**Chinese Path to Modernization: A lesson to African Countries**

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**Introduction:**

China’s path to modernization is the most striking development occurrence in recent human history. It is multifaceted, global, impactful and comprehensive, and has one inspiring goal, delivering a better life for the people. The modernization of China is linked with its rapid development in many sectors. In fact, China’s rapid development in the last few decades and its ability to solve pervasive societal challenges such as severe poverty, corruption, among others, while maintaining peaceful relations with other countries all over the world have all contributed to the admiration of China by people in developing countries such as those found in Africa.[[1]](#footnote-0) Recent polls have indicated that Africans admire and approve of China’s modernization path because of the impressive development that China has consolidated that could be gleamed to inspire and power transformation of African countries. China is still a developing country. However, its modernization path has inspired many African countries that poverty can be fought against with proper governance and dedication. There are a number of factors that have guided China to achieve such comprehensive development within a short time and some African countries have taken China as their development model, learning key factors from China to achieve their development.

1. **Evaluation of China’s Development in the past ten years: China’s key factors to achieve development**
2. **Political Stability**

China’s political stability is undeniable, as it is the core foundation of its economic development. China’s political stability did not happen in one night, it took China some time, but the leaders of China did manage to keep their country’s political system stable. In fact, China has a sound political system that is feasible and efficient. China’s political stability has helped China to achieve its goals and development programs. For example, under President Xi Jinping’s leadership, China was able to keep its promises to the people to eliminate extreme poverty and to win the battle against poverty.

With a stable political system, everyone has one and the same wish: to make the country better. And that is the reason why China has been more successful than any other country around the world. A stable political system has made Chinese government able to provide national public welfare products for the people, and it ensures national order and peace. At the conference marking the 70th Anniversary of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” in Beijing on June 28th 2024, President Xi while delivering a speech said that China resolves to stay on the path of peaceful development, develop friendships and cooperation with all countries all over the world, and promote common development across the world.

China’s political stability is the foundation of its economic development, and has been good for China’s position in the global affairs. China upheld its firm position on solving conflicts through dialogue. The Ukraine crisis, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Saudi Arabia and Iran diplomatic issues, to name few, China has always kept one voice, advocating dialogue to achieve peace. And that is a vital position any country in the world should follow and hold. With a stable political system, China endeavored as well to contribute to the rise of the Global South. It supported the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS. China also helped many African countries realize their development programs through the SDG’s or through the African Union development goals for the continent with its Agenda 2063.

1. **Investment in Technology and Innovation**

Investment in technology and innovation is crucial to a country’s development. In the last couple of years, China has invested a lot in technology and innovation. With its ability to encourage young generation to develop their country, China has become the hub for technological innovation. For instance, China is taking the lead in 5G development across the globe. Now, China holds the world’s largest 5G network with the most advanced technologies. China is also strengthening international exchange and communication in 5G related technology. China has more than 2.64 million 5G’s base stations, and is developing electric vehicles, moving towards digitization.

By 2025, China vowed to make important progress in the construction of a digital China, capable of effective inter-connectivity in digital infrastructure, digital economy, and breakthrough in digital technology innovation. Electrical car maker like BYD has made tremendous achievements by making advanced technologies, which are being bought by many countries around the world.

1. **China’s Path to Modernization: Lessons for African Countries**
2. **The rule of Law**

In China, the rule of law is paramount and absolute. China has an efficient Government, that puts the people first, and has also an efficient judiciary system that is fair. The Chinese Government has installed the rule of law that is being followed by all, with no exceptions. The fight against corruption has given China many chances to thrive in the right away with the right people, especially in the key positions of the country. With the right people in the right positions of the country, China has kept rising economically in the last decade, even during the Covid-19. China handled well not only the coronavirus, but also kept strong economic endeavors, which helped China to thrive during those hard times.

In Africa, the rule of law exists, but not so efficient like in China, and it is not followed by all. Important people in high places in Africa are usually not affected by the rule of law. Those people can do whatever they want while they are still in power, and the law in place protects them somehow. With that situation, many African countries have a hard time fighting efficiently corruption. Corruption has remained the most endemic challenge to Africa’s development. Corruption on the African continent benefits a few at the expense of the majority, and it is being observed in many countries around the continent at many levels.[[2]](#footnote-1) Some African’s Government officials and policy makers pilfer public resources, neglect their daily duties, and even collude with criminals, let alone terrorists, to derail the national development agenda of their respective countries.

