

# “People-Oriented” Public Diplomacy: the Key for China’s Soft Power Building in Africa

HE Wenping

Paper presented at the international conference  
China and Africa Media, Communications and Public Diplomacy

CHINA AND AFRICA  
MEDIA, COMMUNICATIONS  
AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



Organised by the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) (Norway) in cooperation with Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences\*

\* Center for Global Media & Communication Studies hosted the conference in association with the Kede College of Capital Normal University

10 - 11 September 2014  
Beijing

**CMI** CHR.  
MICHELSEN  
INSTITUTE

# **“People-Oriented” Public Diplomacy: the Key for China’s Soft Power Building in Africa**

Dr. HE Wenping

Professor and Director of African Studies Section  
Institute of West Asian & African Studies (IWAAS)  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)

Sino-African relations have progressed significantly on the economic front over the past one and half decade ever since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in October 2000. For example, China has overtaken the United States as Africa's largest trade partner since 2009, and the bilateral trade volume surged from \$10 billion in 2000 to more than \$ 210 billion in 2013. There are more than 2500 Chinese companies doing business in Africa, etc. However, comparing with the big achievement in above “hard power” areas, the “soft power” areas such as the cultural /academic exchange, people-people contact and civil society linkage building between China and Africa is far lag behind.

Aware of this harsh reality and challenge, as early as in the Beijing Summit of the 2006 FOCAC, “cultural exchanges and mutual learning” was for the first time listed as equally important as “political equality and mutual trust” and “economic win-win cooperation” in the “new type of strategic partnership” between China and Africa. And then in the fifth FOCAC in July 2012, “strengthening people-people contact” has been named as one of five priorities areas together with financing, development assistance, African’s integration, peace & security. Therefore, to conduct a “people-oriented” public diplomacy is the key to face the challenge and to improve China’s soft power in Africa.

## **1. China’s Soft power building in Africa: Advantages and Disadvantages**

For long, the term “Soft Power”, defined by Josef Nye, professor from Harvard University and ex-US Assistant Secretary of Defense, to be something that may achieve its goals by means of attractions rather than by force or purchasing, seems to have nothing to do with China. In many Westerners’ (especially Americans) eyes, it is seemingly that only the values on democracy, freedom, human rights, and the popular cultural and consumption symbols from jeans, McDonald, Hollywood films were the most attractive natural representatives of “Soft Power” in modern world. However, when we have a deep look of China’s engagement with Africa, we can see that China also enjoys its own advantages on building soft power even though the word “soft power” has not been voiced loudly during the past long period time. If we go one by one from the three factors that Prof. Josef Nye used for analyzing “Soft Power”, namely policy, values and culture, we then find that China’s advantages and disadvantages on building its soft power in Africa is coexistence there, just like the

two sides of one coin, are sometimes two manifestations of one thing.

**1.1. China's policy towards Africa, featured by mutual respect and reciprocity, is a valuable historical heritage from the era of MAO Zedong and ZHOU Enlai, and would be the advantage and embodiment of its "Soft Power".**

Though China is geographically remote from Africa, the history of bilateral friendship has experienced more than 2000 years, ever since ZHANG Qian's visit to Central and West Asia in West Han Dynasty (202BC-9AD). In modern history, as emerging nations after the Second World War, China and African shared common history of being invaded and colonized, and took part in the liberation struggle for anti-imperialism and colonialism, and for national independence.

The common experiences accumulated in the similar historical past, anti-imperialism and colonialism movements, the struggle for national sovereignty, opposition to foreign interventions, and efforts to develop national economy, have made Sino-African friendship well accepted by both sides throughout decades. During the apogee of African nationalist liberation movement of the 1960s and the 1970s, Chairman MAO Zedong frequently meet friends and organizations from Asia, Africa and Latin America, announcing that China would show sympathy and support to African people's brave struggle against imperialism and colonialism. In order to assist African countries to develop national economy and consolidate political independence, China, a country far from being developed, attached no strings to its foreign aid to Africa, and upheld justice for African countries on the world stage. These traditional friendship and sentiments have provided a solid basis for the healthy and sustainable development of Sino-African relations.

