

CHINA-AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF BRI-B3W

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Introduction

In 1992, Professor Lester Thurow, a famous American economist of MIT, published a book entitled *Head to Head: The coming economic battle among Japan, Europe, and America*, to analyze the coming competition between economic powers in the 21st century (Thurow 1992). It seems that the author was quite confident in economic giants Japan, Europe and the US in the future and believed that the rich club accepted only one country – Japan in the 20th century –, and it would not be surprising if no country would enter the club in the 21st century. Once published, the book aroused great repercussions in Japan, Europe and the US and became one of the non-literary bestsellers. No matter how brilliant Lester Thurow's academic achievements are, his prediction was not fulfilled this time. He never thought that Europe and the US would experience a financial crisis in the new century and China would become the second world economy in 2010. Nor did he expect that Gallup's survey report on Rating World Leaders (2018) found that people in 134 countries and regions around the world recognized China's leadership by 34%, higher than 31% for the US. This is the second time since 2008 that China's global recognition of leadership has surpassed that of the US, setting a record for China in 10 years (Ray 2019).

Why did Mr. Thurow ignore emerging economies? This seems understandable from a historical perspective. In the early 1990s, Russia was still under the control of the iron curtain, China was recovering from the Cultural Revolution and the events of 1989, India was still haunted by bureaucratic nightmares and Brazil's economy stagnated for a decade. These countries are

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lost in the global market economy, suffering from economic policy mistakes, lack of stock markets, bureaucratic breeding or super turbulence and need to go through a profound pain before they could embark on normal development path (Van Agtmael 2012). This is the time when Mr. Thurow wrote his book and he never thought the situation would change so dramatically. Regarding China-Africa relations, there are always heated debates and various opinions, fabrications and facts. It is a necessity to make a more careful and objective study².

By all accounts, globalization is now sweeping across Africa. Farmers in Ghana are in a precarious position because of the inflow of subsidized cheap rice from the US; American drivers refuel their cars with oil imported from Nigeria; Senegalese are buying clothes made in China and Vietnam; Beijingers drink South African beer while checking newspapers for the stock values of Naspers there; Africans have regular business deals in Yiwu, a booming market in Zhejiang Province in China for international dealers; Ethiopian Mursi's pictures spread to Japan via the internet; the African diaspora forms the sixth part of African people. Globalization penetrates everywhere. For Africans, both positive and negative cases are there. Africa's richest man, Nigerian entrepreneur Dangote, started business with cement production with diversified enterprise, and he is skillful at using international capital. Since 2008, he has started international cooperation with SINOMA, successively built more than ten cement plants in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and other countries. In 2017, he invested \$500 million in cement in Congo (fabric) and invested in African infrastructure. His business is a good example of economic globalization. There are also negative examples. Cashew is one of Mozambique's main exports. In 1995, the World Bank informed the Mozambique Government that it must end protection against the cashew processing industry and allow export for foreign processing or it would not submit the country's assistance strategy. Mozambique had to close all the large cashew processing plants in 2001 and 10,000 jobs disappeared. Economic globalization has become a trend and it is impossible to escape or avoid. The only way to adjust is to hold your own sovereignty, put more emphasis on self-reliance rather than on aid from whatever parties and gradually develop your own capability (Li Anshan 2021, 43-53).

2 Recently, a commentary by a Tanzanian caused a sensational response and more than 1.5 million people expressed their opinions afterwards. Quora "Do Westerners who bash China for helping Africa (yes, help) know actually Africans view them and their 'helping'". <https://www.quora.com/Do-Westerners-who-bash-China-for-helping-Africa-yes-helping-know-how-actual-Africans-view-them-and-their-helping>.

The 21st century has witnessed great changes in international affairs. Brexit brings a new situation in Europe and Britain may or may not enjoy its independence, while Germany, France and other EU countries are trying to adjust to the new situation. A racial crisis is spreading all over the US which just withdrew from Afghanistan, where it created many troubles during its stay. The Middle East faces tremendous obstacles in bringing peace to the region. Since 2009, China has surpassed the United States as Africa's largest trading partner. Out of expectation, the surge in the number of African students in China is remarkable. According to Breeze and Moore (2017):

[...] in less than 15 years the number of African students has grown 26-fold, from just under 2000 in 2003 to almost 50,000 in 2015. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the US and UK host around 40,000 African students a year; China surpassed this number in 2014. This dramatic increase in students from Africa can be explained in part by the Chinese government's targeted focus on African human resources and education development (Breeze and Moore 2017, n/p).

The Communist Party of China has just passed its 100th anniversary and continues the struggle for the people's benefit. Most tragically, the globe is suffering from COVID-19, which is killing people and damaging the economy and social life in every corner of the world. African leaders have reached an agreement on an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is designed to unite 1.3 billion people under one market.

There are several important events related to the African continent in 2021. On January 1, AfCFTA, started in March 2018 in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, officially launched with the world's largest free trade area. A single market covering 54 countries with a GDP of \$3 trillion has become a reality. According to relevant agreements and arrangements, from January 1, 2021, members of the AfCFTA will gradually eliminate tariffs on goods according to product categories and their respective conditions. With the opening of official website and supporting data monitoring platform, the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra, Ghanaian capital city, had been officially handed over and put into operation in August 2020. This is a great startup for offering new hope and continental exhilaration in terms of boosting intra-African trade, and eventually facilitating Africa's development and industrialization.

On June 4-5, 2021, the G7 Summit was held in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, in England, with world leaders deliberating on key world issues. In the summit, the US President Biden proposed strategic plan of Build Back Better World (B3W) and called on strong support to Africa. On October 8, a summit

between France and African countries opened in the southern French city of Montpellier. Amid France's recent serious tensions with Algeria and Mali, French President Emmanuel Macron decided to seek a new breakthrough in the relations between France and Africa through the summit. For the first time since the summit began in 1973, it adopted a new fashion by inviting young African representatives from various fields instead of African heads of state. Young entrepreneurs and artists from Africa attended the event to participate in the discussion of political, economic and cultural issues.

