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China in Africa: A Case of Neo-Colonialism or a Win-Win Strategy?

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ABSTRACT. *The article deals with China's policy in Africa in the last decade. As the analysis shows, China has been steadily increasing its presence in Africa, not only in the countries rich in natural resources – though it is resources, especially oil, that remain of particular importance for the Chinese economy – but also in countries poor on natural resources and bearing little strategic value. The author examines unique features of China's diplomatic practices on the continent, as well as explores China-Africa trade relations and Beijing's activities as a donor and investor in Africa. Special attention is given to the Belt and Road Initiative, which plays a significant part in China's foreign strategy, as well as to the role of African countries located on the crossroads between land and maritime Silk Roads. The Chinese strategy involves massive infrastructure projects, including the construction of railways and highways, upgrades of aviation communications, new energy projects, industrial parks, as well as the construction of seaports in coastal countries. The increase in Beijing's investment flow to the African economies and the expansion of its spheres of influence on the continent are extensively examined by politicians, scientists and the media. On one hand, Beijing is often credited for the rapid economic growth of African countries, with some now experiencing world's fastest rates of growth. On*

the other hand, some accuse Beijing of "neo-colonialism", claiming that China is guided only by its own interests, which are radically different from African interests, that it violates human rights and disregards environmental regulations in its desire to grab as much natural resources as possible. The author argues that an objective analysis of the various aspects of Beijing's activities in Africa in the last decade, as well as an examination of the way these activities are seen by Africans themselves, may shed some light on the nature of China's intentions in Africa.

KEY WORDS: *China, Africa, trade, aid, investment, infrastructure, Belt and Road Initiative, soft power*

Successes of Beijing's Diplomacy on the African Continent

Until recently, China had diplomatic relations with 50 of the 54 African states. The other four – Burkina Faso, Sao Tome and Principe, Eswatini and The Gambia – maintained relations with Taiwan. However, Beijing has been actively reaching out and trying to win them over, too. According to David Shinn, a prominent American expert on China's policy in Africa, by as early as 2013, Beijing established closer ties with these four coun-

tries than Taipei. He also believes that by 2023, all African countries will diplomatically recognize Beijing.² Already in 2013, The Gambia suspended relations with Taiwan and recognized the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China, and in 2016, China and The Gambia have formally established diplomatic relations. In December of the same year, diplomatic ties were restored between China and São Tomé and Príncipe. Finally, in 2018, Burkina Faso announced that it is re-establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC. At the signing of a joint communiqué in Beijing on May 28, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed his "sincere hope" that Eswatini, the last remaining country in Africa to diplomatically recognize Taiwan, will soon join Beijing's "family" of allies on the continent.²

China ranks highest in terms of sheer number of high-level visits to the African states. At the start of each year, China's Minister of Foreign Affairs sets off on a diplomatic tour of the continent. After taking office in 2013, President Xi Jinping made Africa one of his first overseas destinations, visiting Tanzania, the Republic of Congo and South Africa, where he attended the BRICS summit – a year later, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang also embarked on a diplomatic tour to Africa. In January 2018, Foreign Minister Wang Yi made another trip there, visiting four countries: Rwanda, Angola, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

And in July 2018, Xi Jinping, after paying a state visit to the United Arab Emirates, traveled to four African countries: Senegal, Rwanda (where he visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial to pay tribute to the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi), South Africa (where he participated in the annual BRICS summit), and Mauritius. Commenting on the diplomatic activity of the Chinese leader, Deborah Brautigam, Director of the China-Africa Research Initiative at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, wrote: "Clearly, the UAE has oil. But Rwanda, Senegal and Mauritius are resource-poor. These stops don't fit the 'neo-colonialism' interpretation of China's African interests. [Xi Jinping's] choice of countries sheds light on another side of China's efforts to win friends and influence Africa: positioning China as a partner for Africa's industrialization".³ This assessment appears convincing, especially after examining the agreements signed following the meetings with the leadership of the aforementioned countries. For example, China promised to help Senegal with the development of industry and pledged to bankroll the second stage of the Dakar Integrated Special Economic Zone. In Rwanda, Xi signed a USD 126 million loan agreement for two road projects, which the country's media referred to as the "cornerstone" for Africa's development.⁴ Rwanda already has a functioning Special Economic Zone

1 Shinn D. (2013) China and Africa: The Next Decade. During a Conference on China in Africa at the University of Denver. Denver, Colorado. February 1, 2013 // <https://ru.scribd.com/document/123557623/China-and-Africa-The-Next-Decade>, accessed 12.10.2018.

2 Tara Francis Chan (2018) Taiwan Has Just One Diplomatic Ally in Africa and China Is Eagerly Eyeing It Off // Business Insider, May 28, 2018 // <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-is-eyeing-off-swaziland-africa-diplomatic-relationship-with-taiwan-2018-5>, accessed 12.10.2018.

3 Tara Francis Chan (2018) Taiwan Has Just One Diplomatic Ally in Africa and China Is Eagerly Eyeing It Off // Business Insider, May 28, 2018 // <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-is-eyeing-off-swaziland-africa-diplomatic-relationship-with-taiwan-2018-5>, accessed 12.10.2018.

4 Shahtahmasebi D. (2018) China Sees Trump's Trade War as Opportunity to Boost Ties with Africa // RT Live. Question More, July 27, 2018 // <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/434245-china-africa-trade-war/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

near Kigali, where Chinese companies manufacture textiles and other products. Since 1970, Mauritius has had an industrial zone at Plaine Lauzun, which has been attracting manufacturers from Hong Kong and Taiwan. With the help of Asian countries, Mauritius successfully diversified its economy and now boasts the best business climate in all of Africa. In April 2018, Beijing started negotiating free trade with Mauritius.