Over the last half-century, even as the international situation has changed, China's Africa policy has remained consistent and it has never ignored African countries due to changing relations with other great powers. To this day the five principles for developing relations with African and Arabic countries put forth by Premier Zhou Enlai in the 1960s, along with China's eight principles for foreign economic technological aid, are still the important guiding ideology and principles for the development of Sino-African relations.<sup>①</sup>

---

<sup>①</sup> China's eight principles for foreign economic technological aid are: 1)The Chinese Government always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other countries. It never regards such aid as a kind of unilateral alms but as something mutual. 2)In providing aid to other countries, the Chinese Government strictly respects the sovereignty of the recipient countries, and never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges. 3)China provides economic aid in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans and extends the time limit for repayment when necessary so as to lighten the burden of the recipient countries as far as possible. 4) In providing aid to other countries, the purpose of the Chinese Government is not to make the recipient countries dependent on China but to help them embark step by step on the road of self-reliance and independent economic development. 5) The Chinese Government tries its best to help the recipient countries build projects which require less investment while yielding quicker results, so that the recipient governments may increase their income and

In its relations with African countries, neither did China boast itself to be a leading country, nor seek its own interest. It respected the sovereignty of recipient countries, refusing to define its aid as a kind of unilateral almsgivings, and attached no political strings. Furthermore, experts and technicians dispatched by the Chinese government enjoyed the same treatment with their African counterparts. This was in stark contrast to Western foreign aid to Africa. Chinese experts and medical team members lived together with their African friends, and some of them even dedicated their lives to the development of African countries. Many of these Chinese names have been memorized and praised by locals even by now. Some projects aided by China are still playing an important role in the national economic development of certain countries, and are applauded as “the typical example of South-South cooperation”.

After the end of the Cold War, as the West tried to force democracy onto Africa by tying aid to democratization, China maintained that choosing a development path and political system are internal matters for African countries. China argued that outside countries should not interfere with domestic affairs or impose their value systems, ideologies or development models on other countries. When working with African countries China has never posed as a great power or sought personal gain, has always respected the sovereignty of aid-receiving countries and has not seen aid as a one-dimensional grant. In addition, no political conditions have been placed on the provision of aid and no special rights have been demanded. The African people have come to recognize China as being completely different from the Western nations that once colonized them.

After the establishment of the FOCAC in 2000, China offered practical assistance to African countries in the form of debt reduction, reduced tariffs on African products, job training, increased business investment and community investment in schools and hospitals. The first session of the Sino-African summit in 2006 did even more to ensure the establishment of a “comprehensive and cooperative” partnership built on political trust, mutual economic benefit and cultural exchanges.

Additionally, China believes in the international affairs that all countries, no matter big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, and no matter what social system it follows, should stand on their own, and should be an equal member of the international community; they should be mutually respected, equally treated; they should agree to

---

accumulate capital. 6) The Chinese Government provides the best-quality equipment and material of its own manufacture at international market prices. If the equipment and material provided by the Chinese Government are not up to the agreed specifications and quality, the Chinese Government undertakes to replace them. 7) In providing any technical assistance, the Chinese Government will see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master such technique. 8) The experts dispatched by China to help in construction in the recipient countries will have the same standard of living as the experts of the recipient country. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities.

disagree, to embark on friendly cooperation, and to promote prosperity.

In sum, no matter the long history (common historical past and mutual support), or China's policy towards Africa in the past decades featured by mutual respect, sincere amity and reciprocity, have left a wonderful impression deep in the heart of African people, and also have intensified their understanding of China: China should not and would never be same with colonial Western powers; China's sincere assistance to Africa is never for its own interests. As a matter of fact, this understanding is the recognition and praise, and also a need and expectation for us. But sometimes, unrealistic need and expectation would possibly cause pressures on the development of Sino-African relations, and subsequently trigger depressed mood if they were not fully satisfied.

**1.2. As for values, the magnificent achievements that China has acquired in the past three decades since its opening-up, has made “Beijing Consensus” and its economic development mode more attractive to Africa. Though both sides have consensus on issues of “democracy” and “human right”, divergences on political ideas and values are enlarging, with the development of African democratization and civil societies.**

**1.2.1 Attractions from China's economic development mode and achievements: the key to “Soft Power”.**

Throughout three decades since its opening-up, China has achieved remarkable economic achievements: the year-on-year growth rate of GDP is 9%; more than 400 million people get rid of poverty; second largest economic power after the US, and the second largest global trader after Germany. Experiences that help China to evolve from backward to advanced are naturally attractive to African countries that are now in an urgent need to develop and get rid of poverty.

