

# Africa's Emerging Endogenous Dynamics and New Thoughts on Sino- African Cooperation<sup>\*</sup>

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THE FIRST DECADE of the 21st century, especially the years after the outbreak of financial crisis in 2008, saw impressive overall economic performance in Africa. Just as the term “Asian Tigers” was used to describe the emerging economies of Southeast Asian nations, the term “African Lions” is rapidly becoming a global buzzword. In 2010, 6 African nations were listed among the world’s 10 fastest-growing economies, with Africa’s overall growth rate surpassing 5 percent, a sharp contrast to Europe’s and North America’s sluggish economic recovery. The reduction in the number of people living in abject poverty and the narrowing of income disparities were two shining features of Africa’s impressive development.

## I. AFRICA’S RISE AGAINST BACKDROP OF GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

ASIDE FROM THE tiny number of countries still plagued by war and crisis, most African nations, rich or poor in resources, are showing

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vigorous growth. This is particularly true for Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Rwanda. Looking at the continent over the past 50 years, from the independence of Ghana in 1960 to the present, we can easily understand why people are saying that Africa is on the rise, and a silverlining continent is under transformation from images of doom and gloom to glimmers of hope, from places to avoid to places to enjoy.<sup>1</sup>

Most African nations, rich or poor in resources, are showing vigorous growth.

### **Observation 1: Population Growth**

LET'S FIRST LOOK at population, one of the most fundamental factors in economic growth. In 1650, Africa's population totaled about 100 million, accounting for 17 percent of the world's total. In the following two and a half centuries, owing to the slave trade, colonial exploitation and diseases, the continent's population remained at 100 million, while its share of the global total fell to four percent. According to the Population Reference Bureau in the United States, in 2010 Africa's population reached 1.03 billion, accounting for 15 percent of the world's total. In light of the annual net growth rate of 2.4 percent, Africa's population is projected to reach 1.4 billion in 2025 and 2.1 billion in 2050. Many observers have talked about the coming "demographic dividend" in Africa, and attribute the positive population growth to several factors, including an increased ability to prevent and treat diseases. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Africa has greatly reduced the number of AIDS deaths in recent years. Death rates in the four worst-hit countries—South Africa, Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe—have decreased 25 percent in the past decade.

### **Observation 2: Agricultural Improvement**

INCREASES and decreases in cultivated area are closely connected with optimistic and pessimistic views toward Africa. Between 1961 and 2009, Africa's cultivated area for agricultural production more than doubled, hitting 209 million hectares, or seven percent of the

continent's total area. In the 1960s, following independence, most African nations strove to develop import-substitution industries to the neglect of agriculture and rural areas while relegating the overwhelming part of agricultural output to subsidizing urbanization and industrialization. In addition to bad weather conditions and a decrease in total cultivated area during the 1970s, most agriculture-dependent African countries showed an economic decline, particularly in rural areas, giving rise to a prevailing pessimism in Africa. Since the end of the 1980s, agriculture has been recovering in Africa, mainly providing food for the growing population.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) statistics show that in the past 50 years the cultivated area that is devoted to primary crops in Africa has increased sharply, doubling for grains and increasing threefold for beans and root crops. The growing demand from world markets as well as Africa's urban middle class has led to a rapid increase in the continent's fruit and vegetable growing area (close to being doubled), as well as an increase in poultry and livestock production (some witnessing a growth of fourfold). The FAO statistics also register an increase in per-unit output for crops, excluding vegetables. The per-unit fruit and grain yields are twice what they were 50 years ago. However, hunger still exists on the African continent, especially in the Horn of Africa nations, mainly due to exports to world markets and inequitable distribution. In fact, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) survey, if we take both Africa's population growth and agricultural improvement into consideration, the amount of food produced per-capita is slightly higher than the standard of the basic healthy diet set by WHO. Because Africa has maintained a good momentum in agriculture, international observers believe the continent is emerging as a flourishing green zone.

### **Observation 3: Urbanization**

IN 1960, Africa had 65 million urban residents, accounting for only 20 percent of its total population. The urbanization level in Africa has now reached 40 percent, and is expected to exceed

50 percent by 2030, and this means a rapidly expanding urban bourgeois consumer group. African cities will become centers for technological innovation and a powerhouse for overall national economic growth. The “World Development Indicators” released by the World Bank shows that Cairo, Lagos, Kinshasa and Johannesburg are among the world’s 50 most populous cities. More African cities are expected to join this list.