The media revealed the main purpose of the visit – to compel African countries into joining China’s Belt and Road Initiative, discussed later on. In addition, China requires more allies for its confrontation with the United States, now that President Trump has started a trade war against Beijing. While it is true that all aspects of China’s foreign policy are linked, in one way or another, to the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, it should be admitted that the agreements listed above are beneficial to African countries, whose leadership regard industrialization as a key interest and a crucial step towards sustainable development. In today’s Africa, manufacturing accounts for roughly 10% of all total value added. In 2016, the G20 promised to help African countries solve this problem, but by that time, China had already invested over USD 33 billion in Africa’s

energy sector, and USD 41 billion more into transportation.⁵

China as Africa’s Largest Trading Partner

China-Africa trade has been experiencing steady growth over the past ten years. In 2009, China surpassed the United States to become Africa’s largest trading partner. The volume of trade, which amounted to USD 11 billion in 2000, exceeded USD 220 billion in 2014⁶ and was expected to reach USD 300 billion by 2015.⁷ As Premier Li Keqiang stated in 2014, the goal was to bring it to USD 400 billion by 2020.⁸ However, due to falling commodity prices – natural resources being Africa’s main export – trade volume between China and Africa plummeted, and in January–October 2015 it was calculated to be just USD 147.6 billion [*Pant, Haidar* 2017], and USD 149.2 billion in 2016⁹ (according to other sources, as low as USD 128 billion¹⁰). According to estimates by China’s General Administration of Customs, African exports to China decreased by 40% in 2015¹¹ (with some sources saying 50%) as a result of falling prices for Africa’s main export, crude petroleum. For example, oil exports from Angola, Africa’s largest supplier of hydrocarbons to China, fell from USD 41 bil-

5 Brautigam D. (2018) Xi Jinping Is Visiting Africa This Week. Here Is Why China Is Such a Popular Development Partner // The Washington Post, July 24, 2018 // https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/24/xi-jinping-is-visiting-africa-this-week-heres-why-china-is-such-a-popular-development-partner/?utm_term=.7b42b1c360d1, accessed 12.10.2018.

6 Yao Lan (2015) China-Africa Trade Tops 220 bln USD in 2014: Envoy // Xinhua, Economy, November 11, 2015 // www.ecns.cn/business/2015/11-21/189578.shtml, accessed 12.10.2018.

7 China to Open its First Overseas Military Base (2015) // South China. November 25, 2015 // <https://www.south-insight.com/node/217767>, accessed 12.10.2018.

8 Premier Li: China-Africa Trade Volume to Top &400 bln by 2020 (2014) // The State Council. The People’s Republic of China, May 07, 2014 // http://english.gov.cn/premier/video/2014/08/23/content_281474983011541.htm, accessed 12.10.2018.

9 2015 Business Review XI: China-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Starts (2016) // Ministry of Commerce. People’s Republic of China, January 25, 2016 // http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_businessview2015/news/201602/20160201261327.shtml, accessed 12.10.2018.

10 China-Africa Annual Trade Data (Country by Country) 1992–2016 (2017) // SAIS-CARI // www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade, accessed 12.10.2018.

11 China-Africa Exports Fall by 40% after China Slowdown (2016) // BBC News, January 13, 2016 // www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35303981, accessed 12.10.2018.

lion in 2014 to USD 15 billion in 2015. In 2016, South Africa ranked second among African exporters to China, followed by the Republic of Congo. South Africa is the largest buyer of Chinese goods, followed by Egypt and Nigeria.

However, in 2017 China-Africa trade volume bounced back, reaching USD 170 billion.¹² Among the factors facilitating trade growth was the fact that several African countries started using China’s yuan, or renminbi (RMB), in bilateral trade. The practice is beneficial to both sides, as it makes international transactions less dependent on a third party. In addition to Angola, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya, the banks of Ghana also allowed using the yuan for trade. Finally, the yuan was approved for public transactions in Zimbabwe. In 2017, transactions using China’s currency to buy hydrocarbons from Angola rose by 22%, and Sino-Angolan trade exceeded USD 2 billion, with USD 1.86 billion coming from China’s imports, mainly oil.¹³ In their dealings with China, most African states have suffered significant trade imbalances – something Beijing has been routinely criticized for. In 2016, Africa’s trade deficit with China reached USD 35.4 billion.¹⁴ The only exception to the rule were countries rich in natural resources, such as Angola.

In 2017, China has become the world’s largest importer of oil, surpassing the United States. According to the International Energy Agency (EIA), in 2017, China imported 8.4 million barrels per day, while the United States imported 7.9 million. Moreover, according to the report published by the Chinese oil company Sinopec, China’s import covered 67.4% of the country’s oil needs.

Table 1.

China's trade with African countries, 2000–2017	
Year	Trading Volume (USD Billion)
2000	8.7
2001	10.76
2002	12.35
2003	18.5
2004	29.5
2005	40.31
2006	55.5
2007	73, 3
2008	106.8
2009	90.07
2010	126.9
2011	166.3
2012	198.49
2013	210.2
2014	220
2015	147.6
2016	149.2
2017	170

Sources: Direction of Trade Statistics. Yearbook // IMF, 2000–2016; China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation (2013–2016) // State Council the People’s Republic of China; 2015 Business Review XII: China-Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Starts (2016) // Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China, January 25, 2016 // http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_businessview2015/news/201602/20160201261327.shtml; Shahtahmasebi D. (2018) China Sees Trump’s Trade War as Opportunity to Boost Ties with Africa // RT Live. Question More, July 27, 2018 // <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/434245-china-africa-trade-war/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

12 Shahtahmasebi D. (2018) China Sees Trump’s Trade War as Opportunity to Boost Ties with Africa // RT Live. Question More, July 27, 2018 // <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/434245-china-africa-trade-war/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

13 Kholodkov V. (2018) China Not Ready to Shake Up the Global Oil Market // REX news. January 19, 2018 // <http://www.iarex.ru/news/55251.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

14 March J. (2018) China’s President Xi Pledges Another USD 60 Billion for Africa // CNN, September 04, 2018 // <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/asia/focac-china-africa-development-intl/index.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

The company forecasts that in 2018, net oil imports to China will grow by another 6.7% and reach 423 million tons.¹⁵ In the past decade, Africa has been China's second largest source of crude oil after the Middle East, accounting for 23% of its total oil imports. However, by the end of 2017, Russia turned out to be the largest oil supplier to China, followed by Saudi Arabia and Angola.¹⁶ Neftegaz.ru gives the following figures for China's oil imports as of December 2017: Russia – 5.03 million tons (1.185 million b/d)¹⁷; Saudi Arabia – 4.71 million tons (1.11 million b/d; 31.7% more than in December 2016), Angola – 3.17 million tons (reduced oil sales by 6.6%) . Apart from Angola, major oil suppliers to China in Africa are the Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Algeria, and Libya. Chinese companies have shares in the oil production of Ghana, Niger, Gabon, Ethiopia, Namibia, Chad, and Kenya.

