
MULTILATERAL COOPERATION AND CHINA'S ROLE IN AFRICAN INTEGRATION AND SECURITY COOPERATION

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The world has grown so tremendously that no country or continent can survive on its own without establishing a strong presence in other parts of the world. The quest for resources from other parts of the world has driven Europeans to Africa and later made colonial rule an inevitable part of that quest for cheap raw materials. The contemporary world, driven by the technological revolution, has broken the barriers to businesses and it has opened the world to competition through free enterprise. Therefore, with the collapse of the unipolar and bipolar world systems multilateralism tends to be the order of the new era. This is because countries in the global system tend to be confronted with similar, cross-cutting, or common challenges such as energy crises, climate change issues, terrorism, migration issues, human rights, and governance issues which invariably threaten regional or global peace.

Multilateralism refers to the practice of multiple countries or parties coming together to address and solve global problems. Multilateralism also allows countries to pursue common goals through collective decision-making and cooperation. It emphasizes the importance of international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), and international agreements and treaties in promoting peace, stability, and mutual benefits among nations. Multilateralism aims at fostering collaboration, dialogue, and diverse compromises among diverse na-

tions, recognizing that no single country can effectively address complex global challenges on its own.

Multilateral cooperation and Chinese engagement in Africa have been the subject of significant debate in recent years. Africa has become a key battleground for global powers seeking to expand their influence and secure access to the continent's vast natural resources. In this paper, we will examine the role of multilateral cooperation and Chinese engagement in African integration and security cooperation, with a particular focus on the impact of these factors on the region's development and stability.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN AFRICA

Multilateral cooperation in Africa has a long and complex history, shaped by the continent's political, economic, and social dynamics. The origins of multilateral cooperation in Africa can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the establishment of the League of Nations in the aftermath of World War I. The League of Nations sought to promote international cooperation and peace, and its activities in Africa focused on addressing colonial issues and promoting development.

The establishment of the UN in 1945 further expanded multilateral cooperation in Africa, with a specific focus on decolonization and development. The UN played a

key role in supporting African countries in their struggle for independence from colonial rule, and in promoting economic and social development through various agencies and programs.

In the decades following independence, African countries sought to address common challenges through regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Union (AU). These organizations focused on promoting political stability, economic integration, and conflict resolution across the continent.

In recent years, multilateral cooperation in Africa has expanded to address a wide range of issues, including health, climate change, and security. The AU and its member states have worked closely with international partners such as the UN, the European Union, and the World Bank to address these challenges and promote sustainable development.

Overall, the history of multilateral cooperation in Africa reflects the continent's ongoing efforts to address common challenges and promote inclusive and sustainable development. While progress has been made, there are still many obstacles to overcome, and the need for effective multilateral cooperation remains as important as ever.

Multilateral cooperation in Africa has long been seen as a key tool for promoting economic development and regional integration, from the OAU Lagos Plan of Action of 1982 where a blueprint was designed for enhancing the integration, infrastructural development, and security cooperation of the continent, to the current AU, playing a leading role in coordinating efforts to address the continent's most pressing challenges, including poverty, conflict, and underdevelopment. Through initiatives such as Agenda 2063, the AU has sought to promote greater economic integration and political cooperation among African countries, to create a more united and prosperous continent.

In recent years, multilateral cooperation in Africa has also been driven by the growing influence of non-Western countries, particularly China. As the world's second-largest economy, China has become an increasingly important player in Africa, both as a major investor and a diplomatic partner. Chinese investment in Africa has grown rapidly in recent years, with Beijing providing billions of dollars in loans and aid to African countries in exchange for access to their natural resources. This has significantly impacted the region's economic devel-

opment and has raised questions about the implications of China's growing influence on African integration and security cooperation.

China's growing involvement in Africa has significantly impacted the region's integration and security cooperation. On the one hand, Chinese investment has contributed to the economic growth of many African countries, particularly in the form of large-scale infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, and ports. These projects have the potential to promote greater economic integration and connectivity within the region, which could in turn foster greater political and security cooperation among African countries.

On the other hand, there are some concerns that China's engagement in Africa could have negative implications for the region's long-term development and stability.

THE ROLE OF MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN MANAGING CHINESE INFLUENCE

The growing influence of China in Africa has raised important questions about the role of multilateral cooperation in managing Chinese engagement and promoting the region's development and stability. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of the challenges facing Africa, it is clear that no single country or institution can effectively address these issues alone. Instead, a coordinated and collaborative approach is needed, with multilateral cooperation playing a central role in promoting greater transparency and accountability in Chinese investment, as well as in fostering greater economic integration and security cooperation among African countries.

