

# Panoramic View of China-Africa Cooperation

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## Abstract

The cooperation between China and Africa has continued since the 1950s, and the cooperation has been expanding and deepening, involving politics, economy, culture, education, health, agriculture, energy, environment and other aspects. For a long time, the current scholars' research mainly focuses on China's aid-Africa policy, the process and results of China's aid-Africa, and the prospect of the future, while there are few studies on the impact of aid to Africa on China. This paper discusses the impact of aid to Africa on China's economy, politics and international reputation, and puts forward some policy suggestions, which has important theoretical and practical significance.

## Keywords

**Infrastructure; Technical Cooperation; Cooperation on International Issues; Economic and Trade Cooperation; Development Path of China-Africa Cooperation.**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

China's assistance to Africa has a history of about 70 years since the 1950s. China has always taken an equal approach to its aid to Africa, without attaching any political conditions. The two sides have been supporting each other and conducting economic cooperation to achieve common development. Since the mid-1990s, China has paid more attention to the construction of local infrastructure in Africa, and combined investment and aid to achieve mutually beneficial goals. In the declaration of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2015, the two sides proposed that "the two sides will actively explore the complementarity of the Belt and Road Initiative with African integration and sustainable development", marking a new stage of strategic alignment of the Belt and Road cooperation between China and Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative, which refers to the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," is a cooperative model for China to promote economic globalization, deal with excess capacity and acquire scarce resources. African integration is an Asian-African revival movement in which many African countries unite economically, culturally and other aspects at the regional level to achieve national development through collective strength.

For many African countries, the fundamental route to prosperity is trade and investment, not direct aid. The trade between China and Africa is highly complementary, China needs a vast export market, while Africa needs a large number of high-quality and inexpensive goods. Africa is an ideal export market for China; Chinese goods also meet the needs of Africa. Such trade will bring equal competition and openness to African countries, promote their overall economic development capacity and vitality, and may eventually lift Africa out of its chronic poverty and give its people more opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

For a long time, the current scholars' research mainly focuses on China's aid-Africa policy, the process and results of China's aid-Africa, and the prospect of the future, while there are few studies on the impact of aid to Africa on China. This paper discusses the impact of aid to Africa

on China's economy, politics and international reputation, and puts forward some policy suggestions, which has important theoretical and practical significance.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

Dr. Martyn Davies (2008) elaborated on the scale of China's aid to Africa and its reasons, and systematically introduced the mechanism and main activities of China's aid to Africa [1]. He believes that China's aid policy combines aid and trade at the same time, creating possibilities for Africa's social and economic development, and enabling Africa to have enough resources to launch economic growth plans. In addition, China maintains an attitude of mutual respect in its diplomacy, not only investing in African countries with rich resources and strategic importance, but also assisting small African countries with little political and economic influence. Shu (2010) summarized the five characteristics of China's aid policy to Africa: the basic concept of aid is mutual support; China does not attach any political conditions to its assistance to Africa. Through assistance, China strengthens the capacity of economic development of African countries rather than just solving temporary problems; To help Africa solve its most urgent and urgent problems; Commitments remain unchanged for the duration of the assistance [2]. Yun (2000) explained that China's agricultural aid to Africa has always emphasized international obligations and designed many projects in accordance with the needs of African countries, and has achieved great achievements [3]. He investigated and examined the success and failure of many projects, and finally proposed that the focus should be on financial efficiency and in line with the country's goal of diversifying non-agricultural cooperation with Africa.

## **2. Research process**

### **2.1. Data Acquisition**

This paper mainly uses grounded theory as research method, mainly collects news and events related to China-Africa aid, and collates the recent cooperation process and some projects between China and Africa to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the article.

### **2.2. Data Coding & Processing**

In the open coding stage, this paper analyzes the collected data sentence by sentence, extracts the initial concepts from the original sentence, analyzes and classifies them, and integrates them to form a higher level corresponding category. Then, the corresponding categories are further integrated, summarized and refined, and a more core main category is formed in the spindle coding stage, so that there is a connection between the corresponding categories and the category is more complete.