China as a Major Donor and Investor in Africa

In 2011, the first white paper on China's foreign aid was published in Beijing, revealing that Africa receives 52% of all Chinese foreign aid, while Asia accounts for 31%, and Latin America for 8% [*Ligang Song, Garnaut, Cai Fang, Johnston* 2017, p. 440]. According to a report published in 2016 by the China-Africa Research Initiative (SAIS-CARI) at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced and International Studies, in the period from 2000 to

2014 Chinese banks, companies and the government provided over USD 80 billion worth of loans to African countries.¹⁸ The largest recipients were Angola – USD 21.2 billion, Ethiopia – USD 12 billion; and Kenya, Sudan and the DRC, receiving USD 5 billion each [*Dollar* 2016, p. 59]. This data disproves the view that China's financial aid goes primarily to resource-rich countries: the first on the list is Angola, rich in oil – but it is followed by Ethiopia, which does not have an abundance of natural resources. Moreover, almost 50% of the loans were directed to transportation and the energy sector. In other words, Chinese loans went more to infrastructure than to the extraction and production of hydrocarbons and minerals.

In 2018, SAIS-CARI released new report showing that between the years 2000 and 2015, the Chinese government, banks and companies provided USD 94.4 billion in financing to African governments and China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) operating in Africa. Again, the main recipient was Angola, receiving USD 19.2 billion over 15 years. That said, SAIS-CARI does not consider China to be Africa's largest donor – this title is still held by the United States. However, the report notes the issue of inaccurate or unreliable data, since China has not been providing any official figures regarding its financial aid to Africa. China is not a member of the OECD and does not participate in the writing of its reports. Very rarely do Chinese banks provide any information on financial agreements. Neither do the recipient countries disclose the details of such arrangements. This explains the dif-

15 Chu Daye (2018) China Becomes World Largest Oil Importer // *Global Times*, February 02, 2018 // <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1088490.shtml>, accessed 12.10.2018.

16 Russia Becomes China's Largest Supplier of Oil in 2017 (2018) // *Vesti. The Economy*, January 25, 2018 // <https://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/96804>, accessed 12.10.2018.

17 2nd year of leadership: In 2017, Russia Once Again Becomes China's Top Crude Oil Supplier (2018) // *Neftegaz.ru*, January 25, 2018 // <https://neftegaz.ru/news/view/168591-2-y-god-liderstva.-Rossiya-v-2017-g-vnov-stala-krupneyshim-postavschikom-nefti-v-Kitay>, accessed 12.10.2018.

18 Albert E. (2017) China in Africa // *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 12, 2017 // <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-africa>, accessed 12.10.2018.

ference in the data regarding China’s financial assistance to Africa.¹⁹

Funding from China comes mostly in the form of loans and credits from the People’s Bank of China, the China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China and the China-Africa Development Fund (CADF). The main source of funding for Africa is the Export-Import Bank of China: in 2000 – 2015, it gave USD 63 billion worth of loans to almost all African nations [Pant, Haidar 2017]. China Development Bank primarily finances small and medium-sized Chinese enterprises (SMEs) involved in Africa’s development, and focuses on agricultural projects. The China-Africa Development Fund was established in 2007 to support Chinese companies operating in Africa, and it has repeatedly received significant government funding. For example, in December 2015, Xi Jinping announced that the government will contribute USD 10 billion to the fund.

According to the head of CADF, China’s foreign direct investment in Africa is growing by 10% each year. In total, the fund has invested in 87 projects in 36 countries, focusing on infrastructure, industry and manufacturing. According to other sources, in the period from 2007 to 2017, the fund invested about USD 3.2 billion in 91 projects in 36 countries [Belyaev, Makarova 2018]. Besides state-owned companies, there are private firms, as well as medium and small enterprises (including those representing individual provinces of China) that play an active role in financing development projects in Africa.

The Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2000, plays an important role in Chinese financing in Africa. FOCAC summits and conferences

Table 2. China’s loans to Africa in 2002–2017

Year	Billion dollars
2002	1
2003	2
2004	1
2005	2
2006	5
2007	6
2008	4
2009	6
2010	7
2011	10
2012	13
2013	18
2014	15
2015	13
2016	30
2017	9

Source: March J. (2018) China’s President Xi Pledges Another USD 60 Billion for Africa // CNN, September 04, 2018 // <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/asia/focac-china-africa-development-intl/index.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

are held every three years; at each meeting, senior Beijing officials unveil their new Program for China-Africa Cooperation, which outlines financing targets, as well as African development projects in various areas of the economy to be completed in the next three years. Every time the forum takes place, the amount of financing is doubled. At the FOCAC meeting in 2015 in Johannesburg, Africa, the figure announced was USD 60 billion.²⁰

The next FOCAC meeting took place on September 3–4, 2018 in Beijing. The

19 Chinese Loans to African Governments 2000–2017 (Excel Data). CARI Loan Database Research Guidebook (n/y) // SAIS-CARI // <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-loans-and-aid-to-africa/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

20 Africa: China Pledges USD 60 Billion to African Development (2015) // Al Jazeera, December 05, 2015 // <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/china-pledges-60-billion-african-development-151204204624495.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

Chinese authorities raised the status of the event from Conference to Summit, as, according to China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang, there is a great demand and a practical need among African nations for the development of China-Africa relations.²¹ This was the third FO-CAC Summit – the first was held in Beijing in 2006, and the second in Johannesburg in 2015. According to Xi Jinping, the summit's goal was to promote win-win cooperation between China and Africa, raising it to a higher level, and forge a stronger comprehensive strategic partnership. The main focus of the meeting was the Belt and Road Initiative. According to Xi Jinping, the Belt and Road is an open initiative, and China welcomes the participation of all nations. At the Summit, the hosts emphasized that the Belt and Road Initiative is in many ways linked to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Program, the African Union Agenda 2063, and to individual development strategies of African nations, such as, for example, Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). According to Chao Xiaoliang, Consul General of China in Lagos, Xi Jinping drew special attention to this plan, expressing confidence that the FOCAC Summit will help raise strategic partnership between China and Nigeria to a new level.²² Perhaps in part to counter criticism of Beijing's policy in Africa and related accusations of "debt trap" diploma-

cy on part of China, Xi Jinping announced at the Summit that, this time, the funding would not be doubled, like usual, but would instead remain at USD 60 billion.²³

According to the reports of the Chinese press in January 2017, the year 2016 had been record-breaking, with Chinese companies investing USD 14 billion in Africa. The previous record was set in 2008, when China invested USD 9 billion into the African continent²⁴ (according to SAIS-CARI, however, investments totaled USD 5.5 billion in 2008, partly due to Beijing purchasing shares of the Standard Bank of South Africa).²⁵ In 2018, UNCTAD reported that, as of 2016, China was the fourth largest investor in Africa. It was slightly behind the United States, Britain and France, and its investments into the African continent continue to grow.²⁶ According to Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan, in 2018 China continues to increase its foreign investment, and it is likely that by 2020 it will become one of the world's largest investors. However, the PRC government has been introducing new controls and regulations to stem capital outflow. This explains, for example, why China's foreign direct investment in the United States fell from USD 46 billion in 2016 to USD 29 billion in 2017.²⁷