In October 2021, Turkish President Erdogan visited Angola, Nigeria and Togo, and the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit was held on December 16-18 in Istanbul. As an emerging economy, Turkey's policy toward Africa has expanded from economy to other areas. The number of Turkish embassies in Africa has risen from 12 in 2002 to 43, while African embassies in Ankara from 10 in 2008 to 37. With the theme "Enhanced Partnership for Development and Prosperity", over 100 ministers and 16 heads of state and government from Africa attended the summit, indicating a new stage in the bilateral relations. The summit concluded with the adoption of an action plan for the next five years. President Erdogan visited more than 30 African nations during his 19-year tenure as Prime Minister or President. Official data indicates the bilateral trade rose from US\$5.4 billion in 2003 to US\$25.3 billion in 2020, and Erdogan announced Turkey would aim to double its trade with Africa to US\$50 billion. Turkish companies have strengthened their presence in Africa, mainly investing in construction, steel, cement, textiles, household goods, and electronic devices. Turkey is also ready to offer support to African states in their fight against terrorism, organized crime and strengthen cooperation in poverty eradication in the continent³.

On November 29-30, the 8th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Ministerial Conference held the opening ceremony in Dakar, Senegal, for the fourth time in Africa and the first time in West Africa. The meeting had global significance against the backdrop of the changes in the global landscape, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intensifying climate crisis. Officials from 53 African countries and China attended the conference. Before the ministerial conference, Vice Minister of Commerce of PRC Qian Keming met Secretary General of Africa Free Trade Zone and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of an Economic Cooperation Expert Group on October 22, 2021. The two sides spoke highly of the long-term mutual respect and mutual benefit cooperation between China and Africa,

³ "3rd Turkey-Africa summit commits to boosting cooperation in various fields", Source: Xinhua | 2021-12-18 23:44:12. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-12/18/c_1310381109.htm.

and believed that the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Expert Group would further promote China-Africa economic and trade exchanges⁴.

The achievements of China-Africa cooperation are impressive. Two cases. Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region, pointed out in 2015, “In 2012, one-quarter of Africa’s merchandise exports came to China. On the external front, African growth has been closely linked to the commodities boom-growth in China and the emergence of China as one of Africa’s main trade and investment partners-as well as the surge in cross-border financial flows” (Diop 2015, n/p). On December 10, 2021, just after the 8th FOCAC ministerial conference, the completion ceremony of Mozambique N13 highway project (Cuamba-Muita section) undertaken by China was held. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, attended the event and cut the ribbon. The N13 Highway Project, with a total length of 138 km, is an important part of Mozambique’s national development plan “Nacala Corridor”. After completion, the project will become an international trade corridor connecting Malawi, Zambia and other landlocked African countries, and an important sea passage from Southern Africa to the Indian Ocean⁵.

According to official data, “From 2000 to 2020, China helped African countries build more than 13,000 km of roads and railway and more than 80 large-scale power facilities, and funded over 130 medical facilities, 45 sports venues and over 170 schools. It also trained more than 160,000 personnel for Africa, and built a series of flagship projects including the AU Conference Center. China’s assistance has extended from economy to social life and is widely welcomed and supported by both governments and people in Africa. China has canceled the debt incurred in the form of interest-free Chinese government loans due to mature by the end of 2018, which applied to Africa’s least developed, heavily indebted and poor countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries that have diplomatic relations with China. “During the Covid-19 pandemic, China canceled the outstanding debts of 15 African countries in the form of interest-free loans that matured at the end of 2020”⁶.

4 “The Ministry of Commerce and the Secretariat of the African Mainland Free Trade Zone signed a memorandum of understanding on establishing a cooperation expert group online”, October 27, 2021. <http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/bnjg/202111/20211103213445.shtml>.

5 “Mozambican President attends N13 highway completion ceremony”, China Railway Group Ltd., December 29, 2021. <http://www.crecg.com/web/10089492/10091154/10187954/index.html>.

6 *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*, The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, November 2021. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-11/26/content_5653540.htm.

At the 2021 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit on September 26, Wu Peng, Director General of the Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, said: “Under this great change that has not been seen in a century, who can expect that Africa will not become a more important partner of China’s opening up in a few decades? Can’t it be more important for China than Europe? Not necessarily”⁷. There is a point in his statement.

Fabrication and fact

Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, some people seem to be unhappy with the FOCAC and the practical results of the bilateral cooperation. There are always incorrect descriptions, rumors or fabrications about the China-Africa relations. As an African reporter explained, “The Western media persistently carries out such negative campaigns against China, as a weapon to fight battles in the big trade and economic war between the West and the emerging economies led by China” (Mbanda 2018, n/p). Here are some examples.

In 2014, Howard French proposed in his book *China’s second continent: How a million migrants are building a new empire in Africa* that President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Africa in 1996 was a turning point in China’s Africa policy:

The most definitive commencement date was perhaps the state visit to six African countries by the then head of state, Jiang Zemin, in 1996. In a speech at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Jiang proposed the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. This turned out to be an important first move in a momentous two-step. Upon his return to China, Jiang gave another speech in the city of Tangshan, in which he explicitly directed the country’s firms to ‘go out’, meaning go overseas in search of business. No Chinese leader had ever said anything like that before, and from the very start Africa was clearly a principal target. Six years later, I was working in China when Jiang’s Forum convened triumphantly for the first time, gathering fifty-three African leaders in Beijing. Among China’s many pledges, Jiang promised to double development assistance to the continent, create a \$5 billion African development fund, cancel outstanding debt, build a new African Union headquarters in Ethiopia, create three to five ‘trade and cooperation’ zones around the continent, build

⁷ “Wu Peng, Director General of the Department of African Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: To tell the Chinese story well, we must do a good job in China,” China News Network, September 26, 2021. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1711956163086028254&wfr=spider&for=pc>.

thirty hospitals and a hundred rural schools, and train fifteen thousand African professionals (French 2014, 16).

