The FOCAC Process and Sino-African Strategic Partnership

Garth Shelton

Abstract: Historical records confirm that China's increasing engagement with Africa through growing trade and investment has been a major boost for African economies. China's comprehensive commitment to Africa through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has also made significant contribution to Africa's overall economic development. The constructivist approach underpinning this paper suggests that FOCAC's evolution can be positively shaped by all active participants toward increased mutual benefit and positive outcomes. With all the consensus and commitments reached at the Johannesburg FOCAC summit (FOCAC VI) held in December 2015, a stronger Sino-African partnership is expected to take shape as both sides take efforts to enhance their win-win cooperation. The key future challenges for China and Africa are to implement the FOCAC VI Action Plan and develop a long-term FOCAC agenda which will broaden and strengthen win-win outcomes in the years to come. At the same time, Africa should try its best to ensure the successful implementation of FOCAC projects and facilitate China's engagement, for a business-friendly environment in Africa, whether in policy, legal or social

Garth Shelton is Professor at the International Relations Department, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. His mailing address is: Private Bag 3 WITS, 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa. He can also be reached at garthshelton@wits.ac.za

aspects, is the key to promoting the Sino-African strategic partnership and enhancing sustainable development of the African continent.

Keywords: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC); Chinese Dream; Afro-Asian solidarity; *African Union Agenda 2063*; Sino-African strategic partnership.

Over the last two decades, China has increasingly prioritized Africa as a strategic partner at both the political and economic levels, seeking to link African commodity and consumer markets to its rapidly growing economy. China's commitment to nonintervention in African domestic affairs and its determination to build partnerships based on equality and mutual respect have received warm welcome throughout the continent. African states have been quick to respond to China's positive approach, and agreements on a wide range of issues have been concluded. In the next few years, possibly even decades, African affairs will be greatly shaped, or impacted, by China's commercial involvement. China's growing economic influence in Africa and globally will have significant long-term consequences for the continent's political and economic evolution.¹ The enormous potential for this new form of South-South cooperation has been recognized by the African Union (AU) where a high-level working group of the AU Commission has been set up to advance closer Sino-African relations.

Founded in October 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) sets a good example for such South-South cooperation by a constructivist approach which posits that in today's changing global system, win-win outcomes can be best achieved and augmented through enhanced diplomatic dialogue and constructive multilateral interaction. Since its establishment, the FOCAC has offered China and Africa an institutional framework for seeking mutually beneficial outcomes and developing their strategic partnership. Looking into the future, success of the FOCAC will largely lie in Africa's hands, as enhanced investment conditions and strengthened trade procedures on the continent are required to attract inward foreign direct investment (FDI) and to facilitate long-term sustainable development.

¹Garth Le Pere, "What's on China's Agenda 2063?" *The Star*, December 4, 2015, p. 35.

Closer Sino-African Interdependence

A broad assessment of China's evolving and growing engagement with Africa, either through the FOCAC or bilateral interaction, suggests a significant range of benefits for both sides.² Two-way trade has grown dramatically in recent years, making China one of Africa's biggest trading partners. China's development assistance is expanding, and its investment footprint covers key economic sectors on the continent.³ Research on China-Africa trade concludes that China's commercial engagement with the continent has had "positive direct and indirect benefits on resource-exporting African economies."⁴ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has confirmed that Africa's increasing growth rate over the last twenty years was largely due to increased commodity demand from China. African analysts also endorse this view and suggest that increased trade and bilateral interaction between China and Africa have been beneficial to both sides.⁵ As the Chinese economy grows and the middle class expands, the future range of African export opportunities to China will be even greater.⁶ A marginal slowdown in China's economic growth may have some negative implications for Africa's exports to China, but overall the trend is expected to remain very positive.⁷

China is willing to invest in a wide range of economic activities on the African continent while facilitating skills and technology transfers. Chinese investments in hydrocarbons, mining, infrastructure, and telecommunications are not only laying the foundation for the continent's economic take-off, but they also promote the establishment of small enterprises in Africa and concomitant employment opportunities. To be more specific, Africa needs approximately \$30 billion a year to develop infrastructure. China's

²"Sixty Years of Africa-Asia Solidarity," *The Star*, December 4, 2015, p. 15.