From 2000 to 2017, China's accumulated direct investment in Africa grew from USD 500 million to over USD 41 billion.²⁸

21 Ding Xiaoxiao (2018) Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2018 Upgraded to Summit // China Plus, January 03, 2018 // <http://chinaplus.cri.cn/news/china/9/20180103/73268.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

22 Chao Xiaoliang (2018) FOCAC Beijing Summit Will Benefit China Nigeria Cooperation // This Day, June 2, 2018 // <https://www.this-daylive.com/index.php/2018/06/02/focac-beijing-summit-will-benefit-china-nigeria-cooperation/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

23 March J. (2018) China's President Xi Pledges Another USD 60 Billion for Africa // CNN, September 04, 2018 // <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/asia/focac-china-africa-development-intl/index.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

24 Yao Nian (2017) Chinese FM to Visit Five African Countries in First Overseas Trip of 2017 // CGTN, January 04, 2017 // https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d49544d3359544d/share_p.html, accessed 12.10.2018.

25 China-Africa FDI Data 2003–2015 (Country Breakdown) (2017) // SAIS-CARI // <http://www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

26 Shahtahmasebi D. (2018) China Sees Trump's Trade War as Opportunity to Boost Ties with Africa // RT Live. Question More, July 27, 2018 // <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/434245-china-africa-trade-war/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

27 FDI in China Steadily Growing-report (2018) // The BRICS Post, April 12, 2018 // <http://thebricspost.com/fdi-in-china-steadily-growing-report/#.W8cp89cza9l>, accessed 12.10.2018.

28 Chao Xiaoliang (2018) FOCAC Beijing Summit Will Benefit China Nigeria Cooperation // This Day, June 2, 2018 // <https://www.this-daylive.com/index.php/2018/06/02/focac-beijing-summit-will-benefit-china-nigeria-cooperation/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

Table 3. Ten African countries leading in accumulated investment from China

Rank	Country	Amount (billion dollars)
1.	South Africa	4.72
2.	DRC	3.24
3.	Algeria	2.53
4.	Nigeria	2.38
5.	Zambia	2.34
6.	Sudan	1.81
7.	Zimbabwe	1.80
8.	Angola	1.27
9.	Ghana	1.27
10.	Tanzania	1.14

Source: March J. (2018) China's President Xi Pledges Another USD 60 Billion for Africa // CNN, September 04, 2018 // <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/03/asia/focac-china-africa-development-intl/index.html>, accessed 12.10.2018

One of the advantages of Chinese foreign direct investment is its level of diversification. In particular, investments in the industrial sector are growing, which contributes to the introduction of new technologies, transfer of knowledge and the development of skilled labor. Another way China facilitates these processes is by creating special economic zones (SEZs) in a number of countries to draw investment flows, as well as new technologies. According to McKinsey & Company, Chinese companies operate in various sectors of African economy: 1/3 – in manufacturing, 1/4 – in services, and 1/5 – in trade, construction and real estate. Over 10 thousand Chinese companies currently operate in Africa, with most of them (according to some sources, up to 90%) being private firms. Chinese companies produce 12% of African manufacturing output, and cover 50% of the African infrastructure market. For example, Tanzania has 92 private Chinese companies and 8 state-owned Chinese enterprises, while Kenya has 80 and 20, respectively. Almost half of Chinese

companies bring new products or services to the local markets, and over 2/3 of them introduce new technologies [Dollar 2016, p. 59].

China's financial involvement in Africa in the form of loans, credit lines and investments has one important feature – it is not ideologically motivated. What makes Chinese financing particularly attractive to African countries is the fact that Beijing's loans and investment come with no political strings attached – unlike financial aid from the West, which often requires the state seeking assistance to comply with a certain set of conditions.

The Belt and Road Initiative and African Infrastructure

Currently, all of Beijing's foreign policies, including its Africa policy, are designed with the Belt and Road Initiative in mind, launched by Xi Jinping in September 2013. Beijing sees the implementation of this initiative as a means to accelerate economic development of both China and the other countries involved, as well as a guard against the challenges and threats to China's interests in the Indian Ocean.

The African continent is also involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. One of the major problems facing Africa today is its poor infrastructure, which hinders the development of trade between the countries and creates obstacles to integration. China has both the experience and the financial muscle to take part in the solution. According to a report from Baker McKenzie and the Economist Corporate Network titled "Spanning Africa's Infrastructure Gap: How development capital is transforming Africa's project build-out", the total funding allocation for Africa-based infrastructure initiatives over the period from 2009 to 2014 was around USD 328 billion (USD 54 billion per year), and the contribution from Asia-based sources, especial-

ly from China, was especially significant: in 2013 alone, it reached USD 13.4 billion, and in 2009-2014, according to the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA), it amounted to almost USD 60 billion. According to Zhao Changhui, chief risk analyst at the Export-Import Bank of China, over the next decade, Chinese investment in Africa will reach at least USD 1 trillion, and the Export-Import Bank will become China's main source of investment in African infrastructure (75%).

Africa's participation in the Belt and One Road Initiative will help it develop infrastructure and will open ways for Beijing to explore its potential in the construction sector. It will boost China's economic growth, which has been decelerating in recent years, and while yielding much benefit to African countries. The second advantage of China's Belt and Road Initiative for Africa, according to Chinese experts, is that it offers an opportunity to move Chinese labor-intensive industrial enterprises to the African continent, ensuring output growth, new jobs, and higher wages. As part of the initiative, China is undertaking ambitious efforts to industrialize peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, where in many cases the manufacturing sector is created virtually from scratch in agro-industrial parks and special zones for industrial cooperation [Chubarov, Kalashnikov 2018].

North Africa is expected to become one of the lynchpins of the project, tying together African infrastructure. The initiative includes six land corridors, one of which passes through the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. It is envisaged that, along these new Silk Road cor-

ridors, the participating nations will create an entire net of liquefied natural gas terminals, pipelines, and power plants.²⁹ In January 2016, two Chinese companies – China Construction and China Harbor – together with Algeria's Port Services Public Group established a joint venture for the construction of a new port in Algeria worth USD 3.3 billion, with an annual capacity of 6.5 million TEU and 30 million tons of cargo.