One potential avenue for multilateral cooperation in managing Chinese engagement is through the AU. The AU has the potential to serve as a forum for African countries to coordinate their responses to Chinese investment, and to develop common strategies for promoting greater transparency and accountability in their dealings with Beijing. Given the AU's mandate to promote greater economic and political integration within the region, the organization is well-placed to play a leading role in fostering greater regional cooperation and cohesion in the face of China's growing influence.

Chinese investment in Africa spans a wide range of projects, including infrastructure development such as roads, railways, ports, and energy projects. Additionally,

Chinese companies have been involved in mining, agriculture, telecommunications, and manufacturing in various African countries. These investments are aimed at securing access to natural resources, expanding market opportunities, and fostering economic growth in the region.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF CHINESE INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN AFRICA

1. Infrastructure development: In Kenya, the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) project, which connects the port city of Mombasa to the capital city of Nairobi, was constructed with the support of Chinese funding and expertise. This project has significantly improved transportation and trade in the region. Also, there are countrywide developments of infrastructure in Nigeria including but not limited to railway lines, Kaduna-Abuja, Lagos-Ibadan; new airport terminals, the Lekki deep sea port, etc.

2. Energy projects: China has been involved in various energy projects in Africa, including financing and constructing hydroelectric power plants. For instance, the Karuma Hydroelectric Power Station in Uganda and the Geregu, Zungeru power plant in Nigeria were built with Chinese funding and support.

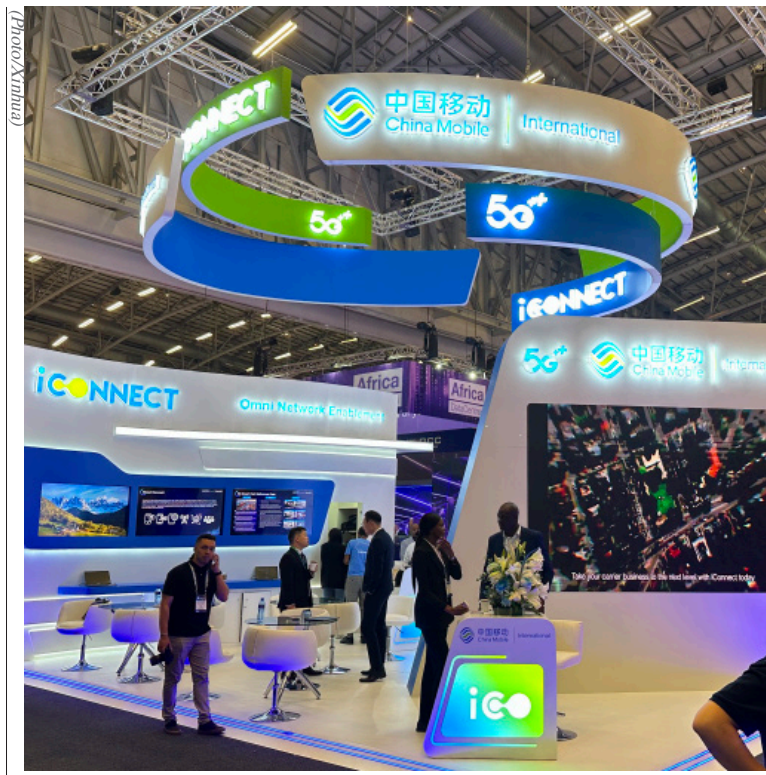
3. Mining: Chinese companies have been actively involved in the mining sector across Africa. For example, in Zambia, Chinese firms have invested in copper and cobalt mining projects, which are vital to the country's economy.

4. Agriculture: China has invested in large-scale agricultural projects in countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. These investments often involve technology transfer and infrastructure development to improve agricultural productivity.

5. Telecommunications: Chinese telecom companies have expanded their operations in Africa, providing mobile and internet services. For instance, companies like Huawei and ZTE have been involved in building telecommunications infrastructure in various African countries.

6. Manufacturing: Chinese companies have established manufacturing facilities in Africa to take advantage of lower labor costs and access to regional markets. For example, Chinese firms have set up textile and industrial facilities in countries like Ethiopia and Tanzania.

These are just a few examples of the diverse range of Chinese investment projects in Africa, highlighting the



People visit the booth of China Mobile at the Africa ICT Expo on the sidelines of the Africa Tech Festival in Cape Town, South Africa, Nov. 14, 2023.

significant presence and impact of Chinese investment in the region.

THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has been instrumental in promoting Chinese investment in Africa. FOCAC is a platform for collective dialogue and cooperation between China and African countries, and it has played a key role in facilitating Chinese investment projects across the continent.

Through FOCAC, China has committed significant financial resources to support various development projects in Africa. This includes infrastructure development, such as the construction of roads, railways, ports, and airports, as well as energy projects, including the development of power plants and transmission lines.

FOCAC has also been instrumental in promoting industrial cooperation and investment in sectors such as

manufacturing, agriculture, and telecommunications. This has led to the establishment of special economic zones and industrial parks in countries like Ethiopia and Nigeria, where Chinese companies have invested in manufacturing facilities.