³Hannah Edinger, "Shape Shifting Economy," *ChinAfrica*, No. 2, February 2016, p. 14.

⁴Raphael Kaplinsky, "Asian Drivers and Sub-Sahara Africa — The Challenge to Development Strategy," Rockefeller Foundation Report (New York City: Rockefeller Foundation, July 2007).

⁵See, for example, Shannon Ebrahim, "A Game Changer for Africa," *The Star*, December 4, 2015, p. 34.

⁶Bernard Sathekge, "China Interested in Africa," *The New Age*, December 4, 2015, p. 22.

⁷Lucie Morangi, Li Lanxing, and Li Yingqing, "Africa's Cup of Tea," *China Daily*, March 6, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2016-03/06/content_23758810.htm.

willingness and ability to help build infrastructure in Africa provides a solid foundation for sustainable development of the continent and benefits the population as a whole. Chinese construction companies are very active across the continent, filling the gap left by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) which are less willing to finance infrastructure. African leaders especially acclaim China's enthusiastic approach and ability to complete projects on time. The same is true for China's involvement in developing Africa's communications networks.

China's willingness to provide aid, where feasible, is welcomed throughout Africa. Almost 50 percent of China's total overseas development assistance now goes to Africa, which helps the continent to accelerate its own development in accordance with local conditions and requirements.⁸ Its agricultural and technical assistance makes an extraordinary contribution to many African countries, helping to improve food security and advance water security through the construction of wells and irrigation systems.⁹ Most importantly, China's aid packages are relatively easy to negotiate and offer African states many new opportunities for rewarding economic development.

In addition, Chinese exports to Africa greatly benefit consumers who cannot afford higher-cost imports from other parts of the world. Suggestions that Chinese imports undermine local manufacturing are largely exaggerated, as in most cases there is little evidence of competitive manufacturing capacity in African countries. As a matter of fact, the central challenge to Africa's diminutive industrial capacity is from globalization in general, rather than specifically from China. This conclusion is largely supported by

With its large investment, aid and trade-promoting measures, China has been a major contributor to Africa's social and economic progress in the past decades.

⁸Zhang Weijie, "Chinese Dream and African Dream," *Contemporary World*, No. 4, 2013.

⁹"Speech by Mr. Lu Shaye, Director-General of African Department of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the seminar of Chinese Dream, African Dream — Achieving Common Development through Joint Efforts," Chinese Foreign Ministry, July 17, 2013, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceke/eng/zfgx/t1060244.htm>.

research on the global textile markets and the impact on African producers.¹⁰

This special Sino-African relationship is underpinned by the solidarity built through their common anti-colonial struggles, as Mr. Meles Zenawi, former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, enthusiastically elaborated:

The vibrant partnership between Africa and China, I believe, is based on two fundamental principles. The first and one that has been abundantly manifested during the anti-colonial struggle in Africa is the principle of solidarity between Africa and China. Our solidarity is based not just on the benefits we get from it but primarily on a set of principles that we all adhere to, principles very persuasively outlined by the late Prime Minister of China Zhou Enlai during his first visit to Africa. Solidarity constitutes the basic structure of our partnership; it is the sturdy machine through which our partnership is expressed. Seeking win-win solutions is the second principle of our partnership. Operating within the framework of the principles of our solidarity, it reflects our deep commitment to insure mutual benefit in each engagement, rather than the maximization of benefits to one or the other side. Seeking win-win solutions provides energy to our partnership. It is the fuel that drives the machine of the partnership.¹¹

As one can see, Afro-Asian solidarity, which has been forged in the anti-imperialist struggles, provides the political foundation for the evolving China-Africa relationship. With similar historical experiences as the foundation of Sino-African interaction, Beijing has a clear and empathetic understanding of Africa's struggle against external interference and economic challenges. China thus has the potential to become a true partner in Africa's social and economic development. As President Xi Jinping reiterated, the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation is directly linked to Africa's dream

¹⁰See, for example, Mike Morris, "Globalization, the Changed Global Dynamics of the Clothing and Textile Value Chains and the Impact on Sub-Saharan Africa" (Vienna: United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2008).

