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**The Transformation of African perception of Chinese identity under
The Belt and Road Initiative**

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Abstract

China has formed a unique Chinese model of innovative development and transformation through sustained economic development and continuous improvement of its comprehensive national power. As China's cooperation with African countries continues to grow, some Western countries, under the influence of traditional colonialist thinking, continue to exaggerate and spread the so-called China threat, attempting to use this means of public opinion to distort China's image and suppress its development. Western countries use their own governments, media and think tanks to make distorted speculations about China's development path and goals, especially about China's friendly cooperation with African countries in economic, cultural and military aspects, in order to safeguard their own interests and power politics. The rhetoric of negative perceptions of China has not disappeared, and it has continued to fancy itself in different historical periods. This article focuses on the reasons for the gradual dissipation of negative rhetoric against China in Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative. The purpose of the article is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current China-Africa cooperation, to dispel the negative rhetoric, and to help China-Africa cooperation grow by leaps and bounds. By sorting out the facts and figures of China-Africa cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, using the literature induction analysis method commonly used in qualitative research, and combining interdependence theory and constructivism theory, the article concludes that the change in Africa's perception of China's identity is due to the high degree of complementarity between China and Africa in various fields, i.e., interdependence, as well as the mutual trust built through cooperation and exchange mechanisms, which can maximize This thesis is a reflection of the relationship between China and Africa on the Belt and Road Initiative. This thesis will play a positive role in optimizing the cooperation model between China and Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative, overcoming difficulties and eliminating misunderstandings.

Keywords: China, Africa, "The Belt and Road Initiative",

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Today, China and the world are undergoing great changes, and China is committed to developing friendly cooperation with all countries in the world on an equal and mutually beneficial basis. Since ancient times, China has insisted on friendly relations with other countries in a peaceful manner. In ancient times, China conducted trade and cultural exchanges with countries and regions along the Silk Road by sea and land; in contemporary times, China inherits and adheres to the wisdom of the Silk Road, which is completely different from the traditional colonial thinking of Western countries, in its interaction and cooperation with other countries, and is using the concept of "win-win cooperation. In contemporary times, China has inherited and adhered to the "Silk Road" wisdom in its relations and cooperation with other countries, which is completely different from the traditional colonial thinking of Western countries. While the situation between China and the world is undergoing new changes, some Western countries still view and analyze the development of the global situation with traditional colonialist thinking and mentality, thus speculating and guessing the purpose of China's development.

Under the influence of the deep-rooted "superiority theory" of the Western model and traditional colonialist thinking, some Western countries, led by the United States, have been exporting the Western model and continuously advocating and spreading the so-called China threat. Using their dominant position in the international community, some Western countries have been concocting and exaggerating the economic, cultural, military, ecological and emerging technologies in an attempt to comprehensively contain China's peaceful development. The essence is to divert the internal social conflicts of Western countries and distort China's international image externally, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of containing China's development and controlling world hegemony.

Since the new century, especially since the 2006 Beijing Summit of the Forum

on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the family of China-Africa cooperation has been widening as China's influence in Africa continues to grow and more and more African countries join the Belt and Road Initiative. China's mutually beneficial cooperation mechanism has greatly impacted the traditional geopolitical landscape of the West and the interests of international monopoly capital, and a series of questioning and attacking remarks from the West have been in full swing, such as China's "neo-colonialism", "neo-imperialism", "land grab", and "land grab" in Africa. "Many uninformed African people are surrounded by these negative statements, and coupled with the exaggeration by the media with ulterior motives, many locals have accepted the so-called "Chinese threat" view and have a negative opinion of China. This has caused a great impact and damage to China's international image. Meanwhile, with the development of the new strategic partnership between China and Africa, China-Africa economic, trade and investment cooperation has presented a broad space and a new nature. While China-Africa cooperation brings new hopes and opportunities to Africa, it also makes the West, which has traditionally regarded Africa as its backyard, deeply uncomfortable. Some Western powers see China as a serious threat to their traditional interests in Africa and accuse China of being a serious threat, using ideological cold war thinking to exaggerate and politicize the misconduct of individual Chinese companies in Africa. Although these accusations, which are clearly biased and double-standard, do not fundamentally affect the overall trend of China-Africa relations, they do have a negative impact on China-Africa relations and on China's national image.

1.2 Problem Formulation

With the current new crown epidemic raging around the world, China has taken a different path to fight the epidemic than the European and American countries. After the epidemic was better controlled at home, China started to reach out to other countries. African countries are in an emergency crisis due to poor health care conditions and lack of vaccines. China not only provided medical and health supplies such as masks, kits and protective clothing to the African countries concerned, but

also sent a large number of medical personnel to provide strong support, bringing experience in fighting the epidemic and strengthening the capacity of African countries to deal with the epidemic. However, some Western politicians and media have turned a blind eye to China's contribution to the struggle against the epidemic, taking the opportunity to stigmatize China's anti-epidemic achievements and international cooperation in the fight against the epidemic, pushing all the blame onto China in order to shift the attention of the nationals and shirk their own responsibility for the ineffective prevention and control, and emerging negative arguments such as "China apologizes" and "China compensates". Negative arguments such as the "China Apology Theory" and "China Compensation Theory" have emerged, with the intention of offsetting the positive impact of China's assistance to other countries and promoting international cooperation, and slandering and vilifying China's image. It is easy for the West to view China's aid with an ideological perspective. This brings to mind some of the negative perceptions of China on the African continent, especially the "China threat theory" and other arguments that were once rampant on this continent.

However, in recent years, with the promotion of Belt and Road, such arguments still exist, but they are no longer mainstream, according to a report released by the Afrobarometer, a leading African polling organization, China's influence in Africa is ranked first. Of the 18 African countries surveyed, 59 percent believe China's economic and political influence in Africa is mostly positive. "The Afrobarometer data suggests that many analysts who criticize China's cooperation with Africa are likely misreading public sentiment toward China in Africa. Despite seemingly endless media coverage of issues such as China's "debt trap," "neo-colonialism," and counterfeit products, the data show that China maintains a positive public image in many African countries. Polling data shows that for the U.S. government and other hawks on China, their strategy of using the debt trap to criticize China over the past decade has had little effect. This phenomenon is worth considering. Is there a deeper reason behind why the image of China is still positive in the eyes of African people,

why the negative perceptions of the so-called Chinese threat, such as the "debt trap and neo-colonialism" propagated by the United States, no longer dominate African public opinion, and whether it is related to other countries or to China itself? This is how the author has developed his thinking on this research question.

1.3 Literature Review

As this paper focuses on the drivers of the shift in Africa's perception of China's identity under the Belt and Road, the main source of literature is how scholars view China's development in Africa. Based on the relevant literature, the following review is provided.

1.3.1 Domestic Research

Domestic scholars focus on analyzing the cooperation mechanisms and areas of cooperation between China and Africa under the "Belt and Road", as well as the impact of China-Africa cooperation on African countries, and the risks and responses of Chinese enterprises in developing in Africa.

Some scholars have explored the China-Africa cooperation model in terms of policy framework. As one of the most important clients of China's public diplomacy activities, Africa has been closely associated with China since the founding of New China, and the cooperation relationship between the two sides has taken a step upward since the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a cooperation mechanism. However, there are constraints within the cooperation mechanism that affect the peaceful and efficient development of China and Africa, such as the overall strength of China far exceeding that of African countries, and whether the cooperation model will be skewed. Therefore, it is crucial to overcome these constraints to achieve sustainable development of the China-Africa cooperation mechanism. The cooperation between China and Africa is usually in the form of exchange visits of heads of state, summits, forums and dialogues, and the main content of China-Africa cooperation has always been economic development and political support complementing each other, thus forming a cooperation mechanism with the characteristics of common will collection, relative normality and support. This has

greatly contributed to the increasing standardization and synergy of cooperation mechanisms between China and Africa (Sun, 2020).

