Participant name: Rabia Qureshi, Pol Chief

Participant organization: US Embassy Accra

The threat from China, see less of a threat from China on the political side than I would on the econ side. The illegal mining that is happening here. That is mostly what the threat is. In the law enforcement community, we do see scams that are run by Chinese rings – direct flights between Ghana and China that will bring in individuals that set up a troll farm. But the idea is that they are fraudsters and trying to defraud locals, Europeans, and even US. Another area looking at is maritime security, and china as we know, around the world buying up a lot of ports and land/infrastructure. There is activity with China at at the Tema port here. Movement of illegal drugs, substances – precursor chemicals – fentanyl or the like – early days of unpacking that. Would lead to a recommendation where more resources should be put towards that particular issue. Otherwise the local government here is not terribly focused on strategic competition, Ghana has a fairly small economy – dwarfed by CDI and Nigeria economically. In that respect because its economy is dwarfed by what is happening in those arenas, it is in Ghana’s interest to play well with ECOWAS. And speaks to President Mahama outlook – Pan Africanist. Known to be socialist, in the democratic sense of the word – part of that has to do with African solidarity – China has been good to Africa generally speaking. With economic assistance. But from the perspective of the Ghanaian government, they see a country coming in with stuff – development assistance, building roads, a positive – not really in their interest to antagonize a big partner like China. Don’t come with the bells and whistles – Germany and UK – not an apples to apples with China and EU – but they are definitely filling a gap on infrastructure that the US was never a part of. In other parts of West Africa they are looking for contracts on infrastructure and housing. Not an antagonistic relationship between China and Turkey – just carving out a very small pot (for Turkey) - looking to see how they can make a buck. Ghana is not a forefront of that, just because the size of the market. Ghana is pro-American – we are the partner of choice, have been for 50 plus years. China is trying to make room for themselves in the military relationships – making some inroads. Aa a US government have an interagency working group mapping what is happening – mostly happening on the economic commercial space. US mining company is the largest taxpayer in Ghana. Newmont – here mining mostly gold – in the western part of the country. Despite what may be prohibitive economic processes for foreign investment the US company still feels that it is worth it. And China is still small scale mining. A little unclear whether the government (new govt) is going to go after illegal miners – from China. The Chinese Ambassador put out a oped this summer when he was new – saying aware that galamsey (illegal small scale gold mining) is an issue, we are taking steps to apprehend individuals with illegal mining – charm offenses. Unclear whether that is clear or not, and whether the government of Ghana is making this a priority. Some senior official said publicly when we find illegal miners that are foreign they are deporting them, but unclear if it means Chinese people.

Civil society to the extend they focus on it. They aren’t very focused on China. Hear about Chinese investments in education and culture – Confucius Institutes. Tries to bring early and mid level diplomats to Beijing to tour them around and build those relationships early in their career. But kind of small potatoes.

No negative perceptions about US mining companies. Laurie Kelleher.

Minister of Defense did talk about mis/disinfo – former communications minister. Under the former president and now under Mahama – senior government officials have communicated the concern. They don’t have strategy. They are interested but they don’t know how to get their arms around it. There is room to be helpful there.

One thing we say with the elections in 2024, did work through other civil society – with fact checking organizations, for credible local organizations and in local dialects – about what is credible info. There is voter apathy, disinterst – in what is this person going to do for me, my fortunes are not going to change. Another recommendation – Afrobarometer’s reporting – voter apathy really high. Not concerned about the future of democracy. Something to keep our eye on that. Saw how quickly mis/disinfo led to the coups in the Sahel. Is a runaway train – it happens much more quickly than you think. They are aware of this even though they don’t see an immediate risk. They care about democracy and democratic backsliding. Area of interest but hard for them to wrap their hands around it.

GEC – was discussing here on PD section. UK and Aussies are interested in this. The Dutch not a Five Eyes partner – might be worth talking to. Germany.

The US doesn’t have to cut a check for something to be helpful. Just advocating or leading folks to think about the available tools. Messaging to government – maybe there is unexplored work that we could do with the UN - maybe there is something there, put it into an existing strategy. And even our advocacy is important. WE sit on the exec boards of all these agencies.