

Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche

Cattedra di Geopolitical Scenarios and Political Risk

# China Belt Road Development in Africa: How the Chinese Transformation of the African Continent will Grow it into a Geopolitical Asset for Beijing

Prof. Giuseppe Scognamiglio

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RELATORE

Prof. Carlo Magrassi

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CORRELATORE

Alice Oppi - 645422

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CANDIDATO

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## Introduction

Through the Belt and Road Initiative, the focal point of Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy, which aims to have China take on a bigger leadership role in world affairs in light of its growing influence and stature, China has expanded its political, economic, and cultural reach in many developing countries all over the world. The Initiative encourages the collaboration of participating nations to build collaborative development strategies and initiatives to boost cross-border or regional cooperation. This project should allegedly look forward to a win-win cooperation based on the mutual benefit of both China and the countries involved, and comprises coordination of monetary policy, intergovernmental collaboration, multilevel macro policy interchange, and communication channels and policy assistance for the execution of large-scale projects. However, the African continent has been engaged in the BRI via a bilateral relationship with Beijing purely based on asymmetry: indeed, while China calls for brotherhood and equality, a different point of view could reveal the BRI as a mere attempt to downplay Africa. In fact, the BRI is often critiqued as so-called "debt trap diplomacy." According to this narrative, China provides infrastructure funding to developing economies under opaque loan terms, only to strategically leverage the recipient country's indebtedness to China for economic, military, or political favor. Nevertheless, in spite of China's intent, the aid that came from Beijing in the last two decades in fields like infrastructure, education, and health has made African states develop into potential newly emerging powers.

Given the controversies surrounding the intentions of the BRI, this research will question the Chinese motive behind the Initiative and its projects, by aiming to answer this query: will the Chinese transformation of the African continent grow it into a geopolitical asset for Beijing?

Chapter I describes the evolution of China's relations and interactions with the rest of the globe from the 1950s to the 2010s, examining what has motivated China to undertake its path to global power. Two significant measures were taken to ease China out of isolation. First, the "great strategy", which held that China should maintain a low profile and remain serene in the face of threats and uncertainties; and second, the famous "southern sojourn", through which clever economic reforms let China re-engage with the rest of the world. From a situation of pessimism, China rehabilitated into situation of openness and confidence on the international scene, where now plays a more prominent role in global governance and multilateral diplomacy.

Having shifted its political position in the international scenario from a situation of passivity to a rather active one, China's domestic interests have become gradually intertwined with those of the international community. Thus, in order to present itself as a peaceful country on the global governance scene to provide it opportunities to advance its national objectives, Beijing has adopted

a new behavioral paradigm, known as Chinese Exceptionalism. Chapter II will present this as the theoretical framework under which this research is analyzed, with the goal of attesting stressing that this theory is solely supported by the Chinese perspective. Indeed, the Chinese international façade focuses on cooperation rather than conflict, even though it is grounded in the doctrine of Sinocentrism, namely the ideology that finds China as the cultural, political, and economic center of the world, automatically creating a situation of asymmetry between China and the other countries. As a result, the chapter will also provide an outline of China's expanding global interests in respect to the BRI, discussing both its aim to improve regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future cooperating the peripheries, portions of the developing world subjected to Beijing's expanding authority and influence, and the allegations of China's debt trap diplomacy tactic.

Chapter III, examining the historical relationships between China and Africa and outlining the important Chinese activities in the African continent, will illustrate how Africa fits into the BRI. China and Africa have developed close ties as a result of previous common experiences and shared objectives. Because the cornerstone and long-standing strategy of China's foreign policy has been to strengthen its solidarity and collaboration with African nations, Africa and China share a common future, and both sides have been assisting one another and expanding their collaboration as they work for economic progress and national renewal. This section will analyze the historical ties between China and Africa, investigating the creation of FOCAC, which is the primary multilateral coordination mechanism between the two, and describing the main Chinese interventions in Africa. Moreover, this chapter will specifically assess the action plans for marine cooperation, education for school and university training, and infrastructure, presenting a case study on Kenya to observe concrete examples of the Sino-African partnership in these fields.

China and Africa have established an authentic connection, but there are both benefits and drawbacks to such a partnership. Why does China benefit from working with African nations? Chapter IV will examine the advantages and disadvantages of China's influence on the African nations, and conclude by analyzing what to expect from the Sino-African relationship at the geopolitical level. This research will conclude by analyzing what to expect from the consequences of the China-Africa partnership at the geopolitical level in the near future, and what role it will play together with all the uncertainties characterizing nowadays' international scene.

## Chapter I: China's Long March to Global Power

This chapter documents how China's international ties and contacts with the rest of the world have developed since 1950s, up until the 2010s. The following analysis will be useful to understand what to expect from China's foreign relations in the next decades of the twenty-first century.

The term "foreign relations" is purposely used instead of foreign policy. The latter is mostly made up of China's government's declared policy on numerous problems, stresses diplomacy, and is analyzed at the national level. Foreign relations, on the other hand, covers a considerably wider spectrum of a country's relationships than formal declarations and diplomacy.

As China has gone global, a slew of Chinese players are scouring the globe for business possibilities. China currently has a strong presence on every continent and in every civilization (even the remaining seventeen countries with whom it has no formal diplomatic relations). It is also a part of international institutions, having joined 66 intergovernmental organizations and serving as an observer in nine others.<sup>1</sup>

China's sheer existence clearly qualifies it as a complete international actor. In recent years, Beijing's diplomatic influence has considerably increased. In 2017, the PRC has 264 diplomatic missions (166 embassies, 90 consulates, and 8 permanent missions) across the world.<sup>2</sup> No government is as diplomatically engaged on a bilateral level as China, with its leaders traveling to every continent and hosting dozens of world leaders in Beijing each year. During Xi Jinping's presidency, Beijing's diplomacy has also become less reactive (a long-standing trend) and more proactive. China has become considerably more engaged and prominent in international organizations and multilateral global governance as a result of this transition. Beijing is no longer a "free rider" and is increasingly acting as a "responsible international stakeholder",<sup>3</sup> contributing more equitably to international public goods. Despite the massive resources Beijing has invested in trying to strengthen China's foreign image and cultural links, China's cultural and "soft" power remains fairly restricted on a global scale. The contrast between presence and influence may be particularly pronounced in this area: China has a global cultural presence, but its soft power effect is mostly restricted to underdeveloped nations (where it is also mixed).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Mason University Index Mundi, "China's International Organization Participation": [https://www.indexmundi.com/china/international\\_organization\\_participation.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/china/international_organization_participation.html).

<sup>2</sup> China ranks second globally in the 2017 Global Diplomacy Index, a survey designed to compare diplomatic network. <https://globaldiplomacyindex,lowyinstitute.org/#>.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility," Remarks to the National Committee on US-China Relations, September 21, 2005: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, "Five Charts on Global Views of China," October 19, 2018: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/19/5-charts-on-global-views-of-china/>.

China's use of these many instruments of power differs by area of the world and by country. This thesis will focus on the African continent, but before concentrating on how China is growing it into a geopolitical asset, readers should have some understanding of: how PRC foreign relations have evolved over the past seven decades, what have been some of the key inflection points, and what have been the main drivers of China's policies and relationships over time. This introductory chapter aims at explaining exactly that, by presenting thumbnail sketches of China's increasing interaction with the rest of the world over the last years, and exploring what has pushed China to act in the way it has.

## **I.I The 1950s: Isolation**

China was shut off from both the West and those in the East, and it was terribly isolated. Faced with this reality, Mao and the nascent PRC had no alternative but to seek economic and security help from Moscow. The Soviet Union provided the only help available, and Moscow ensured the PRC's national security through a military alliance. After Stalin's death in 1953, the Sino-Soviet relationship's brotherly dynamics began to crumble.<sup>5 6</sup> Beijing's participation in two international conferences, the 1954 Geneva Conference and 1955 Bandung Conference, were the only notable outliers.

The two Korean governments, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and the United States dealt with the Korean War independently, while France, the United Kingdom, and Viet Minh worked together on Indochina. Geneva, Bandung and the Asian-African Conferences were important for the PRC as it sought a "third path" between the two warring Cold War camps (the socialist camp and the imperialist camp).<sup>7</sup> Mao himself designated this to be the "intermediate zone" in world politics.<sup>8</sup> The Bandung Conference laid the groundwork for the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (to which China was admitted as an observer but not a member) and provided a chance for Beijing to promote its "second identity" as a post-colonial nation. Geneva and Bandung conferences provided useful opportunities for the new PRC government to connect with international

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<sup>5</sup> Factors contributing to the split, apart from strong disagreements between Mao and Khrushchev, were Moscow's refusal to support China's bombardment of Taiwan's offshore islands and brinkmanship with Washington; criticism of Mao's agrarian collectivization and Great Leap Forward; failure to provide China with the promised sample atom bomb; and demands for the establishment of a longwave radio facility and access for Soviet submarines to Chinese naval bases. China, for its part, was skeptical of Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" condemnation of Stalin, as well as his response to the 1956 upheavals in Hungary and Poland, and his 1955 "peaceful coexistence" strategy toward (and visit to) the United States. There were also other doctrinal differences, as well as the personalities of Mao and Khrushchev, that helped to drive the two apart.

<sup>6</sup> "Note from the Soviet Embassy in Beijing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China", July 18, 1960, available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117052>.

<sup>7</sup> David Kimche, *The Afro-Asian Movement Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> In an August 1946 conversation with American correspondent Anna Louise Strong, Mao initially used this phrase to allude to the nations that stood between the growing Soviet and American camps.



entities other than the Soviet Union and its satellite allies. Sino-Soviet tensions began to spread as internal Chinese politics became increasingly radical. Khrushchev's goal of "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialist United States, with which Mao strongly disapproved, was a crucial additional factor in the developing frictions with Moscow.

## **I.II The 1960s: From Bad to Worse**

China began the 1960s in a more vulnerable condition than it had started the 1950s. Relations with neighboring nonaligned countries like India and Indonesia deteriorated dramatically. Indeed, China was suspected of aiding the failed coup attempt in Indonesia in 1965.<sup>9 10</sup> The 1960s were unquestionably the revolutionary period in China's foreign policy, as Beijing transformed into a radical revisionist force trying to overturn existing governments throughout the world. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (无产阶级文化大革命) was a deeply xenophobic and notably anti-Western popular movement, notwithstanding Mao's efforts to "clear the class ranks" and target "revisionist forces" inside the CCP.<sup>11</sup>

The decade of the 1960s also saw rising tensions between China and the Soviet Union, as well as increased strain on China's national security. Long-range transmitters in China's southern Yunnan Province broadcast revolutionary propaganda to Southeast Asian countries 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Only 20 new countries established diplomatic ties with China throughout the decade. Mao, who was the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party at the time, ordered a massive civil defense project underneath China's city in the event of an attack by either the US or the USSR. The Soviet Union was the "main contradiction" (主要矛盾), and the Americans were a secondary danger, in true Marxist dialectical form.

Unknown to Mao and Zhou Enlai, President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger were making a similar assessment and considering the same possibility, namely that "my enemy's enemy is my friend". Nixon published an essay in *Foreign Affairs* in 1967, just before taking office, in which he subtly foreshadowed a reconciliation with China. He had grown to see China less as a renegade player and more as a country that needed to be "brought in from the cold" and absorbed into the international community. Nixon also estimated that Beijing was critical to his plans for a gradual withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam.

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<sup>9</sup> John W. Garver, *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*, p.221.

<sup>10</sup> As Garver concludes, following an exhaustive examination of the available evidence: "It is virtually certain that CCP and PKI leaders discussed strategy for the Indonesian revolution, and Beijing lauded and encouraged the PKI struggle. Yet there is no evidence that Beijing knew of it, let alone helped plan, the calamitous PKI coup attempt that soon occurred".

<sup>11</sup> Officials and historians in China state that the GPCR spanned a decade, from 1966 to 1976, while the "active phase" (活跃期) lasted just three years, until the Ninth Party Congress in 1969.

### **I.III The 1970s: China Joins the World**

China's relations with the United States, Canada<sup>12</sup> and the Soviet Union changed dramatically in the 1970s. The opening with the US ended two decades of hostility and non-contact. It also resulted in the formation of the so-called strategic triangle in international affairs, forming a "unified front" (统战) against Moscow. Moreover, China began the long process of emerging from its isolation to "join the world". Indeed, the Sino-American reconciliation was a crucial milestone in Beijing's international relations growth.

The official establishing of diplomatic ties on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979, was required before full normalization could take place. The opening with the United States encouraged the formation of connections with other Western and Asian nations.<sup>13</sup> It also permitted the development of business and cultural interactions with Western nations with the establishment of diplomatic connections. The Gang of Four was captured by Mao Zedong's chosen successor, Hua Guofeng, a month after Mao's death. Deng Xiaoping was "rehabilitated" (改过自新) and reinstated to his top posts in the summer of 1977, after a period of deft maneuvering.<sup>14</sup> Beijing's top geostrategic concern was combating the Soviet "polar bear" and its client nations (including Vietnam), but economic development became the sine qua non of all Chinese policy from then on.

### **I.IV The 1980s: From Optimism to Pessimism**

China began the decade with a hopeful attitude about "reform and opening" (改革与开放), but was shattered on the rocks of the Tiananmen Square Incident on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989. These were heady days, and the daily demonstrations in Beijing in the spring of 1989 further added to the sense that the PRC was finally breaking free from the shackles of political totalitarianism, economic commandism, and social restrictions. China's choice to use fatal force against the protestors in June 1989, on the other hand, pushed China back and ruined its international reputation.

Furthermore, China opened its doors to foreign investment, rapidly expanded its foreign trade (based on an import substitution strategy), engaged in educational and other cultural exchanges with a variety of countries. It eagerly studied other (and more liberal) political systems, began interactions with Western militaries, and began to open China itself to foreign visitors. Overall, the PRC was on

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Evans, *Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration, and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); and David Mulroney, *Middle Power, Middle Kingdom: What Canadians Need to Know About China* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> "Dates of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with the Peoples Republic of China," available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dates\\_of\\_establishment\\_of\\_diplomatic\\_relations\\_with\\_the\\_People%27s\\_Republic\\_of\\_China#1960s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dates_of_establishment_of_diplomatic_relations_with_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China#1960s).

<sup>14</sup> Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China: Sixty Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, third edition, 2011), chapter 4; and Robert Weatherley, *Mao's Forgotten Successor: The Political Career of Hua Guofeng* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

the right track—until tanks moved into Tiananmen Square and slaughtered an estimated 1,500-2,000 people on the streets of Beijing.

#### **I.V The 1990s: From Isolation to Rehabilitation**

The PRC was once again isolated, at least as far as the West was concerned, as a result of these events. The rest of the globe, on the other hand, remained virtually unaffected. Southeast Asian governments were cautious after the “regrettable occurrence”. In Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew led the way among Asian countries in maintaining relations with Beijing.<sup>15</sup>

The G-7 countries took nearly five years to relax most of its sanctions and reengage with China. The EU and US retained a weapons embargo in place and substantially reduced their interactions with the People’s Liberation Army. Other nations throughout the globe stayed mute about the events in Tiananmen Square. Deng Xiaoping, an elderly leader, took two significant measures in 1991 to ease China’s isolation. First, he initially articulated the “great strategy” (韬光养晦) in 1990, which said that China should maintain a low profile and remain tranquil in the face of such threats and uncertainties. Second, Deng’s famous “southern sojourn” (南巡) in early 1992, through which he restarted economic reforms, letting China re-engage with the rest of the world.

Finally, during the rest of the decade, Beijing established official bilateral ties with other thirty-two countries. In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to Chinese sovereignty, which was a significant step forward. By the late 1990s, Beijing had also begun to participate in a variety of Asian regional multilateral institutions.<sup>16</sup>

#### **I.VI The 2000s: Omnidirectional Diplomacy**

China’s objective in the 1990s was to add deeper depth to its global presence. As a result, China began its “going out” (走出去) or “going global” (走向世界) strategy. It was not until the 2000s that a broad spectrum of Chinese actors really began to develop a footprint around the globe. These Chinese performers spread across Africa, Europe, and Latin America. For the first time, China’s impact actually became global.

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<sup>15</sup> Pye, Lucian W., and Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000* (Singapore: Times Media, 2000), p.693.

<sup>16</sup> David Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” *International Security* vol. 29, no. 3, 2005, pp. 64–99, <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288043467496>”; and *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

China had arguably its greatest decade ever, dubbed the “golden decade” by some analysts (1999-2009) in China’s ties with its periphery.<sup>17</sup> A transition from a focus on ties with the major powers to a more varied and omnidirectional diplomacy with a new emphasis on the Global South was clear. We also saw the Chinese recognize and embrace soft power under Hu Jintao’s leadership. China’s foreign relations were generally good during this decade, but a new shift in China’s external ties emerged near the close of the decade. 2009-2010 was dubbed China’s “year of assertiveness”,<sup>18</sup> with many observers seeing a more caustic and aggressive approach. As a result, what had been a fruitful decade in China’s international relations ended on a sour note.

By 2011-2012, Beijing had re-calibrated and was attempting to alleviate tensions with a number of countries. However, the harm had already been done for many.

### **I.VII The 2010s: Increased Confidence and Prominence**

China has displayed growing confidence and proactiveness on the global scene since Xi Jinping’s ascent to power in 2012. Xi has replaced Deng Xiaoping’s passive diplomacy prescription of “biding time, hiding brilliance, and not taking the lead” (韬光养晦不当头) with his more aggressive credo of “striving for achievement” (奋发有为). In addition, Xi has stressed China’s “great rejuvenation,” (大复兴), the “Chinese Dream” (中国梦), and its being a “community with a shared destiny for mankind” (人类命运共同体). Xi has made foreign policy a priority, asserting that China should engage in “major country diplomacy” (大国外交) and advocating for a “new style of big power interactions” (新型大国关系). His signature Belt and Road Initiative has gotten a lot of international attention, with 123 countries and 29 international organizations signing on as of 2019.<sup>19</sup> China should play a more prominent role in global governance (全球治理) and multilateral diplomacy (多边外交). Moreover, Xi has also called for bettering China’s “internal propaganda” (对外宣传) and “telling China’s story well.”

Despite the sycophancy, there is little question that Xi Jinping’s foreign policy has taken on a new and more direct tone. The more powerful China gets, the greater the distrust, resulting in an ever-increasing need for assurances. China’s greatest foreign policy challenge in the future may probably be in the sphere of information and public diplomacy.

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<sup>17</sup> David Shambaugh, *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, (University of California Press, 2006); and “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order.” *International Security*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2005, pp. 64–99., <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288043467496>.”

<sup>18</sup> Michael D. Swaine, “Perceptions of an Assertive China,” *China Leadership Monitor*, vol. 32 (2010), available at: <http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM32MS.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> “Full Text of Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s News Conference at Second Session of 13th NPC 2019”, Xinhua, March 8, 2019.

China's strength and position in the globe have never been higher as the millennium enters its second decade. This is an unstoppable trend that is unlikely to change. When seen against the backdrop of the PRC's turbulent relationship with the rest of the globe during the last seven decades, as detailed in this chapter, Beijing's current situation is truly amazing. China has achieved numerous accomplishments in its contacts with the international community and will continue to do so.

## Chapter II: Chinese Global Governance

China as a major player in international politics is one of the key features of global politics of the late XX and early XXI century. Indeed, China's attitude to international governance has recently moved away from its traditional defensive posture and toward more active engagement. This new alignment in Chinese foreign policy shows that the CCP leadership is becoming more confident in China's domestic political system and its ability to set an exemplary worldwide example. The Xi Jinping administration appears to have a new aspiration for global leadership, as seen by recent changes in Chinese speech, diplomacy, and answers to significant global crises. China's growing influence in international affairs reflects its growing strength and stature as well as a long-standing desire to contribute to the creation of world order on its own terms.

The initial part of this chapter will: first, investigate the characteristics and purposes of Chinese exceptionalism through Sinocentrism; and second, explore the origins of this phenomenon, rooted in the China's Peaceful Rise policy. The aim of this section is to attest how Chinese exceptionalism shapes the political and sociological contours of the Chinese foreign policy in the XXI century. Consequently, the concept of "periphery" intended as a strategical geographic belt around the country, and how it extends in order to include also Africa, will be explained. This topic will necessarily feature a discussion on the characteristics of China's relations with developing countries, and its engagement at the economic, political, and security levels, based on three main principles: asymmetry, comprehensiveness, and interlocking structure. Furthermore, the chapter will present a brief but functional summary on the Belt and Road Initiative, addressing both its essence of global development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in nearly 70 countries and international organizations, and its objectives, namely to enhance regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future cooperating the peripheries. Finally, this section will conclude by analyzing the debt trap diplomacy strategy, typical of China, which consists in entrusting to the beneficiary countries huge loans when they are not able to repay them, in order to get strategic concessions as substitute payments.

### II.I Chinese Exceptionalism: A Nationalistic Approach to Global Governance

In recent years, China has shifted its political position in the international scenario from a situation of passivity to a rather active one, since its domestic interests have become gradually intertwined with those of the international community. Thus, in order to present China as a peaceful country on the global governance scene to provide it opportunities to advance its national objectives, Beijing has adopted a new behavioral paradigm, known as *Chinese Exceptionalism* (中国例外主义),

based on “great power reformism, benevolent pacifism, and harmonious inclusionism.”<sup>20</sup> By stressing these unique features, often referred to as “Chinese characteristics”, rooted in the ideology of Sinocentrism, Chinese exceptionalism seeks to provide a different, non-Western approach to international relations that could possibly represent an even superior alternative to the liberal tradition of pursuit of power. At the bilateral and contractual levels, it aims to ensure mutual benefit and win-win results. Indeed, Chinese foreign policy focuses on cooperation rather than conflict, displaying leadership skills dating back to the China’s Peaceful Rise policy, characterizing China as a responsible world leader that avoids unnecessary international confrontation.<sup>21</sup>

Chinese exceptionalism acts as the central idea of Beijing’s contemporary role in international relations with the intention of highlighting the greatness of the country. Indeed, exceptionalism is grounded in the doctrine of *Sinocentrism* (中国中心主义), namely the ideology that finds China as the cultural, political, or economic center of the world. “The idea of a country’s greatness is linked to the belief that it has a special preordained role to play in world affairs. [...] In the case of China, this perception of greatness can be linked to a sense of being chosen by Heaven.”<sup>22</sup> This conviction is due to the very sense of Chinese national identity bound up with the belief of being located at the center of the world, (“China” in Chinese means “middle country”, 中国) not only in a political way, but also in a cultural and moral one. “China to be truly great, has to be measured by standards that are morally defined.”<sup>23</sup> Consequently, understood from a Sino-centric point of view, Chinese exceptionalism is reflective of a broader Chinese mentality, whereby the idea of China as a great nation is being internalized at both the political and cultural level.

## II.II 2005 White Paper on China’s Peaceful Development Strategy

Tightly linked to the dogma of Sinocentrism, is the *China’s Peaceful Rise policy* (中国和平崛起). Also known as *China’s Peaceful Development* (中国和平发展), this was an official policy by former leader Hu Jintao, who sought to assure the international community that China’s growing political, economic, and military power, even though resulting in China wanting to seek global predominance on its own terms, would not pose a threat to international peace and security.<sup>24</sup> What makes the country so exceptional is the emphasis of the Chinese ethic as a soft power, which also

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Ho, “Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism.” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2014, p.165., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375414567978>.

<sup>21</sup> Shaohua Hu, “Revisiting Chinese Pacifism.” *Asian Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2006, p.256

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Ho, “Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism.” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2014, p.166., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375414567978>.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Sujian Guo, “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ in the 21st Century: Domestic and International Conditions.” *The China Journal*, vol. 58, 2007, pp. 228., <https://doi.org/10.2307/20066356>.

guarantees China's commitment to its own internal issues and improving the welfare of its own people before interfering in world affairs. Indeed, this policy was implemented to reassure the nations of Asia, together with the United States, that the rise of Beijing in military and economic prominence will not pose a threat to peace and stability, and that other nations will benefit from China's expanding power and influence. It is nevertheless worth clarify that "when Chinese leaders insist that the PRC will never be hegemonic, they are not saying that China will not dominate; they are merely saying that the PRC will never see itself as immoral."<sup>25</sup> Undeniably, within Chinese culture there is the expectation also for the leader to be morally uptight, for the extent of their morality justifies both their authority to lead the country and the greatness of the nation itself, following the honorable values imparted by its head of state.