Despite this, rapid urbanization for 460 million Africans is hampered by outdated facilities. This explains why African nations are eager to develop their infrastructure. Because of a lack of historical data, it is hard to assess the change in infrastructure over the past 50 years. But it is easy to see the overall improvement. In recent years, visible highway improvements and expansions have been attributed to continual capital input from international donors, including the World Bank, and to the arrival of Chinese enterprises and all types of engineering contracting companies. In addition to the resumption and construction of trunk and branch rail lines, under the African Union’s NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championing initiative, work is currently underway on British colonialist Cecil John Rhodes’ unfinished railway scheme that he proposed in the early 20th century, to connect the Cape of Good Hope with Cairo. Despite the lackluster development in operating point-to-point direct flights, African continental shuttle airlines from such countries as Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya have taken the lead in a major effort to complete air connections. Kenyan airlines have been listed among the world best in terms of safety and service.

In South Africa and the northern African countries, stable power supply reaches more than 80 percent of the population; and in other areas, less than 50 percent. In urban areas, generators are used to provide electric power for industrial production and residential use. In the rural areas, charcoal remains the main fuel. Inadequate electricity facilities however, offer a tremendous space for developing clean energy sources like solar and wind power, and biogas, as well as a variety of possibilities for low-carbon development that avoids reliance on chemical fuels.

II. A NEW “RESOURCE BOOM” OR ENDOGENOUS GROWTH?

GENERALLY SPEAKING, the African continent was not pulled into the economic mire by the world financial crisis for very long. Its economy has rebounded and resumed its pre-crisis momentum quickly, and Africa’s actual growth rates for 2009 and 2010 even exceeded IMF expectations.<sup>2</sup> Many observers have stressed the key role of soaring international raw material prices as a factor, particularly for energy, e.g., an increase of crude oil prices from US\$20 per barrel in 1999 to US\$145 in 2008. Following the popular theory “resource curse,” they have interpreted Africa’s new growth as a “resource boom,” believing that the African economic bubble will burst as the prices of energy and raw materials fall.

It is true that quite a number of countries have relied on bulk exports of one or several kinds of minerals to obtain their eye-catching GDP growth, while those lacking mineral resources

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generally earn foreign exchange through the export of primary agricultural products. A critical reason for Africa’s new round of growth is that, with fewer conflicts, fiscal assets originally diverted to wars began entering manufacture and construction, enabling many African governments to develop their economies. Take Angola for example, a typical resource-dependent country. After implementing a policy of economic diversification, in 2010 Angola returned

to its rapid pre-crisis growth rate, and experienced strong growth in agriculture and services, making it a world leader in GDP growth in the first decade of the new century. In recent years, Rwanda, a typical resource-deficient nation, has successfully employed a new development strategy, modeling itself after Singapore by focusing on services and promoting itself as an IT port and exhibition center of the Eastern African region. Looking at Rwanda’s rapid growth, we can hardly believe that this is the same Rwanda that was living under the shadow of a mass genocide just a bit more

than ten years ago. Another example, Ethiopia is not a resource-abundant nation either, but its GDP will soon be four times what it was at the beginning of the 21st century. Government-sponsored infrastructure construction and production activities have energized Ethiopia's economy since the end of the 1990s, creating new jobs and helping people shake off poverty.

It was therefore analyzed, while soaring resource prices powered one-third of Africa's economic growth in the first decade of the 20th century, the other two-thirds came from internal structural change.<sup>3</sup> The continent's current economic growth can be summarized from the following facts: the 2008 consumption capability was \$830 billion dollars; it currently has 52 cities with a population of more than a million; there are 20 companies with annual revenues of over 3 billion RMB; since the year 2000, mobile phone users have increased by 316 million; and it has also 60 percent of the world's uncultivated land area. By 2020, Africa's GDP is expected to reach \$2.6 trillion dollars; its consumption capacity is to reach \$1.4 trillion; its young and middle-aged labor force to reach 1.1 billion; and total wage income is expected to reach US\$128 million. These figures, along with projections in other fields, indicate that Africa's recent growth is not a flash in the pan due to soaring raw material prices, but solid growth that is endogenous. It can be regarded as the beginning of a broad economic take-off for the continent, with the driving force coming from the continent's potential consumption.

