








# China's Influence Expansion Strategy in Africa (1993-2021)

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## **Abstract**

Smart power is one of the concepts and terms derived from the western discourse and the order of liberal democracy, which have specific meanings and indicators in this discourse. What is emphasized in this article is a different narrative from the Chinese perspective on smart power. Statistical data, documents, and current trends all confirm that despite the dominance of the liberal order and its mechanisms on the political and economic structures of the world, Beijing has increasingly expanded its role and influence in different regions of the world, including Africa. This country has become a key country in the international system by taking advantage of the international opportunities provided by globalization along with the fundamental redefinition of national principles and interests. What enables a deep analysis in the text of this apparent conflict is the Chinese narrative of smart power, which is rooted in Chinese culture and thoughts, contemporary historical developments, and ultimately the consensus of the country's elites. Therefore, the main question of this article can be posed as follows: what are the coordinates of Chinese smart power, and how can the development and influence of China in Africa be justified based on the concepts and coordinates of this concept of soft power?

**Keywords:** China, African Continent, Smart Power, Chinese Culture, Influence.

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## **Introduction**

Over the past decade, China's influence in Africa has become more pronounced, and between 1998 and 2010, African goods exports to China increased from a low level to more than 60-fold, compared to five-fold and three-fold increases for the United States, respectively. The United States and the European Union are surprising. In this way, in just one decade, China's share of exports to Africa grew from 1% to about 15%, and on the other hand, although the share of the United States increased slightly, the European Union saw a decrease in its share of exports to Africa from 36 The percentage was 23%. Chinese investment in Africa increased from \$70 million in 2003 to \$5.5 billion in 2008. However, since 2005, China accounted for only 5% of the annual FDI inflows to the continent on average, and the United States and the European Union together accounted for more than 30% of the annual FDI inflows to Africa, but since the second decade of the current century, this trend has been reversed (Bokhris, 2020, p.14).

Although this expansion of the level of relations with Africa can be examined from different perspectives and causes but it seems that its correct understanding requires examining the issue in deeper layers of explanation that tend to the reason and not the cause. This layer, which is somewhat close to the discourse layer, is the cause itself. What we are trying to explain in the following article by relying on this layer is the Chinese influence in Africa in the form of a new redefinition of the term smart power, which can be described in the Chinese discourse in the form of Chinese smart power with special coordinates. Therefore, the main question of this article can be posed as follows: what are the coordinates of Chinese smart power, and how can the development and influence of China in Africa be justified based on the concepts and coordinates of this concept of soft power?

## **Theoretical Framework: Smart Power Strategy with Chinese Characteristics**

China has not reached its current position in the international system by just opening the doors of its economy to the world. Rather, this is a result of the integration and combination of several components and indicators, which can be generally classified into three categories: internal foundations (including Chinese culture and ideas), contemporary historical developments, and finally the consensus of the elites of this country. Triplets are the basis of Chinese smart power.

### **First: Chinese Culture, Thought, and Worldview**

The concept of smart power is rooted in Chinese culture. In the political dimension, soft power has a meaning in the framework of regulating the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, between power, the state, and the individual. This concept shows itself in the military dimension, in the art of war. In the philosophical framework, smart power represents a civilizational heritage in accordance with Confucianism. According to Confucius, a successful ruler is someone who wins the hearts and minds of subordinates and governs them based on the values of love and virtue, not by using force (Kazem, 2017, p. 29). In Chinese culture and thought, there are fundamental principles that can be considered the foundations of smart power; they also form the traditional principles of Chinese politics:

- 1- The idea of the unity of the world and society: Based on this principle, which some call organic materialism, the world and society, the realm of nature, and the realm of man are not only based on common laws, but the combination of these two spheres makes it possible to create a complete organic set. Among the examples of this harmony, we can mention the harmony of the five elements of nature, namely water, fire, earth, wood, and metal. In this principle, the key point lies in the relationship between objects and humans, not in their individual personalities, and humans are formed by “five relationships”: emperor-subject; father-son; husband-wife; older brother-younger brother; and friend-friend. This universalism obliges a person to comply with the moral norms that apply to all phenomena, such as smells, virtues, colors, calligraphy, and even the naming of people, for example, in choosing a name or a single word. It does not state the issue of the proposed form; rather, it returns to the essence, and the right word is a sign of perfection deepened between the social essence and the general content (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 19).
- 2- Yin and Yang principle: based on this principle, the world is not based on unity and has stability; all social and natural phenomena represent two opposite and complete aspects (day and night, male and female, summer and winter, moon and sun, etc.). The functions of yin and yang alternately and mutually cause movement in the world. As a result, based on this principle, it can be said that not only is the world in a state of stability and freezing, but it is also moving dynamically, moving in a more suitable and favorable direction. This ancient