¹¹Meles Zenawi's speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Ministerial FOCAC Conference at Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, November 8, 2009.

of poverty reduction, greater self-reliance, and economic development.¹² African commentators have welcomed President Xi's comments, suggesting that both China and Africa share a common dream of economic development and improved standards of living. In this sense, China and Africa have a shared destiny and common development objectives.

China's contribution to Africa is not limited to the liberation of the continent, but includes a sincere engagement in supporting and promoting its economic development as well. China's constructive pragmatism is seen as a welcome alternative to the West's restrictive and conditional approach. There are no specific political strings attached to China's friendship and diplomatic engagement with African countries, and China's action-oriented and functional engagement is recognized as offering African countries new opportunities for commercial engagement. New initiatives such as China's "Maritime Silk Road" plan further strengthens prospects for China-Africa cooperation.¹³

For Africa, South-South cooperation offers a shield against exploitation by wealthy, industrialized nations, and a realistic alternative to North-South trading patterns which have dominated global commerce since the colonial era. South-South solidarity offers the promise of countering the increasingly negative consequences of globalization. In this context, the real value of the Sino-African relationship, especially in China's willingness to set a common agenda for interaction, lies in Africa's opportunity to work with China in better managing globalization for their mutual benefit. A successful outcome for South-South cooperation should be based on unity and solidarity among countries of the South with the long-term objective of creating a more just and equitable international order within which accelerated development of poorer countries is facilitated.

Promoting sustainable economic development will remain a key challenge for all

The Sino-African relationship sets a good example for South-South cooperation in managing globalization for their mutual benefit.

¹²South China Morning Post, *The China Renaissance* (Hong Kong: SCMP Books, 2013).

¹³Maite Nkooana-Mashabane, "Africa's Agenda 2063 and China's One Belt and One Road Initiative," *The Star*, December 6, 2015, p. 2.

governments over the next decade and beyond. Within this context, Africa is expected to become increasingly important. Africa's enormous mineral wealth and untapped human potential offer significant opportunities for future global economic growth. Over the last two decades or so, a cooperative interdependence has grown between China and Africa — China needs Africa's raw materials for growth and Africa needs to sell these raw materials to China for its continued growth; at the political level, both sides seek revisions in the global institutions which constrain economic prosperity in the developing world. The China–Africa interdependence has created a special relationship grounded on a common destiny. The challenge ahead is for both sides to enhance the current win-win relationship by deepening their cooperation on all dimensions while trying to develop new areas of commercial interaction.

FOCAC as a Model of South-South Cooperation

The development of a common China-Africa program, through the FOCAC, to advance a “post-Washington consensus” provides Africa with numerous prospects for improved developmental opportunities and suggests a new agenda for both economic and political relations in our era of deepening globalization. In response to the new opportunities provided by China's extraordinary economic achievements and its willingness to actively engage Africa as a development partner, Africa's leadership has increasingly embraced China's growing engagement and seeks to cooperatively develop realistic and achievable objectives for economic growth and prosperity.¹⁴ Both countries are also working more closely together to push forward the agenda for the global transition from a unipolar to a more just and equitable multipolar world.¹⁵

The FOCAC process may be defined as a form of “international diplomatic collaboration” through which compatible interests and objectives are investigated, aggregated, and strengthened. Professor K. J. Holsti has defined such collaboration as the following: First, a perception that a

¹⁴D. Dimow, “Evening the Odds for Future Sino-Nigerian Relations,” *Pretoria News*, December 6, 2015, p. 10.

