

The Changing Dynamics of Cooperation Between China and African Countries: A Global Public-Goods Approach



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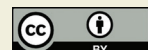
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ABSTRACT

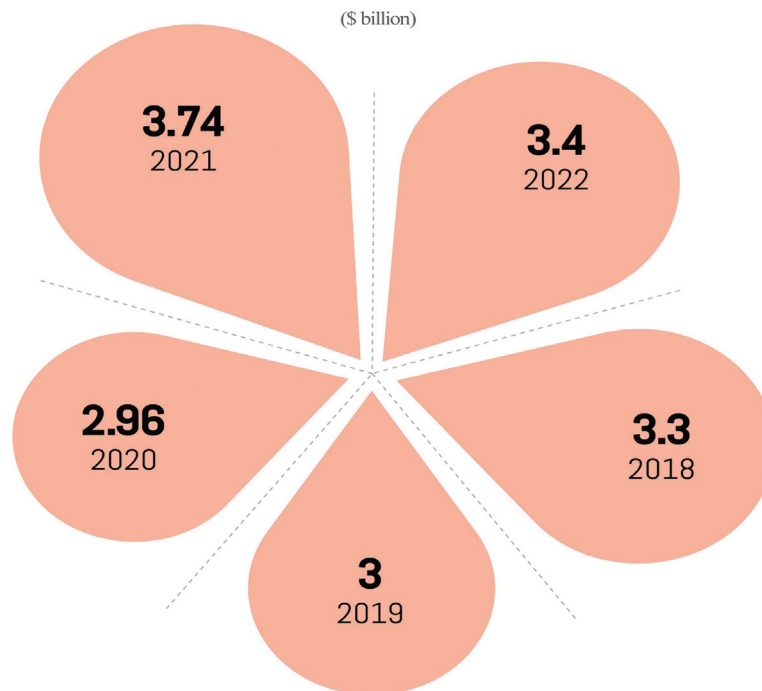
This paper examines the impact of China's emergence as a global power on various African nations, emphasizing the provision of "global public goods" as a key mechanism for fostering development. Global public goods are defined as those with benefits extending to all citizens worldwide. Employing a desktop literature review methodology, the paper conducts an in-depth examination through a process tracing of China's major initiatives labeled as global public goods from 2000 to 2023. Notable initiatives include the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in transforming Africa into a hub of development by leveraging mechanisms such as government concessional loans, grants, aid, commercial financial institution credit funds, special investment and financing funds, and promoting direct Chinese investments in Africa. Despite these positive outcomes, China's growing influence in Africa, particularly through the provision of global public goods, has elicited diverse reactions, especially from traditional Western partners of African nations. Accusations of entangling Africa in a "debt trap" and other myths have been a recurring critique. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the evolving dynamics of cooperation between China and African countries within the framework of a public-goods approach.

Keywords: Africa, China, debt trap, neo-colonialism, public goods.

FOR DECADES, CHINA HAS LONG HAD a comprehensive and strategic relationship with African countries. The relationship classified as both multilateral (within the African Union framework) and bilateral (individual member-states) has evolved in the 21st century and it is demonstrating substantial efficacy in consideration of Beijing's new goals of building a modern socialist country in all respects and advancing national rejuvenation on all fronts (Long, 2022). In common, both civilizations (China and Africa) had in recent centuries been "politically and economically dominated by external powers while experiencing very low per capita incomes and high rates of poverty and under-development", (Ajakaiye & Kaplinsky, 2009). Accordingly, as the cooperation between the two civilizations continues to grow, the paper tackles the following questions: how do China's initiatives contribute to global

public goods and the modernization of African countries? How do traditional Western partners react to China's increasing influence in Africa? What criticisms, particularly regarding the "debt trap," have been leveled against China? In tackling these questions, this paper uses a desktop literature review to assess the debt trap thesis and other Western-centric propaganda myths, which involves gathering information from existing sources, combining the results, and analyzing them for interpretation (Kariuki & Msuya, 2022). The analysis of China's contribution to global public goods and how China's relations with Africa have historically evolved is conducted using process tracing. Process tracing, resembling detective work, is a method focused on logical analysis and evidence collection, where the interpretivist approach allows for a flexible narrative shaped by key actors and events (Gürcan, 2020).