Morocco attracted the attention of Beijing's after the visit of King Mohammed VI to China in 2016. Unlike Algeria, Morocco does not have oil reserves, but the country's political stability in the tumultuous Arab region gives it an edge over its neighbours. Besides, Morocco recently rejoined the African Union. From 2011 to 2015, Chinese direct investment in Morocco grew by 195%. China has already made a significant contribution to Morocco's infrastructure by completing the longest cable-stayed bridge in Africa, which connects the country's capital, Rabat, to the city of Salé. The bridge itself is a part of a massive infrastructure project to create the largest highway network in the country, from Tangier, located on the Mediterranean coast, to Casablanca, considered Morocco's economic and business center. There are also plans to build a high-speed railway between Marrakesh and Agadir.³⁰ In November 2017, Marrakesh hosted the China-Africa Investment Forum (CAIF) which brought together more than 400 representatives of Chinese and African businesses. The goal of the forum was to promote and expand business cooperation between investors and entrepreneurs in the industrial sector and in infrastructure.³¹

29 V. Tsegoyev. (2018) China's Footprint: How China Expands its Economic Presence in Africa // RT.com. January 8, 2018 // <https://russian.rt.com/business/article/468291-kitai-afrika-investicii>, accessed 12.10.2018.

30 Under the Radar: What's behind China's Love Affair with Morocco? (2017) // Global Risk Insights, March 26, 2017 // <https://global-riskinsights.com/2017/03/chinas-love-affair-with-morocco/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

31 China-Africa Investment Forum, November 27–28, 2017 // https://www.imemo.ru/index.php?page_id=502&id=3778, accessed 12.10.2018.

Beijing also plans to intensify interaction between the Belt and Road Initiative and Egypt Vision 2030 – the Chinese leadership considers Egypt to be a “strategic axis” and a “regional priority”. China is Egypt’s leading trading partner (in 2016, trade volume was at USD 12 billion) and the largest investor in the Suez Canal Economic Zone. In 2016, Xi Jinping paid a visit to Egypt, signing 21 agreements on cooperation in the development of transport, infrastructure, and electrification. China is planning to invest USD 2.5 billion in a project for the development of the Suez Canal alone.

The Belt and Road Initiative also covers East Africa, where Beijing intends to establish a part of the Maritime Silk Road. At the same time, it expects to expand local infrastructure and transfer some of its producers to East African countries. From 2007 to 2015, Chinese investment in East Africa grew 12 times. In 2007, investment was estimated at less than USD 100 million, and in 2015 it was already at USD 1.2 billion, which accounted for 40% of Chinese FDI flows to Africa (in 2007 it was at 6%). China has become the source of almost 16% of all FDI inflows to East Africa [Macroeconomic and Social Developments in East-Africa 2017, p. 37].

Today, the countries of the East African Community play the leading role in the Chinese program to develop transport infrastructure on the African continent. In 2013, construction began on a highway in Uganda, linking the capital city of Kampala with Entebbe International Airport, and designed to replace the currently used un-surfaced road which, like many other roads in Uganda, is highly affected by rain in the period from March to June. The construction was supposed to take 5 years, but in March 2017 it was reported that the road

was 75% complete. And on May 31, 2017, Kenya opened a major new railway line between the port city of Mombasa and the capital, Nairobi (and Jomo Kenyatta International Airport). The line, which is the first phase of a larger railway project, was built by China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC). The railway is described as the largest Chinese infrastructure project in Kenya since its independence. The first phase of construction – which is part of the Belt and Road Initiative – is meant, according to Beijing, to open East Africa for international trade. The road cost USD 3.8 billion, with China’s Export-Import Bank providing 90% of the funding. The road is part of an ambitious project meant to connect all of East Africa with a massive railway network: the railway is supposed to be extended all the way to Kampala (Uganda) and then to South Sudan. This is China’s most expensive construction project in Africa, costing USD 13.8 billion.

The project holds a special significance for railway construction in Africa because, unlike the narrow-gauge railways that have existed since colonial times, the new railway is a standard-gauge road. The new roads will be built to the same standard, meaning that eventually the entire narrow-gauge railway system of Africa will be replaced with modern standard-gauge roads.³¹ Tanzania has already approached China with a request to begin the construction of a standard-gauge railway; the road will go through the Central Transport Corridor, connecting the ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, and will unite Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region, Rwanda and Burundi into a single transport system.

In May 2017, Beijing hosted the Belt and Road Summit, where President Xi Jin-

32 Yun Sun (2017) China and the East Africa Railways // Brookings, July 6, 2017 // <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2017/07/06/china-and-the-east-africa-railways-beyond-full-industry-chain-export/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

ping spoke about China's intention to invest even more in infrastructure projects. African countries recognize that China's focus on African infrastructure is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Agenda 2063, adopted by the African Union. The "African Dream" is to connect the nations of the continent with a network of highways, railways and airways, ports, power lines and telecommunications lines. China's Africa policy is helping make this dream a reality.

Apart from North and East Africa, other countries on the continent are showing their interest in the Belt and Road Initiative. South Africa, as well as some nations of West Africa, such as Nigeria, Mauritania, and Côte d'Ivoire, are hoping to seize this economic opportunity, too. And new President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa stated that the "Belt and Road Initiative is indeed a vision for the future"³³

Critics of the initiative point out how difficult it would be for African countries to repay Chinese loans. One can argue, however, that China has repeatedly written off African debts, primarily those given to the least developed countries (LDCs), and promised to continue with this practice at the 2018 FOCAC Summit in Beijing.

Agricultural Cooperation

Another important area of China-Africa economic cooperation is the development of agriculture. The 2006 official China's Africa Policy paper places a focus on cooperation in land development, agricultural plantation, food security, agricultur-

al machinery and technology, as well as experimental and demonstrative agricultural projects. Africa is also assisted in the creation of irrigation systems and in combating desertification (through the introduction of green trade barriers). China's experience in the area is widely promoted and popularized: Africans are invited to agricultural facilities, introduced to irrigation methods, and the use of solar energy; they attend training courses at the Foreign Economic Cooperation Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture. Chinese experts are sent as advisers to African countries. China's Ministry of Agriculture routinely organizes Agricultural Technology Seminars for African officials.³⁴ The first Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centre was opened in Mozambique in 2007. And in March 2018, at the 1st session of the 13th National People's Congress, China's Minister of Agriculture Han Changfu announced that China opened Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers in 14 African Countries, that Chinese experts implemented about 300 demonstration projects, introduced 450 types of technologies and conducted training of 30 thousand rural residents. China is ready to share its experience in agricultural development with African countries and help African farmers and officials, especially from the poorest countries, by teaching them agricultural know-how and technologies. "Our sincere wish is to help African countries ensure food security without any additional conditions or pre-requisites," said Han Changfu.³⁵ Chinese companies finance large-scale agriculture, livestock farming, construction of grain silos, and