understanding of the essential dialectic between yin and yang can be seen in Marxism. Such a transcendental understanding of the conflicting dependence between the elements of nature and human societies is called, *Wuwei* in Chinese philosophy. Therefore, one should not change the natural flow of phenomena with unskillful and premature intervention. This ancient and remote understanding of the natural world and the human world had an impact on social relations in such a way that “a good leader does not need direct intervention to move his country forward” (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 19-20).

It seems that there is a connection between the principles of yin and yang as well as another concept called *Molovi* in terms of the necessity of creating harmony between opposites and managing opposites. In Chinese social philosophy, there is the concept of *Malawi*. This word is roughly translated as “super-planning”, which means a special form of wisdom that focuses on conflict in its broader sense. *Molüe* means working with different conflict situations, which includes analyzing and evaluating opportunities. In traditional Chinese literature, strategists were praised for taking advantage of advantageous factors and minimizing the opportunities that their competitors might take. During the legendary period of the Three Kingdoms, Shu Han actively used non-violent tactics that were supposed to weaken the enemy's combat effectiveness. Since ancient times, the Chinese valued the negotiation skills of leaders to weaken the opponent's self-confidence and, as a result, to gain psychological (if not material) superiority (Podyapolskiy, 2014:349). Therefore, it is a special humanitarian technology for preparing and making strategic decisions. In the contemporary era, China's policy still follows this principle.

3- Heavenly decree and its revocation: In Chinese philosophical thought, the position of the empire is very prominent. He is the son of the sky, who is the intermediary between nature and society and is responsible for human relations with the world. Mediation between two forces—nature and society—lies in a concept called “heavenly command” which is manifested in the role-word “king”. The intermediary role is so important that even spring planting is done by the emperor himself, and even the basis of the calendar is calculated at the beginning of the period of each empire. Therefore, the role of “heavenly command”—the king or emperor—is current and obvious in all issues and aspects of nature and society. At the same time, the political tradition in

China considered the decree of heaven to be revocable and allowed a place for popular uprisings, such as those that weakened the foundations of imperial power in the transition of 1850-1860. Rebellions arise from both natural signs such as famine and floods and social signs such as the incompetence of bureaucrats, corruption of rulers and others, etc., and are mostly aimed at re-establishing social rules. In the state of rebellion, the leader of the rebels considers himself the manifestation of the heavenly command and sits on the throne of power as the founder of a new dynasty, like the Tang and Ming dynasties (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 20-21).

4- Public services and rights: As Wuwei's principle says, a statesman does not interfere directly in affairs as much as possible, and his main role is to maintain the harmony between the natural system and the social system. In the discussion of rights in China, the principle was to maintain social harmony, and heresy and individualism were blamed. Even if there was a criminal trial between two people and one of these two people was found to be the right person, personal rights were still not in question, and the court's effort was more focused on creating an acceptable compromise between the parties. The principles of trials relied more on social impact than individual justice, and the role of the judge was more arbitral. In China, there was practically no independent and permanent judicial system, and government officials performed judgments in addition to other duties. The Chinese judgment method, which was rooted in the depths of their imagination and understanding of nature and society, seemed strange and incomprehensible to the Westerners who sought to stay in the "free ports" of China after the opium wars, and soon, using the prevailing atmosphere, they could obtain "legal exemptions" from the Chinese judicial system, an issue that caused the Chinese judicial cooperation to be questioned (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 24).

