

## Contemporary China-Africa Relations and the Revitalizing Afro-Asian Civilizations -- Discussion on Certain Issues Regarding the Characteristics and Significance of Contemporary China-Africa Relations<sup>I</sup>

LIU Hongwu<sup>2</sup> & CAO Junfeng<sup>3</sup>

Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University, China

---

Received: 15/10/2025

Revised: 01/12/2025

Accepted: 21/01/2026

---

### Citation (APA)

Liu, H., & Cao, J. (2026). Contemporary China-Africa Relations and the Revitalizing Afro-Asian Civilizations—Discussion on Certain Issues Regarding the Characteristics and Significance of Contemporary China-Africa Relations. *Journal of Sino-African Studies (JSAS)*, 5(1), 39-57. <https://doi.org/10.56377/jsas.v5n1.3957>

---

### Abstract

In recent years, with the accelerated development of Afro-Asian economies and the strengthening of Afro-Asian relations, the contemporary world has been undergoing a series of profound structural transformations. The rapid advancement of China-Africa relations and the rising influence of China in Africa serve as a window into this global wave of transformation. Through the lens of China-Africa relations, we not only witness the tremendous progress China has made over the past 50 years since its reform and opening-up but also observe a “New Silk Road” of the revitalizing Afro-Asian civilizations extending into the distance, heralding the formation of a new world. Traditional knowledge and theoretical frameworks, however, seem increasingly inadequate to fully and effectively explain the essence and significance of this evolving world. To address this grand and long-term historical process of Afro-Asian civilization revival, international relations theory must undergo structural, conceptual, and methodological innovation. This requires a transition from a Western-centric paradigm to one rooted in Afro-Asian perspectives, while simultaneously engaging with the broader global context.

**Keywords:** Afro-Asian revival; China-Africa relations; structural transformations; knowledge renewal

---

---

<sup>1</sup> **Research Funding:** This study is supported by the 2025 National Social Science Fund of China (NSSF) Major Project "Research on the Modernization of Modern and Contemporary African Countries (Code: 25VLS022)

<sup>2</sup> **LIU Hongwu** is a Ph.D. supervisor, founding Director of the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, a Changjiang Scholar appointed by the Ministry of Education of China, and the founder of the China-Africa Think Tank Forum.

<sup>3</sup> **CAO Junfeng** is a PhD Candidate of Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University.

## Introduction

The accelerated development of Afro-Asian countries in recent years has driven profound structural transformations in international relations. The long-standing global order, characterized by a “center-periphery” model dominated by Western developed nations and marginalizing non-Western underdeveloped countries, is gradually shifting toward a more balanced framework of parallel and equal interactions among all civilizations. This transition also highlights the increasingly evident autonomy in the development of Afro-Asian countries. While Afro-Asian countries as a whole still trail behind Western developed nations, and their revival and development remain a work in progress, the advancing wave of Afro-Asian revival has already begun to reshape the structure of international relations and the dynamics of inter-state interactions. Viewed within a broader and interconnected context, the rapid growth of China-Africa relations in recent years, the establishment of comprehensive strategic partnerships, and China’s rising influence in Africa are deeply intertwined with and mutually reinforcing the global trend of structural changes in international relations and the “global wave” of Afro-Asian civilizational revival.

### I. The Characteristics of Contemporary China-Africa Relations in the Context of Afro-Asian Civilization Revival

Reflecting on the past, it is evident that the significance and characteristics of any major transformation or development in human life can be difficult to fully grasp for those living through it. Only by situating these changes within a broader historical framework, adopting a panoramic perspective, and tracing their origins can we grasp their full scope and underlying characteristics. This approach is especially crucial when assessing the strengths and challenges of contemporary China-Africa relations, which require such depth of insight and perspective. However, academic circles in China, the West, and Africa have yet to develop sufficient knowledge and theoretical frameworks to comprehensively and proactively understand the rapidly evolving dynamics of the relationship between China and African nations. While the rapid development of contemporary China-Africa relations becomes an undeniable fact, and the achievements of China-Africa cooperation have been considerable, the challenges and complexities of this relationship are becoming increasingly apparent. Nevertheless, theoretical exploration and intellectual reflection on this relationship remain notably inadequate.

Contemporary China-Africa relations, with nearly 70 years of history, have witnessed rapid development in recent years. This progress is not only the inevitable outcome of historical progression, but also rooted in profound and complex contemporary contexts, with clear directions for future development. As former Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, then Chair of the African Union, stated at the opening ceremony of the first Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2006:

“The commitment of China to the principle of the sovereign equality among nations and non-interference in the affairs of others, has provided Africa the opportunity to forge a partnership that is based on trust and mutual confidence. It is therefore very appropriate that 50 years after we began building our strategic partnership in the fight against colonialism and apartheid and for our right to fully exercise our sovereign rights, we should reaffirm the Sino-Africa strategic partnership (UN General Assembly Security Council, 2006, p. 12).”

He further noted, “our peoples have very high expectations from the renewed Sino-Africa strategic partnership and have celebrated and welcomed China’s tremendous progress in the economic and other fields (UN General Assembly Security Council, 2006, p. 14).” Today, the overall positioning of China-Africa relations has been upgraded to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era, and China’s relations with Africa have entered the best period in history. In the context of modern global development, the resilience and evolution of China-Africa relations amidst ongoing transformation and adjustment can be attributed to their origins in the Afro-Asian pursuit of national rejuvenation and self-strengthening. Embedded within these relations are the enduring efforts and aspirations of the people from the non-Western world since the 20<sup>th</sup> century to achieve modern development and transformation (H. Liu, 2007a, p. 16).

In early modern times, China repeatedly suffered from invasion and bullying by foreign powers, plunging into the abyss of hardship and humiliation, losing its right to conduct independent diplomacy. At that time, the African continent faced a similar plight, yet in many ways suffered even greater hardships. However, the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the liberation of the African continent made it possible for both sides to overcome this state of subjugation. During this period, China and Africa discovered each other in their pursuit of modern rejuvenation and development (B. D. Larkin, 1971, p. 1), embodying the sentiment of responding to the call for friendship with harmonious voices. These two regions, long oppressed and humiliated by Western powers since modern times, found in each other not only a distant nation that treated them as equals, but also a sincere partner willing to help. Over the next two decades, China-Africa relations began to develop in a completely new and mutually empowering manner.