From the perspective of a historian, I found many errors just in this short paragraph: (1) In 1996, there was no African Union. (2) Jiang Zemin did not mention the setting up of FOCAC in his speech in 1996. Instead, it was the former Prime Minister of Madagascar, Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, who made this proposal in 1999 (Li Anshan 2014). (3) The first FOCAC was held on 10-12 October 2000, not six years after 1996. (4) More than 80 ministers from 44 African countries and representatives from 17 international regional organizations attended the first FOCAC, not “fifty-three African leaders”. (5) The China-Africa Development Fund was created at the China-Africa Summit of the 3rd FOCAC in 2006, not at the first FOCAC. (6) All the measures he mentioned were issued at the China-Africa Summit in 2006, not the first FOCAC. (7) President Hu, not President Jiang, chaired the China-Africa Summit in 2006. Although there are many errors in a paragraph, the book was nevertheless recommended by both *The New York Times* and *Financial Times* as one of the 100 best books of the year!

In 2018, French newspaper *Le Monde* published a report alleging that China was spying on the African Union Headquarters in Ethiopia. The China-built African Union Conference Center, a 100-meter-tall building, was completed in Addis Ababa in December 2011, and became the tallest African building. Among African scholars, there are some different opinions about the project, which is natural (Ezeanya 2012; Lokongo 2012). *Le Monde* reported that China had bugged the building it had built and gifted to the AU and had been downloading data from servers in the building (Kadiri and Tilouine 2018). Former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat of the AU Commission and many other African leaders were categorical in dismissing the report as fabricated and an attempt to tarnish China-Africa relations.

Beijing has financed and built more than 6,000 kilometers of roads and over 6,500 km of railways. These include the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway, the Mombasa-Nairobi railway and the Abuja-Kaduna railway in Nigeria, which are operational. As a result, this has catapulted the Asian Tiger into Africa's most important investor in infrastructure development (Njoroge 2018, n/p).

“There's nothing to be spied [on] because [the] China-Africa relationship is very strategic, comprehensive”, Mr. Hailemariam said on the sidelines

of the 30th AU Summit held at the AU headquarters. Chairperson, Moussa Faki, told a press conference at the end of the summit that he did not find any sign that the AU building was being spied upon⁸. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who is the current AU Chairman and the leader of AU reforms, also dismissed the allegations by the French newspaper (Mbanda 2018).

As indicated previously, the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was one of the important events in 2021 in terms of both China-Africa relations and international politics. The 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was originally planned to be held in Dakar, Senegal. There are quite a lot of strange things and even rumors about China-African cooperation before the conference. Zimbabwean newspaper *The Herald* disclosed that the US even provided money as reward for any article of slander or defamation against China. The US Embassy has even paid as much as \$1,000 for every article that has smeared Chinese companies, indeed shocking for the Zimbabweans⁹. Just before the opening of the 8th FOCAC, there was a wave of slander about China's "debt trap", such as "Uganda Surrenders Airport for China Cash". In reality, Entebbe Airport Expansion and Upgrading Project is a US\$200 million preferential loan project financed by the Export-Import Bank of China and is guaranteed by Uganda's sovereign credit. The two parties signed the loan agreement in March 2015 and began construction in May 2016. Despite the negative impact of COVID-19, China Communications Construction Company Ltd., the contractor, has managed to catch up with the project schedule with firm support from the Ugandan side. Now the project has progressed smoothly to 75.1% and is expected to be completed and delivered in December 2022. The fabrication is groundless and refuted by both Uganda Civil Aviation Authority on November 26, 2021, and the Chinese Embassy in Uganda two days later¹⁰.

On November 24, 2021, just four days before the 8th FOCAC, I received an email from a journalist of Bloomberg's China Government Team in Hong Kong. She was writing a piece about the upcoming FOCAC conference in Senegal. "I'm interested in why the event this year appears to have been downgraded diplomatically". Even before the meeting, the journalist had jumped into a conclusion – "Downgraded diplomatically" –. This wrong

8 "African leaders dismiss French report of China 'spying' on AU headquarters", Xinhua, January 30, 2018.

9 "US plan to discredit Chinese investments unmasked", *The Herald*, September 21, 2021.

10 Uganda Civil Aviation Authority, "Clarification on Enbete International Airport", November 26, 2021; "Remarks by the Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Uganda on Some Media Reports Alleging that 'Uganda Surrenders Airport for China Cash' 2021-11-28 18:52. http://ug.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/202111/t20211128_10454456.htm.

judgement seems to be based on the wrong information. First, “So far, no African heads of state have been confirmed”, and second, “Senegal’s Foreign Minister will host it rather than a head of state – by my records, that’s the first time the country’s host hasn’t hosted the event since its inception in 2000”. The fabrication is embodied in her two questions, “Which side do you think initiated the downgrade in diplomatic ties? Why do you think Beijing would let the event diminish in stature?” She was thinking that as “Beijing clashes with the US and other Western powers, it has even more reason to court its 50-odd diplomatic powers on the continent, who after all helped it get back its place on the United Nations in 1971”¹¹. With this unfriendly, if not opposing mindset to China-Africa cooperation, how could the journalist find an objective answer to her questions?

Unfortunately for her yet fortunately for China-Africa cooperation, with the theme of “Uphold the Tradition of Always Standing Together and Jointly Build a China-Africa Community With a Shared Future in the New Era”, the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference was held successfully in Dakar on 29-30 November. Senegalese President Macky Sall, the African Co-chair of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, attended and presided over the opening ceremony. President Félix Tshisekedi of Democratic Republic of Congo, President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, President Azali Assoumani of the Union of Comoros, President Ramaphosa of South Africa, Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat of the African Union Commission and Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres attended the meeting by video. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Foreign Ministers of 53 African countries, ministers or representatives responsible for foreign economic cooperation and representatives of some international and regional organizations attended the meeting.