### III. AFRICA IN CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION: DRIVEN BY EXTERNAL FORCES?

WHAT IS the driving force for Africa to maintain continual growth despite the global economic crisis? A recent IMF report attributes its growth since the financial crisis to raw material demands from two emerging markets—China and India.<sup>4</sup> The newly emerging economies are entering Africa rapidly, but their overall role can hardly rival that of African former European colonizers or the United States, which increased its presence after WWII, particularly in mining. In recent years, Europe and America have been keen

to hold seminars and tripartite dialogues, attempting to interpret China's strategy in Africa and decoding the puzzle of China's rapid and successful involvement in Africa. One argument is that China has likely adopted "non-legitimate means" in its cooperation with Africa. But, this voluntarily or involuntarily ignores the endogenous driving forces of Africa's development. At the Africa Business Forum organized by the Commonwealth Business Council in June 2011, British Foreign Secretary Henry Bellingham said that Westerners were concerned about China's demand for African resources, but they knew little about the basic trade balance between China and Africa. Westerners who persistently interpreted China-Africa relations as imbalanced and unequal are suddenly awakening to the Sino-African trade balance. Instead of simply being a passive recipient of China's influence, Africa is seeking to satisfy its enormous internal market.

### **1. Attributing the Growth to External Aid from Traditional Donors?**

CRITICISM OF Western aid to Africa began in the 1950s, and increased sharply at the dawn of the 21st century. Scholars from both the Third World and the West pointed out earlier that the developed countries implemented aid through special departments of international development cooperation, and the so-called "development cooperation" involved no real cooperation whatsoever, while gradually shifting to a giver-receiver relationship by shrinking African countries' independence and sovereignty is at the core of North-South relations.<sup>5</sup> European scholars have said that the West often ignores Africa's progress because Western aid agencies use bad news from Africa to justify their existence, and journalists also tend to go after negative news.<sup>6</sup> With this backdrop, few Western countries want to invest in Africa, preferring to invest in Asia, when more and more Chinese and Indian companies are investing in Africa.<sup>7</sup> During the financial crisis, the traditional donors' giver-receiver aid model was increasingly put to the test. Some developed countries sharply cut their foreign aid budgets; the Netherlands for example greatly restructured its foreign aid and the number of beneficiary countries halved to 15 in 2011.<sup>8</sup>

The Africa-EU summit held in Lisbon in 2007 proposed that partnership should become the guiding principle for future African-EU relations. But, will Europeans cease to discriminate against Africans' intelligence and creativity, and accept African-led development as a driving force?<sup>9</sup> Many Western observers are still delighted to attribute Africa's growth to traditional donors' aid. This derives from their long-held prejudice and discrimination under the veil of a so-called "scientific theory"—that Africa has no history.<sup>10</sup> This is no different from former French President Sarkozy's assertion that Africa's problems lie in being not well integrated throughout world history. The positive role of European countries and America have so far played for African growth should not be blotted out at one stroke, but this role is rather limited. Moreover, we should see the negative effect that this kind of aid has in downgrading the continent's sovereignty.

In the early stage after independence, African countries generally adopted policies focusing on infrastructure construction and development of import-substitution industries. They attempted to follow a path of independent economic growth with funding for large-scale domestic projects relying mostly on loans, particularly after the 1973 oil crisis, which created a large influx of petrodollars in the form of cheap loans. Because of high U.S. budget deficits, the international oil price turbulence in 1979 brought rising interest rates. At maturity, the loans which had originally been appealing became unbearable burdens for African nations. The debt crisis triggered off an economic crisis and the resulting food shortages that caused the deaths of 500,000 children annually, according to a UNICEF estimate.