5- International relations: The definition and development □□

China's foreign relations with other countries, like other characteristics such as imperial power, public services, and rights, are rooted in the political principles of Chinese philosophy. In Chinese thinking, the world is square and the sky is circular, and under the rays of the sky is the "emperor's realm" and the emperor is the "son of the sky". It is only the emperor who benefits from heavenly blessings, and there are four categories outside the circle and realm of the under heaven,

which include the four seas, foreign barbarians, monsters, and sea giants. According to the stated rule, the leaders of the barbarians outside the circle are not able to establish an equal relationship with the emperor, the son of the sky, and thus the existence of a concept called international relations is meaningless. As a result, there is no place left to create a ministry of foreign affairs. Agents choose barbarians to manage barbarians. In this way, they avoid direct interference in the affairs of the barbarians as much as possible and act only by monitoring and influencing from a distance. The relationship between the Chinese and their neighbors is necessarily unequal, and symbolically, it means sending tribute to Beijing and, in return, gaining China's support for itself (Shesno, Vol. 1, 1995, p. 25).

### **Second: Contemporary Historical Developments**

In the nineteenth century, after the Opium War, China entered a period of cultural conquest. The Opium War (1839) is the first series of defeats that was not only a shock in the military and political fields but also a great shock to traditional Chinese culture. (Benn, 1996, pp. 24-25). During this period, the Chinese fell into anxiety and worry that they did not know before and lost their psycho-social balance.

In the Second Opium War (1856), when France joined England, China was conquered, and the Chinese were forced to recognize the right to trade opium and sell it to the Chinese and to allow religious missionaries to enter their country to the spread of Christianity should prepare the ground for the Chinese to become Christians. In addition, foreign ships were allowed to sail on all Chinese rivers. This colonial situation continued until 1912 and the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. After this date and the fall of the Qing Dynasty, chaos engulfed China in such a way that not only the civil war between the warlords started, but other countries, such as Japan, also took advantage of China's internal weakness and attacked China in 1937 and occupied parts of this country. This humiliation was contrasted with the proud feeling that China's past aroused in its people. In fact, China's severe economic and political decline is a product of the recent centuries. After more than 70 years since the Chinese Revolution, the 20th century is known as the century of humiliation in the historical memory of the Chinese nation (Allison, 2019, p. 197).



Therefore, one of China's goals in the world is to improve Beijing's status as a great power. For China's leaders, it is very important to maintain internal security and ensure the continuity of the Communist Party's rule. Because the persistence of the Communist Party in power by portraying itself as the permanent defender of China's interests means maintaining its political legitimacy and political control. The promotion of the Chinese dream by the leaders of the fifth generation, which is the most obvious domestic manifestation of the attention to Chinese history and culture, is actually a collective effort by the Chinese government and people to enter a new era that heals the bitter and broken era of this country. It is a boon and a harbinger of a new era in the political life of this country. In other words, China's dream about the tangible achievement of “national rejuvenation” is under the wise and visionary guidance of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and is intended to inspire the Chinese people (Scobell, 2020, p. 10).

### **Leadership Dimension: Elite Consensus**

Although China had achieved extensive growth at a certain speed before 1978, nevertheless, in terms of employment, the population was still agricultural and heavy and light industries were neglected. Approximately 75% of industrial production was generated by state-owned enterprises under centralized control, aligning with the objectives of centralized production. In this period, the main goal of the Chinese government was economic self-sufficiency. Private sector activity and foreign investment were prohibited, and foreign trade was generally limited to obtaining those goods that could not be manufactured or procured in China. As a result, there was little incentive for companies, workers, and farmers to become more productive or pay attention to their quality. Because they were often focused on production targets set by the government, they only focused on production. The cultural revolution from 1966 to 1976 caused great damage to society and pushed the national economy to the brink of collapse. (CRS, 2019, p. 2)

The massive failure of the Great Leap Forward created tensions within the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn led to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which continued until Mao's death. During the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962 (which resulted in a massive famine and a reported 45 million

deaths) and the Cultural Revolution, China suffered a significant economic downturn. During this period, Chinese living standards decreased by 20.3% compared to Western countries, such as Japan, and decreased by 9.6% from 1966 to 1968. (CRS, 2019, p. 1)

The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 made it possible to implement a new strategy of economic and social development. Of course, it should be added that it was difficult for the new leaders to completely reject the planned economy because they were first-generation revolutionaries and participated in the implementation of the “retreat strategy” and traditional formation. If Mao's successors suddenly abandoned the planning system, their legitimacy would be jeopardized. As a result, the new leaders after the Cultural Revolution could only choose another approach to reforming the existing planning system. People's communes were abolished, and jobs, schools, and health care for rural residents were no longer automatically provided by the government. Urban residents used to pay for their welfare all the time, but now both urban and rural residents have to provide for themselves. (Assbring, 2012, p. 4)