Shifting from theory into practice, Chinese exceptionalism finds its principles of great power reformism, benevolent pacifism, and harmonious inclusionism, unfolded in the 2005 white paper issued by the State Council of the People's Republic of China, chief of administrative authority, defining China's Peaceful Development strategy for foreign policy in the XXI century.<sup>26</sup> The report is constituted of five chapters. The first chapter stresses that, in the globalization era, the main goal of a developing country like China is economic development, through which Beijing "seeks a multipolar world rather than hegemony,"<sup>27</sup> basing its relations with other countries on the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*, namely non-interference. The second argues that for China to thrive, there must be peace on the world stage, since, in turn, China's development is a key component of world progress in eradicating poverty, and it works to cut down on its energy use to mitigate the consequences of the Great Recession. The third section focuses on how science will guide China's development: by utilizing its human capital via education, it will expand its home market, build a new route to industrialization that is more environmentally friendly and makes greater use of information technology and innovation. The fourth segment highlights China's will to continue to allow free trade with the outside world: it will assist regional integration by promoting organizations like the World Trade Organization and the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area, and it will deal with disputes over trade and currency rates on an equal footing with other nations. China will continue to make investments abroad, keep a sizable work force, and export goods for use abroad. Finally, the last chapter emphasizes that "China will promote democracy in international relations with countries interacting on an equal footing through dialog and multilateralism and not coercion."<sup>28</sup> China will support developing nations' full engagement in international affairs while also assisting in their own

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<sup>25</sup> William A. Callahan, *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> "China's People Development Road." People's Daily, 22 Oct. 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*



development. Trust should prevail over a “Cold War mentality,” and efforts should be made to achieve nuclear disarmament and arms control, for which China will peacefully settle all outstanding border disputes. Thus, through this strategy, China takes responsibility to reestablish the view of the country as a non-threatening world power.

In conclusion, Chinese exceptionalism can be identified as a nationalistic approach to global governance. China’s emphasis on its peaceful rise highlights a Sino-centric ideal that the global governance scenario could be peaceful if China’s moral behavior concerning international relations inspired other countries towards cooperation rather than conflict. Indeed, through the China’s Peaceful Development strategy, China can claim moral superiority and perhaps, one day, change the international political hierarchy. Nevertheless, “Chinese exceptionalism remains a work in progress.”<sup>29</sup> China, in the years to come, will be expected to shoulder a great share of global responsibility, not knowing how the other superpowers will react. However, through the China’s Peaceful Rise policy, Beijing has paved the way for the nation to a new, ethical international scenario, with the aim of preventing avoidable international confrontation, shifting from the liberal political and sociological features of today’s global governance to relatively Chinese characteristics.

### **II.III The “Peripheries”**

As aforementioned, China sponsored anti-colonial and revolutionary movements in the developing nations under Mao Zedong.<sup>30</sup> Political objectives (with the exception of Taiwan) were subordinated in favor of economic ones after Deng Xiaoping assumed leadership of China in 1978. Today, economic measures are increasingly used to attain political goals, even if China’s political efforts frequently benefit its economic goals.

China has historically used the characteristics of its partner states—major powers, periphery states, developing nations, and, since the 18th Party Congress in 2012, multilateral international forums—to guide its interactions with them.<sup>31</sup> States may cross over into two or more of these categories because of the hazy boundaries between them. Large, economically advanced nations such as the United States, Russia, Japan, Germany, Britain, and the European Union are considered major powers. East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Russia, and Southeast Asia all have a variety of developing nations as well as significant powers that are considered peripheral states. “Major powers

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<sup>29</sup> Benjamin Ho, “Understanding Chinese Exceptionalism.” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2014, p.172., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375414567978>.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking’s Support for Wars of National Liberation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Lin Limin, “Shibada Zhihou de Zhongguo Waijiao Xin Jumian” [China’s New Foreign Policy after the 18th Party Congress], *Sina News*, January 9, 2014, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-01-09/111129197073.shtml>.

are crucial, nearby (peripheral) areas are top priority, developing countries are the cornerstone, and multilateral forums are the crucial stage”, according to former president Hu Jintao.<sup>32</sup>

The order of topics discussed in significant policy speeches under Xi Jinping implies that Beijing’s top goal is still its relations with major powers, but having a new class of developing states joining them on that level. Chinese Strategists have developed a more sophisticated perspective on the development looking around the world, identifying “major developing states” or “nowly emerging powers” from “other” developing nations.<sup>33</sup>

China views itself as a major power as well as the leader of emerging nations attempting to “democratize” important international institutions to increase their representation.<sup>34</sup> According to official assertions, developing countries are the ones driving the global system’s evolution toward multipolarity.<sup>35</sup> Former vice minister of foreign affairs He Yafei acknowledged the value of forming alliances with nations that pursue a “multipolar world and democratic international relations” in 2016. He claimed that, because they are predominantly developing nations, they should continue to be “the cornerstone and strategic focus of China’s major-country diplomacy.”<sup>36</sup> Beijing has signed bilateral “strategic partnership” agreements with important developing nations in order to achieve shared political goals. To counterbalance Western dominance, Beijing has also collectively engaged subsets of these nations, most notably the BRICS, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, which aims to synchronize the public comments and political-economic positions of those countries.<sup>37</sup>

China’s “periphery” (周边), sometimes translated as “strategic periphery,” refers to a geographical strip encircling China that is of great strategic relevance for Beijing. A portion of the developing world is included in this region, and its scope has to be modified in light of Beijing’s expanding authority and influence. The “greater periphery” (大周边) has been extended to include West Asia, the South Pacific, and, by some definitions, East Africa, which will be the focus of this

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<sup>32</sup> Zhang Hong, “Zhongguo Zouxiang ‘Dawaijiao’ [China Moves Toward “Big Power Diplomacy”], People’s Daily Overseas Edition, February 8, 2011, vol.6.

<sup>33</sup> “Xi Jinping Chuxi Zhongyang Waishi Gongzuo Huiyi bing Fabiao Zhongyao Jianghua” [Xi Jinping Chairs Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs and Delivers an Important Speech], Xinhua News, November 29, 2014, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-11/29/c\\_1113457723.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-11/29/c_1113457723.htm).

<sup>34</sup> Michael D. Swaine, “Chinese Views on Global Governance since 2008-2009: Not Much New,” China Leadership Monitor, no. 49 (Winter 2016): pp. 1-13.

<sup>35</sup> The Chinese lexicon defines multipolarity as the autonomy or independence of states in the system and their ability to influence events at the regional level; that is, freedom from hegemony. In the American international relations literature, by contrast, “multipolarity” means there are several states with the independent capability to challenge the leading state. Brantly Womack, “Asymmetry Theory and China’s Concept of Multipolarity,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 13, no. 39 (May 2004): pp. 351-366.

<sup>36</sup> He Yafei, “Chinas Major-Country Diplomacy Progresses on All Fronts,” March 23, 2016, [http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content\\_38091993.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content_38091993.htm).

<sup>37</sup> Feng Zhongping and Huang Jing, “China’s Strategic Partnership Diplomacy: Engaging with a Changing World,” European Strategic Partnership Observatory (ESPO) Working Paper, no. 8, June 29, 2014.

research, during the Xi administration.<sup>38</sup> Previously, the periphery was only comprised of Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia, but then China emphasized the importance it places on those regions by publishing official White Papers on Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa in 2015 and 2016.<sup>39</sup>

China's expanding global interests in respect to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its strained relations with the United States, Japan, and Southeast Asian nations are reflected in this growing emphasis on the periphery. Beijing must support narratives that unite developing nations and strengthen its influence within current regional organizations in order to preserve Chinese interests.<sup>40</sup> Beijing's policy toward emerging nations is still mostly determined by regime survival, which is still its top priority. The nature and content of China's diplomacy, party-to-party interactions, defense of sovereignty rules in international politics, and near-unwavering focus on economic development all reflect the impact of internal politics.<sup>41</sup>

#### **II.IV Characteristics of China's Relations with Developing Countries**

China's conceptualization of the developing world and its position in Beijing's geostrategy finds its roots in three key characteristics of the Chinese approach: asymmetry, comprehensiveness, and its interlocking structure.

The imbalance in China's interactions with the developing world, its all-encompassing strategy, and the interconnectedness of its regional, global, and bilateral engagement are its defining traits. Beijing's appeals for "brotherhood" and "equality" are essentially attempts to downplay the *Asymmetry* that is the first and most pervasive feature of its dealings with emerging nations.<sup>42</sup> In fact, China's nominal GDP (\$12.0 trillion in 2017) is over twice as large as the combined GDP of the other BRICS nations, which include South Africa (\$349 billion), Brazil (\$2.1 trillion), India (\$2.6 trillion), and Russia (\$1.5 trillion).<sup>43</sup> Regional organizations founded by Beijing, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), rotate meeting locations between China and various partner nations in

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<sup>38</sup> Chen Xiangyang, "Zhongguo Tuijin 'Dazhoubian Zhanlue' Zhengdangshi" [The Right Time for China to Advance a "Greater Periphery" Strategy], January 16, 2015, <http://comment.cfisnet.com/2015/0116/1300445.html>.

<sup>39</sup> These White Papers are available in Eisenman and Heginbotham eds., *China Steps Out: Beijing's Major Power Engagement with the Developing World* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 322-384.

<sup>40</sup> Chen Xiangyang, "Zhongguo Tuijin 'Dazhoubian Zhanlue' Zhengdangshi" [The Right Time for China to Advance a "Greater Periphery" Strategy], January 16, 2015, <http://comment.cfisnet.com/2015/0116/1300445.html>.

<sup>41</sup> As Xi Jinping said at Davos in 2017: "China has come this far because the Chinese people have, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, blazed a development path that suits China's actual conditions." See Xi Jinping, "Xi Jinping Chuxi Shijie Jingji Luntan 2017 Nianhui Kaimushi bing Fabiao Zhuzhi Yanjing" [Xi Jinping Presented at the Opening Ceremony of World Economic Forum 2017 and Made Keynote Speech], Xinhua News, January 17, 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-01/17/c\\_1120331492.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-01/17/c_1120331492.htm).

<sup>42</sup> John Pomfret, "US Takes a Tougher Tone with China," *Washington Post*, July 30, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> GDP estimates are from the IMF website.

these and other regions. In a symbolic sense, this equalizes China with entire regions, and in a practical one, it strengthens Beijing's already overwhelming ability to determine policy.

*Comprehensiveness* is the Beijing strategy's second distinguishing feature. Beijing uses the many strategies described below in a way that maximizes its leverage and creates synergies. China's policy banks, particularly the China Development Bank (CDB) and China Export-Import Bank (China Ex-Im), have established themselves as the region's preferred lenders, and the nation's infrastructure and telecom companies are constructing railroads, dams, airports, highways, and fiber optic networks in dozens of developing nations. When considered as a whole, China's bundle of incentives is frequently too alluring for emerging nations with limited money. Beijing's political and economic objectives are intertwined, and officials frequently facilitate and finalize transactions. Although Beijing's arsenal of tools tends to lean heavily toward financial incentives, China's comprehensive engagement goes beyond economics and attempts to forge stable, complex, and mutually beneficial bilateral partnerships. According to China's leaders, these relationships must be of a high standard and incorporate "a sense of justice and interests (义益观)."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, a significant portion of Chinese commercial activity in Africa, for instance, is carried out by independent, small- to medium-sized private companies that pursue profits and generally try to stay out of government relations.<sup>45</sup>

The *Interconnected Nature* of China's engagement is a third feature. China's foreign policy involves multi-centric, multi-layered, and multi-pivotal sub-networks of regional and international cooperation that are interconnected and interlaced, according to former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs He Yafei.<sup>46</sup> While many large nations participate in bilateral, regional, and international diplomacy, China's engagement entails a particularly intricate web of institutionalized relationships that overlap. Beijing strives to establish a strong and mutually reinforcing structure on which to further its interests by constructing a dense network of interlocking ties. Beijing's goodwill is displayed and given legitimacy by multilateral platforms, but bilateral contacts with poor nations still form the backbone of Chinese foreign policy. China has strengthened its bilateral ties and keeps "strategic alliances" with about 67 states in the developing world.<sup>47</sup> Beijing's 15 bilateral relations with the nation are conducted in private and are geared to serve its interests there. China generally

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<sup>44</sup> Xi Jinping used the phrase in his 2018 and 2014 FAWC addresses.

<sup>45</sup> Conclusion based on interviews conducted by Joshua Eisenman June 2018 with private Chinese businessmen in South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia, and Ghana.

<sup>46</sup> He Yafei, "Chinas Major-Country Diplomacy Progresses on All Fronts," March 23, 2010, [http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content\\_38091993.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content_38091993.htm).

<sup>47</sup> He Yafei, "Chinas Major-Country Diplomacy Progresses on All Fronts," March 23, 2010, [http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content\\_38091993.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2016-03/23/content_38091993.htm).; Feng Zhongping and Huang Jing, "Chinas Strategic Partnership Diplomacy: Engaging with a Changing World," European Strategic Partnership Observatory (ESPO) Working Paper, no. 8, June 29, 2014.

has deeper and more complicated ties with its neighbors, with a variety of political, economic, and occasionally territorial interests at stake. Economic matters have typically taken precedence in China's dealings with more distant developing nations, but political and security issues are also growing more significant there. China's connections with the BRICS nations and other G-20 members in particular straddle regional boundaries and have overlapping political, economic, and security components. Beijing lays a lot of emphasis on its relationships with significant anchor or "hub" states within each region, particularly those where geography, politics, or economics favor relations with China. In Beijing, these connections are more likely to be noticed and to last a long time. They include Indonesia and Thailand in East Asia, Pakistan and India in South Asia, Kazakhstan in Central Asia, South Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia in Africa, Iran in the Middle East, Brazil and Argentina in Latin America, and Indonesia and Thailand in East Asia (a non-exhaustive list that will continue to change over time).

## **II.V Methods of China's Engagement with the Developing Countries World**

### **a) Economics**

#### *Trade*

Trade growth is not solely or even predominantly the result of state-led promotion efforts, but Beijing does its best to tip the scales in its favor. State bankers, diplomats, and Party officials constantly collaborate with state-owned enterprises (SOEs), semi-private businesses, private businesses, and entrepreneurs to help them close transactions and promote exports. According to reports, China's commercial attachés in its embassies in Africa exceed US Foreign Commercial Service officers there by a ratio of almost fifteen to one.<sup>48</sup>

Trade both influences and mirrors GDP growth. Between 1978 and 2017, China's GDP increased at a real compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.9%, while its trade increased by an average of 11.5% annually. But since 2015, the growth of the GDP and commerce has both slowed significantly.<sup>49</sup> China's commerce increased by a real 0.9% in 2014, decreased by 9.9% in 2015, decreased again by 5.4% in 2016, and then increased by 8.2% in 2017. In 2016, trade was carried out by private companies at the tune of 38.1%.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Mwangi S. Kimenyi and Zenia A. Lewis, "New Approaches from Washington to Doing Business with Africa;" This Is Africa Online, <https://www.thisisafricaonline.com/News/New-approaches-from-Washington-to-doing-business-with-Africa?ct=true>

<sup>49</sup> Joong Shik Kang and Wei Liao, "Chinese Imports: What's Behind the Slowdown?," IMF Working Paper, no. 16 (vol. 106), May 26, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> "China's Trade Surplus Down 9.1 Percent in 2016," China Daily, January 13, 2017, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-01/13/content\\_27945655.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-01/13/content_27945655.htm).

Developing nations give crucial raw materials to Chinese manufacturers and expanding export markets. In 1990, developing nations accounted for only 15% of China's overall commerce; by 2000, they had increased to 19%, and by 2010, they had reached 31%. After reaching a peak of about 34% in 2012, the proportion has plateaued as a result of declining raw material demand from China and historically low oil and metals prices. Trade between China and the developing world increased from \$29.4 billion in 1990 to \$1.4 trillion in 2017 (measured in constant 2017 US currency, about 34% of China's total foreign trade) - a real CAGR of 15.4% - versus an 11.5% CAGR for China's overall commerce over same time. For instance, China's trade percentages in 2017 in Africa were at 3.7%.<sup>51</sup>

### *Investment*

Developing nations have been a key component of China's foreign investment policy since they present higher risks and returns. China had amassed around \$155 billion in foreign reserves by 1999, and it was looking to increase yields and create business prospects for SOEs in the extractive and construction sectors.<sup>52</sup> That year, at the Fourth Plenum of the 15th National Party Congress, Jiang Zemin adopted the so-called *Going Out Strategy* (走出去战略), which pushed enterprises to "establish branches overseas" and "explore overseas markets."<sup>53</sup> Following judgments made in the 2000s enabled commerce and investment by creating funding methods and banking services. For example, China's largest lender ICBC spent \$5.6 billion to acquire a 20% stake in South Africa's Standard Bank, and in 2011 it started opening onshore Chinese yuan accounts for African businesses in order to "facilitate quick and efficient trade relations with Chinese suppliers, buyers, and related global customers."<sup>54</sup>

After 2010, "China's going out" gained momentum. From \$3.8 billion (in 2018 US dollars) in 2003 to \$204 billion in 2015, non-financial FDI flows expanded at a real CAGR of 36%.<sup>55</sup> Despite

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<sup>51</sup> IMF, Direction of Trade Statistics, (DOTS). Southeast Asia figure does not include trade with Taiwan, but does include trade with Singapore. Afghanistan is included in South Asia number

<sup>52</sup> Foreign reserves continued to accumulate rapidly through June 2014, when they reached 53.993 trillion, before falling to about \$3.051 trillion in November 2016. PRC State Administration of Foreign Exchange website, see <http://www.safe.gov.cn/safe/2018/061299313.html>, <http://www.safegov.cn/safe/2016/1230/6183.html>, January 12, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Jiang Zemin, "Genghao de Shishi 'Zouchuqu' Zhanlue" [To Better Enforce "Going Out" Strategy], the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China website, [http://www.gov.cn/node\\_11140/200603/15/content\\_227686.htm](http://www.gov.cn/node_11140/200603/15/content_227686.htm). Also see David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapter 5.

<sup>54</sup> George Chen and Marius Bosch, "ICBC to Buy Standard Bank Stake for \$5.6 billion," Reuters, October 25, 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-standardbank-icbc-acquisition/icbc-to-buy-standard-bank-stake-for-5-6-billion-idUSSHA11075020071026>; and "Standard Chartered Opens Its First Onshore Chinese Yuan (RMB) Account for South Africa's Portland Steel," Standard Chartered, May 23, 2011, <https://www.sc.com/za/news.media/2011-opens-first-africa-onshore-renminbi-account.html>

<sup>55</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian" [China Statistical Yearbook], (Beijing: China Statistics Press, various years). Current-dollar figures converted to 2018 constant using GDP deflator.

a significant decline in FDI to the US, outbound FDI declined by 20% in 2017 to \$162 billion, before somewhat rebounding in 2018 (\$169 billion). For the entire period from 2003 to 2018, the actual CAGR was 28%. According to official statistics, emerging and developing countries accounted for about 36% of China's total outbound FDI flow in 2017 (excluding investment in offshore financial centers), with 7.3% going to Africa, 4.0%.<sup>56</sup>

Even though China's investment in developing nations has grown quickly, it is not always the dominant actor that is suggested. After the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, China was the continent's fourth-largest investor in 2016; in 2017, it had the continent's fourth-largest number of projects.<sup>57</sup> Simply said, Chinese investment is not the majority, but during the past ten years, it has become a leader with other significant players.

### *Debt Financing*

Beijing has long attempted to alter voting rights and quotas at the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Asian Development Bank in an effort to increase its influence within financial global institutions (ADB).<sup>58</sup> China has argued for increased presidential selection openness and a rejection of Western domination at the World Bank.<sup>59</sup> Beijing, impatient with the speed of IMF reform, contributed \$100 billion in initial funding to the establishment of the Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS bank, in 2014.<sup>60</sup> Beijing also launched the \$55 billion Silk Road Fund in December 2014; it is supported by China's sovereign wealth fund but also welcomes private investors.

In December 2015, the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) officially launched with 57 founding members, including 37 Asian nations.<sup>61</sup> Initial capital was \$100 billion,

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<sup>56</sup> Offshore financial centers include Hong Kong, Singapore, the Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and Bermuda. The developed states of Asia are not included in the figures presented. PRC Ministry of Commerce, "2017 Niandu Zhongguo Duiwai Zhijie Touzi Tongji Gongbao" [2017 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment], September 2018.

<sup>57</sup> "Turning Tides: EY Attractiveness Program, Africa," October 2018, [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-Africa-Attractiveness-2018/\\$FILE/ey-Africa-Attractiveness-2018.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-Africa-Attractiveness-2018/$FILE/ey-Africa-Attractiveness-2018.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Xiao Ren, "China as an Institution-Builder: The Case of the AIIB," *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 3 (March 4, 2016): pp. 435-442.

<sup>59</sup> "The Case for Reform at the World Bank," *Financial Times*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/b7da7178-Seec-1le6-bb77-al21aa8abd95>.

<sup>60</sup> Jordan Totten, "BRICS New Development Bank Threatens Hegemony of US Dollar" *Forbes*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2014/12/22/brics-new-development-bank-threatens-hegemony-of-u-s-dollar/#7f85bbb57889>; and "BRICS Cooperation Helps Build New International Framework," *Global Times*, July 13, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/931748.shtml>.

<sup>61</sup> Jane Perlez, "China Creates a World Bank of Its Own, and the US Balks," *New York Times*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/05/business/international/china-creates-an-asian-bank-as-the-us-stands-alooof.html>; and Mike Callaghan, "The \$100 Billion AIIB Opens for Business: Will China's Multilateral Ambitions Soar or Sour?" *The Interpreter*, January 19, 2016, <http://lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreler100-billion-aiib-opens-business-will-chinas-multilateral-ambitions-soar-or-sour>.

which is roughly equivalent to two thirds of the ADB's and half of the World Bank's capitalization.<sup>62</sup> Since AIIB President Jin Liqun answers to a global governing board and China holds the largest voting bloc (26%) despite being a minority stakeholder, Beijing's influence is lessened. The AIIB loaned out only \$4.4 billion in its first two years, falling short of its anticipated \$10-15 billion annually.<sup>63</sup> Jin stated in February 2019 that the bank would raise the ceiling on loans for Chinese infrastructure projects from 3% to 10% of the bank's entire loan portfolio in order to "enhance its asset quality."<sup>64</sup> However, adding China to AIIB lending may encounter resistance from other member nations given the already substantial investments in China's infrastructure compared to the urgent needs in other Asian countries.

China's policy banks, the China Development Bank and China Export-Import Bank, which were formed in 1994 to finance projects that encourage economic growth, are the primary sources of funding for Chinese construction projects in developing nations.<sup>65</sup> Large amounts of lenient loans are given to developing nations on the condition that they use Chinese SOEs to finish the projects. Once agreements are agreed upon, money is wired to the SOE that has been chosen to carry out the project, frequently employing Chinese goods and labor, from the host country's bank accounts in Beijing. By 2016, the loan portfolios of China Ex-Im Bank and CDB had surpassed the combined \$700 billion in outstanding loans from the six multilateral institutions with Western backing.<sup>66</sup>

When the BRI (formerly "One Belt, One Road") was unveiled in 2013, it established a political narrative and a framework for government policy to enable China's policy banks to finance development projects on a previously unheard-of scale. BRI raises the bar for China's efforts in infrastructure development and finance to a new, much riskier level. Numerous global firms, both Chinese and foreign, are attempting to profit on Beijing's expected allocation of at least \$1 trillion.<sup>67</sup> The plan covers nearly every sort of transportation infrastructure on a global scale, including train,

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<sup>62</sup> "Why China Is Creating a New World Bank for Asia"; *The Economist*, November 14, 2014, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-@explains/2014/11/11/Nbychina-is-creating-a-new-world-bank-for-asia>.