In the 1990s, to obtain aid, most African nations were busy engaging in Western-style multi-party democratic political reforms, while also carrying out the economic "structural adjustments" as demanded by the World Bank and IMF. As Africa fully opened its

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markets, the governments bowed out from the economic sector, letting state-owned or partially state-owned companies to be completely privatized and social sectors that were vitally related to people's lives to be relinquished to the market. As a result, privatization caused the loss of jobs overnight for thousands of people formerly working in the public sector. The unemployed were forced to join the ranks of temporary workers devoid of the protection of trade unions. What the public generally felt were increasing expenditures, tax payments and phone bills, but worsening services. Increasing rents forced many urban people into slums. Worst of all, the "structural adjustment" excluded local expertise and indigenous knowledge, and operated in strict accordance with "prescription" offered by distant international financial institutions as World Bank and IMF. As a result, many African nations were trapped in an economic standoff but continued accumulating debts. For countries like Kenya, the interest payment on debts was almost equal to the combined appropriations for health preservation, drinking water supply, road construction, agricultural development and the like. Heavily indebted nations that performed well and reached the standards for "structural adjustments" could demand debt exemptions. If the standards were not met, the World Bank and the IMF would cut funding and notify other aid agencies to do so in the name of "donor harmony."<sup>11</sup>

This was a problem encountered by both Mubarak-led Egypt and Ben Ali-led Tunisia. The world regarded these two countries as exemplary, but their structural reforms basically denied benefits to most of their people. The debt burden recently paid by Egypt was far higher than its annual social expenditures, including healthcare. Ironically, the World Bank annual report in 2010 named the Mubarak-led Egyptian government the world's ninth best reformer for 2009, raising it one place over the previous year's standings. Several months later, the same Mubarak who was lauded highly as an exerciser of the socioeconomic reform plans of the international community, was scolded by United States Secretary of State, "not done enough reform" and should "step down in accordance with the people's wishes."

## **2. Emerging Economies Swarming in: Opportunities and Challenges**

AGAINST the background of the structural dilemma caused by neoliberalism, the first decade and more in the 21st century saw the arrival of the world's emerging economies in African countries. Some of them relied on historical ties, such as Indians in Mauritius and eastern and southern Africa, and Lebanese in western Africa. Others depended on language and cultural ties, such as Brazilians in Portuguese-speaking African nations. The Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Turkey and Iran have also become increasingly active in many African countries. North-South relations, that had long played a major role in Africa's international contacts, are likely to be replaced by South-East, even Africa-South-East relations.<sup>12</sup>

As to these new external forces, Africans hold different views. Some think it represents the best development since the end of the Cold War, as the new economies, represented by China and India, have rapidly boosted their trade with Africa and generated a great impact on the development of infrastructure construction, poverty reduction and increased productivity. Some optimistically believe that this might represent an important opportunity for Africa to change its geopolitics and that Africa should overcome its economic and financial concerns to welcome the coming of these new economies after growing weary of continual Western paternalism and the way of "giving aid with one hand while, through unfair trade practices and debt structures, taking it back with the other."<sup>13</sup> Others doubt that new players will change Africa's role in global politics, wondering whether these new economies might profit at the expense of the continent instead. Many African scholars have pointed out that this new wave of growth is real, whatever it is; mining, tourism, agriculture and even bio-energy. This rapid development has strong yet seemingly pervasive external backing. Some African scholars have warned that African states must take a harder stance in negotiations and must be more proactive to avoid neocolonialism coming along with the arrival of the new economies.<sup>14</sup> Currently, the hottest controversy in Africa is "land grab," which may best illustrate

these concerns. As climate change and emission reduction become one of the hot issues around the globe, the biofuel industry (using corn, jatropha, etc. as raw materials) has become fashionable for multinational companies in the developed countries. The African continent is the world's "last virgin land" for investment, and so it has become a target for land enclosure by foreign firms looking to buy large tracts of land for cash crops. Moreover, as palm oil is becoming coveted by the global food and cosmetic industries, traditional producers, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, have little land for more palm trees. Liberia, which relies on imports for 60 percent of its food supply, has rented out 5.6 percent of its land to companies from Malaysia, Singapore and the UK to plant palm trees. Similar situations have also appeared in its neighboring nations—Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gabon, Congo and Cameroon.<sup>15</sup> Following the surge of the "land grabbing" waves, African land has become a tool of speculation for the world's financial predators, unknowingly to the African public. Reports indicate that a Harvard student organization has also made a large investment in African land and gained significant benefits.

