that shape the US's evolving approach towards China's involvement in Africa. Through this analysis, we can contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interactions and power dynamics at play in the African continent's evolving geopolitical landscape.

4.1 The Securitization Perspective

To examine the competition between China and America in Africa from the perspective of securitization theory, it is important to understand that threats are not inherent but rather constructed through language (Buzan, 1997). The securitizing actor, in order to persuade the audience to take extraordinary measures, must highlight the threat and often exaggerate its urgency and level of danger, thus establishing a point of no return (Eroukhmanoff, 2017). This part aims to explore how the Western media employs language to depict China's investment in African countries as a threat in terms of securitization theory.

From the securitization perspective, the securitizing actor, in this case, the United States, possesses the social and institutional power to elevate the issue beyond regular politics (Ababa, 2018). It can disseminate its version of the truth through various means such as media, news outlets, social media, and public speeches, which can shape, influence, and define the security issue. If the securitizing actor successfully convinces the audience, the speech act is considered effective. Consequently, the securitization process unfolds. Security issues can be categorized into two types: traditional issues encompassing territory, military, and economy, and non-traditional issues involving politics, military, economy, environment, and society (Eroukhmanoff, 2017).

In American reports, some analysts use negative language to describe China's investment in Africa. For example, the "National Security Strategy" released by the

Trump administration in December 2017 explicitly defines China as a major strategic competitor and aims to overhaul U.S. regional strategy. It highlights China's expanding economic and military presence in Africa, suggesting that shifts in the regional balance of power could have global implications and threaten U.S. interests. Through such framing, a regime of truth is established, portraying China's power expansion in Africa as a threat to U.S. interests.

The Chinese involvement in Africa was described in a special 2013 report by the Brookings Institute. China has mobilized its government and society's extensive resources to develop port infrastructure in Africa, leading to ripple effects such as contracts for Chinese companies, relocation of low-cost labor businesses to Africa as Chinese wages increase, particularly in high-pollution industries, and diplomatic benefits at the United Nations and other multilateral institutions as China emphasizes solidarity with other developing countries. With its diplomatic and economic influence, China is increasingly gaining an edge in competition against the United States (Sun, 2013).

To strengthen its strategic position in Africa, the White House hosted an Africa-U.S. Leaders Summit in 2014, during which President Barack Obama stated that the U.S. has a different approach compared to nations that solely exploit Africa's natural resources. Although the American President did not explicitly mention China, his remarks were widely interpreted as a criticism directed at China (Sun, 2015). In response to the summit, the Chinese internet publication Hanqui.com argued that the negative comments against China indicate American performance anxiety and a lack of confidence. It highlighted that Chinese leaders and officials often meet with African leaders to discuss China-Africa friendship without ridiculing third parties (Hanqui, 2014).

Furthermore, both China and the United States have established military bases in Djibouti, but their intentions for establishing these bases differ. China built its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017, officially known as the "People's Liberation Army Support Base in Djibouti." On the other hand, the United States has maintained a military presence in Djibouti since 2002, with the establishment of the Combined Joint

Task Force – Horn of Africa located at Camp Lemonnier (Paice, 2017). The U.S. base covers approximately 100 acres and hosts over 4,000 personnel, while China's base covers about 100 acres and reportedly has around 2,000 personnel (Paice, 2017).

For China, the establishment of its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017 is part of its broader efforts to expand its global military presence and protect its growing economic and strategic interests worldwide, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. China sees Djibouti as a key location for its Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to increase connectivity and infrastructure development across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

On the other hand, the United States established its military presence in Djibouti back in 2002, with the establishment of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa. The U.S. views Djibouti as an important strategic location for counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. The U.S. base in Djibouti, Camp Lemonnier, has been used to launch drone strikes against militants in Yemen and Somalia.