33 Shahtahmasebi D. (2018) China Sees Trump's Trade War as Opportunity to Boost Ties with Africa // RT Live. Question More, July 27, 2018 // <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/434245-china-africa-trade-war/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

34 China Holds Agro-tech Extension Training Course for African Officials (2007) // People's Daily Online, July 05, 2007 // <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/6207964.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

35 China Builds Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers in 14 African Countries (2018) // The People's Daily, March 9, 2018 // <http://russian.people.com.cn/n3/2018/0309/c31521-9435224.html>, accessed 12.10.2018.

grain processing. According to the China-Africa Cooperation Johannesburg Action Plan for 2016-2018, multiple agricultural projects, supervised by 30 groups of Chinese experts, are to be implemented in one hundred African villages.³⁶

New technologies that China promotes in Africa are aimed not only at improving agricultural production, but also at raising the quality of life of rural citizens. In terms of green economy, China is implementing one hundred projects in clean energy, wildlife conservation, and improving the quality of city life. Other plans include the establishment of the China-Africa Environmental Cooperation Center and the launching of the China-Africa Green Innovation Project.

Shortage of drinking water is one of the most pressing problems of the continent, and China helps address it, as well. In 2007, it launched a project to build a hydroelectric power dam on the Black Volta River in Ghana's Bui National Park. Along with the hydroelectric dam, it was planned to establish a new urban area, called Bui City, to bolster socio-economic development of the region. The main goal of the project was to increase the country's energy intensity from 2000 MW in 2007 to 6000 MW by 2015. The construction of the dam started in December 2009; the first generator was commissioned in May 2013, and the hydroelectric power plant was fully operational by December of the same year. A USD 562 million loan, payable over a period of 17 years with a 5-year moratorium, was granted by Export-Import Bank of China to complete the dam project [*Idun-Arkhurst* 2008]. The Bui project effectively disproves the view that Chinese projects employ only Chinese labor and experts, writes Deborah Brautigam. The project was overseen by Coyne et Bellier, a French company, and the con-

struction itself involved 1,676 Ghanaians, about 100 Chinese and 60 Pakistanis. The same situation could be observed in other construction projects for dams and dikes. For example, the German company Gauff Engineering provided its consultants for a hydroelectric dam project in Gabon. In Congo, the workforce for a dam construction project included 2,000 Congolese, 20 German consulting engineers, and just 400 Chinese [*Brautigam, Hwang, Wang* 2015]. In 2009, the Merowe Dam, built in Sudan with assistance from China, was completed, becoming the largest man-made structure on the Nile River after the Aswan Dam in Egypt. Its hydroelectric dam cost a total of USD 1.5 billion, with the bulk of the expenses covered by the Export-Import Bank of China. The construction was carried out by Chinese, French and German companies.

By early 2011, China has set up 150 agricultural enterprises on leased or purchased African land. The farms themselves are modelled after different types of Chinese farms. For example, in 2012, there were four small Chinese farms in Ghana, growing vegetables and fruits. The owner, a man named Li, supplied the local market with a wide range of quality vegetables, 85% of which were purchased by the Chinese, to be consumed in households or in Chinese shops and restaurants, 5% were purchased by Ghanaians, and the rest by Europeans and other residents of Ghana. Lee used new technologies and employed local labor. In the upcoming years, he hoped to train a number of small business entrepreneurs from among the locals. His farms created jobs: one farm employed eight Ghanaians and two Togolese, while another employed eight Ghanaians.

Another example of a Chinese farming model taking hold in Africa is Green Agriculture West Africa (GAWA), a grain

36 Sibongakonke Shoba (2015) Early Festive Gifts from China's Xi // Sunday Times, December 6, 2015.

producer operating in Nigeria, established as a collaboration project by the governments of China and Nigeria and uniting Chinese agricultural enterprises with local Nigerian farmers. The main shareholders are two Chinese companies: Sinopec and China Geo-Engineering Corporation. The corporation conducts business in more than 10 African countries, and is represented in the agricultural sector, among other areas. Apart from growing rice and corn, and engaging in ecological farming, it produces agricultural equipment and does trade [Jiao Yang 2015]. China's provinces often specialize in certain types of work. For instance, the main focus of the Hubei Gaza Friendship Farm is grain production. Hubei Province signed an agreement with Mozambique's Gaza province to launch a number of agricultural projects. The Ogun-Guangdong Free Trade Zone in Nigeria is a partnership project between Guangdong Province and the Ogun State Government.³⁷

However, Chinese participation in African farming has sparked heated debate online and in the media, giving rise to the accusations of Chinese “land grabbing” in Africa. There are studies that cast the practice of Chinese farming on the continent in a negative light, warning about its implications for African agriculture. That said, many authors are trying to get to the bottom of the problem by assessing the activities of Chinese farmers in one or another particular African country. With this goal in mind, a group of researchers of the China-Africa Research Initiative at the Johns Hopkins University approached the issue, publishing the results of their studies in several policy briefs in 2015. They write, among other things, that the press

reported about 6 million hectares allegedly “land-grabbed” by the Chinese. Meanwhile, their own studies showed that only 252,901 ha were, in fact, acquired by the Chinese.³⁸

One study focuses on Zambia, where Chinese entrepreneurs were found among the investors in agriculture. Contrary to popular belief, their agricultural projects were not an initiative of the Chinese government, but a private venture started by individual migrants. After the adoption of the Lands Act of 1995, which, for the first time since the country gained its independence, formally allowed foreigners to acquire land by obtaining investment certificates, the Chinese became a prominent player in the agricultural sector. Voluntary migration to rural Zambia is seen as an attractive opportunity by the Chinese, and their number is growing. Meanwhile, these “new farmers” are considered drivers of agricultural growth in the country. “China, contrary to allegations of ‘land grabbing’ and ‘neo-colonialism’, never became a major ‘invader’, and its companies did not turn into producers of food to be exported back to the Chinese market,” says the article [Chatelard, Chu 2015]. Most Chinese farmers in Zambia are sole proprietors who have little to no affiliation with state-owned enterprises. In 2015, there were two Chinese state farms in Zambia, and about 30 private farms, with most of them oriented for domestic consumption. A series of surveys of workers in 16 Chinese farms (state and privately-owned) and 27 mixed-ownership farms held in 2008–2014 showed that new investors cannot compete with multinational corporations, better integrated into the country's economy and having greater access to resour-

37 Understanding China-Africa Relations (2016) // The Diplomat, June 21, 2016 // <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/understanding-china-africa-relations/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

38 Chinese Agricultural Investment in Africa, 1987–2016 (Excel Data) (2018) // SAIS-CARI // <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-agricultural-investments-in-africa/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

es. However, private farmers are more active and are learning how to grow a business in less than perfect conditions. At the same time, the researchers did not find evidence that private or even state-owned Chinese want to export goods back home, in order to address China's own food security issues. Chinese farms occupy relatively small land plots and cannot truly compete with state-owned and commercial farms. Despite their small contribution to overall investment, these farms represent a dynamic and steadily growing segment of Zambia's "emergent farming" [Chatelard, Chu 2015].