**Table 1.** Open coding result

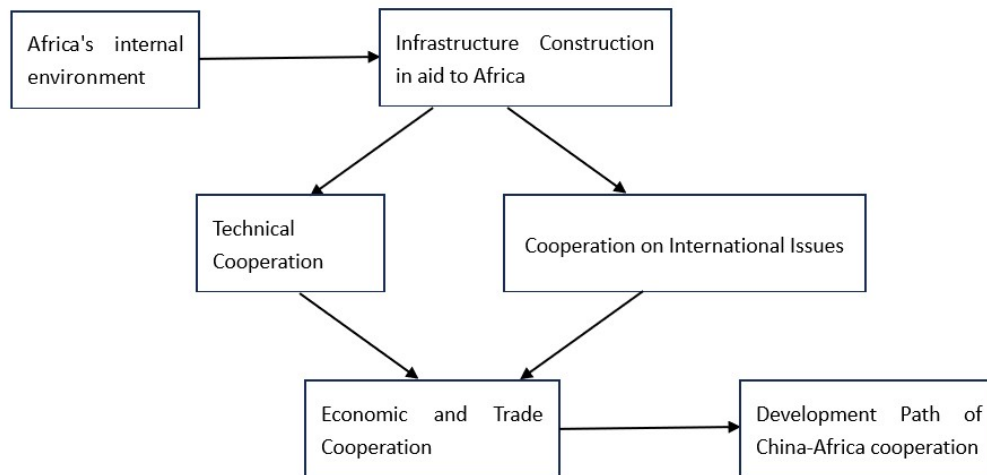
Principal Category	Corresponding Category	Initial concept
Technical Cooperation	China-Africa Scientific and Technological Cooperation	Digital technology cooperation, technical team aid to Africa, international technical exchange meeting
	Agricultural technology and demonstration routes for African aid	Establish local agricultural cooperation committees, build and operate agriculture and specialty agriculture industries, support and help establish agricultural digitalization, focus on agricultural needs and efficiency, and give agricultural technical support
	China and Africa carry out cooperation on energy security and green development Specific areas of international cooperation	Help develop and utilize African energy, make it energy independent, help Africa connect to the international energy market, pay attention to green energy and give energy development experience
Cooperation on International Issues	Specific areas of international cooperation	Agricultural cooperation, economic and trade cooperation, climate change cooperation, energy cooperation, scientific and technological innovation cooperation, financial cooperation, cooperation in different industries
	Exchanges and cooperation on major international issues	We will promote Africa's entry into the international arena, establish an international cargo transport network, and participate in discussions on international affairs
	International economic trend	World economic recovery, digital economy, economic growth momentum
Economic and trade cooperation	Diversification of China's investment in Africa	Oil investment, economic and trade investment business, establishment of investment platform, greenfield investment
	Digitization of China-Africa economic cooperation	Local and global digital economy, digital industry, digital economy innovation, digital payments
	China helps African markets standardize and innovate	Explore market potential, pay attention to the market environment, help to enter the international market
	Facilitation of China-Africa trade channels	Trade reciprocity, regional and world electronic trade, establish trade facilitation working group, new trade architecture, promote trade integration
Africa's internal environment	Internal political economy of Africa	National industrialization, national food security, build national economic communities, national development strategies, National social stability
	Africa's economic development needs	Economic transformation, blue economy, economic transformation, economic diversification
Infrastructure construction	Infrastructure construction in aid to Africa	Build and develop industrial parks, accelerate the pace of free trade zones, help power engineering and agricultural capacity building, and promote modernization and integration

### 2.3. Model Architecture

Through the integration of the initial concepts, the author has formed many corresponding categories. In the main axis coding part, this study has formed five main categories: technical

cooperation, international cooperation, economic and trade cooperation, Africa's internal environment and infrastructure construction. Through further analysis of the research data, the author extracts the core category of "China-Africa cooperation development path", and tries to build a model of the stages of China-Africa cooperation development path.