In fact, as early as mid-1980s, under the “guidance” of World Bank (IBRD) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), embarked on the privatization and marketization oriented structural adjustment plans. After the Cold War, the West took advantages of Soviet's collapse and implemented Western multi-parties democracy in Africa. However, it is later proved that Western “democratization” and “liberalization” would not lead to stabilization and prosperity upon the African basis of multi-races, multi-ethnic groups and poor development of productive forces. It is due to this disaffection that more and more African countries started to pay attention to East Asia (the policy of looking east), especially to the development mode and experiences of China, hoping to get inspirations and enlightenments to develop Africa. It is reported that many African leaders would visit township enterprises in Shenzhen, Pudong District of Shanghai, provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang when they arrived in China. Since there were too many African leaders wishing to visit China, those who were impatient preferred to come privately. In their opinions, China has set a shining example to the world by successfully feeding 1.2 billion people. The successful

experiences that China enjoys on reform and the needs for economic reform in Africa would make it possible for both sides to conduct mutual studies.

China's dramatic shift from a backwards to an advanced economy in only 30 years has attracted global attention, particularly from African countries looking to escape cycles of poverty. Achieving modernization in a globalized world is challenging for developing countries, and each country is exploring development models. China's experience is relevant to developing countries because it did not copy the Western model, but followed its own national condition in selecting which lessons to emphasize. According to the "Beijing Consensus", China is proceeding carefully with development, emphasizing social stability, effective governance and avoiding the use of "shock therapy" to achieve great leaps forward.<sup>①</sup> Some Western writers have even argued that China's economic development model is suitable for other developing countries. In addition to replacing "the Washington Consensus's" overemphasis on liberalization, the "Beijing Consensus" has begun to change the entire international development structure, starting with economic, social and political aspects.

Although the Chinese government has never formally endorsed the "Beijing Consensus", the concept has fueled a global debate over the path for developing countries. Whether other countries adopt China's model in whole or part, it has been established as a viable alternative to the traditional Western approach. Sharing this message with African countries should be the main content of soft power construction at this stage.

### **1.2.2. Consensus and divergences on notions of "democracy" and "human rights": factors of "Soft Power" which have both advantages and shortcomings.**

Although China's achievements in economic development are recognized throughout the world, its political operating model for sustaining these achievements has met a variety of reactions. The West, according to its innate understanding of "democracy" and "human rights", tends to put China in the "one-party system" and "non-democratic" column of nations. Thus Westerners have suspicions of African nations' growing affinity for the Chinese-style development.

In Africa, situation is more complicated. On the one hand, since democratization in Africa arises from "external" rather than "internal" forces, and has caused problems of election riots, social unrests and low efficiency in its development process, African governments and ruling parties hoped to learn ideas from operation and management of Chinese politics. Through Africa's 20 years of developing multi-party democracy, many of these concerns have been absorbed by Africa. The Western rhetoric on democracy and human rights has already claimed the ideological and moral high ground. The terms "democracy" and "human rights" often appear in government documents and daily speech, and Africans are very proud of the quick development of

---

<sup>①</sup> See Joshua Cooper Ramo, "The Beijing Consensus", British Foreign Policy Research Center, May 11, 2004. The article was translated and published in two parts in China's Cankao Ziliao on June 14 and 15, 2004.

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. The African intelligentsia does not quite understand China's democracy and human rights situation and even feel that China does not pay a proper amount of attention to these issues in Africa.

**Due to the similarities in historical past and current development, the consensus between China and Africa on “human rights” and “sovereignty” is more solid than that on “democracy”.** In contrast with the individuality, paramount, practicability of human rights which was unilaterally emphasized by the West, developing countries like China and African countries focus more on collective human right and development right such as the right of ethnic groups. To sum up, Sino-African consensus on “human right” and “sovereignty” mainly contains following aspects: (1) in the international cooperation on human rights, mutual respect and understanding should be the premise for human rights protections. Different history, customs, cultural traditions, geographic environments, economic development of different countries and ethnic groups have determined that people from different states would have different explanations and focuses regarding human rights; (2) the right of development is an unalienable basic human right, and should top the world agenda. Being different from the political connotations emphasized by the West, the key to the right of development proposed by developing countries should be economic development, and the right to survive and ameliorate living conditions; (3) human rights is a changing term. Beyond rights of individuals, it should cover collective rights such as right of self-determination and of development; (4) the principle of national sovereignty should be upheld. Basic principles of international laws such as respect to national sovereignty and no engagement in others' internal affairs, should also apply to the international cooperation on human rights. Interference in other countries' internal affairs under the excuse of human rights protection should be strongly opposed.