Nevertheless, charges that China is engaged in "land grabbing" in Africa to grow food for export back home has prompted Beijing to dial back its agricultural projects abroad. In this regard, David Shinn writes: "In fact, investors from India, Saudi Arabia and even the United States have been more active in this area, although most of the projects do not qualify as 'land grabbing'. Today, China intends to focus on joint ventures with African investors and arrangements whereby the crop is sold both in Africa and exported to China."³⁹

The Role of Soft Power in China's Africa Policy

As Beijing's 'Go Out policy' started to gain traction, its soft power instruments have become increasingly relevant to its foreign policy. Soft power tools are widely used in Africa to counter the "Chinese threat" narrative and improve China's image abroad. Soft Power is also employed to form an African elite supportive of South-South cooperation.

Human capital is a priority concern for Beijing. As early as 2000, at the first

FOCAC meeting in Beijing, a decision was made to establish an African Human Resources Development Fund, financed by Beijing. The fund was created to provide education to African students, award scholarships, help African countries establish schools and set up laboratories, send teachers and volunteers to Africa, teach Africans the Chinese language, etc.

China-Africa educational cooperation has made considerable progress in recent decades. In the period from 2009 to 2012, 28 new schools were built in Africa with China's assistance, and 42 schools received equipment, including 6 computer classes [Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2013].

In 2012–2015, Beijing provided scholarships to 20,000 Africans, and at the 2015 FOCAC Summit in Johannesburg it was announced that in 2015–2018, 32,000 African students will receive scholarships [Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (2016–2018) 2015]. In 2016, according to Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission Erastus Mwencha, 30 thousand scholarships were granted to Africans, and about 150,000 African students studied at Chinese universities [Mwencha 2016].

In the 1960s, China has experienced racism against African students, which in some cases resulted in Africans having to return home without completing their studies. Today, the situation has shifted. According to surveys of African-born students studying in China, the general attitude towards studying abroad is positive. During the surveys, students displayed interest in and fondness for the Chinese language and culture, and a desire to study and carry out research projects together with Chinese students. The interest of Africans in the Chinese language and culture

39 Shinn D. (2013) China and Africa: The Next Decade. During a Conference on China in Africa at the University of Denver. Denver, Colorado. February 1, 2013 // <https://ru.scribd.com/document/123557623/China-and-Africa-The-Next-Decade>, accessed 12.10.2018.

grew during their stay in the country, but many reported that they had liked China even before coming there. “The responses and the results of the interviews reveal that, as ‘agents of soft power’, African students are happy to share their knowledge with others and to build bridges of friendship between the two peoples,” writes the author of an article analyzing a survey conducted among African students in China [Gonondo 2017, p. 25].

The Chinese language program for African students is being expanded. There is a world-wide network of Confucius Institutes, where students are given courses in Chinese history and culture, in addition to the language courses. As of today, Africa has 47 such institutes operating throughout the continent. Kenya, which was the first to open a Confucius Institute in Africa, now has three, while South Africa has five. Director of the Confucius Institute that opened in South Africa in 2014 said that institutions like these could help “put an end to the campaign against China in Africa, whose apologists claim China wants to buy all of us.”⁴⁰ According to L. Mukaro, a professor at the University of Zimbabwe, one of the reasons for the success of the Chinese language program in Africa is the demand in the labor market for people speaking Chinese, particularly in the Chinese companies operating on the continent.⁴¹

Scientific cooperation is developing rapidly. In accordance with the China-Africa Science and Technology Partnership Program adopted in Johannesburg in 2015, new laboratories and innovation parks are being created in Africa. In 2016, a joint Agricultural Technology Research

Center was opened at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya, which works in partnership with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to do research in the field of microbiology and design innovative methods in agricultural development. In 2017, China and South Africa officially launched the South Africa-China Park for Science Cooperation [Ligang Song, Garnaut, Cai Fang, Johnston 2017, p. 442]. In 2014, the Malawi University of Science and Technology opened its doors for the first time. Mount Kenya University (MKI) signed an agreement with the China University of Petroleum, under which MKI will train oil industry specialists. In 2016, China’s Shenyang University of Chemical Technology pledged to establish The National Research Institute for Chemical Technology in Nigeria. In 2017, the Chinese-built School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ghana’s Volta region was officially handed over to the national government.⁴²

The African Human Resources Development Fund trains professionals to work in various countries throughout the continent. As part of the African Talents Program for 2012–2015, 30,173 participants received professional training [Deych 2017, p. 52]. The Action Plan for 2016–2018 sets the goal of training 200,000 Africans in technical skills [Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Johannesburg Action Plan (2016–2018) 2015]. Innovative approaches are used in the training of technical management and economic development professionals; a lot of effort is spent to prepare high-level administrative personnel, which includes learning the Chinese language.

40 The Goal of ‘People to People’ Diplomacy (2015). FOCAC 6. Africa-China Progressing Together. Cape Town. December 15, 2015, p.11.

41 Olaniran F. (n/y) On the Growing Ties between China and Zimbabwe // CPAFRICA // <http://www.cp-africa.com/2013/03/03/china-and-zimbabwe/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

42 Johnston L.A. (2018) Harvesting from “Poor Old” China to Harness “Poor Young” Africa’s Demographic Dividend? // *Bridges Africa*, vol. 7, no 5, July 2018 // <https://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/harvesting-from-%E2%80%9Cpoor-old%E2%80%9D-china-to-harness-%E2%80%9Cpoor-young%E2%80%9D-africa%E2%80%99s>, accessed 12.10.2018.

