



中国传媒大学
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



Institute for a Community
with Shared Future
人类命运共同体研究院



BRI's Contributions to Development and Shared Prosperity in Africa



By Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director,
Pakistan Research Center for a Community with
Shared Future (PRCCSF), Islamabad

Published on 26th December 2023

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) stands as a crucial platform, facilitating collaboration and immense cooperation between China and nations worldwide. China and Africa with the highest number of developing nations, share a robust cooperative relationship through Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI). Together, they strive to foster connectivity, stimulate economic cooperation, and nurture shared prosperity. The Belt and



Road Initiative (BRI) has made diverse contributions to Africa's development, spanning infrastructure, trade, investment, and digital cooperation.

Cooperation and shared values

China's dedication to the BRI is showcased through 52 cooperation agreements inked with African nations and the African Union Commission. This commitment propels Africa into an era of extensive investment and infrastructure growth, spanning crucial sectors like ports, railways, and roads. Beyond physical projects, the BRI sparks aspirations among Africans for a future rich in opportunities. China's approach to its African relationship emphasizes dialogue, comprehensive partnership, and a commitment to mutually beneficial outcomes, promoting an open and inclusive global economy.



Advocating cooperative approach, China envisions inclusive development and mutual benefit, rejecting unilateralism and protectionism. This aligns with the BRI's goal of an open world economy where developing nations actively engage in the international division of labor. This collaborative ethos underpins the China-Africa partnership, fostering mutual trust, support, and the evolution of a comprehensive strategic cooperative relationship.

Development and sustainable growth

The BRI actively addresses African economic development with substantial Chinese investments, placing a strong emphasis on infrastructure development as a key driver. This is essential for Africa to leverage China's industrial upgrades and the global relocation of labor-intensive industries. The sustainability of these initiatives is reinforced through collaboration with Chinese partners, fostering knowledge transfer and technology exchange vital for local maintenance and the growth of infrastructure industries in Africa.

As of the end of 2020, China's direct investment in Africa exceeded \$56 billion, predominantly concentrated in industrial parks and factories. This strategic investment has empowered African nations to establish diverse industrial prototypes, bolstering export earnings. China's commitment manifests in extensive infrastructure development, encompassing over 6,000 kilometers of railway, 6,000 kilometers of roads, 20 ports, 80 power facilities, 130 hospitals, and 170 schools across the African continent.

Trade and economic integration

The BRI has been a driving force in supporting Africa's development and integration into global economies, maintaining China as Africa's top trading partner for 13 consecutive years.

In 2022, China-Africa trade volume reached \$282 billion, marking an 11.1% increase from the previous year. As part of China's ambitious plan to increase trade to \$300



billion by 2025, it has enacted policies covering various products, further enhancing economic ties. The Suez Canal Economic Zone's collaboration with China on projects valued at \$15.6 billion exemplifies the BRI's far-reaching impact on Africa's economic landscape.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) serves as a bridge linking major economic hubs between South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, fostering regional integration. Beyond present gains, BRI investments look towards the future by promoting sustainable business development, environmental protection, and digitalization in Africa. The impact of China's involvement in Africa's infrastructure construction is evident, contributing significantly to economic and social development. As part of its commitment, China



waived tariffs on 98 percent of taxable imports from nine African countries, further enhancing trade relations.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is lifting Africa out of poverty and creating numerous opportunities across the continent. It has catalyzed comprehensive development, fostering economic growth, infrastructure upgrades, and enhanced connectivity. Importantly, the BRI is also a powerful engine for economic diversification in Africa. By linking major economic hubs and establishing trading routes between countries like South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, the initiative has provided a significant boost to sectors such as the textile and mineral industries. This diversification not only ensures a more resilient and sustainable economic base but also creates employment opportunities, contributing to poverty alleviation. Africa's status as China's largest trading partner for consecutive years reflects the success of the BRI in establishing mutually beneficial economic relations.

China's unwavering position, coupled with over 1,100 ongoing cooperation projects, underscores its commitment to Africa's economic recovery. Collaboration in new areas such as aerospace and clean energy, as well as in other areas, amplifies the depth and breadth of China-Africa cooperation.

The collaboration between China and African nations within the Belt and Road Initiative has catalyzed the establishment and enrichment of diverse economic zones in Africa. Notable examples include the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) in Egypt, the



Lekki Free Trade Zone in Nigeria, Ethiopian Industrial Parks, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in South Africa, and the Hawassa Industrial Park in Ethiopia. These initiatives, marked by Chinese investments, showcase the versatility of the BRI in fostering trade, industrialization, and economic growth across the continent and reflect the adaptability of the BRI to the unique needs and priorities of different African countries, fostering a shared vision of sustainable development and prosperity. The collaboration between the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) and China on 11 projects valued at \$15.6 billion marks a significant milestone. These projects, spanning 4.9 million square meters, are poised to generate approximately 9,000 job opportunities. Noteworthy investments by companies like Xinxing Cathay International Group, allocating \$1.08 billion for the development of a steel factory and a factory dedicated to producing cast iron pipes, highlight the depth of China's support for Africa's infrastructure.

China's investments in Africa have exceeded \$56 billion, primarily in industrial parks and factories. Over the last decades, China has played a pivotal role in building crucial infrastructure, including railways, roads, ports, power facilities, hospitals, and schools. This extensive network enhances connectivity and facilitates Africa's integration into the global economy.

Chinese companies have played a pivotal role in connecting different regions of Africa through various projects under the BRI. Over the past decade, centrally administered state-owned enterprises have undertaken more than 1,600 projects, significantly

improving infrastructure standards. With over 3,000 Chinese enterprises investing deeply in Africa, with more than 70 percent being private companies, China's pragmatic approach forms the foundation of a thriving China-Africa community. The approach, which has been characterized by sincerity, equality, and friendship, underpins a win-win cooperation model. Both sides build on their core businesses and shared interests, addressing development concerns side-by-side. This cooperative spirit has enhanced coordination on critical regional and international matters.

Future prospects and digital cooperation

Looking ahead, China's commitment to expanding its export markets in Africa, particularly in renewable energy technologies, communication products, and infrastructure, presents massive opportunities for the region. African nations are also leveraging this



opportunity to outline a comprehensive infrastructure plan that not only addresses immediate requirements but also considers long-term sustainability.

Digital cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative has seen the signing of numerous memoranda of understanding with more than ten African countries. Chinese enterprises



have excelled in areas such as digital infrastructure, smart phones, e-commerce payments, and cloud services, and their focus on key areas like new-generation mobile communication, cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, satellite internet, e-commerce, network security, and digital transformation, demonstrating enormous development potential, injects new impetus into the development of the digital economy between China and Africa.

China's pragmatic approach to relations with Africa has built a strong foundation for a shared future. The win-win cooperation, anchored in shared responsibility and addressing development concerns, has boosted coordination on critical regional and international matters. China's commitment to understanding Africa's developmental needs positions it as a valuable partner in the continent's growth trajectory.

Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative has emerged as a transformative force in China-Africa relations, driving comprehensive development and shared prosperity. From infrastructure upgrades to trade facilitation and digital cooperation, the initiative has become a catalyst for positive change across the African continent. As China and Africa continue to work together, the BRI remains a beacon of hope for building an inclusive, interconnected world economy where the benefits of globalization are shared equitably among developing nations. The BRI's impact on Africa transcends mere economic collaboration and represents a commitment to a shared future rooted in mutual respect, understanding, and the pursuit of sustainable development.