From the U.S. perspective, the establishment of China's military base poses a threat to its security. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, China's base in Djibouti is part of a broader strategy to project military power beyond China's borders and secure its interests overseas. The U.S. Department of Defense report states that the base is "designed to support China's growing presence in Africa and allow for extended deployments in the Indian Ocean, including supporting counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions."

In this context, the United States has increased its investment and focused more on African countries to reduce China's presence in Africa. For example, in Congo, the American government supported the current president in investigating mining contracts that were previously signed with the Chinese government. By spreading negative comments about China's investment, the U.S. aims to convince the African countries that Chinese investment poses a threat to their interests. While China presents its investment as a win-win cooperation, the West perceives it as a threat to its interests in Africa, encompassing traditional aspects such as military and economy, as well as

non-traditional security aspects such as norms and values, thereby framing it as a security issue.

4.2 The Constructivist Perspective

Constructivism emerged within the realm of international relations theory during the 1980s and 1990s, filling a void left unaddressed by realism and liberalism. The constructivist school of thought sought to explain how states identify their interests and explored the social construction of these interests. Alexander Wendt, one of the prominent theorists in constructivism, considers the attribution of meaning to objects as a fundamental principle in social constructivist theory. According to Wendt (1992), individuals base their actions towards objects, including other actors, on the meanings they assign to them. This implies that relationships with objects and other actors are socially constituted within constructivist thought (Hurd, 2008).

The constructivist perspective argues that ideas play a significant role in shaping international relations and posits that the behavior of actors within the international system is more adaptable than what structural theories suggest. The historical development of Sino-African relations provides validation for this perspective, as the evolving nature of these ties since the establishment of the People's Republic of China exemplifies this notion. In 1955, the Afro-Asian Conference of Heads of State and Governments held in Bandung, Indonesia marked the initiation of Sino-African links. At that time, China held limited influence in international affairs and closely aligned itself with the economic model of the Soviet Union. However, doubts regarding the suitability of the Soviet model for China may have arisen within Mao's thinking by 1957, following the outcomes of the initial Five-Year Economic Plan (Fung, 2019). Mao envisioned China as the true leader of Third World countries and, in September 1958, extended recognition to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, thereby reorienting China's objective in Africa to surpass the Soviet Union and demonstrate to Africans that China was a more loyal and natural ally (Fung, 2019).

Between 1961 and 1999, China's foreign policy towards Africa underwent significant transformations. Following Mao's death and the ascent of Deng Xiaoping, China prioritized economic growth and embraced neoliberal norms. From 1980 to 1999, China pursued a "China-first" policy (Xu, 2001). However, at the turn of the 21st century, influenced by neoliberal values and its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001, China's investment in Africa experienced exponential growth. This expansion led to the establishment of investment funds for African countries through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the China-Africa Development Fund (CAD Fund).

Despite accusations of "modern colonialism" leveled by the West, economic data indicates that China invests more in Asia and the mining industry in Europe than in Africa (Fung, 2019). In fact, China invests nearly as much in Africa's infrastructure as it does in mining, reflecting the financial needs of African countries to improve their infrastructure and the Chinese government's initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of Chinese enterprises seeking contracts abroad.

Constructivism provides a valuable lens for understanding the relationship between Djibouti and external actors, particularly its strategic partnership with China. Djibouti, a small East African country, has emerged as a key hub for regional trade and military operations due to its strategic location near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden. Djibouti's decision to establish close ties with China can be attributed to the socially constructed meanings attached to the partnership. Djibouti, a former French colony, has historically relied on external powers for support and economic development. China's narrative of South-South cooperation and its non-interference policy resonates with Djibouti's desire for sovereignty and development.

Moreover, Djibouti's engagement with China is also influenced by the socially constructed identity of being a regional gateway and a center for international trade and investment. Djibouti's leaders perceive China's investment and infrastructure projects as crucial for their country's economic growth and regional significance. The shared understanding of economic development and infrastructure cooperation shapes

Djibouti's interests and decision-making in its relationship with China.

