

THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION (FOCAC) AND THE BEIJING DECLARATION, 2024

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Abstract

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has emerged as a pivotal platform for South-South cooperation, fostering not only economic but also political, security, and social ties between China and African nations. The Beijing Declaration 2024 marks a significant milestone in this partnership, emphasizing a collaborative approach to mutual development, economic integration, and addressing global challenges. This paper examines the evolution of FOCAC, its key objectives, and the significance of the Beijing Declaration 2024. It analyses the Declaration's focus areas, including infrastructure development, trade expansion, and people-to-people exchanges. Furthermore, it discusses the implications of FOCAC for African development, global governance, and China's rising role in international affairs.

Keywords: *Africa, China, Cooperation, Forum, Health, Economic Growth, Education, Climate Action, Infrastructure.*

Introduction

Since independence from its former colonial masters, African states have been struggling for the development of their continent without any significant development. They have suffered a setback from their former colonial master in terms of development. As noted by (Doris Chinelo, 2022), in the post-independence struggle, Africa has been on its own without fruitful aid that would pave the way for its educational expansion, industrialization, science, and technological breakthrough. This was also corroborated by (Sheriff & Aliyu, 2016) that the foreign aid hitherto given to Africa by her colonial masters and their allies was not geared toward meaningful development as the donors were not ready for African development, and the African leaders were nothing but stooges for perpetual economic imperialism. The colonial masters of the post-independence African states were pursuing their paramount interests. The emergence of China's involvement in Africa has generated much debate. The increasing presence in Africa has drawn mixed reactions from academic and media platforms. It has been argued that China is sapping African manufacturing potential and also extracting Africa's resources as witnessed during the colonial administration in various African states, without any significant benefit to them. Thus, China is perceived as a contributor to Africa's underdevelopment and deindustrialization. However, some have perceived China as Africa's new partner for development. They perceived China's presence in Africa as beneficial to China and Africa. As a result, there is no settled opinion as to whether China's increasing presence in

Africa is sustainable for Africa or whether the relationship is unsustainable. Although the relations between China and Africa are widely covered in the media, empirically the area has been under-researched (Ndulo, M. 2012).

The relationship between China and Africa can be traced back to 1950 but the relations were not formal. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is an effective platform and multilateral mechanism for China and African countries to conduct collective consultations and carry out pragmatic cooperation (Aiping & Zhan, 2018). The institution of the “Forum on China-Africa Cooperation” commonly referred to as “FOCAC” can be attributed to the culmination of centuries of cordial relations and exchanges. As FOCAC attained a 20-year milestone in its existence, it has become one of the most important podiums for all cooperation between China and African states. FOCAC has afforded Africa a united, coordinated, and collaborated voice in all its dealings with China. The philosophical undertone of FOCAC was to assist both sides, particularly African countries’ quest to achieve an accelerated development agenda with assistance from China, as outlined under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the vision of the African Union. Since the foundation of FOCAC 20 years ago, some tremendous strides have been achieved; these include the comprehensive development of China-Africa relations, and the provision of critical development infrastructures such as roads, seaports, airports, railway lines, schools, etc. (Francis Kwezi, K & Zou Xhialong, 2022). Since its establishment in 2000, FOCAC has held eight summits, with the most recent in 2024. The Beijing Declaration 2024 reaffirms the commitment to China-Africa cooperation, outlining a comprehensive framework for mutual benefit.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) just held its 2024 Beijing Summit from September 4 to 6, 2024. This summit was a significant event, bringing together Chinese and African leaders to strengthen their cooperation. During the summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech, highlighting the importance of China-Africa relations. In light of the above background, this paper set out to examine the FOCAS historical context, analyze the key provisions and objectives of the Beijing Declaration 2024, and assess the implications of FOCAC for African development, global governance, and China’s international role.

Evolution of FOCAC

FOCAC began as a response to the need for a structured platform for China-Africa relations. Initial summits focused primarily on trade and investment, but the scope has expanded over the years to include topics such as health, education, and climate change. The 2024 summit in Beijing highlighted a continued commitment to partnership, emphasizing shared development goals. Furthermore, the Beijing Declaration serves as a comprehensive framework outlining commitments to strengthen cooperation across various sectors. It emphasizes economic development, cultural exchange, and collaborative efforts to address global challenges. This declaration reflects China's growing influence in Africa and the continent's strategic importance in the global arena.