Figure 1. China's Direct Investments in Africa



China's direct investment in Africa between 2018-2021 in billion dollars (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

As observed, with the rise of China as a global power in 21st century, political scientist Joseph Nye vexed that Beijing might make the same fatal mistake as the United States, which failed to provide “global public goods” after replacing Britain as the leading power by the turn of the 20th century (Nye, 2017). These led to the disastrous decade of the 1930s where the global system experienced the great depression, genocide as democracies were on retreat, and a tragic world war. For Nye and other sinologists, the concern is whether China will make the same mistake as it power and influence continues to grow. However, in studying the historical events that led to a lost decade for civilizations, China has embarked on a “modernization doctrine” of providing “global public goods” such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, the

Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa to stabilize the global system and build a post-COVID-19 world order that is prepared to mitigate another pandemic in the future.

Global Public Goods

Conceptually, global public goods are identified as enablers of “international economic stability, international security (political stability), the international environment, international humanitarian assistance and knowledge” (Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern, 1999).

Further, Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern (1999) state that global public goods must satisfy two

essential criteria. Firstly, their benefits must exhibit pronounced qualities of publicness, characterized by nonrivalry in consumption and non-excludability, thereby classifying them within the broader category of public goods. Secondly, these benefits should demonstrate quasi-universality, encompassing multiple countries, catering to diverse population groups, and extending across generations. This attribute designates humanity as the collective beneficiary, rendering the entirety of humanity as the publicum of global public goods.

Similarly, Nye (2017) observed that “in domestic politics, governments produce public goods such as policing or a clean environment, from which all citizens can benefit and none are excluded. At the global level, public goods – such as a stable climate, financial stability, or freedom of the seas – are provided by coalitions led by the largest powers”. Nye’s observation is in tandem with China’s offer of public goods to provide a central rationale for global collective action to secure a future for all mankind.

Stability through the offer of global public goods such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) among other initiatives became the major focus in China’s policy toward Africa.

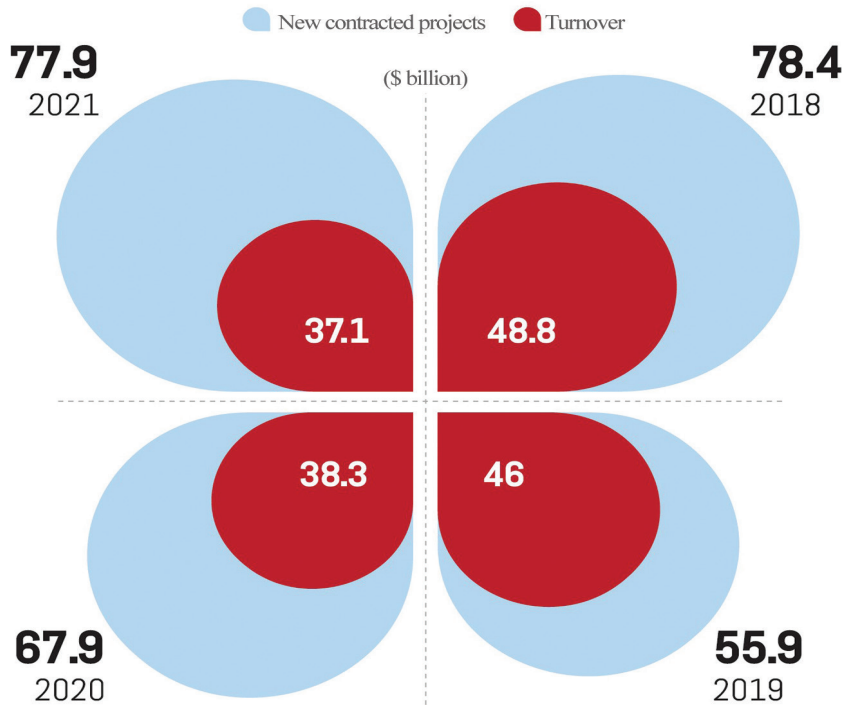
Having emerged as the 21st century’s leading economic power (Kariuki, 2022; Gürçan, 2022), China began a noble drive to offer global public goods to both developed and developing countries to mitigate the conflicts described in Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilization thesis (Huntington, 1996). For China, a peaceful environment is necessary to develop a stable

economy. Thus, stability through the offer of global public goods such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) among other initiatives became the major focus in China’s policy toward Africa. According to China, development must not be a monopoly of a few countries, or specific classes or segments of society. It must be a shared prosperity. Therefore, the rationale underlying China’s strategic expansion beyond its territorial confines resides in its endeavour to foster economic prosperity within various regions of Africa and other global locales, with the ultimate objective of cultivating harmonious coexistence and facilitating sustainable development.