Constructivism also offers insights into the relationship between the Republic of Congo and external actors, particularly its engagement with both China and Western powers. The Congo is rich in natural resources, including oil and minerals, and has attracted significant attention from various international actors.

In this case, constructivism highlights the socially constructed meanings and norms that influence the Republic of Congo's engagement with different actors. Western powers, such as former colonial powers or international financial institutions, have historically exerted influence over the country's political and economic policies. However, the rise of China as an alternative partner with a different narrative and approach has opened up new possibilities for the Republic of Congo.

Constructivism allows us to understand the changing dynamics of the Congo's engagement with China and the West. The socially constructed meanings attached to the partnership with China, such as the narrative of non-interference, mutual benefit, and infrastructure development, appeal to the Republic of Congo's interests in economic growth and development. The country's leaders may perceive China's engagement as an opportunity to diversify its partnerships, reduce dependence on Western powers, and reinforce its own agency in shaping its development path.

At the same time, the Republic of Congo's engagement with Western powers reflects the influence of shared norms and historical ties. Constructivism recognizes that the socially constructed identities and historical experiences shape the country's relationships with different actors. Western powers may emphasize governance, human rights, and transparency in their engagement with the Republic of Congo, reflecting a different set of socially constructed norms and values.

Overall, constructivism allows for a nuanced understanding of the relationships between Djibouti, the Republic of Congo, and external actors like China and the West. It highlights the role of shared meanings, identities, and socially constructed norms in shaping state behavior, interests, and decision-making in international relations.

Chapter 5: Case study: Djibouti and Congo

5.1 The Competition of China and America in Djibouti

Djibouti is a small country located in the Horn of Africa. Situated on the northeastern coast of the continent, it occupies a strategic position at the entrance to the Red Sea and serves as a gateway between Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Despite its small size, Djibouti plays a significant role in regional and international affairs (Edward Paice, 2017). One of Djibouti's key strengths lies in its strategic location, which has made it a hub for international trade and maritime activities. The country hosts several foreign military bases, including those of the United States, France, China, and Japan, highlighting its geopolitical significance and stability in a volatile region (Edward Paice, 2017).

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has had a significant impact on Djibouti, particularly in terms of infrastructure investment. The country has experienced notable GDP growth, with a 6.5% increase in 2020, largely attributed to China's involvement in major projects such as the construction of the Djibouti-Ethiopia railway and the Doraleh Multipurpose Port (Edward Paice, 2017). These projects have enhanced Djibouti's connectivity and trade potential, opening up opportunities for economic development and regional integration.

However, China's establishment of its first military base in Djibouti has raised concerns for the United States, which maintains its largest permanent military base in Africa in the same country. The U.S. military base, known as Camp Lemonnier, plays a crucial role in supporting U.S. military operations in the region and is part of the U.S. Africa Command (Ababa, 2018). In 2014, then-President Barack Obama and Djibouti's President Ismail signed a 20-year lease extension for the base, solidifying its long-term presence. The U.S. pays an annual sum of \$63 million for the use of the base (Ababa, 2018).

While Djibouti has expressed a desire to collaborate with China, exemplified by

the partnership with China Merchants Ports Holdings Company (CMPort) in the construction of the Doraleh Multipurpose Port (Ababa, 2018), the close proximity of this port to the American military base adds to the U.S.'s sense of insecurity. The U.S. has been closely monitoring what it perceives as Chinese encroachment and the emerging military presence in Djibouti. In March, Thomas Waldhauser, commander of U.S. Africa Command, testified before the House Armed Services Committee, highlighting the need for careful monitoring of China's activities in the region (Edward Paice, 2017).

The relationship between China and the U.S. in Djibouti has experienced strains and conflicts, with both parties filing complaints against each other in 2018 (Edward Paice, 2017). From the U.S. perspective, China's investment and military presence are seen as potential threats to American security interests in the region. The close proximity of the Chinese military base to the American base and the growing influence of China in Djibouti have heightened concerns about the balance of power and potential implications for regional stability.

