

CONTEMPORARY WORLD *NIGERIA*

当代世界

Volume 02

Number 03

Jul.-Sept. 2023



CHINA-AFRICA HIGH-QUALITY BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION

The Future of the Belt and Road Initiative in Responding
to Global Development Crisis

Harmonizing the Belt and Road Initiative and the African Continental
Free Trade Area for the Economic Prosperity of Africa

A New Approach for Global Economic Governance:
The New Development Bank's Role

The New Situation of Africa's Autonomous Development:
Causes and Prospects



On the afternoon of October 18, 2023, President Xi Jinping meets with Nigerian Vice President Shettima at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to attend the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

(Photo/Xinhua)

CHINA & AFRICA

The Future of the Belt and Road Initiative in Responding to Global Development Crisis
Paul Frimpong

Harmonizing the Belt and Road Initiative and the African Continental Free Trade Area for the Economic Prosperity of Africa
Uche Collins NWOGWUGWU

Vision and Practice of China-Africa Belt and Road High-quality Cooperation
Tong Fei

Development of the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Africa Cooperation
Zhao Chenguang

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

A New Approach for Global Economic Governance: The New Development Bank's Role
Dilma Rousseff

National Security Dilemma in the Digital Era and the Building of a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace
Lang Ping

AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Constructing a Belt and Road Initiative with African Characteristics: A Vision for Inclusive Development
Ndukwe Onyinyechi Kelechi

The New Situation of Africa's Autonomous Development: Causes and Prospects
Yao Guimei

02

08

13

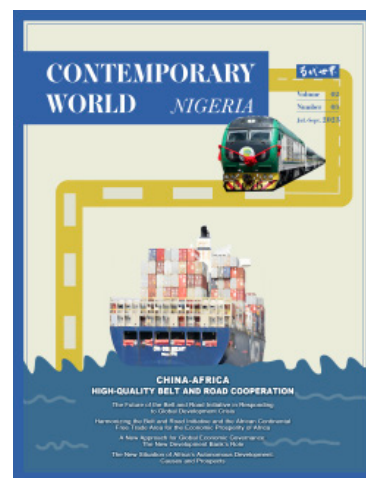
19

26

33

38

44



Volume 02 Number 03 Jul.-Sept. 2023

Publishers:
A co-publication of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and China's Contemporary World Magazine

Editorial Committee:
Joseph Peter Ochogwu (Director-General, IPCR)
Lv Xuejun (Director-General, Contemporary World China)
Olalekan A. Babatunde (Editor, Contemporary World Nigeria)
Gerald Ifeanyi Okafor (Editor, Contemporary World Nigeria)
Zhang Kai (Editor, Contemporary World Nigeria)
Li Zheng (Editor, Contemporary World Nigeria)

Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)
Plot 469, Abogo Largema Street,
Off Constitution Avenue
Central Business District, P.M.B. 349,
Garki, Abuja, Nigeria
info@ipcr.gov.ng
www.ipcr.gov.ng

China's Contemporary World Magazine
No.4 Fuxing Road, Haidian District,
Beijing, China
ddsjcn.com

Copyright © IPCR, 2022

ISSN: 2955-1749

All Rights Reserved

No part of this Journal may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photo-copying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of publishers, that is the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and China's Contemporary World.

This Journal is distributed subject to the condition that it should not by way of trade or otherwise be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.



Trains at the opening ceremony of the Railway of Raj, photographed on June 10, 2021 in Lagos, Nigeria.

(Photo/Xinhua)

THE FUTURE OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE IN RESPONDING TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CRISIS

Paul Frimpong

Executive Director, Africa-China Centre for Policy & Advisory, Accra, Ghana

Chinese President Xi Jinping sees a globally shared future built on four important global initiatives: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).

In the face of unprecedented global challenges, the

BRI emerges as a pivotal player in responding to the development crises that afflict nations worldwide. The BRI, represents one of the most ambitious and expansive infrastructure and economic development projects in modern history with China investing billions of dollars in infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Europe.

In March 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed the vision of building a community with shared future for mankind and, in September and October of that year, he launched the Belt and Road Initiatives which initially took the form of the “One Belt, One Road initiative,” encompassing the overland Silk Road Economic Belt which focuses on land-based economic corridors and the Maritime Silk Road focuses on trade and connection along. These two components envisioned an interconnected network of trade routes spanning continents. Simultaneously, the BRI’s aspirations have grown with the establishment of a Digital Silk Road, a Polar Silk Road, a Health Silk Road, and a 5G-based Internet-of-Things (IoT) initiative.

These initiatives reflect China’s efforts to expand the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative beyond traditional infrastructure projects, addressing the evolving needs of the global economy and technology landscape. Each initiative focuses on a specific area of development, ranging from digital connectivity and healthcare to emerging technologies like 5G and the exploration of new trade routes.

The BRI has evolved into a comprehensive infrastructure and economic development strategy across continents. Encompassing over 150 countries and over 30 international organizations across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East which accounts for two-thirds of the world’s population and 40% of global GDP, the BRI seeks to enhance global connectivity, promote trade and economic cooperation, and foster shared development.

UNVEILING MILESTONES AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS

As of 2023, the initiative has made significant progress, impacting various sectors with a multitude of projects. The milestones and key developments in the BRI highlight its dynamic nature and China’s commitment to addressing challenges while expanding the initiative’s reach and impact on global development.

Geographic Scope: The BRI encompasses a broad geographical scope, connecting regions in Asia, Europe, Africa, and even extending to parts of the Middle East and Latin America.

The geographic scope of the BRI spans across more than 150 countries and covers around 65% of the world’s population and 40% of global GDP.

It’s important to note that the geographic scope of the BRI is continuously evolving, with new projects and partnerships being added over time.

Total Investment: Estimates of total investment in BRI projects vary, since 2013, cumulative BRI engagement amounts to about USD1.016 trillion, with about USD596 billion in construction contracts, and USD420 billion in non-financial investments. As of 2022, total Chinese investment in countries of the BRI pared down to around 67.8 billion U.S. dollars.

Infrastructure Development: The BRI focuses extensively on transportation infrastructure. It includes the development of railways, highways, ports, and airports to facilitate the movement of goods and people. As of June 2023, the China-Europe Railway Express has achieved an extensive network, encompassing over 200 cities in 25 European countries. This network spans 86 routes that traverse vital regions within the Eurasian hinterlands. This expansion signifies the remarkable reach and impact of the BRI on intercontinental trade and connectivity. Notable projects under the BRI include the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which reduces the distance between China and the Middle East from 12,900 kilometres by insecure sea lanes to a shorter and more secure distance of 3,000 kilometres by land, and the Nairobi-Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya.

Energy: Chinese engagement related to the energy sector constitutes the largest share of China’s BRI engagement. BRI investments heavily target the energy sector, including the development of power plants, renewable energy projects, and oil and gas pipelines. Analyzing Chinese energy engagement in different BRI countries, Pakistan was the country that received the most energy engagement since the launch of BRI in 2013, receiving almost USD30 billion in investment and construction

Construction crews work at the construction site of the Sosian Geothermal Power Plant project on May 26, 2023 in Nakuru, Kenya.



Photo: Xinhua

contracts, majority of which have been in hydropower and coal followed by Russia and Saudi Arabia. Projects like the China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline and the Karot Hydropower Station in Pakistan exemplify this focus.

Trade Facilitation: The BRI aims to reduce trade barriers by improving connectivity and streamlining customs procedures. China's trade with the countries engaged in the BRI has exhibited steady growth, expanding at an annual rate of 6.4 percent between 2013 and 2022. This growth has culminated in a total trade value of USD19.1 trillion, reflecting the initiative's role in fostering economic collaboration and connectivity among participating nations. This is expected to boost trade volumes between participating countries.

THE FUTURE OF THE BRI IN RESPONDING TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CRISES DEPENDS ON SEVERAL FACTORS

China's willingness and capacity to adapt the BRI to the changing global and local contexts, values, and needs, and to improve its governance, environmental, and social performance based on more consultation, participation, and evaluation from relevant stakeholders. The BRI should remain adaptable and flexible to respond effectively to global development crises. This may involve adjusting investment priorities, aligning projects with local needs, and incorporating lessons learnt from previous experiences.

The willingness and capacity of participating countries to balance their economic and strategic interests with their development needs and local priorities, and to leverage the BRI to promote their own sustainable and inclusive development agendas, through more transparent and accountable decision-making, risk management, and public participation.

The willingness and capacity of non-participating countries, international organizations, and civil society actors to engage with the BRI in a constructive and critical manner, and to use their leverage and expertise to counteract potential negative impacts, promote best practices and standards, and foster dialogue and collaboration among various stakeholders.

The ability of the BRI to respond to challenges and criticisms. Some experts argue that the initiative lacks transparency, accountability, and sustainability standards, and that it risks creating more debt, corruption, and en-

vironmental degradation than benefits for some countries. Some countries have also expressed concerns about China's strategic ambitions, human rights violations, and competition with other powers, such as the US and India.

Therefore, the future of the BRI depends on whether and how it can navigate and contribute to these complex and dynamic challenges and opportunities, in ways that align with the overarching goals of sustainable and inclusive development. Engaging with international organizations, regional partnerships, and other stakeholders can enhance coordination in responding to development crises, ensure project transparency, and promote sustainable development.

THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE RESPONSE TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT CRISIS

With the BRI's expansive infrastructure projects and economic partnerships, it aims to promote connectivity, trade, and development across Asia, Europe, Africa, and even beyond. As the world faces mounting global development crises, such as environmental vulnerabilities, climate change and economic inequality, the future of BRI holds great potential in responding to these challenges and fostering resilience on a global scale.

One of the central tenets of the BRI is that it will strengthen economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development across its member countries. A significant part of this process will have to do with responding to global development crises as they occur. In the long run, these crises, if left unaddressed, threaten to undermine the success of the initiative as a whole. In that regard, China's role in managing global development crises will be essential in determining the effectiveness of the BRI, particularly in helping countries achieve its long term development goals.

The BRI strategically aligns with and supports regional and multilateral development initiatives, such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the European Union's Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia.

For instance, during the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in Beijing, which marked the largest-ever meeting between Chinese and African leaders, a significant declaration was made. China and African nations agreed to deepen their cooperation by align-



Photo/Xinhua

Employees work on a fiberglass production line at Junshi Egypt for Fiberglass Industry S.A.E on June 26, 2023 in Egypt.

ing Africa's Agenda 2063 development strategies with the BRI. This envisioned synergy aimed to enhance connectivity in various areas, including policy, infrastructure, trade, finance, and industrial capacity under the BRI. It also sought to foster increased collaboration in planning African infrastructure and industrial development. Hence, the future of the BRI in addressing global development crises heavily relies as it aligns with participants's initiatives that recognizes the interrelationship between crises.

One important aspect of the BRI's response to this global development crisis is China's engagement with international partners. While the BRI is primarily a Chinese initiative, it has elicited support from countries worldwide, including ones that are not a part of the initiative. Close collaboration with international partners will be critical in ensuring the success of the BRI, and it is through these relationships that China can help to coordinate multilateral efforts to address development challenges across the globe. The BRI is presented as a collaborative initiative with mutual benefits. China emphasizes that the initiative is open to all countries and aims to foster inclusive development and cooperation.

ADDRESSING ECONOMIC CRISES

BRI has the potential to play a crucial role in addressing economic crises by promoting trade and investment along its corridors. The initiative's focus on infrastructure development enables countries to enhance connectivity,

reduce logistical costs, and boost economic growth. By improving transportation networks and establishing special economic zones, BRI encourages trade diversification and regional integration, creating opportunities for countries to recover from economic downturns. Furthermore, BRI projects provide employment opportunities, stimulate local economies, and facilitate technology transfer, thus contributing to poverty reduction and inclusive development.

By maintaining and increasing economic cooperation, BRI can help to mitigate the negative impacts of economic crises on local economies. Additionally, the BRI can foster the diversification of economic activities and assist with the optimization of trade and investment flows, thereby providing aid to unstable and financially weak nations. Enhanced collaboration and increased investment in digital infrastructure, technology transfer, and sustainable business practices can further strengthen economic growth, productivity, and overall development, thereby helping countries respond to crises effectively.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

China has increasingly recognized the importance of environmental sustainability in BRI projects. The greening of the Belt and Road Initiative, driven by China, entails development initiatives aligned with the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) targets that also present climate action-posi-

tive investment opportunities. The BRI's energy related engagement in the first half of 2023 were the greenest in any 6-month period since the BRI's launch in 2013. In the first 6 months of 2023, about 55% of energy engagement went into solar, wind and hydropower.

The BRI recognizes the importance of addressing environmental challenges, including climate change and energy security. As the world is faced with the urgent need to transition towards sustainable energy sources, the BRI can play a pivotal role in facilitating the development of green energy infrastructure.

The BRI has the potential to address climate-related issues by incorporating green development practices, renewable energy, and climate-conscious infrastructure. By investing in clean energy projects, such as solar, wind and hydroelectric power projects, BRI can help countries transition towards low-carbon economies and contribute to global efforts in responding to environmental crises.

The BRI's focus on sustainable infrastructure can serve as a model for environmentally conscious development, setting the stage for a green recovery in the face of climate change.

Additionally, BRI's emphasis on connectivity and trade facilitation can encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and promote the exchange of green technologies. China's commitment to the Paris Agreement and its green Belt and Road principles demonstrate a growing recognition of the need for environmental stewardship within the initiative. By investing in renewable energy projects and promoting sustainable practices, the BRI can help to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change as one of the global developmental crises.

RESPONDING TO GLOBAL HEALTH CRISES

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of global health cooperation and preparedness. The scope and influence of the BRI extend beyond just infrastructure, and the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to global health within the BRI framework.

In response to the crisis, China took steps to incorporate health infrastructure and cooperation into the BRI projects. For instance, China provided medical supplies and assistance to BRI partner countries and established health corridors to facilitate the movement of essential medical resources. These efforts demonstrate an initial response to

addressing global health challenges within the BRI.

The BRI, with its emphasis on connectivity and collaboration, is well-positioned to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources, and medical expertise to aid countries in responding to global health crises. Infrastructure projects funded by the BRI can enhance healthcare systems, facilitate the transport of medical supplies, and promote knowledge sharing among nations. As the world seeks to recover from the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, the BRI's investments in healthcare infrastructure could prove instrumental in building more resilient societies. Additionally, BRI's emphasis on digital connectivity can facilitate the sharing of health-related information and expertise, enabling quick responses to future health crises.

Moving into the future, the BRI could further enhance its capacity in responding to global health crises by:

Strengthening healthcare infrastructure: The BRI could emphasize building and upgrading hospitals, laboratories, and healthcare facilities in partner countries. Investing in healthcare infrastructure can help countries better prepare and respond to future health crises.

Promoting medical research and development: Collaboration in medical research and development between BRI countries can lead to the discovery of new treatments, vaccines, and diagnostic methods. Joint research projects and sharing of scientific knowledge can better equip countries to combat global health challenges. For example, China has collaborated with African countries in developing traditional medicine to treat COVID-19.

Improving healthcare cooperation and capacity building: The BRI can facilitate stronger cooperation between healthcare professionals, institutions, and organizations across partner countries. Exchange programs, training initiatives, and knowledge sharing can enhance healthcare capabilities and preparedness.

Supporting digital health initiatives: The BRI could promote the adoption of digital health technologies, such as telemedicine and health data sharing platforms. This would enable remote healthcare delivery, early warning systems, and efficient response mechanisms during health crises.

Incorporating public health considerations in project planning: The BRI can integrate public health considerations into project planning, ensuring that infrastructure projects are designed in a way that enhances health resilience. This may involve incorporating healthcare infra-

structure and systems into the design and functionality of ports, railways, and other infrastructure projects.

