

PROFOUND CHANGES UNSEEN IN A CENTURY AND BUILDING CHINA-AFRICA COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE

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In the twentieth century, humankind has experienced two world wars. As time goes on, not only has the number of sovereign states in the world increased, but many developing countries that were formerly colonized and oppressed have begun to run forward on the path of development, and have formed emerging countries and even the power of Global South. And international affairs are no longer dominated only by the “Seven Powers” of the Western countries. Driving the changes in the world is also the dramatic century-rare change in China. From battling against poverty and weakness to becoming the world’s second-largest economy, China has achieved magnificent turnaround and continued with stepping into the center of the world stage. The process has transformed China and promoted changes in global governance. China and Africa, as the strongest forces of solidarity among developing countries in the Global South, need to strengthen their communication, coordination and solidarity, and to build a closer China-Africa community with a shared future in order to grasp the overall positioning and strength of the developing countries in the profound changes unseen in a century.

THREE PERSPECTIVES OF PROFOUND CHANGES UNSEEN IN A CENTURY

At present, the profound changes unseen in a centu-

ry are accelerating, and the three dimensions of changes in the international balance of power, changes in China’s power and status, and the emergence of many uncertainties in the century-long changes are important perspectives for observing the directions of the future.

Firstly, the loss of Western dominance and the overall rise of emerging powers. The most significant change in the international balance of power over the course of a hundred years is the “rise of the East and fall of the West” and “rise of the emerging powers and fall of the traditional powers”. With the rising power of developing countries, the Group of Twenty (G20), which was established in 1999 and includes developing countries such as China, has replaced the Group of Seven (G7), which was formed by Western developed countries, to dominate global economic governance.

In addition to the G20’s increased global weight and status, the BRICS mechanism, comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has evolved from a business concept featuring emerging markets to a multilateral consultation and cooperation mechanism among emerging market countries. The BRICS mechanism has also expanded from its initial focus on the economic sphere to the broader political, security and social spheres. During the 15th BRICS Leaders’ Meeting in August 2023, the BRICS mechanism underwent a historic expansion with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates becoming new members,

making the BRICS a more representative organization of the Global South.

In terms of global scope and development trend, emerging economies and developing countries has been closing the gaps with traditional developed countries. The “latecomer’s advantage” and “catching-up advantage” of emerging economies and other developing countries have continued to flourish. In 2018, emerging markets and developing countries accounted for about 40% of the world’s total economy, contributing about 80% to world economic growth. According to the United Nations, by 2050, the global population will reach about 10 billion, of which 8.5 billion will belong to the current emerging markets and developing countries. The gradual loss of dominance by the Western powers and the rise of emerging powers as a whole are arguably the most revolutionary, historic and even irreversible changes in the international balance of power since modern times. This change is also described by President Xi Jinping in three “unprecedented” terms: the rapid rise of emerging market countries and developing countries is unprecedented; the metabolism and fierce competition brought about by the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial change are unprecedented; and the mismatch and asymmetry between the global governance system and the changes in the international situation are unprecedented.

Secondly, China has been growing in comprehensive national strength and stepping closer to the center of the world stage. After more than 40 years of reform and opening up, China has not only succeeded in lifting more than 700 million people out of poverty, but has also become the world’s second largest economy. According to the statistics released by China’s National Bureau of Statistics in 2022, China’s GDP in 2021 was 17.7 trillion U.S. dollars, firmly ranking second in the world; GDP per capita exceeded the \$12,000. China’s GDP in 2021 is expected to account for 18.5 percent of the world’s GDP, and China’s economic growth has contributed 30 percent to the world’s economic growth. China continues to be the main power source driving the world’s economic growth.

African countries, on the one hand, hope to understand and learn from China’s experience in economic development and political governance, and seize the historical opportunities for Africa brought about by Chi-

na’s development as well as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) put forward in 2013. On the other hand, they wish to break away from their previous dependence on former colonial masters by closely cooperating with China and other emerging economies. As the Cameroonian scholar Elvis Ngor puts it, with China’s emergence as a global economic power and its increased cooperation with African countries, Africa has a once-in-a-lifetime geopolitical opportunity to become a strategic partner of China and to defend its geopolitical values in international relations.

Thirdly, the international system is facing major shocks and adjustments. The United States in the aftermath of its victory of the Cold War, not only vigorously promoted the neo-liberal economic paradigm and the democratic and free political development model of multi-party competition, but also demonstrated to the world the superpower status of the United States in terms of military strength by launching the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The international pattern has also changed from the “Bipolar System” during the Cold War to the “only super power and multi-great powers” pattern of the post-Cold War era. Moreover, the United States, as the “only super power”, is far exceeding the “multi-great powers” of Europe, Russia and China, etc. With the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 and the United States global strategy spreading too far, the United States’ willingness, determination and ability to control the regional and international situation alone have obviously declined. And the international status of the changes between the “multi-great powers” in the trend of equalization has become more prominent. Especially during the Trump administration, under the banner of “America first”, the US engaged in unilateralism, authoritarianism and hegemony, and politicized and weaponized the issue of tariffs which caused chaos and disorder in the international order, and the process of globalization encountered a counter-current. While at the same time, the threat of terrorism and the regional conflicts were hardly stopped, and the competition among the major powers have sailed into uncharted waters. The COVID-19 pandemic that has swept across the globe has added another footnote to the profound changes unseen in a century. The pandemic is a great challenge not only to the global public health system, but also to the process of globalization and global governance.