Consequently, the “Going Global” strategy especially in developing countries, has resulted in China’s cumulative investment in Africa to exceed over USD 200 billion (Wencheng, 2023). As part of the “tangible global public goods”, Chinese companies have built railways, highways, ports, airports, special economic zones and industrial parks, and other forms of infrastructure in Africa, greatly improving the economic development of the continent, attracting foreign investment, promoting local employment, freeing people from poverty, and gradually moving towards a prosperous and well-off life (Wencheng, 2023).

Thus, the primary objective of this paper is to analyze and comprehend the implications of China’s role as a provider of global public goods on the modernization and development of African nations, exploring the mechanisms employed and the reactions elicited from traditional Western partners. Through this research, the aim is to contribute valuable insights into the changing dynamics of international cooperation between China and African countries, specifically within the context of global public goods.

Figure 2. Chinese Infrastructure Projects in Africa



China's infrastructure projects in Africa between 2018-2021, in billion dollars (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

China-Africa Relations

The debate on China-Africa cooperation forms part of the 'solidarity thesis' that enchants the enduring relationship between the two civilizations whose friendship is deeply rooted in ancient times and hardened in the trenches of mutual struggles against imperialism and shared aspirations for freedom and development (Kagwanja, 2016). This phenomenon was observed on two discrete instances. First, in December 1982 Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang visited eleven African countries. His visit was to promote the 'Four Principles' of Chinese cooperation with Africa: equality and mutual benefit; an emphasis on practical results; diversity

in form; and economic development (Uchehara, 2009). Second, the May 1996 visit by then President Jiang Zemin to six African countries and his keynote speech delivered at the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor to the African Union, laid out a five-point proposal for the development and need to set up an institutional platform for consultation and cooperation with African countries to promote in-depth development of China-Africa relations (Anshan, 2012). These guiding events marked a new era in China-African relations and a new shift of sustaining its offer of public goods to a continent that was impoverished by under-development in all-fronts.

Essentially, the collaboration between China and Africa is deeply rooted in the longstanding historical connections between their civilizations. It is founded upon the extensive and enduring history of relations between China and Africa, stretching back centuries to a time when African traders, travelers, and scholars engaged with China, and Chinese sailors undertook numerous voyages to the African continent. Moreover, this collaboration mirrors contemporary China's commitment to humanism, advocating for the belief that every individual deserves dignity, and respect, and the promotion of values that uphold freedom and independence (Meinert, 2010 and Liu, 2015). Discussing how China's offer of global public goods could contribute to the modernization of the African continent, the paper adopts a desktop literature review method (desk study). This also involves an in-depth process tracing analysis (Gürçan, 2020) of process China's key initiatives, which the paper refers to as global public goods from 2000 to 2023 such as the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa that have transformed the Continent of Africa to become a hub of development.

China and the Making of a Modernized Africa: A Process-Tracing Analysis

In the 1980s, dubbed the “lost decade” for Africa (Adjei, Kyei & Kwadwo, 2014), the externally borrowed model of modernization plunged the continent into a complex socio-economic crisis. One-party tyrannies, military coups, and personal dictatorships undermined Africa's efforts to chart an alternative path to modernization and economic recovery. Africa's traditional partners in the West, through the Bretton Woods system (World Bank and International Mo-

