

# Chinese Economic and Technical Assistance to Africa in the New Century

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## ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, China has strengthened its economic and technical assistance to Africa. The amount of assistance has increased significantly, the subjects of assistance have become more diversified, and the methods of assistance have become more diverse. In particular, China has focused on the training of local talents and human resources development in African countries, thus promoting the rapid economic and social development of Africa. The reason for this is not only the needs of China's economic and social development, but also the strong promotion of the international community. It is also because China's foreign aid has gradually been aligned with international standards and its internationalization has gradually increased. Through economic and technical assistance to Africa, China and Africa have achieved mutual benefit and win-win results.

## KEYWORDS

New Century; Economical and Technical Aid; Research.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The friendship between China and Africa has a long history. With similar historical experiences, they sympathized with and supported each other in the struggle for national liberation, and forged a deep friendship. For more than half a century, the two sides have maintained close political relations, frequent personnel exchanges, rapid development of economic and trade relations, and fruitful cooperation in other fields. China has provided assistance to African countries to the best of its ability[1], and African countries have given China a lot of support. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, established in 2000, has strongly promoted the great development of China-Africa friendly and cooperative relations. In addition to maintaining the traditional characteristics of no political conditions, equal treatment and mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, what new characteristics and changes has China's assistance to Africa shown in the new century, and what are the reasons? These are all worth exploring and summarizing.

## 2. NEW FEATURES OF AID TO AFRICA

The scale of economic assistance has been significantly expanded and the forms of assistance have been diversified. Since the beginning of the new century, China's foreign aid has increased significantly, and the growth rate is astonishing. For example, foreign aid of a purely grant nature has increased from US\$554 million in 2000 to US\$1.948 billion in 2009, nearly tripling in just 10 years. In [2]the ten years since China's accession to the WTO, its foreign aid has amounted to RMB 170 billion, exceeding the total foreign aid funds before its accession; among them, the annual average growth rate of foreign aid funds from 2004 to 2009 was 29.4%, far exceeding the GDP growth rate. [3]The African continent has always been a key area for China's foreign aid. By the end of 2009,

China's cumulative foreign aid amounted to RMB 256.29 billion, of which Africa accounted for 45.7%. [4]Compared with France and the United States, the largest donors to Africa, China's aid to Africa is still relatively small, but the growth of China's aid in the 21st century is very significant; the forms of aid have also gradually diversified, including grants, loans (including concessional and non-concessional loans), debt relief and tariff exemption.

China began providing aid to Africa in 1956. From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, China's aid to Africa was about \$100 million per year. Since 2000, China's development aid to Africa has accelerated, and in 2002, China's total aid and economic support to Africa reached \$1.8 billion. By mid-2006, China had invested \$5.7 billion in more than 800 projects on the African continent, and provided more than \$12.5 billion in funding to sub-Saharan Africa. At the first China-Africa Summit in Beijing in 2006, the Chinese government announced a package of aid initiatives, including doubling its aid to Africa within three years, providing African countries with \$3 billion in concessional loans and \$2 billion in preferential export buyer's credit, establishing economic and trade cooperation zones, and setting up a China-Africa Development Fund with a total amount of \$5 billion to encourage Chinese companies to invest and start businesses in Africa. The China-Africa Development Fund is known as the world's largest fund that is entirely aimed at Africa's development. It is a remarkable move in the history of China-Africa relations, further demonstrating that China will play an important role in Africa's development. In 2007, with the convening of the African Development Bank Conference in Shanghai, China announced that it would provide \$20 billion in financing for Africa's infrastructure construction and trade. Such a huge loan was considered a challenge to Africa's traditional donors. [5]At the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2009, the Chinese government proposed eight packages of aid measures closely related to people's livelihood and environmental protection, including the establishment of 100 clean energy projects in Africa in the next three years, the provision of \$10 billion in concessional loans to increase the financing capacity of African countries, and the establishment of a special loan of \$1 billion for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa.[6]

China also provides large-scale food aid to Africa. In 2011, the Horn of Africa suffered from a drought and famine that was rare in 60 years. The Chinese government announced that it would provide emergency food aid totaling RMB 533.2 million to Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti and other relevant countries. This is the largest amount of food aid provided by the Chinese government since the founding of the People's Republic of China. [7]In terms of tariffs, the Chinese government promised at the 2003 China-Africa Cooperation Forum to grant tariff-free treatment to some commodities from African countries. By 2008, 454 kinds of commodities from 26 of the least developed countries in Africa had enjoyed zero tariff treatment in the Chinese market. [8]China also largely waived the debts of African countries. From the first China-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2000 to the third China-Africa Cooperation Forum Summit in 2006, China waived a total of US\$2.6 billion in debts owed to African countries. By the end of 2009, China had signed debt relief protocols with 35 African countries, waiving 312 overdue debts totaling RMB 18.96 billion. Debt relief has enabled African countries to have more funds for economic development and enhance their independent development capabilities.[9]