From the perspective of multi-civilizational exchange, human civilization has undergone centuries of evolution within a so-called unidirectional, center-dominating-periphery world system led and dominated by the West. Therefore, the establishment and development of a modern relationship between China and Africa, characterized by mutual respect and equal interaction, holds profound symbolic significance. It reflects, to some extent, a transformation in the overall pattern of global civilizational exchanges and the characteristics of international relations, moving toward multidirectional, networked, and egalitarian interactions among diverse civilizations. This transition signifies a future of autonomous dialogue and equal exchanges among global civilizations. Although this process is arduous, full of twists and turns, and spans a long journey, it highlights that the Eurocentric or Western-centric experience and discourse of modernity over the past few centuries will ultimately represent just one phase in the development of human civilization. The world history will not end with the rise and culmination of Western civilization; rather, it will continue to advance with the revival and rise of Afro-Asian civilizations. Today, after more than half a century of endeavors and explorations, the pace of development in the Afro-Asian world has significantly accelerated, driving profound transformations in the global landscape. These structural changes mark the emergence of a new and historically significant era in world history (H. Liu, 2007b, p. 14).

## **2. The Period of Strategic Opportunity for the Rise of China-Africa Relations**

China-Africa relations, marked by profound transformations and structural changes, began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1990s, amid significant shifts in the global order, this

relationship entered an important period of strategic opportunity and began to rise noticeably, reaching a new height with the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This evolution unfolded under specific historical conditions. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, following the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War, the United States emerged as the world's sole superpower, fundamentally reshaping its worldview. During this period, Western countries, led by the United States, were immersed in the "triumph of democracy and victory in the Cold War," arrogantly believing that the development of the world had "culminated" in the current "perfect" democratic model of the West. They dismissed the possibility that Asian and African nations could play a role in creating history and, as a result, broadly neglected Africa and underestimated China. This lack of serious consideration for the potential of independent development and innovation in Asia and Africa led to the accumulation of knowledge blind spots within the Western world.

Throughout the 1990s, Western nations perceived Africa's strategic importance as diminished, significantly reducing their attention and aid to the continent. Meanwhile, the Western concept of "neoliberalism" was promoted as a universal ideology and policy framework, pressuring African nations to implement reforms aligned with Western interests. Facing both external and internal pressures, many African countries, despite their reluctance, were compelled to make concessions in domestic and foreign affairs due to widespread poverty and reliance on foreign aid. They accepted privatization reform plans proposed by Western nations and international financial institutions, and adopted multi-party systems based on Western values, which led to frequent and chaotic regime changes and political instability across the continent. However, the solutions put forward by Western nations and Western-led international organizations proved not to be remedies. After the 1990s, most African countries faced worsening economic decline and political turmoil compared to previous decades. Africa's development path became increasingly uncertain, and its position in the world further marginalized. In the eyes of the West, the 1990s was Africa's "lost decade." During this period, the Western world's attitude toward Africa was dominated by indifference and pessimism.

However, China, drawing on its unique civilizational heritage and historical perspective, approached Africa with strategic priorities and emotional connections that were fundamentally different from those of the West. Consequently, China's expectations for Africa at the time diverged significantly from Western viewpoints, as it approached Africa's future development with "a greater sense of historical vision and confidence."

On the one hand, in 1989, Western countries imposed a series of "sanctions" against China, accompanied by widespread negative coverage in Western media. China faced significant political pressure and ideological challenges from the West. Starting in 1990, Western nations, led by the United States, proposed annual resolutions condemning China at the United Nations Human Rights Council, emphasizing narratives such as the "China Collapse Theory" and the "China Threat Theory," which reflected their lingering Cold War mentality. During that time, these narratives dominated Western discourse, and China's foreign relations were confronted with a challenging position.

Nevertheless, the shifting global landscape provided a strategic opportunity to strengthen China-Africa relations, which had already been built on a foundation of traditional friendship since the 1960s and 1970s. Importantly, African countries, driven by considerations of nationalism and national

interests, did not align with Western efforts to sanction China. Instead, they continued to maintain their relations with China. In December 1989, amid widespread Western sanctions against China, then Chinese President Yang Shangkun visited Egypt at the invitation of then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. This visit marked the first overseas trip by a Chinese head of state after 1989. During the same period, the first foreign dignitaries to visit China, including heads of state, government leaders, and foreign ministers, were also from African nations. From 1990 onward, African nations consistently supported China in defeating anti-China human rights resolutions proposed by Western countries at the United Nations. During this period when China's diplomacy faced severe difficulties and challenges, the strategic value of China-Africa relations in improving China's international position and enhancing its global status became increasingly evident. Throughout the 1990s, Western countries employed pragmatic and double-standard approaches to issues like human rights and democracy as "curses" and "tools of coercion" against developing nations. Such behavior not only underscored the divide between developed and developing world but also inadvertently strengthened China-Africa strategic cooperation. As the African continent became increasingly marginalized by the international community during the 1990s, China stood out by placing great importance on Africa. Since 1990, the Chinese Foreign Minister's annual diplomatic visits invariably began with Africa, underscoring the strategic significance of China-Africa relations.

On the other hand, after the 1990s, China's economy did not collapse as some Western prognosticators had predicted. Instead, it entered a period of rapid growth. More importantly, while Western countries, viewing Africa's development prospects with pessimism, gradually reduced their investments in the continent, China not only maintained its traditional friendly relations with African nations but also adopted a more proactive and long-term approach to Africa's development. By reforming its aid strategies, China opened up new avenues for China-Africa cooperation. By the mid-to-late 1990s, economic and trade relations between China and Africa were heating up year by year, and China's influence on the continent was steadily rising. Although China-Africa relations progressed slowly, they advanced with firm and decisive steps. Guided by "Four Principles on China-Africa Economic and Technical Cooperation" (1983), which underlined mutual benefits, practical results, diversity in form, and common development, China undertook corresponding reforms to its aid model for Africa. After the mid-1990s, these reforms accelerated, with aid being appropriately integrated with investment and trade. China established investment and trade service centers across Africa, encouraged Chinese and African enterprises to expand cooperation, and fostered a new type of partnership characterized by shared benefits and mutual risk-sharing.