It is upon this consensus and with the help of African countries that China successively frustrated Western anti-China proposals for 11 times on the human right conference of the UN, ever since 1990, and won the struggle on the issue.

As for democratic politics and management, “good governance” has become a new popular notion in African since the 1990s. Both the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) regarded good governance as an indispensable premise for future African development. To put it more simply, good governance is to strengthen ruling ability and responsibility, and to improve management skills and administrative efficiency; to emphasize people's participation in the political activities and the role of civil organizations, and to facilitate local decentralization and services; to put forward democracy and law in order to show transparency, to respect the independent status of legislature and judiciary organs as well as the surveillance from mass-medias and public opinions, to safeguard human rights and rights of women. For the sake of encouraging good governance, African countries creatively established an institutionalized democratic surveillance system---- the African Peer Review

Mechanism (APRM). Member states should make its governmental management, economic policies and human rights issues at disposal of other members' check and assessment.

As a result, some African scholars believe that African future economic development can only be carried out within the framework of democratic politics (this would be different with the mode of China). When “”looking east”, Africa should never lose its own characteristics or sacrifice the political achievement obtained since the 1990s.<sup>①</sup> After some former opposition leaders who had education background in Western countries, stepped onto the stage through legitimate elections, official notions of many African countries on “democracy” and “human rights” tended to converge towards those of African civil societies.

**1.3. In the cultural field, despite that the Chinese traditional culture is broad and profound, but approaches to introduce and spread it are rather monotonous. Contemporary Chinese public culture is unable to withstand the blow from Western popular culture, or even culture of India and South Korea.**

Cultural influence is no doubt an important component and manifestation of “Soft Power”. If a country were to be respected by others, one of the basic criteria would be the possession of an amicable, imaginative and creative cultural modality. It should be capable to satisfy people's spiritual need, and influence culture of other countries or even of the world, and make contribution to their development.<sup>②</sup>

Traditional Chinese culture of five thousand years is broad and profound (from Chinese characters to lute-playing, chess, calligraphy, and painting, from *the Four Books, the Five Classics* to ancient Chinese philosophers, from Chinese martial arts of Shaolin Temple to acrobatics of Wuqiao), and is attracting more and more foreigners to study and research it. But in the process of promoting these cultural traditions, we notice that some of them are either too difficult for foreigners or even for many Chinese teenagers to command (for instance, calligraphy, and painting), or inconsistent with the quick rhythm of practical life (such as thinking of ancient philosophers, Tang poem Song jambic verse). Plus the monotonous approach of introducing them, Indian Yoga becomes more popular than Chinese martial arts in some countries.

In order to cater to the current “Mandarin Fever” in the world, Chinese government is now attaching more importance to its oversea Mandarin teaching work. From the very first Confucius Institute being set up in South Korea in November 2004 until the end of 2007, more than 200 had been established in merely only 3 years (It is reported that Confucius Institutes were set up at a speed of 3 per day in 2007.) This made the

---

<sup>①</sup> Jean-Germain Gros, “Chinese Economic Success and Lessons for Africa: Possibilities and Limits”, *Nkrumaist Review*, May 2005.

<sup>②</sup> LUO Jianbo, “Optimize China's Soft Power in Africa”, *Asia and Africa Review*, Vol 6, 2007.

Education Ministry of China to reset the number of Confucius Institutes which need to be finished by the end of 2010 from 100 to 500.<sup>①</sup> But in addition to the rapid development, more concerns should be paid to the assignments of these institutes. If they were merely scheduled for Mandarin teachings, that would be far from being enough. In fact, language oriented teaching would hardly reflect Chinese culture in an accurate and comprehensive manner.

What is more, China also needs to pay more attention to cultivating popular culture. It seems that Chinese culture is almost equivalent to traditional Confucian culture. Objectively speaking, however, the international and our own understanding regarding Chinese culture are mainly focused on traditional culture rather than a modern one, since the latter is much less prestigious by comparison. Taking film, one of the most important vehicles to spread popular culture as an example----leaving how to withstand the blow from Western movies aside---- the success of films from Indian Bollywood and South Korean TV drama *the Great Jang-Geum* in China can give us enough alerts.