Corruption undermines trust in many African countries’ institutions, diverts resources from essential services such as healthcare, and hampers efforts to achieve stable economic growth. Many African countries are still experiencing severe corruption and this corruption discourages potential foreign investment, skews the economic play-field on the continent. How to install a fair rule of law, with no exceptions, can be a way out of Africa’s high level of corruption. African countries can learn from China how to fight against corruption and held accountable those responsible of misusing the country’s resources. African countries can also learn from China how to put the right people in the right positions of the country. This is one learning area that Africa can benefit by bench-marking on China.

1. **Stable and Guided Politics**

From 1949, China has been a country with a clear development path, to make the citizen’s life better. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the government and the people of China have worked together to carefully identify their challenges, accept them, come up with sustainable solutions and effectively implement the recommended policies to the identified challenges. On that, the CPC political stability has been a key factor driving Chinese modernization and helped reaching those targets. The political stability maintained by the CPC has also inspired trust among the people with CPC registering the highest party approval compared to other political parties in the world.

In this regard, many African countries have also their development target. Some African countries have a five-year development plan, some ten-year, some even longer. For instance, Burundi has a more than twenty-year development plan. The African Union has its own, the agenda 2063. But the only difference is few African countries succeed in reaching all their development targets, due to lack of good governance and enough resources such as financing all their development plans. This is where African countries can learn from China, by implementing targets that they can reach instead of drawing mega plans that are unlikely reachable.

1. **Problem Solving**

China has adopted something that I personally admire, it is the whole of society approach to problem solving. In China, development is a function for everyone to get involved in. compared to many parts of Africa where while development is often associated with economic indicators in towns and cities, China has adopted whole of society, all of the country approach to development. This has ensured that every part of China is involved in driving development; making China achieve some very impressive development milestones such as eliminating extreme poverty by 2020, ten years ahead of the UN set target of 2030.[[3]](#footnote-2)

The most problem solving that the whole world witnessed is how China dealt with efficacy during the Covid-19. When the virus appeared in China, China’s government took all necessary approach to protect all citizens by building temporary hospitals in no time to tackle Covid-19. Shortly after the virus spread in many countries around the world, countries followed China’s lead in building temporary hospitals and offered medical care for patients. China was the first country in the world to control the spread of the virus and helped many countries fight the virus as well. For instance, China financed Africa’s Center for Disease Control headquarters, which played an important role in tackling the virus on the continent.

**III. China and Africa Bilateral Economic Development:**

**Through BRI and FOCAC platforms, build a community with shared future**

One of the most significant achievements of China-Africa economic cooperation is the development of infrastructure across the African continent. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China has invested heavily in building roads, railways, ports, airports, hospitals, and telecommunications networks in Africa. These infrastructure projects have enhanced connectivity, facilitated trade and investment, and promoted economic development in Africa.

On March 8th 2024, the 13th meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum took place in Tanzania, Dar-Es-Salaam under the theme “China-African Practice: Building a community with a shared future”, with many officials from all over Africa attending. Some of those officials pointed out the importance of the BRI on the continent, and what African countries have gained so far from the initiative. The meeting also delved into the major concerns and potential strategic cooperation between China and Africa in the new era. During the meeting, African officials on their interviews to different media mentioned that they are looking forward to see many development programs through the BRI implemented on the continent. Through BRI, Chinese investment in major infrastructure in African countries like Uganda, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria has helped develop railway networks, gas pipelines, etc.[[4]](#footnote-3)

Since its establishment 20 years ago, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has remained the essential platform on which Africa’s political, economic and socio-cultural relationship with China has continued to wax stronger. In fact, over the years, China has used the platform to engage with nearly all African countries.

Beijing has become Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade volume reaching hundreds of billions of dollars annually. China's investment in Africa spans various sectors, including energy, mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. Many Chinese companies such as China Railway Construction Group, Zoom lion among others, have established joint ventures, invested in industrial parks, and financed infrastructure projects, contributing to job creation, technology transfer, and economic diversification in Africa.