During the 1990s, China-Africa economic and trade cooperation achieved remarkable progress. Bilateral trade volume increased from \$1.022 billion in 1988 to \$3.92 billion in 1995, and further grew to \$5.67 billion in 1997 (P. Ji, 2000, p. 99). In the subsequent years, China-Africa trade began to grow at an annual rate exceeding 30%, making Africa the fastest-growing region for China's foreign trade at the time. By 1999, more than 800 Chinese enterprises and companies were engaged in project contracting, trade, and investment activities in over 40 African countries, with nearly 400 trade and investment companies directly established in Africa. In 1997, China signed an agreement with the Sudanese government to jointly construct an oil pipeline from Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, to Port Sudan, with a project value of \$215 million. This project laid a solid foundation for future cooperation in oil development and energy between China and Sudan. In the same year, China signed a contract with

the Egyptian government for a complete set of equipment to produce 1.3 million tons of cement annually, valued at \$145 million. Additionally, China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation secured an international bid for Nigeria's railway restoration and modernization project, with a contract value of \$529 million (P. Ji, 2000, p. 99).

The initial entry of Chinese enterprises into Africa was primarily characterized by foundational activities, including engineering contracting, labor cooperation, and the transition of aid-based projects into sustainable commercial ventures. This groundwork, often facilitated by state-backed initiatives, established a crucial foothold and laid the infrastructure for the deeper, more diversified economic engagement that would follow. During this period, Chinese enterprises and companies familiarized themselves with the economic and investment environments of African countries earlier than their Western counterparts, securing a substantial share of infrastructure and engineering projects in Africa while building market recognition and reputation across the continent. At that time, Western countries largely underestimated Africa, withdrawing their enterprises and capital from the region. In contrast, Chinese enterprises took their first steps into the international market from the African continent. For many Chinese multinational companies that later achieved global success, Africa often served as their first gateway to the world, enabling them to take their initial steps in adapting to the fiercely competitive global economic environment. After 2000, the results of these efforts became increasingly evident. China-Africa trade volume grew rapidly, surpassing \$10 billion for the first time in 2000, reaching \$100 billion in 2008, and further soaring to \$295.6 billion in 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 14.2%. In 2009, China surpassed the United States for the first time to become Africa's largest trading partner and has maintained this position for 16 consecutive years (Y. Zhang, 2025).

This change was something the West had never anticipated. For decades, Western countries, constrained by stereotypes and ideological biases, failed to prioritize Africa in their foreign policies and overlooked its rise and the rapid development of China-Africa cooperation. Western media consistently defined Africa with negative labels such as disease, poverty, conflict, and political instability, neglecting the continent's efforts and achievements in economic growth, social progress, and cultural preservation. For instance, in 2000, *The Economist* featured a cover story titled *The hopeless continent*, which depicted Africa as mired in poverty, pestilence, political instability, and economic stagnation. The article emphasized the region's structural weaknesses and heavy reliance on foreign aid, concluding that the new millennium had "brought more disaster than hope to Africa (The Economist, 2000)." However, that same year marked a turning point with the launch of the FOCAC, signaling a new phase in China-Africa relations. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, African nations achieved remarkable economic progress. Sub-Saharan Africa's total GDP surged more than tripling from \$428.32 billion to \$1.46 trillion (The World Bank, 2025). Meanwhile, in 2000-2010, the economy of Africa grew by an annual 4.8 per cent on average, which was 1.7 percentage points higher than the global average of 3.1 per cent (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2025, p. 9). Key drivers of this transformation included the rise of the middle class, rapid urbanization, and the widespread adoption of mobile technology, and China's substantial investments in infrastructure and resource development further accelerated trade growth, making this era known as Africa's "Golden Decade." The continent's dramatic progress had compelled a dramatic rhetorical shift in the West's narrative. In 2011, *The Economist* published a cover story titled *Africa rising*, which redefined Africa as a new growth engine for the global economy, positing that "Africa has a real chance to follow in the footsteps of Asia (The

*Economist*, 2011).” The article highlighted the optimism driven by resource booms and increasing foreign investment, marking a shift toward a more positive and forward-looking narrative. This change not only underscores China’s strategic foresight in fostering cooperation with Africa but also demonstrates that China-Africa collaboration has become a vital external catalyst for Africa’s sustained development.

It is fair to argue that today’s China-Africa cooperation has moved beyond traditional political rhetoric, progressing toward a pragmatic path dedicated to fostering tangible development and improving livelihoods. This partnership is increasingly defined by its practicality, rationality, strategic foresight, comprehensiveness, and sustainability. While some Western politicians and media continue to apply rigid ideological perspectives to discuss hollow principles and levy baseless accusations of “neo-colonialism” through outdated viewpoints, China and African nations have already begun to act upon a new shared vision for mutual prosperity. Ultimately, this consistent prioritization of concrete action over empty rhetoric is what ensures the continued vitality and steady progression of China-Africa relations.

### **3. The Impact of China-Africa Relations on the Structure of China’s Relations with the External World**

The uniqueness of contemporary China-Africa relations lies in their inherent transcendence of mere bilateral engagement (B. D. Larkin, 1971, p. 83). From the very beginning, these ties have carried broader strategic significance, serving as both a lever to reshape China’s external relations structure and a platform for China to engage globally with dignity and autonomy. Since the 1960s, China’s growing influence and increasing role in Africa have repeatedly compelled the West to reconsider the significance of China and Africa in the global context.

The transformation of the contemporary global order is indeed a complex and contradictory process. Forces and interests embedded within the established international system often resist change, requiring prolonged and sometimes contentious adjustment to new realities. For centuries, Africa was viewed by many European powers as a strategic “backyard” and “garden”, a space for resource extraction, leisure, and the assertion of colonial superiority. Deeply ingrained in the mindset of some Europeans is a “European Monroe Doctrine,” wherein Africa was perceived as “Europe’s Africa” or “Africa under European trusteeship.” As former colonies of Europe, African countries were long subject to European dominance and influence. Although this dynamic has shifted somewhat since African nations gained independence, many aspects remain unchanged. For years, Westerners have been accustomed to managing Africa within a prearranged Euro-African framework, which both neglects Africa and views it through a lens of pessimism - much like their tendency to overlook and distort China.

For years, Westerners have consistently neglected the historical trajectories and contemporary transformations processes of the Asia, Africa, and broader Eastern world. This long-standing indifference has led to the accumulation of numerous cognitive “blind spots” and even entire “blind zones.” Consequently, there is widespread ignorance of the profound changes that have reshaped Asian and African societies over recent decades. Arrogance and prejudice have further dulled western sensitivity to the quiet rise of China-Africa relations and the broader revival of Asian and African civilizations. As a result, when China-Africa relations - after decades of steady accumulation - entered a

period of rapid acceleration and enhanced strategic depth in the new century, its demonstrated impact left many Western observers stunned and struggling to formulate a coherent response.