Overall, the future of the BRI in responding to global health crises lies in its ability to effectively integrate healthcare infrastructure, research, and cooperation into its framework. By prioritizing health resilience within the initiative, the BRI can play a significant role in mitigating global health challenges and strengthening global health security in the future.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The success of BRI lies also in its ability to promote inclusive development and reduce inequalities. By investing in infrastructure projects in underdeveloped regions, BRI can stimulate economic growth and uplift marginalized communities. Furthermore, BRI's focus on people-to-people connectivity, cultural exchanges, tourism and education initiatives can foster cross-cultural understanding, respect, social cohesion and strengthen global solidarity during challenging times. These initiatives can bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding among nations, creating a conducive environment for cooperation during development crises.

By prioritizing inclusive development, BRI can contribute to poverty eradication, social stability and sustainable growth, ensuring that the benefits of globalization reach all segments of society.

In conclusion, China's Belt and Road Initiative has the potential to be a catalyst in responding to global development crises. The BRI's future in responding to global

This is the landscape arrangement of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation near the China National Convention Center in Beijing.



(Photo/Xinhua)

development crises rests on its adaptability to changing circumstances and its capacity to address pressing and current challenges. BRI stands at the forefront of addressing the multifaceted challenges that define global development crisis by fostering international cooperation, promoting sustainable development, transparency, and a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of participating nations. By aligning with global development goals and addressing emerging challenges, the future of BRI holds immense promise in shaping a more prosperous, sustainable and resilient world.

As we face significant challenges, the BRI must continue to adapt and evolve, delivering benefits that create sustainable and inclusive development outcomes not just prioritizing efficiency and speed but also taking into account the social and environmental implications of its projects. The BRI's ability to integrate lessons from ongoing challenges and align with broader global development goals will shape its effectiveness in the years to come.

Notwithstanding the positive impact, challenges such as rising debt burdens and environmental issues have emerged, impacting countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Uganda who have, at a point, found it challenging to manage their escalating debt obligations. The ability of the BRI to respond effectively to global development crises also hinges on addressing these challenges head-on.

To secure the BRI's long-term success, there is a critical need for transparent and responsible lending practices, ensuring that participating countries can manage their debt obligations effectively. Additionally, incorporating environmentally sustainable practices within BRI projects is crucial to align the initiative with global efforts toward a more sustainable future.

A collaborative approach that involves not only China and participating nations but also international organizations is paramount. By fostering cooperation, promoting good governance, and adapting to changing global circumstances, the BRI can position itself as a dynamic force for positive change. Ultimately, tackling the identified issues will be pivotal in realizing the BRI's potential to contribute significantly to global development, especially in times of crises, and to foster a more interconnected and prosperous world.

Finally, while the initiative continues to evolve, it is imperative for stakeholders to work together to harness its full potential and navigate the path toward a more prosperous future for all. 🇺🇸

HARMONIZING THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA FOR THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OF AFRICA

Uche Collins NWOGWUGWU

*Director of International Collaborations and Linkages
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria*

The source of African underdevelopment has been linked with inadequate and inflexible intra-African trade. It has evolved into a problem that must be resolved if Africa is to meet the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030 and its ambitious development plan by 2060. Among the frustrating problems facing the continent are trade and investment within Africa, particularly the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Initiatives, Africa's industrialization and export development, trade finance, and financial sustainability.

Out of all the continents in the world, intra-continental trade is lowest in Africa. Her options are restricted by a high average of 8.7% applicable tariff protection rates. Other barriers to trade include the underdeveloped economies of Africa and their over-reliance on the production and sale of commodities, as well as inadequate trade logistics, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and significant security concerns. Non-tariff barriers are another obstacle to trade.

Trade restrictions that limit the import or export of goods without the use of tariffs are known as non-tariff barriers. Non-tariff trade barriers encompass various measures such as import licensing, pre-shipment inspections, rules of origin, custom delayers, and other trade-prevention or trade-restricting devices.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) research, intra-continental trade in Africa was 15%, while it was 59% in Asia and 69% in Europe. The direct result of inflexible intra-African trade is Africa's macroeconomic disequilibrium, which shows up as unemployment, underdevelopment, insecurity, poor output, high and spiral inflations, and multifaceted poverty.

This imperialism and underdevelopment stemmed from Africa's colonial past in terms of intra- and inter-African trade. Because the colonial authorities did not give intra-continental trade development any thought, it not only performed horribly under the colonial system but also was not the main objective of their program. For example, the Berlin Conference of 1884, which jumbled and divided Africa into fragments, not only kept tribes apart but also erected inflexible hurdles to trade between the colonized countries. Since then, trade has primarily taken place between the colonizing power's capital and its colonies. Under colonial trade strategy, manufactured commodities traveled from Europe to Africa, while natural resources traveled the opposite way. The goal of the import substitution industrialization plan was to encourage optimism for growth, but it hasn't yet been able to fully transform into an export-orientation approach.

African post-colonial leaders either never had enough

time to consider the issues or the vision was not present until lately. Regardless, they were unable to alter the colonial trading structure of their economy. African nations continue to engage in trade connections with colonial superstructures and structures. Even if new limits are being drawn every day, the old ones still stand. Intra-African trade is perhaps considerably more difficult than it was under colonization due to strict immigration laws and border police. Today, the lack of infrastructure everywhere further hinders intra-African trade.

THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA

One of the main initiatives of the African Union (AU) is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which was created to bridge the development gap caused by inadequate intra-African trade. The AfCFTA Agreement was established on May 30, 2019, and it has very defined goals. The project seeks to unite 54 African nations and their citizens around the goals of economic development and self-governance. AfCFTA, the biggest free trade area since the World Trade Organization (WTO) was founded, is expected to increase intra-African trade by almost 100% when non-tariff obstacles are removed and by 52.3% when import taxes are removed. According to UN estimates, the AfCFTA would be one of the world's largest free trade areas, valued at over \$2.5 trillion. Thus, the AfCFTA has emerged to improve intra-African integration and trade.

Goals of the AfCFTA

The ambitious goals of the AfCFTA are to

- Create a single market to further the continent's economic unity.

- Create a liberalized market by going through several rounds of talks.

- Encourage the flow of people and capital to make investment easier.

- Proceed with the creation of a future customs union for the continent.

- Attain gender parity, inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic growth, and structural changes in member states.

- Boost member states' competitiveness in the African market and worldwide.

- Promote industrial development through agricultural development, food security, diversification, and regional

value chain development.

Address issues of overlapping and multiple memberships.

With these goals in place, the AfCFTA is anticipated to support job creation, food security, poverty alleviation, economic growth, and the elimination of insecurity throughout the continent. Additionally, it will enable Africa to more effectively finance its development, lessen its reliance on the volatile prices of oil and other mineral resources, and eventually enhance intra-continental trade.

Deficit in Infrastructure and the AfCFTA

The availability of contemporary, multifaceted infrastructure is essential to achieving the goals of the AfCFTA, as it is now either nonexistent or antiquated. For example, Africa requires expansion of existing seaports, doubling or tripling of national and international road lengths, building of new bridges and the renovation of existing ones, and construction of new airports to accommodate the anticipated rise in air travel while maintaining the use of existing ones. It is necessary to extend and repair older rail lines. It is necessary to build new railways through the deep jungles, the Sahara, the huge grasslands, and the coastlines. Development of infrastructure is essential, and the AfCFTA's success largely rests on it.

Other problems also include under-stimulation of intra-African trade, under-exposure of tradable commodities, and need to create demand. A significant portion of Africa's imports are manufactured commodities, yet exporting these goods from a small number of African nations is not supported. The extractive industry receives a disproportionate amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa; the industrial sector still lacks the funding it needs to expand. Due to the inadequate hard and software infrastructure technology, security apparatuses, and infrastructure, investors are also wary of investing in Africa's industry. Closing this gap would be difficult because Africa lacks the financial resources to start building the infrastructure that would be needed to support the AfCFTA plan full-time right now.

THE AFRICAN ECONOMY AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

President Xi Jinping declared in 2013 that China would establish the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road that would connect the

Middle East and Europe with Central Asia via the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. This initiative aims to strengthen already-existing trade channels while revitalizing historic ones. After swiftly combining these, Beijing gave the name Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The primary goal is for China to provide loans and aids to the developing nations so they may build infrastructure in the areas of transportation, electricity, water supply, and so on. In May 2017, President Xi stated in his inaugural speech at the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing that “Infrastructure connectivity is the foundation of development through cooperation.” We should encourage connectivity across land, sea, air, and cyberspace; focus our attention on important routes, cities, and projects; and link networks of roads, trains, and seaports. To create global energy inter-connection and accomplish green and low-carbon growth, we must make use of the opportunities given by the latest cycle of changes in the energy mix and the revolution in energy technologies. To create institutional safeguards

for boosting connectivity, we should strengthen the trans-regional logistics network and encourage policy, rule, and standard linkage. The project is widely favored in the developing nations, nearly all of which have inadequate infrastructure.

If the BRI is successful, China will be able to use its excess savings and building capacity more effectively to support African development. By creating economic lanes that bypass those under the authority of the United States and its allies, China may increase trade, strengthen political and economic ties with participating nations, and diversify its imports of energy and other resources.

One of the BRI projects in Kenya is the \$3 billion Mombasa – Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). Mozambique’s \$785 million Maputo to Katembe Bridge allowed it to participate in the BRI. China’s state-owned Sino Hydro corporation built a \$1.7 billion 600MW hydroelectric dam at Karuma, Uganda, as part of the BRI. China constructed the 153 MW Adama II wind farm and the Hawassa Industrial Park in Ethiopia. China is mod-



Photo/Xinhua

The Central Business District of the new administrative capital under construction, photographed on September 11, 2023, east of Cairo, Egypt.

ernizing Nigeria's dilapidated colonial railway, which runs from Lagos in the south to Kano in the north. China is also constructing railroads to link the cities in the south with each other, as well as the central regions with the nation's Capital Abuja. The first \$2 billion of the massive \$19 billion bauxite infrastructure agreement signed in 2018 is being delivered to Ghana by Sino Hydro. There are many items on the list. Chinese engineers will create a brand-new, state-of-the-art port in Tanzania's Bagamoyo, reportedly at \$10 billion.

Through the expansion of Africa's infrastructure, China's Belt and Road Initiative is making a significant contribution to the continent's growth. Africa would quickly make up a large portion of its infrastructure deficit if the current rate of construction were to be maintained.

Given the scale of Nigeria's market, the railway linking Lagos and Kano, for example, might meet a large portion of the transportation demands of local traders in West Africa under the AfCFTA. Additionally, it might act as a point of entry for Nigerian goods into neighboring markets like those in Niger, Cameroon, and Benin.

Ghana would have easier and more affordable access to its markets with Chinese-funded roads and railways. Similarly, it will be simpler for Ghanaian traders to enter the markets of neighboring countries like Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. Additionally, it has been anticipated that the Belt and Road Initiative's transportation infrastructure projects will shorten shipment times to the rest of the globe by 3.2% and save transportation expenses (Belt and Road Forum Advisory Council, 2021).

Kenya's SGR was initially intended to run along the borders of South Sudan, Uganda, and Rwanda, from the port city of Mombasa to the Lake Region of Kisumu. More trade, jobs, and prosperity for the local population are the results of this. China's construction of the Karuma Hydroelectric Dam in Uganda and other renewable energy projects in Africa is a critical investment for the continent's businesses. More investors will come into Africa's manufacturing sectors thanks to the special economic zones that China has established in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and other countries.

The BRI has undoubtedly become an essential component for the success of the AfCFTA by serving to connect Africa. African leaders must show the political will to commit to the AfCFTA to use the BRI to make the AfCFTA successful; otherwise, BRI projects risk turning into financially unprofitable endeavors. For the BRI pro-

jects to be sustainable, African governments must also guarantee their effective administration.

Although the BRI is well-liked by the developing nations, wealthy industrial economies have expressed opposition to it:

That the initiative lacks transparency and helps China export its autocratic model;

That new debt problems in the developing countries are being triggered by the terms of commercial loans;

Additionally, the projects' social and environmental safeguards are insufficient.

This relationship has two sides, much like a coin has two sides. Among the main obstacles are legislative restrictions. There are policy-based restrictions on the movement of products among the AfCFTA member countries. Some actions could impede the free movement of goods. Infrastructure projects carry a risk of encountering certain issues that could impede their progress and ultimately defeat their purpose.

Here, the reduction in tax revenue can be inferred from the consequences of the AfCFTA objective. This is the money that the government gets and uses to grow the economy and accomplish long-term objectives.

BRINGING THE CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE INTO HARMONY WITH THE AFCFTA TODAY

Two separate projects that seek to support economic growth and development in Africa are the AfCFTA and the BRI. The BRI wants to promote connectivity and collaboration across countries and regions by heavily investing in infrastructure projects, while the AfCFTA aspires to boost intra-African trade by removing trade obstacles and strengthening local and regional value chains.

The promotion of economic development in Africa is the shared objective of both programs, despite their distinct goals. With China's attempts to create infrastructure in Africa, particularly in the areas of rail, roads, and energy, the AfCFTA can gain from the BRI. In addition to international rail and expressways, seaports, hydro-power and carbon-based power, water supply, sanitation, and numerous other development programs that both help meet African needs and pave the way for future developments, the BRI projects in Africa primarily focus on transportation and power.

The AfCFTA aims to enhance economic integration between African nations by establishing a single market

for products and services. This will facilitate the continent's industrialization and structural transformation. Despite their seeming independence, both projects are convergent and offer two tools for economic diplomacy that can be used to address the industrialization problem facing Africa and the barriers to intra-African trade for equitable and sustainable development.

Africa must take advantage of the integration to fulfill its goals and develop into a powerful continent that China can rely on as an ally and partner.

First, encouraging initiatives that align with the goals of the AfCFTA and the Belt and Road Initiative. This is an early advantage that ought to be taken advantage of. Given the foundation of the BRI, projects that are impeded by infrastructure ought to be at the top of the list. Before long, the initiative would be accomplishing its goal and both sides would be gaining from one another.

Second, with the removal or reduction of tariffs inside the African countries in the AfCFTA, agreements leading to international imports and exports can become a bit tactical. To maintain free movement, these ought to be a few of the issues that the BRI can assist Africa in resolving. The main obstacle that Africa faces is infrastructure. With the BRI's specific infrastructure goals, Africa might be well on its path to prosperity.

Regarding the BRI and the growth in trade, the initial relationship between China and Africa was based on economics before other terms of cooperation were added. After the majority of trade obstacles were removed, trading between China and Africa would be unrestricted.

The pandemic's emergence had a significant impact on the majority of economic sectors on both sides, which raised the poverty rate. Because the integration of the initiatives will offer employment opportunities for both sides, hence reducing the amount of poverty and nuisance in society, it is anticipated that the BRI will help elevate up to 8 million people out of poverty.

CONCLUSION

China is Africa's biggest trading partner no doubt, precautions must be taken to prevent trade dominance.