**Table 2.** A model of the stages of the development path of China-Africa cooperation



## 2.4. Content Summary

During the period of coding and model building, through in-depth analysis of data and collection of specific cases, the author concluded that the assistance in the construction of China-Africa cooperation development path plays a role in strengthening China-Africa strategic cooperation, enhancing China's status on the international stage and promoting China's participation in international affairs. China's aid to Africa in infrastructure construction, technical cooperation, international cooperation, economic and trade cooperation and other aspects have produced considerable results, successfully helped Africa to accelerate development. These measures have strengthened the political mutual trust between China and Africa and increased China's influence and voice in the African region. At the same time, it will enhance China's status and image on the international stage, enhance its voice and influence in international affairs, and promote China's participation in international affairs. On October 25, 1971, the 26th session of the UN general assembly overwhelmingly passed resolution 2758, the recovery of the People's Republic of China's lawful seat in the United Nations. Eleven of the 23 countries that sponsored the proposal were from Africa, and 26 of the 76 yes votes were from Africa. This shows Africa's recognition of China's aid to Africa, and shows its support for China's participation in more international affairs, enhancing China's importance in international affairs.

## 3. China assists Africa in Infrastructure Construction

### 3.1. Status of Infrastructure Construction in Africa

The African continent is rich in natural resources and human resources, but for a long time, it has been faced with the challenge of backward infrastructure, such as the shortage of roads, electricity, water conservancy, communications and other aspects, which has seriously restricted its economic development and social progress. African governments have realized the urgency and importance of infrastructure development, but its progress has been slow due to financial and technical constraints. At the same time, Africa's political and social environment is not stable, and infrastructure construction is facing greater risks and challenges. China and

Africa enjoy a long history of friendship. Since the 1950s, China has paid close attention to Africa's development and progress, and is ready to provide support and assistance for Africa's economic development and infrastructure construction on the basis of equality, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. At the same time, the Chinese government has put forward the Belt and Road Initiative, and Africa, as an important participant in the Belt and Road Initiative, has received assistance and support from China in infrastructure construction, which is conducive to the development of China-Africa comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership.

### **3.2. Impact of China's Infrastructure Aid to Africa**

In terms of economy, China assists Africa in infrastructure construction, helps African countries improve their infrastructure level, improves their investment environment, attracts more investment from China and other countries, and drives Africa's economic growth. At the same time, new modes of transport such as infrastructure such as railways are conducive to promoting connectivity among African countries, promoting the regional integration process of Africa, and enhancing the overall economic strength of Africa. The new infrastructure makes exports from Africa more efficient, thus increasing the volume of African trade in the global market and improving Africa's position in the global market.

On the social front, infrastructure construction has improved public services such as transportation, health care and education in African countries and raised the quality of life of the people. Infrastructure construction has provided a large number of local employment opportunities, alleviated employment pressure and contributed to social stability. Infrastructure construction has accelerated the urbanization process, promoted urban development, and improved the living conditions of urban residents.

In terms of the environment, China attaches great importance to environmental protection and sustainable development in the process of assisting Africa in infrastructure construction, reducing the dependence of African countries on traditional energy sources and promoting the development of clean energy. By building infrastructure, African countries can adopt more advanced mining and agricultural technologies and reduce environmental damage. And improve our ability to respond to climate change and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