<sup>63</sup> Salvatore Babones, "China: AIIB Expected to Lend \$10- 15B a Year, but Has Only Managed \$4.4B in 2 Years" *Forbes*, January 16, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/salvatorebabones/2016/01/16/chinas-aiib-expected-to-lend-10-15b-a-year-but-has-only-managed-4-4b-in-2-years/#2e05a2e537f1>.

<sup>64</sup> "AIIB President Suggests Taking on More Chinese Projects to Improve Asset Quality", *China Knowledge*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.chinaknowledge.com/News/DetailNews/85080/AIIB>.

<sup>65</sup> The third bank, the Agricultural Development Bank of China, has a domestic focus.

<sup>66</sup> James Kynge, Jonathan Wheatley, Lucy Hornby, Christian Shepherd, and Andres Schipani, "China Rethinks Developing World Largesse as Deals Sour," *Financial Times*, October 13, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/Sbf4d6d8-9073-11e6-a72e-b428cb934b78>.

<sup>67</sup> This conclusion is based on interviews with businessmen in Beijing and Shanghai in May and June 2017. Total funding, which will primarily involve debt financing, remains uncertain but has been estimated at between \$1 trillion and \$4 trillion ("Our Bulldozers, Our Rules"); National Development and Reform Commission of the PRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce, "Tuidong Gongjian Sichouzhilu Jingjidai he 21 Shiji Haishang Sichouzhilu de Yuanjing yu Xindong" [Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road], Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, January 26, 2016, <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/i/dxfw/jlyd/201601/20160101243342.shtml>.



roads, ports, airports, electrical transmission, telecommunications, etc.<sup>68</sup> An important mention goes to the Maritime Silk Road, which links China to nations in North and East Africa, among others. Many initiatives that were being contemplated long before BRI was established have been absorbed by it, but the implied political support provided by the BRI seal has led to endless rebrandings of both domestic and international ventures.

Due to the late start of the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund's small magnitude, it is likely that the CDB and China Ex-Im will continue to fund the majority of BRI projects.<sup>69</sup> Regarding the potential for investments related to the BRI, several Chinese analysts are gloomy. They express concern that the BRI will add significantly more unserviceable foreign loans to the nation's already heavily leveraged banking sector and that Beijing's overreach has sparked opposition among officials in developing nations and Western capitals. In fact, it is likely that Beijing will need to reschedule or write off substantial amounts of debt in the upcoming years due to the fact that massive loans to politically friendly nations like Venezuela, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe offer little chance of principal repayment, let alone profits.

### *Foreign Aid*

In comparison to other members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, private Western donors like the Gates Foundation, and multilateral organizations like the World Bank, China's approach to foreign aid differs significantly. China's assistance, especially its concessionary financial aid, is generally focused on infrastructure development, related to corporate contracts, and dispersed on a state-by-state basis rather than on reducing poverty. Contrary to Western nations and organizations, which frequently impose restrictions on help, China's assistance is provided "with no political strings attached" and is not subject to audits. The expected outcome is that corrupt foreign leaders can more easily "capture" Chinese aid.<sup>70</sup>

During the Mao era (1949–1966), China made significant economic contributions to developing nations, but between 1978 and 2000, it reduced its foreign aid spending. Since then,

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<sup>68</sup> National Development and Reform Commission of the PRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce, "Tuidong Gongjian Sichouzhilu Jingjidai he 21 Shiji Haishang Sichouzhilu de Yuanjing yu Xingdong" [Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road], Ministry of Commerce of the Peoples Republic of China, January 26, 2016, <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/i/dxfw/jlyd/201601/20160101243342.shtml>.

<sup>69</sup> James Kynge, "How the Silk Road Plans Will Be Financed," *Financial Times*, May 9, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/e83ced94-Obd8-11e6-9456-444ab5211a2f>. The Export-Import Bank lent \$80 billion for projects in forty-nine countries in 2015, compared to \$27.1 billion for the Asian Development Bank (and less than \$2 billion for the AIIB).

<sup>70</sup> Alex Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Roland Hodler, Bradley C. Parks, Paul A. Raschky, and Michael J. Tierney, "Aid on Demand: African Leaders and the Geography of Chinas Foreign Assistance," *Aid Data Working Paper*, no. 3 (October 2016).

foreign aid has come back into prominence as a crucial tool for policymaking, and Beijing published White Papers on the subject in 2011 and 2014.<sup>71</sup> The budget for international aid has increased significantly over the past ten years, on average by 29.4% year between 2004 and 2009. China spent \$14.4 billion on help between 2009 and 2012, or around one-third of the entire amount it gave from 1950 to 2008.<sup>72</sup> Three types of aid are provided by China: grant aid (36% of the total from 2009 to 2012), interest-free loans (8%), and concessional loans (56%).<sup>73</sup> For instance, during this time, China's help was distributed for 52% to Africa, with the aim of supporting a variety of initiatives, including emergency and medical aid, technical and educational training, affordable housing, and infrastructure.<sup>74</sup>

Prior to recently, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed foreign aid simultaneously in a disorganized manner that did not allow for year-over-year tracking, so effectively preventing systematic review. However, Beijing established an “international development cooperation agency” in 2018 to manage and coordinate the distribution of foreign aid as part of a comprehensive revamp of the State Council and Central Committee organizations. The new approach, in the words of State Councilor Wang Yong, “would fully play up foreign aid as a fundamental tool of major-country diplomacy, strengthen strategic planning and coordination of foreign aid, and better support the country's overall diplomatic structure and BRI.”<sup>75</sup>

## **b) Politics**

### ***Economic Diplomacy***

The most prominent part of China's international engagement is bilateral *MoU Diplomacy*, and news of trade promotion, foreign direct investment, and infrastructure finance is frequently reported in China's official media. China's leaders frequently travel with sizable corporate delegations to meetings held abroad and sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), agreements between two or more parties expresses a convergence of will between them indicating an intended common line of action, that are worth hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. High monetary values, notwithstanding the fact that most transactions never materialize, are alluring to developing

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<sup>71</sup> For the text of the 2014 Foreign Aid White Paper, see Eisenman and Heginbotham, eds., *China Steps Out*, pp. 385-404.

<sup>72</sup> James I. Areddy, “China Touts \$14.4 Billion in Foreign Aid, Half of Which Went to Africa,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2014, <https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/07/10/china-touts-14-4-billion-in-foreign-aid-half-of-which-went-to-africa/>.

<sup>73</sup> “Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China”, *China's Foreign Aid*, July 10, 2014, [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/08/23/content\\_281474982986592.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986592.htm).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>75</sup> Xinhua, “China Unveils Cabinet Restructuring Plan,” *China Daily*, March 14, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201803/14/WSSaa7ffd3a3106e7dcc141675.html>.

nations with little resources. These agreements, which are not enforceable by law, continue to be a crucial component of Beijing's all-encompassing strategy.

Multilateral gatherings are also a chance for China to sign agreements. At FOCAC meetings (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation), China had a history of tripling their pledges: from \$5 billion in 2006 to \$10 billion in 2009, \$20 billion in 2012, and \$60 billion in 2015. China's \$60 billion pledge to Africa was upheld but not increased during the 2018 FOCAC in Beijing.<sup>76</sup>

### *Non-Interference*

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely: 1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; 4) equality and co-operation for mutual benefit; and 5) peaceful coexistence, are fundamental political norms underlying the relationship between China and the peripheries.

Non-interference, the most significant one, relates to Beijing's strategy of almost universal involvement. China has vetoed UN resolutions that it believes violate the principle of state sovereignty and continues to emphasize the Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, state sovereignty, and non-interference in its ties with developing countries,<sup>77</sup> small and developing states, who jealously defend their autonomy, find this strategy appealing. In return, Beijing will develop contacts with partner states after a political shift, regardless of their philosophy or human rights record, as long as the new leaders refuse to recognize Taipei. New leaders in emerging nations, especially those who seize control through coercion, frequently ignore China's prior backing for their political adversaries when faced with governance challenges. Beijing's strategy to reduce political risk in unstable developing nations hasn't always been successful, though. For example, Chinese investors lost billions of dollars in contracts and investments during violent, protracted political transitions in South Sudan, and Libya.

It is interesting to notice that as Beijing's relationships with specific regimes strengthen, so does its interpretation of sovereignty standards. China openly backed and lavished money on sympathetic African governments and political parties during elections in Sierra Leone, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Winslow Robertson and Lina Benabdallah, "China Pledged to Invest \$60 Billion in Africa. Here's What That Means," Washington Post, January 7, 2016; and Yun Sun, "China's 2018 Financial Commitments to Africa: Adjustment and Recalibration," Brookings Institution, September 5, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/09/05/chinas-2018-financial-commitments-to-africa-adjustment-and-recalibration/>.

<sup>77</sup> Ren Mu, "China's Non-intervention Policy in UNSC Sanctions in the 21st Century: The Cases of Libya, North Korea, and Zimbabwe," *Ritsumeikan International Affairs*, no. 12 (2014): pp. 101-134.

<sup>78</sup> Cooper Inveen and Ruth Maclean, "China's Influence Looms as Sierra Leone Goes to the Polls," *The Guardian*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/07/chinas-influence-looms-as-sierra-leone-goes-to-the-polls>.

## *Foreign Focus Propaganda*

China has increased its external propaganda (外宣传) efforts in an effort to achieve its goal of becoming a “culture major power” (文化大国). China’s peaceful rise was the subject of a conceptual framework approved in 2004; with Hu Jintao’s speech to the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2007, China’s became a national priority.<sup>79</sup> Beijing has gotten more politically involved with the developing countries since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. Xi has emphasized the necessity of boosting China’s soft power (軟實力) through, among other things, forging an engaging Chinese narrative and enhancing Beijing’s ability to spread its message abroad.<sup>80</sup> In accordance with Xi’s statements, China’s people have a distinctive history that endows their country with significant natural advantages, enabling it to become a major cultural force.<sup>81</sup>

Beijing annually funds tens of thousands of foreign students to attend Chinese colleges and vocational institutions as part of its “people-to-people exchanges.” In 2017, there were 489,200 international students studying in China, up from roughly 290,000 in 2011, according to the Ministry of Education.<sup>82</sup> More than 264,976 international students from Asia studied in China in 2016, but many more come from other developing nations, with Africa seeing the largest rise in enrollment over the past three years.<sup>83</sup>

The Ministry of Education’s Hanban established the Confucius Institute program in 2004 with the stated goal of promoting Chinese language and culture study overseas. On the website of the Hanban headquarters, there were 525 institutes worldwide as of the beginning of 2019. Even though the majority are in rich nations, 227 of the 548 (or 41% of them) are in developing nations, including 105 in the United States alone.<sup>84</sup> As concerns about foreign influence and the effect of these

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<sup>79</sup> See David Shambaugh, “China’s External Propaganda Work: Missions, Messengers, Mediums,” Party Watch Annual Report 2018,

<https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcce21fe3b7d14447bfaba30d3b6d6e3ac0.pdf>; and Anne-Marie Brady, “Exploit Every Rift: United Front Goes Global,” Party Watch Annual Report 2018, [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcc\\_5dfb4a9b2dde492db4002f4aa90f4a25.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcc_5dfb4a9b2dde492db4002f4aa90f4a25.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> See David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft Power Push: The Search for Respect,” *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2015).

<sup>81</sup> Feng Wenya, ed., “Xi Jinping Tan Guojia Wenhua Ruan Shili: Zengjiang Zuo Zhongguoren de Gugi he Diqi” [Xi Jinping Talks About National Cultural Soft Power: Strengthening the Character and Integrity of Being a Chinese], *Xinhua*, June 25, 2015, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-06/25/c\\_127949618.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-06/25/c_127949618.htm).

<sup>82</sup> Yu Yunquan, “Zhongguo Wenhua Ruan Shili Jianshe Renzhongdaoyuan” [Shouldering the Heavy Responsibility of Building China’s Soft Power], *International Communications*, no. 1 (January 10, 2007): pp. 44-46; and Chen Xinguang, “Meiguo Ruan Shili Shuaitui yu Zhongguo Ruan shili Tisheng” [US Soft Power Weakening and Chinese Soft Power Rising], *China Daily*, June 23, 2015, <http://column.chinadaily.com.cn/article.php?pid=8322>.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, “Jiaoyuyubu fa Liuxue Dashuju: Lhongguo cheng Yazhou Zuida Liuxue Mudiguo” [Ministry of Education Sent Out Big Data on Chinese Students Studying Abroad and Foreign Students Studying in China: China Has Become the Largest Studying Destination in Asia], *China News*, March 30, 2018, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2018/03-30/8479732.shtml>.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Education, “2016 Niandu Woguo Laihua Liuxuesheng Qingkuang Tongji!” [2016 Statistics Regarding Foreign Students in China, Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China], March 1, 2017, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/xw\\_fbh/moe\\_2069/xwtbh\\_2017n/xwfb\\_170301/170301\\_sjtj/201703/t20170301297677.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwtbh_2017n/xwfb_170301/170301_sjtj/201703/t20170301297677.html).

institutions on academic objectivity have been raised, Confucius Institutes have come under increasing scrutiny in the United States and other Western nations. However, in developing nations where education funding is typically limited, similar worries have been more subdued.<sup>85</sup>

The International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (ID-CPC) conducts outreach as a continual addition to the diplomacy carried out by state entities like the MFA and senior officials.<sup>86</sup> The Party often avoids the impression of interfering in home matters in its political outreach. In democracies, the ID-CPC maintains connections with both the government and opposition parties, in contrast to autocracies where it typically does not communicate with the opposition. The leader of the ID-CPC, Song Tao, sponsored a multilateral meeting in July 2018 with forty African political parties from more than thirty-six nations in Tanzania.<sup>87</sup>

The CPC has increased its host diplomatic efforts, cadre development programs, and outreach to political parties in the developing nations.<sup>88</sup> The ID-CPC coordinates the training of party cadres, which is delivered by academies, party schools, and other appropriate training facilities.<sup>89</sup> These overtly political projects aim to enhance international perceptions of China and justify CPC rule. Ethiopia has sent delegations to China on a regular basis since 1994 and was perhaps the first and most ardent student of Chinese cadre training.<sup>90</sup> Around 2,000 members of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa have received training from the CPC as of 2015. Another 300 ANC cadres came to China in the summer of 2018 to learn “party building” (黨建).<sup>91</sup> The Julius Nyerere Leadership School’s development began in July 2018 thanks to Chinese construction companies. The new training academy was built with Beijing’s assistance and is intended for the ruling parties of Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Beijing aims to change how the younger generation views its political system and win over the elite in order to fight against what it perceives as Western efforts to malign China. Since 2005, the official Xinhua News Agency has placed a strong emphasis on media training programs, content

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<sup>85</sup> “About Confucius Institute/Classroom,” Hanban, <http://english.hanban.org>.

<sup>86</sup> Elizabeth Redden, “Closing Confucius Institutes,” *Inside Higher Ed*, January 9, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/01/09/colleges-move-close-chinese-government-funded-confucius-institutes-amid-increasing>.

<sup>87</sup> See David Shambaugh, “China’s ‘Quiet Diplomacy’: The International Department of the Chinese Communist Party,” *China: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Edith Mutethya, “CPC Holds Dialogue with African Political Leaders,” *China Daily*, July 18, 2018, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201807/18/WS5b4e6la9a310796df4df70cb.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Julia G. Bowie, “International Liaison Work for the New Era: Generating Global Consensus?,” *Party Watch Annual Report 2018*, <https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/183fcc687cd757272e461885069b3e3365t46d.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> For a description of African party cadre training programs see David Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 75-79.

<sup>91</sup> Yun Sun, “Political Party Training: China’s Ideological Push into Africa,” *Brookings Institution*, July 5, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2016/07/05/political-party-training-chinas-ideological-push-in-africa/>.

sharing, and collaboration with other news organizations throughout the developing world.<sup>92</sup> A training program for media workers from developing nations has been designed by Xinhua and CCTV in order to improve China's impact and international reputation.<sup>93</sup>

### c) Security

#### *Military Diplomacy and Peacekeeping*

Up until the 1990s, China gave military diplomacy little thought.<sup>94</sup> The Chinese PLA Navy (People's Liberation Army Navy) made its first fleet visit to a foreign port in 1990, but it took until 2002 for it to conduct its first joint exercise with a foreign force. The 1998 National Defense White Paper, which outlined China's comprehensive "new security concept" and includes the first official usage of the term "military diplomacy," contains the policy foundations for China's increasing military participation.<sup>95</sup> Since then, China's military diplomacy has dramatically increased in breadth and scale and now includes a variety of initiatives.

China's most established security ties, which include Defense and Security Consultation mechanisms, are with Southeast Asian and South Asian nations. However, Beijing also regularly holds dialogues with farther-flung major developing nations like South Africa and Egypt, albeit on a less regular basis. The PLA Navy and Air Force now regularly engage in joint training with other militaries. China pledged \$100 million in military aid to the African Union in 2015, and the inaugural China-Africa Defense and Security Forum, which featured senior military leaders from fifty African states, was held in Beijing in 2018.<sup>96</sup>

China presently ranks among the top suppliers of people to the UN peacekeeping forces and is the largest among the permanent members of the Security Council. It only deployed support forces up until 2013, when it dispatched its first combat troops to Mali. A battalion was then sent to South Sudan in 2014. As of January 2019, 2,508 Chinese peacekeepers were participating in UN peacekeeping missions. By 2019, China had committed more than 8,000 troops, or nearly 20% of the

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<sup>92</sup> Stephanie Findlay, "South Africa's Ruling ANC Looks to Learn from Chinese Communist Party," Time, November 24, 2014, <http://time.com/3601968/anc-south-africa-china-communist-party/>; and "Beijing Will Increase Sway over African Policymaking," Oxford Analytics Daily Brief, August 8, 2016, <https://dailybrief.oxan.com/Analysis/DB212857/Beijing-will-increase-sway-over-African-policymaking>.

<sup>93</sup> "Briefs from China-Learning from the Best for the Future: Notes from the ANC SG CDE Ace Magashule," ANC Today, June 2018, <http://anctoday.org.za/briefs-china-learning-best-future/>, accessed November 22, 2018.

<sup>94</sup> Shinn and Eisenman, China and Africa, pp. 201-203; "Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation," CCTV, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Iginio Gagliardone, "China and the Shaping of African Information Societies," in Africa and China: How Africans and Their Governments Are Shaping Relations with China, edited by A. W. Gadzalla, pp. 45-59 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015); Iginio Gagliardone, "China as a Persuader: CCTV Africa's First Steps in the African Media Sphere," *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 34, no. 3 (2013): p.29; and Yu-shan Wu, "The Rise of China's State-Led Media Dynasty in Africa," South African Institute of International Affairs Occasional Paper, no. 117 (2012): p.24.

<sup>96</sup> Edmund Smith-Asante, "48 Journalists Begin Media Exchange Program in China," Graphic Online, March 3, 2017, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/48-journalists-begin-media-exchange-programme-in-china.html>.

total, to the UN peacekeeping standby force.<sup>97</sup> UN operations improve China's reputation as the benevolent defender of peace and security in developing nations and an active participant in the international order while providing PLA personnel with practical experience in challenging foreign surroundings.

### *Power Projection*

Although China's security footprint in the developing world is still modest in comparison to its economic size, it has expanded over the past ten years in step with Chinese interests and PLA set of abilities (e.g., amphibious lift and at-sea replenishment). Heavy bombers and aerial refueling tankers are likely to deploy alongside PLA warships and huge cargo aircraft in the near future, indicating that PLA power will continue to increase.

Hu Jintao ordered the PLA to get ready for "New Historic Missions" in 2004, which included defending China's expanding foreign interests.<sup>98</sup> A "diversified" mission set, encompassing "counter-terrorism, stability maintenance, emergency rescue, and international peacekeeping," was highlighted in Beijing's 2008 White Paper on China's National Defense.<sup>99</sup> The 2013 Defense White Paper's section on "safeguarding foreign interests" stated that emergency rescue, vessel protection at sea, and the evacuation of Chinese nationals abroad have all become crucial ways and means for the PLA to preserve national interests.<sup>100</sup>

There are currently appeals to increase the military's capabilities to save Chinese people in danger abroad from both the PLA and the general population.<sup>101</sup> The PLA assisted in the 2011 and 2015 evacuations of thousands of Chinese citizens from Libya. There, the PLA used an 11-76 transport aircraft over 40 sorties to evacuate more than 1,600 Chinese nationals after diverting a warship from Yemen to Libya.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, to assist the Southern African Development Community

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<sup>97</sup> See Ken W. Allen and Eric A. McVadon, *China's Foreign Military Relations* (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1999).

<sup>98</sup> For Chinese definitions of military diplomacy, see Jin Canrong and Wang Bo, "Youguan Zhongguo Tese Junshi Waijiao de Lilun Sikao" [On the Theories of China's Military Diplomacy], *Taipingyang Xuebao* 23, no. 5 (May 2015): pp. 17-25.

<sup>99</sup> Lina Benabdallah, "China-Africa Military Ties Have Deepened: Here Are Four Things to Know," *Washington Post*, July 6, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/06/china-africa-military-ties-have-deepened-here-are-4-things-to-know/?utm\\_term=.f6c39ce0f2d4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/06/china-africa-military-ties-have-deepened-here-are-4-things-to-know/?utm_term=.f6c39ce0f2d4).

<sup>100</sup> United Nations, "Contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations as of 3.01.19," <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

<sup>101</sup> Roy Kamphausen, "China's Military Operations Other Than War: The Military Legacy of Hu Jintao," paper presented at SIPRI Conference, Stockholm, April 2013.

<sup>102</sup> China's National Defense in 2008, Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China website, January 20, 2009, [http://www.china.org.cn/government/white-paper/node\\_7060059.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/white-paper/node_7060059.htm).

Standby Force in Botswana, the PLA is currently constructing a 19-hectare logistics support complex.<sup>103</sup>

China has always shunned foreign outposts, but in recent years, its stance has changed. A naval base managed by the PLA was established in Djibouti in 2017 next to military outposts run by many other nations, including the US. The base is furnished with shops for maintaining ships and helicopters, a supply of armaments, and a group of military guards.<sup>104</sup> “Establishing military outposts abroad is not a concept we should reject; on the contrary, it is our right”. According to Shen Dingli, a professor at Fudan University, bases built by other nations appear to be used to defend their interests and rights abroad.<sup>105</sup>

### *Arms Sales*

China sent weaponry to revolutionary organizations or communist partner governments during the Mao era.<sup>106</sup> China has recently reemerged as a significant global armaments supplier, rising from sixth place from 2004 to 2010 to fourth place from 2011 to 2017.<sup>107</sup>

China now sells corvettes, frigates, fighter planes, a variety of anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles, in addition to tanks, artillery, and small guns. Weapons sales come with maintenance and training plans that subtly encourage ongoing security cooperation. Arms sales have mainly gone to resource-rich but technologically backward nations like Nigeria.

## **II.VI Belt and Road Initiative**

One Belt One Road (一帶一路), was the previous name for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a worldwide infrastructure development initiative that the Chinese government chose in 2013 in order

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<sup>103</sup> See Han Xudong, “Guofang Daxue Jiaoshou: Baohu Haiwai Zhongguoren Jidai Wozu Zhunjian Junshi Liliang Jieru” [Chinese National Defense University Professor: We Must Urgently Establish Military Forces for Intervention in Order to Protect Overseas Chinese Citizens], *Huangjiu Shibao*, February 2, 2012, <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/1152/2012-02/240215S.html>; and Yue Gang, “Zhongguo Junli Ying Hanwei Haiwai Liyi Juebu Rongren Paihua Beiju Zaiyan” [The PLA Must Protect China’s Overseas Interests and Never Tolerate Any Anti-Chinese Tragedy Again], *Sina News*, April 18, 2013, <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/2013-04-18/0824722110.html>; and Andrea Ghiselli, “Diplomatic Opportunities and Rising Threats: The Expanding Role of Non-Traditional Security in Chinese Foreign and Security Policy,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 112 (February 15, 2018): pp. 611-625.