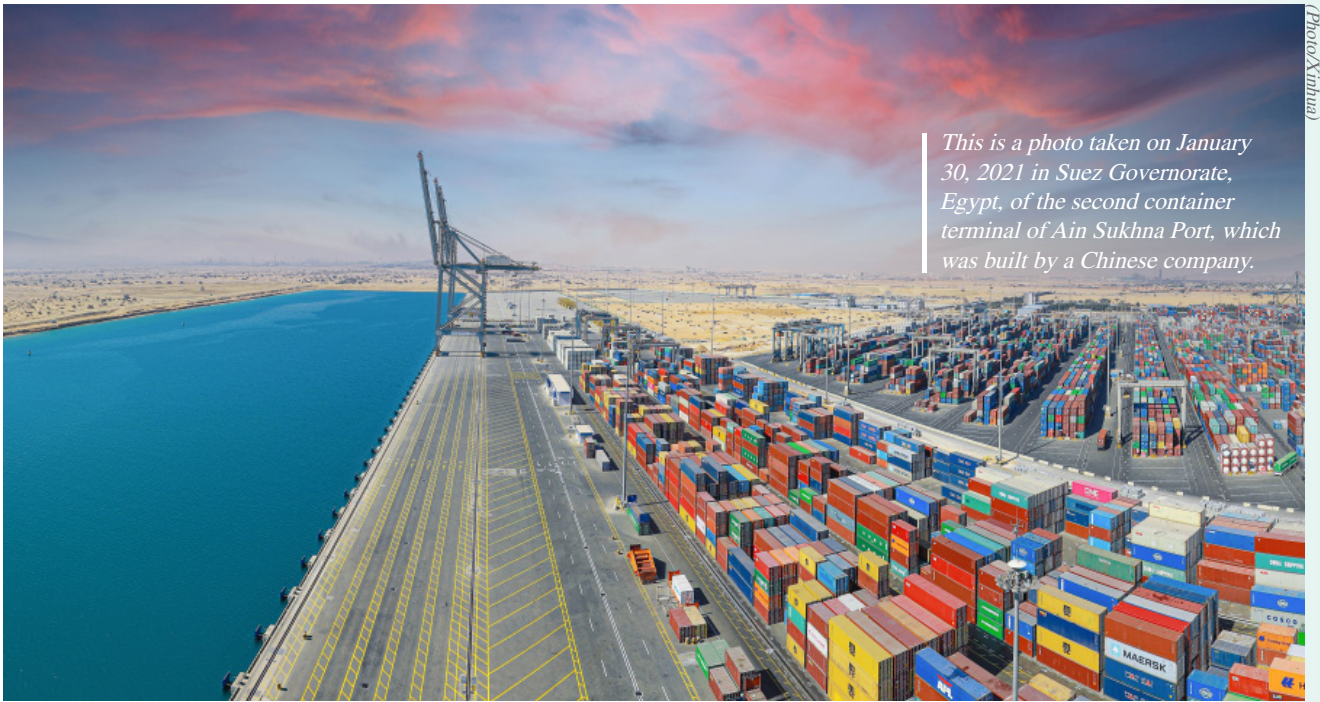
African nations can take a few actions to address the seemingly inharmonious issues that may likely arise. First, they can create a well-thought-out, coordinated reaction to connect the BRI with the AfCFTA. This would entail figuring out where the two projects complement

one another and creating a plan to take advantage of China's infrastructure development endeavors in Africa to create local and regional value chains. Secondly, African nations may prevent the rush of low-cost, fiercely competitive Chinese goods into their markets by cultivating their own manufacturing and value-added businesses. To increase productivity and competitiveness, investments in innovation, technology, and human capital would be necessary. Thirdly, to guarantee that the advantages of the BRI and the AfCFTA are dispersed fairly throughout society, African nations should fortify their governance structures and institutions. To do this, it would be necessary to make investments in public goods like social protection, health care, and education.

AfCFTA and BRI harmonization can result in a win-win partnership that supports African economic expansion and development. While the BRI can benefit from the AfCFTA goal of boosting intra-African trade by creating new business dynamics that offer investors access to a population of 1.7 billion people with combined business and consumer spending reaching \$6.7 billion by 2030, the AfCFTA can take advantage of the BRI's infrastructure and build efforts to develop regional and local value chains.

The African Union (AU) established the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund to assist African nations and the private sector in successfully navigating the new commercial landscape brought about by the AfCFTA. The Base Fund, General Fund, and Credit Fund make up the Adjustment Fund. Contributions from member states, grants, and funding for technical support will make up the Base Fund, which will be used to compensate for tariff income losses when tariffs are gradually removed. Additionally, it will assist nations in putting the AfCFTA Agreement, its Protocols, and Annexes into practice. Concessional finance will be mobilized through the General Fund, and commercial funding will be mobilized through the Credit Fund to support the public and private sectors, allowing them to adapt and seize the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. It is predicted that \$10 billion in resources will be needed for the Adjustment Fund during the next five to ten years.

Lastly, there are benefits and drawbacks to aligning the BRI with the AfCFTA. Although the two programs aim to promote economic development and progress in Africa, they have different goals, and their effective integration will depend on the governments of those countries responding in a coordinated and well-thought-out manner. ■



This is a photo taken on January 30, 2021 in Suez Governorate, Egypt, of the second container terminal of Ain Sukhna Port, which was built by a Chinese company.

Photo(Xinhua)

VISION AND PRACTICE OF CHINA-AFRICA BELT AND ROAD HIGH-QUALITY COOPERATION

Tong Fei

*Director, Division of Peace and Security Studies, Institute of West-Asian and African Studies (IWAAS),
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

The Belt and Road Initiative is China's proposition for seeking common development with other countries in the world. The year 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past ten years, the initiative has connected more than 150 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, covering two-thirds of the world's population and accounting for about 40% of the world's GDP. Looking from a global

perspective, the investment in sub-Saharan Africa in Belt and Road cooperation has increased by 130% in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade, among which the amount of construction contracts has increased by 69%. Sub-Saharan Africa has become the second largest destination of the Belt and Road Initiative-related investment after Southeast Asia, and China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation has moved from the periphery to the center



On October 20, 2023, Mozambique's Prime Minister Maleane (front second left) visits Huaxin Cement Co. in Wuhan.

stage. As the development demands of the African continent are highly complementary to the Belt and Road Initiative, African countries and China have both gained development opportunities in Belt and Road cooperation. In October 2023, the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing, with the theme of “High-quality Belt and Road Cooperation: Together for Common Development and Prosperity”. President Xi Jinping announced eight steps by China to support high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, including building a multi-dimensional Belt and Road connectivity network, supporting an open world economy, carrying out practical cooperation, promoting green development, advancing scientific and technological innovation, supporting people-to-people exchanges, promoting integrity-based Belt and Road cooperation and strengthening institutional building for international Belt and Road cooperation. From the perspective of the achievements, Belt and Road cooperation between Africa and China has been fruitful, which has laid a solid foundation for building a China-Africa community with a shared future. Gearing up China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation for a stage of high-quality development is in the interest of both parties for economic upgrade.

CHINA'S VISION ON BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION WITH AFRICA

Marginalized in the world economic system, Africa has long lacked effective growth and sustainable development dynamics. China has brought new opportunities for Africa's development through Belt and Road cooperation.

China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation features seeking development through cooperation, complementing each other's advantages and achieving mutual benefit and win-win results.

First, the vision of China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation originated from China's new concept of international order. China sympathizes with the development path of Asian, African and Latin American countries, opposes hegemony and advocates democracy-based international relations. Africa is regarded by China as a truly equal partner. President Xi Jinping's first overseas visit after taking office in 2013 was to Africa and he put forward the idea of building a “China-Africa Community with a Shared Future”. The vision is regarded as “a ‘development re-balancing strategy’ based on China's wisdom and far-sightedness, which focuses on building and shaping of new international relations for the common and cooperative development of mankind, and it is essentially different from the outdated international relations system based on law of the jungle and hegemony dominated by the Western countries in modern times.”

Second, common development and win-win cooperation represents the core value for China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation. China's concept of cooperation with Africa, while taking into account China's own development, is based on Africa's needs, focusing on areas in urgent need of development, and constantly broadening and consolidating the foundation of cooperation. At the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2015, President Xi Jinping put forward the “ten cooperation plans” which marked the formal integration of Africa into the Belt and Road Initiative and embody the core principles of common development and win-win results for cooperation between the two sides.

Third, by honoring its commitment in Belt and Road cooperation with Africa, China showcases its strong faith in the program. At the High-level Dialogue between Chinese and African Leaders and Business Representatives and the Sixth Conference of Chinese and African Entrepreneurs in 2018, President Xi Jinping pointed out that China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation is pragmatic and in good faith. Shortly before the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2018, the China government announced that the “ten cooperation plans” for China and Africa had been fully implemented, and China had become Africa's largest trading partner for nine consecutive years. China's commitment and trust-

worthiness is the underlying reason for Africa’s cordial support for the Belt and Road Initiative.

Fourth, China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation also features phased progress. At the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2018, it was proposed that Belt and Road construction should be connected with the implementation of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the development strategies of African countries, and that efforts should be made to cement traditional advantages and create highlights in new economic fields. On the basis of the “ten cooperation plans”, the summit also put forward “eight actions” to beef up support for industrial development, diversified financing and youth vocational training in extremely underdeveloped countries in Africa. In June, 2020, in view of the shortage of vaccines and difficulties in the economy and people’s livelihood in Africa, the Chinese and African leaders held an Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19. President Xi Jinping proposed to speed up Belt and Road construction, focusing on health and hygiene, resuming industrial production and improving people’s livelihood, and at the same time, write off some African countries’ interest-free loan debts to China by the end of 2020 while accelerating digital economy and new energy cooperation.

Fifth, the goal of China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation is to build a China-Africa community with a shared future. The ultimate goal of China-Africa Belt and Road

Jiangsu Provincial People’s Hospital takes gastrointestinal endoscopy as a clinical technology pilot, and carries out Belt and Road medical pilot cooperation with medical institutions in Pakistan, Egypt and other countries and regions.



(Photo/Xinhua)

cooperation is to promote the building of a China-Africa community with a shared future. The pragmatic cooperation under the Belt and Road framework has laid a solid foundation for accelerating construction of these efforts. At the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in 2021, President Xi Jinping made a keynote speech themed as Uphold the Tradition of Always Standing Together and Jointly Build a China-Africa Community with a Shared Future in the New Era, unequivocally linking China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation with the goal of building a China-Africa community with a shared future, which has been widely acknowledged by African countries.

THE FOUNDATION FOR CHINA-AFRICA HIGH QUALITY BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION

After nearly a decade of practice, China-Africa high-quality Belt and Road cooperation is underpinned by a solid material foundation, a multi-level cooperation system and wide public support.

The first is a solid material foundation. Thanks to the support lent by the Belt and Road projects and the increasing political mutual trust, China and Africa have formed close relations of mutual benefit with win-win results. On the whole, the trade between China and Africa showed a rapid growth trend. Although trade volume between the two sides temporarily declined under the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, it has then quickly recovered to the original level and rebounded rapidly. In 2022, the bilateral trade volume between China and Africa reached US\$ 282 billion, up by 11.1% year-on-year. Specifically, China imported US\$ 117.5 billion from Africa and exported US\$ 164.5 billion to Africa, up by 11% and 11.2% respectively. China has maintained its position as Africa’s largest trading partner for 14 consecutive years. In 2022, China’s direct investment in Africa was 3.43 billion US dollars. China’s new contracted projects in Africa amounted to 73.2 billion US dollars, with a turnover of 37.8 billion US dollars. According to a report by the Economist, in 2020, 31% of the infrastructure projects valued at US\$ 50 million or more in Africa were undertaken by Chinese enterprises, and the percentage was a mere 12% in 2013. Belt and Road cooperation has made important contributions to African industrial development.

The second is a multi-level cooperation system. China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation is a model of

multilateralism, which demonstrates multiple levels of cooperation. On the one hand, China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation mechanism relies on the overall growth of China-Africa relations. By November 2021, China has established comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership with nine African countries, comprehensive strategic partnerships with three countries, strategic partnerships with six countries and partnerships of comprehensive cooperation with seven countries. China has also established bilateral committees, diplomatic consultations or strategic dialogue mechanisms with 21 African countries and the African Union Commission, and set up economic and trade joint (mixed) committee mechanisms with 51 African countries. The elevation of overall relationship between China and Africa has laid the foundation for Belt and Road high-quality development and institutionalization efforts. On the other hand, in addition to signing Belt and Road cooperation documents with specific countries, China has also set up cooperation mechanisms to engage with Africa as a whole. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, established in 2000, has become a solid institutional foundation for China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation. The Forum covers wide-ranging areas of cooperation such as politics, economy, people-to-people and cultural exchanges which has fully integrated with the concept and mechanism of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The third is wide public support. China adheres to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, honors its commitment to Belt and Road cooperation with Africa and has made remarkable achievements. According to the 2022 African Youth Survey, 77% of the respondents believe that China is the most influential foreign country on the African continent, and 76% believe that China's influence is positive. Therefore, Belt and Road projects enjoy relatively positive evaluation in Africa. According to Afrobarometer, from 2019 to 2021, 63% of Africans in 35 African countries found that China's economic and political influence in Africa was "positive" or "fairly positive". A German polling agency found that 62% of African respondents wish to be involved in Belt and Road projects. The agency also found that Africa's satisfaction with Belt and Road projects was higher than that of any other region that also partners with China. The positive recognition from Africa has arisen from Belt and Road projects' contribution to the local economic development, and naturally from strengthened cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and Africa.



DIFFICULTIES AND SOLUTIONS OF CHINA-AFRICA HIGH-QUALITY BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION

From Belt and Road Initiative to high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, the endeavors serve the inherent need of economic development for both China and Africa, and represented the future path for sustainable cooperation between the two sides. However, some difficulties in current China-Africa cooperation that need to be addressed.

First, China and Africa face sustainability challenge to the existing cooperation model. Financing the Belt and Road projects in Africa mainly relies on China and the vehicle is relatively single, which has brought big pressure on China. Some scholars point out that construction model of the contracted infrastructure projects



Photo: Xinhua

The Mwanza Satellite City water supply project in Tanzania is an important livelihood project under the China-Africa Belt and Road Initiative.

funded by China's state loans would be unsustainable. The limited-scale trade between Africa and China and the long-standing trade deficit are not conducive to sustainable Belt and Road cooperation. The current situation of China-Africa trade is essentially hampered by the backward industry status and structural problems of the African countries, and may easily trigger nationalism in some of the African countries, and even resistance to investment, products and technology from China.

Second, some African countries suffer from unstable political situation, poor social security and unsustainable policies. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the socio-economic situation in some African countries

has deteriorated with widening wealth gap, rising youth unemployment rate, and coup d'état. From August 2020 to February 2022, there were seven coups or attempted coups in Africa. Some African countries (such as Mali, Burkina Faso, etc.) have been attacked by Islamic State and the remnants of Al Qaeda on substantially more occasions, and the number of attacks by radical Islamic organizations in African countries has increased by 70% from 2020 to 2021. Changes of governments often cause existing Belt and Road projects to be reviewed, which adds uncertainties to implementation of the projects. The local social security issues increase security costs and construction risks.

Third, African countries have different perceptions of China. Although African countries generally hold positive views of China, there are big differences among different countries in their perception of China. According to the Afrobarometer survey in 2021, more than half of the population in Kenya, Ethiopia, Morocco, Sudan, South Africa, Zambia and other countries believe that their governments have borrowed too much from China and there is a risk of "debt trap". A few Chinese businesses having not enough knowledge of the local laws and regulations are involved in labour environmental disputes. Some Africans have xenophobic views towards Chinese workers taking jobs in their countries. Many factors, such as the narrative about the so-called China mounting "neo-colonialism" and "debt trap" in Africa by the Western political communities and media, have affected local people's feeling and perception of China.

Fourth, competition among major countries in Africa has become ever more intensified. In recent years, the United States, the European Union, India, Japan, among other countries and regions, have been increasingly worried about development of Belt and Road Initiative in Africa, and have launched Africa strategies in obvious competition with China.