In this context, China's investment and military presence in Djibouti have been perceived by the U.S. as a challenge to its strategic interests and regional dominance. The U.S. is keen on preserving its position as a major player in Africa, and any perceived threats from China's activities in Djibouti are viewed as obstacles to maintaining its influence and control.

According to Chinese government, all of its activities have been in the form of peacekeeping operations or anti-piracy operations in Djibouti. With the gradual expansion of peacekeeping efforts in recent years and the gradual increase in Chinese citizens' activities in the region, calls for China to build overseas bases have grown stronger. Since 2015, it has been revealed in the foreign media that China and the Djibouti government have been negotiating on the construction of a base. In the evacuation of Yemen in March of the same year, Djibouti was also one of the resettlement sites for expatriates, making it a natural candidate for China's first

overseas base (Edward Paice, 2017).

From the start of construction of the Djibouti security base in 2016 to its official commissioning on August 1, 2017, the construction time of just over a year once again reflects the "speed of China". In terms of Chinese official social media, the purpose and role of China's security base in Djibouti are different from those of the U.S. and Japan (Zhou Laura, 2017). According to the current information, the main tasks of the base are expected to be to supply and protect the escort fleet, to provide protection and support to the troops in the UN peacekeeping mission areas of South Sudan, Congo and Mali, and to provide personnel and support to the evacuation of overseas Chinese in the relevant areas. These are all activities conducted for the purpose of peace and stability.

China and the United States have been competing for influence in Djibouti. While China has established a military base and is the country's largest trading partner, the US has had a longer presence in Djibouti and sees it as a key location for counterterrorism operations (Edward Paice, 2017). China's military base in Djibouti can increase its military presence and influence in Africa. The base can allow the Chinese navy to conduct patrols and military exercises in the waters off the east coast of Africa and potentially expand its long-range naval capabilities. This could pose a threat to the US's maritime security and challenge its military advantage in the region.

According to the US Department of Defense, China's base in Djibouti is part of a broader strategy to project military power beyond China's borders and to secure its interests overseas (DoD, 2021). The US Department of Defense report states that the base is "designed to support China's growing presence in Africa and allow for extended deployments in the Indian Ocean, including supporting counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions (DoD, 2021)."

Since 2015, the U.S. State Department and members of Congress have repeatedly publicly pressed Djibouti to restrict and restrict the scope of Chinese military activities in Djibouti (Feige Johannes, 2016). European and American countries have always regarded Africa as their own backyard, and they do not want to

see their influence in Africa decline due to China's entry.

According to U.S. national security, the investment of China in Africa was described as “coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor”. However, Djiboutian officials insist the country will maintain control over its ports and that, so far, the government has a solid track record of paying off its loans. “The funding is coming from China mainly, but we own the investments, we own the assets. It’s a port, it’s a railway, it’s a free zone, we own two thirds of our investments,” said the chairman of the Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority, Aboubaker Omar Hadi (Feige Johannes, 2016).

The West must understand two aspects of Djibouti's base and bilateral relationship with China: When Djibouti opened its doors to international investment, no one showed up or was interested in investing except to rent its assets, leaving the country with no choice but to seek assistance from China, which helped save the country from an economic death spiral (Rithmire, 2022). China did not impose itself on Djibouti or seek to enslave it with military, as Western media and governments frequently portray. Besides, Djibouti took out manageable loans to invest in its national infrastructure to become self-sufficient, which improved people’s living being in local (Rithmire, 2022).