However, a September 2010 World Bank report disguised such "land enclosure" as "large-scale agricultural investment" for Africa, thus claiming it to have positive win-win results for Africa's long-term development and demanding the investors to take responsibility for their agricultural investments and turn challenges for the local community (to lose land) into opportunities (to gain agricultural development).<sup>16</sup> It remains to be seen whether those who acquire land can make responsible investments. Research has shown that, in the course of land acquisition, African farmers have suffered in terms of water resources, land, forests, bio-diversity and traditional agricultural methods. The "green revolution" promoted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation brings an operational model—large agro-business—to Africa. Yet, it also causes the continent a loss of bio-diversity and forces it to accept genetically modified crops. In fact, many have argued the traditional small scale-farmer in Africa is the one that can support most of the population of the continent now and in the coming period.<sup>17</sup>

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE ENDOGENOUS DYNAMICS  
FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

ACCORDING to relevant calculations, a ten-percent growth rate is required to create sufficient jobs for the large upcoming young generation in many African countries. In other words, it will still take time for Africa to enter a period of sustained transitional development. This section is only an attempt to analyze the endogenous forces that propel growth.

**1. Political and Economic Orientations  
in Developing Countries**

STRUCTURAL CHANGES allowing long-term economic growth are attributable to African states' efforts to resolve political conflicts and improve the macro-economic environment. From the very early stage after independence, African nations have endeavored for economic modernization. Their initial policies of relying more on heavy industry than agriculture produced tremendous problems. Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s, African economies still showed gains, with advances in infrastructure and welfare, particularly in the areas of health, medical care and drinking water. Currently the public healthcare systems are not operating ideally though, the basic structure were nevertheless established in the early days after independence.

Since mid-1990's, multi-party democracy seemingly has deeply rooted in most of the continent, and election has unveiled its strength, i.e., the elected leaders might lose in later elections if they fail to fulfill election commitments during their terms, they are required to spend lots of time, energy and resource to deal with electoral campaigns though. Former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's failure in March 2012 when he violated the Constitution to seek a third term was a good showcase that a normal electoral democracy as a concept has also deeply embedded in African people's heart. At the same time, Africa does not lack political figures with ambition and enthusiasm to shake off conflict shadow and realize national growth through their special efforts; Feeling helpless in their attempts to develop the national economies, many state leaders and political elites in recent years have been even

favoring authoritarian systems, such as Paul Kagame's case from Rwanda. He may not be supported politically by traditional donors in term of their conditionality; he however is also favored by them because of the strong sense of developmental approach in his governance and guiding the country out of curse of ethnic conflict of many years.

Many African nations have promoted policies of economic diversification by getting rid of resource-reliance and structural problems such as "single crop cultivation." At present, in addition to South Africa's strong manufacturing sector, Mauritius and Lesotho have also developed advanced manufacturing export systems, which are expected to expand. Angola, long considered a typical resource-dependent nation, has continuously drawn comments such as the "Dutch disease" and "resource curse." Compounded by its long-standing adherence to Marxist-Leninist principles, Angola offers a ready target for criticism by international observers. Yet, its economic diversification has enabled it to gain an 11-percent growth rate in non-oil sectors, a remarkable achievement.

## **2. A New Generation of Entrepreneurs and Modern Technology<sup>18</sup>**

THE NEW GENERATION of African entrepreneurs who are rapidly growing has exhibited many strengths that are unique in "late comers." These entrepreneurs and leaders of small businesses have natural advantages in language and culture as well as expertise in using cell phones and the Internet to rapidly promote products across Africa. With their increasing power, this new generation of entrepreneurs may become a powerful pressure group compelling African leaders and governments to accordingly act favorably for economic growth. This has been something visibly seen in countries like Zambia and Mozambique. Governments not only work for their countries' economic interests, but also to protect their labor forces and owners of small and medium-size businesses. Concerns for consumers' rights and demands for sustainable development are also growing.

Africa's innovative use of the cell phone is noteworthy. In the sub-Saharan region, the Internet is not well developed, and broadband transmission capability is very limited. While Africa has networks—particularly wireless networks, it has not yet entered the information age. But, African countries have been quick to use cell phones in their production and lives, greatly shortening the digital gap between the continent and other regions. For example, in Kenya, cattle farmers used cell phones to transmit new technology and even information about each cow, so that technical center staff can remotely guide scientific breeding and milking schedules. The promotion of this “e-cow” technology has enabled a number of farmers to obtain clear economic rewards. In countries like Sierra Leone, low-income women employ cell phones to establish small credit systems, aiming at bypassing the complicated procedures and obstacles in applying and obtaining bank loans (as many banks impose some limitations based on the local traditions and social organizational forms, such as requiring the borrowers to be male). They also use cell phones to establish social mutual networks in production and daily life among women, and many women are helped by the networks to make small-sum invests in industry and commerce, thus improving their overall social status. *SMS Uprising: Mobile Activism in Africa*, published in 2010, tells how African activists use mobile technology to address issues of gender, rural development, urbanization and social justice. This book, widely read in Africa, is regarded as a new guide for social activism.