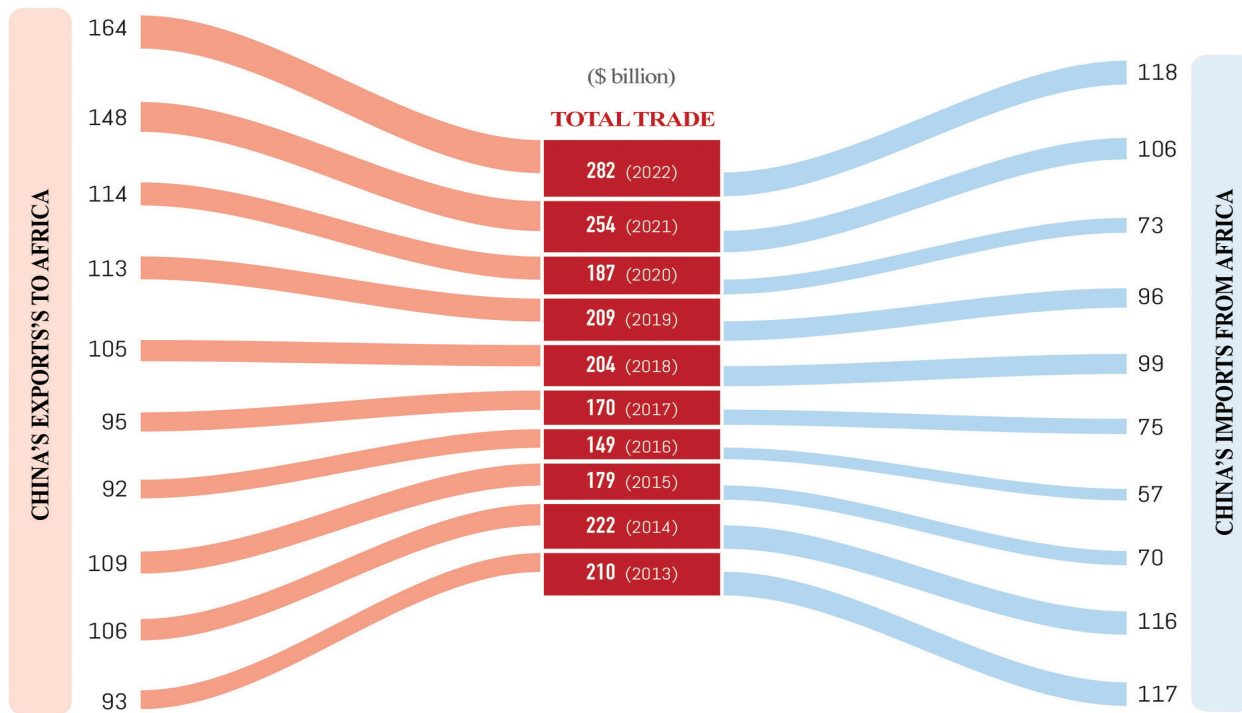
netary Fund), responded by imposing the ruinous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which destroyed the continent's economies rather than saving them (Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2001). Modeled to adopt the colonial way of governance, most African countries were plagued by weak economic foundations. Diseases, instability, and poverty became the trinity of discord in Africa. The Continent of Africa quest for modernization was halted.

The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘equal partnership’, ‘mutual cooperation’, and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a common future and shared prosperity.

At the turn of the 21st century, success in Chinese modernization began to inspire a spirit of African renaissance and the continent's independent path to modernization. The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘equal partnership’, ‘mutual cooperation’, and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a common future and shared prosperity (Kagwanja 2016). China through its offer of global public goods tapped into the spirit of Pan-Africanism as the ideology driving African modernization.

To effectively concretize the cooperation between the two civilizations, China's offer of public goods has revolutionized Sino-Africa relations. Through process tracing, the paper will scrutinize the key initiatives (global public goods) from the year 2000 to 2023 that are playing a vital role in modernizing Africa and strengthening the Sino-Africa cooperations in the 21st century era.

Figure 3. 2013-2022 China-Africa Trade



Total trade between China and African countries exceeded \$2 trillion in 10 years (Figure: CGTN, 2023).

First, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2000, became the premier official policy forum driving the engine of China-Africa relations (Kagwanja, 2020). A significant marker of South-South cooperation, FOCAC signifies the needed dialogue of civilizations in our divided and polarized global community facing the anti-globalization trends. Today, the “FOCAC Community” comprising China and 54 African countries with an estimation of more than 2.8 billion people has become an integral story of the “Africa Rising narrative”. The formation of FOCAC expressed the need to set up an institutional platform for consultation and cooperation with African countries to promote in-depth development of China-Africa relations (Anshan, 2012). Subsequently,

every three years, the two civilizations meet to chart new ways to enhance their strategic relations.

Taking stock of the triannual summit that has become an anchor on China-Africa Cooperation, in December 2003, the second Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The primary focus of this conference was to strengthen collaboration in human resource development, marked by China’s commitment to training over 10,000 African professionals in diverse fields. Additionally, China expanded its market access, granting tariff-exempt status to certain commodities. The conference also highlighted tourism cooperation, identifying eight African countries as potential destinations for Chinese tourist groups.

Notably, the proposal for a China-Africa Youth Festival was introduced during this event (MFA, 2023).

Regarding education, capacity building, and technology transfer, China made several commitments, including the formation of a China-Africa Science and Technology partnership.