Some scholars analyze the influencing factors of Chinese aid to Africa through empirical data, mainly diplomatic factors, economic factors, without considering the institutional conditions of the recipient countries, mainly considering humanistic concerns, and different influencing factors of aid to countries with different income levels, aid to countries with high income levels is significantly influenced by economic factors, while aid to low-income countries is not significantly influenced by any of them. This study has practical implications for future aid initiatives of Chinese government and enterprises in Africa (Zhang, 2020).

It is also one of the starting points for domestic scholars to explore the significance of people-to-people relations from the perspective of enterprises in Africa. Chinese enterprises in Africa have brought jobs, trained skilled personnel, and promoted local economic and social development, but the process of Chinese enterprises going abroad has been accompanied by some doubts and questions from the international community. By illustrating the business process of Chinese enterprises in Africa, we show the real situation of Chinese enterprises focusing on the synergistic development of economic and social benefits, and explain how they enhance mutual understanding, deepen friendship and promote people-to-people contact between Chinese and African people. It will help the international community better understand China's concept of peaceful development and respond to the international community's doubts and misunderstandings about Chinese enterprises' operations in Africa (Qiao, 2021).

China's mutually successful partnership with Africa has been questioned and accused by Western countries of "neo-colonialism" and "support for hegemony and authoritarianism", and has caused concern among some African countries. In the face of these challenges, some scholars believe that China's response strategy is to continuously improve its own soft power and respond to and dispel the doubts and concerns through soft power diplomacy. The focus will be on China's soft power

practices and their impact on Africa in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, including the "win-win" principle of the Belt and Road Initiative and the African Union's Agenda 2063. While acknowledging the positive impact of these practices, it is also important to recognize the problems and shortcomings in the process, and to identify the omissions and shortcomings in the process of soft power diplomacy at the Chinese, African and international levels. China learns more experiences and lessons in practice, and explores countermeasures to deepen soft power diplomacy in the future, so as to improve the level of China's soft power communication to Africa, face the current challenges faced in China-Africa diplomatic relations, and lay a solid foundation for the future friendly development of China-Africa diplomatic relations (Qu, 2021).

Some scholars conducted questionnaires and interviews with African officials (including government officials, scholars and NGO officials) who came to China for training, hoping to grasp to a certain extent the perceptions of African officials on China's national image. With regard to the perceptions of "neo-colonialism" and "China threat theory", in general, disagreement with the "neo-colonialism theory" is the mainstream view, but there are also a few dissenting opinions. As for the perceptions of Chinese aid, investment and trade, although the officials of recipient countries are generally positive in their evaluation of Chinese aid, the proportion is not high. Therefore, China needs to optimize the structure of foreign aid and emphasize assistance to people's livelihoods. Foreign direct investment and trade should focus on areas related to people's livelihood, economic and social infrastructure construction (Liu & Wang, 2017).

The so-called neo-colonialist arguments of China in Africa are mostly refuted by domestic scholars. Some scholars use Marx's theories on colonization as a basis to argue for the sovereign independence, economic profitability, civilizational freedom, and people's happiness of the participating countries; others provide concrete data to illustrate China's tangible contributions to Africa's autonomous development: from selfless aid in the 1950s to the establishment of the China-Africa Community of

Destiny in 2014, to the current infrastructure construction, which proves that China has done much to reduce Africa's external dependence, thus favorably countering accusations of Chinese neocolonialism (Yao & Yang, 2020).

1.3.2 Foreign Research

Foreign scholars begin their analysis with the negative rhetoric of China. Roy, one of the first scholars to address the China threat from an international relations perspective, provides an overview of the main arguments on both sides of the debate, including a literature review of neorealist and neoclassical theories of the China threat, as well as policy recommendations for Western governments. Over the years, prominent original research on the China threat has emerged. A More Liberal Approach. He argues that the challenge posed by a fast-growing China to stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond depends on the securitization of the "China threat doctrine": the post-structuralist account of the expectations of Chinese policymakers who operate in a highly interdependent economic environment. They are more likely to use peaceful means to resolve disputes with neighbors and other countries if they believe such a strategy will bring economic benefits. Other scholars have used realist international relations theory (particularly power transition theory) to argue that the so-called China threat has emerged in the political discourse of the United States and other Western countries in response to China's rise. In another commentary, Jeffery demonstrates the danger of creating a real China threat through "historical analogies" with previous challenger states. For example, power transition theorists of the realist school of international relations compare the Chinese threat to that of 19th century Germany (Song, 2015).

The concept of the "China threat" is not new; it has been around in the West for more than a century. Initially, the meaning of the term "Chinese threat" was primarily cultural and social: popular Western writers portrayed the Chinese and their traditions as malevolent, alien, and a threat to Western culture. This portrayal still exists in the Western imagination and has since been extended to the political sphere. In recent decades, especially since the end of the Cold War, the so-called Chinese threat has

become a hot topic in contemporary international relations. Over the past two decades, the concept has played a more prominent role in Western political discourse, especially, but not particularly, in the United States. It has been introduced into the public sphere not only by journalists and other opinion leaders, but also through the work of policy analysts and politicians. And the threat is perceived as all-encompassing, including security, military, economic and other aspects.

Some scholars have critiqued China's involvement in Africa from an Afrocentric context and theoretical perspective, demonstrating that China is a neo-colonialist and imperialist in its dealings with African countries and that China's debt trap (more conditional loans to other countries and even more loans that cannot be repaid) diplomacy is the sole representative of neo-colonialism and imperialism (Rapanyane & Makhura, 2021).

Some scholars have explored the following two views: China's move to Africa is a form of neo-colonialism; and China's move to Africa is a mutually beneficial relationship. What is the theory of China's move to Africa and what is the evidence of those who believe that China is practicing neo-colonial practices and what is the evidence of its opponents are explained respectively. Using the trade relationship between China and Egypt as a case study, the theory of interdependence and the relatively unbalanced trade relationship between Egypt and China-Egypt in favor of China are argued as arguments, respectively (Alyaa & Metawe, 2022).

Some scholars point out that China's Belt and Road Initiative, a multibillion-dollar infrastructure investment platform with positive economic implications for developing countries and the United States, has been overlooked by political and national security concerns. It is also noted that the Belt and Road Initiative has been able to work in African countries primarily because of the urgent need for infrastructure financing in these countries, with political externalities being a secondary concern. The negative rhetoric against China's development in Africa has overshadowed the positive outcomes of the BRI and missed opportunities to work constructively with China for the common development of African countries (Pearl,

2019).

In summary, foreign scholars are skeptical of China's development in Africa and even consider China's assistance to African countries as neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism, as the former British foreign secretary once said, "Most of what China is doing in Africa today is what we did in Africa 150 years ago." But there is also no shortage of scholars who take a neutral perspective on what impact China has had on Africa.

Chapter 2 Methodology

In this section, I will mainly introduce the theory, case study and research methodology used in the article.

2.1 Choice of Theory

In the article, the author will choose two theories, interdependence and constructivism, to answer the research question of this paper - why African perceptions of Chinese identity have changed from negative to positive. Interdependence theory offers the idea that economic and social development cannot proceed without increased interdependence as a result of increased interactions between countries, while constructivism advocates for shaping inter-subjective relations by shaping value consensus and forging identity. The following will specify how each of these two theories contributes to answering this research question.