Although facing many challenges, China-Africa cooperation has a solid foundation. By solving the difficulties, the two sides will have a very broad prospect for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. In the future, the two sides need to focus on the following issues.

First, high-quality Belt and Road cooperation needs to focus on industries that are in urgent need of development in Africa. China-Africa high-quality Belt and Road cooperation requires more attentions to the weak links in African industrial development and boosted collab-



Photo/Xinhua

On September 27, 2023, the Second Conference of the Belt and Road Economic Information Partnership and 2023 Shanghai Entrepreneurs Conference for the Belt and Road High-quality Development kicked off in Shanghai.

oration in infrastructure construction, food supply and manufacturing development. Efforts need to be made to improve the empowerment of science, technology and digital technology, develop green eco-agriculture and high value-added manufacturing, and achieve a high degree of integration of infrastructure projects with the local industries.

Second, it is necessary to further improve the systems for China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation has served as the major platform of promoting Belt and Road cooperation between the two sides. However, at present, it is faced with challenges such as mechanism and system innovation, cooperation scale re-adjustment, cooperation expansion, as well as the pressure of competition in international rules and norms dominated by the Western countries. Therefore, China and African countries should strengthen institutional cooperation at overall and industrial levels.

Third, China-Africa high-quality Belt and Road cooperation requires more independent development on the part of African countries. China's aid to Africa has been in place for decades, and the sustainability of the current cooperation model is being challenged. High-quality Belt and Road cooperation requires more attentions to the independent development ability of African countries, and efforts should be made to explore diversified and flexible ways in investment, financing and profit return, actively involve African domestic enterprises, and improve the standardization and transparency of the financing process.

Fourth, it is imperative to narrate to the general public stories of China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation.

The Western media's false reports on China and Belt and Road projects have caused negative impacts on some African people. At present, there has been a cognitive gap on China and Belt and Road projects in Africa where the governments remain much interested while the civil society remain indifferent. The Chinese government and enterprises need to strengthen communication with the local communities through multiple channels and tell stories of China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation compelling to the general public.

What happened in the past shows that China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation has a clear path and pragmatic results. A stable and close cooperation mechanism has been established, making Belt and Road projects the sure course towards a China-Africa community with a shared future. Under the current complex international situation, China needs to improve the quality of Belt and Road cooperation with Africa up to the standard of "high standards, sustainability and benefits to people's livelihood" and to make steady progress. China-Africa high-quality Belt and Road cooperation also requires targeted engagements with African industries, innovation in institutional platforms, ensuring the sustainability of cooperation, and narrates the stories of China-Africa cooperation in compelling ways. In August 2023, the 15th BRICS Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. It's decided to add two more African countries, i.e. Egypt and Ethiopia, to the BRICS cooperation mechanism. With the strong synergy formed by the Belt and Road Initiative and BRICS plus cooperation mechanism, China-Africa cooperation will continue to upgrade and pace up, and lend impetus to building a China-Africa community with a shared future. ■

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

Zhao Chenguang

Deputy Director and Associate Researcher of the Center for African Studies at the China Foreign Affairs University

China-Africa relations are the bedrock of the foundation of China's diplomacy. In the international cooperation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China-Africa cooperation plays a fundamental role and becomes a highlight, which is seen not only in the "matter" but also the "manner" of China and Africa's joint efforts to develop the BRI. "Matter" hereby refers to the remarkable achievements and "manner" refers to the progress and approaches. As for the "matter", a large number of research outcomes are already in place both in China and abroad, while the investigation into the "manner" is relatively limited. It is critical to review the progress made in China-Africa joint development of the BRI and further explore the specific approaches and highlights of China-Africa cooperation within the BRI framework so as to deepen the joint BRI development in the future.

THE PROGRESS MADE IN CHINA-AFRICA JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRI

Since the proposal of the BRI in 2013, the vision of the BRI has given rise to action and become a reality with concrete implementation in Africa, marked by the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road issued in 2015 and the convening of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Ever since then, China-Africa cooperation has become part of the BRI framework.

Based on the changes and evolution of the relationship between the BRI and China-Africa cooperation, the

implementation of the BRI in Africa can be divided into two successive stages. The first is pilot stage, when China-Africa cooperation was not incorporated in the BRI, yet accumulated experience and paved the way for its implementation. The second is the integration and upgrading stage, when China-Africa cooperation enjoys higher strategic positioning in the BRI and serves as a fast track to a large extent.

I. The Pilot Stage

As a top-level design document, the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road issued in 2015 drew the roadmap for the implantation of BRI. However, the document didn't explicitly identify the position of Africa, indicating that the BRI did not include China-Africa cooperation in the initial stage of planning (2013-2015). But



Children and teenagers on the shores of Lake Rusiwasi, Zambia, welcoming a train from the Tanzam Railway to their home town (taken in 1976).

Photo/Xinhua



Photo: Xinhua

President Mwini of Zanzibar, Tanzania, delivers a speech at the opening ceremony of the 3rd China-Africa Business and Trade Expo on June 29, 2023.

in 2014, China specifically proposed the “461” cooperation framework and the construction of “highways, railways, aviation networks, and industrialization” in Africa, both of which were highly consistent with the BRI and had been going on in Africa before the implementation of the BRI. It is fair to say that the existing cooperation between China and Africa has accumulated experience for the planning and implementation of the BRI and, to a large extent, served as the “pilot experiment” of the BRI cooperation.

II. The Integration and Upgrading Stage

After the convening of the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit, the relationship between China-Africa cooperation and the BRI has gradually become clear. China and Africa have planned their cooperation with the BRI in perspective and the positioning of their cooperation has been constantly improved and upgraded in the BRI framework.

In May 2015, Lin Songtian, then Director-General of the Department of African Affairs of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated in an interview that the BRI represented China’s latest measure of opening up and that it is expected to include Africa, which is an extension of the

Maritime Silk Road, in the grand vision of the BRI. In December 2015, China and South Africa signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of South Africa on Jointly Promoting the Construction of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, indicating that South Africa became the first African country to join the BRI. In August 2016, after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held a symposium on the BRI, Lin Songtian suggested in an interview that Africa, especially eastern and southern Africa, is the historical and natural extension of the Maritime Silk Road. As a critical node of the BRI, Africa represents an important direction and foothold for advancing the BRI westward. During the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in May 2017, the Chinese government released a document titled *Building the Belt and Road: Philosophy, Practice and China’s Contribution*, which identified Africa as a key partner in jointly advancing the BRI. In September 2018, the FOCAC Beijing Summit was convened, and FOCAC was positioned as the major platform for China-Africa BRI cooperation.

APPROACHES OF CHINA-AFRICA BELT AND ROAD COOPERATION

The “Five Connectivities” are the main content of the BRI and also the macro framework for analyzing the implementation of the BRI. With the late-mover advantage of China-Africa Belt and Road Cooperation and in accordance with the specific conditions and existing situation of the “Five Connectivities”, China and Africa have explored a distinctive and practical approach of cooperation, effectively uplifting the level of connectivity between China and Africa and among African countries.

I.High-Level planning leads “policy communication”

The new era has witnessed the frequent high-level exchanges between China and Africa, which effectively facilitated “policy communication” and built a solid political foundation for China and Africa to jointly advance the BRI. During President Xi Jinping’s first visit to Africa which was also his first trip overseas after assuming office in 2013, he announced the principle of “sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith” and of pursuing the greater good and shared interests for China’s relations with Africa as well as the vision of China-Africa community with a shared future. These new concepts have later become the guiding philosophy of China’s diplomacy towards Africa and provided political guidance for “policy communication” between China and Africa, reflecting the fact that China-Africa cooperation is important, representative and demonstrative.

Guided by the Chinese and African leaders, the BRI, the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063 and African countries national development strategies are closely synergized. As the China-Africa comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership is boosted to achieve rapid development, a new pattern of all-round cooperation at multiple levels and in various sectors has been formed. So far, China has signed the BRI cooperation documents with 52 African countries and the AU Commission, making up one third of global BRI cooperation signatories. As one of the most important regions in the joint development of the BRI, Africa has achieved fruitful outcomes in its cooperation with China to advance the BRI.

II. Transportation networks support “infrastructure connectivity”

“Infrastructure connectivity” is a prioritized area for

the BRI development. For a long time, China and African countries have carried out extensive cooperation in constructing transportation infrastructure which has been well recognized and appreciated by the African people. China and Africa choose transportation infrastructure as a breakthrough of “infrastructure connectivity” in their cooperation under the BRI, reflecting the distinctive features of China-Africa cooperation.

Since the proposal of the BRI, with financial and technical support provided by China, African countries have benefited from higher standard infrastructure connectivity. As of now, within the BRI framework, China has built 10,000km standard-gauge railway, 100,000km highway and 100 newly built or renovated ports in Africa. The Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, the Mombasa-Nairobi



Photo(Xinhua)

The Abuja-Kaduna Railway, the first Chinese-standard railroad on the African continent, in the Nigerian capital.



Photo(Xinhua)

Idu Railway Station, the starting point of the Akha Railway.

Railway and the Abuja-Kaduna Railway have contributed to closer connectivity on the African continent. The China-Africa cooperation in infrastructure, with the “construction of transportation networks” as a breakthrough, is hailed as the “accelerator” of economic and social development in Africa.

III. Cooperation in establishing industrial parks facilitates “unimpeded trade”

“Unimpeded trade” is an essential part of the BRI development. In consideration of the comparative advantages of China and Africa, production capacity cooperation takes up a prominent position in economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa. In this regard, joint efforts to establish industrial parks represent a salient feature and highlight of China-Africa production capacity cooperation. With constant devotion, China and Africa have jointly established a batch of economic and trade cooperation zones, special economic zones, industrial parks, as well as science and technology parks to attract foreign enterprises, including Chinese enterprises, to invest, establish production and processing bases, and launch localized operations in Africa. Such cooperation helps create more local jobs, generate more taxes and promote industrial upgrading and technological cooperation.

As of now, China has been Africa’s largest trading partner for 14 consecutive years. In 2022, the bilateral trade volume between China and Africa reached 282 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of 11.1%. China’s investment stock in Africa has exceeded 56 billion US dollars, doubling that of a decade ago.

IV. Multi-pronged measures push forward “financial integration”

For a long time, insufficiency of funds has imposed restraint on the economic and social development of Africa. Within the BRI framework and in consideration of the features of China-Africa cooperation, China has explored diversified financing models for Africa, built a stable and sustainable financing system and thus helped Africa realize independent development through “financial integration”.

Ever since its inception, the financial cooperation between China and Africa has been centering on such real economy sectors as infrastructure construction, unimpeded trade and manufacturing industry. Since its establishment, the China-Africa Development Fund has actively supported China-Africa economic and trade cooperation and invested in a number of projects in agriculture, infrastructure and resource development



(Photo/Xinhua)

Djibouti International Free Trade Zone.



Photo/Xinhua

An agronomy professor from China instructs Kenyan trainees on agricultural technology on September 18, 2023, in Matangitissa village, Nakuru County, Kenya.

among others. The Fund has effectively encouraged Chinese investment in Africa and played a critical role in infrastructure construction, technological progress, export and earning foreign exchange, as well as increasing employment in the host countries. As of October 2021, the 42 African entities from 19 African countries had indirectly participated in the Cross-border Interbank Payment System (CIPS). China has joined multilateral development and financial institutions such as the African Development Bank, the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank and the West African Development Bank. China has pledged a total of 996 million US dollars to the African Development Fund under the African Development Bank.

V. Hear-to-heart exchanges enable “people-to-people bond”

The amity between peoples holds the key to relationship between countries. China and Africa have witnessed ever deeper exchanges in such sectors as culture, media and technology and among think tanks, youth and women, which has further enhanced people-to-people bond and cemented the foundation for relations between China and Africa. Taking the academic and think tank cooperation between China and Africa as an example, China and Africa support various forms of cooperation among academic research institutions, think tanks and universities in carrying out research, academic exchanges and publication of works. Top priority is given to joint research and the sharing of achievements, especially on topics such as

governance, development paths, industrial capacity cooperation, culture and law. Both sides have also been working on enhancing research capacity. More than 80 think tanks and academic research institutions have participated in the China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Plan. The Fifth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC held in 2012 proposed to implement the “China-Africa Think Tanks 10+10 Partnership Plan” for long-term paired cooperation. In April 2019, China-Africa Institute was established in Beijing.

PRIORITIES OF THE BRI DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

As the BRI international cooperation continues to deepen, institution-based cooperation has become an underlying trend and demand of the high-quality BRI development. In October 2023, President Xi Jinping stressed at the Third BRF that efforts should be made to strengthen institutional building for international BRI cooperation and that China would work with its BRI partner countries to strengthen the building of multilateral cooperation platforms covering energy, taxation, finance, green development, disaster reduction, anti-corruption, think tank, media, culture and other fields. Against this backdrop, institutional building should serve as a priority if China and Africa are to deepen the BRI cooperation.

Firstly, more efforts should be made to include African sub-regional organizations in the China-Africa partnership for the BRI development. In recent years, within the framework of the Agenda 2063 initiated by the AU, various African sub-regional organizations have served as concrete platforms for activities included in the Agenda, especially by tailoring the continental framework to sub-regional realities. African sub-regional organizations act not only as the foundation and pillars for the integration of the entire continent, but also directly influence the development strategies of the member countries. According to the latest assessment, African sub-regional organizations are playing a robust role in African integration and development and also serve as the most dynamic and effective basic unit for economic cooperation among neighboring countries in Africa.

Currently, the AU is the sole African inter-governmental organization that has signed the BRI cooperation agreement with China. Moreover, the existing mechanism of the FOCAC which is the main platform for China-Africa cooperation under the BRI, also decides that the FOCAC attaches more importance to sovereign countries

in Africa and the AU which serves as the representative of all African sovereign countries. This leads to an objective result that the African sub-regional organizations fail to attract due attention or even neglected. This is not conducive to the planning and implementation of synergizing development strategies between China and Africa within the BRI framework. China-Africa BRI cooperation has almost covered all countries across the continent. In the next step, China should seek to include major African sub-regional organizations in the framework and process of the BRI development and explore approaches and means for African sub-regional organizations to substantively engage in the FOCAC.

Secondly, efforts should be made to enhance the institutional connection between the FOCAC and the BRF. The institutionalization of the BRF is attracting attention, as it has been convened three times. The FOCAC has accumulated rich experience and gained obvious advantages in terms of institutionalization. On the one hand, the African members of the FOCAC account for one third of the BRI family, representing a critical basis and source of influence of the BRF. On the other hand, as the earliest platform for overall diplomacy established by China, the FOCAC can provide the BRF with reference for institutional building. Correspondingly, the BRF, once being institutionalized, will facilitate the connection between China-Africa BRI cooperation and global development agenda in terms of both values and practice and serve as a platform for the two mechanisms to expand third-party cooperation. In view of this, the FOCAC may make efforts in the following two aspects.

On the one hand, the FOCAC can seek synergy with the BRF in terms of meeting mechanism. The Advisory Council of the BRF has studied the international experience of hosting summits and accordingly put forward a series of suggestions on the institutional building of the BRF. For example, the BRF could be convened every two or three years with regular ministerial or interdepartmental meetings as sideline events. Such proposal is basically consistent with the FOCAC's conference mechanism and arrangement. As their complementary conference resources can be shared, the two forums embrace ripe conditions for cooperation. On the other hand, the FOCAC should enhance connection with the BRF in terms of supportive mechanisms. The FOCAC has not yet established a dedicated advisory and evaluation mechanism, leaving vacuum for the Western think tanks to pre-empt the right



to comment on China-Africa BRI cooperation with often biased reports. To alter such a situation, the FOCAC may leverage the influence and role of the Advisory Council of the BRF, by such means as recommending former African politicians with international influence to join the Advisory Council, encouraging the Council to include more content related to the China-Africa joint BRI development in their policy reports or pushing forward the publication of special reports on Africa. As for the BRF, it has not yet put in place a complete set of supporting mechanisms to follow up the implementation of the outcomes of the BRF, while the FOCAC has established a follow-up mechanism that can provide institutional support for the BRF. Besides, the FOCAC, with rich experience in practice, can facilitate other mechanisms in overall diplomacy to play their roles.