Official aid begins to participate in multilateral aid. China's foreign aid has always been mainly bilateral aid , establishing its own mechanism rather than providing aid under the framework of existing international organizations, because China feels that its own mechanism is more effective and easier to manage. [10]However, some international organizations and multilateral institutions hope to cooperate with China and use China's development experience and technology to help African countries develop better. [11]Therefore, the Chinese government also tries to carry out aid to Africa under the multilateral framework. In 2008, China announced that it would take a series of actions to promote the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of "reducing the number of hungry people in the world by half by 2015". In 2009, China signed the "General Agreement on the Trust Fund", planning to donate 30 million US dollars to FAO in three years to

establish a trust fund, focusing on supporting South-South cooperation projects under the framework of FAO's "Special Program for Food Security", and sending agricultural experts and technicians to recipient countries to improve the agricultural production capacity of developing countries. The use of the trust fund will be moderately tilted towards Africa. By the end of 2011, China had sent agricultural experts and technicians to African countries such as Ethiopia, Mauritania and Mali, playing an active role in improving local agricultural production capacity and food security. [12]In the field of health care, China has also achieved a certain degree of multilateral cooperation by providing financial assistance to the Global Fund for Malaria Prevention and Control.[13]

The types of entities involved in aid have increased. In addition to official agencies and state-owned enterprises stationed abroad, the entities involved in aid also include young volunteers of "government-assisted private enterprises", private enterprises such as Huawei, non-governmental organizations ( NGOs) [14]and individuals. Among them, young volunteers and NGOs are more prominent.

First, China began to send young volunteers. At the 2006 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, President Hu Jintao announced that 300 young volunteers would be sent to Africa within three years, and the dispatch of young volunteers to foreign countries was one of the eight commitments of China's aid to Africa. In August 2005, the first volunteer to be sent to Africa, the Ethiopia project, was officially launched, and China achieved a "zero breakthrough" in the history of young volunteers to foreign countries in Africa. From May 2002 to April 2011, China sent a total of 446 young volunteers to foreign countries, of which 353 were sent to Africa, accounting for 79.15% of the total number; and sent them to Ethiopia, Guyana and other countries for many consecutive years. Their service combines China's own cultural and technological advantages with the actual needs of the recipient countries, laying a good foundation for China to explore and establish the "China Aid Youth Volunteer Development Model".[15]

Secondly, NGOs began to actively participate in aid activities in Africa. NGOs in New China started late, there are fewer of them, and they obviously lack experience in international public welfare projects. Compared with the foreign aid of the Chinese government and state-owned enterprises, Chinese NGOs are a shortcoming. Compared with Western NGOs, Chinese NGOs are far behind in terms of number, fields of engagement, scale of aid to Africa, and sustainability . For example, among the 3,000 NGOs in Kenya , about 20% are from the West, and they are engaged in a wide variety of fields. Among the 3,000 NGOs registered in Sudan, 146 are international NGOs. There are no Chinese NGOs registered in these two countries, and almost no Chinese NGOs have set up offices in Africa. Therefore, in the eyes of many Africans, Chinese NGOs have always been the "missing link" on the African continent.[16]

However, this situation has changed significantly. The Chinese government encourages NGOs to participate in aid to Africa. Some NGOs with a global vision have emerged in China . More and more NGOs have begun to go abroad and actively participate in aid to Africa. They not only help African people to the best of their ability, but also cooperate with African NGOs to jointly promote aid to Africa. In terms of wildlife protection, since 2005, Chinese Xingba has spontaneously engaged in research and protection of large cats in Africa. In 2011, he led the establishment of the " Mara Wildlife Conservation Fund " and filmed a documentary from the perspective of the Chinese and with Chinese and animals as the protagonists . Xingba's conservation fund has also established cooperative relations with many conservation organizations, becoming an important channel for promoting social forces to participate in African animal protection. [17]In the field of education , the Youth Foundation took the lead in launching the "Hope Project Entering Africa" project. In March 2011, they signed the "Hope Project Donation Agreement" with the Tanzanian Ministry of Education. At the end of April , the construction of Moshoga Primary School in Ga, Tanzania started and it will be put into use within the year. In May , the second batch of Hope Primary Schools entered Namibia. In June, the third batch of Hope Primary Schools were launched in Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and other three countries. [18]In other aspects, the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation implemented the "African Poor Mother