The third Ministerial Conference and FOCAC Summit took place in Beijing in November 2006. During the summit, China allocated USD 5 billion in loans and buyers' credits, along with an additional USD 5 billion in China-Africa Development Funds (CADF). These funds were designated to support Chinese companies investing in Africa. As part of its commitments, China promised to construct an African Union Conference Centre and expand the list of African export items from 190 to over 440, some of which would enjoy zero-tariff status. Primarily, health issues were included in the agenda for the first time, with China vowing to contribute to the fight against malaria by establishing prevention and treatment centers and providing anti-malaria drugs. In the realm of education, China pledged to build one hundred rural schools across Africa and double the number of annual scholarships to 2,000 by the year 2009 (China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of African students studying in Chinese universities, marking a notable departure from the previously 'preferred traditional study destinations' for most students during the post-independence era.

The fourth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC occurred in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on November 8-9, 2009. In attendance were Chinese Premier Wen

Jiabao, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, leaders from 49 African countries, and representatives from the African Union. During the meeting, participants adopted the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration and Action Plan for 2010–2012, outlining the course for enhanced cooperation between China and Africa. Emphasis was placed on addressing climate change, with a commitment to respond proactively by establishing 100 clean energy projects. Further, regarding education, capacity building, and technology transfer, China made several commitments, including the formation of a China-Africa Science and Technology partnership. China pledged support for science and technological research projects and offered to host 100 post-doctoral fellows for research in China. Additionally, the meeting resolved to establish agricultural technology demonstration centers built by China, along with facilities to train over 2,000 African agricultural technicians. To ensure the implementation of the outcomes of FOCAC IV, China provided significant financial support, offering USD 10 billion in concessional loans and an additional USD 1 billion for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, China canceled the debt associated with interest-free government loans due to maturity by the end of that year, demonstrating its commitment to fostering economic cooperation between China and Africa (Eneka, 2010).

The Fifth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC unfolded in Beijing on July 19-20, 2012, coinciding with a shift in leadership within China. Notably, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, participated in the conference for the first time, underscoring FOCAC's burgeoning influence on the global stage. Beijing, in a substantial move, extended a credit line of USD 20 billion to support diverse sectors in Africa, including infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and small and medium-sized enterprises (Zhang, 2015).



In 1976, Chinese and Tanzanian workers lay track on the Tanzania-Zambia Railway. The 1860.5 km railway is a milestone in China-Africa friendship (Photo: FOCAC, 2016).

The financial commitment extended to the China-Africa Development Fund, initially established during the 2006 FOCAC summit, experienced a significant increase from USD 1 billion to USD 5 billion. Moreover, China entered into bilateral agreements on investment protection with 32 African nations and established Joint Economic and Trade Commissions with 45 others. An investment totaling approximately USD 1.806 billion was injected into 53 projects, part of a broader initiative encompassing 61 projects across 30 African countries under the China-Africa Development Fund.

China also introduced new, non-conditional facilities aimed at supporting Africa's infrastructure, mining, manufacturing, and finance sectors. Additionally, a noteworthy commitment emerged with the announcement of the "African Talent Programme," designed to train 30,000 personnel across various sectors. However, the 2012 summit brought attention to unmet

promises concerning technology transfer and highlighted concerns about the prevailing trade dynamics, where Africa continued to export raw materials while importing China's manufactured goods, resulting in a trade imbalance (Bhura, 2016). To address the issues of trade imbalance, China pledged to increase imports of non-mining African goods and expand the list of duty-free goods permitted into the Chinese market, signaling a commitment to rectify the trade disparities between the two regions. Further, through the use of private organizations such as AVIC International Holding Corporation, China initiated the Africa Tech Challenge (ATC) in 2014 to use digital technology and provide African youth with rich knowledge in the vocational education field free of charge (Muthoni, 2023).

The sixth Summit of 2015 took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the agenda shifted towards Africa's industrialization. As a key global public good, President Xi emphasized the importance of "industrial

cooperation” and “strategic complementarity” in shaping China-Africa relations. As part of this new direction, China initiated the relocation of its labor-intensive industries to Africa. Demonstrating a significant commitment, China pledged an unprecedented USD 60 billion in funding to Africa, comprising grants, interest-free loans, and commercial financing. This financial support included USD 5 billion for interest-free aid, USD 35 billion for preferential loans and export credits, an additional USD 5 billion each for the China-Africa Development Fund and the Special Loan for the Development of Africa Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and USD 10 billion as the initial capital for the China-Africa Production Cooperation Fund (Xinhua, 2015).