Thirdly, respecting Africa's dominant position, the FOCAC shall explore institutionalized cooperation with third parties in Africa. As the BRI continues to gain greater international influence, cooperation with third parties has



Photo/Xinhua

This is a parked Monnet Railway locomotive photographed on May 23, 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.



Photo/Xinhua

On October 13, 2023, the final of the “Belt and Road: My China” Speech Competition was held in Nairobi, capital of Kenya. The picture is Konchilia Orville, from China Road and Bridge Corp, delivering a speech.

become a major trend. Recent years have witnessed extra-territorial powers beefing up efforts for institutionalized cooperation with Africa. In 2017, Japan and India jointly launched the “Asia Africa Growth Corridor” (AAGC). In 2021, the United States announced the Build Back Better World (B3W) within the framework of the G7, and the European Union launched the Global Gateway. For all these initiatives, Africa is the important goal. Although all these plans or initiatives intend to counter the influence of the BRI, competition also exists among themselves, which is clearly exhibited in the cooperation with Africa. As Africa enjoys higher strategic position and capability of independence while a multipolar pattern of major powers’ cooperation with Africa being formed, China and Africa embrace the potential and space for expanding cooperation with third parties. Therefore, within the FOCAC framework, China can explore institutionalized tripartite dialogues with the Western and emerging countries on such issues as rules and standards, push forward the formation of the new rules that are well recognized by Africa and consistent with Africa’s development conditions and enhance “soft connectivity”. Based on such development, further efforts should be made by China and Africa to explore institutionalized cooperation with third parties, especially the major countries.

CONCLUSION

China-Africa relations are the bedrock of the foundation of China’s diplomacy. Before the implementation of the BRI (in Africa), China had carried out pilot cooperation with Africa within the “461” cooperation framework and in terms of the construction of “highways, railways, aviation networks and industrialization”. With the convening of the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit as a turning point, China-Africa cooperation has been rapidly integrated into the BRI framework. Africa has transformed from a non-traditional region along the BRI to a key partner” and an important participant in the joint development of the BRI cooperation. The remarkable achievements made by China and Africa in jointly advancing the BRI are highlights of the BRI international cooperation, creating an African brand for the BRI development. In the future, China and Africa should further leverage on their advantages, follow the right direction, defuse risks and push forward to high-quality BRI development through intensified institutional building. 📌



The headquarters building of the New Development Bank at the Expo Park, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China.

A NEW APPROACH FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: THE NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK'S ROLE

Dilma Rousseff

President of the New Development Bank

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC DYNAMICS AND ITS CHALLENGES

In our contemporary era, the world grapples with a profound sense of uncertainty, marked by a confluence of crises: a severe climate crisis, a stark surge in inequality, sluggish economic growth, and the rise of trade protectionism. These challenges intertwine with the disruption of global value chains, geopolitical turbulence and multifaceted conflicts, collectively fostering an environment where instability and insecurity have become the norm. The recent escalation of inflation and the resultant monetary policies, which have triggered interest rate hikes, bank failures, and excessive leveraging,

have amplified the specter of recession across developed economies, exacerbating volatility across credit, currency, and capital markets.

It is apparent that the financial neo-liberalism practiced in developed countries has caused credit and finance to become “headwinds” rather than drivers for the productive economy. They have become real hindrances and the center of unbridled speculation that sucks all resources dry. Thus, a growing concentration of income and wealth in the hands of very few in the Global North has brutally increased inequalities, while simultaneously also creating more inequality, speculation, instability, and successive crises in the Global South. The weak regulation of

international finance has failed to prevent recurring crises linked to the financialization of Western economies. The regulatory measures recommended by the G20 have not been able, in fact, to prevent the occurrence of either new speculative bubbles or excess liquidity problems and high leverage that have led to new bank failures.

The globalization trend that promoted more internationalized markets, trade, industrial production, services, currency flows, bonds and shares, as well as information has been receding ever since the 2008/2009 global financial crisis. Before the crisis, global value chains, one of the pillars of globalization, were growing at a faster rate than other components of GDP but have since slowed down. This downturn was followed by a rapid recovery in 2010 to 2011 and since then, with the exception of 2017, global value chains have been growing at a slower rate than global GDP. This slowdown of globalization has resulted in lower economic growth and fragility in global value chains and it is further deepened by the pandemic. Protectionism, decoupling and de-risking policies, and sanctions have acted to intensify these already serious fractures inherited from the great financial crisis.

More recently, the weaponization of the US dollar through sanctions in geopolitical conflicts has raised the price of food and energy, further fragmenting supply chains. Blocking the access of sovereign nations to their own international reserves, as well as other practices based on the unacceptable notion of extraterritorial jurisdiction, has created an environment of distrust regarding the safety of assets kept in Western financial institutions.

At the same time, the United Nations has not been able to cope with the growing geopolitical tensions, nor have the so-called Bretton Woods institutions – the IME, the World Bank and the WTO – shown they are capable of reversing the trends of geo-economic fragmentation and growing social fragility.

Another clear symptom of the lack of coordination in international governance is the alarming fact that the climate crisis and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not being addressed in accordance with the decisions taken at all the UN Conferences of the Parties (COPs) and other international environmental forums that have taken place in the last decade. The capital contributions to developing countries that the rich countries had pledged to make since COP 15, the Agenda 2030, which defined the Sustainable Development Goals, and even the Paris Agreement, have never materialized.

Nevertheless, macroeconomic uncertainty prevails at a global level on account of the effects of high inflation and of monetary policies that drive interest rates upwards, giving rise to bank failures and excessive leverage. The end of quantitative easing and the adoption of quantitative tightening also contribute to increase the risk of recession in developed countries and to intensify the volatility of credit, currency and capital markets. For their part, developing countries have generally suffered the effects of interest rate increases and exchange-rate devaluation. The high indebtedness of these countries, caused largely by neo-liberal austerity policies, is now maximized by the stratospheric impact of the strong dollar exchange-rate policy, as well as of the inflationary spiral, on their external debts, with many reaching the threshold of default.

In this setting, rather than mere objective phenomena that weaken the patterns of globalized economic and financial relations, notions such as “decoupling” and “de-risking” are indeed political weapons used to curtail the rise of new players in the international arena. The very dynamics of globalization, although currently weaker, has given rise to a deep interdependence among economies and regions of the world, an interconnection that has grown in tandem with the increase in international trade, the greater density of global value chains and the multiplication of capital flows. Disconnecting the world has thus become unworkable, and any attempts to erect insurmountable barriers between countries is nothing but an extemporaneous return to the Iron Curtain.

Here's when dichotomies arise, and all countries are confronted with a choice: polarization or common pros-



Dilma Rousseff, president of the New Development Bank.

Photo/C Photo

perity? Cold War mentality or multilateralism? Copying other countries' development models or building one's own paths in light of each nation's conditions? Fighting climate change with meaningful injections of new money or simply leaving things as they are?

One of today's most serious threats is a new form of protectionism: the containment of development in emerging countries. This is the case of containment policies directed at China, whether through unilateral tariff increase policies, which demoralized the WTO, or the recent Chips and Science Act of August 2022, which blocked the global production chain of semiconductors. These rifts in the previous pattern of globalization require reforms in global governance in order to break with protectionist unilateralism.

Therefore, it is imperative that we seek a consensus based on the principle of shared prosperity, by which all countries stand to gain from the wealth generated globally, one that is associated with the rejection of the unipolar model under all its forms. There is no possibility of shared prosperity where sanctions, attempts to contain emerging countries, financial and technological trade blocks prevail.

What is at issue today is the "exorbitant privilege" itself, an expression coined by De Gaulle's Minister of Finance to define the position acquired by the US dollar. In other words, as the world accepted the existence of a single international reserve currency, we witnessed the rise of an asymmetric financial system that has always provided great advantage to the country issuing that currency. As a result, not only are US companies, by definition and unlike their competitors in other countries, protected from exchange-rate risks, but they also enjoy US dollar's huge seigniorage gains, as their competition in other countries are forced to sell goods and services to obtain dollars while Americans obtain them simply by printing money. Not to mention the even greater privilege of having the US public deficit financed by all international economic agents who need to have dollar-denominated assets which are then recycled and kept in US and international financial institutions, under the strict regulatory control of the Fed. The abuse of the latter privilege, by freezing sovereign international reserves under the name of financial sanctions, has given rise to questions worldwide concerning the inherent arbitrariness of the global monetary order.

It appears evident that, in the long run, the overall ge-

ostrategic position of the US relative to emerging powers will be of key importance to the global monetary system, as it was also the case with previous hegemonic currencies. While US domestic policies and the evolution of its international alliances are crucial to its position in the geopolitical sphere, this position will ultimately depend on the success of the American economy, as a whole. Put simply, the question is whether the US economy can maintain its leading position as a driver of innovation. That is the underlying reason for the policies of containment of emerging powers, as it was once done to Japan and is now being attempted at China.

As always, past performance is not an indicator of future success. Everything indicates, however, that two scenarios are clearly unlikely: on the one hand, the emergence of an alternative hegemonic currency, that is, the replacement of the dollar-based monetary system by another centric currency in its stead. On the other hand, the creation of a global currency, as Keynes wanted.



Because then, as now, the necessary condition to sustain such a currency, that is, a global geopolitical unity, does not exist.

In the absence of a complete replacement of the dollar as the leading currency, and without the emergence of a single global currency, the most likely outcome is the constitution of a new monetary system, better adapted and more multipolar, resulting from three factors. First, from the steady tendency towards growing bilateral trade, which gives rise to increasing returns of scale in the use of their respective currencies, to the detriment of those obtained with the dollar. Second, from the deepening of local capital markets in emerging economies. And finally, from the many efforts on the part of these countries to establish insurance schemes against exchange-rate crises in their balance of payments, similar to the Contingent Reserve Agreement (CRA) that was designed by the BRICS countries – sometimes resorting to simpler mechanisms, such as local-currency swaps.



Photo: Xinhua

This is the wind turbine of Zhongmin Fujian Putian Pinghai Bay Phase I Offshore Wind Power Project, China. The second phase of the project was granted a sovereign loan of RMB 2 billion by the BRICS New Development Bank.

In short, the intensification of bilateral trade between countries and the returns to scale generated from it can reduce the transaction costs between the buyer's and seller's currency, as well as protect against shocks arising from interest-rate and exchange-rate fluctuations. Data published by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) show a continuing growth in foreign trade in currencies of emerging economies, which, they say, is also largely the result of significant transactions with emerging economy assets in capital markets. In any case, the growing participation in global trade and capital market transactions involving emerging economies suggests that the dominance of the dollar will diminish further, making the global monetary system more diverse and multipolar, with the currencies of major developing countries gaining in importance.

Another very relevant matter is the environment. As a result of the severe social and natural challenges of the current century, economic development must be always viewed as sustainable development. This means development that depends critically on a healthy environment and on a society built on a foundation of equality. This is the vision set out in all the landmark international agreements on the subject, starting with the Rio 20 Declaration, and then going on to the Paris Agreement, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. But words are simply not enough. We must come up with a concrete blueprint for facing up to our realities. We must propose and implement financial mechanisms and business models that generate employment and income, while conserving a natural capital base – namely soil, water, climate, forests, biodiversity and oceans. The preservation of this base is essential for us to sustain the economic process itself.

This is why it is urgent that we rescue the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals. They express a vision of the future and a plan of action in favor of people and of the planet. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions is pointed out as the greatest global challenge and as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

However, we currently face an estimated total deficit of USD 4.3 trillion in the availability of the resources needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030, according to the OECD. The enormity of this gap has led UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to call it “a financing black hole” and rightly so.

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) have an important role to play in financing development and can help low- and middle-income countries to achieve their climate change targets and the SDGs. However, these banks play only a supplementary role, and it is not possible to transfer over to them the responsibility to provide the resources for climate adaptation and mitigation that had been assumed by the rich countries and that, so far, has not been fulfilled.

It is inconsistent for the US and the EU to claim that it is necessary to reduce the debts of developing countries while systematically increasing interest rates and supporting IMF austerity policies. It is inconsistent to advocate for increased capital leverage in MDBs and for more concessional lending, while still accepting that MDBs which implement such measures will be punished by credit-rating agencies with downgrades and consequently higher interest rates. Therefore, we must promote a more comprehensive discussion on the Capital Adequacy Framework (CAF) proposed by the G20 and its true impacts on financing the SDGs, fighting climate change, and preserving the financial health of MDBs.

The fact is that, in 2023, we are already three years behind the date to start mobilizing USD 100 billion a year in climate adaptation and alleviation funds for developing countries, as agreed in Copenhagen in 2009. Some reports even claim that the actual aid provided so far is less than the published figures, and mainly translates into debt that must be repaid.

However, it is not credible to imagine that the enormous costs associated with climate change adaptation and alleviation, as well as with the eradication poverty, can be met mainly through costly bank loans, since these are, by their very nature, only a supplementary source of funds. In view of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as defined by the Kyoto protocol, and considering the much larger responsibility of developed countries in causing climate change, it becomes clear that only high-income countries that do not have to bear the burden of unpayable external debt can use loans as a major source of funds. Many developing countries cannot.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its commitment to “leave no one behind”, reminds us that bold, transformative steps need to be taken urgently to put the world back on the path to sustainability, resilience, and inequality reduction. Neither the SDGs nor



This is a part of the metro project, under loans from the New Development Bank, in north Mumbai, India, on June 22, 2023.

the fight against climate change can be achieved without new money being brought to the table. Putting new names on existing programs and budgets simply will not do from now on.

The poorest countries need to be given new resources to achieve the SDGs in a way that does not plunge them further into debt. Similarly, resources for climate change adaptation and alleviation must be made available while respecting the free exercise by developing countries of full and permanent national sovereignty over all their wealth, their natural resources, and their level of economic activity. Therefore, it is imperative to build an effective consensus and to adopt a new posture of close cooperation between rich and poor countries to face these serious problems.

Circumscribing by the necessity of a deeper cooperation, two vital trends have emerged recently, wielding the potential to reshape the existing landscape. The first dynamic underscores a transition from a unipolar global economic structure to a multipolar framework, as propelled by the ascendancy of the Global South. In 1950, the United States commanded 39.4% of global GDP on the Purchasing Power Parity metric, while the G7 collectively controlled 68.6%. These nations were the chief architects of the global economic architecture, as underscored by the establishment of institutions like the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. However, the ascendancy of developed economies has undergone a seismic shift in the new millennium, with Emerging Mar-

ket and Developing Countries (EMDCs) gradually claiming a larger share of the global economic pie since 2008. China, most notably, dethroned the US as the world's largest economy (in PPP terms) in 2013, commanding 18.5% of global output in 2022, nearly three percentage points higher than the US. Likewise, India's ascent saw it surpass Japan in 2008, becoming the world's third-largest economy (in PPP terms). In 2020, the BRICS nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – collectively eclipsed the G7 economies in output for the first time in history (31.04% vs. 30.95%). Over the past decade up to 2021, the BRICS bloc contributed almost twice as much to global growth as the G7 (43.2% vs. 22.6%). This emergence of the Global South has endowed it with the role of a pivotal engine for worldwide development.

