

CHINA'S EVOLVING AFRICA POLICY

In May 2014, during a trip to Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola and Kenya, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang enunciated the “4-6-1” China-Africa Cooperation Framework, at the headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa.ⁱ The framework highlights peace and security, poverty reduction and sustainable development, civil society exchanges, and partnerships with other development organizations as new pillars of China's Africa policy. This has important implications for China's approach to development aid in Africa.

China's Africa policy has been underpinned by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistenceⁱⁱ and the Eight Principles underlying China's economic aid and technical assistance to foreign countries,ⁱⁱⁱ announced by former Premier Zhou Enlai during a trip to Africa in 1964. Premier Li suggested that these principles be *commemorated and carried forward*: “with splendid chapters already written, China-Africa cooperation is poised to turn a brand new page”. The wording of Premier Li's speech reflects several new trends in China's Africa policy which suggest that China may be incorporating some additional dimensions of development into its Africa policy.

Africa in China's foreign policy

China's foreign policy principle states that big powers are the key; China's geographic neighbourhood is the priority; developing countries are the foundation; and multilateral platforms are the stage^{iv}. China has historically enjoyed a peaceful relationship with African countries based on mutual solidarity and support for independence struggles.

Over the past two decades, Africa has grown in both political and economic importance for China. With a total of 54 countries, Africa occupies a quarter of United Nations seats, and support for the One China policy is widespread. China-Africa trade and investment volumes are growing rapidly. China became Africa's largest trading partner in 2009, with the total volume of China-Africa bilateral trade reaching 210 billion USD in 2013,

up by 5.9 per cent from 2012. China's direct investment stock to Africa totaled 25 billion USD by the end of 2013,^v and China's total budget for foreign aid reached 3.23 billion USD in the same year.^{vi}

The “4-6-1” China-Africa Cooperation Framework

While traditional political and economic considerations remain central to China-Africa relations, the “4-6-1” framework highlights more specific areas for cooperation:

→ “4” represents four principles: treating each other sincerely and equally; consolidating solidarity and mutual trust; jointly pursuing inclusive development; and promoting innovation in bilateral practical cooperation.

→ “6” relates to China's goals of promoting major projects in six areas, including industry, finance, poverty reduction, ecological protection, people-to-people exchanges, as well as peace and security.

→ “1” refers to the FOCAC (Forum of China-Africa Cooperation) as the primary multilateral platform through which China-Africa cooperation is to be strengthened.

New trends in China's Africa policy

The policy progression in the “4-6-1” framework reflects the growth of China's practical engagements in broader development issues across the African continent:

Peace and security

As China's economic activities and personnel presence in Africa grow and sometimes become threatened by political turmoil,^{vii} China is increasingly addressing the links between peace, security, and development. China has significantly expanded its participation in UN peacekeeping missions in recent years. China currently contributes more troops, military observers, and civilian police to peacekeeping operations than the other permanent members of the Security Council. It recently participated in conflict mediation in South Sudan and pledged 50 million RMB (about 8 million USD) of

humanitarian aid to address the crisis in the country.^{viii}

Poverty reduction and sustainable development

Chinese foreign aid has traditionally focused on infrastructure development, agriculture, health and technical cooperation. During his visit to the AU, Premier Li and African leaders issued a joint “Programme for Strengthening China-Africa Cooperation on Poverty Reduction”, which states that Chinese development aid to Africa will increasingly focus on access to clean water, preventing and treating infectious diseases, and environmental protection.

China has established guidelines for companies investing overseas to mitigate adverse social and environmental impacts. For instance, China Eximbank adopted an environmental policy in 2004, stating that “projects that are harmful to the environment or do not gain endorsement or approval from environmental administration will not be funded”.^{ix} In 2010, Eximbank suspended an iron ore development project in Gabon by Sinohydro due to its violation of environmental guidelines.^x However challenges still exist, as in the case of Chad in 2013, where the government shut down Chinese oil operations after discovering considerable environmental pollution.^{xi}

Civil society in development

China has increasingly demonstrated a commitment to working with African civil society in development. For instance, under the “China-Africa People-to-People Friendship Action” plan, Chinese embassies across Africa are seeking collaboration with African NGOs, and during the 3rd China-Africa People’s Forum in May 2014, China pledged to further strengthen ties with African civil society organizations through cultural exchanges, technical training and the promotion of Chinese volunteerism in Africa.

Collaboration with multilateral organizations and bilateral donors in development

In his speech to the AU, Premier Li maintained that China hopes to see Africa diversify its cooperation partners, welcomes greater international input into Africa, and is ready to carry out cooperation schemes in Africa involving third parties. For instance, China and UNDP are currently piloting cooperation projects in Cambodia focusing on cassava production, as well as in Malawi (disaster risk reduction) and Burundi (renewable energy).^{xii} China appears to be seeking to further strengthen its partnerships with multilateral organizations and bilateral donors in Africa, which may represent a shift away from China’s former emphasis on bilateralism in development.

Looking ahead

While the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence continue to form the cornerstone of China’s Africa policy,^{xiii} the wording of Premier Li’s speech in Addis Ababa suggests that China-Africa development

relations may become increasingly comprehensive and multi-dimensional, encompassing broader issue areas including peace and security, poverty reduction and sustainable development, and involving a more diverse range of actors at different levels, from civil society groups to multilateral development agencies. This may have important implications for the formulation and implementation of China’s foreign aid in Africa, and also for other development partners.

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ⁱ The full text of Premier Li Keqiang’s speech can be found at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/lkqzlcfasebyfmrlyaglkny/t1154397.shtml.

ⁱⁱ The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence encompass: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and cooperation for mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Eight Principles include: mutual benefit; no conditionality; debt reduction; economic growth and reduction of dependence on China; promotion of projects with quick returns; in-kind aid contributions; technology transfers; and the equal treatment of Chinese and local actors.

^{iv} This foreign policy principle was proposed at the 10th Conference of Chinese Diplomatic Envoys Stationed Abroad by former President Hu Jintao in 2004.

^v Xinhua Focus: China, Africa Devoted to Deepening Cooperation, Xinhuanet, May 8, 2014. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-05/08/c_133318475.htm.

^{vi} This figure does not include concessional loans, estimated to be around 1.96 billion USD in 2013, and debt relief. See UNDP China (2013), China’s Aid Flows and Mechanisms, *Issue Brief* No. 1.

^{vii} Yun, Sun (2014) Africa in China’s Foreign Policy, *Brookings Institution*. Available at:

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/04/10-africa-china-foreign-policy-sun>.

^{viii} Thompson, Drew (2013) Beijing’s Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations, *Jamestown Foundation China Issue Brief* 5(1).

^{ix} China Exim Bank’s environmental policy (unofficial translation from Chinese to English).

^x China: Not the Rogue Dam Builder We Feared It Would Be? International Rivers, March 31, 2010. Available at:

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/227/china-not-the-rogue-dam-builder-we-feared-it-would-be>

^{xi} Cooke, Daniel, African Governments Take On Chinese Oil Companies, GlobalEDGE Blog, September 24, 2013. Available at: <http://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/1554/african-governments-take-on-chinese-oil-companies>

^{xii} The first phase of the Cambodia project was successfully completed in 2012 and the second phase has been launched and is still ongoing. The Malawi and Burundi projects are being launched in the third quarter of 2014.

^{xiii} Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liu Zhenmin’s speech at the International Colloquium Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, May 28, 2014. Available at: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1160366.shtml.

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