In reaction, segments of the Western media resorted to sensational headlines such as “China Suddenly Appears in Africa” or “China’s Sudden Interest in Africa’s Oil and Resources” to frame the narrative around China-Africa relations. Beneath this superficial coverage lay a deeper concern among Western observers: that the rapid advancement of this partnership could cause Africa to “deviate” from the frameworks and structures preordained by the West, thereby challenging Europe’s traditional dominance in the region. Indeed, as C. Walsh (2006) aptly observed, “the opening of new trade and investment corridors between developing countries is a disconcerting sight for the old powers.” This sense of confusion and anxiety has further exacerbated the bias and arrogance evident in Western perceptions of China’s development and its relations with Africa.

In this regard, Western standards of judgment are often dualistic, emotional, and habitual. For instance, while Western companies investing and trading in Africa are praised as spreading free-market principles and promoting equality, Chinese companies engaging in similar activities are depicted as “plundering” resources and destroying the environment. Such narrow-minded thinking leads certain Western commentators to confront a changing world with outdated knowledge and experiences, using these preconceptions to accuse China of practicing “neo-colonialism” or “neo-imperialism” in Africa. They further criticize China-Africa cooperation as actions that “strengthen some of the continent’s worst regimes” “threaten this African renaissance” and claim that China’s aid to Africa is to “export its own brand of capitalism” and “invest in politically risky states China wants to cultivate (J. Kurlantzick, 2006).” These distorted viewpoints, which politicize normal international trade, reveal widespread cognitive blind spots among Western intellectual elites regarding the modern development processes of the Asian and African worlds. They also highlight their habitual use of ideologically driven “cognitive razors” to deliberately or inadvertently cut away realities and truths unfavorable to their interests. By manipulating discourse power, they seek to control global public opinion. Ultimately, these patterns expose a deeply ingrained sense of moral superiority that continues to shape the Western intellectual understanding of history and international relations.

In several key areas, the development of contemporary China-Africa relations is poised to transcend the framework of the traditional international relations system. This evolution is giving rise to a new worldview and model of international interaction. Such a shift is first reflected in certain fundamental principles and positions of China-Africa relations. For instance, the pursuit of equal dialogue and sincere cooperation, as well as the avoidance of imposing conditions that interfere in the internal affairs of African recipient countries, has been the core spirit and guiding principle of China-Africa relations over the past decades. It is also a crucial reason for the enduring strength of these ties.

This principle has garnered recognition and affirmation from a broad spectrum of African political leaders and intellectual elites. For example, Moeletsi Mbeki, a prominent South African political economist and brother of former South African President Thabo Mbeki, told *The New York Times*: “China has offered Africa a new model that focuses on straight commercial relations and fair market prices without the ideological agenda.” And he further emphasized, “they (China) are not the first big foreign power to come to Africa, but they may be the first not to act as though they are some kind of patron or teacher or conqueror. In that sense, there is a meeting of the minds.” At the opening

ceremony of the 2015 FOCAC Johannesburg Summit, following President Xi Jinping's speech, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe stated, "Here is a man representing a country once called poor, a country which never was our colonizer. He is doing to us what we expected those who colonized us yesterday to do, if they have ears to hear, let them hear (*Xinhua*, 2015)!" In recent years, this sentiment has been echoed by numerous other African heads of state. Leaders such as South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso, and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, have publicly stated on various occasions to debunk "China's neo-colonialism in Africa" as a "fallacy" and "entirely inconsistent with the facts." Instead, they have underscored China's role as a genuine, reliable, and valuable partner in Africa's pursuit of sustainable development (*A. Salau*, 2018; *CCTV+*, 2024).

Indeed, traditional frameworks of knowledge and analysis often prove inadequate for comprehending an emerging new world order. From a general perspective, Western engagement with Africa spans several centuries, far longer than contemporary China-Africa relations. However, over the centuries, the Western contribution to Africa's sustained modern development has been limited, which prompted Africa to seek alternative partners and development models. China's remarkable transformation over the past fifty years of reform and opening-up, together with the development path it has chosen, has offered African countries valuable insights and a tangible source of inspiration. By demonstrating that rapid economic growth and poverty reduction are achievable through contextually tailored policies, China has expanded Africa's sense of possibility - not merely as an alternative partner, but as proof that different development narratives are attainable. Africa has begun to reflect on the potential relevance of China's experience for its own development in its unique way (*Kabukuru*, 2006). In response to Africa's call for transformation, the West must re-evaluate its traditional relationship with Africa and, from a contemporary standpoint, reconsider its ties with China and broader Asian-African relations.

#### **4. The Significance of China-Africa Relations in Africa's Development Process**

The significance of contemporary China-Africa relations extends far beyond bilateral ties, representing a substantial contribution to the advancement of Asia and Africa within the global landscape. As a developing country that accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world's population, any progress China achieves in overcoming poverty and fostering development is a meaningful contribution to the global community. Moreover, if China can create opportunities for Africa based on mutual benefit and stimulate the economic revitalization of African nations, it would signify another profound contribution by China to the world during its 21<sup>st</sup>-century revival.

However, for China, maintaining a low profile and focusing on its own development will remain essential long-term domestic and foreign policies. China does not aim to position itself as a "teacher" for global development; rather, it recognizes that the experiences and lessons of Asian and African nations hold invaluable insights for mutual learning and shared growth. This is because the process of transitioning from traditional societies to modern ones in contemporary Asia and Africa is far more complex and challenging than the historical transitions experienced by Western countries. External forces cannot substitute for the autonomous efforts of Asian and African nations, nor can they simply dictate or predetermine the direction of this transformation. China, as an ancient civilization and major nation, possesses a distinct historical, cultural, and civilizational background. As a result, its path to modern revival and development, while adhering to certain fundamental principles of nations

transitioning to modernity and undergoing transformations in market economy and democratic politics, has inevitably given rise to characteristics and models different from those of the West.