Changing the leadership style after Mao's death to organize the contracted economic structure and government system that had been created and institutionalized since the 1949 revolution was one of Xiao Ping's most important actions. He understood the fact that the current process of economic management in China does not only fulfill the ideals of the party; rather, it is moving toward contraction and blockage, which started China's economic dynamism. The fact that he was considered one of the old leaders of the party and was still paying attention to communist goals became an intermediary link for reforms to convince both the party's senior officials and the masses of the people toward their development plans. to encourage

It can be said that Xi and the leaders of the fifth generation know that although economic weight and military power are important for the ruling regime to maintain power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they cannot ignore the promotion of lofty principles and inspiring ideals. Therefore, their leadership can be considered smart; Especially in the post-Mao era (i.e., since 1976), the Chinese Communist Party emphasized political pragmatism and materialistic motivations, emphasizing the establishment of China's hard power (starting with the economy) and then turning to national defense. (Scobell, 2020, p. 8).

The more dangerous expansion of this concentration is the extensive use of influence operations or political warfare beyond China's borders (Scobell, 2020, p. 9). Perhaps this is the reason why

Henry Kissinger, the national security advisor and former secretary of state of the United States, who is known as the architect of Sino-American relations, has named cultural influence as the main factor and element in classical Chinese foreign policy. Allison, 2019, p. 195). The cultural influence of China has been so profound that even conquerors and invaders, like the Mongols and Manchus, assimilated and embraced the cultural and religious aspects of China upon conquering the country, ultimately succumbing to its cultural prowess. Indeed, it has been a way of infiltration (Kissinger, 2018, p. 255).

### **A Comparative Study of Smart Power From Two Perspectives**

Although the Western and Chinese have smart power, in the initial examination, there are many similarities in terms of persuasion and trying to gain favorability and influence over the decisions of others; But inside, they have some basic differences, some of which are mentioned here:

First, while smart power is used in the American narrative as a tool to improve the position of the United States in the international system, this concept is holistic in the Chinese narrative and looks at internal and external aspects as an organic whole (Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 20). For example, the idea of creating a harmonious society and a harmonious world expresses a harmonious framework of the above attitude, and such an attitude also originates from the worldview of Chinese culture and thought. Chinese elites believe that China should not only strive to improve its smart power through peaceful development, public diplomacy, and Chinese culture; rather, it should also help the development of political, economic, and cultural values.

Second, for the Chinese, soft power means “anything outside the military and security spheres, encompassing not only popular culture and public diplomacy but also coercive economic and diplomatic levers such as aid and investment”. China's soft power in Southeast Asia is predominantly attributed to its substantial contributions as a major source of foreign aid and trade, as emphasized in a report (Traoré, 2021, p. 617). It is important to note that since China lacks strategic allies like the United States, its diplomacy relies on material incentives and deterrents, such as punitive trade measures, to advance its interests based on smart power (Fravel, Glaser & Medeiros, 2021, p. 23). In other words, Chinese scholars commonly perceive the prevailing global trend as one characterized by peace and cooperation, aligning closely with

the fundamental principles of contemporary Chinese diplomacy, namely the pursuit of peace, development, and cooperation (Liqun, 2010, p. 36). On the other hand, the fact that the United States is the world's largest military power, and this produces a unique soft power for this country that can act as a stable model to influence the thoughts of other countries, is undeniable. This is something that China has benefited little from until now (Godement, 2015, p. 3).

Third, another crucial distinction between Chinese and Western smart power lies in their respective values. In Western smart power frameworks, political values are considered a fundamental pillar, as emphasized by Narimani et al. (2017, p. 168). This implies that commercial and economic engagements, as well as investments, are seen as significant indicators for evaluating the scope and effectiveness of Chinese smart power. In contrast, Chinese smart power places greater emphasis on economic influence and tangible outcomes, with political values playing a relatively lesser role in their approach. This divergence in values underscores the contrasting strategies employed by China and the West in their pursuit of smart power..