Taking the TAZARA Railway as an example, the TAZARA railway, which opened to traffic on June 7, 1975, starts from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania in the east and ends in Kapili Mposhi in central Zambia in the west, with a total length of 1,860.5 kilometers. It passes through some mountains, canyons, fast-flowing rivers and dense virgin forests of Tazara, building 320 Bridges along the whole line, with a total extension of 16,520 meters; 22 tunnels with a total extension of 8898 meters; 93 stations were built; The total building area is 376,000 square meters. In 1977, the second year after the handover, TAZARA completed an annual freight volume of 1.27 million tons. By the end of June 2005, TAZARA had carried 24.355 million tons of cargo and 39.114 million passengers. Jamie Monson, who has studied the TAZARA for years, argues that Tanzanian ingenuity has transformed the TAZARA into a "market economy along the railway" that defied the expectations of its designers and builders and helped lift ordinary people out of poverty.

### **3.3. The Impact of China's Infrastructure Aid to Africa on China**

On the social front, the assistance in infrastructure construction has enhanced the friendship and mutual understanding between the people of Africa, promoted the cultural exchanges and people-to-people exchanges between China and Africa, helped China establish a good image in the African region, enhanced its influence and image in the African region, promoted the China-Africa comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, and strengthened the cooperation between China and Africa in various fields such as politics and economy. A total of 50,000 Chinese engineers and managers were dispatched to complete the task of building roads with

high quality together with local engineers and technicians in spite of the difficult conditions of lack of medical supplies, shortage of food, hot weather and epidemic diseases. According to the memories of the African people who participated in the construction at that time, Chinese engineers and technicians always lived under the same roof as the local builders, working hard under the same harsh conditions, sharing risks and never sharing with each other. After work, we will also watch Chinese movies together to share happiness in the hardships. After the completion of the construction, some of the Chinese workers returning to China also received gifts from the African people, symbolizing the friendship between the Chinese and African people.

On the economic front, China assists Africa in infrastructure construction, promotes Chinese enterprises to actively participate in the African market, realizes the "going out" strategy, expands the international market share of Chinese enterprises, and promotes the development of China's foreign trade. Infrastructure aid to Africa encourages Chinese enterprises to increase investment in Africa, increase China's overseas assets and enhance China's international competitiveness. And the relatively cheap labor in Africa provides a solution to the rising labor costs in the Chinese market. In 2020, China's GDP per capita will reach about \$11,000. According to the World Bank's classification criteria, China has been firmly in the level of upper-middle-income countries, and will soon enter the group of high-income countries. As a result, China no longer has the advantage of low labor costs required by the low-end global industrial chain. By comparison, sub-Saharan Africa's per capita GDP was \$1,596 in 2019, equivalent to 1/7 of China's. By the end of 2020, China's investment stock in Africa has exceeded 43 billion US dollars, and its investment has spread to more than 50 African countries. Although China is a latecomer to investment in Africa, it has become the fourth largest source of investment in Africa, with more than 3,500 Chinese companies taking root in Africa. And Chinese projects in Africa have very few mining projects, while transport, storage and energy projects take up the most money. Meanwhile, in 2019, the African Development Bank released data showing that there are 350 million middle-income people in Africa and 400 million in China. In 2019, the urbanization rate in sub-Saharan Africa has reached 40.7%, while the urbanization rate in China is about 55%. The rise of the middle class in Africa will bring a series of consumer demands, such as the increasing demand for energy, consumption, education, entertainment, finance and health, which is a very huge export market for China. The construction of infrastructure can reduce the cost of Chinese exports to Africa and expand the export market, and improve the production capacity and efficiency of Chinese enterprises in Africa.

### **3.4. Summary**

At present, China has made remarkable achievements in the construction of infrastructure aid to Africa, although it still faces problems such as lack of funds, difficult construction, low skill level of local labor and criticism from Western countries. The completion of major infrastructure such as the Merovi Dam and the Tazara Railway has promoted the development of African countries and had a positive impact on China-Africa relations. In the future, China will continue to increase its assistance to Africa's infrastructure construction and carry out cooperation in many fields to bring China-Africa relations closer.