The second trend revolves around the geographic pivot of the world economy towards the East. In 1990, the Western regions – encompassing North America, Latin and Caribbean America, Europe, and Central Asia – accounted for 65.4% of global output, dwarfing the Eastern regions, which encompassed South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific, with a 24.9% share. Over three decades, the latter's share surged to 41.7%, while the former waned to 49.2%. With burgeoning Asian economies like China, India, and ASEAN members continuing their expansion, the East is poised to emerge as the preeminent economic region in the forthcoming decades.

Above all, a multipolar system is indispensable. For emerging economies, it is about overcoming the condition of mere commodity providers. The Global South, Latin America, and Africa in particular, must seek industrialization or reindustrialization with new characteristics. Many countries have not even reached the third industrial and technological revolution. And now, facing the fourth revolution, they are threatened to become mere consumers of platform capitalism products, only using digital applications in their economies. Digital integration and multilateral platforms such as the BRICS Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank, and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) are strategic in promoting this new and more balanced multipolar order.

Improving international governance is at the foundation of building shared prosperity for all. We must improve existing institutions and, when necessary, create new ones that are more effective and resilient, and that function in a truly multilateral and multipolar manner.

For all these reasons, it is essential to ensure an effective arbitration power to the United Nations system. Simply put, the decisions of the UN General Assembly need to be considered by the entire international community. The purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be respected. The decisions of its institutions such as the General Assembly, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) must be readily implemented. This is the only way for the voices and the rights of the majority of humankind to be heeded – and, besides prosperity and inclusion, this is the other indispensable foundation of peace.

THE NDB'S ROLE IN GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Clearly, in order to cope with this disquieting situation of global economic governance, a whole new level of political and institutional engineering becomes urgent and indispensable if we truly are to promote inclusive and sustainable development in an environment of common prosperity and peace for all peoples and countries. Without inclusive and sustainable development there is no peace. Without peace there is no stability and security.

The issue of financing economic and social development urgently demands structural changes in the international financial architecture that will make it possible to channel the available liquidity in such a way as to enable financing both on the scale and under the conditions required by developing countries and emerging economies. Consensus-building and intense cooperation must be used to improve environmental governance instruments greatly, steer green financing mechanisms towards a truly multilateral mode of operation. Increased investment in research and dissemination of sustainable energy generation technologies for the Global South is also needed to drive the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Moreover, reforming the global financial architecture is an urgent mandate. The framework must embrace multipolar currencies, circumventing undue reliance on a singular currency that fuels unipolarity in both economic and political spheres. It should expedite the transmission of development finance to the Global South, fostering swifter, larger-scale and more agreeable disbursements. Concurrently, it should encourage the utilization of Global South local currencies while deepening domestic capital markets for more efficient resource

mobilization. The new financial architecture must champion inclusivity, eschewing inequality and wealth concentration.

Furthermore, this new global financial architecture could be shaped by a more inclusive, multilateral currency platform based on Central Banks Digital Currency (CBDC) that could provide a cross border payment secure structure, offering a faster and cheaper digital payments systems, providing people and countries, currently outside the traditional banking system, with access to financial infrastructure. It could also reduce settlement risk and delays on international trade. Notably, China is the most developed case of digital payment system through the implementation of e-CNY.

The path forward necessitates the enhancement of existing institutions or the creation of novel multilateral and multipolar entities that are more resilient and impactful. A multilateral and multipolar alternative is imperative to bridge the gap between the Global North and South and to preclude the pursuit of unipolar policies and geopolitical conflicts. Enhancing international governance forms the bedrock for fostering shared prosperity across the globe.

In this context, the New Development Bank, with its roots in the Global South and its commitment to multipolar cooperation, holds immense potential to shape this new paradigm. The NDB is making significant contributions to the new global economic governance in its own unique ways.

The NDB structure of shareholding provides an equal voice to all countries that integrate the institution, despite large differences in their political systems, economic history and geography, as well as population size, while no single country has the veto power. The NDB internal governance also is an innovative model that ensures greater agreements. This governance model guarantees that all shareholders have equal voices and responsibilities. This contrasts with the structure of the traditional development institutions, including global and regional MDBs and specialized development agencies, in which the advanced economies usually hold the majority shares and therefore, the decision powers.


Another major component of NDB's innovative governance is that the NDB does not impose conditionalities linked to public policies. Our financial support is provided free of onerous conditions.

Furthermore, the NDB is expanding its membership

in a gradual and balanced manner to better position itself as a global multilateral financial institution with a membership base that reflects its focus on EMDCs. Membership expansion enables the NDB to promote infrastructure and sustainable development in more EMDCs, enhance its role as one of the key platforms for international development cooperation, and therefore, contribute directly to the global development agenda. It will also strengthen NDB's capital base, diversify its portfolio, and increase its capacity to mobilize financial resources for development purposes. Since 2021, the NDB has added Bangladesh, UAE, and Egypt to its original member list of five BRICS countries.

Using our example in NDB, we can state that a better global economic governance cannot be achieved without deepened collaborations among MDBs. In this regard, the NDB has been working closely with partner MDBs in co-financing projects. Over 2022-2026, the NDB aims to co-finance 20% of the approved projects with peer MDBs. The NDB is also actively cooperating with peer MDBs to crowd in more investment on infrastructure and sustainable development from private investors and other sources such as pension funds and sovereign wealth funds.

Last but not the least, the NDB aims to become a knowledge hub for EMDCs and bring the views of EMDCs to the center stage of the new economic governance. The NDB facilitates the exchange of development ideas and expertise, particularly on infrastructure and sustainable development, among BRICS and other EMDCs. The NDB seeks to become an important platform for EMDCs to engage in constructive dialogues and cooperation, disseminate leading practices and solutions to development challenges, and make EMDCs' voices widely heard.

Today, the NDB is a well-capitalized bank, with very little leverage, and it has all the conditions to expand its operations as an important tool for supporting the sustainable development projects that the countries of the Global South so desperately need. The NDB has been demonstrating its commitment to fostering equitable development, echoing the values enshrined in the UN General Assembly's principles. As the NDB plays its part in amplifying the voices of the Global South, it stands as a complementary force rather than a replacement of the prevailing system. By enhancing its capacities and forging alliances with peer institutions, the NDB can catalyze infrastructure investment and propel sustainable development, translating intentions into impactful actions. 



NATIONAL SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE DIGITAL ERA AND THE BUILDING OF A COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE IN CYBERSPACE

Lang Ping

Researcher at the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

A review of the history of human development shows that every major technological revolution brings new challenges to national security. With the advent of the information technology revolution represented by the Internet, cybersecurity has become an issue of paramount importance, and the digital intelligence revolution with digital technology innovations such as big data and cloud computing has further expanded the content and connotation of cybersecurity, which has been on a par with national security in the digital age. At present, the digital space has become an arena for competition between major countries. Against the highly uncertain security threats and risks in the digital

age, joint governance or confrontation and split of the international community will determine, to a large extent, the future of human development.

NATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

With the acceleration of innovative applications and integrated development of digital technology, the digital, networked and intelligent revolution is unfolding around the world, and the digital economy has become a new driving force and engine for world economic growth and industrial transformation. Meanwhile, the widespread application of digital technologies also brings more and

wider security risks, and national security faces greater uncertainty and complexity in the evolving technological development. This is manifested in the continuous ravages of malicious cyber activities such as cyberattacks and cybercrimes. Meanwhile, data security and artificial intelligence security risks are oncoming and intertwined with cybersecurity risks. National security environment in the digital era has changed from the Internet age to an era of digital intelligence .

In the Internet age, countries are facing two types of security threats which are technical and social. Security threats at the technical level exist in all aspects of the cyberspace system, and security threats at the social level are mainly cybercrime, cyberterrorism, infringement of personal information and privacy, public opinion warfare and information warfare in the context of information manipulation. The national security risks in the Internet era mainly come from the technical vulnerabilities of the Internet itself and the artificial use or weaponization of the application layer and content layer of cyberspace. In other words, the higher the degree of informatization of a country, the greater its dependence on network facilities, and the higher the security risks it faces. The United States, the creator of the Internet with the most powerful cyber strength in the world, has successively introduced offensive cybersecurity strategies such as “defend forward”, “persistent engagement”, “layered deterrence” and “hunt forward”, but also faces many cybersecurity threats.

In recent years, boosted by the wave of the Internet, important progress has been made in digital technologies such as big data, cloud computing, Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence. Digital economy and real economy have been deeply integrated with the cyberspace, thus ushering in the era of digital intelligence. An important feature of this era is the emergence of a convergence ecosystem of digital technology, and every technological innovation is backed up by other technological breakthroughs. Whether it is the prospect of the Internet of Everything or the wide application of artificial intelligence, it needs to rely on strong Internet infrastructure, and continuous improvement of big data technology and computing power. On the other side, security threats in cyberspace have also taken on new features of convergence. Whether it is the mutation and upgrading of cyberattack tools or the expansion of attack effects and scope of influence, supply chain security, data security, and artificial intelligence security not only are vital to a

country’s industrial and economic security, but also penetrate into all aspects of the country’s political, economic, social, and military fields, with wide-ranging implications.

In particular, the major breakthroughs in strong artificial intelligence have attracted great attention for the security risks they brought about. Ian Bremmer, political scientist and president of the Eurasia Group, a consulting firm that studies global political risks in the United States, pointed out that the iterative upgrade rate of generative AI is beyond imagination. Countries try to control AI and make it available for their own use, but it is far from keeping up with the upgrade and popularization of AI. This technology is likely to threaten the status of the nation states as a force to shape of geopolitical order in the world and will trigger a fundamental shift in the global power structure and balance.

STATE ACTORS IN THE DIGITAL SECURITY DILEMMA

The security risks accumulated during the continuous evolution of the digital age have become an important feature of the changes of the current era, and the profound adjustment of the balance of power between major countries has led to the intensification of major country competition, which has become not only the root cause of the national security dilemma in the digital age, but also an important fulcrum for the evolution of international relations in the digital age. Security has always been the most fundamental interest of state actors in a state



China’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Zhang Jun (1st L) talks to delegates before a high-level open session on artificial intelligence and security at the UN headquarters in New York on July 18, 2023.



Photo/CNS

On May 7, 2021, Coroneil Pipeline Transportation, the largest fuel pipeline operator in the United States, was hacked and forced to shut down its supply network.

of anarchy, and the protection of a country from major security threats and the elimination of security fears are the most fundamental needs for their participation in international interactions. Changes in the international environment in the digital age are having an impact on the behavior of states in the international system.

First, growing sense of insecurity in a country. It is generally believed that security refers to the state in which a country feels free from threats or fear, including both the objective situation of external threats and the subjective perception of threats by actors, which is directly related to its ability to maintain national security. At a time when the balance of power of states has undergone profound adjustments, the rapid iteration of digital technology innovation and application has become an important engine for the improvement of the comprehensive national strength of major countries, but it will also lead countries to fall into a vacuum of security capabilities in

this field, with increased national insecurity, and intensified the fear of the rapid improvement of the strength of other countries, especially adversary countries. For example, in June 2023, Germany released its first National Security Strategy, covering diplomacy, police affairs, international development, cybersecurity, and supply chain, marking a significant pan-security shift in Germany's national security concept in the digital age.

Second, over-generalization and abuse of the concept of national security in the context of major country competition. As geopolitical conflicts and major country rivalry intensify, some countries have begun to use the power given by economic interdependence as a geopolitical tool for forcing other countries. In particular, in the context of the development of digital technology towards an integrated ecosystem, the scientific and technological cooperation, investment and trade exchanges and even related people-to-people exchanges in the digital field

are artificially related to national security and containment measures are expanded systematically from certain technology companies to the entire industrial chain, and the exchange activities between countries in many fields such as economy and society are under the control of the so-called national security. It not only leads to the fragmentation of the global industrial chain and supply chain, greatly reducing the production efficiency of the global economy, but also drives up the cost of maintaining security for relevant countries and increases the risk of falling into a security dilemma.

Third, consideration of balancing security and development in foreign relations. As countries' sense of insecurity in the digital age is on the rise, and the concept of security continues to generalize, more and more foreign economic activities are restricted as they are considered to be closely related to national security. Considering the universality and dual-use of digital intelligent technology in both military and civilian applications, for a country, whether to adopt an open or restricted strategy in the digital field concerns not only the market interests of its relevant industries and national economic development, but also whether its national security risks are controllable. There are typical cases related to supply chain security and cross-border data flow. In recent years, whether it is Europe and the United States that have shifted from the initial "decoupling" to the so-called "de-risking" with China, or the United States that hopes to narrow down the scope as much as possible, draw a line and focus on the chokepoint technology against China in the process of promoting the "small courtyard with high walls" strategy, the essence is seeking to maximize their own development interests while developing economic and trade relations with China, and safeguard their core security interests on the basis of maintaining their absolute competitive advantage over China.

WORK TOGETHER TO BUILD A COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE IN CYBERSPACE

In the face of more complex and uncertain factors and challenges in the era of digital intelligence, whether the international community should allow geopolitical confrontation and competition to escalate or work together to deal with it is a major issue facing all countries, especially major countries. If the former is chosen, human society will probably enter an era of uncontrol-

lability, and the development of science and technology will bring about large-scale conflicts, confrontations, and regression of civilizations. If the latter is chosen, the international community will jointly address the security threats and challenges brought about by digital technology on the basis of shared governance, and bring peace, prosperity and civilization progress to the world.

As far as the current international system of cyberspace is concerned, the models of cooperation between countries can be broadly divided into three categories: dependent cooperation, major country competition, and full cooperation. The dependent cooperation model is characterized by unequal cooperation between the dominant country and the dependent country, and the former can use the resources of the latter to a large extent to develop the digital economy and provide security protection for the latter, but it is easy to fall into a "center-periphery" digital hegemony system, which will solidify and exacerbate the inequality in the development of the global digital economy. The major country competition model, often occurs between the advanced countries and the rising countries. Their competition in the digital space across the board, can easily fall into traps of security race that divert a lot of resources for economic development. The full cooperation model is characterized by shared governance, mutual benefit and win-win results, which is more conducive to the common development of all parties on the basis of balanced security.

Theoretically, China's initiative to jointly build a community with a shared future in cyberspace is consistent with the full cooperation model which is conducive to achieving a dynamic balance between high-quality development of the digital economy and high-level security across the world by coordinating the interests of all countries and promoting cooperation among all parties. In practice, in the face of the rather anarchic in the international community, especially in the national security environment where uncontrollable risks continue to increase in the digital age, how should we promote the building of a community with a shared future in cyberspace?

First, the international community should fully recognize that common security is the only effective way to address the digital security dilemma. Looking back at the development of the Internet, while the Internet is innovating human production and lifestyle, the security risks it faces continue to expand, and deficits in security and governance in cyberspace continue to increase due to the

lack of effective cooperation between countries. Driven by a strong sense of insecurity, some countries pursue self-security by increasing their own security investment and adopting aggressive unilateral security measures, which only leads to greater insecurity due to the characteristics of cyberspace security risks of crossing national borders and converging in multiple domains. The advent of the era of digital and artificial intelligence is like a potentially powerful risk amplifier, which is likely to bring immeasurable security risks to mankind in the case of disorder in cyberspace. If the development of science and technology does not necessarily bring about the progress of human civilization, and human history has always been in a cycle between progress and retrogression, the primary condition for getting rid of retrogression and turning to the path of progress is that all countries should establish the concept of common security.