2.1.1 Interdependence

The question to be answered in this paper is why the African public's perception of China's identity has changed from negative to positive, with the aim of countering those negative statements about China, so it is important to understand the theoretical logic behind the negative statements. Obviously, the promotion of the so-called Chinese threat can find its basis in the power theory in realism, which uses power theory as a driving force for analyzing changes in state relations in the international system. According to the hegemonic stability theory and the balance of power theory in power theory, the basic feature of international politics is the problem of succession of hegemonic states, which establish an international order that serves to protect their special interests and spread their values. With this orientation, all the Western countries such as the United States have to do is to try to maintain the status quo and prevent the emergence of challengers to the existing international order. The rise of China as an integrated political, economic, and military power has made it the first choice of threat actors. Like the hegemonic stability theory, the balance of power

(balance of power) theory is also wary of China's rise. According to the balance-of-power behavior scenario, China's increasing power will lead to fearful reactions from the countries involved. China's aid and construction in Africa is seen as dangerous by those with ulterior motives, especially since the West has constructed an elaborate, systematic and institutionalized international aid system in Africa, making China-Africa cooperation an important point of encounter in the international discourse between China and the West.

And to break down such negative rhetoric about China, interdependence theory is a good theoretical perspective.

In their book *Power and Interdependence*, Keohane and Joseph Nye write: "Generally speaking, dependence is a state of being dominated or greatly influenced by external forces. In short, interdependence is dependence on each other. In international politics, interdependence is a situation in which states influence each other or actors in different states."^① According to the theory of compound dependence, state relations can be characterized by interdependence, the existence of common interests and the possibility of cooperation. Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China and African countries have further strengthened their friendly cooperation in the new situation, jointly tackled the challenges of economic globalization and sought common development, and the Beijing Summit of FOCAC even proposed to build a closer China-Africa community of destiny. The interdependence between China and African countries is deepening, and this interdependence has basically developed into a model of "compound interdependence". Under the composite interdependence model, the importance of "high-level political" issues such as national security, sovereignty, and military strategy has been greatly reduced and gradually replaced by "low-level political" issues such as economy, resources, environment, and sustainable development. The interdependence and win-win situation between China and Africa is a powerful counterpoint to the negative public opinion such as the threat of China.

^① Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004:7

2.1.2 Constructivism

The evaluation of a country, like the evaluation of a person, is constructed by different subjects in the process of mutual interaction. Different modes of state rule and different foreign exchange policies will largely influence the evaluation of the other; on the other hand, the other as the subject of evaluation is also in a state of change, On the other hand, the other, as the subject of evaluation, is also in a state of flux, and his focus, interests and interests, as well as value standards, will also influence his different feelings about the object of observation. To explain why the Chinese threat theory no longer occupies a large market in Africa, it is natural to use a constructivist perspective to decipher it.

Nowadays, the "Belt and Road" initiative has elevated China-Africa relations to a new level, and China-Africa relations are no longer limited to cooperation in one field. The constructivist theory, represented by Alexander Winter of the United States, provides a suitable interpretation of China-Africa relations.

Winter proposed that there are three cultural structures in the anarchic system and three shared cultural structures that produce different identities, enemy, rival and friend identities. Constructivist theory emphasizes the two concepts of identity and shared culture. The idea that identity relations do not exist innately and that materiality must be socially constructed in order to have some meaningful effect on the behavior of actors is one of the basic principles of Wendt's constructivism. In addition, the central view of constructivism is identity. The concept of identity distinguishes constructivism from other international theories in its connotation. Identity reflects the relationship within the activists themselves and their relationship with other activists; the interests are different if the identity is not the same. Culture and perceptions influence the motivation of state behavior and the basic characteristics of the state, that is, the identity of the state. China-Africa relations have a profound history, and China and Africa have formed a concept of equality and friendship, mutual benefit and win-win based on their common historical situation and historical tasks, and this shared concept will gradually form a specific identity, and

once formed will have an impact on the actions of the actors and form a virtuous interaction. The strategic development of "One Belt One Road" just meets the national conditions and development of African countries, and is increasingly recognized and participated by African countries. The cooperation and interaction between China and Africa, which is built under the common concept, will help to make the "China Threat" and other negative statements disappear.

2.2 Choice of data

The reason for this article is that the negative perception of China in Africa has emerged against the backdrop of China's continuous economic development and rising comprehensive national power, while the Belt and Road Initiative is an important initiative for China to "go global". "The Belt and Road Initiative is an important initiative for China to go global, and China-Africa has achieved significant development on the platform of the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, the cooperation between China and Africa under "One Belt, One Road" provides both space for negative public opinions to spread and opportunity to counter these negative opinions with facts. This paper will focus on the cooperation between China and Africa in the economic and trade fields as well as the political exchanges. The data on China-Africa cooperation in the economic and trade fields will be combined with interdependence theory to argue the case for this paper; the political exchanges will be combined with constructivist theory to argue the case for this paper.

The author will collect relevant information and data from the official websites of the Chinese government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xinhua News Agency or People's Daily, as well as the official websites of Chinese embassies in African countries, and will also cite relevant data from important African pollsters and government websites of African countries to make arguments. The logic of citing data is as follows.

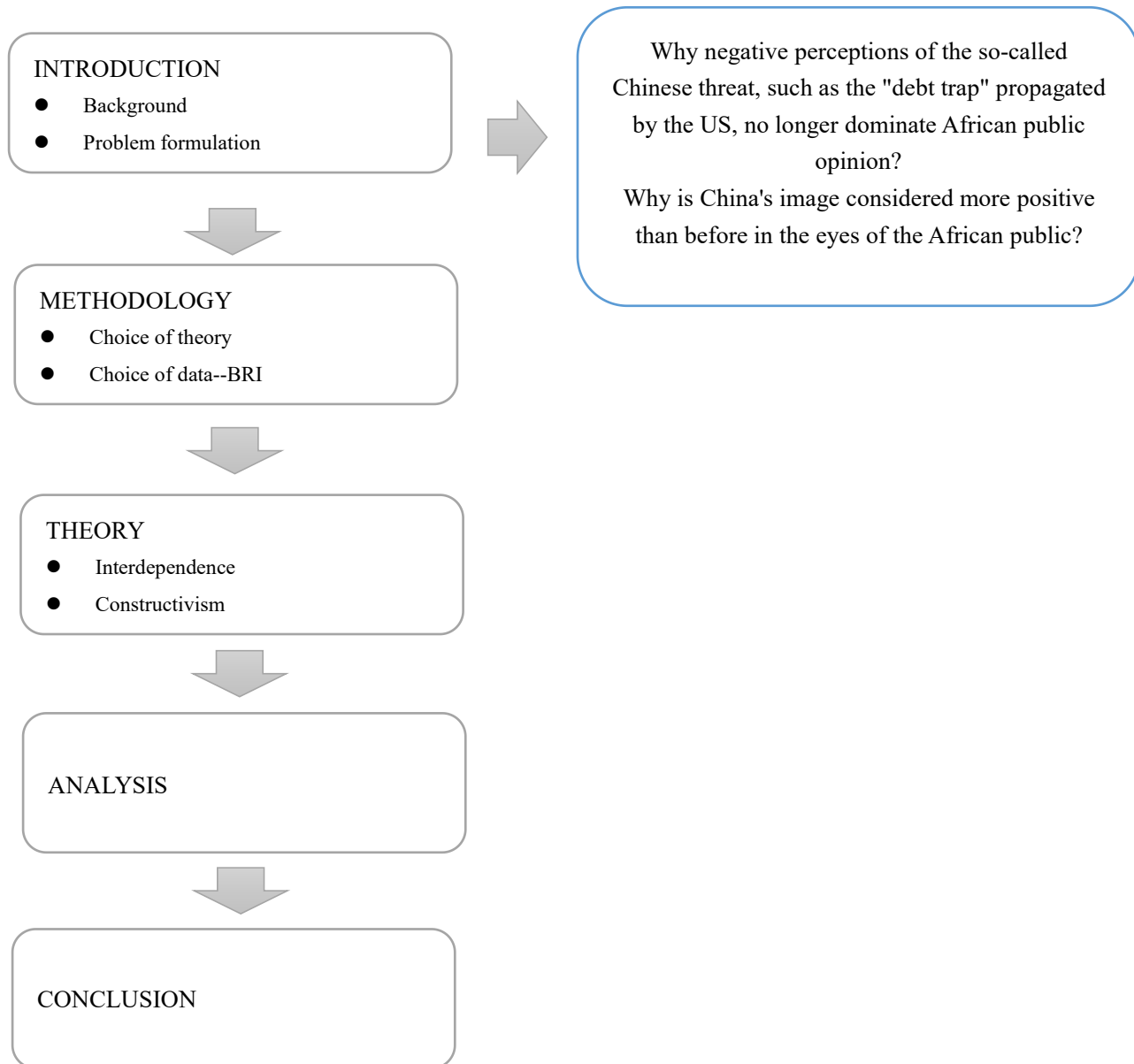
Under the promotion of the "Belt and Road" initiative, firstly, China and Africa are in a state of interdependence in terms of investment, trade and other economic cooperation, with China, as Africa's largest trading partner, being crucial to Africa's