## **4. Technical Cooperation in the Context of International Issues**

### **4.1. Technical Cooperation**

Africa still lags behind the world in agriculture, energy and information technology. The proportion of people in Africa with high levels of food insecurity in 2018 was 21.5%, higher than the world average of 9.2%. The African continent has a population of more than 1.2 billion people, about 50% of which lack electricity coverage, and nearly 70% of the world's electricity

shortage population is located in Africa. Electricity is expensive in rural areas, and some villages are not even connected to the national grid. As of October 2021, Internet penetration in Africa has reached only 33%. The world's average Internet penetration rate has reached 64.4%.

In agriculture, China has provided technical support in various fields, such as mechanization, industrialization and digitalization of African agricultural production, and the construction of agricultural technology demonstration centers. It has sent many agricultural technical experts to carry out field research, technical training and experimental demonstration activities to help Africa's large-scale agricultural development. In Uganda, East Africa, under the joint efforts of local overseas Chinese Zhong Shuangquan and his team and the local people, large-scale rice planting has been built in an agricultural park and the agricultural production line has been realized, so as to achieve "year-round sowing, year-round harvesting and year-round sales". The farmers of the Wanbao Agricultural project in Mozambique benefited from China's advanced rice planting technology and resources to increase their grain yield from 2 to 2.5 tons per hectare before the original training to 6 to 7.5 tons, not only contributing 13,500 tons of rice production to the local area, but also providing more than 1,000 jobs.

On the energy front, dozens of Chinese companies have partnered with African companies to build photovoltaic power plants, a technology that uses light energy to convert it into electricity, with a cumulative installed capacity of more than 1.5 gigawatts (GW). This technology is called off-grid power products, which can be powered off the main power grid. This not only alleviates the local power shortage problem, but also promotes low-carbon emission reduction and contributes to environmental protection.

In the field of information technology, by November 2021, China has helped Africa build more than 50 percent of wireless Internet sites and high-speed mobile broadband networks, and laid more than 200,000 kilometers of optical fiber, serving more than 900 million African people. In South Africa, China and Africa jointly established a public "cloud" serving the entire African region, and the first 5G independent commercial network. China has started preparations for a China-Africa Cooperation Center on Satellite Remote Sensing Applications, and successfully held the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the first China-Africa Innovation Cooperation Conference.

#### **4.2. Impact on China**

China's investment in Africa has shown a good momentum of development, covering a wide range of industries such as mining, processing and smelting, equipment manufacturing, agricultural development, household appliance production, aviation services, medical and health care, and digital economy. In recent years, China's imports of African products have continued to grow, and China has become the largest export destination country for Africa. From January to July 2023, China imported 23.66 billion yuan of agricultural products from Africa, an increase of 20%. China's total grain imports in the same period was about 373 billion yuan, and imports from Africa accounted for about 6.3%, which filled part of the gap in China's grain imports and is still growing. "Silk Road E-commerce" cooperation, that is, a new platform for international cooperation created in order to promote the "Belt and Road" economic and trade cooperation, continues to advance, and through e-commerce, high-quality and characteristic African products are directly connected to the Chinese market, providing Chinese consumers with more and wider product choices. At the same time, China's assistance to Africa has enlarged the export market of Africa, comprehensively strengthened the economic cooperation between the two countries, created a bond of friendship between the two countries, and provided great convenience for China's cultural exchanges and commodity exports. The Internet market in Africa is almost "uncultivated" due to the low network penetration rate and can be called the last billion Internet market in the world. As of April 2022, Africa's total population is close to 1.4 billion and more than 60% of the population is under the age of 25. In

terms of e-commerce, Africa is one of the fastest growing e-commerce markets in the world, with a CAGR of 15.5% in 2020-2025. The popularization of the Internet in Africa can bring new business opportunities to the world Internet market, which is already close to saturation. China's support in information technology enables China to gain a more priority position when entering the market and increase China's share in the Internet market.

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