Furthermore, FOCAC has supported initiatives aimed at promoting agricultural modernization and technology transfer, with a focus on improving food security and agricultural productivity in African countries.

Overall, FOCAC has been a driving force behind Chinese investment in Africa, fostering cooperation and partnership between China and African countries to promote sustainable development and economic growth on the continent.

One key feature of the FOCAC is its significant emphasis on people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and African countries. This involves programs and initiatives designed to promote cultural, educational, and interpersonal exchanges between the peoples of China and Africa.

KEY ASPECTS OF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGES UNDER FOCAC

1. Education and training: FOCAC has supported various educational initiatives, including scholarships, exchange programs, and vocational training opportunities for students and professionals from African countries to study in China. This has facilitated knowledge transfer and capacity building in areas such as science, technology, agriculture, and public administration.

2. Cultural cooperation: FOCAC promotes cultural exchanges between China and African countries, including the organization of cultural festivals, artistic performances, and exhibitions. These activities help promote mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultural heritage.

3. Health and medical cooperation: FOCAC has supported initiatives to improve healthcare and medical cooperation between China and African countries. This includes medical assistance programs, training for healthcare professionals, and the establishment of medical facilities and research institutions.

4. People-to-people dialogue: FOCAC facilitates regular dialogues and interactions between scholars, journalists, youth representatives, and civil society organizations from China and Africa to discuss issues of common inter-

est and strengthen mutual understanding.

Overall, people-to-people exchanges are an important component of FOCAC's efforts to foster stronger ties between China and Africa, promoting friendship, mutual respect, and cooperation at the individual and societal levels.

Apart from the FOCAC Arrangement, there is also another global initiative of the Chinese government launched in 2013 namely the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The BRI is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government, focusing on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries. In Africa, the BRI has led to significant investments in infrastructure, such as ports, highways, railways, and energy facilities. The multilateral reach of the BRI in Africa has several security implications and areas of cooperation:

I. Security Implications:

1. Economic security: The BRI investments in African infrastructure can enhance economic security by creating employment opportunities, boosting trade, and facilitating economic growth. However, this economic development may lead to competition and potential tensions between China and other countries with economic interests in the region.

2. Maritime security: The construction of ports and maritime infrastructure under the BRI in Africa has security implications, including the potential militarization of ports, navigation rights, and regional maritime disputes. Cooperation to ensure the security of sea routes and maritime infrastructure could be an area of mutual interest the African countries will need to pay closer attention to guard against any future maritime security threat.

3. Cybersecurity: With increasing digital connectivity as part of BRI infrastructure projects, there is a need for cooperation in cybersecurity to prevent cyber-attacks and safeguard critical infrastructure.

II. Areas of Mutual Cooperation:

1. Counter-terrorism: China and African countries can cooperate on counter-terrorism efforts, including intelligence sharing, capacity building, and joint military exercises to address security threats emanating from terrorist groups.

2. Maritime security: There is potential for cooperation in ensuring maritime security, including anti-piracy

efforts, search and rescue operations, and maritime law enforcement.

3. Peacekeeping and conflict resolution: China has been contributing to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. There is potential for cooperation in peacekeeping training, capacity building, and conflict resolution efforts.

4. Infrastructure security: Cooperation in securing BRI infrastructure projects, such as ports, railways, and energy facilities, can ensure the safety and stability of these critical assets.

5. Cybersecurity: Collaborative efforts in enhancing cybersecurity measures and information sharing to protect BRI-related digital infrastructure.

The multilateral reach of the BRI in Africa provides opportunities for China and African countries to collaborate in addressing security challenges while promoting shared economic development. Effective cooperation should prioritize mutual interests, sovereignty, and the long-term security and stability of the region.

CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE AREA OF SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

China's engagement with African countries in the area of security architecture involves various forms of cooperation. Some of the key areas of cooperation in African security architecture with China include:

1. Military training and assistance: China provides military training programs and capacity-building assistance to African countries. This includes training for military personnel, logistical and technical support, and the provision of military equipment and hardware.

2. Peacekeeping and conflict resolution: China has been actively involved in supporting peacekeeping efforts in Africa, including providing troops and logistical support to the UN and AU peacekeeping missions. China's contribution to peacekeeping efforts in Africa has been significant, and the country has been involved in various peacekeeping missions across the continent.

3. Counter-terrorism cooperation: China has engaged in counter-terrorism cooperation with African countries. This includes intelligence sharing, capacity-building in counter-terrorism operations, and collaboration in addressing the regional and global threats posed by terrorist groups operating in Africa.

4. Maritime security: China has been involved in cooperative efforts with African countries to enhance maritime

security in the region. This includes joint patrols, information sharing, and support for capacity-building initiatives aimed at combating piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime security challenges.