<sup>104</sup> “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces.”

<sup>105</sup> Xue Chengqing and Cui Xiaoyang, “Haijun Di Sanshiyi Pi Huhang Biandui Chenggong Chuzhi Liusou Yisi Haidao Mubiao” [The 31st Navy Convoy Successfully Got Rid of Six Suspected Pirate Targets], *PLA Navy Website*, January 24, 2019, <http://navy.81.cn/content/2019-01/24/content941272S.htm>.

<sup>106</sup> “China to Help with SADC Regional Logistics Depot,” *Defense Web (South Africa)*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/logistics/china-to-help-with-sadc-regional-logistics-depot/>.

<sup>107</sup> “China Formally Opens First Overseas Military Base in Djibouti,” *Reuters*, August 1, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-djibouti/china-formally-opens-first-overseas-military-base-in-djibouti-idUSKBN1AH3E3>.



to invest in approximately 70 nations and international organizations.<sup>108</sup> It is regarded as the focal point of Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy, being a key part of Xi's "Major Country Diplomacy" strategy (大国外交), which aims to have China take on a bigger leadership role in world affairs in light of its growing influence and stature. The "Silk Road Economic Belt" was the name given to the plan when it was first unveiled by Xi in September 2013 during an official trip to Kazakhstan. While "road" is short for the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," it refers to the Indo-Pacific Sea routes through Southeast Asia to South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. "Belt" stands for the "Silk Road Economic Belt," which refers to the proposed overland routes for road and rail transportation through landlocked Central Asia along the famed historical trade routes of the Western Regions. 149 nations were mentioned as having ratified the BRI as of August 2022.<sup>109</sup> The project is expected to be finished in 2049, which also happens to be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The official Belt and Road Initiative blueprint encourages the collaboration of participating nations across the Asia Pacific, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe, to build collaborative development strategies and initiatives to boost cross-border or regional cooperation. This comprises coordination of monetary policy, intergovernmental collaboration, multilevel macro policy interchange, and communication channels and policy assistance for the execution of large-scale projects. Consequently, mutual benefit is the key feature of the BRI, which attracted considerable attention from the international community and won a positive response from the countries involved. All nations, large or small, wealthy or impoverished, can join in cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative on an equal basis. This collaboration fosters global peace and progress because it is open, transparent, and in the public eye. It revives the spirit of the Silk Road and strives for advantages that are complimentary and mutually beneficial. Under this framework, the concerned nations uphold the idea of attaining shared growth through dialogue and cooperation and work together to create a new framework for global economic governance. China is willing to combine its own development experience and recommendations with the development aspirations and comparative advantages of all nations, and to use the Belt and Road Initiative as a major opportunity and a platform for cooperation to advance economic policy coordination among various nations, enhance connectivity, encourage bilateral and multilateral cooperation with a broader scope and at a deeper level, and create a new framework for cooperation that is open, transparent, and inclusive.

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<sup>108</sup> "Belt and Road Initiative." World Bank Group, 24 Mar. 2022, [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative).

<sup>109</sup> Christoph Nedopil Wang. "Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)." Green Finance & Development Center, <http://greenfdc.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/>.

Indeed, the BRI is built upon five areas of collaboration: 1) *Policy Coordination*, promotion of intergovernmental cooperation, multi-level intergovernmental macro policy exchange and communication mechanism; 2) *Facilities Connectivity*, improvement of connectivity of infrastructure construction plans and technical standards systems; 3) *Unimpeded Trade*, reduction of investment and trade barriers, promotion of regional economic integration; 4) *Financial Integration*, coordination and cooperation in monetary policy, set-up of financing institutions; 5) *People-to-people Bonds*, cultural and academic exchange and dialogue, media cooperation.<sup>110</sup> As a result, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to spread the advantages that China's development has brought to the rest of the world, inviting all nations work together for shared prosperity. One of the main drivers of the world economy's expansion and the focal point of the Belt and Road Initiative is the Eurasia Continent. The Eurasia Continent and its surrounding oceans must have strong connectivity and strengthened pragmatic cooperation in order for all of the civilizations to fully realize the region's enormous potential, increase mutual learning and idea sharing, and collaborate for diverse, independent, balanced, and sustainable development. Any nation or international organization with an interest is welcome to join the Belt and Road Initiative, and all kinds of cooperation and engagement are encouraged in order to benefit more nations, regions, and peoples. As aforementioned, Africa too is a crucial partner of the Belt and Road. With strong bilateral and multilateral ties, China and Africa share a long-standing friendship. The Maritime Silk Road once passed through some regions of Africa, and those locations benefited from its growth in terms of their economies, social stability, and cultural advancement. By beginning with the core interests of African nations, China has long contributed to the economic and social development of Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative expands China's and Africa's potential for mutually beneficial collaboration and strengthens linkages between Eurasia and Africa in the interests of shared development.

**a) Debt-Trap Diplomacy**

Nevertheless, it is vital to present the other side of the coin when analyzing the BRI. Indeed, China has been accused of debt-trap diplomacy through the promulgation on the One Belt One Road. *Debt-Trap Diplomacy* is an international financial relationship in which a creditor country or organization lends debt to a borrowing nation, wholly or partially, in order to give the lender more political clout. When a debtor country is unable to make its repayment commitments, the creditor country is considered to have given it an excessive amount of credit with the goal of obtaining political or economic concessions from it.<sup>111</sup> The terms of the loans are frequently kept a secret, and

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<sup>110</sup> Belt and Road Initiative, [www.beltroad-initiative.com/belt-and-road/](http://www.beltroad-initiative.com/belt-and-road/).

<sup>111</sup> Sebastian Horn, et al. "How Much Money Does the World Owe China?" *Harvard Business Review*, 26 Feb. 2020, <https://hbr.org/2020/02/how-much-money-does-the-world-owe-china>.

the borrowed funds frequently used toward hiring workers and purchasing supplies from the nation of the creditor. Indeed, due to a lack of information and openness, China's expanding position in international banking has remained a mystery. Between 1949 and 2017, the state and its affiliates provided over \$1.5 trillion in loans to more than 150 nations throughout the world, the majority of which were kept secret from the general public.<sup>112</sup> China prefers to lend under market conditions, i.e., at interest rates that are comparable to those on private capital markets, rather than the preferential rates provided by other government organizations like the World Bank or IMF. Furthermore, investigations revealed that 50% of China's loans to developing nations are not recorded, which materially alters the government and private sectors' perceptions in three ways: 1) when a country's debt is unclear in some areas, official surveillance efforts are limited; 2) if private sectors underestimate the real extent of a government's debt, they will overvalue debt instruments like sovereign bonds (this issue is exacerbated by the collateral provisions in many Chinese official loans, which provide China preferential treatment when it comes to repayment); and 3) forecasters of global economic activity are missing a crucial swing component that affects overall worldwide demand.

China frequently employing loans with commercial interest rates concerns several nations. While the BRI offers poor nations with crucial infrastructure investment, it also leaves them with unmanageable debt. For instance, China is paying for a high-speed train project in Laos that will cost as much as half of the nation's GDP.<sup>113</sup> Beijing, the IMF, and other parties should work together to assist nations along the Belt and Road who are struggling with financial imbalances and heavy debt. However, this could cause problem, since the IMF will demand transparency into BRI loan conditions before granting funding, and BRI loan arrangements are notoriously opaque and can put burdens on nations with heavy debt.<sup>114</sup> The IMF and China should open new lines of communication and implement pilot reforms that deal with issues on both sides of the equation in order to reconcile these divergent viewpoints. The United States should support IMF assistance to BRI nations to defend sovereignty and advance better lending standards if these requirements are satisfied.

The sustainability of debt has become a major worry as a result of BRI investment in developing nations. Countries like Djibouti and Laos are among the many BRI recipient nations that face a significant danger of debt hardship as a result of BRI loans.<sup>115</sup> Once the BRI loan is finished, these nations will all have debt-to-GDP ratios that are above 50%, with at least 40% of that debt due

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Janssen, "Land-locked Laos on track for controversial China rail link," *Nikkei Asian Review*, June 24, 2017, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/Land-locked-Laos-on-track-for-controversial-China-rail-link>.

<sup>114</sup> Jonathan Hillman, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Five Years Later," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), January 25, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-five-years-later-0>.

<sup>115</sup> John Hurley et al., "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective," Center for Global Development, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/examining-debt-implications-belt-and-road-initiative-policy-perspective.pdf>.

to China. As BRI loan repayments reach their height, these nations will require assistance and are likely to resort to the IMF and other smaller lenders. The IMF has looked into a number of BRI-related issues and has frequently warned about unmanageable debt levels, predatory financing, and a lack of project transparency.<sup>116</sup> Before approving a credit line, the IMF will ask for more clarification on foreign currency payments, especially information about BRI loans, in order to allay these worries. Restructuring BRI debt or assessing potential infrastructure developments to see if they are financially sustainable should be part of an IMF program. To perform the required debt sustainability study, the IMF will at the very least require access to the conditions of BRI loans.<sup>117</sup> Given these limitations, there is a chance that the IMF and China would differ about the direction of BRI projects in debt-stressed nations. A number of international lending best practices relating to procurement, transparency, and dispute resolution are broken by Chinese loans. Infrastructure projects are dominated by Chinese contractors, and loans backed by China are less transparent than loans from multilateral development banks.<sup>118</sup> Beijing has shown a reluctance to adhere to international investment norms by establishing two tribunals to adjudicate issues relating to the BRI outside of the established dispute resolution channels.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, China included BRI in its constitution last year, which increased pressure on state-run businesses and authorities to keep making loans.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Christine Lagarde, "Belt and Road Initiative: Strategies to Deliver in the Next Phase," International Monetary Fund (IMF), April 12, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/04/11/sp041218-belt-and-road-initiative-strategies-to-deliver-in-the-next-phase>.

<sup>117</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Debt Sustainability Analysis," last updated July 29, 2017, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/dsa/>.

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan Hillman, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Five Years Later," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), January 25, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-five-years-later-0>.

<sup>119</sup> Jonathan Hillman, "All Rise? Belt and Road Court is in Session," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), July 26, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/all-rise-belt-and-road-court-session>.

<sup>120</sup> Huileng Tan, "China wrote Belt and Road Initiative into the party constitution. That makes it riskier than ever," CNBC News, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/31/china-wrote-belt-and-road-initiative-into-the-party-constitution.html>.

### Chapter III: How Does Africa Fit into the Belt and Road Initiative?

Africa is the continent with the most developing nations, while China is the largest developing nation in the globe. China and Africa have developed close ties as a result of previous common experiences and shared objectives. Because the cornerstone and long-standing strategy of China's foreign policy has been to strengthen its solidarity and collaboration with African nations, Africa and China share a common future. Indeed, China and African countries helped one another in the struggle for national liberation and independence, growing their political trust in the process, and both sides have been assisting one another and expanding their collaboration as they work for economic progress and national renewal.

As the new era began, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the guiding principles of China's Africa policy: sincerity, actual results, amity and good faith, and promoting the greater good and common interests. He also outlined the basic framework for China's relationship with Africa, namely the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a partnership platform between China and Africa that has produced increasingly deep and complex relations between regions. These fora represent opportunities for President Xi Jinping and African leaders to agree to work together in order to strengthen the China-Africa community of shared future and advance cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, elevating China-Africa cooperation to a previously unheard-of level.

This chapter will clarify how Africa fits into the BRI by analyzing the historical ties between China and Africa, investigating the creation of FOCAC, which is the primary multilateral coordination mechanism between the two, and the drafting of the white papers on Africa, "*China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*." Secondly, the main Chinese interventions in Africa are going to be described. Specifically, this section is going to analyze the actions plans concerning infrastructure, education for school and university training, and maritime cooperation. Consequently, the third paragraph will present a case study on Kenya, examining concrete examples of the Sino-African partnership in said fields, such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, the Chinese Luban Workshop facilities, and the importance of Mombasa and Lamu as strategic points for the Maritime Silk Road. Finally, this chapter will conclude by trying to address the controversial question: "is China colonizing Africa?" through the study of western reactions to the China-Africa cooperation (since European states functioned as colonizing powers in Africa and they are captivated by doing a self-introspection in light of China's phenomenal achievements in the continent). The discussion will focus on the different standpoints of those who understand the Chinese venture as indeed colonialist in nature, and yet a type of benign colonialism, and those that are deeply suspicious of the general tendency to instrumentally use the charge of colonialism as a way of giving classical

colonialism a more human reading while handing the Chinese a harsher judgement of what they would both deserve.

### **III.I Historical Ties between China and the African Continent**

China's relations with Africa have gone through several periods that have been mostly influenced by global challenges as well as political and economic events in China, not in Africa. From Mao Zedong's ascension to power in 1949 until the early 1990s, China placed a greater emphasis on its political ties to Africa. Indeed, China had surpassed the United States as Africa's top trading partner by 2009. And up to current times, the Xi Jinping era has seen China's economic participation level off or decrease while placing a larger emphasis on the defense of Chinese interests in Africa and security collaboration. Xi Jinping has expanded China's political and security engagement, particularly party-to-party collaboration, and continued the economic engagement started by Hu Jintao.

The African Union, on its part, is not even close to performing like a national government, although slowly expanding its capacity to speak for the continent. This underlines that there has always been an imbalance in the China-Africa relationship on the international scenario, that has grown more so over time.

#### **a) Mao Zedong and Relations with Africa (1949-1976)**

China's first significant involvement in Africa was in the lead-up to the 1955 Bandung Conference,<sup>121</sup> through which China was able to start trade negotiations with Egypt and lend support to independence movements in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. China gave Egypt a US\$5 million loan and urged the UK and France to stop hostilities over the Suez Canal.<sup>122</sup> African involvement and Afro-Asian solidarity quickly became central tenets of Chinese foreign policy. Subsequently, China increasingly utilized the Cold War to criticize US imperialism as a perilous foe of African freedom, reflecting the Maoist doctrine.

The PRC spent a lot of time working to gain diplomatic recognition across the continent because doing so nearly always led to support for its UN Security Council application. Zhou Enlai's tour of Africa in 1964 marked a crucial turning point in China-Africa ties, which was the start of a strategy that emphasized the value of consistent high-level communication with African leaders. During the tour, Zhou Enlai announced the *Five Guiding Principles* for China's relations with African nations,

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<sup>121</sup> Larkin, B. D. (1971) *China and Africa 1949–1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 16-26.

<sup>122</sup> Nasser-Eddine, M. (1972) *Arab-Chinese Relations 1950–1971*. Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, pp. 60–94, 117–120.

principles are still in force and have only marginally changed over time.<sup>123</sup> China: first, supports the African peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and new colonialism and to win and safeguard national independence; second, supports the pursuance of a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment by the governments of the African countries; third, supports the desire of the African peoples to achieve unity and solidarity in the manner of their own choice; fourth, supports the African countries in their efforts to settle their disputes through peaceful consultations; and fifth, holds that the sovereignty of the African countries should be respected by all other countries.

However, the relationship between China and Africa entered a new chapter with the start of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, during which China advocated for a global revolution and supported national liberation battles. The Cultural Revolution's hardest phase lasted through 1969; a milder version persisted until Mao's passing in 1976. Finally, China gave up supporting African revolutionary organizations by the early 1970s, which made it easier to build relationships with more traditional regimes.

#### **b) Deng Xiaoping and the Domestic Reform Era (1978–1992)**

China placed a high priority on internal economic development throughout the Deng era. Africa increasingly distanced itself from Beijing's objectives by refusing to open up to global markets, and foreign direct investment from China did not significantly influence the relationship. Premier Zhao Ziyang made an eleven-country tour of Africa in 1982, and his was an attempt to renew China's interest in Africa and resembled Zhou Enlai's visit. Indeed, Zhao Ziyang unveiled a new foreign aid strategy, labeled the *Four Principles*.<sup>124</sup> China-Africa relations should be grounded in: mutual benefit, non-interference in internal affairs, and equality; positive economic outcomes with lower investment, quicker turnaround times, and shorter construction cycles; increasing the range of projects, with a focus on friendship, high standards of work, and consideration of local conditions; increasing both sides' capacity for independence and fostering the expansion of their respective national economies.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, China's relations with Africa evolved from being primarily political to being primarily economic.<sup>126</sup> However, analysts are more hesitant to quantify the worth of China's assistance to

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<sup>123</sup> China (2002) '*China Facts and Figures 2002*', <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/China-Africa/82054.htm>.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor, I. (1998) 'China's Foreign Policy towards Africa in the 1990s', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(3): 446-447.

<sup>125</sup> Xuetong, Y. (1988) 'Sino-African Relations in the 1990s', CSIS Africa Notes, [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/anotes\\_0488.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/anotes_0488.pdf).

<sup>126</sup> He, W. (2006) 'Moving forward with the Time: The Evolution of China's African Policy', Paper presented at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, pp. 7-8. <http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/conference/china-africa/papers/He,Wengping.pdf>.

specific nations. Chinese aid project announcements frequently lack specifics and are not usually carried out in the quantity stated. China's stance on arms transfers was altered by Deng Xiaoping to one that prioritized making money off the sale of weapons. The OECD estimated China's assistance to Africa at roughly US\$800 million between 1979 and 1985.<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, by the end of the 1980s, China had provided Africa with a vast array of military hardware, including fighter jets, artillery, patrol boats, and tanks.<sup>128</sup>

### c) **Jiang Zemin Reaches Out to Africa (1992–2002)**

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, namely the strategic uni-multilateral framework that marked a new stage in Sino-African relations, was proposed by Jiang Zemin in 1999, making a significant break from Deng Xiaoping's strategy to increase China's outreach to Africa.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, China's anticipated aid to Africa in 1988 was only \$60 million, but by 1999 it had increased to US\$375 million.<sup>130</sup> In addition, China's economy and its export of consumer and industrial goods depended more and more on imports of energy and raw materials from Africa during the 1990s, first entering the net petroleum importer category in 1993. Also iron ore, titanium, cobalt, copper, uranium, bauxite, manganese, and lumber were among commodities that China sought from Africa.

Trade between China and Africa increased significantly under Jiang Zemin, from little over \$1 billion in 1989 to more than \$10 billion in 2002. Chinese direct investments abroad in Africa have also begun to increase.

### d) **Hu Jintao Rides the Africa Wave (2002–2012)**

Hu Jintao launched the idea of *Peaceful Rise*, which proposed that China's economic development on the international scene would support peace, mutual collaboration, and shared development rather than attempt to expand beyond.<sup>131</sup> To support this notion, Hu visited Africa four times while serving as general secretary of the CPC Central Committee to emphasize the value China placed on the continent. Moreover, the third, fourth, and fifth FOCAC summits were held under his mandate, and they focused, respectively, on: strengthening cooperation with Africa in the UN and

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<sup>127</sup> OECD (1987) *The Aid Programme of China*. Paris: OECD, pp. 18-19.

<sup>128</sup> Shinn, D. H. and J. Eisenman (2012) *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 167.

<sup>129</sup> Pham, J. P. (2006) 'China's African Strategy and its Implications for U.S. Interests', *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 28: p. 241.

<sup>130</sup> Taylor, I. (1998) 'China's Foreign Policy towards Africa in the 1990s', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(3): pp. 450-451.

<sup>131</sup> Glaser, B. and E. S. Medeiros (2007) 'The Changing Ecology of Foreign Policy-Making in China: The Ascension and Demise of the Theory of Peaceful Rise', *China Quarterly*, p. 190.



other multilateral systems by supporting each other's just demands and reasonable propositions;<sup>132</sup> collaborating with Africa on climate change and consenting to further scientific and technological partnership;<sup>133</sup> and supporting African peace and security, leading to a new kind of China-Africa strategic relationship.<sup>134</sup> As a result, under Hu Jintao's leadership, China's official development assistance to Africa modestly increased.

China's foreign direct investment in Africa grew quickly from a low basis in those years. Chinese companies obtained a significant rise in contracts, mostly for infrastructure projects. By 2012, the value of these contracts had surpassed US\$40 billion, up from a total of roughly US\$3 billion in 2003. The money was provided by international financial organizations, African countries, and China's Export-Import Bank. Despite the fact that China has developed much of Africa's infrastructure, these contracts are typically secured by Chinese businesses.

The expansion of China-Africa trade was another one of Hu Jintao's most notable achievements. China's trade with Africa has risen from about US\$10 billion in 2002 to US\$180 billion in 2012, replacing the United States as Africa's top commercial partner.<sup>135</sup> The majority of Africa's exports to China were raw materials, particularly minerals and oil, while China's exports were made-to-order products.

Furthermore, China started investing in the education field. It awarded over 19,000 scholarships to students from African nations between 2010 and 2012, and by the end of 2012, China had collaborated on 115 joint research and technology projects, and had established 31 Confucius Institutes and 5 Confucius classrooms in 26 African nations.<sup>136</sup>

#### e) **Xi Jinping Becomes More Assertive in Africa (2012–Present)**

When Xi Jinping became the general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, he proposed his idea of *Chinese Dream* (中国梦), which aims at becoming a moderately well-off society, and a fully developed nation. Moreover, he linked African development to China's and aligned Chinese and African interests, contributing to the notion of *Community of Common Destiny for Mankind* (人

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<sup>132</sup> China (2006) China's African Policy. See at <http://www.focac.org/eng/zt/zgdfzccwj/t230479.htm>.

<sup>133</sup> He, W. (2010) 'China's Diplomacy in Africa', <http://www.african-bulletin.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/wenpingc.pdf>.

<sup>134</sup> FOAC (2012) 'The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015)', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peoples Republic of China, Beijing, <http://www.focac.org/eng>.

<sup>135</sup> Pairault, T. (2018) 'China in Africa: Goods Supplier, Service Provider Rather Than Investor', *Bridges Africa*, vol. 7, n.5, pp. 17–22.

<sup>136</sup> China (2013) 'China–Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation', [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/08/23/content\\_281474982986536.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986536.htm).

类命运共同体) created by Hu Jintao. This political slogan is used to describe a stated foreign policy goal for improving the international order in a way that is more advantageous to China's interests.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, due to their shared interests, China has included 39 African countries in the BRI, a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure, economic, and education investment platform. China's foreign aid to the world peaked in 2015 at around \$3 billion, with Africa receiving just over half of China's funding. Since five African nations are in debt hardship, and another 11 are at high danger of going into debt distress, according to the International Monetary Fund, Xi Jinping emphasized the necessity for China to enhance its inter-ethnic relations in Africa.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, China's engagement with African colleges, think tanks, and non-governmental groups has ascended.

### **III.II 2021 White Papers on Africa**

In this new era of cooperation, a white paper outlining China's collaboration with Africa in the new age was released by the State Council Information Office in 2021. In the white paper, *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*, it is claimed that shared history and comparable objectives have forged tight ties between China and Africa.<sup>139</sup> Thus, the premises of this paper are grounded in: the cornerstone and long-standing strategy of China's foreign policy strengthening its solidarity and collaboration with African nations; and in both sides having been assisting one another and expanding their collaboration as they work for economic progress and national renewal.

As the Xi Jinping era began, he announced in the white paper the guiding principles of China's Africa policy: *sincerity, real results, amity and good faith, and pursuing the greater good and shared interests*. This white paper aims to provide a perspective on potential future collaboration between China and Africa as well as to highlight the achievements of cooperation between the two regions in the new era.

#### **a) Building an Even Stronger China-Africa Community of Shared Future**

Africa and China have an enduring relationship. For this reason, the two sides decided to forge a stronger China-Africa community of shared future and steer Sino-African relations and cooperation into a new era through the FOCAC Summits, persevering together through achievement and hardship, serving as role models for creating a world society with a common destiny.

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<sup>137</sup> Rudd, K. (2018) 'Xi Jinping's Vision for Global Governance', Project Syndicate, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/xi-jinping-has-a-coherent-global-vision-by-kevin-rudd-2018-07>.

<sup>138</sup> IMF (2017) Direction of Trade Statistics. Washington: IMF.

<sup>139</sup> "Full Text: China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals." Xinhua, [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c\\_1310333813.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c_1310333813.htm).