At the opening ceremony of the 8th FOCAC Ministerial Conference, Chinese President Xi Jinping made a keynote speech. “This year marks the 65th anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between China and African countries”. He explained why China and Africa have had such a close relationship and so deep a bond of friendship. “The key lies in an everlasting spirit of China-Africa friendship and cooperation forged between the two sides, which features sincere friendship and equality, win-win for mutual benefit and common development, fairness and justice, and progress with the times and openness and inclusiveness”. He stated that both sides have jointly prepared the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 and promised that

¹¹ Email: XXX to Anshan Li, “Bloomberg journalist with questions on FOCAC”, 2021/11/24/ 18:03:08 (Wednesday).

under the first three-year plan of the Vision, China would work closely with African countries to implement the following nine programs: the medical and health program, the poverty reduction and agricultural development program, the trade promotion program, the investment promotion program, the digital innovation program, the green development program, the capacity building program, the cultural and people-to-people exchange program, the peace and security program¹².

African leaders and most people usually think highly of China's involvement in Africa and have a positive opinion of China's contributions to African development. Just because of this equal and sincere cooperation, China's reputation is durable in Africa. This is indicated by various reports, such as the annual report of "The opinion of China" for more than a decade by Pew Research Center in the US, or McKinsey's survey on Chinese company in Africa in 2017, or Gallup's survey report on Rating World Leaders (2018), or Afrobarometer's 2020 poll. Although African opinions regarding China may differ, Afrobarometer's annual surveys of 2016-2020 speak with the same tone (Sanny and Selormey 2020)¹³.

BRI and B3W

At the end of 2021, Lina Benabdallah of Wake Forest University in the US published an article entitled "China's Soft-Power Advantage in Africa: Beijing Isn't Just Building Roads – It's Making Friends" in *Foreign Affairs*. She points out:

China's evolving presence in Africa, including the BRI, is based as much on investment in building social and human capital as it is on giant infrastructure projects. Since the beginning of this century, Beijing has invested heavily in cultivating political, educational and institutional relationships with leaders and citizens in almost all African countries with which it has diplomatic relations (Benabdallah 2021, n/p).

The description indicates three phenomena. First, Africa has been involved in the BRI. Second, China's investment in Africa covers various

¹² "Keynote speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at opening ceremony of 8th FOCAC ministerial conference", Source: Xinhua, 2021-12-02. http://www.focac.org/eng/ttxsy/202112/t20211202_10461079.htm.

¹³ See also "Here's what Africans think about China's influence in their countries" 2016/10/28. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/blogs/heres-what-africans-think-about-chinas-influence-their-countries>.

fields, including economic, political, educational, institutional, etc. Third, China is developing relationships in all African countries (except one, e.g., the Kingdom of Eswatini, which has no diplomatic relations with China), not only with leaders but also ordinary citizens. China is building infrastructure as well as social and human capital, and making friends in Africa. The result also explains why China's reputation in Africa is durable, as Olander suggests,

[...] in the five year interim since the respected public opinion research agency Afrobarometer conducted surveys on African citizens' perceptions of China's engagement on the continent, positive views of the Chinese were either stable or edging higher in most countries. Overall, across the 18 countries that Afrobarometer surveyed, 59% of the people think that China's economic and political influence in Africa is mostly positive. That is a remarkable figure, especially in this day and age when China is such a polarizing actor in many other parts of the world (Olander 2020, n/p).

The BRI here means "Belt and Road Initiative", or "OBOR" (One Belt One Road), put forward in 2013 by President Xi Jinping with the significance of international development and cooperation. The BRI is supposed to "create an infrastructure corridor from China to Central Asia and Europe and a 'Maritime Silk Road' that links China to South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa through a series of deep-water ports along the littoral areas of the Indian Ocean – has provoked a great deal of speculation and controversy", and it was termed as "white elephant" projects that are "politically motivated and economically unsustainable" (Bluhm et al. 2021, n/p). Yet a recent collective research finds some grounds for optimism. "Since many of the low-income and middle-income countries included in our analysis suffer from an excessive concentration of economic activity in a small number of congested urban centers, our findings suggest that Chinese government financing for connective infrastructure promotes spatially inclusive economic development" (Bluhm et al. 2021). Now three consensuses have gradually reached. The BRI has risen to the national action of the Chinese government and needs concerted efforts; the BRI is a long-term plan to share the interests of countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road; the BRI is an important strategy to build a community with a shared future for mankind and improve global governance. The BRI has brought about positive effects in the world and has been promoting international trade, especially economic and trade relations between China and Asia, Europe and Africa.

Since its introduction, the BRI has received a positive response from countries along the Belt and Road, and especially African countries. During

his visit to Africa in 2014, the Prime Minister Li Keqiang raised the vision of China-Africa production capacity cooperation. In the 2015 Summit of the FOCAC, the leaders of African countries welcomed China's active participation in the construction of infrastructure, interconnection and other industries in Africa, and transferred high-quality energy to Africa¹⁴. At the end of 2015, scholars from China and Africa held an academic seminar on "Belt and Road and China-Africa Cooperation" in South Africa. They gave positive comments on the opportunities brought by the BRI to China-Africa cooperation, and fully estimated the difficulties in implementing this plan. International scholars offered various views. As an important part of the BRI, Maritime Silk Road has built a bridge for China-Africa cooperation in economic fields as highway, information technology and telecommunications (Pautasso 2016). In the 2016 Conference on One Belt & One Road held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzanian former President Mkapa explored the historical linkage and future perspective with confidence,

[...] the trade relationship between the African continent and China can be traced back to China's Ming Dynasty. At that time, the famous Chinese navigator Zheng He brought a huge fleet to East Africa, and his fleet arrived at African ports such as Mombasa. Since then, there has been good trade between China and Africa. From the 15th century to the 19th century, Africa experienced a process of the gradual establishment of colonial rule. During this period, trade became less frequent. At that time, Africa's foreign trade was mainly controlled by the colonial rulers. Today, the Silk Road Economic Belt can be extended to Africa, which is very popular with us. The 21st century Maritime Silk Road can bring African countries together to pursue common strategic, political and economic interests. Because if this initiative is implemented, it can help achieve common development and prosperity between China and Africa¹⁵.