### **3. Overseas Africans:**

#### **a Driving Force for Development from Outside**

IN RECENT YEARS, remissions from overseas nationals have surpassed foreign direct investment and foreign aid and become a major chunk of the national incomes of African countries. Since the end of the 1990s, African emigrants have reached every corner of the world (including China) and become yet another driving force in the continent's growth from the outside.<sup>19</sup> These emigrants exert considerable influence on African governments, and their familiarity with local society and culture, and their personal connections offer great potential for the continent's long-term economic development.

Recent U.S. statistics show African immigrants in the U.S. number 1.5 million, nearly half of whom (47.7 percent) arrived after 2000. Approximately 41.7 percent of 25-year-old African immigrants had a university or post-graduate education. This percentage was much higher than the percentage of native U.S. citizens receiving higher education (28.1 percent). In countries like Angola, overseas immigrants tend to return and bring back accumulated overseas capital, technology, experience and personal connections to aid in developing their motherlands. Optimistic scholars even think that overseas Africans should be considered a sixth zone in addition to the north, central, east, west and south African sub-zones. In addition to providing economic benefits, overseas Africans will play a critical role in creating the continent's collective consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4. Regional Integration: Power for Collective Development**

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IN THE NEW CENTURY, given Africa's continual economic growth and the tremendous global changes, there is an increasing confidence that the continent's future is in the hands of its own people. This confidence is manifested by the growing momentum of the African Union and sub-regional organizations.

From a long-term perspective, these organizations will be a crucial force in shaping Africa's destiny. Research shows that the integration of sub-regions has propelled economic growth, especially between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).<sup>21</sup> In addition, in terms of peace and security, ECOWAS has also played a positive role in the election crisis in Cote d'Ivoire and in Mali's military coup.

Prior to 2005, the trade volume on the African continent accounted for about three percent of the world's total, and only ten percent of Africa's foreign trade was conducted among the continent's countries. Even the Southern African Development

Community (SADC), a well-developed sub-continental organization, had little trade among its members. Regional trade relies on African efforts to build unified financial and tariff systems and well-connected infrastructure. But in 2005, the African Union began to discuss the integration of the continent, spurring many countries to set up departments titled “African Union and Continental Integration.” The African Union has set the year 2028 as its target for economic integration. In April 2011, the African Union focused on an “African Free Trade Area,” attempting to resolve the problems of overlapping sub-zone organizations, and hoping to achieve integration first among the SADC, COMESA and the Eastern Africa Community (EAC).<sup>22</sup>

With the increased pace of globalization, it has become more and more important for African countries to find collective and independent solutions to such problems as pandemics, climate change, organized crime and transnational poverty. Before the Durban Climate Conference of 2011, African nations held ministerial-level meetings to promote Africa’s “climate-smart agriculture.” However, on global stage, Africa is still wanting a louder voice to present and represent its real interests. The G20 forum’s main agenda for example, differs from African concerns—sustainable debts, aid conditions, trade equity and social protection.<sup>23</sup>

## V. NEW THOUGHTS ON SINO-AFRICAN COOPERATION

GIVEN THE ROLE of African nations in the international system, the opportunities facing Africa, its governance and adjustment capabilities, and Africa’s endogenous dynamics, it is necessary to strengthen Sino-African cooperation in international affairs. Suggestions on how this may be accomplished are as follows:

**1. Promoting dialogue and cooperation with African countries on development and incorporating “sustainable development” into “strategic partnerships,” thus providing an alternative to the Western theory of “humanitarian intervention.”** Turbulence in North Africa since the end of 2010 has been used as an excuse for “new interventionism” as advocated by Western powers,



which forced a change of regime in the name of the “international community” and the “responsibility for protection.” The new interventionism of the West echoed across the African continent. Some think the continent’s new-found prosperity resulted from Western aid requiring democracy and good governance.<sup>24</sup> This has been used to legitimize interventionism and is considered a necessary external force to spur internal political reform in African countries.<sup>25</sup>

As the West intensifies its intervention, China should use its advantages to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with Africa by prioritizing sustainable development and incorporating it into the framework for strategic partnerships between China and friendly African nations. Meanwhile, it is necessary to add new contents to bilateral strategic partnerships with African nations, further specifying the nature of their cooperation. From a moral perspective and in terms of practical contribution, China should put forward a new type of strategic partnership that is different from Western theory and that is consistent with the Chinese vision of a “harmonious world.”