***The Principles of Sincerity, Real Results, Amity, and Good Faith and the Principles of Pursuing the Greater Good and Shared Interests***

In the white paper, China's approach to Africa is characterized by the values of *sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith* as well as the *pursuit of the greater good and shared interests*.<sup>140</sup> From the Chinese standpoint, they serve as an inspiration for international collaboration with Africa and exemplify the essence of Chinese culture and the long-standing relationship between China and Africa, representing China's main guiding principles for fostering cooperation and solidarity with underdeveloped nations, particularly those in Africa.

The following paragraphs will be paraphrased directly from the white paper. They will explain the importance of these principles and how to implement them from the Chinese perspective.

*Sincerity* is how China treats its African friends. China has traditionally viewed collaboration and solidarity with African nations as vital components of its foreign policy. This will not change, not even as China becomes more powerful and enjoys a higher level of international standing. China will keep upholding the position of Africa in global and regional affairs as well as the shared interests of developing nations, continuing to assist African nations' initiatives to find their own solutions to their continent's problems and increase its contribution to peace and security in Africa. China will continue to support African nations' efforts to investigate development paths according to their own circumstances. By drawing on knowledge from the ancient civilizations and experience from both sides, it also stands ready to deepen exchanges on governance experience with African, promoting shared progress and prosperity.<sup>141</sup>

*Real results* are what China aims to achieve in its cooperation with Africa. China actively promotes win-win collaboration and seeks to put it into practice. Thus, China's dedication looks forwards to closely integrating its own growth with that of Africa, as well as the interests of both their peoples. As a result, China earnestly expects that African countries will become stronger, and that African living will improve. A mutually beneficial partnership in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors will be strengthened as it continues to deepen its investment and financial collaboration. China will assist African nations in realizing independent and sustainable development by assisting them in converting their resource advantages into advantages in development.<sup>142</sup>

*Amity* is a value that China upholds in fostering friendship with Africa. Their populations are bound to get along well. The purpose of China-Africa ties is to benefit the people, who are the

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<sup>140</sup>Zhao, Zhiyuan. "Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Injects Strong Impetus into China-Africa Cooperation." Embassy of the People's Republic of China to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 23 Apr. 2022, [http://et.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zagx/202204/t20220423\\_10672612.htm](http://et.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zagx/202204/t20220423_10672612.htm).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

foundation the bond between the two continents. People-to-people exchanges have long been appreciated by both parties; as a matter of fact, the Chinese and African peoples are well acquainted, and this situation sets the basis for youth interactions, which should be encouraged between the two sides in order to keep the friendship vibrant and alive.<sup>143</sup>

*Good faith* should be honored in solving problems arising from cooperation. Africa and China are both going through a period of fast development. Their comprehension of one another needs to be current with the times. Any new issues in their relations are faced head-on by China, which is dedicated to appropriately resolving them in a spirit of respect for one another and collaboration that benefits both parties.<sup>144</sup>

Each of these principles is very important in terms of ideals such as *shared interests* and *greater good*. China promotes political justice, reciprocal economic gain, win-win collaboration, and shared progress in international affairs. Relations between China and Africa must effectively manage the relationship between common interests and the greater good, and the best way to achieve that is to closely integrate China's own growth with that of Africa, reject the idea of a zero-sum game, and avoid taking decisions that are only motivated by personal gain.<sup>145</sup>

### ***The Lofty Goal of Building a Community of Shared Future***

China and Africa will improve their mutual understanding and support on matters involving each other's core interests and primary concerns by taking on joint responsibility. They will also improve their coordination on significant global and regional challenges, pursuing a win-win cooperation and taking advantage of the synergy between their respective development objectives and the significant potential offered by the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>146</sup>

Improving people's lives is a clear objective shared by China and Africa as they develop their relationship and work to provide happiness to all. By increasing exchanges, mutual learning, and peaceful coexistence between the two civilizations, China and Africa will work to strengthen the bond between their peoples while pursuing cultural prosperity, revitalizing their civilizations and cultures, enhancing their artistic productions, and offering richer cultural nourishment.<sup>147</sup>

China is also prepared to contribute positively to efforts to achieve common security, and will aid African nations in enhancing their autonomy in maintaining stability and peace. Indeed, China

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> "Chinese Ambassador Qin Jian to Somalia: 'Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind Is a Sure Way.'" Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Somalia, 10 June 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjfb\\_663304/zwjg\\_665342/zwbd\\_665378/202006/t20200610\\_628773.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjfb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/202006/t20200610_628773.html).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

fully backs African nations, the African Union (AU), and other regional institutions in Africa to address African problems in African ways.

China will step up communication and collaboration with Africa in the fields of climate change, clean energy, stopping and controlling desertification and soil erosion, protecting wildlife, and other ecological and environmental sensitive regions in order to advance harmony between people and nature. Together, the two sides will transform China and Africa into stunning locales where people may live in peace with the environment.

The Chinese and African people will ultimately be the ones to evaluate the outcomes of China-Africa collaboration. Promoting the fundamental interests of the Chinese and African peoples will always be China's goal when it comes to expanding cooperation with Africa. It will never set its policy in Africa as containing any third-party nation.

### ***An Exemplary Model for World Development and Cooperation***

South-South cooperation will develop once China-African relations are successful. The only surefire option for China and Africa to achieve shared growth in the coming era is through cooperation.<sup>148</sup> It will put down more firm foundations for creating a community of shared future between China and Africa that is much stronger. It will also generate significant impetus for the emergence of developing nations as a whole and for more balanced international relations.

The global governance system is experiencing significant and unanticipated challenges as a result of the epidemic, a scale of change unseen in a century, and a strong clash between multilateralism and unilateralism. China views Africa as a large stage for world collaboration as opposed to a place for great nations to compete. It involves giving the people of China and Africa real advantages while improving the environment for other members of the international community to work with Africa.<sup>149</sup> The peoples of China and Africa will lead by example in the new era by fostering solidarity and collaboration, fostering new forms of international relations, and forging a world community with a shared future.

#### **b) Strengthening Mutual Support**

Over the last 50 years, the PRC and Africa have maintained cordial ties that have weathered the test of time. At pivotal moments and when pressing concerns arose, the two sides have consistently stood solidly in unison. China's efforts to protect its sovereignty, security, and development interests, to advance reunification, and to achieve national rejuvenation via development

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<sup>148</sup> "Full Text: China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals." Xinhua, [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c\\_1310333813.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c_1310333813.htm).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

have received significant backing from African nations. China has always encouraged African nations to achieve national independence, pursue development routes that suit their national circumstances, encourage regional integration, and fortify their unity.<sup>150</sup> In order to meet the serious challenge posed by Covid-19, China and Africa have come together, further solidifying their partnership. Chinese and African peoples are able to overcome challenges and hurdles and forge a bright future because to their shared unity.

### *Upholding International Equity and Justice*

China and Africa are crucial allies in achieving the transformation of the international order and the global governance system. In its 26<sup>th</sup> session fifty years ago, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 2758 with a resounding majority, giving the PRC its rightful place in the UN.<sup>151</sup> Since then, China has assumed an increasingly significant position on the global scene. 26 of the 76 votes in favor of the resolution were given by African nations, while 11 of the draft resolution's 23 sponsors were Africans. Since then, China and Africa have been working together to advance multilateralism in the current complicated and turbulent world environment. They vehemently reject protectionism and unilateralism, stand by one another when it comes to matters concerning the fundamental concerns and interests of either side, and defend the shared interests of emerging nations. Theoretical and practical aspects of China-Africa cooperation provide emerging nations guidance on how to manage international affairs as well as significant allusions to the transformation of the system of global governance.<sup>152</sup>

An example of this cooperation is real multilateralism in action. Holding aloft the flag of multilateralism, China and Africa steadfastly support the international system centered on the United Nations, the international order supported by international law, and the fundamental standards governing international relations based on the objectives and tenets of the UN Charter.<sup>153</sup> The two sides steadfastly uphold international justice and fairness while attempting to move the world order in a more just and reasonable path. They defend an open global economy and the multilateral trading system, reject unilateralism and protectionism, and China and Africa are adamant supporters of increasing the voice and representation of emerging nations, particularly African nations, in the

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<sup>150</sup> "China's Position Paper on Mutual Respect and Common Development Africa." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 30 May 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202205/t20220531\\_10694923.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202205/t20220531_10694923.html).

<sup>151</sup> "Upholding Equity and Justice to Promote Sound Development of the Global Human Rights Cause." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 28 Feb. 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/202202/t20220228\\_10646322.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202202/t20220228_10646322.html).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

system of global governance. China consistently supports developing nations while voting at the United Nations.

A further instance, according to the white papers, is working together to protect lawful rights. On important issues including those pertaining to their sovereignty, territorial integrity, national dignity, and development interests, China and Africa are mutually understanding and supportive of one another. All African nations that maintain diplomatic relations with China adhere to the one-China concept to the letter and wholeheartedly support the unification of China. China opposes all forms of racism and racial discrimination, calls on the international community to help African countries protect their right to subsistence and development, and unwaveringly supports African nations in maintaining their sovereignty and independence. China also actively works to have unjustified unilateral sanctions against African nations lifted.

Moreover, China and three African members of the Security Council have formed a “1 + 3” consultation mechanism to discuss and plan solutions to important global and regional concerns.<sup>154</sup> China has started open discussions on “Enhancing African Capabilities in Peace and Security”, “Peace and Security in Africa: Strengthening Peacekeeping Operations in Africa”, “Peace and Security in Africa: Countering Terrorism and Extremism in Africa”, and “Peace and Security in Africa: Addressing Root Causes of Conflict in Post-pandemic Recovery in Africa” since 2017 while it has been rotating as the UN Security Council's presidency. These have compelled the international world to increase its solidarity, collaboration, and support for Africa’s long-term stability.

Both China and Africa have proposed that all other human rights be accorded equal weight, that exchanges and cooperation on human rights be conducted on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and that individual nations’ right to determine their own development paths be respected. The rights to subsistence and development are viewed as the primary and fundamental human rights. Both of them reject the politicization of human rights concerns, the use of double standards, and the meddling in the internal affairs of other nations while ostensibly promoting human rights.

African nations, along with other developing nations, have expressed their collective or individual support for China’s position at the UN Human Rights Council and the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Affairs Committee, also known as the “Third Committee,” in response to Western anti-China forces’ mudslinging and false accusations against China in relation to Xinjiang and Hong Kong-related issues.<sup>155</sup> African nations support the resolutions China tabled at the Human Rights Council on encouraging win-win cooperation in the field of human rights and the contribution

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<sup>154</sup> “Full Text: China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals.” Xinhua, [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c\\_1310333813.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c_1310333813.htm).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

of development to the enjoyment of all human rights because they share China's commitment to human rights.

China urges the international community to go forward with changes to the way that the economy is governed globally and to provide real aid for the development of Africa. A G20 Initiative in Support of Industrialization of Africa and Other Least Developed Countries was released at the G20 Hangzhou Summit, at China's initiative.<sup>156</sup> A China-UN Peace and Development Fund was launched by China in 2015. Its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund supported 34 initiatives between 2016 and 2020, with the majority of the recipients being African nations, in areas including infrastructure, energy access, health, and poverty reduction. China and Africa joined forces to launch the Initiative on Partnership for Africa's Development in May 2021. Both parties agree that the international community should assist Africa's development as a matter of agreement and shared duty.

China appeals to international partners to provide more assistance to Africa in areas like post-Covid reconstruction and response to Covid-19 and other pandemics, as well as to pool resources in those areas where Africa's most pressing needs are, in order to give the continent's development more momentum.

### ***Jointly Combating Covid-19***

China and Africa have overcome a significant obstacle by supporting one another and battling the epidemic side by side. China hosted the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against Covid-19 in June 2020 via video connection, which gave international anti-pandemic cooperation with Africa a set of guidelines.<sup>157</sup> President Xi provided crucial policy details on bolstering global collaboration in the face of the epidemic, with cooperation in the areas of public health, economic openness, and people's livelihoods receiving higher priority. African nations and regional organizations provided China with tremendous support and aid during the most difficult phases of its fight against the pandemic, including the AU's Executive Council publishing a communiqué in support of China's anti-epidemic measures.<sup>158</sup> Despite the fact that few African nations are affluent, they continue to actively give funds and supplies to China, and some African students who are studying there also help battle the disease there.

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<sup>156</sup> "G20 Leaders' Communique Hangzhou Summit." European Commission, 5 Sept. 2016, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_16\\_2967](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_16_2967).

<sup>157</sup> Shaohui Jiang, David Li. "China's Pivotal Role in Supporting Post-Covid Growth in Africa: White & Case LLP." China's Pivotal Role in Supporting Post-COVID Growth in Africa | White & Case LLP, 26 May 2022, <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/chinas-pivotal-role-supporting-post-covid-growth-africa>.

<sup>158</sup> Kodjo, Tchioffo. "Communique: Executive Council China Solidarity Statement on the Coronavirus -African Union - Peace and Security Department." African Union, Peace and Security Department, 7 Feb. 2020, <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-executive-council-china-solidarity-statement-on-the-coronavirus>.



China instantly gave humanitarian help after the pandemic. The Central Government of China has provided emergency anti-pandemic supplies, including 120 batches of nucleic test reagents, protective gear, masks, eye protectors, and ventilators, to 53 African countries and the AU since 2020.<sup>159</sup> China has also sent short-term anti-disease medical teams or anti-epidemic medical expert groups to 17 African nations, and has actively shared its expertise combating the epidemic with those nations. China has pledged to promote vaccinations as a global benefit, and aims to offer a total of 2 billion doses of the Covid-19 vaccine by the end of 2021. China supports the endeavor to lessen the debt load on African nations and is actively implementing the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative to assist them in coping with the epidemic and overcoming short-term challenges.<sup>160</sup>

China has the highest level of deferred debt among G20 members, and is working with the appropriate members to implement the Common Framework for Debt Treatments. China, together with other stakeholders, will offer assistance on an as-needed basis to nations that are dealing with extremely dangerous epidemic situations and are under particularly intense strain.

### ***Winning the Battle against Ebola Together***

Ebola first appeared in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea in 2014. China provided assistance to the African people at a time when they were struggling, serving as an example for the global world. China was the only nation to supply laboratories to the West African regions affected by the outbreak and to establish observation and treatment facilities there. It was the first to assist Guinea and Sierra Leone. China sent nine chartered planes to convey supplies and personnel as well as quick, efficient, and comprehensive anti-Ebola aid worth RMB750 million. More than 1,200 clinical and public health specialists were dispatched to Africa to fight Ebola with local medical personnel. Some 13,000 local medical staff were overworked by Chinese medical workers. China has provided aid to Ebola-affected nations in the form of laboratories and treatment facilities. In terms of duration, reach, scope, and intensity, those aid initiatives were the greatest among China's international assistance programs at the time. Chinese ambassadors, medical crews, peacekeepers, and corporate workers decided not to leave Africa. They were able to get past their personal dread of the virus, which helped the locals gain confidence. Chinese and Africans shared their joys and sorrows as they bravely faced the calamity.

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<sup>159</sup> Shaohui Jiang, David Li. "China's Pivotal Role in Supporting Post-Covid Growth in Africa: White & Case LLP." China's Pivotal Role in Supporting Post-COVID Growth in Africa | White & Case LLP, 26 May 2022, <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/chinas-pivotal-role-supporting-post-covid-growth-africa>.

<sup>160</sup> World Bank Group. "Debt Service Suspension Initiative." World Bank, World Bank Group, 14 Mar. 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/debt/brief/covid-19-debt-service-suspension-initiative>.

When Ebola reemerged in the DRC in 2018, China rapidly supported the nation and its neighbors, notably Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, as well as the AU, with emergency humanitarian relief. This assistance enabled them to quickly contain the outbreak.

### *Jointly Coping with Natural Disasters*

China has always given emergency humanitarian aid through multilateral organizations like the UN, the World Food Programme, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. China also assists Africa in responding to numerous natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

Chinese people will never forget that Equatorial Guinea, a nation of barely 2 million people, gave 2 million euros—an average of one euro per person—in 2008 when China was devastated by an earthquake. Following the Wenchuan earthquake, the Republic of the Congo gave \$1 million, and following the Yushu earthquake, \$2 million was given towards the construction of a primary school.

In exchange, China has implemented programs in more than 40 disaster-stricken African countries, benefiting more than 10 million people and significantly advancing their economic recovery and social development. These programs cover areas such as food, water supply, women's and children's health, and education.

The storm Idai moved over Southeast Africa in 2019. China sent a 65-member international rescue team to the badly affected Mozambique to treat more than 3,000 people. China also sent essential humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi. Locusts ravaged the Horn of Africa towards the end of 2019, endangering the lives of more than 30 million people. Early in 2020, despite being affected by Covid-19, China continued to provide emergency aid and supplies for the eradication of locusts to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Additionally, China allocated funds from the China-FAO South-South Cooperation Trust Fund to help the three nations purchase prevention and control supplies and continue capacity-building activities.

### **c) Breaking New Ground in China-Africa Relations**

The international order and global governance system are now evolving rapidly, and the international power structure is drastically shifting. Covid-19 further demonstrates how intertwined the destinies of all nations are. Standing at a historical turning point, China and Africa must further strengthen their relationship and create a community of shared future for the two continents in the new age. The two sides will persistently uphold their long-standing relationship, foster beneficial collaboration, and protect shared interests. They will continue to drive forward the Belt and Road Initiative, advance the China-Africa Comprehensive Strategic and Cooperation Partnership, set the pace of cooperation through FOCAC, and create a better future together.

### ***Boosting Cooperation Through FOCAC***

FOCAC was established in October 2000 during its inaugural Ministerial Conference in Beijing at the urging of both China and African nations. Its objectives were to address the problems brought on by economic globalization and pursue shared development. Over the past two decades, FOCAC has developed into a crucial forum for cross-cultural communication and a useful tool for practical collaboration between China and Africa. It has evolved into a trailblazer for contemporary foreign assistance to Africa.

FOCAC today includes 55 members, including China, the 53 African nations with which China maintains diplomatic ties, and the AU Commission. Every three years, China and an African country alternate hosting the FOCAC Ministerial Conference, which is co-chaired by China and the hosting nation. The co-chairs are also in charge of putting conference recommendations into action. Some of the ministerial conferences have been promoted to summits based on mutual agreement. The ministerial conferences and summits that have already taken place have borne abundant fruit, leading to the publication of a number of significant documents that serve as guidelines for cooperation and the encouragement of the adoption of a number of significant policies that will aid in the development of Africa, cement China-African friendship, and advance mutually beneficial cooperation.

Future FOCACs will play a significant role in advancing the post-pandemic economic recovery and growth of China, Africa, and the rest of the globe. To match China's Second Centennial Goal of creating a great modern socialist nation by the middle of the century with the AU's Agenda 2063, China will closely collaborate with Africa. Together, the two sides will plan and discuss the decisions to be made at FOCACs regarding topics like health, trade and investment, industrialization, agricultural modernization, responses to climate change, and the digital economy. Both sides will make every effort to create a meeting that will foster new understanding, investigate new areas of cooperation, and be advantageous to the Chinese and African peoples.

### ***Promoting Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative***

Africa is a natural partner for the plan given its role in the history of the Belt and Road. The Maritime Silk Path, which promoted friendship and mutual learning by bringing Chinese tea, porcelain, and development expertise to Africa in the past, is known in history as a road of friendship. African nations have actively supported and participated in the new program ever since it began. The future is bright for the partnership between China and Africa under the program.

The BRI is not a "solo," but rather an "orchestra" in which both China and African nations must participate. South Africa signed the first agreement on cooperation with China under the Belt and Road Initiative in December 2015, making it the first African nation to do so. In 2017 and 2019,

the leaders of Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Djibouti, and Mozambique participated in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, strengthening its collaborative framework. China and Africa decided to expand their cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative during the 2018 FOCAC Beijing Summit. Nearly all the African nations that have diplomatic relations with China as of this writing have already ratified agreements on cooperation under the program. The Cooperation Plan on Jointly Promoting the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road between the Government of the PRC and the African Union was signed by China and the AU Commission, making it the first agreement of its sort between China and a regional body.

A number of transportation infrastructure projects, such as the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya, the number one National Highway of the Republic of the Congo, the Thies-Touba highway in Senegal, the Port Gentil-Omboue coastal road and the Booué Bridge in Gabon, as well as the first and second phases of the Belt and Road Initiative, have been completed and opened to traffic. Entrepot commerce has increased because to initiatives like the Lome Container Terminal in Togo and the Doraleh Multi-Purpose Port in Djibouti. The connection and integration of the region have benefited greatly from these efforts. China has signed bilateral airworthiness agreements with 12 African nations, civil aviation transport agreements with 21 African nations, bilateral intergovernmental marine shipping agreements with eight African nations, and civil aviation transport agreements with 21 African nations.

Both China and Africa are currently in a new era of growth. China is adopting a new development paradigm with the former serving as the mainstay and the home economy and foreign involvement providing mutual reinforcement. Africa's development will have greater prospects thanks to China's growth. Africa's economic integration is progressing with the formal establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, opening up additional potential for expansion in China-Africa collaboration. The aims of the Belt and Road Initiative will be increasingly aligned with those of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the development plans of individual African nations as the two parties concentrate on fostering quality development. To construct a China-Africa community with a shared destiny in the new era, they will transform the Belt and Road into a route to peace, prosperity, openness, green development, innovation, and cultural exchanges.

### ***Raising China-Africa Relations to a New Level***

Keeping up with current events and building new, innovative ties are essential to the health of China-Africa relations. At every pivotal time throughout the past 50 years, the two sides have used long-term thinking and have always been successful in identifying fresh points of agreement and

growth-promoting factors. At this new historical juncture, China will follow the principles of sincerity, affinity, good faith, and practical results, uphold the values of shared interests and the greater good, and collaborate with African nations to advance high-quality cooperation and create a China-Africa community of shared future. These policies are guided by *Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era* and *Xi Jinping Thought on Foreign Affairs*, and they are the following.

Building a strong basis for friendship and increasing political trust between both parties. The pace of high-level interactions between China and Africa will be maintained, and the friendly collaboration between their local governments, political parties, and legislative and advisory bodies will grow. By exchanging governance concepts and development expertise, they will strengthen mutual trust and strategic communication. They will fully utilize the beneficial effects of think tanks, the media, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations; develop a new model of multi-dimensional, multi-level, and all-around cultural exchanges; improve people-to-people connectivity; and strengthen the long-standing, unbreakable friendship between China and Africa.

Fostering new forces for developing mutually beneficial collaboration and fostering joint growth. The benefits of China and Africa's complementarity have been more apparent as they move into new developmental phases, and their cooperative efforts are now of better quality, larger significance, and more promising futures. The two parties will aggressively support their respective companies' efforts to maximize the potential for collaboration, foster emerging development factors including the green economy, 5G networks, and e-commerce, and broaden cooperation in strategically important areas. To achieve high-quality and sustainable common development for the benefit of the Chinese and African peoples, they will support the Worldwide Development Initiative and a global community of shared development.

Encouraging deeper international collaboration to create a more just and equitable global order. In order to protect the shared interests of emerging nations and to advance global peace and development, China and Africa are significant forces. The two sides will strongly defend the democratization of international relations while strengthening their strategic communication and cooperation on such matters. They will work together to address the shared problems that mankind faces, including terrorism, poverty alleviation, battling diseases, and climate change. They will cooperate to defend genuine multilateralism, the shared interests of developing nations, the UN-centered international system, the international order anchored by international law, and the fundamental rules governing international relations based on the UN Charter.

China has overcome its long-standing issue with extreme poverty and attained overall moderate prosperity. To make China a modern socialist nation by the time the PRC celebrates its centennial in 2049, it has started a new path.