¹⁵P. Johnson, “China and Africa, Past and Present,” *Southern Times*, November 29, 2015, p. 28.

number of interests, values or foreign policy objectives are shared among two or more states and that their cooperative behavior is mutually beneficial in the long run. A common development agenda, for example, can form the basis of a process of international collaboration. Second, perception or expectation by a state that the policies and actions of another may be beneficial in achieving its own defined objectives or national interests. Expectation of mutual benefit through collaborative transactions thus underpins the initiation, form, and function of the process. Third, collaboration implies agreement on the substance of the international transactions between participating states. For example, specific trade and investment agreements may be concluded and implemented. Fourth, rules or procedures for inter-state transactions are agreed on in order to facilitate complex diplomatic exchange, constructive negotiation and agreement. Under this backdrop, pre-arranged meetings, procedural rules and specific diplomatic etiquette all form parts of the process. Fifth, inter-state transactions focus on advancing common interests and fulfilling negotiated agreements.¹⁶

In this respect, the FOCAC represents a quasi-institutionalized collaborative mechanism, designed and intended to advance Sino-African cooperation in a rapidly globalizing world and expanding South-South cooperation. The comprehensive, collective system implies a high degree of cooperation and policy synthesis, producing productive, comprehensive, and collaborative arrangements, with customs, habits, and high-level friendships overcoming minor differences of opinion in favor of long-term mutual benefits. The evolving FOCAC process suggests an increase in the volume of inter-state transactions intended to provide new opportunities and prospects for mutual benefits. This process encourages an increasing number of cooperative ventures, commercial endeavors, and political concord.¹⁷

The various FOCAC declarations and minutes of proceedings provide the foundation for the evolving collaborative agenda. The FOCAC

¹⁶Kalevi J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, London: Prentice Hall, 1972, p. 495.

¹⁷T. Monama, "The Goal of People-to-People Diplomacy," *Pretoria News*, December 6, 2015, p. 11.

deliberations have brought African and Chinese leaders closer together in crafting a shared vision for policy coordination, expanded commercial interaction, and common prosperity. This offers Africa an opportunity to shape Sino-African relations through high-level consultation and constructive diplomatic interaction. The FOCAC has promoted a process of mutually beneficial complex interdependence between China and Africa, underpinned by China's commitment to peaceful coexistence, equality, and respect for sovereign independence. Africa has gained significantly from this and stands to gain further through ongoing interaction and diplomatic exchange. The regular and structured diplomatic interaction provides a mechanism to identify and develop new opportunities.¹⁸ The FOCAC thus reflects the form and content of Sino-African relations while mapping a future for both sides to achieve common prosperity. In this context, Africa can share the Chinese Dream by defining and advancing a compatible "African Dream." This process is now manifested in the African Union's *Agenda 2063*, which outlines an African Dream for economic development.¹⁹

FOCAC represents a quasi-institutionalized collaborative mechanism to pursue mutual benefits for China and Africa in the ever more globalized world.

Through the FOCAC, China has pledged support in advancing Africa's agenda, including admonishing the wealthy industrialized nations to fulfill development promises to bring Africa in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the conclusion of world trade negotiations, and better representation for Africa in global arenas. China has undertaken to support African unity via the African Union, African regional integration efforts, and the AU *Agenda 2063* development program.²⁰

¹⁸Andrew Moody, "Everyone's Friend," *China Daily*, December 3, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁹C. Alden and E. Sidriopoulos, "Chinese Dream Frames This Phase of Foreign Engagement," *The Star*, December 3, 2015, p. 13.

²⁰C. Maponya, "Chinese Cooperation Will Help Achieve Africa Agenda 2063," *The Star*, December 4, 2015, p. 2.

Besides trade and investment, China has become a key development donor, investor, and promoter of peace and security in Africa.²¹ In the meantime, China and Africa are linked by a common objective to advance the South-South political agenda through FOCAC. To be more specific, China and Africa are seeking a stronger voice for the developing world on the world stage and in international institutions such as the United Nations, IMF, and the World Bank. China is seen as a partner of Africa in the struggle to democratize international forums and reshape global development agendas. In this process, Africa's perception of China has been shaped by China's historical commitment to Africa's freedom struggles, and a strong and enduring sentiment of liberation solidarity underpins the relationship. China's successful development model, grounded in strong state management of economic liberalization and development, also holds wide appeal in Africa, where states are seeking to escape the poverty trap.