In recent years, a growing number of African political elites have acknowledged that “the Chinese model has in many ways challenged the conventional wisdom in the West on how to fight poverty and ensure good governance (W. Zhang, 2006)”. African nations interpret China’s significance to Africa in their own unique ways. While they do not intend to replicate China’s experience wholesale, they seek to draw valuable lessons from China’s development path. For today’s African countries, the need for a government committed to development and capable of effectively implementing development policies is paramount - this is where China’s model holds greater appeal for Africa. More importantly, China’s commitment to a foreign policy grounded in sincere dialogue, equal partnership, and unconditional cooperation resonates profoundly with African nations. It has been observed that “in terms of eradicating poverty and supporting the poor and marginalized, the Chinese model, despite its imperfections, has proven far more effective than what is often referred to as the American model,” and that “as long as the American model fails to deliver the desired outcomes, the Chinese model will continue to gain greater appeal among the world’s poor (W. Zhang, 2006).”

Over the past 50 years, China’s developmental achievements has been both substantive and innovative - facts that are increasingly recognized by international observers examining China and its relationship with Africa today. However, China, having gained extensive experience in modern development and a deep understanding of the diversity of global civilizations and development paths, has learned that there is no need to deliberately promote or advocate for a specific development model. Instead, China emphasizes a pragmatic philosophy, believing in learning from practice and embracing the idea that different civilizations can communicate, learn from one another, and exchange insights. Scientific development and harmonious innovation represent the new development concepts that China has established through exploration, which have been fully reflected in the recent development of China-Africa relations.

For decades, structural challenges such as weak state capacity and poor administrative performance have hindered development in many African countries. By contrast, China’s strong state capacity and effective governance in driving economic growth have been critical factors in its rapid development, serving as key areas of interest for African nations seeking inspiration. Moreover, China’s political traditions, which include strategies for managing complex ethnic relations, religious issues, and development challenges in frontier regions, may offer valuable lessons for younger African nations grappling with prolonged internal conflict and instability. At the same time, China has also gained opportunities to expand its presence in global markets and enhance its international adaptability through economic and trade cooperation with African nations. This mutually beneficial partnership has fostered shared prosperity and serves as a compelling example of China’s peaceful rise - an opportunity for collaboration rather than a threat to the world.

The international strategic significance of China-Africa relations has become increasingly evident. In recent years, with the rapid development of China-Africa relations, Africa’s marginalized position in the contemporary global system has begun to shift. The world now recognizes that Africa is not merely a passive recipient of aid, but a continent capable of generating wealth and opportunities for the global community. This shift has led to a resurgence of major powers engaging with Africa, with

countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan establishing various forms of cooperation forums and convening high-level summits with African nations. Unlike during the Cold War, when strategic competition in Africa was often zero-sum and confrontational, current engagements are more oriented toward investment, trade, and market expansion. Therefore, China has an opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue with Western nations, identifying new shared interests in advancing Africa's economic development. This approach could pave the way for expanded multilateral cooperation and mutual benefit among China, Africa, and Europe, creating new spaces for collaboration and shared prosperity.

### **5. China-Africa Relations and Structural Transformation of the World Economy**

The fundamental challenge facing humanity today lies in the ultimate resolution of development issues across the developing world. Success in this endeavor would represent the “reasonable convergence and ultimate fruition” of human modernity - a goal that embodies the universal aspiration of contemporary global development. Historically, while the early rise of Western Europe initiated the process of global modernization, it did not solve the problem of development on a worldwide scale. In the 1980s, only 20% of the global population - primarily in Western countries - had achieved wealth and modernization, while the remaining 80%, residing in non-Western countries, continued to face poverty and underdevelopment. This disparity constitutes a global issue and serves as the root cause of various conflicts among humanity. However, Western nations cannot indefinitely enjoy peace in a world where prosperity is exclusive to them. True wealth and peace must be shared globally. Development must reach all regions and benefit all people worldwide to truly resolve global challenges and fulfill humanity's collective aspirations. This is precisely why China-Africa cooperation holds such profound global significance. While China's development model is not without imperfections and continues to face numerous complex challenges, China, as the world's largest developing country, and Africa, as the continent with the highest concentration of developing countries, are fundamentally crucial to the future of humanity.

In recent years, developing economies have increasingly become the most dynamic forces within the global economy. The World Bank's *Global Economic Prospects* report published in January 2025 pointed out that during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the economic growth rate of emerging market and developing economies reached its highest level since the 1970s, with their contribution to global economic growth rising to approximately 60% ([The World Bank, 2025b, p. 15](#)). Although these economies have faced challenges such as the global financial crisis, increasing protectionist measures from developed Western countries, the growing debt burden of advanced economies, geopolitical tensions, and obstacles to their own structural reforms, leading to a slowdown in economic growth, their importance in the global economy has continued to rise compared to the beginning of this century. Currently, the GDP of developing economies accounts for approximately 45% of global GDP, significantly higher than the 25% in 2000. Additionally, the interdependence among these economies has increased significantly: over 40% of their goods exports are directed to other developing economies, a proportion that is double that of 2000. As the largest developing economies, China, India, and Brazil play a significant role in driving growth in other developing economies. Data shows that for every 1 percentage point increase in GDP growth in these three countries, it boosts GDP in other developing economies by nearly 2 percent in all after three years ([The World Bank, 2025b, pp. 16-18](#)).

Over the past nearly half a century since 1978, the trade volume between China and Africa surged from \$765 million to nearly \$300 billion, an increase of approximately 400 times (CGTN, 2018; Zhang, 2025). Meanwhile, Africa's regional economic integration has gained momentum, with the establishment and expansion of regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These initiatives have significantly promoted the liberalization and facilitation of intra-African trade. By 2024, intra-African trade reached \$220.3 billion, contributing to stable economic growth across the continent (V. Owino, 2025). Increasing trade and investment ties between Asian and African countries, along with enhanced economic cooperation within Africa itself, have emerged as powerful engines driving the continent's economic progress. These developments may signal the arrival of a structural transformation in world history, one poised to reshape the global landscape and redefine international relations. This transformation embodies the rising prominence of Asian and African countries and underscores their growing contributions to the world through self-driven development.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, concepts like the "Eastern Revival" or "Asia-Africa Revival" entering global discourse, reflecting a broader rebalancing of economic momentum. This shift was captured in the emergence of new analytical categories, including the "BRIC" (China, India, Brazil, and Russia), the "VISTA" (Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, and Argentina), and the "Next-II" (Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines, Mexico, Vietnam, Turkey, Pakistan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Iran), etc. Together with the East Asian "Four Asian Tigers" (Hong Kong (China), Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan (China)), these groups underscore the gradual yet sustained economic rise of developing countries, which is reshaping the global landscape.