Second, justness and equitableness are the basic requirements for the establishment of an international order in cyberspace. Justness is mainly manifested in respect for the cyber sovereignty of all countries. The principle of sovereign equality is the fundamental norm governing contemporary international relations in cyberspace, and it is also the premise and foundation for building a community with a shared future in cyberspace. Since the essence of international cooperation is the transfer of sovereignty, the international order in cyberspace can only be built on the basis of voluntary obedience by countries, otherwise it cannot reflect the sovereign equality between countries. Equitableness is mainly manifested in the balance of rights and responsibilities of countries, and the balance and reciprocity of rights and responsibilities is a recognized principle of international law, which is particularly important for the construction of the current international order in cyberspace. Since cyberspace is a technology-based man-made space, and some countries have seized enormous power by virtue of the absolute superiority of the first mover, they should assume greater international obligations at a time when the technological ecosystem is becoming increasingly integrated and the digital divide continues to widen. From the Internet era to the era of digital and artificial intelligence, countries have built fences of sovereign borders in cyberspace to safeguard national security. As the Western proverb goes, "Good fences make good neighbors", sovereign boundaries are like fences in cyberspace, but only a just and equitable distribution of rights and

responsibilities can be called good fences and ensure that the construction of a community with a shared future in cyberspace is continuously promoted.

Third, the effectiveness of actions is an important consideration in promoting the implementation of the construction of a community with a shared future in cyberspace. The greatest truths are the simplest, and hard work is the key. Based on the concept of common security and the principle of justness and equitableness, the key to building a community with a shared future in cyberspace lies in promoting effective collective action. To date, the negotiations on the United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime have been the most fruitful collaboration of the international community in the field of cybersecurity. By contrast, countries have been unable to reach agreements on many issues such as cyber warfare, norms of responsible behavior in cyberspace, and the application of international law, partly due to differences in their strategic perceptions of cyberspace security. In addition, the severity of cyberspace security threats is not enough for countries to put aside their differences of interest and jointly deal with them. The advent of the era of strong artificial intelligence may become an important turning point in the history of cyberspace security. In the face of the risk of uncontrolled security and even the extinction of mankind brought about by artificial intelligence, the international community should work together to take effective and collective actions to implement the concept of a community with a shared future in cyberspace. ■



White paper on Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace.

CONSTRUCTING A BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE WITH AFRICAN CHARACTERISTICS: A VISION FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Ndukwe Onyinyechi Kelechi

Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Maiduguri Borno State, Nigeria

As the world moves towards global transformation and profound change of scale, China emerged as the most significant and active player in Africa through her transformative policies notably the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which has continued to contribute to the development and infrastructure construction, economic growth and industrial prosperity of Africa. However, in the global narrative of development and connectivity, the BRI emerges as a monumental endeavor, a contemporary echo of the historical Silk Road that once connected civilizations across continents. As this modern Silk Road extends its reach to the African continent, the question arises: How can the BRI, with its grand infrastructure vision, be intricately woven into the diverse fabric of Africa's cultures, economies, and developmental aspirations? The answer lies in a meticulous and tailored approach that acknowledges the unique characteristics of the African landscape.

The BRI conceived by China, stands as a testament to the interconnectedness of the modern world and global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013. However, as the BRI navigates the intricate terrains of the African continent, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. The success of this initiative lies in its ability to adapt to resonate with the unique needs, challenges, and aspirations of African nations. China's historical ties with Africa provide a crucial backdrop to this contemporary collaboration. From diplomatic engagements to economic partnerships, China's presence on the African continent has been multifaceted.

Understanding this historical context is paramount as we explore the potential synergies between the BRI and Africa's development agenda.

At the heart of Sino-African relations is the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) established to foster diplomatic and economic ties. FOCAC serves as a pivotal platform for understanding how China and African nations collaborate. The principles and initiatives laid out in FOCAC set the tone for a comprehensive exploration of how the BRI can align with African characteristics. Africa, with its diverse landscapes, cultures, and economies, presents a set of challenges that necessitate quick intervention and solutions. Infrastructure deficits, political stability concerns, widespread conflicts, poor governance

On September 4, 2018, the roundtable of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.



Photo/Xinhua

and environmental vulnerabilities demand a tailored approach that goes beyond conventional strategies. The path to constructing a BRI with African Characteristics involves understanding these challenges and integrating solutions that resonate with the continent's unique needs.

To comprehend the significance of constructing a Belt and Road Initiative with African Characteristics, there is need for this laudable imitation by China to be built on mutual trust that would guarantee self sustaining development and ethical values of transformative drives. The historical ties existed between China and Africa is one that has lasted for decades due to its concern for Africa decolonization and self determination. This is typically seen when China supported Africa for their independence against colonial powers. However, this provides a rich tapestry upon which the BRI seeks to build bridges, foster collaboration, and ensure development and industrialization of Africa.

CHINA'S SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN AFRICA AND QUEST TO ADDRESS AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

China's significant and expanding role in Africa, particularly through the BRI, is reshaping global geopolitics and influencing economic trajectories across the continent. Through substantial investments in infrastructure, trade, and natural resources development, China has become a key economic partner for many African nations, contributing to the construction of critical projects and fostering economic growth. The BRI's extension into Africa reflects China's commitment to addressing the continent's development needs, including infrastructure deficits, connectivity enhancement, and inclusive economic growth. While concerns about debt sustainability and geopolitical implications persist, African nations view China's involvement as an opportunity for much-needed development.

China's role in Africa is not solely focused on infrastructure development. It extends to actively addressing the continent's unique challenges. The BRI incorporates tailored strategies, such as cultural sensitivity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive economic development, to ensure the creation of sustainable and impactful initiatives. Recognizing the transformative power of technology, China integrates digital infrastructure and innovation hubs into its approach, aiming to position Africa as a key player in the global digital economy.



(Photo/Xinhua)

On July 25, 2023, children from the Picoico Village School in Maputo Province, Mozambique, stand in front of a house equipped with a Chinese-aided satellite TV receiving antenna.

This comprehensive engagement is reshaping Africa's development landscape and signifies a paradigm shift in global economic dynamics. As China actively addresses Africa's development challenges, scrutiny of the impacts becomes crucial, ensuring that these engagements lead to sustainable, inclusive, and mutually beneficial outcomes for both China and the diverse nations of Africa.

Furthermore, in its role as the vanguard country that promotes infrastructure development, China has succeeded in launching its ambitious multibillion trans-continental infrastructure project through the BRI. These projects spread across many African states. This shows China resilience and commitment to the infrastructural development of Africa. More so, irrespective that Sino-American trade rivalry is reflected in political economy of African countries, China seems to have surpassed the USA, in terms of its presence by promoting projects of development cooperation.

Moreover, China is the largest donor in Africa and it has consistently shown generosity in cancelling debt obligations of the least developed African countries. Such assistance is valuable for African states for consolidation of democratic governance. These and many other aforementioned issues have gained China gateway to Africa development other than the West whose involvement in Africa is tailored only to economic gains with little to the contribution of Africa development.

BRI AND AFRICA

The BRI is a colossal global infrastructure and economic development project spearheaded by China, aiming to enhance connectivity, trade, and cultural exchanges among participating nations. The BRI has expanded its reach to Africa, marking a significant chapter in China's engagement with the continent. This initiative aligns with China's historical ties with Africa and complements existing cooperation frameworks like the FOCAC.

In Africa, the BRI unfolds as a multifaceted strategy, intertwining economic development, cultural exchange, and infrastructural connectivity. China's involvement in Africa through the BRI encompasses substantial investments in key sectors, including transportation, energy, telecommunications, and industrial zones. By focusing on infrastructure development, the BRI addresses critical gaps that have impeded Africa's economic progress, such as inadequate transportation networks and energy deficits.

African countries see the BRI as a valuable opportunity for economic growth, job creation, and technology transfer. The BRI's projects in Africa include the construction of ports, railways, roads, and energy facilities, fostering regional integration and enhancing global trade connectivity. This initiative is not solely an economic endeavor, it also emphasizes people-to-people connections, cultural exchanges, and educational collaboration. However, China's prominent role in Africa and the BRI has generated discussions and debates. Concerns

On November 10, 2022, the "Africa-China Alliance for Poverty Alleviation Inaugural Ceremony & 2022 FOCAC Africa-China Poverty Reduction and Development Conference" was held in Beijing.



regarding debt sustainability, environmental impact, and the geopolitical implications of China's influence in the region have been raised. It is essential to navigate these challenges to ensure that the BRI in Africa leads to sustainable development, benefits local communities, and aligns with the diverse needs of the continent.

In essence, the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa reflects a transformative partnership, driven by economic collaboration, historical ties, and shared development goals. It provides opportunities for Africa to address its infrastructure deficits and unlock its economic potential while requiring careful navigation of challenges to ensure the initiative's positive and lasting impact on the continent.

FOCAC: A PATH WAY TO DEEPENING SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS AND LAUNCH TO BRI

The FOCAC serves as a pivotal platform for fostering diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties between China and African nations. Established in 2000, FOCAC has played a crucial role in shaping the modern landscape of Sino-African relations. FOCAC operates on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and common development. It seeks to promote cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. The establishment of FOCAC underscored China's commitment to engaging with African nations as equal partners. One of FOCAC's key features is the convening of regular high-level meetings between Chinese and African leaders. These gatherings provide a platform for dialogue, enabling both parties to discuss and coordinate on issues of mutual interest. The rotational nature of the summit location emphasizes the inclusivity of the forum, ensuring that all African nations have an opportunity to participate. This has great implications on fertilization of ideas from both states. Their exchanges have laid solid political grand work for consolidating traditional friendship, increasing mutual political trust, safe guarding common interests, and pursuing development and cooperation.

FOCAC has been instrumental in promoting economic cooperation between China and Africa. Through the forum, China has pledged significant financial assistance, concessional loans, and preferential trade agreements to support Africa's development agenda. Economic aid is often directed toward infrastructure projects, industrialization, and poverty alleviation initiatives.

Infrastructure development has been a key focus area of FOCAC. Many Chinese-funded projects under FOCAC involve the construction of roads, railways, ports, and energy facilities across Africa. This aligns with the broader goals of enhancing connectivity and facilitating economic growth on the continent, and has served as a gateway to Belt and Road Initiative anchored on economic growth across Africa.

FOCAC AND THE BRI: THE NEXUS

FOCAC and the BRI share common objectives of promoting economic development, infrastructure connectivity, and mutual cooperation. The two mechanisms are complementary, with FOCAC serving as a framework for bilateral cooperation, and the BRI offering a broader, global vision for connectivity and development. Many Belt and Road Initiative projects in Africa are implemented within the framework of FOCAC. The synergy between the two allows for coordinated efforts in infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and people-to-people exchanges. The BRI's emphasis on connectivity aligns with FOCAC's goals of fostering economic collaboration and integration among African nations. FOCAC and the BRI jointly emphasize inclusive development, poverty reduction, and sustainable growth. By aligning their development goals, China and African nations seek to create a win-win situation that promotes economic prosperity and social well-being. While FOCAC and the BRI have garnered support, they have also faced criticisms, including concerns about debt sustainability and environmental impacts. Both mechanisms are adapting to address these concerns, emphasizing transparency, inclusivity, and environmentally sustainable practices.

However, despite that FOCAC was established far earlier than the BRI, it has become a sophisticated framework for China's partnerships with African countries. Thus, FOCAC could be regarded as a mini version of multilateral cooperation that aids the implementation of BRI projects, while BRI addresses multilateral platforms and connectivity, and it is expected to bring Africa into a wider world market.

AFRICA NEEDS TO CONSTRUCT A BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE WITH AN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Africa, with its rich cultural diversity and varied land-

scapes, confronts a myriad of challenges that demand a nuanced and tailored approach for sustainable development. As China engages with the continent through the BRI, there is a pressing need to construct this initiative with an African Development Model, recognizing and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities of the continent.

Key challenges in Africa include inadequate infrastructure, economic disparities, political instability, environmental vulnerabilities, wide spread conflict, poor governance and social issues. Constructing a BRI with an African Development Model involves understanding and integrating the distinct needs of African nations. Therefore, a "Diverse Needs Assessment" is essential to comprehensively analyze the economic, social, and environmental requirements of Africa states. This involves evaluating economic structures, identifying growth sectors, addressing social service gaps, and assessing environmental vulnerabilities. Moreover, it considers infrastructure deficits hindering economic development and opportunities for sustainable growth and green technologies.

Amidst issues raised above, cultural sensitivity is another crucial aspect. Africa is a mosaic of cultures, languages, and traditions. Integrating and understanding of this diverse cultural landscape into the BRI ensures that projects resonate positively with local communities. This involves incorporating cultural elements into project design, respecting linguistic diversity in communication, and blending traditional knowledge with modern innovation. The goal is to safeguard and celebrate diverse cultures, minimizing the risk of cultural clashes and fostering harmony.

The BRI with an African Development Model must prioritize inclusive partnerships. Stakeholder engagements involving governments, local communities, and businesses, ensure inclusive decision-making processes. Thus, capacity building becomes paramount, empowering local communities to actively participate in and benefit from BRI projects. This collaborative approach is crucial for addressing economic disparities and fostering sustainable development. More so, a BRI with African characteristics should embed robust environmental sustainability frameworks. Eco-centric project planning, with rigorous environmental impact assessments, and the prioritization of Green technologies contribute to minimizing the ecological footprint of infrastructure development. This aligns with international sustainability



Photo(Xinhua)

standards and addresses environmental vulnerabilities unique to Africa.

The Social Impact Assessment framework further emphasizes understanding and mitigating the potential social ramifications of BRI projects. Conducting comprehensive assessments and prioritizing Community-Centric Initiatives contribute positively to local livelihoods and social cohesion, ensuring that BRI projects leave a lasting positive impact.

Furthermore, capacity building for sustainability involves investing in local human resources and institutions. Providing training, educational opportunities, and empowering local communities to actively participate in and benefit from BRI projects are integral to ensuring long-term success and sustainability.

Adaptability and Flexibility are crucial in designing projects that accommodate variations in geographic and socio-economic conditions across different African regions. Responsive implementation ensures projects to adapt to evolving needs and challenges unique to each region.

Inclusive Economic Development Strategies involve integrating local businesses into the BRI supply chain and ensuring equitable benefit distribution. This approach fosters entrepreneurship, economic development, and prevents disparities, aligning with the diverse needs of African economies.

Also, digital infrastructure integration is recognized as

pivotal in modern development. By investing in technological connectivity and supporting innovation hubs, the BRI can harness the transformative potential of digital technologies, contributing to Africa's leap into the digital age.

Furthermore, security and stability protocols are essential for addressing security concerns related to BRI projects. Collaborative Security Measures rooted on community and home grown approach and Risk Mitigation would ensure a secure environment for project implementation, mitigating potential conflicts over resources or land. A long-term vision for African Development, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ensures that the BRI contributes to poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development. Beyond physical infrastructure, this vision focuses on uplifting communities, preserving the environment, and fostering lasting economic growth.

A transparent financial framework involving local financial institutions enhances financial transparency, accountability, and credibility. This is crucial for building trust and ensuring the success of BRI projects.

PROSPECT FOR CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS IN AN EMERGING ERA OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

In the emerging era of Africa's development and industrialization, the prospects for China-Africa relations



(Photo: Xinhua)

On September 15, 2023, in Djibouti City, Djibouti, the inaugural training camp of the African Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center on digital innovation and cross-border e-commerce was held. (L)

Botswana's National Data Center, constructed by China Jiangxi International Economic and Technical Cooperation Botswana Branch, photographed in the capital city of Botswana, Gaborone, on August 10, 2023. (R)

appear promising, underpinned by mutual economic interests, strategic collaboration, and shared development goals. China's engagement with Africa, particularly through initiatives like the BRI, presents opportunities for both parties. Economically, China's robust investments in African infrastructure projects contribute significantly to the continent's development. The BRI, with its emphasis on connectivity and economic cooperation, aligns with Africa's aspirations for improved transportation networks, energy infrastructure, and industrial capacity. This collaboration has the potential to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and foster industrialization across African nations.