The Marching FOCAC Process

There are many different areas of China-Africa cooperation, driven by both the FOCAC process and normal diplomatic bilateral interaction. In terms of infrastructure development, China is providing the foundation for long-term economic growth on the African continent. Without adequate infrastructure, poverty and development cannot be addressed in Africa. The TAZARA Railway remains the model of China-Africa cooperation in connecting African countries and providing a transport network for integration and economic development. China is now well-positioned to build an African rail network which could form the foundation for longer-term economic growth.²² Moreover, rail networks can be complemented with high-speed trains, as Chinese-made high-speed trains are

²¹Michael Cohen and Ting Shi, "Xi's African Tour Highlights China's Expanding Security Role," Bloomberg, December 1, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-30/xi-s-african-tour-highlights-china-s-expanding-security-role>.

²²Hou Weili, "Benefits down the Line: Chinese Construction Company that Built TAZARA Railway Brings Skills and Employment to East Africa," *ChinAfrica*, No. 5, May 2014, pp. 22–23.

now being exported worldwide.²³ According to the consulting company, Deloitte, the majority of rail projects in Africa are now funded by China, such as the Nairobi-Mombasa high-speed line and the links between Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Sudan.²⁴ China's construction projects in Africa are strengthening prospects for regional integration and increased cross-border trade. At the same time, a number of Chinese companies are now active in developing Africa's communications networks, which will provide a new platform for the ever more dynamic economic activities in Africa.

In agricultural cooperation, through the FOCAC and a range of bilateral undertakings, China is building dams and irrigation systems in Africa, along with agricultural training and assistance. China's assistance constitutes a significant contribution to strengthening Africa's food security. China has strengthened Africa's self-reliance in food production by building a number of agriculture demonstration centers in twenty African countries, as well as sending agricultural specialists to train and advise African farmers. Chinese agriculture demonstration centers in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Rwanda have shown significant progress in helping to boost farm outputs.²⁵

China is also helping to enhance Africa's energy security through the construction of power stations across the continent. Energy supply is critical for Africa's economic development and longer-term growth. According to the World Bank, China is now the single biggest financier of infrastructure in Africa, providing for the construction of key infrastructure in numerous countries.²⁶ The China National Petroleum Corporation's (CNPC) US\$1.2 billion natural gas pipeline linking Dares Salaam to the gas field of southern Tanzania will boost local economies and contribute to the region's energy security.²⁷

In addition, China has been a major partner in health-care cooperation and has contributed significantly to improving health services in Africa.

²³Deng Yaqing, "Alliance between Giants," *ChinAfrica*, No. 12, December 2014, pp. 42–43.

²⁴R. Spee, "Eastern Promise," *ChinAfrica*, No. 6, June 2014, p. 34.

²⁵George Okore, "Africa's Agricultural Ally," *ChinAfrica*, No. 11, November 2014, p. 32.

²⁶A. Dulleh, "Building Bridges, Laying Roads," *The Africa Report*, No. 68, March 2015, p. 11.

²⁷Wanjohi Kabukuru, "Asian Money Talking and Competing in COMESA," *New African*, April 9, 2015, p. 39.

The dispatch of Chinese doctors to numerous hospitals in Africa has for many years been a key feature of the China-Africa partnership. Chinese doctors and health-care professionals are helping to improve medical systems across Africa and helping to train locals to provide better services.²⁸

Peacekeeping is another key area of Chinese assistance to Africa and is expected to become even more important as Africa seeks to create a favorable social and business environment. Since 1992, China has contributed almost 9,000 peacekeepers to UN peacekeeping missions. Currently, China deploys 1,975 People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops and civilian police officers to 13 of the 17 ongoing UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs). In global terms, China now ranks 11th among the 119 troop-contributing nations to UNPKOs and is the leading contributor among the UN Security Council's five permanent members (P5).²⁹ Almost 75 percent of China's peacekeepers are deployed in Africa, showcasing Beijing's willingness to participate directly in building peace and stability on the continent.³⁰

Sino-African cooperation has been developing rapidly in other fields as well, thanks in large part to the FOCAC process. For instance, China-Africa trade and investment has grown significantly since the beginning of the century. Financing from Chinese banks has made this possible and has directly contributed to increased economic growth in Africa. Climate change cooperation has been broadened in recent years and new possibilities are emerging for cooperation in the widespread application of green technologies in Africa. A China-Africa "green partnership" to address increased energy demands while protecting the environment is now emerging.