Materials and Method

The study adopted a developmental research design, being a product of library research. Data were collected qualitatively using secondary sources, especially books, journals, periodicals, and the Internet, to examine and analyze the issues at hand. Several books, journals, and internet sources were consulted and reviewed to add value to the paper.

Literature Review

Conceptional Review: The concept of multilateralism will be used to explain the literature review. Multilateralism is an approach to international relations where multiple countries or stakeholders engage cooperatively to address common global challenges, promote shared interests, and establish norms and rules. This approach is corroborated by (Doris, 2022) and interpreted to mean the coordinated diplomatic interaction of three or more states or other actors in international relations. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of these states coming together is to foster common objectives and interests, collaboration and mutual support, formal organizations, and agreements, and agreed-upon norms and regulations. Multilateralism as argued by (Liman, 2009) became a common mode of interstate relations in the late nineteenth century, before that time, it was limited to either special meetings called at the moments of crises when war threatened or peace conferences following major wars such as the congress of Vienna (1815) in which winners and losers of the war gathered to determine the division of the spoils and settle other matters.

Furthermore, the prevalence of multilateralism in the 20th century is associated with several factors such as the proliferation of intergovernmental organizations at the global levels which provide institutional settings for the conduct of multilateral engagement and the existence of many less developed countries that rely heavily on the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral fora for the bulk of their diplomatic contacts (Pearson & Rochester, 1988). In recent times, the concepts of multilateralism such as global multilateralism (worldwide cooperation e.g., UN), regional multilateralism (cooperation within geographic locations e.g., African Union (AU), European Union (EU), East Asia (EA), etc.), sectoral multilateralism (cooperation on specific issues e.g., World Trade Organization (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO)), and unilateralism which means small groups of countries addressing specific issues has been institutionalized in the international system. In the words of (Doris, 2022) hence, since the world system is now multipolar, interactions among nation-states are taking place on the principles of interdependent cooperation. Based on the backdrop of multilateralism and complex interdependence the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation FOCAC is established.

Empirical Review: The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a multilateral platform established in 2000 to promote economic cooperation, political dialogue, and cultural exchange between China and African countries. This empirical review examines the evolution, achievements, challenges, and implications of FOCAC. FOCAC has undergone significant transformations since its inception:

2000-2006: Initial focus on economic cooperation, trade, and investment.

2007-2012: Expansion to include infrastructure development, natural resources, and people-to-people exchanges.

2013-2018: Emphasis on industrialization, capacity building, and regional integration.

2019-present: Focus on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) alignment, green development, and health cooperation.

The 2000 Beijing Summit's Resolution to Africa/Beijing Declaration on China-Africa Cooperation has been a breakthrough in laying a solid foundation for such a relationship (Sheriff, 2016). The Beijing was meant to conduct equal-footed consultation, deepen understanding, broaden consensus strengthen friendship, and promote cooperation between China and Africa. The achievement of FOCAC cannot be overemphasized since its inception to date, especially in the areas of trade growth, infrastructural development, investments, poverty reduction, and cultural exchange (Barney and Jamil, 2009). It is also undoubtedly that the presence of China in Africa and cooperation between the two parties has tremendously

improved agriculture, education, energy, infrastructure, and health, and boosted the African economy (Beri, 2007; Sheriff, 2016). China has played a pivotal role in this forum in Africa, for example, in the outbreak of Ebola in some African countries has deployed a league of medical professionals to contribute to seeing the end of the deadly epidemic. China is indeed a party to cooperate with in recent times for their humanitarian gesture in Africa against the virus that would have swept the whole continent (Sheriff, 2016).

The FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2024 is a significant milestone in China-Africa relations, outlining cooperation initiatives for the next three years. One of the key outcomes of the summit was the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, which outlines the framework for China-Africa cooperation over the next three years. The declaration emphasizes the principles of mutual respect, equality, and win-win cooperation. Furthermore, the declaration emphasizes the importance of mutual learning, trade prosperity, industrial chain cooperation, connectivity, development cooperation, healthcare, rural revitalization, and people's well-being. China has pledged to support Africa in achieving food security, eradicating hunger, and promoting sustainable agricultural development. The declaration also highlights the establishment of a dialogue partnership for the Global Civilization Initiative and a platform for governance experience-sharing between China and Africa. In addition to the declaration, the summit also produced the Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027), which provides a roadmap for implementing the cooperation agreements reached during the summit. Hence, it is noteworthy that the FOCAC 2024 Beijing Declaration demonstrates China's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Africa and promoting mutual development. Against this backdrop, this paper sets out to assess the significance of the declaration along with the objective and gains.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the complex interdependence theory, which is primarily associated with political scientists Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1977) as a neoliberal critique of the realist view or explanation of the world. The theory challenges the traditional realist view of international relations, emphasizing military power and state-centric interactions. The complex interdependence theory highlights the multifaceted connections among states, where economic, environmental, and social ties play a significant role in global affairs. The theory focuses on multiple channels of interaction and explains that, unlike a narrow focus on state-to-state relations, complex interdependence includes various action actors such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations. The absence of a hierarchy among issues, and the minor role of military force. The theory further that states are connected not just through military or security issues but through a wide array of concerns, including trade, environmental issues, and cultural exchanges. The theory also argues that there is no clear hierarchy of issues. Security does not dominate over economic or social issues, meaning states may prioritize different issues based on context. And lastly, states can be sensitive or vulnerable to changes in other state's policies, emphasizing that interdependence is not always mutual or balanced.