economic development, while Africa's energy imports and industrial and agricultural products also influence the transformation of China's economic model. Secondly, China and Africa not only have similar destinies in history, but also are a community of interests and destiny for common development and inseparability today; Thirdly, China and Africa are both developing countries, and the exchange of China-Africa governance experience in recent years has enabled the two countries to have some common ground in national governance; Finally, cooperation between China and Africa has always adhered to the principles of respect for differences, openness and tolerance, and eclecticism, and while pursuing common interests strives to respect the individual interests of African countries.

2.3. Method of analysis

The research problem of this paper is the change of Africa's perception of China's identity under "One Belt, One Road", which mainly involves the change of perceptions and belongs to the category of ideology, so it needs to be studied qualitatively based on a large amount of historical facts and empirical materials, rather than quantitatively by statistical or experimental methods. The inductive analysis method is used in the text. Inductive analysis is the use of a large number of facts to prove an argument. A considerable number of chapters in this paper require this method, for example, when showing the interdependence of China and Africa in economic and trade relations, it is summarized through the mutual needs of both sides in the field of infrastructure construction; when illustrating the gradual establishment of identity and mutual trust between China and Africa, it is argued through civil contacts, exchange of visits of leaders, and participation in multilateral diplomatic activities and building a China-Africa community of destiny.

2.4 Structure of the project



Chapter 3 Theory

3.1 Interdependence

Interdependence theory is an important school of thought in Western international relations theory. It emerged in the 1960s and became popular in the 1970s. Interdependence theory was first developed from the economic perspective to study the interrelationship between countries and the development of the international system, and later extended to interdependence in the political, cultural and military fields. At the early stage, it was mainly represented by Richard Copper and his interdependence economics, and later by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye and their composite interdependence, which integrated international relations realism and liberal international political economy to study the interrelationship between countries and the development and changes of international society, and thus put forward a new international political economy theory - interdependence theory. In this paper, we will mainly introduce the complex interdependence theory.

Dependence is a state of being dominated by or greatly influenced by an external force. Interdependence is Mutual Dependence. Interdependence in world politics refers to a situation characterized by mutual influence between states or between actors in different states. Interdependence stems from the exchange of money, goods, people, and information across borders. But mere mutual exchanges and contacts do not equal interdependence; interdependence can only develop when mutual exchanges develop into mutual influences that require mutual costs. Interaction is nothing more than interconnection if it does not lead to significant costly outcomes for the parties involved.

Interdependence has two properties. One is sensitivity, i.e., the degree of responsiveness within a certain policy framework, i.e., how quickly and at what cost changes in one country lead to changes in another country. Sensitivity is not measured only by the scale of cross-country interactions, but also by the cost of changes in interactions to society and government. The second is vulnerability. The degree to

which each country suffers from trying to change policies to reduce the costs imposed by external events. The degree of vulnerability to interdependence depends on the relative ability of various actors to obtain alternative options and the price they pay. In the long run, it depends on political will, government capacity, and resource capacity.

Types of interdependence can be classified as equal, absolute and relative dependence. Parity dependence refers to countries with equal resources in a certain area; absolute dependence refers to countries with absolutely disproportionate resources in a certain area; relative dependence lies between the above two cases, although there is an imbalance, but not as big as the gap of absolute dependence. The latter two are "asymmetric interdependence", which can be a power resource. Compound interdependence has the following characteristics: first, the diversification of channels of communication between countries, the rise of various cross-governmental and transnational links, second, military security is not always the primary issue among all countries, and third, the scope of application of military means is reduced and their effectiveness decreases.

3.2 Constructivism

Classical realists define the basic state of international relations as a security dilemma, arguing that states in a state of anarchy will experience a certain amount of insecurity due to mutual suspicion and fear, which will drive states in that state to strive for more power in order to gain greater security. Constructivism, represented by Alexander Winter, on the other hand, questions the premise of realist theory. Constructivism holds that the structure of the state-centered international system is not material but cultural, and that anarchy is state-constructed. The interaction of states constitutes the structure of the international system. In this process, states can generate different role identities through complex learning and natural selection. Since such role identities often depend on the congruence between the reproduction of the state by other states and the self-apprehension of the state, they cannot be displayed as the nature of the state itself, that is, the identity of the state is intersubjective.

The structure of the international system varies accordingly depending on the

role identity of the state. In general, there are three cases: if the role identity is enemy, the structure of anarchy is presented as Hobbesian culture; if the role identity is rival, the structure of anarchy is presented as Lockean culture; if the role identity is friend, the structure of anarchy is presented as Kantian culture. In different anarchies, the state behaves differently. As Winter says, "the state acts differently towards its enemies than it does towards its friends, because an enemy is a threat, while a friend is not."^② " So to some extent it can be said that the interests of the state are determined by the actor's role identity. But role identities are not as established as realism suggests. Objective state interests are not just normative principles that guide state action, but are causally significant forces that motivate the state to act in a certain way, in part because the state has certain security needs (objective interests). That is why it defines its subjective interests^③ . Thus, the relationship between objective and subjective state interests is not very clear, and state interests are also intersubjective.

Constructivism argues that culture has a significant impact on international relations and that shared culture influences changes in international relations. First, a state's diplomatic behavior largely reflects its cultural identity. Diplomatic behavior is, to some extent, a transfer, reproduction and expression of culture at the political level. People as actors - whether diplomatic decision-makers, implementers or a certain group - grow up in a certain cultural environment, which suggests that culture in a sense determines the basic content of a country's diplomatic behavior. From a national perspective, culture is both the basis for a country's policy-making and a symbol of power. As a political resource, it influences the formulation of national foreign policy goals and national foreign policy instruments.

For constructivism, identity construction is the central concept of its theory, and identity among state actors shifts in identity constructs can be used to explain changes in state behavior, which in turn affects changes in international structures. Wendt argues that identity can be made and recreated in the social process. To this end, he

^② Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States make of It: The Social construction of politics-power". International Organization, Vol. 46, 1992. 397.

^③ Alexander Winter, translated by Qin Yaqing, Social Theory of International Politics, Shanghai People's Publishing House.2000. 293,198.

establishes identity the theory of the construct, with interdependence, common destiny, homogeneity and self-restraint as the four main variables, has been applied to the state Identity formation and transformation explained^④ .

Winter sees the steps of identity formation as follows: In the first step, the actor makes an autonomous choice of the highlighted role identity and presupposes the self role identity and the other role identity. In the second step, the other interprets the self and begins to act. In the third step, the self then interprets the other's behavior and generates a response. In this process, the self and the other generate shared knowledge and deepen or change identity perceptions. In social activities, it is often not who I am that matters, but who others think I am, and the other's perception of the actor's identity is more important than the actor's self-perception. Thus, identity confirmation emphasizes the degree to which the other identifies with the self-projected identity. With a high degree of identification, identity confirmation succeeds and identity is strengthened; with a low degree of identification, identity confirmation fails and identity remains the same or regresses. Second, in China's interactions with other countries, the logic of the Chinese middle-ground dialectic is often used, a logic that is inclusive and open in a way that Western countries are not, adding a new element to the process of identity affirmation between China and other actors. Thus, identity recognition cannot simply be defined as a success or a failure, but beyond success and failure, China adds the option of "peace and difference" for other actors, making it easier for identity to emerge between states.