In recent years, globalization and the trend toward a multipolar world have accelerated, fostering closer ties among developing countries. A community with a shared future is gradually forming among the "Global South", encompassing a wide range of developing nations across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as Third World countries, all committed to common development goals. Deepening cooperation within the BRIC framework exemplifies this shift. The group have evolved significantly from the original four-member group to the "BRICS" with South Africa's inclusion in 2010, and now expanding further to ten member countries alongside partner nations. This broadened framework of "Big BRICS Cooperation" has injected fresh vitality into the development of the Global South. Currently, BRICS nations account for approximately 40% of global GDP and contribute more than 50% of global economic growth (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, 2025).

Meanwhile, Sub-Saharan Africa has significantly enhanced its position in the global economy. According to the International Monetary Fund's *African Economic Outlook* published in July 2025, Sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth rate reached 4.0% in 2024, maintaining moderate growth and ranking as the second-fastest-growing continent after Asia (International Monetary Fund, 2025, p. 9). Among the world's 20 fastest-growing economies, nine are located in this region. Additionally, the African Union's inclusion in the G20 has amplified Africa's voice in global governance, providing developing countries with greater opportunities to participate in global economic decision-making and contributing "African strength" to advancing multilateralism and global development.

In 2006, Harry G. Broadman, then the World Bank's economic advisor for Africa, proposed the concept of a "new economic frontier", highlighting the emergence of a transformative economic linkage connecting Africa, India, and China. This frontier extended beyond traditional trade and investment, representing a more intricate and dynamic force capable of driving profound changes in the global economic structure. Broadman observed that the expanding middle class in China and India, along with their increasing purchasing power, was driving demand for African products. At the time, business activities between China, India, and Africa were paving a new road for Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa had begun to transition into a processor of primary commodities, becoming a competitive provider of labor-intensive goods and services for China and India. Therefore, he argued that this evolving relationship laid the foundation for a "New Silk Road" that "presents a significant opportunity for growth and integration of the Sub-Saharan continent into the global economy (H. G. Broadman, 2006, pp. 1-3)."

Today, this "New Silk Road" has transformed from a concept into actions at the national level. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the initiative to build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road," collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative aims to strengthen connections among countries and regions along its routes, fostering extensive cooperation in infrastructure, finance, trade, and investment. By enhancing connectivity, the BRI has facilitated economic integration across Africa, Asia, and Europe, creating a new platform for international economic collaboration. By 2023, China had signed more than 200 BRI cooperation agreements with over 150 countries and 30 international organizations across five continents. These efforts have driven nearly one trillion dollars in investments and established a connectivity framework known as "six corridors, six routes, multiple countries, multiple ports (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2023, p. 8)." From 2013 to 2022, the cumulative trade volume between China and participating countries reached \$19.1 trillion, while two-way investments reached \$380 billion. Additionally, China's average annual contribution to global economic growth through the initiative has surpassed 30% (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2023, p. 11).

The BRI has driven the transformation and upgrading of China-Africa cooperation, fostering increasingly close direct ties between the two sides. Through enhanced collaboration with China in trade, investment, and infrastructure, Africa's role in the global economy has been significantly elevated. Chinese enterprises have cumulatively participated in constructing and upgrading over 10,000 km of railways, nearly 100,000 km of roads, close to 1,000 bridges, almost 100 ports, 66,000 km of power transmission and transformation lines, and 150,000 km of backbone communication networks in Africa, establishing a China-Africa network featuring land-sea links and coordinated development (CGTN, 2024). These infrastructure projects have provided vital support for the development of the AfCFTA, deepened logistics and financial cooperation, and promoted cross-regional growth across the continent. Looking ahead, China-Africa cooperation is poised to create more opportunities in areas such as manufacturing, agriculture, telecommunications, digital economy, new infrastructure, green energy, and finance, injecting fresh momentum into the shared development of both sides.

China-Africa cooperation has played a pivotal role in shifting the global economic center southward, while also providing new opportunities and models for broader collaboration between Asia and Africa. For example, the ports and railway networks built by Chinese enterprises in Africa not only

facilitate China-Africa trade but also provide infrastructure support for economic exchanges between African countries and Asian nations such as India and Vietnam. This help reduce logistics costs and enhance trade efficiency. Additionally, China-Africa cooperation has driven Africa's economic transformation from reliance on resources to diversification and the development of higher value-added industries, thereby creating more opportunities for Asian countries to access the African market. Besides, The AfCFTA, supported by China-Africa cooperation, has created a unified market through interconnected infrastructure, industrialization initiatives, and digital transformation. This provides Asian nations with streamlined access and diverse opportunities to engage with Africa's integrated market. Today, Asian countries can leverage multilateral mechanisms such as the FOCAC and BRICS, as well as regional trade agreements, to strengthen partnerships with Africa in trade, investment, and sustainable development. Together, these efforts are driving the economic integration of the "Global South" and reshaping the global economic order.

## **6. Theoretical Innovation in International Relations from the Perspective of Asia-Africa Development**

The progression of history follows its own inherent processes and structures. The current state and future of Africa, as well as the characteristics, gains and losses, and challenges faced by contemporary China-Africa relations, should be understood and evaluated within the context of the modern development of Asian and African countries. It must be acknowledged that, at present, Asian and African countries as a whole still lag far behind Western countries, and their path to revival remains long and arduous. However, any great historical transformation is a gradual and enduring process. In fact, over the past 50 years, China, India, East Asia, Africa, and the broader Asia-Africa and Eastern world have undergone profound changes. These regions are gradually entering a new phase of development and rise. Although progress remains uneven, and the road to revival may still encounter reversals and setbacks, from a long-term historical perspective this collective movement represents a "Third Wave" of global modernization. It is a wave of truly global significance, driven by the aspirations and energies of the world's emerging regions. As this process continues to unfold, the structure and dynamics of the global landscape are destined to undergo fundamental and far-reaching changes.