In fact, people that help to promote Chinese culture abroad should not be *Confucius*(孔子), *Mozi* (墨子) or *Zhuangzi* (庄子), but famous representatives of popular culture in the world (such as basketball player YAO Ming, pianist LANG Lang, film stars like Jacky Chan and GONG Li). Youth, culture, masculinity and beautiful China represented by them would be important “boosters” to our “Soft Power” building.

## **2. The human resources training, culture exchange and health security are the key areas for catching up in terms of China’s soft power building and people-oriented public diplomacy**

### **2.1. Human resources training has been paid increasing attention even though the challenges are still there**

In recent decade, with its rapidly growing economy, China has begun to cultivate the attraction of its language, culture, political values and diplomacy around the world. Africa is perhaps the most important testing ground for the promotion of Chinese soft power. These efforts have come in mainly two forms: bringing Africans to China and sending Chinese to Africa – exchanges which strive to share China’s experience in national development and offer help to improve the capacity of African human resources.

To this end, China has injected increasing budget in human resource training for Africa. Invitations have been extended to a variety of African specialists (Party and government cadres, economic management personnel, middle- and high-ranking

---

<sup>①</sup> See Japanese Yomiuri Online, “the Scale of Chinese Confucius Institutes keeps on Enlarging”, January 16, 2008.

military officers and professional technical personnel) to visit China for opportunities to learn both professional and technical skills as well as get an up close and personal feel for China's development experience. China also dispatches many Chinese experts to African countries to give lectures at universities, visit medical facilities and hospitals and advise farmers on agricultural production techniques.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government has also robustly promoted the development of Chinese language instruction overseas over the past decade. By the end of 2013, 37 Confucius Institutes plus 10 Confucius Classes in Africa had been set up in 31 African countries. And China meanwhile had dispatched 360 thousands technical experts, agricultural experts and youth volunteers to Africa. The total number of African human resources trained with the sponsor from China has reached 54 thousands. Furthermore, Chinese government scholarship quotas for African students to study in China also increase year by year, the total African students in China in the year of 2013 has reached 33 thousands.<sup>①</sup>

On the other side of the coin, although China is indeed becoming more attractive to Africans as a destination to study or train abroad, Europe and America remain the top choices for Africans. There are many reasons for this, but the greater geographical distance and higher language barriers between China and Africa compared with the United States and Europe are not insignificant. The number of available government scholarships and the living stipends offered by China also remain far less generous than those offered by Western countries. These factors, as well as the historical ties between the West and Africa, have led most African elites still choose Western countries as their prime destination for overseas study. Although there are more than 2,500 Chinese companies operating in Africa and above 1 million Chinese nationals there, Chinese professors rarely make appearances to teach in African universities and China's voice is hardly heard in the African media. Most of the African elite, including leaders and intellectuals, have received a Westernized education and their identification with the West in terms of democracy and freedom is probably beyond China's imagination.

## **2.2. Culture exchange is on the move and gradually institutionalized**

Since China and Africa were both cradles of human civilization and rich cultural heritage, there are good conditions for cultural exchanges. To explore the rich culture treasures both in China and Africa, bilateral cultural cooperation should not simply stay at the government level. It needs to spread to the industry level through the introduction of market and social force.

As a key project of "Chinese Culture in Focus" events, the First Roundtable Meeting on Chinese and African Cultural Industries, organized by the Ministry of Chinese

---

<sup>①</sup> See He Wenping, "China-Africa Cooperation has been upgraded in an all-round Way", *China Today*, NO.6, 2014, pp. 38-41; [http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctchinese/chinaworld/article/2014-06/04/content\\_622416.htm](http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctchinese/chinaworld/article/2014-06/04/content_622416.htm).

Culture, was held in Beijing and Shenzhen from June 18 to 23, 2013, with delegates from China and senior cultural officials and experts from 26 African countries in a discussion of how best to promote bilateral cultural exchanges in terms of cultural industry policies, development status, successful experience, demands and cooperation vision. *African and Chinese Cultures in Focus* events have been held since 2008. The events happen in alternate years and now are becoming a significant brand and platform for cultural exchange between China and Africa. *The China-Africa Cultural Cooperation Partnership Program*, launched in 2013, aims to promote the building of long-term paired cooperation between 100 Chinese cultural institutions and 100 African cultural institutions in three years. China has also provided cultural materials assistance worth about 7.2 million yuan (\$1.18 million) to 36 African countries. These cultural exchanges and cooperation play an increasingly important role in deepening Sino-African relations and promoting mutual understanding and trust.