^④ Alexander Wendt. *The Social Theory of International Politics* [M]. Translated by Qin Yaqing, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2000.431-445.

Chapter 4 Analysis

4.1 Analyzing BRI in Africa with Interdependence Theory

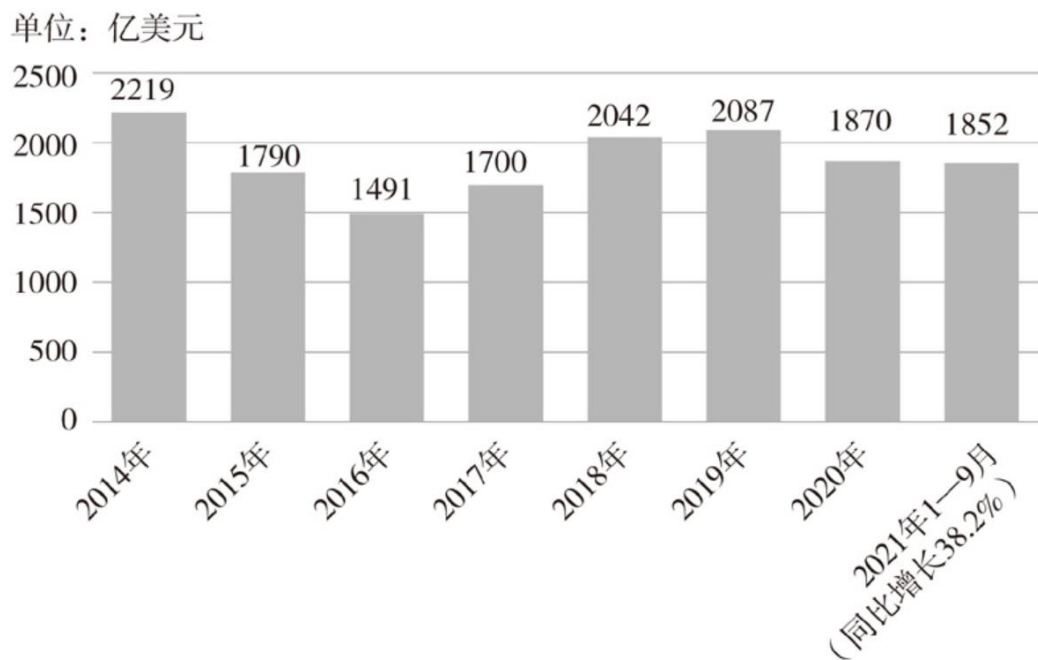
According to the theoretical view of interdependence, national relations are not characterized by conflicting national interests, but rather by the existence of common interests and win-win relations that allow cooperation in various fields such as resources, energy and environment. China and Africa have deepened their development under the Belt and Road Initiative on the basis of many mutual interests and a certain level of common interests.

4.1.1 A brief overview of China-Africa Cooperation under the BRI

The "Belt and Road" is a major innovation of China, as the locomotive of world economic growth in the post-financial crisis era, to transform its own advantages in production capacity, technology and capital, experience and models into market and cooperation advantages, and to implement all-round opening. Through the "Belt and Road" construction, we will share the dividends of China's reform and development, and the experience and lessons of China's development. China will focus on promoting cooperation and dialogue among countries along the route, establishing a new global development partnership that is more equal and balanced, and strengthening the foundation for the long-term stable development of the world economy.

Africa is a dynamic continent with a land area of 30.29 million square kilometers, with 53 of the world's most important minerals and some rare strategic resources, and only 27% of its arable land area exploited; with a total population of over 1.1 billion, expected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, its labor force will surpass that of China and India by 2034. For China, this vast piece of land in Africa contains unlimited business opportunities. The export of electrical and mechanical equipment, building materials, textiles and other commodities has eased the downward pressure on China's economy and China's overcapacity problem. For Africa, the combination of Chinese capital, equipment, technology and services with its rich natural resources, huge demographic

dividend and vast market potential can unleash its economic development potential. Factors such as abundant labor population resources, accelerated urbanization and growing levels of consumer power make Africa's economic growth prospects promising. At the same time, African countries are generally eager to industrialize and diversify their economies, urgently need foreign investment and technology transfer, and are eager to learn from China's successful experiences and development models.



China-Africa Trade Volume, September 2014 2021

Source:http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-11/26/content_5653540.htm

In 2000, China-Africa trade volume was only \$10.4 billion, and in 2008, China-Africa trade volume exceeded the \$100 billion mark for the first time. To date, China has been Africa's top trading partner for 12 consecutive years. According to statistics, China's service imports from Africa have grown by an average of 20% annually since 2017, creating nearly 400,000 jobs for Africa every year. China's imports of agricultural products from Africa have continued to grow and have become the second largest agricultural export destination in Africa; China's imports of

agricultural products from Africa have also continued to grow and have become the second largest agricultural export destination in Africa; e-commerce trade between China and Africa is also booming, with Chinese enterprises actively investing in the construction of overseas warehouses and African high-quality specialty products directly connecting to the Chinese market through e-commerce. The resource endowments and comparative advantages of China and Africa determine the strong complementarity of the goods traded between the two sides.

4.1.2 China-Africa Infrastructure Cooperation under the BRI

Africa, both in terms of population and in terms of natural conditions, is considered to be a continent rich in resources. Yet Africa also has the lowest per capita income in the world (\$1,824 in 2019, equivalent to 1/7 of the global average), the slowest growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (0.3% in 2019, only 1/4 of the global level), and the most underdeveloped overall (30 out of 54 African countries are still among the low human development level, accounting for 90%) of the region.

It is widely recognized that among the bottleneck elements limiting economic development in Africa, poor infrastructure is the most important one. Some studies have shown that the dilapidated state of roads, railroads and port facilities leads to an additional 30% to 40% increase in logistics costs between African countries and inhibits capacity realization by up to 40%. According to the African Union, poor infrastructure is a serious enough drag on Africa's GDP growth by 2% per year, and such problems are widespread throughout Africa, especially in the sub-Saharan. The implementation of the "Belt and Road" initiative in Africa offers new hope for the continent to break through the infrastructure bottleneck.

For decades, African governments, together with many other countries and international organizations around the world, have been rolling out infrastructure development programs in an almost iterative manner, with constantly renewed content, higher targets and a progressive expansion. It should be noted that there is a high level of consensus among African countries on the importance of strengthening

infrastructure development. However, most initiatives, decisions and plans are rarely implemented. The key reason for this is the contradiction between the growing demand for infrastructure investment in African countries and communities and their low resource mobilization capacity. It is difficult for African countries to effectively improve their severely underdeveloped infrastructure by their own financial investment. Due to the distinctive public goods nature of infrastructure and the obvious local institutional deficiencies in Africa, there have been very few successful cases of private investment in infrastructure so far, and it is difficult to make any changes in the future. However, in recent years, Africa's traditional international development partners' participation in and contribution to Africa's infrastructure has been rapidly shrinking, and African countries have had to seek new sources of funding, and moreover, they need to achieve innovation in financing models. In the last two decades of Africa's massive infrastructure development program rollout, China has become the most notable engineering contractor and financing source. In fact, the outstanding feature of China-Africa development and economic and trade cooperation lies precisely in infrastructure.