The production capacity cooperation between China and developing countries was proposed by Professor Lin Yifu. When he was Vice President of the World Bank, he visited Africa many times to explore the way of African development, and introduced China's Huajian Group to Ethiopia, which promoted the development of the local footwear industry. This case has had a wide international impact (The World Bank 2012). On the basis

¹⁴ "Xi Jinping meets African leaders of some countries", Xinhuanet, December 4, 2015. http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/04/c_1117362544.htm.

¹⁵ "Tanzanian Former President: African countries most welcome President Xi Jinping's Belt & Road Initiative", Sina Finance Network, November 14, 2016. <http://finance.sina.com.cn/meeting/2016-11-14/doc-iffxsmif2962174.shtml>.

of this practice, he put forward the relevant argument of industry docking and applied it to new structural economics, and suggesting “One Belt, One Road and One Continent”, meaning OBOR should add the African continent. Because China’s huge labor-intensive industries can be transferred to Africa.

According to the third industrial census, 124 million people are employed in China’s manufacturing industry, which is 12 times that of Japan. Only Africa can undertake such a large-scale transfer of labor-intensive industries. Africa has 1 billion people, a large number of surplus labor force is in rural areas, the proportion of young people is high, and the wage level is only one tenth to one fifth of that of China. In terms of integrated industries to Africa, there have been successful cases such as Huajian group (Lin Yifu 2015, n/p)¹⁶.

This is a bold initiative. The natural link between the Maritime Silk Road and Africa does exist. However, the BRI has aroused attention from foreign media and there are various opinions about the proposal. Joel Wuthnow’s research report on Chinese perspective is suggestive. A PhD in Political Science from Columbia University, Wuthnow was a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, a post-doctoral fellow in the China and the World Program at Princeton University, and a pre-doctoral fellow at the Brookings Institution, and now a Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University (NDU). In the report on the Belt and Road Initiative of the Center, he summarizes that the main strategic benefits of the BRI for the Chinese government include bolstering regional stability, improving China’s energy security, and amassing influence in Eurasia. He made the suggestion that it is important for the US to check China’s ambition while maintain the balanced Sino-American relationship. “U.S. strategy should seek to check China’s geopolitical ambitions while advancing mutually beneficial cooperation where possible” (Wuthnow 2017; Wuthnow 2019). This seems to be a strategy of check and balance.

However, there are more radical opinions. Since the initiation of Joe Biden administration, the US has tried its best to counter and rival China on its own by introducing various policies such as the US containment policy of China, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or Quad), Summit for Democracy and President Biden’s policy of dubbing China as a strategic rival (Jia Qingguo 2021a). The most dangerous challenge comes from his policy

¹⁶ He raised this idea at the “Langrun-Gezheng Forum- ‘Belt and Road Strategy Seminar’ held on January 16 2015 at Peking University. “Justin Yifu Lin, ‘One Belt One Road’ should add ‘One Continent’”, <http://www.21ccom.net/articles/china/ggcx/2015011819130.html>. For a recent study, see (Liu Haifang, He Feng, Wang Jinjie, 2021). This is a collection of field-work reports in Djibouti and Ethiopia in 2019.

toward the Taiwan issue (Jia Qingguo 2021b). All these policies were aimed at countering China, but when it failed or had no results in all strategies at hand, now it wants the other developed nations to side with it for countering Beijing together. In June 2021, the G7 countries announced a new initiative called the “Build Back Better World” (B3W) partnership. The document is found at the White House as a policy statement as following, “Build Back Better World: An Affirmative Initiative for Meeting the Tremendous Infrastructure Needs of Low and Middle-Income Countries”. President Biden and G7 partners agreed to launch the bold new global infrastructure initiative Build Back Better World (B3W),

[...] a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to help narrow the \$40+ trillion infrastructure need in the developing world, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In announcing this partnership, the United States and its G7 partners are expressing a unified vision for global infrastructure development. As a lead partner in B3W, the United States will seek to mobilize the full potential of our development finance tools, including the Development Finance Corporation, USAID, EXIM, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and complementary bodies such as the Transaction Advisory Fund. In doing so, the Biden Administration aims to complement domestic infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan and create new opportunities to demonstrate U.S. competitiveness abroad and create jobs at home (The White House 2021, n/p)¹⁷.

As a strategic move, Build Back Better World or B3W as its short form, has the following characteristics. First, it is a plan conceived by the United States or directly by President Biden’s advisors as a response to the concerns raised by many U.S. officials, policymakers and experts on China’s loans, investments and infrastructure projects worldwide. Most probably it will be led by the United States if it is going to be implemented, since the announcement made it clear the United States “as a lead partner in B3W”. Moreover, the statement release came on White House-topped paper, not the usual G7 branded document. Second, it is “a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies”. In other words, the B3W is an ideology-oriented project. Third, the initiative is

¹⁷ “FACT SHEET: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership”, The White House Statements and Releases, June 12, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>.

to meet the tremendous needs, e.g., “to narrow the \$40+trillion infrastructure need in the developing world”. Fourth, B3W will depend on private-sector. The document clearly indicates “the G7 and other like-minded partners will coordinate in mobilizing private-sector capital” and the term “private” appears six times in the full paper, either “private-sector capital”, “private capital” or “private sector”. Fifth, through B3W, all partner countries will coordinate in four prioritized areas of focus, e.g., climate, health and health security, digital technology, and gender equity and equality with the help of financial institutions. Sixth, in terms of geographical area that B3W is concerned, it will be global in scope, “from Latin America and the Caribbean to Africa to the Indo-Pacific. Different G7 partners will have different geographic orientations”. In addition, the statement made it plain that the Biden administration “aims to complement domestic infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan and create new opportunities to demonstrate US competitiveness abroad and create jobs at home”. This plan’s major purpose seems quite clear.