### **2.3. Health security and medical cooperation are becoming more and more significant in “people-oriented” public diplomacy**

#### **2.3.1. From medical team sending to all kinds of medical cooperation**

In 1963, the first Chinese medical team to Africa arrived in Algeria and the year 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of this medical team sending. For the past five decades, China has sent over 20,000 Chinese medical experts and staff to Africa and treated 250 million people in 51 African countries and regions, and nearly 50 Chinese medical staff had dedicated their lives for that. At present, there are 43 Chinese medical teams with nearly 1000 members in 42 African countries. More than 50 year on, the Chinese medical teams has greatly helped Africa enhance its own capacity for medical care and public health, and also enhanced friendship between China and Africa. And the team themselves, also are named as “the most beautiful business card” or “the brightest brand” of Chinese public diplomacy.

At the 2006 FOCAC Beijing Summit, the Chinese government pledged to assist 30 hospitals in African countries and grant 300 million yuan to provide anti-malarial medication and to build 30 malaria centers over the course of three years. In August 2013, FOCAC Ministerial Conference on Health Cooperation and Development was held in Beijing with delegates from 48 African countries, WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA and the GAVI Alliance. The joint declaration issued at the conference called for ensuring the priority position of health in the post-2015 global development agenda, developing the African healthcare workforce, increasing international cooperation through development partners and exploring and piloting public health cooperation projects encompassing schistosomiasis, malaria, productive healthcare for all as well as the prevention, care, and treatment of AIDS and tuberculosis.

#### **2.3.2. Support African countries for fighting-Ebola**

Since February 2014, the outbreak and the spread of *Ebola*, a severe and hemorrhagic infectious disease has led to growing fatality rate due to its fast outbreak and strong infectious nature, in West Africa has caused over 4000 casualties and more than 8000 affected by the middle of Oct. 2014. The World Health Organization (WHO), therefore, declared the Ebola outbreak as an international public health emergency on August 8, 2014.

Facing such a rampant epidemic, governments of countries affected have responded immediately with huge input of manpower and resources, however, they are in serious shortage of medical supplies and human resources and need the help of the international community. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon therefore convened a High-level meeting on Response to the Ebola Virus during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly in Sept. 2014 by leaders of various countries, aimed at mobilizing more global players into the fight against the disease.

In the global battle against Ebola, China has always been at the forefront. In April 2014, when Ebola just broke out, the Chinese government provided 1 million yuan of supplies on disease prevention and control to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leon and Guinea-Bissau respectively. On August 7, against the spread of the epidemic, the Chinese government provided another 30 million yuan of contingent humanitarian assistance in the form of emergency supplies such as protective clothing, disinfectant and thermal detectors to West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leon and Guinea. On September 18, Chinese President Xi Jinping who was on a visit to India announced in New Delhi that the Chinese government will provide a further 200 million yuan of aid including food, supplies and capital support to Liberia, Sierra Leon and Guinea and 2 million USD in cash respectively to the African Union and the World Health Organization on the basis of previous two batches of assistance to support the countries in the fight against Ebola, help neighbouring countries of the three affected countries to strengthen the development of disease prevention and control capability, and support relevant international and regional organizations in continuing their leadership and coordination role in the battle against the disease. On October 16, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang announced in Milan, Italy while he attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Summit that China will offer another 100 million yuan aid to West Africa for fighting Ebola.

Moreover, it is more commendable that China has offered most-need and most precious human resources - Chinese medical teams to Africa and experts on disease control and public health, who are also in the frontline against Ebola disease. When the dangerous epidemic came, the Chinese medical teams in these countries did not go away. On the contrary, they have stayed there to work together with African friends to fight the disease. On top of that, more Chinese medical experts have arrived at the forefront of African countries to join in the battle. Statistics show that since the outbreak of Ebola in three West African countries, China has sent around 200 medical staff to support and participate in the disease prevention and control campaign. Confronting the ruthless disease, the Chinese doctors have demonstrated their care

and love. Through attacked unexpectedly by the virus, African countries know that the Chinese brothers are with them. This is the demonstration of China-Africa friendship, and is the display of China's responsibility.<sup>①</sup>

### **3. “People-Oriented” Public Diplomacy should focus on improving African people’s livelihood, including job creation and shouldering more responsibility**

#### **3.1. The entity and one of the key objectives of public diplomacy are the people and people’s livelihood improvement**

Unlike the government diplomacy, the target audience of public diplomacy is not government or high-level official, but the grassroots people instead. Hence, the job concern and daily need necessities should be the priority for “People-Oriented” Public Diplomacy.