5. Security infrastructure development: China has been involved in the construction and development of security infrastructure in African countries, including the provision of surveillance equipment, border control facilities, and other security-related infrastructure.

6. Arms sales and military cooperation: China has engaged in arms sales and military cooperation with various African countries, providing military equipment, hardware, and technology to support their security and defense capabilities.

China's engagement in these areas reflects its growing interest in Africa and its desire to strengthen ties and cooperation with African countries in the realm of security. The nature of China's involvement in African security architecture has been subject to increasing scrutiny and debate, with discussions on the implications of Chinese engagement for African security dynamics and long-term relations.

CHALLENGES IN CHINA-AFRICA MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

1. Diverse interests and priorities: African countries have diverse interests and priorities, and aligning these with China's goals and objectives can be challenging. China's approach to engagement in Africa has to navigate complex political, economic, and social landscapes within each country, as well as the broader regional dynamics.

2. Competition with other global powers: China's cooperation in Africa is often seen in competition with other global actors such as the United States and European countries. This competitive environment can make it challenging for China to establish and maintain a leading position in its multilateral cooperation efforts.

3. Political instability and governance challenges: Many African countries face political instability, governance challenges, and corruption, which can complicate China's efforts to engage in multilateral cooperation. Instability and governance issues can create risks for Chinese investments and partnerships in Africa.

4. Infrastructure and connectivity limitations: Poor infrastructure and connectivity in many African countries can pose challenges for China's efforts to enhance multi-

lateral cooperation. Investment in infrastructure development, including transportation networks, communication systems, and energy facilities, is essential for promoting effective multilateral cooperation.

5. Cultural and linguistic barriers: China's engagement in Africa may face challenges related to cultural and linguistic differences, requiring efforts to bridge communication gaps and build mutual understanding.

6. Environmental and social concerns: China's multilateral cooperation in Africa is facing increasing scrutiny regarding its environmental and social impacts, particularly related to infrastructure and resource development projects. Balancing economic development with environmental and social sustainability is an ongoing challenge for China's engagement in Africa.

7. Maligning of China: Another critical barrier in the way of China multilateralism is the maligning of China by the West which keeps putting up bad propaganda against China, criticizing it for strategizing to take over the raw materials and infrastructural assets in African countries as a recolonization effort.

Addressing these challenges requires China to adopt a nuanced approach to its multilateral cooperation in Africa, acknowledging the complex and evolving nature of Africa's political, economic, and social landscape. Building trust, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting transparency and accountability are critical elements for addressing these challenges and advancing multilateral cooperation with African countries.

Addressing the challenges of China's multilateral cooperation in Africa security cooperation in the interest of world peace and harmony requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Some key steps that can be taken to address these challenges include:

1. Promoting dialogue and mutual understanding: China and African countries need to engage in open and transparent dialogue to understand each other's security concerns, interests, and priorities. Building mutual trust and understanding is essential for effective multilateral cooperation in security matters.

2. Addressing governance and corruption issues: Addressing governance and corruption challenges in African countries is crucial for promoting stability and security. China can support efforts to improve governance, enhance transparency, and combat corruption, as these factors can contribute to peace and harmony in the region.

3. Investing in sustainable development: China can

promote sustainable development initiatives in Africa, including investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and poverty reduction. By addressing underlying economic and social challenges, China can contribute to the long-term stability and security of African countries.

4. Balancing economic interests with social and environmental responsibility: China can take measures to ensure that its economic activities in Africa align with social and environmental responsibility. This includes promoting sustainable development, respecting local communities, and mitigating environmental impacts.

5. Strengthening multilateral institutions and frameworks: China can support the strengthening of multilateral institutions and frameworks in Africa aimed at promoting peace, security, and cooperation. This includes supporting regional and continental organizations such as the AU and the regional economic communities.

6. Engaging with other global actors: China can collaborate with other global actors, including the UN, Western powers, and other emerging economies, to address security challenges in Africa. By working together, these actors can share best practices, resources, and expertise to enhance security cooperation in the continent.

By taking these steps, China can contribute to resolving the challenges of multilateral cooperation in African security and promote world peace and harmony. A collaborative and inclusive approach that considers the interests and perspectives of all stakeholders is essential for achieving sustainable and effective security cooperation in Africa.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the growing influence of China in Africa has significant implications for the region's integration and security cooperation. Chinese investment has the potential to promote economic development and greater regional connectivity. Multilateral cooperation is essential in managing Chinese engagement and promoting the region's long-term development and stability. The AU, in particular, has a key role to play in fostering greater regional cooperation and cohesion in the face of China's growing influence. By working together, African countries can leverage the potential benefits of Chinese investment while also safeguarding their long-term interests and promoting greater regional integration and security cooperation. ■