The area of economic cooperation on which China and Africa rely on each other is international construction contracting, mainly in infrastructure. Since 2008, Chinese companies have consistently held the largest share of operating revenue in the international contracting market on the continent, with a high share of 62.9% in 2020; in second place are engineering contractors from all European countries combined, with a share of 18.1%. From China's own perspective, Africa has occupied the first or second largest share of China's foreign contracting overseas market for nearly 20 consecutive years. In 2019, China's contracting works to Africa completed a turnover of \$46 billion and 120,000 personnel in Africa at the end of the year, accounting for 26.6% and 32.7% of my total foreign contracting works respectively. In 2012, before the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese government announced its willingness to work with the AU to strengthen cooperation in cross-border and cross-regional infrastructure in Africa. Although African countries were generally late

to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (South Africa was the first African country to sign a cooperation document with China in December 2015, more than two years after the initiative was launched), the development has been quite rapid, and even in 2018, 28 African countries and the AU " In 2018, 28 African countries and the African Union (AU) even participated in the "Belt and Road" together.

Infrastructure construction is a key area of cooperation between China and Africa. Africa's future development potential gives China the opportunity to make a big impact on infrastructure, while cost, technical skills, implementation experience, and access to financing are all unique core competencies of Chinese engineering contractors. Africa, for its part, has included large-scale cross-border connectivity infrastructure projects among the 12 flagship projects in its first ten-year plan in Africa Agenda 2063, thus demonstrating the importance Africa attaches to infrastructure development. In fact, most African countries require at least 90% localization of labor for foreign investment projects. Infrastructure projects are expected to raise employment levels due to their large scale, long duration and large number of workers. The interdependence between China and Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative has brought a lot of benefits to African people.

China's contribution to the development of many African countries has become a central element in the development strategies of these countries. Many of China's infrastructure projects in Africa address the urgent need for roads, railroads, ports and energy. These include a 2,600 MW hydroelectric project in Nigeria, a \$3 billion investment in telecommunications equipment in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Ghana, and major rail projects in Nigeria, Gabon, and Mauritania (Vivien & William, 2008).

4.2 Analyzing BRI in Africa with Constructivism Theory

According to constructivism, the structure of the state-centered international system is not material but cultural, and the interaction between states constitutes the structure of the international system. Culture and perceptions influence the motivation of state behavior, different cultural structures produce different identities i.e. enemies, rivals and friends, and national interests are determined by the identity roles of the

actors. In the development of China-Africa relations, China has always viewed and treated Africa as a friend, and based on the identity of "friend", it has been building mutual cooperation between China and Africa and developing together under the "Belt and Road" initiative.

China is the largest developing country in the world, and Africa is the continent with the largest concentration of developing countries. China and Africa are closely linked by similar historical experiences and common historical missions, and China-Africa has always been a community of destiny. Developing solidarity and cooperation with African countries is an important cornerstone of China's foreign policy and a long-term and firm strategic choice for China. China and African countries have supported each other in their struggle for national liberation and independence, and have continued to deepen mutual political trust; they have helped each other on the road to economic development and national revitalization, and have continuously expanded new areas of cooperation; they have coordinated closely on major international and regional issues, and have jointly defended international justice and equity.

In 2015 and 2018, the Johannesburg and Beijing summits of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) were successfully held, leading China-Africa cooperation to an unprecedented new level. At the Beijing Summit, President Xi Jinping and African leaders unanimously decided to build a closer China-Africa community of destiny and promote China-Africa cooperation on "One Belt, One Road", which set a new milestone in the history of China-Africa relations.

4.2.1 Deepen political mutual trust

The process of deepening political mutual trust between China and Africa is also the basis for promoting cultural exchanges and forming a common culture. Since the founding of New China, China and African countries have always been good friends, good partners and good brothers, no matter how the international storm changes. The 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) confirmed the building of a closer China-Africa community of destiny, promoting

China-Africa relations into the best period in history.

The high-level exchanges play an important leading role in the development of China-Africa relations, and the leaders of both sides have strengthened communication and coordination on bilateral relations and major issues of common concern, providing a strong political guarantee for consolidating traditional friendship, enhancing political mutual trust, safeguarding common interests and seeking common development cooperation. During the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), President Xi Jinping met with more than 50 African leaders to discuss friendship, cooperation and the future, and attended nearly 70 bilateral and multilateral events. 17 African leaders have visited or attended meetings in China since the 2018 FOCAC Summit. After the New Crown Pneumonia epidemic, leaders from both sides maintained contacts and communications through video and phone calls. In June 2020, President Xi Jinping hosted a special summit on China-Africa solidarity against the epidemic by video, which was attended by 13 African leaders and the chair of the AU Commission. Since the epidemic, President Xi Jinping has spoken with African heads of state 17 times, maintaining the density and heat of high-level exchanges between China and Africa. President Xi Jinping has treated his African friends with sincerity, friendship and equality, built deep friendship and trust with African leaders, and led China-Africa relations with head of state diplomacy to move steadily and far.

China and Africa have continuously enriched and improved intergovernmental dialogue, consultation and cooperation mechanisms, given full play to the role of coordination, and promoted the all-round development of China-Africa cooperation in various fields. China has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with nine African countries, three with three others, six with six others and seven with seven others. China has established bilateral committees, diplomatic consultations or strategic dialogue mechanisms with 21 African countries and the AU Commission, and economic and trade joint (mixed) committees with 51 African countries. 2016 saw the establishment of a human rights consultation mechanism between China and

the AU, and 2017 saw the establishment of the first senior-level exchange mechanism between China and South Africa. China-Africa local cooperation is bursting with vitality. Since 2012, China and Africa have held four China-Africa Local Government Cooperation Forums. Up to now, China and Africa have concluded 160 pairs of friendship provinces and cities, of which 48 pairs have been added since 2013.

China and African countries are closely interacting with political parties, legislative and consultative bodies, and building multi-level, multi-channel, multi-faceted and all-round friendly cooperation. On the basis of the principles of independence, full equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, the CPC has continued to closely exchange and cooperate with political parties in African countries, building a new type of political party relationship that seeks common ground while reserving differences, respects each other, and learns from each other. The two sides have exerted positive influence in terms of legislation and supervision to provide policy support and guarantee for China-Africa cooperation and exchanges. The NPC has established regular exchange mechanisms with the parliaments of Egypt, South Africa and Kenya, and has established bilateral friendship groups with 35 African parliaments. The CPPCC and its affiliated institutions have engaged with 59 institutions in 39 African countries. In June 2019, the CPPCC established the China-Africa Friendship Group, the first foreign friendship group in the history of the CPPCC. In recent years, more African countries have joined the China-Africa friendship family, and China has restored diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with Gambia (March 17, 2016), Sao Tome and Principe (December 26, 2016) and Burkina Faso (May 26, 2018), respectively. Currently, China has established diplomatic relations with 53 African countries other than Swaziland.

4.2.2 Social cooperation keeps emerging

China actively cooperates with Africa in social fields such as poverty reduction, health, education, science and technology, environmental protection, climate change, and youth and women exchanges, and helps African countries improve their

comprehensive social development level by strengthening exchanges, providing assistance and sharing social development experiences, and creating endogenous impetus for Africa's economic development.

Share experiences in poverty reduction. Poverty is a common challenge faced by China and Africa. Poverty eradication is the primary goal of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China has successfully developed a path of poverty reduction with Chinese characteristics, which has lifted hundreds of millions of poor people out of poverty and provided a reference for addressing poverty in Africa. China has actively implemented the "China-Africa Cooperation Program on Poverty Reduction" and encouraged and supported China-Africa cooperation through mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Conference on Poverty Reduction and Development and the China-Africa Youth Exchange Program on Poverty Reduction and Development. Through mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Poverty Reduction and Development Conference and the China-Africa Youth Poverty Reduction and Development Exchange Program, we encourage and support local governments, academics, enterprises, youth and NGOs to carry out various forms of poverty reduction experience exchange and practical cooperation. Since 2010, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation - Conference on Poverty Reduction and Development has been held in China, Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda and other countries for 10 consecutive sessions, with a total of nearly 1,600 participants. From 2005 to 2021, China will hold 160 training courses for poverty reduction, training more than 2,700 participants from 53 countries in Africa, accounting for 58.6% of the total number of participants.