The rapid development of China-Africa relations in recent years can be reasonably explained through the lens of shared historical experiences and mutual transformations. Over the past decades, China has undergone a series of complex and iterative explorations, ultimately achieving rapid modern economic growth and transitioning toward a market-oriented economy. Africa, following the national liberation movements of the 1940s and 1950s and subsequent decades of nation-building from the 1960s to the 1990s, has witnessed the maturation of political communities and state structures within its young nations. Today, dozens of young African countries, having endured periods of turbulence, are gradually entering a "second wave of revival," marked by their pursuit of economic development and modernization. Against this backdrop, China-Africa relations have gained new foundations and momentum, driven by internal transformations on both sides. This relationship is evolving from an idealistic, politically dominated model to a more pragmatic and rational partnership, characterized by comprehensive cooperation across politics, economics, and culture. While the rapid development of China-Africa relations may bring new contradictions and challenges that require ongoing adjustment and refinement, the long-term strategic prospects suggest that this new historical trajectory of China-Africa relations has only just begun. The unique characteristics of this relationship and its potential

complex impacts on the present and future of both sides remain largely unexplored. As the growth wave of 21st-century developing economies continues to ripple across the African continent, the full scope and significance of this partnership will increasingly come to light.

Undoubtedly, the advancement of China-Africa relations has already contributed, and will continue to contribute, new and impactful experiences to global modernization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As these experiences deepen and diversify, the urgency of theoretical innovation becomes increasingly apparent. However, much of the existing international relations and development theories reflect the political and economic conflicts of the Western-dominated world over the past two centuries, as well as the historical conditions of isolation and underdevelopment experienced by China and Africa during that time. Today, with profound transformations taking place in China, Africa, and the global landscape, theoretical frameworks must evolve to keep pace with the times and strive for innovation.

In recent years, at the national level, Chinese President Xi Jinping has introduced concepts such as the “Community of Shared Future for Mankind,” the “Global Development Initiative,” the “Global Security Initiative,” the “Global Civilization Initiative,” the “Global Governance Initiative,” etc. These ideas represent China’s innovative contributions to global governance and highlight its efforts in pioneering knowledge discourse within the international system. Rooted in traditional Chinese cultural philosophies such as “hehe (harmony and cooperation)” and “tianxia datong (universal harmony under heaven),” these initiatives integrate the practical demands of modern international cooperation. Different from the zero-sum thinking traditionally dominated by Western perspectives, these initiatives advocate governance models centered on mutual benefit, inclusivity, and coexistence. They have established a global governance discourse system with distinct Chinese characteristics. Through promoting connectivity, shared development, and common security, these frameworks offer pragmatic solutions to pressing global challenges, reflecting China’s unique perspective and value propositions in global governance. More importantly, these efforts introduce a transformative vision for international relations - one that emphasizes inclusivity, mutual respect, and shared prosperity. By fostering a more harmonious and interconnected global community, China’s contributions not only address immediate global needs but also inspire a long-term shift toward a cooperative, equitable, and sustainable world order.

Moreover, the academic communities of China and Africa have been actively working to develop an original knowledge system tailored to their unique needs, aiming to advance the modernization process of the Global South. In April 2024, during the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the China-Africa Think Tank Forum held in Dar es Salaam, over 300 scholars from more than 50 countries across China and Africa jointly issued the “China-Africa Think Tank Consensus on Deepening Global Development Cooperation” (referred to as the “China-Africa Dar es Salaam Consensus”). This consensus calls on the international community to adhere to the principles of mutual respect, solidarity, cooperation, openness, shared benefits, and common prosperity. It advocates for deepening development cooperation, advancing modernization together, and building a community with a shared future for humanity (Xinhua, 2024). Regarded as the first consensus developed in the Global South rather than imposed by the Global North, it has garnered widespread attention and significant acclaim. It has been incorporated into the “China-Africa Cooperation Forum - Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027)” and serves as a key ideological framework guiding the modernization efforts of the Global South. In August 2025, during the first China-Africa Human Rights Seminar held in Addis Ababa, over 200 representatives - including

officials, experts, scholars, and members of relevant social organizations, enterprises, think tanks, and media from China and more than 40 African countries - engaged in discussions under the theme "Building a China-Africa Community with a Shared Future: Jointly Achieving the Right to Development." Together, they issued the "The Addis Ababa Consensus on the China-Africa Right to Development," which profoundly emphasized that development is the key to solving all human rights issues (X. Wang, 2025). It is also the shared aspiration of all nations, including the peoples of China and Africa, and constitutes a collective endeavor requiring extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits between the two sides. The release of these consensuses represents a significant milestone in the Global South's efforts to construct an autonomous knowledge system. It also reflects the ongoing intellectual awakening of China and African nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These initiatives challenge the misconception that "modernization equals Westernization," safeguard the developmental rights of the Global South, and promote the creation of a shared knowledge system between Asia and Africa.

## Conclusion

In today's world, the issue of development remains unresolved, yet it has become a global phenomenon. Political and economic conflicts arising from development are gradually becoming new focal points of global contention. In the attitudes of Western countries toward China and other developing nations, a peculiar sentiment of "development aversion" is increasingly evident. For those harboring such sentiments, China - despite achieving remarkable success in poverty alleviation and development - is inexplicably seen as a source of "threats, trouble, and unease." This reflects that when development genuinely stems from the autonomous choices of developing countries, and when the forces driving openness and transformation are deeply rooted in the civilizational foundations of these nations' histories and traditions, they inevitably face a certain discomfort with "the Other," as well as speculative observations and inappropriate judgments from outsiders.

At the same time, in today's era of reform, opening-up, and proactive transformation, the internal development of developing countries is becoming increasingly intertwined with the international environment. As challenges and impacts grow more globalized, transcending national boundaries, cooperation among developing nations is not only becoming more vital but also encountering increasingly complex obstacles. Today, China, like a massive ship, is navigating through the turbulent waves of the external world, with transformation and development becoming unstoppable forces. Facing these challenges, we have no choice but to press forward. However, this journey demands new theories and wisdom, which should incorporate the correct principles and experiences from existing Western theories, while more importantly, developing new theories rooted in our own experiences and needs. These include new development theories, international relations theories, and foundational theories of global history. Both in practice and in theory, this may well represent the responsibility that contemporary China should undertake for itself and for the broader world.

Since the beginning of the new century, China-Africa cooperation has spanned a quarter of a century. While this may be but a fleeting moment in the long course of world history, it holds profound significance for me personally, as my academic journey became closely intertwined with it since the inaugural FOCAC. Over these 25 years, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative changes

in the forum and the broader China-Africa relationship it represents. Today, the two great civilizations of China and Africa, encompassing 2.8 billion people, have forged an all-encompassing partnership centered on the FOCAC as its core engine and driving mechanism. This relationship has emerged as one of the most prominent areas in global international relations. I firmly believe that over the next 25 years, China will steadily advance on its path toward modernization, while Africa will stride confidently toward its own revival. The prospects for China-Africa cooperation are bright, and the future of the revival of Asian and African civilizations is brimming with boundless possibilities.