### III.III Chinese Interventions in Africa

The *Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation* is closely related to Africa's dream of poverty eradication, increased independence, and economic prosperity. Both China and Africa share the same desire of economic growth and higher living conditions. Thus, they share a common destiny and have similar growth goals. Indeed, with common the long-term goal of establishing a more just and equitable international order that facilitates the rapid growth of poorer nations, a successful outcome for South-South cooperation should be founded on unity and solidarity among countries of the South. *South-South cooperation* describes the action of sharing of resources, technology, and expertise between developing nations, commonly referred to as countries of the Global South, nowadays contributing more and more significantly to world development.<sup>161</sup> South-South cooperation provides Africa with protection against the exploitation of affluent, industrialized nations as well as a viable alternative to the North-South trading patterns that have dominated world trade since the colonial era.<sup>162</sup> Thus, the possibility of reversing the increasingly unfavorable effects of globalization is made possible through South-South cooperation. The opportunity for Africa to collaborate with China in better managing globalization for their mutual benefit is the actual significance of the Sino-African relationship in this environment, particularly given China's desire to establish a shared agenda for engagement.

Since its founding in 2000, FOCAC has promoted extensive interaction with Africa. FOCAC might be seen as the formalization of China's ties to Africa that date back to the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Social and development commitments have been significant throughout its extremely wide-ranging collaboration, and within this focus, education and human resources have always been a fundamental component. Within the human resource development package, there has always been a core of scholarships and short-term training, together with the implementation of higher education, which has often been the major focus of the pledges. Secondary only to education, other key components of the FOCAC promises have been capacity building and, more recently,

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<sup>161</sup>Luiz Ramalho, et al. "South-South and Triangular Cooperation Are Important for Achieving the Sdgs." *D+C. Development and Cooperation*, 18 July 2019, <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-are-important-achieving-sdgs>.

<sup>162</sup>Garth Shelton. "The FOCAC Process and Sino-African Strategic Partnership." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, vol. 02, no. 02, 2016, pp. 259–276., <https://doi.org/10.1142/s2377740016500123>.

capacity cooperation. These have, of course, not just been applied to the education sector, but also to other fields including health, the environment, science and technology, and especially infrastructure.

**a) Education**

An essential goal of the Belt and Road Initiative is to increase collaboration and collaborative action among the Belt and Road nations in the field of education, which can help the Initiative attract the talent it needs to succeed. China is prepared to collaborate with the nations bordering the routes to deepen talent-development cooperation, increase people-to-people interactions, and together forge a promising future for education in the area. According to China, a nation's strength, wealth, and happiness all depend on its citizens' access to education. This belief has a fundamental and guiding role to play in the BRI. Educational exchange can be a bridge to stronger people-to-people ties, while the development of talent can support these countries' efforts to coordinate policies, connect their infrastructure, allow unhindered trade, and integrate their economies along the routes. The nations along the routes are highly interdependent, and educational exchange between them benefits all involved.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Higher Education is a key area of interest for China and Africa, with Beijing hosting the inaugural FOCAC Ministerial Conference in October 2000, stipulating scholarships for African students to study in China, sending Chinese teachers to Africa to assist local institutions, opening channels of communication between African and Chinese universities for the purpose of studying both cultures, and establishing an African Human Resources Development Fund specifically for the training of African personnel.<sup>163</sup>

Alternating between China and Africa, Addis Abeba held the second FOCAC Ministerial Conference in 2003, which saw the establishment of a platform for idea exchange between African and Chinese institutions of higher learning, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, the exchange of experience and cooperation in science, the training of 10,000 African personnel in various fields, and the expansion of African academic disciplines and fields of specialization.<sup>164</sup>

During the third FOCAC Summit in Beijing, 2006, Hu Jintao announced eight practical initiatives and actions to advance cooperation between China and Africa in the *Beijing Declaration and Action Plan (2007-2009)*, which included resolutions to encourage more exchanges and closer cooperation between higher education institutions, ensure the efficacy of student exchange programs, decide on mutual accreditation of academic degrees, increase the number of Chinese government

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<sup>163</sup> King, Kenneth. China–Africa Education Cooperation: From FOCAC to Belt and Road. 2019, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2096531119889874>.

<sup>164</sup> "Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Addis Ababa Action Plan." Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Addis Ababa Action Plan(Full Text), 2004, [http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx\\_1/zywj/200909/t20090925\\_7933568.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/200909/t20090925_7933568.htm).

scholarships available to African students, and provide annual training for educational officials, heads, and leadership positions.<sup>165</sup>

At the fourth FOCAC Ministerial Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2009, Jiabao announced eight new measures to strengthen their cooperation. These included the establishment of a platform for idea exchange, exchange of experience and cooperation in science, training of 10.000 African personnel in various fields, exchange of more teachers, creation of new scholarships, and expansion of African academic disciplines and fields of specialization.<sup>166</sup>

The fifth FOCAC Ministerial Conference took place in Beijing in 2012 and announced new initiatives boosting the cooperation in higher education between China and Africa. The African Talents Program was being implemented by both countries and aimed at training 30.000 African professionals in a variety of fields and providing 18.000 government scholarships over the course of the following three years.<sup>167</sup>

In 2015, Johannesburg hosted the Second FOCAC Summit and the Sixth FOCAC Ministerial Conference. The *Johannesburg Declaration and Action Plan (2016-2018)* and its “1+5+10” framework were also announced. This agenda, “1+5+10,” referred to a new kind of strategic, all-encompassing cooperation between China and Africa. They would unite as “1” in the future to support one another; “5” stands for the five major pillars of political equality and mutual trust, promoting win-win economic cooperation, having mutually enriching cultural exchanges, mutual assistance in security, and solidarity and coordination in international affairs; and “10” denotes the ten cooperation plans to be put into action.<sup>168</sup> Due to this program, the Chinese government decided to increase the number of scholarships by offering 2.000-degree opportunities in China, 30.000 government scholarships in Africa, expanding and innovating training methods for African professionals in the domain of technical management and economic development, and training African senior professionals on administration.

The *FOCAC VII Action Plan*, drafted in China in 2018, highlighted the growing importance of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms, providing Africa with 50,000 government scholarships and 50,000 training chances for seminars and workshops, and train more professionals of diverse

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<sup>165</sup> “Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009).” Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009), 2006, [http://zw.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwtd/200611/t20061117\\_6419220.htm](http://zw.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/xwtd/200611/t20061117_6419220.htm).

<sup>166</sup> “Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Sharm el Sheik Action Plan (2010-2012).” Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm el Sheik Action Plan (2010-2012), 2009, [http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx\\_1/zywj/200911/t20091112\\_7933571.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/200911/t20091112_7933571.htm)

<sup>167</sup> “The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Beijing Action Plan (2013-2015)”, 2012, [http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx\\_1/zywj/201207/t20120723\\_8079762.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/201207/t20120723_8079762.htm)

<sup>168</sup> “Declaration and Action Plan of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.” Tralac, Dec. 2015, <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/8656-declaration-of-the-johannesburg-summit-of-the-forum-on-china-africa-cooperation.html>.



disciplines for the continent. Additionally, it is stated that a specific “tailor-made program to train 1,000 high-caliber Africans” will be implemented.<sup>169</sup>

The eighth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC, which is the most recent one, was held in Dakar in 2022, and adopted the *Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024)*.<sup>170</sup> To provide high-quality education for Africans through government grants and training programs, it underlines the will of both China and Africa to intensify their collaboration in technology transfer, young technical training, and capacity building, especially for specialist professionals. On this note, the Chinese government has instituted Luban Workshops: named after Lu Ban, an ancient Chinese woodcraft expert who was born in 507 BC, the Luban Workshop is an institution of vocational education that creates a pool of skilled workers for developing countries, injecting vitality into local economies.<sup>171</sup> In Africa, Luban Workshops and other vocational training initiatives, whose goal is to enhance the professional abilities of the local workforce, are highly commended by the African side, which also values China’s assistance in providing resources, technical direction, teaching staff, and personnel training.

Moreover, in Africa, the two parties will implement the “Future of Africa” China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Plan, launch an “Employment Through Train” scheme for African students in China, and hold an Education Ministers’ Forum to increase their cooperation in areas like employment, vocational training, and social security. China will promote and support Chinese businesses’ efforts to conduct vocational training in African nations, and compel Chinese businesses operating in Africa to create at least 80,000 local employments. China will also build or upgrade schools in Africa and invite 10,000 high-level African professionals to seminars and workshops, and develop experts in pertinent sectors as part of its scholarship initiatives. China and Africa will work together to establish a joint China-Africa R&D lab or center for road engineering, start expert exchange programs, collaborative software development projects, and research initiatives on R&D collaboration, policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation. They will also create new training models in specified African nations and optimize their impact in the socioeconomic situations of the end users.

China will also support new projects on capacity building in areas such as rural revitalization, ICT, fintech, digital economy, e-commerce, cloud computing, big data, and cyberspace security, and Confucius Institutes across the African continent. Finally, the third phase of the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust has begun with success and may be extended for an additional four years.

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<sup>169</sup> Mendes, Lara. “VII FOCAC.” BRICS Policy Center, 5 Nov. 2018, <https://bricspolicycenter.org/en/vii-focac/>.

<sup>170</sup> “FOCAC Dakar Action Plan ‘More Detailed and Wide-Reaching’ than Previous Ones.” CLBrief, 6 Dec. 2021, <https://www.clbrief.com/focac-dakar-action-plan-more-detailed-and-wide-reaching-than-previous-ones/>.

<sup>171</sup> Xuanmin, Li. “China’s Luban Workshop Creates a Pool of Skilled Workers for Developing Countries, Injects Vitality into Local Economies.” Global Times, 2022, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1273435.shtml>.

## **b) Infrastructures**

China is funding a large portion of the infrastructure improvements on the African continent, and during FOCAC VIII, a new action plan was drafted.<sup>172</sup> The Plan's section on infrastructure development starts with a premise that both China and Africa acknowledge the ongoing infrastructure deficit in the African continent and commit to closing it over the following three years.<sup>173</sup> To help African nations consistently enhance their infrastructure, the two sides will intensify their mutually beneficial collaboration in the planning, design, building, operation, maintenance, and good governance of infrastructure projects. China will continue to support Chinese enterprises in improving and developing Africa's infrastructure with cutting-edge equipment, technologies, standards, and services, promoting connectivity, and offering creative financing. Ten connectivity aid projects for Africa will be carried out by China, and China and Africa will encourage Chinese businesses to carry out connectivity and other projects in Africa, including those related to the Pan-African E-network, the Single African Air-Transport Market, the Integrated High Speed Train Network, and Cyber Security.

Chinese businesses that are competent are encouraged and supported to invest in African ports, airports, and airlines, and both parties favor the introduction of further flights and shipping services linking China and Africa by Chinese and African airlines and maritime firms. China and Africa will increase their efforts to collaborate with African partners, hire more locals at all levels, and utilize more regionally produced materials and manufactured goods when planning and implementing infrastructure projects. They will also train more African professionals, including women, in all fields related to the infrastructure connectivity initiative in Africa. China will also establish an Africa-China civil aviation academy to meet ICAO standards and adhere to ICAO's recommended practices. In recognition of the strategic and wide-ranging effects of ICT on economic and social development, the two sides will increase communication and cooperation, encouraging and supporting their companies' involvement in the construction of ICT infrastructure, including the optical fiber cable backbone network, cross-border connectivity, international undersea cable, new-generation mobile network, and data center.

China and Africa are partnering to jointly develop the logistical infrastructure of Africa and offer dependable and efficient logistics services for China-Africa commerce. The two sides will advance technical cooperation and information sharing, align infrastructure standards for transportation, and encourage mutual recognition of transportation technology and management personnel's credentials. Additionally, they will coordinate their views on issues of mutual interest in

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<sup>172</sup> "FOCAC Dakar Action Plan 'More Detailed and Wide-Reaching' than Previous Ones." *CLBrief*, 6 Dec. 2021, <https://www.clbrief.com/focac-dakar-action-plan-more-detailed-and-wide-reaching-than-previous-ones/>.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

the World Radiocommunication Conference and improve communication and cooperation in the area of radio spectrum management under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union. China's involvement in building infrastructure in Africa is seen as a move to increase Chinese political sway throughout the continent, but many of the projects have World Bank guarantees and the rollout is not expected to slow down given how much Africa needs ports, railroads, and roads. Chinese companies are making up an increasing share of all contracts won, even within the constraints of those backed by the World Bank.

c) **Maritime Silk Road**

In an effort to enhance marine cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, China has proposed three ocean-based *Blue Economic Passages* that connect Asia with Africa, Oceania, Europe, and beyond. The suggestion was a part of the document titled *Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative*, which was made public by the State Oceanic Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission.<sup>174</sup> The document states that China is willing to build open, inclusive cooperation platforms and engage in all-encompassing, broad-based maritime cooperation with nations along the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, fostering mutually advantageous “*blue partnerships*” and creating a “*blue engine*” for sustainable development.<sup>175</sup>

The China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage will connect with the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridors as it travels westward via the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. Nations along the 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road are requested to concentrate on “sharing blue space and growing the blue economy,” which will address concerns such shared oceanic governance, marine environment preservation, marine interconnectivity, and maritime security. China will uphold the values of the Silk Road: peace and cooperation, inclusivity and openness, mutual learning and benefits, putting aside differences and fostering consensus. Additionally, Beijing pledged to uphold international standards and market norms while highlighting the importance of businesses. Indeed, China has supported the start of a protracted series of discussions and initiatives via the Maritime Silk Road, which have reached African markets through the Suez Canal.<sup>176</sup> The route has been proposed as a tool for economic development to aid in both its own growth and the modernization of ports and infrastructure. By implementing this, China has increased its foreign commerce by five times, focusing on energy supplies while also buying metals and necessities,

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<sup>174</sup> 戴甜. “China Proposes 'Blue Economic Passages' for Maritime.” *Chinadaily.com.cn*, 21 June 2017, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-06/21/content\\_29825517.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-06/21/content_29825517.htm).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Maria, Rosolini. “The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.” *Università Ca 'Foscari Venezia*, 2016.

including food. To meet domestic demand, significant amounts of oil, minerals, and natural gas were imported from other parts of the world, especially Africa.

The two parties continue to actively seek mutually beneficial collaboration in this area as they are aware of the huge potential for marine economic cooperation. China will continue to offer financial and technical assistance through the International Marine Organization's technical cooperation program, helping African nations enhance their ability to train shipping experts and advance the sustainable growth of maritime commerce. Both actors will also improve communication and collaboration across marine ports.<sup>177</sup> China will help African nations in expanding IT development and application in African sea ports, give technical assistance and support for pertinent programs for the marine industries of African nations, and intensify cooperation with Africa on the blue economy. Moreover, China will work with African nations in areas like maritime scientific research, ocean observation and monitoring, marine eco-environmental protection, and Antarctic research and logistics support. By doing this, China will advance the construction of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road and make positive contributions to global marine governance. Additionally, on topics including offshore aquaculture, marine transportation, shipbuilding and repair, offshore wind power, maritime information services, and maritime security, the two sides will keep advancing their collaboration and exchanges.

Finally, China similarly assists Africa in boosting capacity building in maritime law enforcement and environmental protection, developing management ability for marine fisheries, and establishing a secure environment for the collaboration and development of marine resources. The two parties will support the development of a system for information exchange, improve information transmission, and work together to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

### **III.IV Case Study: Kenya**

To examine concrete examples of the Sino-African partnership in the fields of education, infrastructure, and maritime cooperation, this research will present a case study on China's and Kenya's engagement in their strong bilateral relation. China-Nairobi diplomatic relations date back to 1963, when China opened its first embassy in Nairobi.<sup>178</sup> Since then, high-profile visits and agreements have been made to promote trade, investments, and technological exchange. Chinese president Mwai Kibaki and his successor Uhuru Kenyatta have implemented a *Look East policy*, deliberately altering the investment climate to favor the Sino-Indian-Persian triumvirate rather than

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Hilary Patroba. *China in Kenya: Addressing Counterfeit Goods and Construction Sector Imbalances*. South African Institute of International Affairs, 2012.

its “traditional” partners.<sup>179</sup> In 2006, China signed an oil exploration contract with Kenya. However, due to financial difficulties, concerns about the legality of its tender process, and allegations that Kenya’s Mombasa port was used as collateral, the most ambitious collaboration—the Standard Gauge Rail—has drawn even more controversy on China’s debt trap diplomacy strategy. In 2007, the Jinchuan Group became the first Chinese company to enter Kenya’s mining sector, and in 2011, Kenya and China signed 10 agreements encompassing large-scale collaborations in telecommunications, energy, tourism, healthcare, trade, construction, and education.<sup>180</sup>

On an economic level, Kenya’s trade deficit with China has reached \$7 billion due to the significant investment, trade deals, and developmental assistance it receives from Beijing. Chinese products make up the vast majority of counterfeit goods in Kenya, resulting in an annual net loss of \$368 million in trade.<sup>181</sup> China has also been substantially increasing its infrastructure loans and investments over the past couple of decades, with Kenya’s two most important infrastructure projects, the Nairobi-Thika Highway Project and the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, part of China’s One Belt, One Road initiative.<sup>182</sup> Concern over debt trap diplomacy and the potential collateralization of Kenya’s Mombasa port has been particularly raised in the latter case. In addition to these infrastructure initiatives, Kenya has been utilizing loans from Chinese-affiliated institutions to expand its agricultural, construction, healthcare, and educational industries.

#### a) **Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway**

The Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) is a standard-gauge railway in Kenya that connects Nairobi, the nation’s capital and largest city, with Mombasa, an important city on the Indian Ocean. In 2009, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda established the Northern Corridor Initiative to develop a sustainable system of freight transportation.<sup>183</sup> The China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) was asked to do a feasibility study for the project, conditionally “free of charge,” in exchange for a future construction contract. The Kenyan government awarded the CRBC the construction contract in 2012, along with the civil work and equipment delivery.<sup>184</sup> The financing agreement to

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<sup>179</sup> “Kenya: Want Growth? Look East.” *African Business*, 8 Mar. 2021, <https://african.business/2011/12/trade-investment/kenya-want-growth-look-east/>.

<sup>180</sup> Hilary Patroba. *China in Kenya: Addressing Counterfeit Goods and Construction Sector Imbalances*. South African Institute of International Affairs, 2012.

<sup>181</sup> Anurag Tripathi, et al. “China’s Pivot to Kenya: Challenges for Kenya behind COVID and BRI for Its ‘Vision 2030.’” *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2021, pp. 71–91., <https://doi.org/10.12724/ajss.58.4>.

<sup>182</sup> Karuti Kanyinga, et al. *The Oxford Handbook of Kenyan Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

<sup>183</sup> <sup>183</sup> Deborah Bräutigam, et al. How Africa borrows from China: And why Mombasa Port is not collateral for Kenya’s Standard Gauge Railway. China Africa Research Initiative Working Paper No. 52. Washington, DC: School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2022.

<sup>184</sup> Zhengli Huang. “Kenya Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).” *The People’s Map of Global China*, 31 Aug. 2022, <https://thepeoplesmap.net/project/kenya-standard-gauge-railway-sgr/>.

finance Phase I was signed by the two countries during Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's official visit to Kenya (Mombasa–Nairobi SGR). 90% of the project would be financed by China Ex-Im Bank, while CRBC was named as the principal contractor.

The Port of Mombasa is connected to Nairobi through Phase I of the SGR project. The project was supposed to take five years to complete, but construction started in October 2014 and was finished in two and a half years, partly because of pressure to complete the project before the 2017 election. Uhuru Kenyatta, the president of Kenya from 2013 until 2022, launched the passenger services between Mombasa and Nairobi in May 2017,<sup>185</sup> and on June 1, 2017, Madaraka Day, the fifty-fourth anniversary of Kenya achieving independence from the British colonial authority, the passenger train, known as the “Madaraka Express,” was opened to fare-paying passengers. Kenya Railways Corporation (KRC) and China Communications Construction Company Limited (CCCC) signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014 for a joint feasibility study for Phase II, which would link Nairobi to the Kenya-Uganda border and complete the master railway plan to advance Kenya's regional economic integration.

The Nairobi-Naivasha part of the project (Phase IIA) will get a 1.5 billion USD loan from China Ex-Im Bank, which will cover 85% of the funding needs. The parent firm of CRBC, CCCC, received the construction contract and construction started in October 2016 and was finished three years later. The Africa Star Railway Operation Company (Afristar), which was granted the concession to run the SGR for five years, was formed in 2017 when the CCCC reorganized its operational division. The operational agreement states that starting in 2022, Afristar would progressively stop operating the SGR and turn it over to KRC, along with the freight and passenger services.<sup>186</sup> As regional agreements to finish the network started to break down, hopes of extending the SGR to Kisumu and Malaba began to dwindle.

In response to these obstacles, the governments of Kenya and Uganda decided to renovate the narrow-gauge railways that were established in each country under colonial rule. Construction of SGR Phase I employed more than 40,000 local people and included more than 1,000 local businesses, while Phase IIA involved 157 local businesses in subcontracting and collaboration and produced close to 25,000 jobs. The SGR passenger train offers an on-time, reasonably priced, and practical alternative to the gridlock on the roads and in the air between Nairobi and Mombasa. There have been differing local reactions to the SGR, with many voicing worries over Kenya's mounting external

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<sup>185</sup> Yuan Wang, and Uwe Wissenbach. “Clientelism at Work? A Case Study of Kenyan Standard Gauge Railway Project.” *Economic History of Developing Regions*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2019, pp. 280–299., <https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2019.1678026>.

<sup>186</sup> Shem Oirere. “Kenya Railways to End SGR Contract with Afristar.” *International Railway Journal*, 12 Mar. 2021, <https://www.railjournal.com/africa/kenya-railways-to-end-sgr-contract-with-afristar/>.

debt.<sup>187</sup> World Bank economists cautioned the Kenyan government against obtaining excessive loans from China for SGR Phase I construction, but Chinese authorities responded by downplaying the loans and claiming that the SGR will boost Kenya's economic growth.

The Kenyan Treasury estimates that in 2021, debt owed to Chinese governments and banks will account for 20.5% of Kenya's total external debt (3.9 trillion KES or 32.76 billion USD). Concerns about the sustainability of debt have also been prompted by other rumors surrounding the SGR loan deal, such as claims that the critical national asset Mombasa Port was used as collateral to obtain the loan.<sup>188</sup> The persistent rumors and discussions around the loan arrangement highlight the project's complicated geopolitical context, the lack of openness in decision-making, and the lack of faith Kenyans have in their government.

#### **b) Luban Workshops**

As previously mentioned, Luban Workshops are facility for vocational education that develop a labor pool of skilled people for emerging nations, boosting their local economies. Africa, which also values China's assistance in providing resources, technical direction, teaching staff, and personnel training, highly commends Luban Workshops and other vocational training initiatives in countries like Kenya, whose objective is to improve the professional abilities of the local workforce.

The inaugural Luban Workshop in Kenya was held at Machakos University and opened on Saturday, December 14th, 2019. The Vice-Chancellor of Machakos University noted during the opening that the Luban Workshop, which was built with the cooperation of the Tianjin City Vocational College, provided Kenyan students with the chance to enroll in top-notch and cutting-edge cloud computing courses. She emphasized that the workshop would encourage original research in the field of ICT and associated human involvement as well as further foster contact through top-notch videoconferencing services.<sup>189</sup> Speaking about the significance of the workshop, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology stated that the facility set up would aid in fostering collaboration in cyberspace. He stressed the importance of cloud computing and information security, which are at the center of the event. The project, according to the minister-counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Kenya, was designed to give college students high-end professional and technical skill training to assist them meet the demands of the developing global

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<sup>187</sup> Dominic Omondi, et al. "World Bank Warns Kenya over Rising Appetite for Chinese Loans." *Business Daily*, 24 Mar. 2016, <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/markets/World-Bank-warns-Kenya-over-rising-appetite-for-Chinese-loans/539552-3132704-format-xhtml-n1fiu9z/index.html>.

<sup>188</sup> Deborah Bräutigam, et al. How Africa borrows from China: And why Mombasa Port is not collateral for Kenya's Standard Gauge Railway. China Africa Research Initiative Working Paper No. 52. Washington, DC: School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2022.

<sup>189</sup> "Luban Workshop Launched at Machakos University." Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, <https://dvc-ril.mksu.ac.ke/luban-workshop-launched-at-machakos-university/>.

market. Fostering top-tier ICT talent for the nation will open a new chapter that will allow the two nations to further develop their bilateral collaboration in vocational education and broaden intercultural contact in the years to come.