**2. Elevating cooperation with African regional and sub-regional organizations to a strategic level and getting involved actively at all levels.** There is no need to go to extensive lengths to explain developing trends and the importance of African regional and sub-regional organizations. At present, developed countries have infiltrated Africa at all levels, including direct fiscal aid. Western countries also prioritize their cooperation with African organizations in terms of development agendas. For example, the UK Department for International Development has collaborated with a South African agency to directly design and operate the agenda for the COMESA. The European Development Fund has been directly involved in the formulation of and investment in the project for the North-South Corridor. China should, instead of worrying about too much demand for money and materials from the African side and therefore passively doing nothing, learn from these practical examples, and proactively involve itself in affairs of African sub-regions which increasingly play an ever-increasingly important role.

**3. Intensifying dialogues and cooperation with major sub-regional countries in Africa, such as South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Angola and Egypt.** African nations all have a strong desire to seek self-reliance and growth through regional cooperation mechanisms. For many reasons, these regional and sub-regional organizations still have to depend on initiatives and contributions from the above-mentioned major countries. To create a basis for future diplomatic opportunities, China should actively strengthen bilateral cooperation with those countries in broadening African continental and global affairs. African continental development aspirations are increasingly manifested by regional organizational goals. China should learn to use these multilateral platforms, by carrying out in-depth dialogues with regional alliances and understanding their motivations to launch more effective cooperation.

**4. Breaking traditional ideological limits, opening up more space for flexible exchanges and cooperation with African countries on security issue, and a potentially supporting theory could be that of public goods.** Viewing the African continent as a whole, due to the influence of the international situation and propelled by the intensive intervention of various non-governmental organizations in recent years, most African countries, governments, regional organizations and civil organizations (especially academic institutions) have replaced the traditional concept of “security as defense” with a broad notion of “social security,” a new security concept that covers all factors related to “human security.” This requires that China view African countries’ security cooperation suggestions and demands from a broad and long-term perspective. Although significant funding cannot be given to all initiatives, it is necessary for China to first carry out cooperation in areas like disaster relief and prevention. Climate change should also be given close attention and comprehensive consideration along with such issues as food and water security in Africa.

**5. In international development cooperation, strengthening efforts to coordinate with emerging countries such as South Africa, emphasizing South-South cooperation, and not passively accepting the title of “emerging donor.”** The system established

by traditional donor countries are worthy of study. But, if China simply accepts the title “emerging donor,” it may easily fall into the traps set by traditional donors, and thus be forced to do their bidding. Other emerging countries share similar concepts with China as well. Cooperation with them can enhance the collective voice and status of developing countries in international aid systems. South Africa and India have established special departments to take charge of aid affairs. Countries like Brazil that have been carrying out foreign aid programs also have experiences that China can learn from. China and other emerging countries can press ahead with international development cooperation within the framework of a South-South development bank.

**6. Strengthening cooperation with African countries in terms of overseas immigration.** In recent years, immigration between China and Africa has been rapidly increasing, and they have become a basic force for mutual cooperation. But, they also pose new problems for the Chinese and various African governments. A satisfactory resolution of immigration issues can play a positive role in bilateral relations. Young Africans growing up in China have quite a different understanding of the country than those growing up in Europe and America do. Also, aiding the integration of Chinese emigrants to Africa will have an important impact on China’s image and soft power.