Encouragingly, during the Fifth FOCAC in July 2012, “Livelihood” and “employment” were the two keywords in the outcome documents of the meeting. While indicating the five key areas for future Sino-Africa cooperation (namely investment and financing, development assistance, African integration, people-to-people contact, peace and security) in the opening speech, then President HU Jintao pointed out that “China will continue to expand assistance to Africa and let all African people share in the results of development.” During his address in the opening ceremony of the China-Africa Business Conference, then Premier WEN Jiabao said that in the future economic and trade cooperation, more attention should be paid to the improvement of people’s livelihood and promotion of employment. Then Commerce Minister CHEN Deming also said that in further expanding trade cooperation, China will transfer industrial chains of comparative advantage to Africa to extend the value chain for “African manufacturing” and create more jobs for Africans.

Helping Africans solve the unemployment problem and paying attention to people’s welfare is not only the wish of African countries but also the focus of readjustments on China’s part when conducting trade with Africa. In the past three years, China’s assistance for Africa has almost doubled, going further into welfare, poverty reduction and alleviation, disaster prevention and relief, and capacity building, etc. It also built many new schools, hospitals, bridges and water-supply facilities in Africa. China also dispatched a number of agricultural and technological experts and medical teams to Africa and has helped train over 21,000 personnels in various fields for African countries. China has also provided emergency food aid to famine-stricken African countries including those in the Horn of Africa. It has set up a number of agriculture demonstration centers and nearly a hundred clean energy projects, thus playing a

---

<sup>①</sup> See He Wenping, “China Displays Its Responsibility in Fighting Ebola”, *People’s Daily* (Overseas version), Sept. 25, 2014. P.1; [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2014-09/25/content\\_1481870.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2014-09/25/content_1481870.htm).

positive role in helping African countries deal with challenges like food security and climate change.

After in all, assistance to Africa with the focus on people's welfare will enhance communication and understanding among the Chinese and African people. Through the improvement of the lives of ordinary people in Africa, more people will benefit from China-Africa cooperation and the public opinion base for common development will be more solid.

### **3.2. Embracing correct justice-profit outlook and taking more responsibility for African development**

Correct handling of the relationship between justice and profit is an important guideline laid down by China's new leadership in its engagement with Africa. In March 2013 when Chinese President Xi visited Africa, he used four phrases to summarize China's attitude toward China-Africa relations: "remaining faithful, valuing real results, cultivating kinship-like quality and being sincere."

In January 2014, when Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi visited Africa, he also reiterated that the "correct justice-profit outlook is a banner of China's diplomacy." According to Wang, China will neither embark on the plundering road of colonists nor seek to profit selfishly as done by some other countries. Instead, China hopes to become prosperous together with African countries. During the process, China will give more consideration for the needs of African countries that can then profit more through cooperation. The Tanzania-Zambia Railway, built with Chinese assistance in the 1970s, is an exemplary model of the correct justice-profit outlook. The AU Conference Center, also built with Chinese assistance, is another example.

In May 2014, when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited Africa, he addressed two "growing pain" issues related with Chinese engagement in Africa, one is corporate social responsibility (CSR), and another is environment (wildlife) protection. While visiting Angola, home to 260,000 Chinese, accounting for nearly a quarter of the Chinese in Africa, Li took time to meet with representatives of Chinese state-owned and private enterprises and a Chinese chamber of commerce operating in Angola. While stressing that the Chinese Government attaches importance to the protection of rights and interests of overseas Chinese and consular protection, Li required these enterprises to strictly abide by local laws and regulations and take corresponding responsibilities in project quality, product quality, consumers and local society and environment.

While visiting Kenya, Premier Li and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta visited the Ivory Burning Site Monument in Nairobi National Park, showing the Chinese Government's strong determination of joining hands with African countries in fighting against illegal poaching and ivory smuggling and its sincerity of strengthening cooperation in wildlife protection. Premier Li pledged \$10 million in

supporting wildlife conservation, protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development in Africa. Li also gave his support to the localization of Chinese enterprises and urged them to provide more job opportunities to Africans. Much of China's foreign aid will go to Africa with focuses on poverty alleviation, health care and disaster prevention.