A Pivotal Moment: 2018 FOCAC Summit

The 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation marked a pivotal moment in the relationship between

China and Africa. By May of that year, all African UN member states had officially recognized the People’s Republic of China as the sole legitimate representative of China, with Eswatini (Swaziland) being the only exception due to its relations with Taiwan. Remarkably, more African leaders attended the FOCAC summit in Beijing in early September than the parallel UN General Assembly meeting. Knowing China’s offer of global public goods has become a key driver for sustainable development in Africa, majority of leaders opted to attend the 2018 FOCAC Summit to secure bilateral agreements. During the summit, President Xi unveiled eight significant initiatives to guide Sino-Africa cooperation. These initiatives encompassed industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, green development, capacity building, healthcare, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security. In support of these pillars, China committed an additional USD 60 billion economic package.



The Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held on 3 September 2018 at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China (Photo: Wang Ye, Xinhua, 2018).

President Xi, in his opening remarks at the FOCAC 2018 summit, pledged USD 20 billion in new credit lines, USD 15 billion in foreign aid in the form of grants, interest-free loans, or concessional loans, USD 10 billion for a special fund dedicated to development financing, and USD 5 billion for a special fund aimed at financing imports from Africa. Additionally, President Xi announced that the remaining USD 10 billion would be contributed by Chinese companies (Xinhua, 2018).

At the 8th FOCAC meeting in 2021, significant announcements were made, and four resolutions were adopted, namely, the Dakar Action Plan, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change, and the Dakar Declaration of the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC. Further, President Xi outlined nine areas of focus for the initial three years of the China-Africa Vision 2035 during the conference. These areas encompass health, poverty reduction and agriculture, trade, investment, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security (Xi, 2021). The 8th

session of FOCAC took place at a time when the world was facing the multi-faceted impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, during the pandemic period, the China-Africa cooperation was tested at great heights. To note, China and Africa exhibit shared perspectives on numerous international and regional matters, maintaining relatively consistent positions.

Africa demonstrates unwavering support on issues central to China's core interests, contributing to the stability of the amicable relations between the two. Amid the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, China not only faced immense pressure in combating the outbreak domestically but also extended substantial assistance to African countries and the African Union. This assistance included the provision of approximately 5.4 million face masks, over a million test kits, and thousands of personal protective gears to bolster Africa's resilience against the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Jack Ma Foundation initiated a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors, contributing around 4.6 million masks, 500,000 pairs of



3 September 2018, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China (Photo: Liu Weibing, Xinhua, 2018).

gloves, 500,000 swabs and test kits, 200,000 face shields, 200,000 sets of protective clothing, 2,000 temperature guns, 300 ventilators, and 100 body temperature scanners for distribution across all 54 African countries. President Xi Jinping further committed to supplying Africa with 30 million test kits monthly, along with 10,000 ventilators and 80 million masks (Mwangi, 2020). Further, in support of the African Union's (AU) aim to vaccinate 60 percent of the African population by 2022, President Xi declared that China would contribute an additional one billion vaccine doses to Africa. This commitment encompasses 600 million doses as a donation and 400 million doses through mechanisms like collaborative production involving Chinese companies and pertinent African nations (Huaxia, 2021). Furthermore, President Xi announced China's commitment to undertake 10 medical and health projects for African countries. Additionally, 1,500 medical personnel and public health experts were dispatched to Africa as part of these initiatives. Actively supporting Africa in its battle against the pandemic, China played a crucial role in strengthening the continent's response efforts (Elnor, 2022).

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Holistically, FOCAC became the policy framework that has guided China in offering its global public goods to Africa, that have resulted to Beijing overtaking the United States of America to become the world's largest foreign direct investor into Africa (Yu, 2021). The

implication, is that China has persisted in augmenting its investment capacity in Africa, a void left by the United States, propelled by the strategic significance arising from their compelling economic cooperation and Africa's promising potential as the forthcoming catalyst for global economic growth.

The Crucial Role of the Belt and Road Initiative

Equally important in China's efforts at contributing to global commons in Africa is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In September 2013, President Xi Jinping while on a high-level visit to Kazakhstan, introduced to the world China's grand plan of establishing a Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). A month later in Indonesia, he announced a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) (Jiao, 2013). These two initiatives thereafter became known as China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. However, to create a cohesive economic area, the two initiatives were merged and rebranded as the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (World Bank, 2018).

Currently, the BRI has expanded and connected transport networks and markets, improved production capacity, and facilitated the transit of goods, capital, energy, raw materials, information, people, and culture (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). Wholistically, BRI encompasses the values that strengthen "people-oriented partnership". Thus, in cognizant of its vision and purpose, BRI has and continues to achieve its collective goal of promoting policy coordination, facilitating connectivity, promoting unimpeded trade, promoting financial integration, and fostering people-to-people bonds (NDRC, 2015). Finding common ground with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which push for greater regional integration within the continent, BRI has managed to become the driving architecture of industrialization and manufacturing in Africa (Marais & Labuschagne, 2019).