Fourth, the tremendous impact of Chinese culture and civilization on the world view and its foreign relations with the Western systemic view of the world is another facet of the difference between the smart power from the above two perspectives. As mentioned, concepts such as yin and yang, *Molvi*, and *Wui* are among the basic concepts in Chinese culture, which have made it possible for China to cooperate and interact in conflict situations with other countries. These principles, which are tolerantly considered a type of super planning, are different from the western system and plan, and this is the reason for the difference in their external behavior with others.

### **China's Use of Smart Power to Penetrate Africa**

China, as a country with a distinct cultural and civilizational identity, has quietly intensified its entry into the African continent since the beginning of the current millennium. Due to the bitter experience of African nation-states with respect to Western colonialism, China raised the slogan “friendship and partnership without exploitation” in order to avoid provoking a wave of hostility against itself. Although relations between China and Africa have ancient historical roots, in the contemporary period, China has diversified its tools when entering the African continent, including economic, political, cultural, and military tools. Considering the

trend of relations between China and Africa, it comes to mind whether China's entry into the African continent is only from the point of view of hard power, soft power, or a combination of the two, i.e., smart power. To examine this issue, several points can be mentioned: First, that; In 2007, former Chinese President Hu Jintao said at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party that China needs to increase its soft power. If your hard power is increasing, you are likely to intimidate your neighbors, but if you increase your soft power at the same time, they are less likely to collude against you. In this sense, the goal is a smart power policy. This combination is supported by Confucian values, which emphasize mutual respect, coexistence, and harmony.

Second, current Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at the 2015 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in South Africa that China-Africa relations have reached a stage of development "unprecedented in history". The statement came with a large aid package. This was a manifestation of China's skillful use of hard, soft, and smart power, which included \$60 billion in loans, financial aid, special funds, and various assistance in industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, financial services, trade, and facilitation. Investment was poverty reduction as well as peace and security. In addition, this aid package includes the training of 200,000 African technicians, 1,000 media specialists, 40,000 opportunities for Africans in China, 2,000 degree or diploma opportunities, and 30,000 government scholarships. China also promised the heads of African countries to establish several local vocational training centers and the capacity to build several colleges in Africa (Leslie, 2016, p. 2).

Third, in contrast to Western smart power, which, along with the granting of humanitarian aid, brings its own values, including democracy and human rights, China's smart power plan revolves around the concept of tolerance. This increases Beijing's attractiveness to African governments and other developing countries that are far from Western standards (Kilipari, 2013, p. 90).

In his speech at the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017, Xi argued that China's system "offers a new option for other countries and nations that want to accelerate their development while maintaining their independence" (Denyer, 2017). In introducing itself as a popular economic model close to the African model, in which the employment of manpower is more than machines and machines and is based on the principle of non-

interference in internal affairs, China has played all aspects of this smart power. China has been able to encourage African business partners to develop their country's economy through trade and investment in infrastructure and community institutions without imposing political conditions or economic reforms (Bokharis, 2020, p. 16).

### **China's Areas of Influence in Africa**

#### **A) Access to Reliable and Widespread Sources of Energy**

Hydrocarbon resources are the most urgent raw materials needed by China, and the country's search for resources and raw materials is extensive and endless throughout the world, but nowhere is it as energetic or concentrated as in Africa, where authoritarian regimes and leaders of different countries have created friendship and used smart diplomatic approaches along with a progressive economic situation. Today, about a third of China's oil imports are from the African continent, and Chinese companies, like European and American companies, have increased their scope of activity on this continent (Marshall, 2020, p. 157).

#### **B) Expanding Business Relations and Gaining Large Markets for Exporting Goods**

Seeking markets for Chinese goods and services in Africa is one of the fundamental elements of China's policy. This includes identifying and creating new markets for a variety of manufactured goods, from the simplest consumer items such as textiles, clothing, shoes, household goods, and kitchen appliances, which have a high labor force, to more complex products such as tools, machinery, and transportation equipment, and the transportation of weapons and military equipment. Another aspect of business is services, often related to the construction of infrastructure, from roads, railways, municipal buildings, and housing projects to schools, hospitals, water systems, dams, and power plants. The Chinese do such projects quickly and often, using imported technicians and labor groups from China at very competitive prices (Suddenly, 2008).