In short, Chinese engagement with African countries through the FOCAC has greatly enhanced the capacity building in Africa, and the policy adjustments that African governments have made have proven crucial to the increasingly business-friendly

The FOCAC process both deepens the Sino-African strategic partnership and helps enhance the capacity building of African countries.

²⁸James Wan, "Call the Chinese Doctor," *New African*, March 10, 2015, p. 22.

²⁹Pan Xiaoqiao, "Commitment to Peace," *Beijing Review*, Vol. 56, No. 32 (August 2015), pp. 26–27.

³⁰Hou Weili, "Mission Mali," *ChinAfrica*, No. 12, December 2014, pp. 22–24.

environment in the continent, facilitating growing inflow of FDI which brings new technologies, skills, capital, and—most importantly—jobs for Africa's youth.³¹

The Sino-African partnership and the FOCAC process have contributed directly and significantly to Africa's efforts to meet the MDGs. According to recent studies by the World Bank, the IMF, and a number of private consultancies, Africa has developed increasing potential for future growth. The WB forecasted a growth rate of 4.5 percent for Sub-Saharan Africa and 3.5 percent for North Africa during 2015 with continued strong growth over the next decade.³² Moreover, many studies suggest that there are also higher profit margins in Africa. Research by the Economist Corporate Network (ECN) indicates that Africa offers not only growth, but high profit opportunities.³³ There are other positive trends in Africa which are expected to underpin further positive China-Africa interaction. For example, over 350 million Africans now constitute a new middle class, earning up to US\$20 per day, and Africa's total consumer spending is expected to total US\$1.4 trillion by 2020.³⁴

The historical record, underpinned by the various FOCAC meetings, suggests that China and Africa are now bound by a comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnership, confirming a shared destiny and a common core interest in helping each other to advance economic and social development. While there are obviously challenges, misunderstandings, and complexities in the China-Africa relationship, as there are in any relationship, the FOCAC forum provides the time and place to resolve their differences in an amicable and effective way.

Way Beyond FOCAC VI

Guided by the theme to "Open a New Era of China-Africa Win-Win Cooperation and Common Development," President Xi outlined ten

³¹Kingsley C. Moghalu, *Emerging Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 167–198.

³²Jana Marais, "What 2015 Has in Store for the World's Economies," *Finweek*, January 15, 2015, p. 14.

³³Ameez Omarjee, "Africa: A Bright Spot for Economic Growth and Opportunity," *Finweek*, April 10, 2015, p. 22.

³⁴Africa Dimension, "African Cities," *African Business*, March 2015, p. 11.

cooperation plans at the Johannesburg FOCAC Summit (also the sixth ministerial meeting, or FOCAC VI). President Xi's FOCAC plans for Africa included the following: industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure development, financial assistance, green technology assistance, trade and investment facilitation, cooperation on poverty reduction, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and assistance in promoting peace and security.³⁵ The plans are to be implemented based on the "five major pillars" of the Sino-African partnership including political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation, mutually enriching cultural exchanges, mutual assistance in security and solidarity, and coordination in international affairs.³⁶ The FOCAC VI program thus builds significantly on past FOCAC undertakings and action plans and offers Africa significant prospects for continued economic development and prosperity.