Further, 10 years after President Xi Jinping announced his grand plan to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe, the 21st century Belt and Road Initiative has morphed into a broad program describing almost all aspects of Chinese engagement abroad (World Bank, 2019). Currently, there are more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations that have signed cooperation documents and participating in the BRI. Globally, there are over 3000 projects that have been implemented under BRI, with a total expenditure of 1 trillion USD (Embassy of PRC in Grenada, 2023). These emancipating projects under BRI in Africa have elicited the debate on ‘debt trap’ diplomacy.

Third is the Global Development Initiative (GDI). Committed to ensuring that there is peace and development for humanity, in the wake of the

COVID-19 pandemic, China moved the concept of peaceful development to a whole new level. Globally, President Xi Jinping unveiled the GDI as China’s new framework for providing global public goods.

GDI’s fundamental purpose is to assist the global community and the United Nations in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and reverse the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on development in developing countries, address the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, poverty alleviation and food security, promote green recovery and the principles of an ecological civilization that harmonize development and natural environment, industrialization, digital economy, and connectivity in the digital era (United Nations, 2023).

Fourth is the Global Security Initiative (GSI). To



Chinese instructor Jiang Liping (right) and trainee Horace Owiti walk past a train carriage with a printed slogan reading “Connecting nations, prospering people” on the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Nairobi, Kenya, 23 May 2023 (Photo: Wang Guansen, Xinhua, 2023).

promote global stability, address common challenges, and safeguard the welfare of future generations and their democracies, China unveiled the Global Security Initiative. The initiative is anchored on six pillars of common security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, legitimate security concerns of all countries, peaceful dispute resolution between countries through dialogue and consultation, and security in traditional and non-traditional domains (PRC, 2023).

The GSI aims to uphold the principles of multilateralism and international solidarity, and the shared desire of all peoples to work together to overcome difficulties at a time when traditional and non-traditional security threats are posing a challenge to the existence of humanity.

For China, without peace, there is no development, and the path to modernization will be rough and slippery. Thus, the GSI aims to uphold the principles of multilateralism and international solidarity, and the shared desire of all peoples to work together to overcome difficulties at a time when traditional and non-traditional security threats are posing a challenge to the existence of humanity. This initiative is key in Africa, due to the continent's fragility in its governance architecture leading to inter and intra-state conflicts.

Fifth is the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa. As indicated above, some of the democracies in the Horn of Africa are

unstable. The region has become the new theater of renewed superpower tensions. The geopolitical tensions from competitive and strategic positioning of vested interest in the region have made the Horn region in Africa more volatile. Learning from experience, China has avoided any military conflict over the last three decades. As a result of a long spell of peace, China has managed to emerge as the most developed and fastest-developing nation in the world. Thus, guided by the ethos of shared prosperity for all mankind, China in January 2022, unfurled the "Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa" in Mombasa, Kenya (Azam, 2022). The initiative seeks to localize the ideals of the GDI and GSI in the Horn region. The initiative aims to support regional countries to address security, development, and governance challenges. Crystallizing the initiative, Beijing also appointed a Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Affairs to help galvanize regional consensus on political, security, and development agenda to realize lasting peace, stability, and prosperity.

Sixth is the unveiling of the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). During the opening ceremony of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting via video link on March 15, 2023, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative and called on world political parties to closely integrate their development with their national modernization drives, to continuously steer the course and marshal strength for modernization (CGTN, 2023). As an initiative, the GCI focuses on respecting the diversity of the world civilization, advocating the common values of humanity, highly valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and jointly advocating robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

According to President Xi, peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Holistically, GCI has become a custodian of humanism to advance modernization among different civilizations, and the epitome of globalization. For Africa, the GCI becomes the crown of jewel that galvanizes the mutual relationship between the two civilizations. It resonates well with the African Governance Architecture (AGA). As a framework guided by the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the AU Shared Values, (AU, 2023) AGA recognizes “good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” as critical enablers and drivers of integration, prosperity, and development of Africa (AU, 2016).