and Child Assistance Program", the "Sudan Maternal and Child Health System Demonstration Project" and the "Horn of Africa Rescue Project" in Africa; the China Council for the Promotion of Development of the People's Republic of China carried out the "Bright Journey" action for free cataract surgery for patients in Malawi, Zimbabwe and other countries. Compared with government agencies, the foreign aid of Chinese NGOs has the following characteristics: the main motivation is humanitarianism, the funding source is overseas enterprises and the public, the aid targets are mainly NGOs with close relations with the government, and the degree of specialization is relatively high.[19] And African NGOs also conduct face-to-face exchanges. At the first China-Africa Civil Society Forum in 2011, more than 200 representatives from 20 Chinese NGOs and more than 100 NGOs from 18 African countries discussed six topics, including climate change and food security in China and Africa, the credibility and transparency of Chinese and African NGOs, and the relationship between Chinese and African NGOs and governments, enterprises and communities. This was seen by the outside world as the beginning of the first large-scale entry of Chinese NGOs into Africa.[20]

Strengthen talent training in Africa. For a long time, China has adhered to the principle of "giving a man a fish is not as good as teaching him how to fish", and has focused on the development of African human resources to enhance Africa's self-sustaining capacity for development. At the first ministerial meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, the Chinese government announced the establishment of the African Human Resources Development Fund and began to train talents for African countries on a large scale. At each ministerial meeting thereafter, the Chinese government announced the expansion of scholarships, teacher aid and other projects. Over the past decade, the fund has continuously increased its investment, and the number of human resources promised to be trained has almost doubled every three years. By the end of 2012, China had trained nearly 50,000 people of all kinds for African countries, covering more than 20 fields such as public administration, agriculture, animal husbandry and fishery, and medical and health care. In the next three years, the African Talent Plan will be implemented to train 30,000 talents of all kinds for Africa and provide 18,000 government scholarships. In addition, Chinese companies in Africa have also trained a large number of skilled technicians for host countries by establishing training centers, on-the-job training, and selecting outstanding employees for training in China.[21]

Among them, the number of African students studying in China has increased significantly. In 2008, the Chinese government began to significantly increase its financial investment in studying in China, reaching more than 500 million yuan per year. Among the students studying in China from more than 190 countries and regions in the world, there were 12,436 African students in 2009, nearly eight times more than in 2000. [22]From 2000 to 2010, a total of 58,586 students from more than 50 African countries came to study in China, and the Chinese government provided scholarships to 26,425 of them, more than three times the number in the previous 50 years. [23]In addition, the China-Ethiopia Agricultural Vocational and Technical Education and Training Project was officially launched in 2001. So far, China has sent 321 agricultural experts to teach in 14 agricultural vocational colleges in Ethiopia, trained more than 60,000 graduates, and helped it establish a relatively complete agricultural vocational and technical education system.[24]

### **3. REASONS FOR THE CHANGES IN CHINA'S AID TO AFRICA**

1) The demand for China's rapid economic expansion.

Diplomacy is the continuation of domestic affairs. As a part of diplomacy, foreign aid is also a policy tool that serves national interests. Since the reform and opening up, China's domestic work has shifted its focus to economic construction, which has led to the focus of aid to Africa shifting from political and strategic interests to economic interests. Aid to Africa has gradually focused on economic mutual benefit and sustainable development of aid projects. With the rapid economic development and rapid increase in national strength, especially after the financial crisis in 1998, China's thirst for resources, investment and commodity markets has become stronger. With the newly implemented "going out"

strategy, China pays more attention to moderately reflecting its own economic development needs and corporate interests in its aid to Africa. Africa has many world "firsts" in mineral reserves such as gold, uranium and cobalt, and its mineral development is highly dependent on foreign countries; many mines are also the last truly undeveloped "resource treasure trove" in the world[25], which is the highlight and focus of China's future investment. At the same time, the reason why Africa is currently included in China's "going out" strategy is not only because of its natural resources, but also because of its opportunities in trade, construction and industry: business opportunities.[26]