Although “China” appears only once in this document, yet President Joe Biden’s first and foremost reason behind meeting the G7 leaders was “to discuss strategic competition with China and commit to concrete actions to help meet the tremendous infrastructure need in Low and Middle-Income Countries”. Here, the intention of the B3W plan is quite evident, e.g., to compete with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), thus taking the commitment for concrete actions against Beijing. According to President Joe Biden, the G7 countries’ B3W partnership offers an alternative to China’s BRI, and the B3W plan would be greener and more inclusive. Furthermore, it will endorse a new vision for funding infrastructure projects in developing countries. Most likely, a new frontier of rivalry with Beijing is started by the US through the initiation of the B3W partnership along with six other rich countries of the world (Awan 2021). This posture was termed as “US and Chinese geopolitical rivalry” (Gu, Green and Yu 2021).

However, the B3W as “a global infrastructure program meant to counter China’s influence in the global South”, and “designed to outperform Beijing by offering alternative investment projects intended to entice the countries into choosing the United States over China” indicates Biden administration’s “narrow understanding of China’s global role”, as well as China-Africa cooperation, as Lina Benabdallah points out (Benabdallah 2021). Biden’s ideology is to take China as a rival and use the B3W to compete with the BRI. Yet, not all members of G7 are happy with that since some have close business relations with China. The B3W investments are to come from the private sector, which will seek profits, thus difficult to compete with state-sponsored/supported BRI loans and investments. In addition, the G7

countries' foreign reserves can't compare with China with about \$3.2 trillion foreign reserves. It is pointed out by an analyst that China, not the G7, has the best capability and comparative advantage in infrastructure building (Rana 2021).

Africa's role in BRI

In a China-Africa cooperation conference held in 2016 in the coast city Xiamen, Fujian Province, a number of African businessmen were optimistic about the development opportunities brought by the BRI to Africa, and anticipated it to promote the investment of Chinese enterprises in Africa. Deputy Consul General of Ethiopia in Guangzhou expected that the BRI can help Africa "find potential investment partners, develop cultural and tourism exchanges, promote trade and economic exchanges, establish sister cities, and strengthen mutual visits of high-level officials and infrastructure construction". He told dozens of Chinese entrepreneurs in what fields Ethiopia welcomes investment from Chinese companies, such as food processing, beverage, textile, clothing, paper making/paper product, and pharmaceutical industry, etc. He also listed the convenient airline and sea routes between Ethiopia and China¹⁸.

Africa's role in BRI is obvious, expressed both in history and in the present. This importance is shown in the following five aspects. First, the ports on the east and south coast of Africa form an important part of the Maritime Silk Road to provide a convenient channel for exchange for a long time. Many important ports on the west bank of the Indian Ocean have made great contributions to the prosperity of maritime trade in this region. The port of Alexandria in Egypt is an important hub connecting Africa, the Arab region and Asia. It is no exaggeration to say that the ancient Aksum (located in present Ethiopia) was the first-class trading power in the world trade at that time. It has an advantageous geographical location and controls two famous ports in the Red Sea, Adulis and Assab, both in today's Eritrea (Sellassie 1972, 15-17). Pliny pointed out in A.D. 75 that Adulis port was one of the most important ports in the Red Sea and "a very large centre of Ethiopian trade" (Sellassie 1972, 49). This makes it possible for Aksum to master commodities, information, management and channels in the process of world trade circulation. It is worth noting that it is indicated by the classic

¹⁸ "The African countries are competing for the fulcrum of Belt and Road initiated by China", *Reference News*, June 1, 2016.

Periplus that Adulis was one of the three ports “established by law”, the other two were located in Arabian coast (Mouza) and Persian Gulf (Charax) respectively (Palmer 1951, 156). “Persia, India and China were the main countries that regularly traded with Ethiopia”, and an Ethiopian historian also noticed from both local and Chinese sources that Chinese ships came during the ancient time, and what China imported from the region was what Ethiopia exported at the time (Sellassie 1972, 70). Judging from the extremely rich trade commodities, Aksum had trade exchanges with Eurasian countries at that time. It is not only a consumer of all kinds of goods, but also a broker engaged in changing trade. It got emeralds from Nubia and shipped them to northern India for sale. Some of the goods exported from Adulis were actually produced in inland Africa. The tariff system had been established and began to forge their own currency. Europeans and Asians came to Aksum to engage in trade activities and lived in cities and towns such as Adulis, Aksum, etc., and brought all kinds of exotic weighing instruments and daily necessities. On the East African coast, there are various relics such as porcelain and ancient coins of the exchange from Asia. For example, 176 Chinese coins of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) were found in Kazengwa, Zanzibar in 1945. Professor Marco Viganò of Addis Ababa University also discovered Song coins in the Ethiopian interior in the ruins of the medieval village of Harla, near Dire Dawa, an indication of Chinese trade’s extensive presence in East Africa (Li Anshan 2015; Abram 2015).

It is understood that since the ancient time the Maritime Silk Road has played an important role in trade relations and cultural exchanges between Asia, Africa and Europe. The process was however disrupted by the colonial expansion of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British empire. Today, it is realized that only by sharing the sea route and seeking common development can all the countries along the route become a beneficiary of the Maritime Silk Road. Therefore, China’s efforts to build a peaceful sea route and advocate the development of the BRI are by no means to seize the maritime trade channel, but to provide an opportunity to develop with other partners. Currently, Djibouti is playing an important role as an international port. In addition, Mogadishu, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Beira, Maputo, Durban, Elizabeth and Cape Town in the eastern and southern African coast all constitute important port groups in the western Indian Ocean.

Second, the African Islands (countries) in the western Indian Ocean form the fulcrum of the Maritime Silk Road. Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion and other important islands (countries) in the western Indian Ocean are important stops or transit ports of the ancient till modern time (Chan Ieng Him 2016, 18). Mauritius has been acting as a transit point

for migration and trade between the two continents of Asia and Africa, with St. Louis as an important port. Mauritius has developed steadily and rapidly since its independence, and its economy has changed from export processing and tourism to diversification. At present, it is undergoing a new economic transformation. Although Comoros and Seychelles experienced turbulence after their independence, they are now developing steadily. The seaports of the two island countries also play an important role. Madagascar is an important port in the western Indian Ocean and has always been regarded as the connecting hub between Africa and Asia. With its citizens as African and Asian descent, Madagascar becomes the natural link connecting the two continents. Although it covers an area of only 590,750 square kilometers, Madagascar has nearly ten ports around it, in the southeast and northwest part of the island.