BUILDING A CHINA-AFRICA COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE WITH JOINT HANDS

In the course of building a community with a shared future between China and Africa, the two sides have not only sound historical foundation, moral basis and common values, but also more solid and broader development conditions and room for advancement in the context of the new era, empowered by the development of the BRI.

First, we will build a China-Africa community with a shared future side by side through thick and thin. The concept of “China-Africa community with a shared future” was put forward in March 2013 by President Xi Jinping. During his visit to Africa, President Xi pointed out that China and Africa share common historical encounters, common development tasks and common strategic interests, and that we are in the same boat through thick and thin in a “community with a shared future”. Indeed, China and African countries are both developing countries, belong to the Third World and have had similar historical encounters and common destinies, having suffered from colonialism and aggression by foreign powers. Therefore, the solidarity and mutual support between

China and Africa have withstood the test of storms and have become more and more solid on the basis of common political and development aspirations, constituting the most solid foundation for building a community with a shared future between China and Africa.

The China-Africa community with a shared future is also based on “sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith” and the values in pursuing the greater good and shared interests. President Xi Jinping has used the words “sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith” to point out the basic concepts and principles for China-Africa relations to be stable and sustainable in the future. President Xi pointed out that we should value “sincerity” to our African friends, value “real results” in our cooperation with Africa, value “amity” in our friendship with Africa, and value “good faith” in solving problems in our cooperation. In addition, the Chinese leaders have also repeatedly put forward the need to establish the principle for pursuing the greater good and shared interests in China’s policy towards Africa, especially in economic and trade cooperation. They emphasized to balance “shared interest” and “greater good”. “Greater good” means moral righteousness. When China interacts with African countries, we shall give priority to mo-

This is a picture of the Mozambique National Pavilion at the China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation Innovation Demonstration Park (Hunan Gaoqiao Market), June 29, 2023.



rality and righteousness, value equality, sincerity and amity, honor commitments, and speak out in defense of Africa's legitimate rights and reasonable demands. "Shared interest" stands for mutual benefit. China shall give more consideration to the reasonable needs of the African countries, and strive to make Africa benefit more through cooperation. When needed, China shall put friendship before profit.

Secondly, we will build a China-Africa community with a shared future through common development and win-win cooperation. From the perspective of economic development, China and Africa have strong foundations and resource endowments that complement each other's advantages and make cooperation mutually beneficial. The African continent is rich in natural and human resources and has a broad market. China has accumulated rich development experience, capital and applicable technology through reform and opening-up. On the one hand, African countries hope to find the key to development by learning from China's development experience. On the other hand, China has the ability and strong will to help Africa's development, and is able and willing to move forward together with African countries to promote the building of South-South partnership based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

It is with the idea of strengthening South-South cooperation and promoting Africa's development that China continues to invest huge resources in promoting China-Africa cooperation against the backdrop of shrinking international development cooperation with Africa. For example, at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in December 2015 and the FOCAC Summit in Beijing in September 2018, China put forward the *FOCAC Johannesburg Action Plan (2016-2018)* and the *FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021)*, with a total value of 60 billion U.S. dollars. They aim to promote Africa's development in areas such as infrastructure construction, industrialization, health, poverty reduction and agricultural support, trade and investment promotion, digital innovation and human resources training.

For example, since the BRI was put forward in 2013, cooperation in the area of infrastructure construction between China and Africa has been significantly accelerated. According to a report released by the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa in 2017, China invested an average of 12 billion U.S. dollars per year in Africa's



Guests attend the "Red Hall Forum: China and African Countries on the Road to Modernization" Nairobi Dialogue held in Nairobi, Kenya, Nov. 14, 2023.

infrastructure sector from 2011 to 2016, making it the largest source of investment in Africa's infrastructure. In terms of production capacity cooperation and industry promotion, China has established about 25 economic and trade cooperation zones and hundreds of industrial parks in Africa, making positive contributions to Africa's industrialization, job creation and export increase. The "two-wheel-drive" model of "infrastructure construction + industrial development in industrial parks" vigorously promoted by China is boosting Africa's economic development and transforming Africa's resource and energy endowment into the fruits of sustainable development and benefiting people's livelihoods.

PATHS TO BUILD A CLOSER CHINA-AFRICA COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE

In his opening speech at the FOCAC Beijing Summit 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping profoundly elaborated on the profound connotations of the six dimensions of building a China-Africa community with a shared future, pointing out the direction of the future construction of the China-Africa community with a shared future.