Related to the new markets for Chinese goods and services is the side benefit that both Chinese goods and services are often composed of Chinese labor content, so this strategy seeks to create jobs for Chinese citizens inside and outside the country. Providing employment is crucial to maintaining social and political stability in China and the long-term survival of the ruling Communist Party of China. Therefore, one of the benefits of creating African markets for

Chinese imported products is the creation of jobs in China (for example, factory jobs for export manufacturers) and Africa—for example, through the migration of Chinese traders, salespeople, and entrepreneurs to Africa to do business. (Harman, 2007).

According to statistics, the volume of trade between China and the countries of the Black Continent increased from \$100 billion to \$200 billion between 2000 and 2015, and the number of Chinese workers in Africa increased from nearly 200 thousand people in 2009 to more than 250 thousand people in 2015. It arrived in 2015. The volume of trade between China and African countries in 2019 was more than \$208 billion, which shows a 2.2% growth compared to the previous year (Ministry of Commerce of China: 2019). Between 1998 and 2012, China has signed trade agreements with more than 40 countries (out of 54 countries) in Africa, of which Nigeria is at the top with 240 agreements, and South Africa, Zambia, and Ethiopia are in the second, third and fourth ranks, respectively. Compared to China, trade with China is very important for African countries. China-Africa trade accounts for 15% of the total trade of African countries, while this figure accounts for 5% of the total trade in China. Therol; 2015, p. 2).

### **C) Investment Presence in African Infrastructure**

China is emerging as a major source of capital. The vast majority of Chinese investments and loans are based on joint and mutual benefits. For example, in countries such as Sudan and Angola, China has been very successful in creating important positions in the purchase of oil, and this is possible through loans and cooperation with the host governments in order to use its oil purchase money for aid. To build or rebuild damaged infrastructure such as roads, railways, port facilities, pipelines, hospitals, schools, municipal buildings, residential water supply systems, and stadiums. Chinese workers usually work several shifts around the clock, and therefore they can complete their projects quickly and efficiently compared to other foreign contractors (Thorul, 2015, p. 3).

During the last few decades, China's investments in Africa have been focused on five sectors: extractive industries, construction projects, financial services, agriculture, telecommunications, and, of course, the military and security sectors. In some countries, these sections are implemented in parallel. The primary motivation behind China's extractive industry involvement in Africa is to supply raw materials for its industries. Then, through the international growth and expansion of China's economy and

industries, investment in large construction projects follows. According to statistics, the volume of Chinese investments in Africa has exceeded \$60 billion, and in contrast to American investments, they constitute 15% to 20% of this amount, which is mostly in Algeria and the Gulf of Guinea. Today, China's investment and trade with Africa constitute 3% and 5% of global investment and trade, respectively (ibid).

#### **D) Development of Financial Relations in Africa**

Understanding the role that China plays in the development of international financial affairs is an issue that is of common concern among policymakers and academics. This issue has become more acute in a situation where many OECD countries are facing a reduction in foreign aid budgets, the United States has a budget deficit and does not have the former role, and in parallel, China has become more confident about its role. Is. Not only does China continue its bilateral financial development abroad through its policy banks, such as the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank, but now there are new multilateral institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank. this is why some commentators consider China to replace the United States as a global financial leader (Gallagher, 2017).

The amount of money that flows from China to Africa is very impressive; according to AidData statistics, between 2000 and 2014, nearly \$97 billion, and from 2010 on, about \$12 billion of money have been sent from China to Africa. China's imports plan to invest a total of more than one trillion dollars in Africa by 2025 alone, which shows the rapid growth of China's official development financial resources in recent years (AidData: 2017). China's annual financial commitment now equals that of the United States, once the largest bilateral donor in Africa, and has significantly exceeded it in recent years.

#### **E) Granting Loans to African Countries**

Along with trade and investment, lending is another part of China's economic development network on the Dark Continent. According to statistics, China's share of the world's annual aid to Africa is 5%, and 13% of the loans provided to Africa are made through China. These loans are in various fields, including transportation (\$24.2 billion), energy (\$17.6 billion), mining (\$9 billion), etc.