An important component of China's soft power is its foreign medical aid. For over 55 years, China has been assisting Africa with healthcare. In 1963, the first Chinese medical team arrived in Algeria, and in the period from 1991 to 2008, China dispatched medical personnel to 35 African countries, writes Deborah Brautigam in her book *The Dragon's Gift* [*Brautigam* 2009, p. 316]. Today, Chinese health professionals operate in 73 African clinics. For example, since 1974, Chinese doctors have been working in the Ethiopian Friendship Hospital in Akaki, outside Addis Ababa. In 2018, the hospital houses a 15-strong team of medical professionals in various fields, as well as an interpreter.⁴³ Chinese doctors have been successful in treating malaria. Holley-Cotec was one of the first Chinese companies to enter Kenya's pharmaceutical market – in 1993, it started selling a cheaper anti-malaria drug (compared to Western and Indian alternatives) called COTECXIN — referred to by some on the continent as “Chinese magic medicine”.⁴⁴ China created a cardiology center in Tanzania, a center for reproductive health in Uganda, and a biotechnology laboratory at the University of Nairobi (Kenya). At the 2015 FOCAC Summit in Johannesburg, President Xi Jinping promised to help Africa modernize its healthcare. The Action Plan for 2016–2018 envisages China's assistance to Africa in reducing child and maternal mortality, as well as the construction of an African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and of a number of regional medical centers; cooperation between 20 Chinese and 20 Af-

rican hospitals, the training of doctors and medical personnel; deployment of Chinese medical teams to Africa that include clinical experts and surgeons [Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Johannesburg Action Plan (2016–2018) 2015].

In 2014, China took active part in the fight against the spread of Ebola, sending USD 120 million worth of medicine, food, and other aid to West Africa, as well as 1,200 medical specialists, who, in turn, trained 1,600 local healthcare workers.⁴⁵ According to the statement by Jin Xiaotao, Vice Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, China also promises to help Africa modernize its healthcare system and improve its epidemic preparedness and response capacity.⁴⁶

Cultural cooperation between China and Africa is also developing. In 2015 alone, Beijing opened five new cultural centers in Africa. Days (weeks and months) of Chinese culture are held in Africa, and corresponding days of African culture are held in China. The Chinese-African People's Friendship Association operates in Beijing; other friendship associations also operate in various African countries.

Media and communication play an important role in China's relations with Africa. China Central Television (CCTV) devotes at least 10 hours a week to African issues. China Radio International has a broadcasting center in Kenya, from where it broadcasts to Africa in Swahili, Chinese and English. A specialist at The South African Institute of International Affairs called the activities of Chinese media in Africa a “part of a bigger soft power drive... aimed

43 Feature: Chinese Medical Team Hailed for Their Services in Ethiopia (2018) // Xinhuanet.com, August 19, 2018 // http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2018-08/19/c_137400678.htm, accessed 12.10.2018.

44 Wang Yujue (2016) From Aid to Business? Chinese Medical Companies Arrive in Africa // China Africa Project, August 19, 2016 // <http://chinaafricaproject.com/chinese-medical-aid-kenya-africa/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

45 China Awards Model Ebola Fighters (2015) // Xinhuanet.com, November 25, 2015 // http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/25/c_134854734.htm, accessed 12.10.2018.

46 China Promises to Support Africa in Post-Ebola Recovery (2015) // Russian.News.cn. July 23, 2015 // http://russian.news.cn/2015-07/23/c_134440071.htm, accessed 12.10.2018.

at building a positive image in areas where Beijing is economically and politically active.”⁴⁷

China’s growing presence in most African countries prompts critics to accuse it of expansionism and even brand China’s foreign policy a form of neo-colonialism. Because of that, China seeks to improve its image by actively utilizing soft power tools on the African continent.

China’s Presence in Africa Through the Eyes of Africans

The opinions of Africans regarding China’s involvement in the continent are generally positive, with most noting Beijing’s contribution to the development of African nations. For example, in May 2017, when speaking at the Belt and Road Summit in Beijing, Ethiopian President Hailemariam Desalegn said: “We continue to view China as a successful economic model and reliable ally in the fight against poverty and in the quest for prosperity.”⁴⁸

However, there are aspects of Chinese presence in Africa that cause criticism and opposition from the locals, such as: a rapidly increasing number of Chinese traders and businessmen, numerous violations of environmental standards by Chinese companies, non-compliance with local laws, non-transparent business practices, etc. In 2011, Michael Sata won Zambia’s presidential election by appealing to anti-Chinese sentiment. However, after becoming president, he had an immediate change of heart and started to actively cooperate with China. In 2013, Governor of the Central Bank

of Nigeria Lamido Sanoussi wrote: “It must be recognized that China, like the United States, Russia, Britain, Brazil and other global powers before them, came to Africa not to support our interests, but to satisfy its own.” Africans have also begun to fault Chinese companies for unfair labor practices, including disputes over wages and poor working conditions. According to Ian Taylor, a Professor of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews, an overabundance of state-owned and private Chinese companies in Africa leads to Beijing not always being able to control or regulate their activities.⁴⁹ This state of affairs has led to multiple strikes by workers: in 2012, a protest in Zambia led to deaths of Chinese managers. In 2016, anti-Chinese protests erupted in Madagascar, where Chinese entrepreneurs ran a sugar factory. Seasonal workers, unhappy about a decrease in their wages, took out knives, and the following confrontation led to the deaths of two workers.

Chinese companies have been repeatedly accused of bringing their labor and use it in projects across Africa, thus taking jobs from the local population. Today, however, many experts agree that Chinese enterprises, while still employing other Chinese as managers and engineers, mostly rely on the trained locals for labor and maintenance. According to China Roads and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), it employed more local workforce in the construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway than any other foreign company. 21,858 people took part in the construction project, including 2,000 Chinese managers and technical personnel, and 19,858 locals, includ-

47 McKenzie D. (2012) Chinese Media Make Inroads into Africa // CNN, September 25, 2012 // <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/05/business/china-africa-cctv-media/index.htm>, accessed 12.10.2018.

48 Sow M. (2017) African Leaders Attend China’s Belt and Road Summit // Brookings, May 19, 2017 // <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2017/05/19/africa-in-the-news-african-leaders-attend-china-one-belt-one-road-summit-violence-escalates-in-central-african-republic-and-cote-divoire-mutiny-ends/>, accessed 12.10.2018.

49 Albert E. (2017) China in Africa // Council on Foreign Relations, July 12, 2017 // <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-africa>, accessed 12.10.2018.

ism". While it is hard to deny that Chinese presence on the continent has its drawbacks, it would be even more difficult to dispute Beijing's massive contribution to the development of Africa. Thus, it would be reasonable to regard Beijing's Africa policy not as something dictated by economic and political expediency, which is the standard accusation from the West, but as mutually beneficial – in other words, a win-win strategy.

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