Third, the maritime safety of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden constitutes an important guarantee for the Maritime Silk Road. In recent years, the safety of the Gulf of Aden has become an important focus of international shipping and world media. Aden Port on the north bank in the west of the Gulf of Aden and Djibouti Port on the south bank are important fuel ports and trade transit ports for routes from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, which have an important strategic position. It can be said that without the security of the Gulf of Aden, there will be no security of the Maritime Silk Road.

Fourth, Africa has become an investment and trade partner of Asian countries, vice versa. The economic and trade relations between Africa and Asia have been developing steadily. In 2000, the trade volume between China and Africa exceeded US\$10 billion for the first time. The bilateral trade volume increased from US\$10.5 billion in 2000 to US\$209 billion in 2019, and US\$186.9 billion in 2020. China has been Africa's largest trading partner for 12 consecutive years. It was reported that the trade volume between China and Africa reached the highest level in the same period (January-September) in history¹⁹. Following China, India in 2019 ranked second as the largest trading partner with Africa among the developing countries outside the continent. As Priyadarshi Dash pointed out in 2014:

19 The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "The trade volume between China and Africa reached the highest level in the same period in history", November 17, 2021. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1716656470591533044&wfr=spider&for=pc>. For the detail, see The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*, November 2021. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1716800/1716800.htm>.

India-Africa trade has gathered pace over the past few years characterized by a remarkable rise in Africa's exports to India...India's trade basket is heavily dominated by mineral products with very little diversification in the recent past. Along with tariff liberalization, India is lowering different forms of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) which would pave the way for higher trade between India and African economies [...] (Dash 2014, 268).

In 2001, the bilateral trade volume was only US\$5.3 billion. In 2010-2011, the volume reached US\$51.7 billion, the volume increased to US\$66.7 billion in 2019-2020, and exceeded US\$117 billion in 2020-2021 (Sun Xiaohan 2021).

In history, the Maritime Silk Road was an important channel to connect Asia and Europe for carrying out international trade through the Western Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, up to the Atlantic Ocean. Africa in history was an important hub and transit point for maritime exchanges between Asia and Europe, especially the West bank of the Indian Ocean (Chan Ieng Him 2016). However, after the Portuguese's arrival, the predatory development was brought by Western colonialists. The sea road was interrupted, business twisted, prisoners slaughtered, and their mutilated hands, noses and ears were sent back as mockery souvenirs, as American historian R.R. Palmer described vividly in his well-known *A History of the Modern World*. A Brahman in the East African coast survived various humiliations and dragged his mutilated body back to see his compatriots, which became the first understanding of Westerners in India. The cruel image served as a new linkage between Europe and Asia started by the Portuguese monopoly, transferred to the Dutch control, and to the maritime hegemony of Britain and France, armed by Mahan's sea power theory. After African countries' independence, especially with the speedy globalization, the role of transit between Asia and Europe becomes more important with increase of trade owing to the technological development, industrial division of labor, and raise of living standard. The Cape of Good Hope and the Suez Canal are important passages from Asia to Europe. The BRI covers a wide scope and almost all African countries are enthusiastic about it. Some of them can serve as a direct destination of the BRI, some as extension or transit to the destiny of either Africa, Europe or Asia (Liu Weicai 2016, 70-77).

Since the introduction of the BRI in 2013, it has gone through a promotion process from initiative to vision, and then to practice. From 2014 to 2020, China's total non-financial direct investment in other countries along the Belt and Road reached US\$104.72 billion, with the annual average hitting

US\$14.96 billion. In 2020, China's non-financial direct investment in the countries along the Belt and Road reached US\$17.79 billion, up more than 18 percent year-on-year (Hu Biliang 2021). According to the Refinitiv database, in mid-2019, the BRI comprised some 2631 projects valued at US\$3.7 trillion (Rana 2021). The BRI is a proven success story of China and other participating countries, and the success explains why it has aroused positive response around the world. Now, more than 170 countries, including almost all African countries and international organizations, have signed cooperation documents with China. As the first official member of the European Union to join the BRI, Italy's cooperation with China will surely promote the expansion of China-EU relations under the framework. China and countries along the Belt and Road surely hope that it will be a great opportunity for peace and development. Building a fair, just, democratic and free world is the common value foundation of the community of common destiny of mankind.

On the other hand, how about the B3W? First, it was just put forward and we have to wait and see. It is not clear for the time being what the B3W will look like, yet the B3W has its ideological value in choosing its partner. As Augustin Holl said, it is therefore "normal for Western powers to try to launch initiative to counter the rising China power [...] It is not clear what the B3W will look like, but the oppressed and dominated nations of this world have the right to try alternatives"²⁰. It is not easy to cheat people any more in a more complex world.

Policymakers must take seriously the importance of investing in long-term relations with everyday citizens in countries in Africa and elsewhere, regardless of their governments' ideologies. Divisive events such as the Summit for Democracy, by contrast, can end up pushing excluded countries closer to Beijing (Benabdallah 2021, n/p).

The problem here is that the intention of the B3W Program itself is to fight China, a country with a different ideology and culture. "Democracy" here becomes a self-defined standard to divide the world, the same logic as the old colonialist trick to divide the world by the Eurocentric standard of "civilization".

²⁰ Augustin Ferdinand Charles Holl, "#B3W Initiative-G7, #africa #democracy #china", <https://www.linkedin.com/in/augustin-ferdinand-charles-holl-8293b411/detail/recent-activity/shares/>.

Conclusion

Both China and Africa have a great history and have made a contribution to mankind, yet they were both regarded as “barbaric” by the Europeans during the colonial period, judging from their standard of “civilization”. According to this standard, people on Earth are divided into two categories, e.g., European nations as “civilized”, and all colonized nations as “barbaric” or “uncivilized”. In contemporary times, the US, with its partners, has used the same trick and divided the world into the “modern” and “traditional”, the “democratic” and “autocratic”, etc. The game of the categorization of “we” and “others” can’t play any longer.