The Kenya Luban Workshop was constructed using the EPIP instruction model and the worldwide standards for vocational education established by China (engineering, practice, innovation and project).<sup>190</sup> Additionally, it has been separated into four sections that are designated as teaching areas for big data, intelligent cities, cloud network integration, and online learning. The Kenya Luban Workshop will offer four years of undergraduate cloud computing and information security management instruction to local students, in addition to holding technology training for neighborhood businesses. Giving local children access to a formal education and creating technological talent would support Kenya's economic and social development. The deputy director of the Tianjin Municipal Education Commission emphasized that coordinated efforts should be made by Tianjin City Vocational College, Machakos University, and Huawei to make the Kenya Luban Workshop the most advanced one in Africa,<sup>191</sup> leveraging its radiating effect in leading the development of neighboring countries, giving Kenya and even the entire continent a reference and applicable model in the cultivation of ICT talents, and bringing more concrete benefits to local businesses. Thus, the hope is for the workshop to serve as a successful example of how businesses and educational institutions in the two nations can work together, creating a new stage for Sino-foreign vocational education cooperation.

### **c) Mombasa and Lamu: strategic points for the Maritime Silk Road**

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) has particular promise for Africa since it “prepares for more prominent transport network, provincial engagement, interchange and advancement.”<sup>192</sup> Kenya is included in the project as a vital maritime pivot point, reflecting Africa. Since ports are located along the eastern coast of Africa, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa along the maritime route, the project is opening up a variety of pathways for the flow of products into and within the continent. Indeed, two ports in Kenya, namely Mombasa and Lamu, are crucial gateways to increase commerce and communication with the African continent, and the MSR is positioned to become a route connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa across the sea.<sup>193</sup> Among the three nations

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<sup>190</sup> “Luban Workshop Opens in Kenya.” Regional.chinadaily.com, 25 Dec. 2019, [http://regional.chinadaily.com.cn/tianjin/lubanws/2019-12/25/c\\_744238.htm](http://regional.chinadaily.com.cn/tianjin/lubanws/2019-12/25/c_744238.htm).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Adefolake Adeyeye, “China-Africa Relations: Musings from the Belt and Road Initiative,” NTU-SBF Center for African Studies, March 13, 2017, <https://www.ntusbfcas.com/african-business-insights/content/china-africa-relations-musings-from-the-belt-and-road-initiative>.

<sup>193</sup> Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Colin Flint, “The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” *Geopolitics*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2017, pp. 223–245.



included in the African part of the MSR, together with Djibouti and Egypt, Kenya stands out. This is because, in the long run, being Kenya on the coast of East Africa, it will connect Southeast Asia, Oceania, North Africa, and even the Mediterranean.

Indeed, as formerly stated in the chapter, Chinese investment is mostly focused on building infrastructure, particularly regional rail, highway, and sea and aviation networks. Evidently, such investments and projects may support the BRI's implementation as well as Africa's regeneration and growth. A significant part of the MSR will involve the construction of sizable infrastructure projects like high-speed rail lines, highways and truck roads, air and seaports, utility stations and power grids, oil and natural gas pipelines, and telecommunication networks, though a detailed project list has not yet been made public.<sup>194</sup>

Kenya and China's coordination under the MSR project is currently seen as a model of Sino-African cooperation. With an estimated foreign investment of US\$25 billion on railway modernization, US\$4 billion on building a pipeline from Kenya to South Sudan, and US\$27 billion on developing the Lamu port and related infrastructure, Kenya is most significantly impacted by the MSR in terms of infrastructure improvement.<sup>195</sup> Kenya cannot raise the cash on its own, therefore the BRI and its partner financial institutions have stepped in to assist. When these projects are completely operational, they would considerably benefit oil export from Uganda and South Sudan, whose conflicts with the Republic of Sudan have made it difficult to ship their oil to China and other nations during the height of South Sudan's oil output. Before the wars, China imported 5% of its oil, but that percentage is now less than 2%.<sup>196</sup> Due to the ongoing conflicts, China's investment in Sudanese oil is unlikely to pay off. As a result, the Kenyan route provides South Sudan with a chance to transfer oil to China without being thwarted by the Republic of Sudan, creating a win-win situation for both countries. The discovery of oil fields in northern Uganda has also broadened China's sources of oil imports. Uganda may export its oil through Kenya since it is a landlocked nation. China can eventually push the MSR into the African interior thanks to the safe Kenyan route. In addition, China can use Mombasa as a strategic stopping point in the case of any security issues near the Horn of Africa.

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<sup>194</sup> Christopher Len, "China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Energy Security and SLOC Access," *Maritime Affairs*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–18.

<sup>195</sup> Raphael ZiroMwatela and Zhao Changfeng, "Africa in China's 'Belt and Road' Initiative: A Critical Analysis," December 12, 2016, <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2021%20Issue12/Version-1/B2112011021.pdf>.

<sup>196</sup> "Nansudan Neizhan Zaiqi, Zhongshiyou Henshoushang [Civil War Recaptures South Sudan; CNPC Suffers Greatly]," Sina News, July 13, 2016, [http://gd.sina.com.cn/energy/int/2016-07-13/nypd-ifxtwiht3718993.shtml?from%gd\\_cnxh](http://gd.sina.com.cn/energy/int/2016-07-13/nypd-ifxtwiht3718993.shtml?from%gd_cnxh).

### III.V Is China Colonizing Africa?

Not simply China and Africa alone define and shape ties between them; the West also has an impact. Indeed, many are interested in China's growing influence in the African continent: in particular, China's economic involvement and investments in Africa have drawn criticism. While some are optimistic, others are worried about what China's true interests are. Chinese involvement appears to be intended to emulate what western nations did when they plundered African resources decades ago. This has led to question whether China is a new colonizer, an exploiter or a partner in development.

On the other hand, European governments engaged in colonialism in Africa, but went far further by enforcing cultural standards, engaging in proxy wars, and trading in slaves. While Western and Chinese international institutions—two potent forces that affect global economic governance—might ultimately collaborate more closely, the former are interested in engaging in intense self-reflection in light of China's very successful expansion into Africa. Following this, a large number of African and Asian nations formed the "Non-Aligned Movement," an alliance opposed to colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism. This group declined to affiliate with either of the two military blocs and instead concentrated on economic development cooperation. When compared to the West, China's engagement in Africa is characterized by a comparatively high ratio of foreign direct investments to official development assistance.

In the 1940s and 1950s, independence movements in Africa confronted colonialism. The efforts to create economically autonomous nation states, however, soon ran into problems. Many of these nations had underdeveloped infrastructures, insufficient governmental institutions left over from colonial rule, unqualified human resources, and weak language or ethnic ties. After a time of enthusiasm and defiance against the old colonial rulers, political experimentation, and consolidation, new and mostly inexperienced government administrations frequently found themselves drifting due to issues with the budget, security, and national cohesiveness. Power relations between former colonizers and newly-created administrations took on new, but not necessarily less compelling, forms of exploitation when many of these administrations started looking again to European countries for political and financial support—a phenomenon that would later be known as *neocolonialism*. All features of traditional colonialism are included in this neo-colonialism, with the exception of conquering foreign territories because all African governments are still legally sovereign. In this form of neo-colonialism, the exploiting power maintains control over the economic and political systems of weaker governments and takes use of their wealth under the guise of liberal capitalism. Where would modern-day China fit into this scenario if the previous definitions were to be accepted? When China deals with Africa, is it a colonial power? Has China bypassed the colonial phase and honed its

abilities to influence politics and the economy without engaging in any armed occupation? Or has China introduced a new framework for collaboration that rejects all the salient characteristics of earlier West-African relations? There are many other points of view, and numerous scholars, politicians, diplomats, and journalists align themselves with one of the two opposing camps: either for or against China. Many people believe that the Chinese venture is, in fact, a form of benevolent colonialism. Others have serious reservations about the widespread inclination to use the accusation of colonialism as a tool to reinterpret classical colonialism while harshly judging the Chinese.

However, accusations of neocolonialism are more difficult to evaluate because China's interactions do in fact suit many of the defining characteristics of the term. According to early 2020 statistics, more Chinese nationals have arrived in Africa in the last ten years than Europeans have in the previous 400. Chinese workers from state-owned businesses were the first to come, but more and more now go alone or remain after completing contract employment. Civilian riots against Chinese firms and employees have occurred in several African nations. These protests accuse Chinese people of unfair competition, which has cost them commercial opportunities, and of denying them access to jobs that are only open to Chinese citizens. On their side, African diplomats cite a variety of Chinese behaviors that reveal how the Chinese government views and regards representatives of the African governments as subordinate partners<sup>197</sup>.

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<sup>197</sup> Simone Raudino. *Development Aid and Sustainable Economic Growth in Africa: The Limits of Western and Chinese Engagements*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

## **Chapter IV: Benefits and Drawbacks of the China-Africa Cooperation**

As a rising power, the PRC has attracted the attention of nations across the world, like the ones in the African continent, which are looking to collaborate with it in a variety of areas. There are both benefits and drawbacks to such a partnership. On the one hand, China invests heavily in Africa; several Chinese-funded businesses and industries are present there, providing employment for locals. Additionally, Chinese nationals reside in Africa, and the number of African expats in China is increasing thanks to students who are awarded training scholarships paid for by the People's Republic. Young people, especially those from Africa, where many lack access to standard educational facilities, benefit greatly from this since it gives them the chance to study abroad, pursue further education, and eventually land renowned jobs. Additionally, by forming an alliance with China, Africa may raise its profile on the world stage.

On the other hand, the reason China keeps stepping up its contacts with an area like Africa that is still mostly underdeveloped is obvious: the continent's natural riches, which appeal to countries other than China as well. A further incentive is the potential to increase political power and the ability to rely on African nations' backing in international affairs. It is well known that China is not a democratic country and that it frequently commits human rights abuses. Critiques and even sanctions can be a major obstacle to China's desire to maintain and strengthen its authority. Beijing is conscious of the need for help, if not from Europe, then from other nations, to continue on its path to grandeur.

Another major factor that most likely forms the foundation of this partnership is that the entirety of Europe and many other nations view Africa as a source of issues, a region that suffers from excruciatingly high levels of poverty, and one that requires humanitarian aid, food transports, preferential loans to be extended to various states, among other forms of support. While China invested in the creation of industrial businesses, the growth of mutual commerce, and local agriculture, pushing Africa towards development and innovation, Europe and the US continued to give humanitarian help solely, making the continent remain in a state of inferiority. Consequently, Chinese investment became crucial because of Western nations and agencies reluctance to engage extensively in African infrastructure out of concern that the profits would not be sufficient to cover the investment risks. Nevertheless, despite the size of the Chinese investments for infrastructure, one unusual, concerning feature is that, apparently, they were granted without conditions. This triggers worries of Chinese economic imperialism based on the principle of debt-trap diplomacy relationships.

China and Africa have established an authentic connection. But are there more justifications for China's cooperation with African nations? Why does China benefit from working with the nations in the area? This fourth and last chapter will examine the advantages and disadvantages of China's

influence on the African nations, and conclude by analyzing what to expect from the Sino-African relationship at the geopolitical level.

**a) Advantages for Africa**

Beijing views the African continent as one that presents potential.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, Africa is rich in iron ore, copper, cobalt, and oil, which serve as a market for Chinese construction firms and manufacturers, the very same investments through which China is operating in the continent. Indeed, China used these African resources also in companies that gradually opened in the continent, more specifically in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Nigeria, while the first auto manufacturing facility will shortly start operations in Cameroon. Also the infrastructure sector has been fueled by Chinese capital: Kenya's greatest infrastructure project in the previous 50 years, the railroad from Nairobi to Mombasa, as previously discussed, would not have been possible without the re-investment of African natural resources, supported by the Chinese expertise. Moreover, the price of commodities like copper, aluminum, and other metals has soared due to China's rising need for minerals and other extractives. The demand has turned around the long-term price drop providing an economic and financial boost for African countries.

Diplomatically wise, bilateral cooperation is growing strong. Hundreds of African representatives and politicians visit China on a daily basis for both official and unofficial reasons, with the majority of students from Africa receiving scholarships from the Chinese government to study in China. Working with a nation as powerful and fast rising as China gives African governments a more distinguished position in the international community, and the BRI has bolstered the continent's strategic importance on the world stage, being included in such an influential country's foreign policy planning in a bid to secure support for competing worldviews on the international order.

On a financial level, Africa is weighed down by debt. Traditional donors had promised to reduce part of this debt, but they only agreed to do so if African countries implemented strict fiscal policies. China, on the other hand, has promised to pay off \$1.2 billion in debt owed by Africa's least developed and heavily indebted nations. Thanks to the size of the investment, the local state economies may begin to gradually expand. As a result, there are more employment and as time passes, poverty levels will decrease.

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<sup>198</sup> Dreher, Axel, et al. "Apples and Dragon Fruits: The Determinants of Aid and Other Forms of State Financing from China to Africa". *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 62(1), pp. 182–194, 2018.

Also trade between China and Africa has grown over the years, with China becoming Africa's second-largest commercial partner behind the United States, however there is still opportunity for development. Africa must maintain strong growth rates and expand commerce, especially in the export sector, to advance its economy.

#### **b) Advantages for China**

Complementarily, the following important factors are what motivate China's engagement with Africa. First and foremost, as aforementioned, China needs the resources that the continent has to offer, especially crude oil and gas, precious metals, aluminum, copper, and iron ore, to maintain its rising industrial base and fuel its modern, developing economy.

Second, the people of Africa are considered a potential market for Chinese goods. Chinese economy is primarily dependent on the industrial sector, but it also needs a fresh, reliable consumer market to support its rapid economic expansion.

Thirdly, there were many years of monopolies and protection for African producers and other businesses. Economic reform in African nations opened the way to increasing economic activity from other actors outside by liberalizing the protected market. Many businesses that were previously barred from the market, notably Chinese businesses, are now interested in the new markets.

Fourthly, in order to complete the transition from state-owned companies, the privatization of publicly held firms in China is required. To do this, fresh investment prospects outside of China must be scouted. Consequently, the privatized businesses had to speed up their entry into global markets like Africa, and Chinese businesses are prepared to look for possibilities abroad thanks to support from China Ex-Im Bank.

Last but not least, China seeks to present the image of a global superpower by increasing its footprint in Africa. Indeed, China aims to show that it can compete with the United States and other nations in Europe on the global stage by expanding outside of its area, following the theoretical principle of Chinese Exceptionalism explained in Chapter II. Given the investment portfolio of Chinese state-owned and private companies throughout Africa and elsewhere in the world, it is obvious that this argument has gained popularity. Inferentially, the US has been compelled to acknowledge China's vast economic might and global political sway.

But why does China still make such a big effort to improve ties with Africa? The economic justifications listed above assist nations in achieving their development objectives. However, there is undoubtedly a political component to this cooperation as well. Clearly, China wants to increase its international power, and Africa is the region on which it is concentrating its efforts. Moreover, China

is steadily putting down military bases there, and investing a lot in many types of engagement with Africa because it wants to enhance and solidify its influence. In return, African governments are required to persistently back them on the international scene. For instance, African nations opted not to voice their opinions after the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, support China in its dispute against Taiwan, and ignore and deny the human rights violations notoriously committed by China, following the principle of non-interference.<sup>199</sup>

### c) Disadvantages for Africa

Many argue that, instead of helping them, China has actually taken over the economies of the African nations. Moreover, allegations of debt-trap diplomacy relations between the two parties have caused the rage of the West, which perceive China's BRI as a plan to lure poor, developing countries into agreeing unsustainable loans to pursue infrastructure projects so that, when they experience financial difficulty, Beijing can seize the asset, thereby extending its strategic or military reach. Furthermore, there is a lot of discussion about mistreating local workers and abusing the labor force. Chinese corporations also do not keep an eye on how environmental standards are being followed, they take part in corruption schemes, and they tolerate many breaches of the rights of African employees. Overall, they are willing to use all means necessary to boost their profits while collaborating with authoritarian regimes, tolerating a lack of democracy, and violating human rights.<sup>200</sup> Undoubtedly African states gain a more distinguished place in the international world by cooperating with a country as strong and rapidly developing as China, but following the principle of non-interference does not entirely enhance Africa's reputation.<sup>201</sup>

Moreover, while new jobs are being produced across Africa as a result of various Chinese industries, one should not have any illusions as to who they are meant for. Indeed, a million Chinese citizens have relocated to Africa over the past ten years to occupy the majority of the newly generated posts. Furthermore, the inexpensive Chinese imports that have flooded the continent have proven to be an insurmountable rival for regional small enterprises, who already faced a challenging scenario without this rival. As a result, the expanding Chinese influence cost the African economy some 75,000 jobs.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Thompson Ayodele, and Olusegun Sotola. China in Africa: An Evaluation of Chinese Investment. *Initiative for Public Policy Analysis*, pp. 1–20, 2014.

<sup>200</sup> Scarlett Cornelissen, et al. *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century*, pp. 21–51. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>201</sup> Oyejide Ademola, et al. China-Africa Trade Relations: Insights from AERC Scoping Studies. In: *The Power of the Chinese Dragon*, pp. 69–97, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

<sup>202</sup> Seifudein Adem. "China's Diplomacy in Eastern and Southern Africa", pp. 27–87. London: Routledge, 2016.

As already mentioned in Chapter III, Chinese actions in Africa have long been criticized in the West as exploitative, and occasionally the term “neo-colonial” is used to characterize them. It should be made clear while discussing exploitation that while Chinese labor is seen as being inexpensive, labor in Ethiopia is even less expensive. If a Chinese employee makes \$500 per month, a local Ethiopian employee will make \$50 in that same role.<sup>203</sup> Chinese businesses are thus attempting to fill lower-level roles with Ethiopians. The employees working for the investment corporations are not treated with respect in addition to the fact that the labor is inexpensive. Children also work very hard and for meager pay because of the extremely poor living standards that are the norm, and everyone is eager to try to improve their lot in life. Chinese businesses do in reality frequently profit from the abuse of underage labor. Growing tensions exist between China and Africa over this subject.<sup>204</sup>

#### **d) Disadvantages for China**

As a result of the collapsed economies of the borrowing nations, which left the Asian superpower with enormous amounts of piled-up loans, it can be claimed that China is slipping into its own debt trap.<sup>205</sup> The country’s banks have dramatically decreased lending to low-income countries under its flagship BRI. With the BRI, China made over USD 1 trillion in high-interest loans to roughly 150 developing and least developed nations, making it the largest official creditor in the world for the first time. However, the nation is experiencing harsh lessons as a result of the borrowing nations’ currency problems and inability to repay Chinese debts. Compared to barely 5% in 2010, about 60% of China’s foreign loans are now owned by nations deemed to be in financial difficulty.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, Chinese organizations frequently make substantial payments to politicians and military leaders in the borrowing nations to secure these BRI projects; as a result, the specifics of these loans are kept a secret. International credit rating firms are therefore unable to evaluate the creditworthiness of the borrowing nations. Consequently, the Chinese organizations backing the BRI projects were the first to be caught off guard when the economies of these borrowing countries began to collapse. It is notable that by mid-2022, about 70% of the borrowing nations under BRI were in default, but in 2014,

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<sup>203</sup> Azer Binnatli. “Advantages and Disadvantages of the Contemporary Relationship between China and Africa.” *Historia i Polityka*, vol. no. 28 (35), 2019, p. 37., <https://doi.org/10.12775/hip.2019.013>.

<sup>204</sup> Miria Pigato, Wenxia Tang. *China and Africa: Expanding Economic Ties in an Evolving Global Context*, Washington DC: World Bank, vol. 2, pp. 5–20, 2015.

<sup>205</sup> “China Falls into Its Own Debt Trap as Loans under Belt and Road Initiative Pile Up.” *The Economic Times*, 3 Oct. 2022, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/china-falls-into-its-own-debt-trap-as-loans-under-belt-and-road-initiative-pile-up/articleshow/94621452.cms>.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*



just 10% of them experienced any financial issues.<sup>207</sup> China is responsible for almost 40% of the debt that the developing nations owe. Emerging economies have suffered also due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the crisis between Russia and Ukraine that followed. Now China is expected to see greater issues as nations struggle to pay their debts. Unfortunately, China's plan to maintain the projects in which it had invested as collateral is also failing. The projects are either non-commercially viable or have been put on hold.

Concerns over the unsustainable BRI loans have been expressed by several African nations. Zambia has already canceled its foreign loans, the majority of which are Chinese ones, in order to stop making its financial problems worse. This implies that 14 BRI projects are cancelled. Zambia acquired a USD 1.3 billion financial loan from the IMF in 2022.<sup>208</sup> The loan has a five-and-a-half-year grace period and a 10-year ultimate maturity. Zambia has explicitly said that it will fully abandon 12 planned projects, half of which were anticipated to be sponsored by China Ex-Im Bank, as well as one by ICBC for a university and another by Jiangxi Corporation for a dual highway from the capital. The government also revoked 20 of the outstanding loan amounts, some of which were for current projects and others for brand-new ones. Such cancellations are not unprecedented for Zambia, but compared to non-Chinese private creditors, Chinese partners account for approximately 30% of Zambia's debt. More than one-fourth of all foreign loans to distressed African nations with significant debt are from China. Estimates place China's overall loans to African nations at about US\$140 billion. Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Cameroon are among the top recipients of Chinese loans. Many people criticize China's debt trap approach, which they claim is being used to seize control of crucial infrastructure in other nations and strengthen its military presence.

In the meantime, Chinese policymakers are talking about a more conservative program, dubbed *Belt and Road 2.0* in internal discussions, that would more rigorously evaluate new projects for financing.<sup>209</sup> This comes after nearly a decade of pressuring Chinese banks to be generous with loans. They have also changed their minds about renegotiating debt and taking some losses on loans, which they had previously refused to do. The Belt and Road Initiative has grown in significance to Xi Jinping's policy as China becomes more cut off from the rest of the world. Beijing anticipates that the Belt and Road 2.0 will become more sustainable.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Sara Cristaldi. "Belt & Road 2.0: Questione Di Governance?" *ISPI*, 24 June 2021, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/belt-road-20-questione-di-governance-23300>.

e) **What to expect in the near future**

In a bigger geopolitical scheme, the Chinese dream of achieving the *Reunification* (海峡两岸统一) of the country by 2049, the centennial of the founding of the PRC, together with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is causing alarming reactions on the international scene.<sup>210</sup> As analyzed throughout this research, the geopolitical scheme behind the BRI aims at extending the Chinese sphere of influence by fostering new norms of international cooperation into the so-called peripheries through economic and financial aid. But will this Chinese effort demand future endeavors in return? And which could be the consequences of the BRI for the African peripheries? After having taken over African economic, financial, infrastructural and educational domain, Beijing might take advantage of the upcoming African youth bulge to indoctrinate young Africans to work alongside China in this reunification scheme, while also supporting it at the international level.

With regards to the lexicon used, the term youth bulge is used to define the quantitative and proportional increase in the share of a country's youth population, conventionally when at least 30% of the population belongs to the 15-29 age bracket. This demographic changeover normally involves developing countries, characterized by both a high fertility rate, and a decrease in the mortality rate. Moreover, it affects populations that, until not long ago, were mainly constituted by individuals with an age ranging from 0 to 14, who therefore were granted little or no access at all to the labor market, and lacked a proper socio-political recognition. Thus, entering a youth bulge, namely a situation entailing that the majority of the population is in the working age, presupposes a stimulus towards economic and social improvement. Indeed, this shift from a young and less advanced population, characterized by high fertility and low expectancy at birth (which testifies backwardness in the socio-economic system), to an older and more developed one, with a widespread and successful birth control and a long stay in life, is to occur in a 30-year lasting period known as the demographic window of opportunity. The latter functions as a bridge, and its ultimate effect is to extend the active population up to 65% of the total through the right conditions and policies, in order to achieve a larger worker force, an improvement of human capital, and supplementary savings. All this, so that the demographic dividend, namely "the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population,"<sup>211</sup> can be grasped.