First, we shall "build a China-Africa community with a shared future to assume our joint responsibility". China and Africa should not only strengthen political dialogue and policy communication with each other, but

also enhance collaboration and cooperation in regional and international affairs, so as to safeguard the common interests of China and Africa and the vast number of developing countries. China-Africa win-win cooperation and common development will not only lead South-South cooperation and greatly enhance the overall strength and influence of developing countries, but also promote North-South dialogue and the development of the international situation and governance system in a more balanced and rational direction, and make a greater contribution to the construction of a new type of international relations centered on win-win cooperation. In the post-COVID era, China and Africa can also convene special summits on some major international affairs, so as to send out to the international community a common voice of China and Africa's solidarity and unity.

Secondly, we shall “build a China-Africa community with a shared future that pursues win-win cooperation”. The docking of the BRI with Africa also needs to move from concept initiation to real actions, and be carried out with three levels, namely, the docking between the Belt and Road construction and the *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the docking with the implementation of the *Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU)*, and the docking with the development strategies of African countries. In the post-COVID



Participants of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture take photos of and learn about drones at the Paddy Field National Park in Sanya, Hainan Province, Nov. 14, 2023.

era, special attention should be paid to strengthening China-Africa economic and trade cooperation and helping Africa revitalize its pandemic-hit economy. In the process of China-Africa industrialization cooperation, attention should be paid to technology transfer, personnel training and job creation in Africa; in the process of China-Africa financial cooperation, attention should be paid to strengthening financing support for small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa, and to solving the problems of financing and debt by using innovative financial tools such as development financing; and in the process of strengthening the construction of infrastructure for interconnection and connectivity, attention should be paid to the sustainable development of the projects.

Thirdly, we shall “build a China-Africa community with a shared future that delivers happiness for all of us”. China-Africa cooperation projects should focus more on improving and raising people's living standards than on grandiose “flagship projects”, and should take the enhancement of people's well-being as the starting and ending point for the development of China-Africa relations. Only when China-Africa cooperation brings visible and tangible results and benefits to the people of China and Africa can the sustainable development of China-Africa cooperation be ensured and the strongest foundation of the China-Africa community with a shared future be consolidated. The friendship of nations lies in the amity of peoples, and the amity of peoples lies in the hearts. FOCAC, which meets every three years, lists many specific projects to benefit the people in its action plan for the next three years. For example, in October and November 2019, China's “Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages” project was completed in Nigeria and Cameroon respectively. The completion of the project has enabled villagers in 1,000 villages in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, and 300 villages in Cameroon, respectively, to receive satellite TV programs with clear images and rich content, and has also enabled children to obtain better educational resources through remote TV education programs, which is of great significance.

Fourthly, we shall “build a China-Africa community with a shared future that enjoys cultural prosperity”. China and Africa are both birthplaces of human civilizations with brilliant cultural heritages which make China-Africa cultural exchanges rich in resources and



Children wait to board a train at the Nairobi Station of the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Nairobi, Kenya, Oct. 6, 2023.

connotation. It is necessary to promote exchanges, mutual understanding and coexistence between Chinese and African civilizations, so as to not only provide lasting assistance to each other's civilization renaissance, cultural progress and literary prosperity, but also make greater contributions to the diversification of the world's civilizations. In recent years, China-Africa cultural and people-to-people exchanges have been full of new ideas. People-to-people exchanges are no longer limited to mutual visits of cultural organizations, tourism cooperation and exhibition tours of museum collections, but have expanded and deepened to the exchange of ideas and joint research. The foundation of China-Africa cultural co-prosperity must be mutual understanding, and it is necessary to strengthen China-Africa media cooperation and civil exchanges, and build a "public opinion field" conducive to China-Africa friendship and cooperation.

Fifthly, we shall "build a China-Africa community with a shared future that enjoys common security". As China-Africa economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges become more and more frequent, China-Africa peace and security cooperation in recent years has also continued to expand its scope and deepen its content, from participation in United Nations

peacekeeping in Africa, support for counter-terrorism and anti-piracy efforts in Africa, provision of non-reimbursable military assistance to the AU, training of African peacekeepers, to holding discussions and exchanges on strengthening security cooperation. The China-Africa Peace and Security Fund and the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum were launched one after another in the past three years. And the implementation of 50 security assistance projects has been promoted in such areas as construction of the BRI, social security, United Nations peacekeeping, counter-piracy and counter-terrorism.

Lastly, we shall "build a China-Africa community with a shared future that promotes harmony between man and nature". President Xi Jinping has often said that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. Not only should China's domestic development focus on the concepts of green, environment-friendly and sustainable development, in China-Africa cooperation, we should also uphold the concepts of environmental protection, wildlife protection and the unity of man and nature, and realize the organic combination of economic development and environmental protection. In promoting green industrialization, China has a lot of experience to share with Africa. 🇨🇳