#### **4. Strengthen dialogues between NGOs, think tanks of both China and Africa, so as to facilitate Sino-African civil communication**

To show the world the real and peaceful China, it is far from enough to rely solely on the country's rising economic strength or policy statements and the various white papers issued by the authorities. China needs to mobilize all kinds of diplomatic approaches with the broad-based participation of all sectors of society and make use of elements representing essential Chinese culture and values in ways that show a real and complex China in appealing ways. Among all the approaches, high-level official's easy going style, first lady diplomacy, think-tank and NGO's role need to be further mentioned below.

First of all, in terms of leading official's easy going style, Chinese leaders have now found that non-official diplomatic maneuvers can help people better understand China. For example, when delivering a speech in Tanzania in early April 2013, Chinese President Xi used a Swahili greeting, mentioned *A Beautiful Daughter-In-Law Era*, a hot TV series that has been dubbed and gained popularity in African countries, and a story of a young Chinese couple who has fallen in love with Africa after their honeymoon in Tanzania. Plain language in his speech shortened distance with local people, and Xi's 30-minute speech drew dozens of bursts of warm applause. Peng Liyuan, President Xi's wife, has received increasing attention for not only her attire, but also her good-will activities during the visits abroad, a softtoned diplomatic gesture to boost China's image. First-lady diplomacy is now a vital component of public diplomacy. Peng's role is special and she can deliver a big push to the country's soft power.

Second, With China-Africa cooperation expanding in a more comprehensive way, Sino-African think tank exchanges and cooperation has continued to be strengthened in recent years. Since the China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Program launched in March 2010, the first and second *China-Africa Think Tanks Forum* (CATTF) have been held in Hangzhou and Addis Ababa respectively. The third meeting of CATTF and the launching ceremony of *the China-Africa Think Tanks 10+10 Partnership Plan* was held in Beijing from October 21 to 22, 2013. The frequent and multi-level exchanges and cooperation on large scale among Sino-African scholars and think tanks could effectively enhance in-depth understanding of each other, promote people-to-people exchanges, and provide intellectual support for the development of China and African countries.

However, on the other hand, we also need to point out that, general speaking, in China the development of think tanks and civil society still lags behind. As for think tanks, though the quality and number of researchers and their influence on public opinion and government policy have all been on the rise in recent decade. But when compared horizontally with developed countries or with other domestic industries, they are still rather weak. In addition, if just speaking of the establishment of think tanks that research Africa, they could be called “the weak of the weak”. And there is very few China study centre in African Universities and research institutions. The contact and project-based joint study between China and Africa think tanks are still at the beginning stage.

Finally, as China continues to increase assistance to Africa and bring the benefits of development to the African people, some capable NGOs with a talent pool in China will gradually participate in the China-Africa cooperation projects. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people started to get acquainted with and accept different forms of NGOs both home and abroad. NGO is becoming the most influential non-governmental power, due to its extensive representation, flexible management manner, and concerns for livelihood. As a Chinese proverb says, “State-to-state relations thrive when there is friendship between the peoples. And such friendship grows out of close interactions.” Strengthening NGOs contact and cooperation will enhance people-to-people exchanges and understanding between both sides.

However, similar with the weak starting point of Chinese think tanks, Chinese NGOs are also not involved very much with political and international issues. As Britain’s University of Nottingham China Policy Research Institute research fellow LU Yiyi said, an obvious shortcoming of China’s soft power is its lack of NGOs at the international level and in Africa that could help reduce the negative side effects that have accompanied China’s increased activity in Africa: “On the international stage, China’s NGOs are nowhere to be seen, thus making China lose out on one of soft power’s key instruments and restricting China’s public diplomacy.”<sup>①</sup> In fact, this problem goes beyond NGOs and can also be seen in Chinese scholars’ low level of exposure on the international stage.

All in all, “people-oriented” public diplomacy will focus on not only human resources training, culture exchange and health security, but also the improvement of African people's living standards, only with more and more African people benefit from the China-Africa cooperation achievements, it can lay a solid foundation of public support for enhancing China- Africa common development. In this way, China's public diplomacy and people-to-people communication with Africa would bear new fruit.

---

<sup>①</sup> See LU Yiyi, “The Blind Spots of China’s Soft Power” , Singapore, *Straits Times*, July 9, 2007.