5.2 The Mining Contract between Chinese Government and DRC

Africa's persistent poverty and underdevelopment are what have led to China's expanding involvement there. Despite successes in the mining industry since the DRC's accession to international sovereignty in 1960, its influence on enhancing Congolese citizens' quality of life has remained remarkably minimal (Aaron, 2015). However, the mining industry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is thought to be the most lucrative, supporting the state budget. In the postcolonial Congo, the commercialization of raw commodities hasn't helped to improve any infrastructure or

foster the synergy of growth. The standard of living has drastically declined. With an average GDP of US \$478.2 annually and ranking 176th out of 178 nations in terms of human development index in 2017, the DRC was listed as the eighth poorest nation in the world by the UN report from 2015 (Aaron, 2015).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) refers to a vast and diverse country located in Central Africa. It is the second-largest country on the continent by land area and boasts a population of over 80 million people, making it the fourth most populous country in Africa (Global Witness, 2011). The DRC is bordered by nine countries, including Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Besides, the DRC is rich in natural resources, including minerals such as cobalt, copper, and diamonds. However, the exploitation of these resources has often fueled conflicts and contributed to economic inequality. The country also possesses vast agricultural potential, with fertile lands and a diverse range of crops (Global Witness, 2011).

China has made significant investments in the DRC over the past ten years, particularly in the mining industry, where a USD 6 billion "resources for infrastructure" arrangement has generated a lot of debate among financial institutions and some advocacy groups (Aaron, 2015). In the context of the new partnership, infrastructure development initiatives to benefit the nation have also been proposed.

China's cooperation and economic presence have steadily grown despite all the dismal statistics, the uncertain investment environment, and the unstable political environment. China has embarked into resource-for-infrastructure agreements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to assist with poverty reduction and development, as Western developed country programs have failed to improve living standards despite the nation's abundance of natural resources (Aaron, 2015).. Chinese businesses have invested in the country to support infrastructural projects while also exploiting natural resources since the "Go out" strategy was introduced by the Chinese government and the first democratic elections in the Congo in 2006 (Global Witness, 2011).

At the same time, Africa has become a prominent destination due to China's economic expansion, which has increased demand for mineral resources. In turn, this

has led to a significant evolution in the relationship between China and the DRC, from a strategic alliance that benefited China's standing in Africa and on the global stage to a trade partnership that encourages bilateral trade and the growth of private investment by Chinese companies.

The Congolese government is interested in China's proposal for development, which is focused on infrastructure and has long-term economic goals from a regional viewpoint (Kreps and Flores-Marcias, 2013). China invests in the Congo with no strings attached, in contrast to Western developed nations and international financial institutions, in order to advance its foreign policy of "no strings attached" (Dionne, 2021). China has made large investments in the rehabilitation of the Congo in return for the right to long-term mineral resource exploitation.

China has become a new global power and the nation that is geographically closest to the African continent, particularly to those with abundant natural resources, over the past ten years thanks to its improved relations with Africa in general and the DRC in particular. By generating employment opportunities and enhancing living standards, China's investment is anticipated to promote development and reduce poverty (UNSC, 2001).

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) holds immense reserves of valuable minerals, including cobalt, copper, coltan, and untapped lithium deposits, which are crucial for the development of new-generation technologies like electric vehicle batteries (Aaron, 2015). China recognized this potential early on and aggressively invested in the DRC, establishing control over approximately 60% of the global electric vehicle battery market and capturing around 70% of the DRC's mining sector market share (Sucui, 2020). With the rise of the electric vehicle industry, the United States is determined to catch up and has intensified its efforts in the DRC, despite China's significant influence.

China's investments in the DRC have yielded positive outcomes, particularly in terms of local infrastructure development and improved living conditions for the population. Since 2006, there has been an increase in high-level official visits from China, the expansion of Chinese consular services, the appointment of an experienced

ambassador in Kinshasa, and the signing of various bilateral agreements. The Congolese President has acknowledged the importance of cooperation with China, referring to it as "key to the reconstruction of the DRC" (Dionne, 2021). Chinese investments have already had a positive impact on local infrastructure and living conditions (Sucui, 2020).