Expanding cooperation in education and human resources development. China has supported the development of education in Africa, helped train urgent talents according to the economic and social development needs of African countries, and supported outstanding African youths to study in China by setting up several scholarships. 2012 onwards, China and Africa have implemented the "20+20 Cooperation Program for China-Africa Universities" to build a platform for exchange

and cooperation between Chinese and African universities. Since 2018, China has established "Luban Workshops" with local institutions in Egypt, South Africa, Djibouti, Kenya and other African countries to share China's high-quality vocational education with Africa and train high-quality technical and skilled personnel for Africa to meet the urgent needs of economic and social development. China has supported more than 30 African universities to set up "Luban Workshops". Since 2004, China has sent more than 5,500 Chinese teachers and volunteers to 48 African countries.

Deepen cooperation in ecological protection and addressing climate change. Chinese and African people share a common aspiration for a beautiful environment and a better life. Since 2012, China and Africa have jointly organized a seminar on "China-Africa Green Cooperation to Guide the Economy of the Future" and the "China-Africa Ministerial Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation" to promote the strengthening of policy communication and coordination on environmental governance. "In 2020, the China-Africa Environment Cooperation Center was launched to build an important platform for China and Africa, as well as relevant international organizations, research institutions, enterprises and other parties to participate. As of September 2021, relevant institutions in seven African countries, including Angola and Kenya, have joined the "Belt and Road" International Alliance for Green Development, making positive contributions to promoting the construction of the Green Silk Road. China has signed 15 cooperation documents with 14 African countries to provide support to Africa in addressing climate change through implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, jointly building low-carbon demonstration zones and conducting capacity building training. Among them, the Earth observation remote sensing satellite that China assisted to Ethiopia is the first remote sensing satellite that China cooperated with Africa. China and Africa are working together to promote global wildlife conservation and sustainable use through cooperation on environmental protection laws and regulations, intelligence exchange and law enforcement capacity building, joint efforts to combat transnational organized crime of smuggling of endangered wildlife and plants, and enhanced

communication and coordination in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

4.2.3 Building a Community of Shared Future between China and Africa

China-Africa friendship has a long history. The first generation of leaders of the new China, including Chairman Mao Zedong, and the old generation of African statesmen have jointly laid the foundation of China-Africa friendly relations. For a long time, China has always respected, loved and supported Africa, and the Chinese people have always breathed the same breath and shared the same fate with the African people, with one heart and one mind, looking out for each other, and walked a distinctive road of win-win cooperation. At the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in September 2018, China and Africa reached a strategic consensus on building a China-Africa community of destiny with shared responsibility, win-win cooperation, shared happiness, shared cultural prosperity, shared security and shared harmony. This is the basic platform of the China-Africa community of destiny, a grand goal for China and Africa to strive for, and a path for China-Africa cooperation in the new era. China and Africa have set a model for promoting the building of a community of human destiny by sailing together through thick and thin and moving forward hand in hand.

Especially during the current spread of the New Crown epidemic, China has not only donated a large number of masks, New Crown reagents, medical uniforms and other emergency supplies to Africa, but also sent medical teams to support Africa in fighting the epidemic and share its experience and expertise in fighting the epidemic. In terms of vaccine supply and production, China has cooperated with African countries, and more than 45 African countries have already received New Crown vaccine from China. To increase vaccine production capacity in African countries, on May 21, 2021, the first batch of vaccine raw materials from the Chinese pharmaceutical company Kexing arrived in the Egyptian capital Cairo to be processed into vaccines by local companies. on September 29, 2021, a vaccine factory in

Constantine, Algeria, in cooperation with Kexing, began operations, making Algeria the second African country to produce Chinese vaccines locally. China's cooperation with African countries, enabling them to produce vaccines locally, will help not only the country in question, but also other African countries to fight the new crown epidemic and recover their economies.

In addition, China has responded to African countries' concerns about debt during the epidemic. The "debt trap" is an area where Chinese investment in Africa often raises questions and debates. With China-Africa political and economic relations developing rapidly. While the United States remains Africa's largest donor, China has become the largest provider of financing for infrastructure development in Africa. China's financial support to Africa is often in the form of long-term loans rather than grants, and has been criticized as a "debt trap" - a way for China to gain a strategic advantage in Africa. The United States and other countries have warned Africa against succumbing to China's "debt diplomacy. Some countries believe African countries could lose key assets if they cannot repay China's loans. The Afrobarometer 2019/2020 survey of 18 African countries shows that Africans have a positive view of China's aid and its political and economic influence in Africa.

But in countries that receive more Chinese loans and development aid, most respondents expressed concern about their country's debt sheet to China. In response to the concerns of the African public, China has already forgiven the debts of some countries during the epidemic. China has announced the forgiveness of interest-free intergovernmental loans due and outstanding at the end of 2018 for African least developed countries, heavily indebted poor countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing states that have diplomatic relations with China. In the wake of the New Crown Pneumonia outbreak, China announced the forgiveness of interest-free loan debts due at the end of 2020 for 15 African countries.

The Chinese and African people have the most say in whether China-Africa cooperation is good or not. The starting point of China's cooperation with Africa will always be the fundamental interests of the Chinese and African peoples, and it will

never take the containment of other countries as the starting point of its own policy towards Africa. China upholds the concept of truthfulness and sincerity and the correct concept of righteousness and benefit, insists on mutual respect and common development based on the noble goal of establishing a community of destiny, and more and more African countries feel that China's actions are not just empty words.

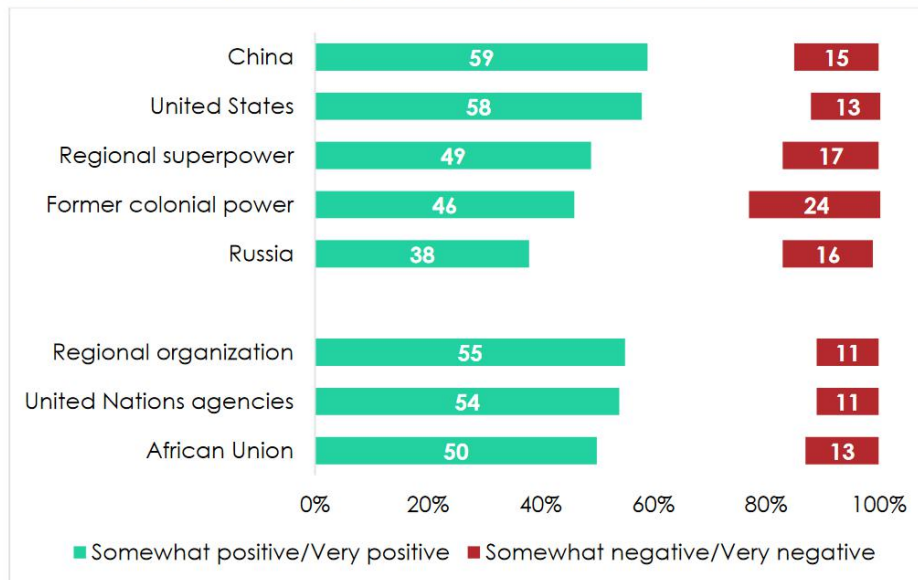
As the fact of close interaction between China and Africa described above shows, China and Africa have reached more and more consensus in many fields such as political party building, international affairs, and China-Africa development prospects. Combined with the constructivist concept of identity and culture, when China conducts exchange visits and political party exchanges with Africa, it invariably spreads China's diplomatic philosophy and peaceful development concept among African countries, and internalizes this concept into the consensus of China-Africa cooperation in the process of step-by-step political exchanges, thus forming a shared identity, which once formed will have an impact on the actions of the actors and form a positive interaction. and form a virtuous interaction. High-level and political party contacts can lead China-Africa relations to reach a superstructure consensus, which in turn can remove some obstacles in other areas, such as civil, social and humanistic cooperation, so that China's actions in Africa can be more understood and recognized by local governments and local people, laying a solid foundation for China-Africa cooperation to go deeper and deeper, and thus make China-Africa cooperation reach the maximum convention, such as the so-called China threat and other negative statements. The negative arguments such as the so-called China threat will not stand up in African countries.