The five pillars confirm China's historical friendship and solidarity with Africa while the ten plans for China-Africa cooperation over the next five years and beyond are clearly in line with Africa's own thinking and long-term economic development programs. There is significant synergy between the FOCAC VI Action Plan and the *African Union Agenda 2063* — both emphasize industrialization, agricultural modernization, poverty reduction, investment facilitation and peace and security;³⁷ both also focus on creative and innovative suggestions for advancing Africa's long-term economic development. The foundation built by past FOCAC programs underpins the prospects for expanded and strengthened cooperation in the future.³⁸ Further win-win results are expected from the implementation of the FOCAC VI action plan. Moreover, the upgrading of China-Africa relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership is expected to create new opportunities for constructive and rewarding commercial interactions.³⁹

³⁵Herbert Moyo, "Capital Injection," *ChinAfrica*, No. 1, January 2016, p. 40.

³⁶"Open a New Era of China-Africa Win-Win Cooperation and Common Development," Chinese Foreign Ministry, December 4, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfqcxqhbhbldhdjbbwnfjxgsfwbfnyhnsbzczzfhzltfh/t1321614.shtml

³⁷Nkosazana C. Dlamini-Zuma, "Aiming to Silence the Guns," *Africa Independent*, December 4, 2015, p. 37.

³⁸R. Cokayne, "Chinese Projects in Africa Primarily on Infrastructure," *Business Report*, December 4, 2015, p. 20.

³⁹Ni Yanshuo, "In Search of Synergy," *ChinAfrica*, No. 1, January 2016, p. 35.

China's commitment to Africa through the FOCAC has been both comprehensive and constructive, and it has made significant contribution to Africa's overall economic development. The broadening and deepening of the FOCAC agenda, through FOCAC VI, will strengthen the process and build a stronger foundation for long-term friendship and cooperation.⁴⁰ The key challenges are to implement the FOCAC VI Action Plan and to develop a long-term FOCAC agenda which will broaden and strengthen win-win outcomes in the years to come.

The constructivist approach underpinning this paper suggests that FOCAC's evolution can be positively shaped by all active participants toward increased mutual benefit and positive outcomes. Africa can — and should — take every effort to ensure the successful implementation of FOCAC projects and facilitate China's engagement. Li Anshan and Yazini April have suggested that "there is a lot more that can still be accomplished under the FOCAC umbrella in promoting cooperation and development between the two regions, however, the onus is now on Africa to play a more constructive role in the relationship."⁴¹ The framework for Africa's successful development agenda would include pro-growth policies; inclusive systems of government; improved political and corporate governance; conflict resolution and more competitive labor practices. FOCAC VI offers many new possibilities, but Africa should step up efforts to ensure effective implementation of the new action plan. Impediments to implementation, such as bureaucratic delays and extensive project planning, should be urgently addressed to clear the way for China's expanding engagement.

Consider investment and trade, for example. The African Development Bank's research suggests that the positive impact of Chinese investments is held back by Africa's own institutional and administrative weaknesses. According to the African Development Bank, the overall economic impact of China on Africa's development, through the FOCAC and bilateral channels, varies according to the size, economic structure and quality of governance and institutions in African economies. China's impact is more positive in resource-rich African economies which benefit

⁴⁰Tian Xuejun, "China to Create a Miracle of Economic Transformation," *The Star*, December 6, 2015, p. 3.

⁴¹Li Anshan and F. Y. April, *Forum on China–Africa Cooperation — The Politics of Human Resource Development*, (Tshwan: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2013), p. 8.

significantly from Chinese demand for raw materials. However, African exports to China are limited by domestic constraints, including poor infrastructure, over-regulation, and a lack of skilled labor. China is supporting export diversification in Africa through a number of special economic zones (SEZs) located in Zambia, Mauritius, Egypt, Ethiopia and Nigeria. Over time, the SEZs are expected to attract significant investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, which will form a major foundation for job creation and economic development in Africa. However, for the SEZs to reach full potential, African governments need to provide strong domestic policy frameworks, including good corporate governance, a competitive economic environment and the availability of skilled workers.