Therefore, in the 21st century, China's increased assistance to Africa is not only necessary to consolidate and deepen the traditional friendship between China and Africa, but also conducive to safeguarding China's overall national interests. In fact, China's assistance is very effective in promoting China's exports and investment. The assistance, which is mainly in the form of concessional loans and supplemented by commercial loans, provides a platform for Chinese enterprises, mainly state-owned enterprises, to establish a foothold in Africa and promotes the export of Chinese products to Africa. In the five years from 2001 to 2006, China-Africa trade quadrupled, reaching US\$55 billion in 2006, and China became Africa's third largest trading partner after the European Union and the United States. China's textiles, clothing, automobiles and satellites have all entered Africa. [27]In 2012, the trade volume between China and Africa was about US\$200 billion, which increased by nearly three times in six years, and China jumped to become Africa's largest trading partner. [28]In addition, China also provides advantages that its companies do not have in the competition in Africa by assisting infrastructure construction, a field that traditional Western aid countries no longer involve. The bidding process in many African countries lacks transparency, and the government tends to award contracts to bidding companies that can obtain external aid and development assistance. For example, in Zambia, since the Chinese government is the main donor, this favorable condition has helped not only large Chinese state-owned enterprises but also small Chinese enterprises to expand their markets. [29]After the China-Africa Summit, China obtained four oil exploration licenses worth US\$40 billion from Nigeria, and China was responsible for assisting the construction of a railway system and a power station. China's investment in Africa has also increased significantly. In 2006 alone, there were 813 Chinese companies investing in Africa.[30]

2) The fierce competition between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait for Africa.

In the 1970s, a large part of China's agricultural aid projects in Africa were agricultural technology stations that replaced Taiwan's farming teams. At that time, the mainland replaced Taiwan's farming teams in 18 African countries, and agricultural projects played an important role in foreign aid and diplomacy. [31]In the 1990s, during the Lee Teng-hui era, Taiwan vigorously promoted gold-dollar diplomacy, and three African countries broke off diplomatic relations with the mainland and established diplomatic relations with Taiwan. After Mandela, who had a global influence, was elected president of South Africa in 1994, an important reason for his delay in establishing diplomatic relations with the mainland was that he received \$11 million in aid from Taipei in 1993, which was \$1 million more than the aid from the mainland. Adhering to "moral principles", Mandela believed that "it is not righteous to break off diplomatic relations just after taking money from the world", and South Africa's relations with China have been swinging between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. It was not until after Hong Kong's return in 1997 that South Africa established diplomatic relations with mainland China. [32]This incident also shows the fierce competition between the two sides in Africa. During the eight years of Chen Shui-bian's administration in the 21st century, he vigorously promoted Taiwan independence, and the political relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait fell to a freezing point, and the competition for overseas, especially Africa, became more intense. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been promoting money diplomacy, and some African governments have also played the Taiwan card when dealing with China. It was not until Ma Ying-jeou came to power in 2000 that the diplomatic truce between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait fundamentally changed this situation, which also proved from the opposite side the necessity of the mainland to increase its aid to Africa.

### 3) International aid is rising.

Africa's development has always been the focus of world attention. China's substantial increase in aid to Africa is not only due to its own rapid economic development and enhanced comprehensive strength, but also because neighboring countries such as Japan, South Korea, and third world countries such as India have significantly increased their aid to Africa, thereby improving the overall level of international aid.

First, Japan and South Korea, our neighbors, have been increasing their aid to Africa. Since 2000, the total amount of Japan's official development assistance has continued to decline, but its aid to Africa has shown a clear upward trend. In 2007, Japan's ODA to sub-Saharan Africa was US\$1.7 billion, achieving the goal of doubling. In 2008, Japan announced that it would double its ODA to Africa to 200 billion yen by 2012, and promised to provide US\$4 billion in loans and US\$2.5 billion in financial support for African development in the next five years, doubling Japan's direct investment in Africa. [33]South Korea also decided in 2009 that by 2012, the total amount of South Korea's official development assistance to Africa would double that of the end of 2008, to about US\$400 million. [34]Therefore, China cannot lag behind and needs to increase its aid to Africa.

Secondly, some third world countries have increased their aid to Africa, and even formed an aid competition with China. China, India and several Gulf countries have an important influence on the development of infrastructure in Africa. In 2003, the total investment led by Arab countries reached 140 million US dollars; in 2004, with the participation of China, the investment amount reached 2 billion US dollars; after India joined in 2005, the investment amount reached 4 billion US dollars; 2006 was China's "Africa Year", and China increased its investment in Africa, with the total investment in Africa reaching 8 billion US dollars. [35]It can be seen that the increase in China's aid to Africa is also due to the competition from other countries.