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<sup>210</sup> Kawashima Shin. "Xi Jinping's 'Peaceful Unification' versus Taiwan's Reality: Can They Be Reconciled?" *Nippon.com*, 15 Dec. 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a08501/>.

<sup>211</sup> Demographic Dividend. (2019). UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund. <https://www.unfpa.org/demographic-dividend>

Thus, youth from China and Africa are expected to play a more active role in renewing bilateral friendship and intensifying cooperation between the two emerging international players.<sup>212</sup> Alongside that, China has also intensified efforts to support African countries to strengthen talent cultivation, financing African students to study in colleges in China through scholarship programs. Even in African schools, subjects like Mandarin and Chinese culture are included in the curriculum. Through these methods, following the youth bulge theory, Beijing can inculcate Chinese ideals into today's students, who will be tomorrow's work force.

Going back to Reunification, building up its regional military capabilities is China's first and most evident move.<sup>213</sup> Located in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, there is already the People's Liberation Army Support Base, a military installation run by China's PLAN. It is the PLAN's first military outpost,<sup>214</sup> and China's power projection in the Horn of Africa, where there is also an American military camp, is anticipated to rise dramatically as a result of the facility. The presence of a Chinese base in close proximity to a US base has created geopolitical tensions, because in a hypothetical global war scenario, the whole continent of Africa could become the scene of battles and clashes between the West and the East. Moreover, on a demographic level, China would have young African in their 20s and 30s siding with it, supposedly grateful for how the BRI played a role in the improvement of the continent, together with Russia and against Europe and America, known for their low fertility rate and highest average median age. Regardless though, Beijing merely intends to demonstrate its overwhelming might on Africa through this strategic move of the military headquarter in Djibouti.

Secondly, China will escalate its psychological and cultural strategy.<sup>215</sup> As already mentioned beforehand, African students are being domestically taught Chinese language, culture, and history from the Chinese perspective, also as far as Reunification is concerned. However, indoctrination will not be the only factor to play a role. Indeed, as analyzed through this research, one of the requests from China to its BRI recipient countries is international support for internal political issues, such as the Taiwan question. And most of the African nations adhered to this demand by cutting ties with Taipei. Thus, in 2049, young Africans will recognize the Chinese reasons for Reunification as

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<sup>212</sup> Wang Xiadong. "Youth Seen Playing Vital Role in China-Africa Ties." *Chinadaily.com.cn*, 11 Aug. 2021, <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202111/08/WS618887a0a310cdd39bc73f3c.html>.

<sup>213</sup> Kawashima Shin. "Xi Jinping's 'Peaceful Unification' versus Taiwan's Reality: Can They Be Reconciled?" *Nippon.com*, 15 Dec. 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a08501/>.

<sup>214</sup> Laura Zhou. "Chinese Investment Boom Brings Changes to Djibouti." *South China Morning Post*, 1 May 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170518025638/http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2087374/how-chinese-investment-boom-changing-face-djibouti>.

<sup>215</sup> Kawashima Shin. "Xi Jinping's 'Peaceful Unification' versus Taiwan's Reality: Can They Be Reconciled?" *Nippon.com*, 15 Dec. 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a08501/>.

legitimate, and not only for the education that they have been imparted with, but also because of the actions taken by their own governments on the international scene.

At this point, the vast majority of African youth see China as the most influential foreign player on the continent, because it has been the foreign actor with the most relevant positive impact on the continent, surpassing the US and Europe, which however were seen as negative, by a great margin.<sup>216</sup> Even if Chinese investment in Africa has received a lot of criticism, African governments find it impossible not to respect China since it is offering finance, knowledge, and markets at a time when Europe and the United States are not. This is the outstanding result desired by Beijing for the BRI: the gratitude of the peoples of the recipient countries. Because apparently, China is investing in Africa asking nothing tangible in return. However, the main assets that are being created in this process are not market nor infrastructures for Africa. The biggest asset is the African continent itself, which, sooner or later, will be valued by Beijing as a major support at the international level in liminal times.

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<sup>216</sup> Kate Bartlett. "China Wins Battle of Perception Among Young Africans." *VOA, Voice of America (VOA News)*, 14 June 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-wins-battle-of-perception-among-young-africans/6617568.html>.

## Conclusion

As the centerpiece of Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy, the Belt and Road Initiative seeks to have China assume a greater leadership role in world affairs in light of its growing influence and prominence. Through this initiative, China has increased its political, economic, and cultural influence in a number of developing nations around the world. The Initiative promotes cooperation among member countries to establish joint development plans and projects to advance regional or transnational cooperation. This scheme is supposed to be a win-win partnership that benefits China and the other participating nations equally. As analyzed, it includes monetary policy coordination, intergovernmental cooperation, multilevel macro policy exchange, communication channels, and policy support for the implementation of large-scale projects. However, although China advocates for equality and fraternity, the African continent has been included in the BRI through a bilateral relationship with Beijing that is solely based on political, economic, and cultural asymmetry.

On a political level, China seeks to present the image of a global superpower by increasing its footprint in Africa, aiming at showing that it can compete with the United States and other nations in Europe on the global stage by expanding outside of its area, following the theoretical principle of Chinese Exceptionalism. Chinese Exceptionalism is a new behavioral archetype adopted by Beijing in order to present China as a peaceful country on the global governance scene to provide it opportunities to advance its national objectives. This paradigm seeks to provide a different, non-Western approach to international relations that could possibly represent an even superior alternative to the liberal tradition of pursuit of power, and at the bilateral and contractual levels, it aims to ensure mutual benefit and win-win results, like aforementioned in regard to the Sino-African relationship. Indeed, Chinese foreign policy's façade focuses on cooperation rather than conflict, even though it is grounded in the doctrine of Sinocentrism, namely the ideology that finds China as the cultural, political, and economic center of the world, automatically creating a situation of asymmetry between China and the other countries. These states with which China engages its political, economic, and cultural relationships, mostly through the BRI, are known as "peripheries", namely portions of the developing world subjected to Beijing's expanding authority and influence.

At the economic level, these Chinese influences on Africa translate into allegations of debt trap diplomacy, an international financial relationship in which a creditor country or organization lends debt to a borrowing nation, wholly or partially, in order to give the lender more political clout. When a debtor country is unable to make its repayment commitments, the creditor country is considered to have given it an excessive amount of credit with the goal of obtaining political or economic concessions from it. According to this narrative, China is accused of financing emerging

nations' infrastructure under murky loan terms only to strategically use the recipient nation's debt to China for economic, military, or political gain. Developing nations have been a key component of China's foreign investment policy since Jiang Zemin adopted the so-called Going Out Strategy, which pushed enterprises to "establish branches overseas" and "explore overseas markets", because they present higher risks and returns. And African nations are a perfect practical example to represent the outcomes of this strategy. Indeed, after studying the African market through years of commerce, China understood that one of the Chinese advantages of its relationship with Africa lays in the fact that China needs the resources that Africa has to offer, especially crude oil and gas, precious metals, aluminum, copper, and iron ore, to maintain its rising industrial base and fuel its modern, developing economy, even in the African continent itself. However, on the other hand, the BRI is frequently criticized for its debt trap diplomacy. The concern is that the BRI will add significantly more unserviceable foreign loans to the nations' already heavily leveraged banking sectors, and that Beijing's overreach has sparked opposition among officials in developing nations and Western capitals. When the BRI was unveiled in 2013, it established a political narrative and a framework for government policy to enable China's policy banks to finance development projects on a previously unheard-of scale. The BRI projects in Africa raised the bar for China's efforts in infrastructure development and finance to a new, much riskier level. In the African continent, the plan covers nearly every sort of transportation infrastructure on a global scale, including train, roads, ports, airports, electrical transmission, telecommunications, etc. An important mention goes to the Maritime Silk Road, which links China to nations in North and East Africa. Many initiatives that were being contemplated long before BRI was established have been absorbed by it, but the implied political support provided by the BRI seal has led to endless rebrandings of both domestic and international ventures.

Culturally, Beijing has gotten more involved with the developing countries since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. An essential goal of Xi's BRI is to increase collaboration and collaborative action among the Belt and Road nations in the field of education, which can help the Initiative attract the talent it needs to succeed. Xi has emphasized the necessity of boosting China's soft power through, among other things, forging an engaging Chinese narrative and enhancing Beijing's ability to spread its message abroad. This tactic resulted in Beijing investing in African education, annually funding tens of thousands of foreign students to attend Chinese colleges and vocational institutions as part of its "people-to-people exchanges." Educational exchange can be a bridge to stronger people-to-people ties, while the development of talent can support these countries' efforts to coordinate policies, connect their infrastructure, allow unhindered trade, and integrate their economies along the routes. As a result, hundreds of thousands of international students from Africa have been given the

possibility to study in China, and vice versa, the Ministry of Education's Hanban established the Confucius Institute program with the stated goal of promoting Chinese language and culture study overseas throughout Africa. China lately also started to provide high-quality education for Africans through government grants and training to intensify their collaboration in technology transfer, young technical training, and capacity building, especially for specialist professionals. The Chinese government has instituted Luban Workshops, institutions of vocational education that create a pool of skilled workers for developing countries, injecting vitality into local economies. Educational exchange between China and Africa benefits all involved, even though these efforts transmute into allegations of indoctrination.

On one hand, disentangling the positive outcomes of China's presence in Africa from the negative is difficult due to the complicated and contentious nature of the BRI, including all economic, political, militaristic, and ideological inputs. On the other hand, despite China's intentions, Beijing's assistance over the past two decades in areas like infrastructure, education, and health has helped African governments grow into brand new states. The aim of this study has been investigating the Chinese strategy and motive behind the BRI and its projects, and the research has analyzed the Sino-African relationship under numerous different perspectives, namely political, economic, cultural, demographic, and geopolitical, while always keeping one unresolved question in mind: will the Chinese transformation of the African continent grow it into a geopolitical asset for Beijing? Even though it cannot be identified as certain, this research is going to answer the query in an affirmative way.

The geopolitical plan underpinning the BRI, as examined throughout this work, attempts to widen China's sphere of influence by promoting new standards of international cooperation in the so-called peripheries through economic and financial help. However, there are valid arguments against the Initiative. Indeed, China, after all its accomplishments in Africa, is asking for the continent's support on the international political scene. Undoubtedly, African states gain a more distinguished place in the international world by cooperating with a country as strong and rapidly developing as China, nevertheless, following the principle of non-interference does not entirely enhance Africa's reputation, since it is helping China cover up breaches of human rights, and it is sustaining Reunification policies against Taiwan. Moreover, siding with China on issues of this magnitude automatically means to stand against the West, and together with the indoctrination of the Chinese language, culture, and values to African students, Beijing is extending its geopolitical reach massively. Considering this as the current situation, China could, and most likely will, demand even bigger endeavors in return in the future.

Beijing may also use the upcoming African youth bulge—a situation in which the majority of the population is of working age and necessitates a stimulus for economic and social improvement—to influence young Africans to work alongside China in this reunification scheme and to support it on a global scale. Therefore, it is predictable that young people from China and Africa will take a more active part in rekindling their friendships and stepping up their joint efforts to become more significant international participants. Following the youth bulge hypothesis, Beijing may exploit its assumption of control of the African economic, financial, infrastructural, and educational domains to instill Chinese values in today’s students, who will represent the workforce of the future. Young Africans would then acknowledge the Chinese justifications for reunification as legitimate, not only due to the education they have received but also due to the activities committed by their own government on the global stage. The vast majority of African youth now perceive China as the most significant foreign player on the continent, and African governments find it hard to not appreciate China because it is providing funding, knowledge, and markets at a time when the West is not. This is true even though Chinese investment in Africa has drawn a lot of criticism. The appreciation of the people in the receiving nations is the standout outcome Beijing wants from the BRI. Because it appears like China is investing in Africa and expecting nothing in exchange. However, neither African markets nor African infrastructures are the primary assets being developed by China in this process. The largest asset is the African continent itself, which Beijing will eventually recognize as a significant ally at the global level in transitional times.



## Summary

The Belt and Road Initiative, the focal point of Chinese President Xi Jinping's foreign policy, aims to have China take on a stronger leadership role in international affairs in light of its expanding power and importance. China's political, economic, and cultural influence has grown in a number of the world's developing countries as a result of this project. The Initiative encourages member nations to work together to create cooperative development strategies and programs that will foster regional and global cooperation. This plan is meant to be a mutually beneficial alliance that benefits both China and the other member countries equally. It comprises coordinating monetary policy, intergovernmental collaboration, multilevel macro policy interchange, communication channels, and policy support for the execution of big projects. Despite China's support for equality and fraternity, the Belt and Road Initiative has incorporated Africa because of a bilateral relationship with Beijing that is purely based on asymmetry in political, economic, and cultural spheres.

On a political level, China aims to demonstrate that it can compete with the United States and other European nations on the world arena by growing outside of its region, in line with the theoretical notion of Chinese Exceptionalism, by enlarging its presence in Africa. Chinese Exceptionalism is a new behavioral paradigm that Beijing has embraced in an effort to portray China as a peaceful society and to provide it opportunities to accomplish its national goals, which however, is supported solely by the Chinese perspective in the international scenario. This model aims to offer a unique, non-Western approach to international relations that, from China's point of view, may result as a better alternative to the liberal tradition of power-seeking. At the bilateral and contractual levels, it aims to ensure mutual benefit and win-win outcomes. In spite of being based on the doctrine of Sinocentrism, which holds that China is the world's cultural, political, and economic center, Chinese foreign policy actually places more of an emphasis on cooperation than conflict. As a result, there is naturally an imbalance between China and the other nations. The countries that China interacts with on a political, economic, and cultural level, primarily through the BRI, are referred to as "peripheries," which are areas of the developing world that are vulnerable to Beijing's growing power and influence.

At the economic level, these Chinese effects on Africa are alleged to involve debt trap diplomacy, a situation in which a creditor country or organization owes debt to a borrowing nation entirely or in part in order to increase the lender's political power. When a debtor nation cannot fulfill its repayment obligations, the creditor nation is thought to have provided it an excessive amount of credit in an effort to secure political or economic concessions from it. This story claims that China is accused of purposefully using the recipient nation's debt to China for economic, military, or political benefit by supporting rising nations' infrastructure under ambiguous loan terms. Since Jiang Zemin

launched the so-called Going Out Strategy, which encouraged businesses to “create branches abroad” and “explore overseas markets,” since they provide higher risks and rewards, developing countries have been a significant part of China’s foreign investment strategy. African nations provide as the ideal practical illustration of the results of this technique. Since China needs the resources that Africa has to offer, particularly crude oil and gas, precious metals, aluminum, copper, and iron ore, to maintain its growing industrial base and fuel its modern, developing economy, even in the African continent itself, this is one of the Chinese advantages of its relationship with Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative is widely attacked for its debt trap diplomacy, on the other side. The Belt and Road Initiative would add a large amount more non-repayable foreign loans to countries’ already highly leveraged financial sectors, raising concerns about this, and Beijing’s overreach has provoked resistance among authorities in poor countries and Western capitals. The BRI developed a political narrative and a framework for government policy that allowed China’s policy banks to finance development projects on a previously unheard-of scale when it was introduced in 2013. The Belt and Road Initiative projects in Africa set a new, far riskier standard for China’s efforts in infrastructure development and financing. The plan includes practically every type of global transportation infrastructure for the African continent, including trains, roads, ports, airports, electrical transmission, and telecommunications. The Maritime Silk Road, which connects China to nations in North and East Africa, deserves special notice. Many projects that were in development before Belt and Road Initiative was founded have been included into it, but the implicit political backing offered by the Initiative mark has resulted in many rebrandings of both local and foreign efforts.

Beijing has increased its cultural engagement with emerging nations since Xi Jinping took office in 2012. Increasing collaboration and cooperative action among the Belt and Road countries in the area of education is a crucial objective of Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative, as this can aid the Initiative in luring the talent it needs to flourish. Xi has underlined the significance of increasing Beijing’s capacity to communicate its message overseas and developing a compelling Chinese narrative as two ways to increase China’s soft power. Beijing invested in African education as a result of this strategy, annually providing funds for tens of thousands of international students to attend Chinese colleges and vocational schools as part of its “people-to-people exchanges.” While the development of talent can boost these nations’ efforts to coordinate policies, connect their infrastructure, enable unrestricted commerce, and integrate their economies along the routes, educational exchange can be a bridge to better people-to-people relationships. The Ministry of Education’s Hanban launched the Confucius Institute program with the declared purpose of promoting Chinese language and culture study abroad throughout Africa as a consequence, giving hundreds of thousands of foreign students from Africa the opportunity to study in China. China has recently begun to provide Africans with high-quality

education through subsidies from the government and training in an effort to increase their cooperation in technology transfer, youth technical training, and capacity building, particularly for specialized professionals. The Chinese government established Luban Workshops, institutes for vocational training that build a pool of trained employees for emerging nations and revitalize local economies. All parties involved gain from the educational interchange between China and Africa, notwithstanding the accusations of brainwashing that result from these efforts.

On the one hand, it is challenging to separate the beneficial effects of China's presence in Africa from the bad ones because of the Belt and Road Initiative's complex and divisive nature, which includes all economic, political, military, and ideological aspects. However, Beijing's aid during the past 20 years in sectors like infrastructure, education, and health has helped African governments develop into brand-new nations, despite China's goals. The purpose of this study was to look into the Chinese strategy and motivation behind the Belt and Road Initiative and its projects. The research also examined the Sino-African relationship from a variety of angles, including political, economic, cultural, demographic, and geopolitical, while always keeping one unanswered question in mind: will China's transformation of Africa make it a geopolitical asset for Beijing? Although it cannot be held with certainty, this study will provide an affirmative response to the question.

Let this summary briefly go through the structure of this research and the content of its chapters to understand how the analysis of China's rise to power and of the Sino-Africa relationship unfolded towards the conclusion that Africa is being converted into a strategic geopolitical asset by China.

Chapter I explores the reasons for China's decision to embark on its path to become a major power by tracing the development of its interactions and relationships with the rest of the world from the 1950s to the 2010s. Indeed, before concentrating on how China is growing the African continent into a geopolitical asset, readers should have some understanding of how the PRC foreign relations have evolved over the past seven decades, what have been some of the key inflection points, and what have been the main drivers of China's policies and relationships over time. To help China get out of isolation, two main important actions were performed. First, the "great strategy," which advocated keeping a low profile and being calm in the face of dangers and uncertainties; and second, the renowned "southern sojourn," which allowed China to reengage with the rest of the world through deft economic reforms. China recovered from a pessimistic position to one of openness and confidence on the global stage, where it now plays a more significant role in multilateral diplomacy and global governance.

China's internal interests have steadily merged with those of the international community after it changed its political stance in the global picture from one of passivity to one of relative activity.

Beijing has thus created the social prototype of Chinese Exceptionalism, based on “great power reformism, benevolent pacifism, and harmonious inclusionism”, in order to show itself as a peaceful nation on the global governance arena in order to provide it opportunities to pursue its national interests. The goal of Chapter II, which serves as the theoretical framework for this research’s analysis, is to demonstrate how Sinocentrism shapes the political and sociological contours of Chinese foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Consequently, understood from a Sino-centric point of view, Chinese Exceptionalism is reflective of a broader Chinese mentality, whereby the idea of China as a great nation is being internalized at both the political and cultural level. Tightly linked to the dogma of Sinocentrism, is the China’s Peaceful Rise policy. Also known as China’s Peaceful Development, this was an official policy by former leader Hu Jintao, who sought to assure the international community that China’s growing political, economic, and military power, even though resulting in China wanting to seek global predominance on its own terms, would not pose a threat to international peace and security. What makes the country so “exceptional” is the emphasis of the Chinese ethic as a soft power, which also guarantees China’s commitment to its own internal issues and improving the welfare of its own people before interfering in world affairs, to reassure developing nations, together with the Western states, that the rise of Beijing in military and economic prominence would not pose a threat to peace and stability. As a result, conferring about military and economic prominence led the chapter to give an overview of China’s growing global interests in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative, discussing both its goal to enhance regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future working with the peripheries, and the accusations of China’s debt trap diplomacy tactic.

As the new era began, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced in the white paper *China’s approach to Africa* the guiding principles of China’s Africa policy: sincerity, actual results, amity and good faith, and promoting the greater good and common interests, inspiration for international collaboration with Africa. These values, according to the Chinese perspective, exemplify the essence of Chinese culture and the long-standing relationship between China and Africa, representing China’s main guiding principles for fostering cooperation and solidarity with underdeveloped nations, like those in the African continent. After such a premise, Chapter III demonstrates how Africa fits into the Belt and Road Initiative by reviewing the historical interactions between China and Africa and summarizing significant Chinese efforts on the African continent. Due to shared goals and earlier mutual experiences, China and Africa have grown closer over the years. Africa and China share a common future, and both sides have been assisting one another and extending their collaboration as they work for economic progress and national renewal. This is because the cornerstone and long-standing strategy of China’s foreign policy has been to strengthen its solidarity and collaboration with

African nations. The historical relationships between China and Africa will be examined in this part, along with the establishment of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)—the two countries' key multilateral coordination mechanism—and an overview of the significant Chinese operations in Africa. The action plans for maritime cooperation, education for school and university training, and infrastructure will also be specifically evaluated in this chapter. A case study on Kenya will be presented in order to show actual examples of the Sino-African collaboration in these areas, especially regarding infrastructure, discussing about the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, and education, with the Chinese Luban Workshop facilities.

There are advantages and disadvantages to such a collaboration, but through the Belt and Road Initiative China and Africa have developed a robust and durable relationship. It is clear why Africa engaged in a project of this magnitude elevating the economic, infrastructural, and educational standards of its nations, however, why is partnering with African countries beneficial to China? In Chapter IV, the benefits and drawbacks of China's influence on African states are discussed, touching upon topics such as China's needs for natural resources, economic reforms in Africa opening the way to increasing economic activity from other actors outside by liberalizing the protected market, violations of human rights, the non-interference principle, and the necessity for a Belt and Road Initiative 2.0. Moreover, this section ends with an analysis of the geopolitical prospects for Sino-African ties. This study will come to a close by assessing the geopolitical repercussions of the China-Africa alliance and the role it will play in light of the many uncertainties that characterize the current state of the world landscape.

The geopolitical strategy behind the Belt and Road Initiative, which has been the subject of this work's analysis, aims to increase China's sphere of influence by fostering new norms of international cooperation in the so-called peripheries through financial and economic support. There are, however, solid defenses against the Initiative. In fact, China is requesting African cooperation on the global political stage in light of its successes there. Cooperating with a nation as powerful and rapidly modernizing as China undoubtedly elevates African states' standing in the international community. However, adhering to the non-interference principle also supports Taiwan's reunification policies and aids China in covering up human rights violations. Furthermore, supporting China on matters of this importance inherently entails opposing the West, and Beijing is greatly expanding its geopolitical influence through the indoctrination of Chinese culture, language, and values into African pupils. Given the existing circumstances, China may eventually demand even more ambitious initiatives in exchange.

Beijing may also utilize the impending youth bulge in Africa—where the youth bulge of the population is working age and need an economic and social betterment stimulus—to persuade young

Africans to collaborate with China on this reunification program and to promote it globally. Young people from China and Africa are thus likely to play a more active role in rekindling their connections and ramping up their collaborative efforts to become more prominent international players. According to the youth bulge theory, Beijing may use its assumed dominance over the African economic, financial, infrastructure, and educational spheres to teach Chinese ideals in the students of today, who will serve as the future workforce. Young Africans would thus accept Chinese explanations for reunification as legitimate in light of their education as well as the actions taken by their own government on a global scale. Most African youth now see China as the most important foreign power on the continent, and African governments find it difficult to ignore China's contributions to the continent's economies in the form of finance, knowledge, and markets at a time when the West is not doing so. This persists despite the widespread criticism of Chinese investments in Africa. Beijing's top priority for the Belt and Road Initiative is the recognition of the people of the recipient nations. China seems to be investing in Africa without asking for anything in return, which is why. However, China is not developing African infrastructure or markets as its main resources in this process. The biggest asset is the continent of Africa itself, which Beijing will ultimately acknowledge as a vital ally at the international level in liminal times.

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