Since the beginning of the 21st Century, China-Africa relationship has become symbiotic. For centuries, China and Africa have enjoyed a time-honored strong relationship. In fact, China and Africa have been good political, economic and security allies. With China’s “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) initiated by President Xi Jinping back in 2013 as well as China’s earlier policy “Go Out” overseas investments strategy, China’s economic footprint in Africa is undeniably growing. For instance, under the BRI, many African countries witnessed unprecedented development in the form of roads, hospitals, stadiums and communication facilities, which made trade and commerce easier to undertake in Africa, improving African people’s well-being. At that, Africa is even being more attractive to other external investors like Russia, India and Brazil, which have seen themselves hosting similar summits as FOCAC with Africa.

Some ways of development are worth mentioning regarding how China and Africa can better jointly promote bilateral economic development. These includes but not only areas like transfer of manufacturing capacity, human capital development and financial support, etc.

1. **Transfer of Manufacturing Capacity**

China’s transfer of manufacturing capacity has been a way of China to create its position globally and helping many developing countries, benefiting developing countries reach their own potential. China’s transfer of manufacturing capacity follows the laws governing the international transfer of technology and helps deepen the integration of the global industrial chain.[[5]](#footnote-4) It is also a way for promoting a global economic recovery and the transformation of the Chinese economy.

China-Africa industrial capacity cooperation has made more and more African countries zealous to espouse the epoch-making opportunities that are brought about by China’s modernization. More and more African countries are looking up to China as China has made Africa its important overseas investments destination. China and African countries both benefit from this transfer of manufacturing capacity as it helps China and African countries achieve a win-win cooperation for mutual development. With this transfer of manufacturing capacity, many Chinese companies are making commodities that African countries need, helping them to break the cycle of aid dependency from Western donors.

China-Africa economic cooperation has also facilitated the transfer of manufacturing capacity and expertise from China to Africa. Chinese companies have set up factories and production facilities in Africa, creating employment opportunities and promoting industrialization on the continent. Many Chinese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are operating on the continent in industrial parks positioned in Ethiopia, Nigeria, etc. by creating jobs and transfer of technology. Additionally, Chinese investments in industrial parks and special economic zones have attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) and stimulated economic growth in Africa.

On the agricultural development front, China has supported Africa through initiatives such as the Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers (ATDCs) and the China-Africa Agricultural Cooperation Program (CAACP). These programs promote technology transfer, capacity building, and knowledge sharing in areas such as crop cultivation, irrigation, and livestock management. Chinese investments in agribusinesses and agricultural infrastructure have boosted food production, improved food security, and enhanced rural livelihoods in Africa. Chinese agricultural specialists are training small farmers in many African countries through multiple programs, and eliminating famine in the process.

1. **Human Capital Development**

China has contributed to human capital development in Africa through scholarships, training programs, and educational exchanges. Thousands of African students have studied in China on government-sponsored scholarships, gaining skills and knowledge in various fields such as engineering, medicine, and business administration. Additionally, Chinese universities and training institutes offer capacity-building programs for African professionals, enhancing their expertise and qualifications. Kenya, for example is today a hub of modern railway technology, including critical expertise because of the collaboration with China in implementing the Mombasa-Nairobi-Naivasha Standard Gauge Railway.

In favor of Africa’s longstanding quest to modernize its healthcare ecosystem, China has also supported Africa through medical assistance programs, training workshops, and infrastructure projects. Chinese medical teams have provided healthcare services and technical assistance in areas such as disease prevention, maternal and child health, and epidemic control. China has also financed and constructed the headquarters of the Africa Center for Disease Prevention and Control in Ethiopia; making the continent to have the largest health emergency coordination and facilitation platform in the world. Beijing has also aided construction of hospitals, clinics, and medical centers in many African countries, improving access to quality healthcare services for local communities.