### 4) Start to pay attention to public diplomacy.

With the learning and absorption of mature diplomatic models of Western developed countries and the familiarity with the rules of international exchanges, China has gradually attached importance to public diplomacy such as people-to-people diplomacy in addition to trying multilateral diplomacy. In particular, it has begun to attach importance to the role of volunteers and NGOs in diplomacy, hoping to make up for the shortcomings of government diplomacy through people-to-people diplomacy, increase the country's soft power, and better serve national interests.

First, the consequence of the absence of Chinese NGOs is misunderstanding[36]. Although China-Africa cooperation has achieved great results, it is also facing some new challenges and new problems. Some African NGOs supported by the West have shown unfriendliness and distrust towards China. For example, the Kenyan NGO MARSKenya has attacked China's intentions and transparency in its economic activities in Africa. Some African people and non-governmental organizations have been influenced by false public opinion and have raised objections to the development of China-Africa relations and Chinese companies entering Africa to develop resources, which has affected the relationship between some African countries and China.

Secondly, NGOs play a role in foreign aid that cannot be replaced by the government. NGOs are often called "representatives of public opinion". Help given to Africa through NGOs is more acceptable and often more effective than through the government. Western NGOs have set an example for China. They are widely welcomed in Africa, especially those NGOs that are "aid-oriented" and "development-oriented" and distribute bread and provide small loans to Africans. Practice has also proved that the role played by Western NGOs among the African people is more direct than that of Western governments, and is more likely to create a situation of "people-to-people friendship".

Third, China-Africa people-to-people exchanges are an important component and cornerstone of China-Africa friendly exchanges, and play a special role in promoting friendship between countries.

It is far from enough for China-Africa friendly cooperation to remain at the government and party level. "China-Africa people-to-people exchanges are a useful supplement to state relations and a powerful force to support the development of state relations. Through exchanges between Chinese and African non-governmental organizations, we can increase trust and dispel doubts, explain China's sincerity to Africa to African people and non-governmental organizations, and better guide the people of African countries to support mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Africa." Strengthening the relationship between NGOs on both sides of China and Africa is of great benefit to safeguarding China's national interests and promoting the comprehensive and healthy development of state relations.

Therefore, the Chinese government has also recognized the important role of non-governmental forces such as NGOs in diplomacy, and encouraged semi-official organizations such as the "Poverty Alleviation Foundation" to transform into NGOs and carry out activities such as "going out". It also imitated the US "Peace Corps " and Japan's "Cooperation Group" to organize young volunteers to participate in foreign aid activities, hoping to radiate China's influence from the bottom up, from the private sector to the government level. [37]The report of the 18th CPC National Congress proposed to promote public diplomacy and cultural exchanges, and "the foreign exchanges of local and non-governmental groups will consolidate the social foundation for the development of state relations " , [38]which is an important sign of the change in attitude towards NGOs.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

China's aid to Africa adheres to principles and focuses on effectiveness. It is not only conducive to the development of China's economy, but also promotes the rapid development of Africa's economy. In particular, China's innovative aid that focuses on infrastructure construction is of great significance to Africa's development. Hardware construction not only facilitates the entry of China and other foreign business partners into the market, but also creates conditions for promoting cross-regional trade among African countries. In addition to stimulating China-Africa trade, China's investment has also created a platform for the future development of private enterprises on the African continent, which will further promote production and create business opportunities. It has injected the needed vitality into the African economy. China takes into account both social development and economic development, and considers trade expansion while considering social development. This is the success of China's aid to Africa.

At the same time, China's aid to Africa has also provided Africa with more favorable opportunities in terms of market options, investment partners and product prices, breaking the situation of Western dominance and improving the autonomy of African countries in production, sales and seeking investment. In the past decade, the prosperity of the commodity market has boosted Africa's GDP growth by 5.5%; in 2010, six African countries were among the world's top ten fastest-growing economies; this is also inseparable from China's contribution to Africa's aid and development. Africans themselves have a more authoritative view of this aid. Rwandan President Kagame compared the differences between China and the West in aid to Rwanda and believed that Western countries invested a large amount of money in aid to Africa, but the result was to feed a large number of foreign personnel, and after leaving, nothing was left except a pile of garbage. China brought what Africa needs: China's investment in infrastructure such as road construction is of great significance to both the government and private enterprises. This new competition is healthy for Africa, and Africa has benefited a lot from this competition. Although the view is extreme, it is indeed the best interpretation of Chinese aid to Africa.

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