It is a warning that there are three paradoxes in the concept and practice of so-called “civilization” (Li Anshan 2021; Li Anshan forthcoming). Paradox one, more civilized nations have produced more waste. It has become a common knowledge that industrialization goes with by-products, e.g. ecological damage, shoddy manufacturing, environmental pollution, etc. North-South imbalance of global wealth distribution has produced great environmental damage to the South. The transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, deforestation, gradual loss of wildlife and biodiversity, the global spread of toxic chemicals and transfer of pollution intensive industries to the South, etc. This indicates the inequality of North-South order in the world²¹. Paradox two, more civilized nations used more terrible weapons to damage the world. In modern time, the “civilized” people have more cruel means to kill each other. In the history, weapons have evolved from spears, bows and swords to today’s nuclear bombs and bacterial weapons. The means of war have been continuously improved, advanced and become more cruel. During the World War I, about 8.5 million soldiers and 13 million civilians died, yet during the World War II, the number of casualties is about 130 million. Paradox three, more civilized nations have more people committing suicide. According to WHO data of age-standardized suicide rate, the more civilized, the higher (WHO 2021, 14-28). Aimé Césaire once pointed out, “A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization” (Césaire 1972, 1).

Since there are differences in geographical conditions and natural surroundings, it is quite improper to use physical things to define civilization, e.g. plow/wheel/domestication/weapons /architecture/smelting/city/

21 There are a lot of books on the subject. See also (Felipe Fernández-Armesto 2001, 435-468).

language/religion, etc. (Gong 2002, 77-96). Therefore, it is necessary to redefine the concept of “civilization”. Civilization is the way of human survival and development or the ability to deal with three kinds of contradictions. The first is the method to deal with the contradiction between man and nature. The second is the way to deal with the contradiction between man and man or the capability to coexist with others. The third is the capability to mediate personal contradictions. Civilization is characterized by pluralism & integration, continuity & adjustment, stability & evolution. Mutual learning is the best choice for the peaceful continuation and harmonious coexistence of different civilizations (Li Anshan 2018).

In recent years, China has established dialogue mechanisms on African affairs with other partners such as Britain, France and the EU, and signed agreements on the framework of third-party market cooperation, with progress made in cooperation in the fields such as agriculture, electricity, ports and water projects. In May, 2021, China and Africa jointly launched the Initiative on Partnership for Africa’s Development and called on other countries to provide more support to the African continent in its fight against the pandemic, promote trade and investment, and provide more debt relief. In a video summit with French President Emmanuel Macron and then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Xi Jinping invited the two countries to take part in the initiative. In September 2021, President Xi proposed a Global Development Initiative at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, calling for promoting global development through balanced, coordinated and inclusive growth.

Different countries’ summits with Africa are becoming more international and inclusive. Africa’s summits with the United Kingdom, France and Japan emphasize coordination among the UN bodies, global financial organizations, regional organizations and other key stakeholders, and pay attention to building inclusive dialogue mechanisms with private sectors, media outlets, NGOs, groups of youth and women (Zhou Yuyuan 2021, n/p).

Regarding the B3W partners, I would like to offer an alternative for the B3W – not to be a rival to the BRI, but a complement to the BRI, thus, to promote the South in their struggle for a better life. The cooperation between China and the US is explained by Jing Gu and her colleagues as “sustain-

able development diplomacy". After the analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, which indicates the interconnection of the world, they consider sustainable development diplomacy is a new approach to prioritize development strategies of different states and work on common shared challenges. "The US-China relationship is the defining geopolitical contest of the twenty-first century. The US-China relationship will play a defining role in tackling these shared challenges. Whether or not the US and China can cooperate with each other is key to tackling the shared crises" (Gu, Green and Yu 2021, 57). The result of the rivalry is unexpected, yet the ideal way is to cooperate with each other in three levels of the international community, e.g. a UN supranational body, the inter-state level and the professional experts/NGOs representing international civil society. "It is believed that if the two superpowers could bury their geopolitical rivalry to make way for a common future of mankind, all else would probably fall into place to ground a new sustainable development diplomacy" (Gu, Green and Yu 2021, 8). In that case, the South, especially Africa, would be beneficiary and the whole world would be more unified. China and the US would contribute a great deal to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Now the COVID-19 pandemic shows that human society is facing a great challenge. There was no parallel in history. Africa is suffering from this unprecedented disaster like other continents. The COVID-19 is the same for everyone, whether poor or rich, it is the same for all countries, whether South or North, and it is the same for all skin groups, whether Black, White, Yellow or Brown. In the face of this common threat, mankind can resist disease only by uniting and working together. Otherwise, no one will be spared. In this way, the "community of human destiny" has changed from a formulation or strategy to an unavoidable realistic choice. The BRI offers a practical way to tackle the poverty and development with joint efforts.

As for China-Africa relations in the future, certainly there will be more problems ahead. Yet my view is unique: the more problems, the better. Why? If there is no contact, there will be no problem. When relations get wider and deeper, more problems would definitely occur. However, with equal relationships and mutual respect, China and Africa can sit down, exchange ideas freely and find a solution. Once the problem is solved, relations become more solid.

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with China-Africa cooperation in the context of BRI-B3W. The first part illustrates the contrast of some predictions about the development of the 21st century and the reality. The second studies the various fabrications and the facts of China-Africa relations. The third examines the BRI (the Belt and Road Initiative) proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013 and the B3W (Build Back Better World) put forward by Joe Biden in 2021. The fourth explores the African role in the BRI. The fifth studies the concept and practice of "civilization" in relation to world development. The author suggests that the BRI and the B3W should cooperate with each other to make the South, especially the African continent, a beneficiary thus contribute a great deal to the whole world.

KEY WORDS

Africa. China. China-Africa relations. BRI. B3W. Civilization.

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