Rekindling of Africa’s Rising Narrative

The offer of global public goods by China (namely – FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, Outlook on Peace and Development in the HoA, and GCI) has inspired a spirit of African rebirth and the continent’s

independent path to modernization (Kagwanja, 2016). The continent adopted a “Look East Policy” and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of ‘mutual cooperation’, equal ‘partnership’ and ‘solidarity’ in pursuit of a community with common future and shared prosperity. China tapped into the spirit of Pan-Africanism as the ideology driving African modernization. Although China has engaged each of the African Union’s 54 member states bilaterally, its partnership with Africa is on a continental scale. The AU’s architecture of modernization has served as the framework of Sino-Africa partnership and solidarity underpinned by the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

As a result, China has been Africa’s largest trading partner for the 14 years since 2009. According to the China-Africa Trade Index, China’s trade with Africa rose from less than 100 billion yuan in 2000 to 1.88 trillion yuan in 2022, posting a cumulative increase of more than 20 times, with an average annual growth rate of 17.7 percent (Xinhua, 2023).



At the 2009 Beijing Summit Gala Night, Chinese and African dancers performed together (Photo: FOCAC, 2009).

The Global Effects of Sino-Africa Cooperations

China's growing footprint in Africa through its offer of global public goods such as FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, GCI, and the Outlook of Peace and Development in the HoA has fueled a 'cold-war' mentality from liberal democracies. They have labeled China's offer of public goods to Africa as agents of "debt trap". Accusations of neo-colonialism and luring developing or underdeveloped countries to request financial loans for infrastructure projects and later controlling them if they fail to pay off their loans (TRT World, 2019) in time has become the post-truth narrative driving the China-Africa cooperation.

At various FOCAC conferences, China has provided relief for the substantial debts accumulated by heavily indebted and poor countries, as well as the least developed countries in Africa, through interest-free Chinese government loans.

China has also been accused of perpetuating resource extraction from Africa, a continent that is endowed with natural resources such as aluminum, copper, iron ore, cobalt, and lithium, among other rare earth minerals. These resources have become the source of renewed geopolitical competition among global powers to influence Africa to abandon its cooperation with China. In a way to invalidate the propaganda narratives on "debt trap diplomacy", between 2000 and 2019, China has cancelled at least USD 3.4

billion of debt in Africa, and restructured or refinanced about USD 15 billion in African debt (Bartlett, 2022). At various FOCAC conferences, China has provided relief for the substantial debts accumulated by heavily indebted and poor countries, as well as the least developed countries in Africa, through interest-free Chinese government loans. The initial FOCAC conference initiated a debt exemption of RMB 10 billion for relevant African nations. Subsequent conferences, including the 2006 Beijing Summit, the 2009 Sharm el Sheikh Conference, the 2015 Johannesburg Summit, and the 2018 Beijing Summit, successively exempted inter-governmental interest-free loans set to mature by the end of 2005, 2009, 2015, and 2018 (Aiping & Zhan, 2018). This substantial measure significantly alleviated the financial burdens of African countries. Additionally, as part of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, China has entered into debt suspension agreements with 12 African nations. Furthermore, China decided to waive interest-free loans that matured by 2020 for 15 African countries, further contributing to easing the financial challenges faced by these nations (Li, 2020). Thus, the "debt trap diplomacy" narratives hold no water in describing the China-Africa cooperation and its partnership in global public goods. Other post-truth narratives regarding the projects done by China to Africa are regarding the weaponization of environmental concerns—often by lobbies, civil society groups, and researchers. To mitigate environmental concerns, China has done its best to reconcile nature and development through the implementation of strategic measures through its guiding philosophy of enhancing ecological civilization (Gürçan, 2021).

Conclusion

Collectively, the offer of global public goods such as FOCAC, BRI, GDI, GSI, GCI, and the Outlook of Peace and Development in the HoA by China to African countries and other developing nations holds significant benefits for the South–South Cooperation. China’s ties with Africa stand as the paramount and dependable facet of Beijing’s foreign relations with developing nations. Through the provision of diverse “global public goods,” as stated in the paper, China is bolstering connectivity, promoting infrastructure development, promoting ecological civilization, and facilitating industrialization in Africa. China’s remarkable success in its modernization process has not only served as inspiration but has also empowered Africa in its quest for an independent path to modernization. Within the framework of Pan-Africanism, China has actively supported the African Union, Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and cultivated robust connections with Africa’s sub-regional organizations and continental initiatives. The convergence of Chinese modernization and the ‘African Renaissance’ has transformed the continent’s image from that of a “hopeless continent” in 2000 to a “hopeful continent” and a new frontier for global trade and foreign investments more than two decades later. This has elicited criticism from Africa’s traditional partners who over the years have implemented discriminatory policies against the continent of Africa. Consequently, by overlooking such unfounded criticisms, the China-Africa cooperation has engendered a community of shared destiny for mankind. 🌸

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