Africa should also work harder to support economic growth in China and the fulfillment of the Chinese Dream. In this regard, Africa should focus on guaranteeing the long-term supply of raw materials to China. At the same time, Africa should also use its raw materials advantage to advance its own specific development objectives and industrialization process.⁴² China's success in this area can help and promote Africa's long-term development. The greater coordination of Africa's negotiating position underpinned by specific common interests would strengthen Africa's role in the FOCAC process and likely produce a reinforced win-win outcome. As a full participant in FOCAC, the AU could take the lead in consulting with African leaders, synthesizing responses, and forming a common approach for more effective and constructive interactions with China.

Meanwhile, African countries can encourage more Chinese SEZs in Africa which are likely to promote new investments and commercial

To better implement the FOCAC VI agenda, Africa needs bolder reforms to overcome internal barriers so as to achieve deeper economic engagement with China.

⁴²Yun Sun, "The Sixth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: New Agenda and New Approach," Brookings Institution, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2015/01/foresight-africa/china-africa-cooperation-sun.pdf?la=enwww.brookings.edu/media>.

opportunities.⁴³ In this sense, Africa needs to provide specific incentives to make the zones attractive, such as lower taxes, developed transport networks, and the provision of skilled and motivated labor. The already established SEZs are considered to have kick-started Africa's industrialization, as they did in China, but insufficient incentives on Africa's side has slowed the process. Most importantly, African regional organizations should now present detailed bankable plans for new infrastructure, with completed feasibility studies and loan repayment schedules to accelerate China's assistance in building the continent's road and rail system. Chinese construction companies are ready to begin work and financing is available, but Africa's planning and business risks remain a challenge.

In many ways, the full implementation of the FOCAC VI action plan depends more on Africa than on China. If Africa provides a positive and constructive business environment, new Chinese (and global) investment will accelerate and new jobs will be created. Implementing business-friendly policies in Africa is the key to enhancing the China-Africa relationship and lifting the African continent out of poverty. China's business-friendly policies, especially in the SEZs, were the catalysts which ignited new industrialization and prosperity for the Chinese people. Following the Chinese SEZ model means good planning, creating investment opportunities and leveraging competitive advantages. A stronger Sino-African partnership, negotiated at the Johannesburg FOCAC summit, provides significant new opportunities for mutually beneficial development. The challenge of promoting sustainable economic development over the next decade can be met through a stronger China-Africa joint venture based on a common vision, crafted through the FOCAC process. Strengthening collaboration and developing new avenues of cooperation is expected to produce continued positive outcomes for both China and Africa.

A comprehensive, collective system implies a high degree of cooperation and policy synthesis, but does not imply that there is no disagreement or difference of opinion. An appropriate and effective policy response from Africa is required to ensure a mutually beneficial China-Africa relationship. Building a stronger domestic economic environment would have advantages for Chinese investors and thus create a win-win situation ensuring

⁴³Shannon Ebrahim, "China Set to Inject \$60 Billion to Transform Africa," *The Star*, December 4, 2015, p. 1.

benefits for both China and Africa in the pursuit of mutual, cooperative economic development. The long-term objective is to assist African decision-makers in knowledge building, which provides the foundation for policies intended to escape the trap of the “minerals curse” and slow industrialization.

Conclusion

In general, China and Africa share the same dream for the future — to increase per capita incomes which will provide the means to achieve all future dreams and more. The challenge is to craft the policies, processes and win-win strategies which will ensure common development of China and Africa. The financial crisis and resulting slower growth have made the West a less dependable trade and development partner. The time has come for China and Africa to strengthen a development partnership through the FOCAC VI agenda and to fully promote the potential of this relationship to achieve a common dream. FOCAC VI has created a period of opportunity for both China and Africa; the opportunity should not be missed.

To date, the FOCAC process and its outcomes have been strongly supported and endorsed by Africa's leadership, confirming the mutually beneficial content of this process. African governments should step up efforts to ensure the full implementation of the FOCAC VI Action Plan. Bureaucratic and other impediments to advancing FOCAC projects should be addressed. FOCAC VI offers both China and Africa a comprehensive and mutually beneficial roadmap towards future economic growth and prosperity. The challenge is to ensure the effective and prompt implementation of the FOCAC action plan to help realize both the Chinese and African dreams.