4.3 Analysis of the survey report of the African Polling Institute

"Afro Barometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research organization that conducts surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions and other related issues in more than 30 African countries. The survey is conducted in a face-to-face interview format, in the language of the respondent's choice, and is nationally representative, with a sample bias of no more than +/-2% (for a sample size of 2400)

or +/-3% (for a sample size of 1200), with a 95% confidence level. The table below illustrates how ordinary Africans view China's presence and economic engagement in their countries.

Figure 6: External influences: positive or negative? | 18 countries | 2019/2020



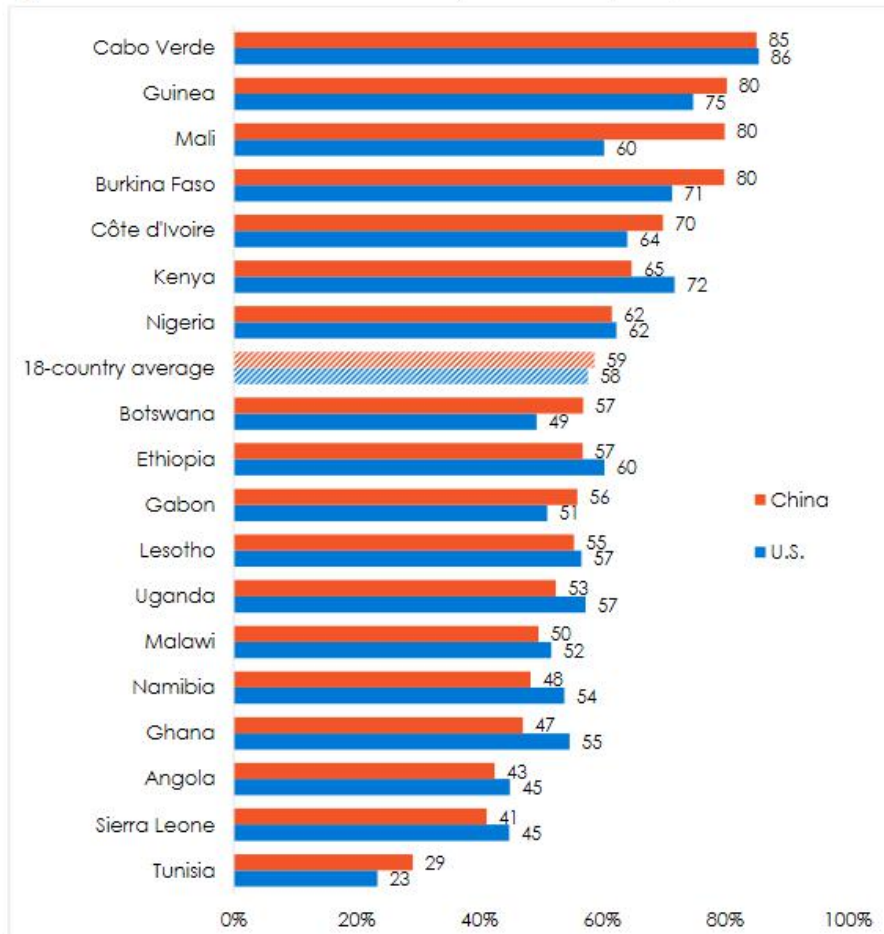
Respondents were asked: *In general, do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries/organizations on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

China's economic and political influence in Africa is seen more as a good thing than a bad thing. The survey, conducted in 18 countries, found that 59 percent of respondents viewed China's economic and political influence in their countries as "somewhat positive" or "very positive," while only 15 percent had a negative view. This is quite a high percentage compared to the highly polarized impressions of China in many other countries around the world. Many analysts who criticize China's cooperation with Africa are likely to misread public sentiment toward China in Africa. Despite seemingly endless media coverage of China's "debt trap" and "neo-colonialism," the data suggest that China maintains a positive public image in many African countries.

At the same time, the other data in the table cannot be ignored. Respondents rate U.S. influence similarly, with 58 percent and 13 percent viewing it positively and negatively, respectively. In another table, the percentage of respondents who view

China's influence favorably is comparable to that of the United States in most countries; the only country where the difference is more than 10 percentage points is Mali - 80 percent in China and 60 percent in the United States. Indeed, respondents who are welcoming of Chinese influence also tend to have positive views of U.S. influence, and this high positive correlation implies that for Africans, the competition between China and the United States may not be an either/or but a win-win relationship. These two charts show that African people welcome and endorse foreign engagement that meets their own priorities, whether Chinese or otherwise, further suggesting that it is China-Africa cooperation that is in line with Africa's development because Africa has a huge need for China, so the market for the "China threat theory" in Africa is This shows that the importance of China-Africa interdependence in dismantling the China threat narrative is even more evident as the percentage of those who "see China's influence as positive" is comparable to that of the United States and other Western countries.

Figure 7: Positive influence: China vs. U.S. | 18 countries | 2019/2020



Question: Do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "somewhat positive" or "very positive")

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The reason for the shift in Africa's perception of China's identity is based on the fact that China and Africa share common interests and that the stronger complementarities in development between the two promote the need for cooperation. As the data from African pollsters show, Africans welcome the involvement of a foreign country, Chinese or otherwise, that meets their own priorities, as to which country's influence is greater and whose development model is more accepted. The negative rhetoric about China can be somewhat dissipated precisely because of the mutual need and dependence of China and Africa in the areas of trade, economics, resources, etc. It is because of the persistence of the need for mutual dependence and the ability to bring the benefits that each country needs to develop, and because African countries can actually appreciate the opportunities that China brings, that a series of facts can slowly dissipate some of the negative rhetoric against China.

Secondly, China is not a former colonial power, nor did it engage in the slave trade, and it also has a history of invasion, so it has a natural sense of closeness. In addition, China and Africa have built many exchange and cooperation mechanisms through the Belt and Road and other cooperation channels, and enhanced mutual political trust through leaders' visits and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, so that they can maximize communication when they encounter problems and reach many common ideas and consensus to further influence the behavior of actors, thus forming a positive interaction in other areas of China-Africa cooperation and making more and more African countries realize the importance of building a China-Africa destiny community. More and more African countries are aware of the importance of building a China-Africa community of destiny. The market for negative statements like the so-called China threat will become less and less.

By analyzing the reasons for the change of China's identity in Africa, we can also reflect that China's development in Africa is not always smooth and still faces great challenges. The development of the international landscape, the imperfect system of

China-Africa cooperation, the business environment, the social culture, etc. will all constrain the further development of China-Africa cooperation, and China needs to explore the integration of connectivity with African characteristics under the "Belt and Road" initiative. At the same time, the world needs to understand China's concept of mutual benefit and win-win, peaceful development, and realize that the Belt and Road Initiative and Sino-Western cooperation in the field of international development play an important pivot role, and that China's international development system is a complement to the mainstream Western international development system, not a separate one; China-Africa cooperation The Chinese program and experience embodied in China-Africa cooperation is also a complement to the mainstream international development system, rather than a destruction of it, thus dispelling the concerns and suspicions of Western societies about China-Africa cooperation, and jointly promoting poverty reduction, livelihood improvement and sustainable development in Africa, creating a better international environment for the long-term development of China-Africa relations.

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