China's lending rate to Africa increased from a total of \$800



million in 2005 to a commitment of \$10 billion between 2009 and 2012. The increase in the amount of the loan takes place while the annual loan of the World Bank to Africa has reached an average annual value of \$4.5 billion since 2006 (Alorfili, 2018). One of the reasons why most African governments favor Chinese banks is the fewer restrictions and easier conditions in the latter country. In other words, due to the disagreement between African recipients and the World Bank on the conditionality of lending, many African countries have turned away from traditional lenders such as the World Bank and turned toward China. Unlike the World Bank and, to a lesser extent, the African Development Bank, China's financial affairs involve minimal safeguard reviews limited to the approval of the relevant recipient government ministry, and procurement is easier because often before the start of the projects, the necessary arrangements are made with the Export and Import Bank of China as a financial provider, which saves considerable paperwork. Although the quality of Chinese infrastructure, especially roads, is sometimes lower, African governments praise the speed of Chinese work because it makes these governments show the quick results of their progress to the respective populations (Humphrey, 2018, p. 25).

#### **F) Cooperation in the Field of Communication and Telecommunications**

Along with increasing its economic presence in Africa, Beijing also has the development of media-communication cooperation on its agenda. Chinese companies Sagam, Huawei, and ZTA are active in supplying equipment and building networks. China Wall Industry Company has signed a contract with the Nigerian government to build the NigCOMSat1 communication satellite. Chinese communication industry companies have also won important contracts in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya (Li and Rønning, 2013, p. 2). Marine projects, especially submarine cables, are one of the main elements of the Chinese focus in the field of communications. In 2009, the Chinese company Huawei Submarine Networks built the undersea cable Hannibal cable, which connects Tunisia to Italy, and in 2010, it delivered another cable connecting Libya to Greece (Abdel Ghaffar & Jacobs, 2019, p. 8).

#### **G) Participation in the Military-Security Field**

China's first significant military mobilization in the military field occurred in 2011, following the beginning of the crisis in

Libya, when the People's Liberation Army of China pulled out in 2011. In 2015, Russia in the Mediterranean Sea was another manifestation of the expansion of China's military presence in North Africa. The opening of the first military base in one of the countries with a strategic position in the Horn of Africa, namely Djibouti, in 2017 is one of the other areas of China's military presence on the African continent. Strategically located at the main geopolitical and geo-economic link of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, the Horn of Africa has about 6,960 kilometers of coastline with deep natural harbors and a busy sea space that connects Africa, the Far East, the Middle East, and Europe. In addition to being close to the US base, where drone attacks against al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are often carried out, the port of Djibouti has the capacity to host Chinese airplanes. Chinese weapons have spread across the African continent, from Liberia to Somalia (Allam Seyed, 2021, p. 69).

Protection and support of China's economic and investment projects in Africa can be considered an indicator of the security goal. In this sense, a kind of link between the principle of peace support, military power, and the economy can be traced. The desire of China and its people to gain credibility and be seen as a great power by other governments has led to more intervention in the region in the past few decades. One of the clear examples of this happened in 2011, during which the air and sea units of the People's Liberation Army of China, for the first time, played a limited but important role in the evacuation of more than 35 thousand Chinese citizens from Libya. This military presence in the region may have been accidental, but its driving force was the growing expectations of the people from the Communist Party to act decisively to protect vulnerable Chinese citizens on the other side of the world. (Abdul Ghaffar and Jacobs, 2019, p. 2).

### **H) Promoting the Chinese Governance Model**

The promotion of the Chinese model against the Western models can be considered the ideological goal of the Yellow Dragon Land (Sun, 2014, p. 3). China's relations with North African countries, especially Egypt and Algeria, began during the anti-colonial movements. During this period, the People's Republic of China was one of the main ideological supporters of the liberation uprisings. In the next stage, that is, after the stabilization of the independence of African countries, China put aid and investment on the agenda in

order to rebuild the destruction and backwardness caused by colonialism in the mentioned countries. For example, the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia railway in the 1970s was a symbol of China's support for African countries, which Chinese leader Mao Zedong had talked about at the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Stahl, 2016, pp. 2-3).

In the framework of Chinese diplomacy, participation in economic, investment, and infrastructure projects is not only for the government and companies; rather, presence at the level of individuals is also important. For this reason, more than 50,000 Chinese workers are currently present in various African countries as part of the communities there (Abdul Ghafar & Jacobs, 2019: 5). These people are actually the Chinese diaspora population who, as representatives of Chinese Confucian culture, implement Beijing's soft diplomacy in Africa (Jamal, 2020, p. 118).