1. **Financial Support**

For every country to develop its economy, infrastructure is very important. Every African country needs infrastructure, and each African country also need to industrialize. The reality is that African countries have no wherewithal to develop infrastructure alone without external financing and technical assistance. Every African country needs partnership and cooperation with other countries, especially China. China, through his engagements on the African continent, has demonstrated its commitment to invest in some sectors on the continent where the West has refused or unable to invest, especially with regards to the provision of hard and productive infrastructures. In fact, China’s infrastructure investment in Africa has caught the eye of the whole world. Back in 2005, only four African countries benefited infrastructure investment from China, while by 2023, this figure had risen up to 46. [[6]](#footnote-5)

On financial inclusion which is a key pillar of the BRI, China has provided financial assistance and support to African countries through concessional loans, grants, and debt relief initiatives. The China-Africa Development Fund (CAD Fund) and the Silk Road Fund are examples of financial instruments established to promote investment and development cooperation between China and Africa. Additionally, China has participated in multilateral initiatives such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), contributing to debt relief, regional integration and poverty reduction efforts.

Over the past two decades alone, Africa’s partnership with China has undeniably led to a leap in trade and investment cooperation. In the last decade alone, China has increased its foreign direct investment flows into Africa and up to this day, maintains special trade and economic cooperation zones in Sub-Saharan countries, while making available development loans worth over $150 billion over the past 20 years.[[7]](#footnote-6) China has also overtaken the United States as Africa’s largest single trading partner, achieving an all-time high of over $250 billion in 2021.

China-Africa cooperation, which mostly involves China offering foreign assistance (non-conditional assistance) or investments in Africa’s key sectors like infrastructure, agriculture and industrial collaboration, offered Africa unprecedented development opportunities, and helped many African countries join the international production chain as a value-added segment. By offering non-conditional aid to many African countries, China has presented a more attractive alternative compared to conditional Western aid, and China gained quite valuable diplomatic support from almost all African countries.

Today, China is Africa’s largest trading partner and one of Africa’s major providers of foreign assistance. Since 2000, trade or economic ties has become the largest feature of the China-Africa relationship. In 2018, the growth rate of China’s trade with Africa remained high, and China has remained Africa’s largest trading partner for the last two decades. Since 2001, the volume of trade between China and Africa has increased by a compound annual growth rate of 21%, reaching US$ 204.19 billion back in 2018,[[8]](#footnote-7) up from US$ 155 billion that was recorded in 2017; more than double the value of trade Africa does with its other major economic partners like India (US$ 59 billion), Japan (US$ 20 billion) etc.; reversing a multiyear slump and reaffirming China’s role as Africa’s most important trading and economic partner. China’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) annual flows in Africa increased as well from 2003 US$ 75 million up to 2018 US$ 5.4 billion.

**Conclusion:**

In the realm of global geopolitics and economic development, China and African countries relations have emerged as one of the most dynamic of the 21st century. China and African countries relations have emerged as one of the most striking relationships in the Global South. Central to this relationship is the establishment of the FOCAC back in 2000, which has become the cornerstone of China-African relations to this date. Within the FOCAC platform, African countries have learned much from China’s path to modernization.

China’s path to modernization has been but an evolving pursuit of the Chinese people over generations. With that modernization, China was able to show the world that maintaining an growing economy without waging wars is possible. Being a developing country, China has been an example to the Global South, especially to African countries. In fact, China has shown to African countries that extreme poverty can be fought against. Some African countries like Rwanda, Mauritius etc. are already showing encouraging results.

With the BRI and the FOCAC as the two important platforms of cooperation between China and Africa, African countries have to take their destiny in their own hands. To maximize the benefits brought in those two platforms, African countries must overcome some of its longstanding issues. First is governance. African countries need good leadership, political will, policy consistency, and continuity of their respective governments programs. Second is corruption. Many African countries still have a hard time getting rid of severe corruption, and corruption is one of the reasons why many African countries could not accomplish their development programs.

To finally achieving its goals, African countries need to install strong institutions, legal frameworks, and put the right people in the right positions of the country. The rule of law for instance and the supremacy of any country’s constitution are fundamental to establish a stable economic environment. China in that part did well, and the results are being seen by the whole world. Africa has much to learn from China. For Africa to get rid of sever poverty for instance, it needs a strategic economic planning, investment in human capital, and the development of infrastructure. African countries need to leverage their abundant resources, both human and natural, to foster a stable and strong economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable.

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