However, certain US politicians have misrepresented and vilified China's economic cooperation with Africa, implicitly accusing China of "plundering Africa's resources," promoting "opacity," and "fueling local corruption" during their visits to the continent. The US has taken steps to curb Chinese investment in Africa by exaggerating the negative intentions behind China's investments. As part of a broader anti-corruption effort, Congolese officials, with financial assistance from the US government, are conducting a comprehensive review of past mining contracts (Searcey, 2021).

According to Jonathan Hillman, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, there is a degree of uncertainty for Beijing in investing trillions of dollars abroad (Cheng, 2018). Through the establishment of a regime of truth, Western media has portrayed African countries cooperating with China as vulnerable gamblers, likening them to Mafia pawns at risk of losing their autonomy. Guided by securitization, Western governments have constructed a perceived threat through their rhetoric. This narrative has been disseminated through Western media outlets, including newspapers and speeches, aimed at containing China's influence and development in Africa (Rithmire, 2022).

By examining the diverse perspectives and underlying motivations of the various players involved, including the US and China, through discourse analysis, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues and disputes surrounding China's growing influence in Africa, with a specific focus on the DRC. Through our case study on military bases in Djibouti and mining contracts in the DRC, we draw upon policy papers, research journals, and news articles from multiple sources, encompassing both Western and Chinese perspectives. This multidimensional approach enables us to unravel the nuanced dynamics and uncover any hidden or deeper meanings that may exist within official documents, contributing to a more

comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As we can see, the interaction between China and the U.S. in Africa is both constrained by the overall framework of the relationship between the two countries and influenced by the particularities of Africa. After Trump became the president of the U.S. in 2017, he explicitly identified China as his main competitor, and while the two countries maintain cooperation in many important areas, their competitiveness has increased significantly, structural contradictions have come to the fore, and strategic suspicions between the two sides have increased.

On the other hand, Africa as a third-party factor in Sino-US relations has its own special characteristics, which are shaped by the interests of China and the US in Africa, the dynamics of power contrast, their respective political demands and Africa's own factors. Africa is not the core region of the strategic game between China and the United States, so there is more room for China and the U.S. to maneuver around each other. Africa is a continent with a high concentration of least developed countries and faces numerous global issues, including development, counter-terrorism, refugees, food security, etc. These issues are important directions for Sino-U.S. cooperation. These factors determine that China and the U.S. are both competing and cooperating in Africa, neither hostile nor a complete zero-sum game, and the competition and cooperation between the two sides in Africa will be deeply intertwined.

In conclusion, Africa's growing importance as a site of geopolitical competition has brought about increasing concerns for the US, as China's expanding economic and political influence on the continent is perceived to pose a threat to US security interests. This paper has argued that the perceived threat has multiple facets, relating to political values, economic interests, and geopolitical considerations.

The paper has analyzed two specific cases to illustrate these points. First, the military bases of both the US and China in Djibouti demonstrate how China's increasing presence in Africa threatens the US in terms of military competition and strategic positioning. Second, China's investment for minerals in Congo highlights the

competition between superpowers in Africa and how China's growing economic influence threatens US interests.

The paper has applied securitization theory and constructivist theory to understand the US's perception of the Chinese threat. Through securitization theory, the paper has shown how the US's framing of China as a threat can be seen as a form of constructing security threats through discourse. Additionally, constructivist theory has been used to analyze how political norms can be exported through initiatives like China's investment in Congo, shedding light on why the US increasingly views China's presence in Africa as a threat to its political and economic interests.

Therefore, in order to counter this threat, this thesis mainly analyses the reason of America framing China's investment in Africa as a threat, besides, this thesis suggests that the US should focus on infrastructure development plans instead of framing China as a threat. By investing in Africa's infrastructure, the US can compete with China's economic influence while also promoting its own values and interests in the region. However, by strategically framing China as a threat, the US can strengthen its alliances and partnerships in Africa, which will be crucial for maintaining its strategic interests on the continent in the face of China's growing influence.

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