African trade and economic relations have often been based on an exploitative economy in which cheap raw materials were sent to modern European factories. On the other hand, Chinese authorities believe that their relations with Africa are based on respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and granting loans and infrastructure assistance (Hogwe & Banda, 2017:238). As a result, African governments are satisfied with China's non-interference in their internal affairs, unlike Westerners, and this has had a great effect on the development of China's economic influence on this continent. The continuation of lending and huge investments in the infrastructure of African countries has greatly helped to paint a suitable and positive image of China on the Dark Continent (Mohammed Younes, 2021). Today, China's penetration rate in Africa is 63%, and it is the second-best development model in Africa after the United States. In addition, after the past colonial powers, China is considered the most influential country on the African continent today (Cook, 2020).

#### **J) Offering Annual Scholarship and Educational Programs**

Beijing's annual scholarship for African students in Chinese universities has left a very positive impact on China's soft power in Africa. This, while creating a relationship between African students as future politicians and managers, has greatly contributed to the transfer of Chinese history, culture, and customs to Africa. Between 2000 and 2015, China provided training courses for 86,000 African officials.

In 2011, China provided educational courses for 539 officials

from developing countries, of which 139 were from Africa and 73 were for French Africans. In 2013, within the framework of the training program for political party leaders, China trained 200 party youth from different countries in Africa, such as the People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in Ethiopia, the People's Organization in Southwest Africa in Namibia, the National Congress Party in Sudan, the Communist Party in South Africa, and the South African National Congress. In 2015, Chinese authorities targeted their program to train 1,000 young leaders in Africa within the framework of the development program by 2018 (Jamal, 2020, p. 119).

### **Conclusion**

In this article, China's plans and policies in Africa are outlined in several general categories, including: strengthening international diplomatic and political support for China and the one China policy of that country; the search for resources, especially energy, for a rapidly growing economy; and the creation of new markets for Chinese products to help its continued industrial growth and create jobs for the country's huge population. China has been able to establish successful political relations with almost all (49) of the 53 independent African countries and convince them to support the One China policy at the United Nations.

As China enters the 21st century, this country has several strategic goals. First, its people and government want to see this country regain its rightful role as a great and respected civilization and world power. One aspect of this is to unify and strengthen all the territories of the country that China believes belong to it, and this includes the island of Taiwan. Second, China's political leaders and its ruling Communist Party want to legitimize their role in running the country while ensuring its continued economic growth and development. These goals are intertwined, as economic growth is the key to maintaining political and social stability, and this is a fundamental principle of successful governance in China.

Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and generous aid and loan packages, as well as aggressive trade activities that link China with local African economies, create great opportunities. Where poverty and slow growth have hampered the ability of African countries to repay loans or aid, China has been generous in granting loans or grants. China's often-declared policy in dealing with African countries emphasizes the concept of mutual benefits, and for several decades, this country has presented itself as

an important partner in solidarity with African countries and in opposition to colonialism and economic dependence.

On the economic and trade side, China has been aggressively pursuing mineral and energy resources and has aggressively penetrated several countries through investments in various oil exploration and extraction activities as well as mineral investments. The purchase of oil has been one of the most significant, and China has moved closer to Angola and Sudan, where it has become the main consumer of energy resources from these two countries. Here, the issue of security is raised, especially for continuous and long-term energy supply. For this reason, regular and senior-level contact with Chinese and African leaders to predict and prevent conflict on the African continent is one of the strategies that are jointly pursued by China and African leaders.

China will undoubtedly continue its efforts to expand African purchases of metals, minerals, and other commodities, such as timber and forest products, wherever they can be found. In the meantime, Africa will be one of several key regions of the world where China continues to seriously look for materials to fuel its huge industries and factories.

It goes without saying that mastery in international affairs requires more than economic leverage. A government should not only have economic power but also have the skill to use economic tools effectively. Here is the importance of soft and smart power: In the absence of political levers, China uses economic tools as smart power mechanisms. How to use these tools should be searched for in the Chinese attitude and approach to the world, an attitude rooted in Eastern culture and thought.

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