## References

- Broadman, Harry G. (2006), *Africa's Silk Road: China and India's New Economic Frontier*, Washington, The World Bank.
- CCTV+ (2024), "Republic of Congo President debunks 'China's neo-colonialism in Africa' Fallacy", CCTV+. Online at <https://www.cctvplus.com/news/20240316/8367985.shtml>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- CGTN (2018), "China-Africa in numbers: Trade ties", CGTN. Online at <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414e3049544f79457a6333566d54/index.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- CGTN (2024), "Key milestones of China-Africa cooperation under BRI", CGTN. Online at <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-08-29/Key-milestones-of-China-Africa-cooperation-under-Belt-and-Road-IwsvxkHcFgI/p.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- International Monetary Fund (2025), *World Economic Outlook Update, Global Economy: Tenuous Resilience amid Persistent Uncertainty*, Washington, International Monetary Fund.
- Ji, Peiding (2000), *China-Africa Friendship and Cooperation in Five Decades*, Beijing, World Affairs Press.
- Kabukuru, Wanjohi. "Kenya: look east my son; Kenya is the latest African country to fall for the charms of the world's emergent superpower, China. Wanjohi Kabukuru reports from Nairobi on what this portends for the East African country", *New African*. Online at <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA148614109&sid=sitemap&v=2.1&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7Eb9d0dd51&aty=open-web-entry>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Khan, Joseph (2006), "Africans courted in China - Asia - Pacific - International Herald Tribune", *The New York Times*. Online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/02/world/asia/02iht-africa.3369373.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Kurlantzick, Josh, "Beijing's safari: China's move into Africa and its implications for aid, development, and governance", *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Online at <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2006/11/beijings-safari-chinas-move-into-africa-and-its-implications-for-aid-development-and-governance?lang=en>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Larkin, Bruce D. (1971), *China and Africa, 1949-1970: The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Liu, Hongwu (2007a), "China-Africa connections: The significance of civilized history", *West Asia and Africa*, no. 1, pp. 11-14+79.
- Liu, Hongwu (2007b), "On New-type Sino-African strategic partnership & its values significance in the contemporary world", *Foreign Affairs Review*, no. 94, pp. 14-21.
- Owino, Vincent (2025), "Intra-Africa trade surges to record \$220bn as top economies recover", *The East African*. Online at <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business-tech/intra-africa-trade-surges-to-record-220bn-as-economies-recover-5137168>, accessed September 2, 2025.

- Salau, Abdullateef (2018), "FOCAC summit: speakers refute claims of China's neo-colonialism in Africa", Daily Trust. Online at <https://dailytrust.com/focac-summit-speakers-refute-claims-of-chinas-neo-colonialism-in-africa/>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- The Economist (2000), "The hopeless continent", The Economist. Online at <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/2000-05-13>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil (2025), "BRICS GDP outperforms global average, accounts for 40% of world economy", BRICS Brasil 2025. Online at <https://brics.br/en/news/brics-gdp-outperforms-global-average-accounts-for-40-of-world-economy>, accessed September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025.
- The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2023), The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future. Online at [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202310/10/content\\_WS6524b55fc6d0868f4e8e014c.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202310/10/content_WS6524b55fc6d0868f4e8e014c.html), accessed September 2, 2025.
- The World Bank (2025a), "GDP - Sub-Saharan Africa", World Bank Open Data. Online at <https://data.worldbank.org/cn/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2024&locations=ZG&start=2000>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- The World Bank (2025b), January 2025 Global Economic Prospect, Washington: The World Bank.
- UN General Assembly Security Council (2006), "General assembly sixty-first session", The United Nations. Online at <https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/N0662179.pdf>, accessed August 30, 2025.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2025), "Economic Development in Africa Report 2024", The United Nations. Online at [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2024-overview\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2024-overview_en.pdf), accessed September 2, 2025.
- Walsh, Conal (2006), "Is China the new colonial power in Africa?", The Guardian. Online at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2006/oct/29/china.theobserver>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Wang Xiaodong (2025), "China-Africa path on human rights hailed: Seminar calls for respecting diversity and opposing politicization of the issue", China Daily. Online at <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202508/25/WS68abb5a6a310851ffdb4fd2b.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Xinhua (2015), "Chinese president's speech receives applause in Africa", China Daily. Online at [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/////////XiattendsParisclimateconference/2015-12/04/content\\_22632633.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/////////XiattendsParisclimateconference/2015-12/04/content_22632633.htm), accessed September 2, 2025.
- Xinhua (2024), "Xi encourages African scholars to bolster China-Africa cooperation, Global South development", China Daily. Online at <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202409/03/WS66d5e5fba3108f29c1fc9afe.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Zhang, Weiwei (2006), "The allure of the Chinese model - Opinion - International Herald Tribune", The New York Times. Online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/01/opinion/01iht-edafrica.3357752.html>, accessed September 2, 2025.
- Zhang, Yiyi (2025), "China remains Africa's top trade partner for 16th year, cooperation in various areas continues to expand: official", Global Times. Online at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202505/1334585.shtml>, accessed September 2, 2025.

### **Biographical note**

**LIU Hongwu** is a Ph.D. supervisor, founding Director of the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, a Changjiang Scholar appointed by the Ministry of Education of China, and the founder of the China-Africa Think Tank Forum. He used to study at the University of Lagos, Nigeria (1991) and the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2003). His research focuses on African studies, China-Africa cooperation, and international relations. He led two major research projects funded by the National Social Science Fund and one key project under the Ministry of Education's Humanities and Social Sciences Fund. Additionally, he has completed multiple national-level research initiatives, published hundreds of academic papers, and authored more than 20 monographs. He has accompanied national leaders on many trips to Africa, and many of his recommendations have been adopted by national leaders.

**CAO Junfeng** is a PhD Candidate of Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University. His research focuses on African area and country studies, and African media and communication. He conducted field research in African countries such as Togo, Nigeria, Tanzania, and South Sudan, and was awarded a scholarship by the Chinese Ministry of Education for a 2024-2025 exchange program at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. He authored nearly 40 research reports and has also participated in several high-level research projects, including the National Social Science Fund Major Project, the Chinese National International Department's project.

*This is an open-access article licensed under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.*



Copyright 2026 © APÉSA