

**XI JINPING'S FIRST OVERSEAS FORAY:
OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND
IMPLICATIONS**

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Executive Summary

1. Xi embarked on his first overseas state visits to Russia, Tanzania, South Africa and the Republic of Congo as well as attended the fifth leaders' summit of the BRICS countries just days after he became China's president in March 2013.
2. The visits underscore Xi's confident grip on power. Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao only made his first overseas trip in late May 2003, more than two months after becoming China's president in early March 2003.
3. Equally important, Xi's visits indicate a China that is confident of responding to a US presence in the Asia-Pacific region that appears directed at China.
4. In his visits, Xi was forthright about China's worldview and how other countries ought to respond to it. He implicitly criticized the US for being caught up in the "old days of colonialism" and "constrained by zero-sum Cold War mentality".
5. Xi asserted that peace, development and win-win cooperation have become the trend. He called for a strong China-Russia relationship that can guarantee international strategic balance and world peace and stability.
6. Besides strategic considerations, Xi's visits serve a more practical purpose of pursuing mutually beneficial cooperation. In particular, China has reached agreement with Russia to supply additional oil to China as well as for China to participate in joint exploration with Russia for oil in the Arctic.
7. In Africa, Xi stressed China's long-standing ties with the countries there including China's support for their fight against colonialism, imperialism and apartheid. More significantly, Xi's visits highlighted the support China has rendered and will continue to provide to Africa.

8. Projects with the involvement of China range from highways, ports, railways, agriculture to convention centers, schools and hospitals. These show that while China has benefited from Africa's vast natural resources, it has also helped Africa develop and progress.
9. Xi's attendance at the BRICS leaders' summit underscores China's effort to reform the international order more in line with China's interests. Initiatives such as a BRICS Development Bank and Contingency Reserve Arrangement are meant to strengthen BRICS linkages and international profile.
10. While reaching out to Russia, Africa and the BRICS, China apparently does not intend to gang up with these partners to challenge the US. Doing so would invite a negative response from the US that could disrupt China's growth.
11. Nevertheless, China would like the US to move away from its military-centric focus in Asia to support peace, development and cooperation, areas where China has a competitive advantage given its strong economy. These are also the areas, particularly in development aspects, where the US is weaker.
12. There is palpable confidence on China's part that over time it can make adjustments to the existing international order still dominated by the US. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, China knows that time is on its side.