China's investments in Africa extend beyond infrastructure to sectors like manufacturing, technology, and agriculture. As Africa seeks to industrialize and diversify its economies, Chinese expertise and capital can play a pivotal role in supporting the development of industrial zones, technology parks, and agricultural initiatives. This collaboration can lead to knowledge transfer, skills development, and the creation of sustainable industries that contribute to Africa's economic transformation.

Moreover, China-Africa relations are characterized by a spirit of South-South cooperation, emphasizing solidarity and mutual benefit. China's experience in lifting millions out of poverty through rapid industrialization provides valuable lessons for African nations aspired to achieve similar development outcomes. The exchange of ideas, best practices, and collaborative research can

further strengthen the ties between China and Africa in their quest for sustainable development.

China's focus on green technologies and sustainable practices aligns with Africa's growing emphasis on environmental stewardship and climate resilience. Collaborative efforts in renewable energy, eco-friendly infrastructure, and green innovation can contribute to addressing shared global challenges while promoting sustainable development in Africa.

However, challenges such as debt sustainability, transparency, and cultural considerations must be navigated to ensure the longevity and inclusivity of China-Africa relations. Open communication, adherence to international standards, and a commitment to addressing local needs and priorities are crucial for building a resilient and mutually beneficial partnership.

CONCLUSION

The construction of a Belt and Road Initiative with African Characteristics goes beyond infrastructural development. It represents a profound commitment to fostering inclusive growth, preserving cultural diversity, and addressing the unique needs of the African continent. The strategic framework, encompassing diverse needs assessment, cultural sensitivity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive economic development, reflects the nuanced approach required to make the BRI a catalyst for positive change in Africa. While the goals of FOCAC and BRI provide a foundation for transformative partnership, addressing infrastructure deficits, political challenges, and environmental vulnerabilities in Africa is crucial. Active engagement with local stakeholders, adaptability, and fostering inclusive development are essential for the BRI to truly embody African characteristics. In addition, as we look to the future, constructing a Belt and Road Initiative with African characteristics requires involvement and continued collaboration with African nations in creating an enabling environment for the policy to thrive, respecting cultural nuances and prioritizing sustainability. Strengthening partnerships with local stakeholders, from governments to communities, is fundamental. It enhances cultural sensitivity in workforce management and promotes inclusive economic developments. Poor democratic governance which is a bane to Africa development needs to be re-examined to enhance ethical value of governance which China and its policies represent. 🇳🇮

THE NEW SITUATION OF AFRICA'S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT: CAUSES AND PROSPECTS

Yao Guimei

*Director and Researcher of the South Africa Center of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies
of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

Since 2020, Africa's turbulence has increased due to the impact of the factors of COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine crisis, and major countries' pursuit of interests in Africa. Under the leadership of the African Union (AU) and African subregional organizations, efforts have been made to cope with various types of crises, so we see a new situation of autonomous development in political, economic and diplomatic fields. Observing and understanding this new situation, analyzing its causes and accurately envision its prospects will not only help us to better understand Africa's overall demands for development and the evolution of its relations with major countries, but also help us to build a closer China-Africa community with a shared future.

NEW SITUATION OF AFRICA'S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT

I. The AU Endeavors to Maintain the Overall Situation of Africa's Peaceful Development in an African Way

First, the AU has responded to the resurgence of military coups. It has intervened decisively in the military coups in countries such as Mali, Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and deterred unconstitutional regimes through sanctions, suspension of AU membership and other tough means. Second, the AU mediated in regional security disputes. It has actively mediated in the internal conflict in Ethiopia and the dispute over the Renaissance Dam among the three Nile countries by calling on the

countries concerned not to jeopardize the process to resolve the conflicts or complicate the negotiations. It has tried to make the parties concerned to reach a peace and reconciliation agreement. The AU, together with the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community and other subregional organizations, has intervened in the peace processes in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the northern part of Mozambique through the African approach, and has achieved positive results, demonstrating its leadership on the continent. Third, the AU has made innovations in its norms and mechanisms. It has actively responded to non-traditional security issues such as terrorism and piracy. For this purpose, it has improved its institutional framework, promoted cooperation between African countries and the United Nations and the European Union, and formulated relevant framework and guiding documents or resolutions.

II. Face Up to the Challenges to Sustainable Socio-Economic Development through Unity by Empowerment

First, the construction of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has been accelerated to pave the way for industrialization. Since the launch of the AfCFTA, the Adjustment Fund and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System have been introduced one after another, and seven countries, including Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mauritius, have been selected

as pilot countries for free trade, harnessing the regional resources and the markets and pushing forward economic integration. Second, Africa's control over key minerals has been enhanced. Since 2021, 15 resource-abundant African countries have successively adjusted their mining policies by applying measures such as establishing state-owned mining companies, re-examining mining contracts, increasing localization and environmental protection requirements. They speed up in forming the downstream industrial chains and regional mining value chains, and make more clear-cut demands for value-adding and rebalancing of profits in mining. Third, African countries are vigorously developing digital economies to realize curve overtaking. Not only has the AU called for digital transformation to be placed among the top priorities of the AU Agenda 2063, but more than 40 African countries have formulated digital economy strategies or policies, striving to make the development of the digital economy the new engine for economic growth of the whole Africa. Fourth, Africa has made progress in promoting the major countries to assume the historical responsibility for tackling climate change. The AU has successively launched the Africa Green Recovery Action Plan and the Strategy and Action Plan on Climate Change and Resilient Development (2022-2032), urging the Western developed countries to increase their support

for climate change mitigation and adaptation in Africa so as to enhance Africa's ability to realize climate resilience and climate-smart development. At the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change hosted by Egypt, Africa contributed to the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund. Fifth, a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the first decade (2014-2023) of planning for Agenda 2063 was conducted to lay a good foundation of planning for the second decade (2024-2033).

III. Expressing Common Position with One Voice on the International Stage

First, Africa has actively participated in multilateral diplomacy to enhance its power of discourse in global governance. The AU has actively promoted UN Security Council reform, aiming to have a veto seat belonging to Africa; it also seeks for the membership of the G20. Second, it has unified its voice in cooperation with the EU, striving for the development of a genuine partnership of equals with Europe. Africa performed strongly in the negotiations of the Post-Cotonou Agreement, and finally realized the expected goal of signing a separate African regional agreement with the EU; in the 6th Europe-Africa Summit and consultations on related issues, African countries made strong and well-grounded argument, and



The 36th Summit of the African Union opened on February 18, 2023 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

(Photo/Xinhua)

had achievements on trade, investment, public health, peace and security, and migration. Third, they have adhered to the spirit of non-alignment by refusing to take sides in the Ukraine crisis, and organized a delegation to visit Russia and Ukraine to advocate negotiation and promote peace, thus demonstrating Africa's influence in the resolution of international hotspot issues.

IV. Taking Balanced Positions Amidst the Game of Major Powers

First, African countries have maintained an unbiased position on the Ukraine crisis. So far, none of the African countries has participated in the sanctions against Russia, nor does the AU use sensitive words as “condemnation” and “aggression” in relevant communiqués. In the two votes related to the Ukraine issue in the United Nations General Assembly, the number of African countries that voted in favor of the resolution and the number of African countries that abstained or did not vote are almost the same. Second, African countries have high expectations for both the U.S.-Africa Summit and the Russia-Africa Summit, and are eager for both countries to increase their commitment. In mid-December 2022, the AU and 49 African countries sent delegations to the second U.S.-Africa Summit, and received a commitment from the U.S. government that it would provide Africa with \$55 billion over the next three years. At the end of July 2023, delegations from 49 African countries, including 17 African heads of state, attended the second Russia-Africa Summit. They made urgent demands to Russia for food security, defense and security. Besides, they reaffirmed fairness of the multilateral forums, as well as ways to interface with AU Agenda 2063 and measures to realize the action plans.

CAUSES FOR THE NEW SITUATION OF AFRICA'S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, a new situation of autonomous development has appeared in Africa on all fronts. This is not only inseparable from the African countries' unremitting pursuit of their long-cherished aspirations for independence, unity and self-reliance, but also supported by the endogenous impetus brought about by the stable development of the political and economic system. Moreover, it reflects the ambitions and aspirations of African countries to cope with the accelerated evolution of the interna-



(Photo/Xinhua)

This is the Port of Tema, Ghana's largest port, taken on February 14, 2022.

tional landscape.

First, the concepts of Ubuntu Philosophy and Pan-Africanism have laid the spiritual foundation for Africa to unite and strengthen itself to face global challenges. Second, sustainable and stable economic development has provided African countries with more opportunities and resources for autonomous development. Third, as the world returns to the era of power competition, major countries attach more and more importance to Africa and continuously increase their investment, which provides Africa with more opportunities to realize its own aspirations and raise its status in the international arena. At the same time, Africa needs to balance its relations with the major powers through independent development in order to maximize its interests. Fourth, against the backdrop of increasing global challenges, Africa's deep governance predicament and the uncertainty of international anti-terrorism cooperation with Africa, there is an urgent need for Africa to join forces to deal with transnational issues and further safeguard Africa's common interests.

PROSPECTS FOR AFRICA'S AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT

Autonomous development and self-reliance are not only the dream of the African people, but also the trend of the accelerated evolution of the international landscape. While the world is experiencing unprecedented

changes over the past century, Africa's autonomous development enjoys a series of favorable conditions. This will enable it to play a more important role internationally. First, Africa's autonomous development has its unique advantages in resources. Africa is rich in natural resources, including oil and key minerals. At present, resource-abundant African countries are adjusting their energy and mineral policies so that their resources can be properly exploited and utilized. This can help them secure more source of income for their autonomous development. Second, African countries are vigorously promoting economic integration led by the Free Trade Area. The gradual expansion of intra-African trade and mutual investment will effectively stimulate market potential, increase employment opportunities, improve education and release the demographic dividend, thus rapidly increasing Africa's development capacity, innovation and competitiveness. Third, Africa as a big vote bank weighs on the strategic balance of the major countries competition. Africa is an ideal partner which major countries compete to cooperate with and a rising political force. African countries are trying to shape a new paradigm of cooperation with their extraterritorial partners, so there is considerable probability for Africa's strategic autonomy to be enhanced. In dealing with the summits with major countries, African leaders have reached a consensus that the AU should collectively decide on the list of countries to participate in different summits, so as to make Africa a unified participant, in order to shift its regional diplomacy from one extraterritorial power plus African countries to African countries decided by the AU plus one extraterritorial power. The major countries will inevitably adjust their mode of cooperation with Africa accordingly.

Although Africa's autonomous development has favorable conditions, protectionist, unilateralist actions, bloc politics and camp rivalry incited by some major countries have added harshness and complexation to the external environment for Africa's autonomous development. Taking in consideration Africa's inherent and chronic problems, the enhancement of Africa's strategic autonomy faces multiple obstacles.

First, poverty and economic dependence constrain the enhancement of capacity for independence. Africa is weak in capital and debt-ridden. According to the African Development Bank, Africa's annual infrastructure financing gap is 68 billion to 108 billion U.S. dollars. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly widened the financing

gap. It is expected that for the next three years, Africa will need about \$484 billion to revive its economy. In 2022, among the 38 African countries that have conducted debt sustainability analysis, 8 of them are already in debt crisis, 14 are at high risk, and 16 are at medium risk. The Ukraine crisis has pushed up Africa's debt risk. A large number of African countries have to consume their limited funds paying debts and interest, which will inevitably aggravate the dilemma of AU member states' inability to pay the relevant fees to the organization as well as the lack of funds for various AU programs. The discrepancy between the willingness and the ability to solve Africa's problems by Africa will continue to exist for a long time.

Second, the regional and national diversification of development in Africa has made the AU unstable in terms of its cohesion. The 54 countries in Africa have various national conditions, vastly different national strengths and diversified diplomatic priorities. They hold different positions on the authority and role of the AU and African subregional organizations. On issues such as the resurgence of military coups in francophone Africa, there is a wide gap between the AU and African subregional organizations in willingness and effectiveness. For example, in response to the military coup in Niger in July 2023, the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemned it and called for the restoration of constitutional order as soon as possible. The ECOWAS, with Nigeria as its core, wanted to intervene militarily. However, Burkina Faso and Mali, where military coups took place before, sided with the soldiers of the coup d'état in Niger and openly stated that any military intervention in Niger would be tantamount to declaration of war against the two countries. The authority and appeal of the ECOWAS has been challenged.

Third, it is difficult for Africa's autonomous development to get rid of the interference and destruction of the United States and the West. Although the U.S. and the West have strengthened cooperation with Africa in order to suppress China and Russia, and have made efforts to cater to Africa, they have never treated Africa as a real equal. Their hegemonic mentality and behavior of interfering in Africa's internal affairs are hard to change. Take the Ethiopian civil war that broke out in 2021 as an example, while the AU was playing a great role in mediating and contributed to the peace agreement between the two warring parties in Ethiopia, the United States also exerted its influence secretly. The U.S. has both ex-

erted pressure on the Ethiopian government through its special envoy for the Horn of Africa region by means of suspension of loans, aid and embargoes, and implanted into the peace agreement between the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front contents on humanitarian assistance, post-war transition and accountability for war crimes in the Ethiopian Peace and Stability Act (EPSA) passed by the two chambers of the U.S. Congress. This has not only undermined the leading role of the AU for solving African problems with African approach, but also led to occasional tensions in northern Ethiopia. In addition, the United States and the West have ignored the serious impact of the protracted crisis in Ukraine on African countries, and have openly pressured all African countries to prevent their leaders or representatives from attending the second Russia-Africa Summit, thus revealing the true face of the United States and the West, which will not hesitate to drag Africa down for the sake of its own interests. In the future, in the absence of fundamental improvement in Africa's economic diversification and diplomatic dependence, the egoistic intervention by the U.S. and the West will also have a destructive impact on Africa's autonomous development process.

CONCLUSION

Africa is a resource-abundant continent with a concentration of developing countries. In August 2023, President

Xi Jinping pointed out in his keynote address at the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue that "with steady progress under Agenda 2063, the official launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and growing coordination among the subregional groups, Africa is becoming an important pole with global influence". China has always been a staunch companion and supporter of Africa on its path to independent development. Adhering to the concept of "sincerity, real results, amity and good faith" in its policy towards Africa, China has aligned the Belt and Road Initiative with the AU Agenda 2063 by contributing to infrastructure construction in Africa, helping Africa upgrade its industrialization level, and supporting African countries to have a greater say and representation in global governance. At the China-Africa Leaders' Dialogue, President Xi Jinping made three proposals to help Africa bring its integration and modernization into a fast track. They are "the Initiative on Supporting Africa's Industrialization", "the Plan for China Supporting Africa's Agricultural Modernization" and "the Plan for China-Africa Cooperation on Talent Development". China-Africa cooperation has finally become the important driving force for Africa's autonomous development. Africa's autonomous development is not only conducive to enhancing the influence of Africa and developing countries in the international arena, but will also inject new momentum into the building of a community with a shared future for China and Africa. 🇨🇳



On June 29, 2023, the third China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo opened in Changsha, China.



Kefi Road, Nigeria, photographed on September 20, 2023, the first phase of the highway reconstruction and expansion project was constructed by China Harbor Company.

(Photo/Xinhua)



AUTUMN SCENERY ON SIDES OF THE FENG RIVER IN
XIXIAN NEW AREA, SHAANXI PROVINCE, CHINA.

(PHOTO/XINHUA)

ISSN 2955-1749



9 772955 174006

ISSN 2955-1749 3,000 Naira