## CONCLUSION

AFRICA’S NEW DEVELOPMENT is not a simple and temporal resource boom, instead, it is firmly rooted on its own endogenous dynamics bred since its independence from colonial powers. There have been four strong obvious elements which constitute this type of inner drivers, namely the developmental agenda normally taken by a rather authoritative government, new technology and new type entrepreneurs, diasporas that bring back development from abroad and the regional and sub-regional integration efforts. These new endogenous development agents or trends appeal for new roadmap and new approaches to be dealt with, and China is not really ready yet for all these transformation and some practical suggestions

are therefore raised in this article, such as to include sustainable development in the bilateral relation strategy, which has been emphasizing fraternal partnership but lack of awareness to maintain it through a real win-win cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. dr. Ton Dietz, Inaugural address, Leiden University & African Studies Centre, January 14, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> IMF (2010), "Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, Back to High Growth?", *World Economic and Financial Survey* (Washington, DC: IMF).

<sup>3</sup> McKinsey Quarterly 2010: Africa on the move, Chinese edition by Xu Haoxun, *Feizhou: Jingji zengzhang de xin dalu* (Africa: A New Continent for Economic Growth), Beijing: Economic Science Press, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> IMF (2010), "Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, Back to High Growth?", *World Economic and Financial Survey* (Washington, DC: IMF).

<sup>5</sup> It is not hard to understand why equal economic cooperation relations with Africa advocated by new emerging economies will impact the OECD donors group. When interpreting Sino-African relations, European scholars often feel perplexed "that international development cooperation" implies dependent North-South relations, while China's stress on equal "cooperation and development" seems a change in phrasing. What on earth is their difference? China needs further official explanation.

<sup>6</sup> Øyvind Eggen (Research Fellow, Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs, NUPI), "Africa's unknown success - Progress unnoticed by the aid agencies," October 21, 2010, <http://www.naiforum.org/2010/10/africa%e2%80%99s-unknown-success/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> The Kingdom of Netherlands, Country Profile, May 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3204.htm> (accessed June 1st, 2012),

<sup>9</sup> In the 1960s when reform was prevailed on the African continent, Ian Smith announced the establishment of a white-ruled Rhodesian regime. To disguise the white oppression of the blacks as

a racial partnership, he incurred criticism. His theory was censured as a “partnership between horses and riders.”

<sup>10</sup> These prejudices are expressed differently in different periods. At the end of the 19th century, they were shown by interpreting African civilizations as foreign in the paradigm of civilization transmission and migration theories; in the first three decades of the 20th century when colonialism was prevailing, the prejudices were shown by social Darwinism-based “scientific racism”: on the dark continent, African black races relied on European explorers, missionaries, merchants and rulers to bring in civilization because the blacks had no creativity and were “the white man’s burden,” (a phrase taken from the book *The Whiteman’s Burden* by Joseph Rudyard Kipling, a 20th century British playwright and Nobel Prize winner).

<sup>11</sup> Alex Thomson, *Introduction to African Politics*, 3rd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2010, Chapter 9, “Sovereignty II: neo-colonialism, structural adjustment and Africa’s political economy,” pp.188-214.

<sup>12</sup> Fantu Cheru, “The Rise of China and India in Africa-What should be Africa’s response?,” <http://www.naiforum.org/2010/06/the-rise-of-china-and-india-in-africa/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Refer to <http://www.allafrica.com> for reports in recent years.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank Website: “Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits?,” released in September 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Thompson, “Storms More Ominous than Climate Change? Policy Hazards to African Food Production,” Lecture given at the Center for African Studies of Peking University, June 29, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> This understanding arises mainly from the author’s tours in African continent recent years, preliminary findings through the conversations or other interactions with African small entrepreneurs and businesspeople. More data and case studies are needed.

<sup>19</sup> Ton Dietz: “Development from abroad,” Lecture at the Annual Society of Africa in North America, Los Angeles, November 17, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Rita Kiki Edozie, “The Sixth Zone: The African Diaspora and the African Union’s Global Era Pan-Africanism,” *Journal of American African Studies*, November 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Attiat F. Ott & Oswaldo Patino, “Is Economic Integration the Solution to African Development?,” *International Advanced Economic Research* (2009) 15:278-295.

<sup>22</sup> Attiat F. Ott & Oswaldo Patino, “Is Economic Integration the Solution to African Development?”.

<sup>23</sup> Fantu Cheru, “Creating a Conducive International Environment for Africa’s Development,” Policy Note, Nordic African Institute, September 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Edward Miguel, *Africa’s Turn*, The MIT Press, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Callaghy *et al.*, ed., *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.