Complex interdependence has become increasingly relevant in today's globalized world, where issues like climate change, terrorism, and pandemics require cooperation beyond traditional security paradigms. It emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and multilateral approaches to address transnational challenges. This framework has influenced various fields, including international relations theory, global governance, and policy-making, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of state interactions in a complex global landscape. Hence, it is based on these theoretical postulations and gesticulations that the analysis of this paper revolves.

The topic can also be explained by the international cooperation project, which argues that cooperation can be achieved by partners of like minds. Sheriff, Bibi, and Abdulkarim (2021) believe that it is discernible that China, Africa, and the entire world, have one major goal, which is a mutual or collective benefit of the cooperation that binds them together. The second aspect of the analogy is assistance, where people see America's aid to the third-world states, concluding that it is without interest. The Chinese assistance to Africa is described as “aid oriented towards helping the other part to realize his/her own goals.

Findings and Discussion

Nations and states do not get into a relationship that is not significant to their existence and survival. However, The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Beijing Declaration 2024 represent key initiatives in strengthening ties between China and African countries. Here's an overview of findings and discussions on these topics.

a. Economic Cooperation and Investment

One of the central themes of the Beijing Declaration is economic cooperation. China has pledged significant investments in infrastructure, technology, and trade. Projects in transportation, energy, and telecommunications are aimed at enhancing connectivity within Africa and between Africa and China. According to the African Development Bank (2024), infrastructure development is critical for achieving sustainable growth in African economies. FOCAC emphasizes substantial Chinese investment in African infrastructure, trade, and technology. The Beijing Declaration reaffirms commitments to expand economic partnerships, targeting sectors like renewable energy, digital economy, and industrialization (FOCAC, 2024). Prioritizing infrastructure and connectivity, China supports the AUDA-NEPAD Agency in the execution of projects aimed at facilitating continental connectivity within the framework of the Second PIDA Priority Action Plan (PAP II 2021-2030). The two parties will act to create synergy between the projects planned in the “Belt and Road” Initiative and the PAP II of PIDA to develop logistical connectivity between China and Africa including through maritime routes and shipping lines and thereby increase the volume of trade. China-Africa cooperation in infrastructure has contributed to dramatically changing the face of the continent with the construction of railways, roads, ports, and airports, which have a positive impact on economic growth in Africa, regional integration, and the free movement of people and goods. The ambition of PIDA is to unify and support the efforts of the AU through efficient partnerships to develop infrastructure on the continent in the transport, energy, digital economy, and infrastructure in hydraulics sectors. In this sense, China will support the AUDA-NEPAD in its implementation of connectivity projects in the five African sub-regions to improve economic integration at the national, sub-regional, and continental levels and to reduce the continent's infrastructure deficit. These infrastructures will have a positive impact on the implementation of the AfCFTA by increasing intra-African trade and Sino-African trade. China encourages private sectors to work together with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), African sub-regional banks, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the New Development Bank (NDB) to expand investment in Africa's infrastructure under the support of Chinese financial institutions especially those participating in the Belt and Road cooperation.

The two sides believe that cooperation on investment and industrial and supply chains plays an important role in Africa's economic and social development and transformation. Africa speaks

highly of the 11 industrialization and employment promotion assistance projects undertaken by China for Africa since the eighth FOCAC Ministerial Conference and commends China for actively expanding its investment in Africa. China will hold the symposium on high-quality development of China-Africa investment cooperation, continue to encourage Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa, regularly publish the Report on Chinese Investment in Africa, carry out syndicated loan cooperation, third-party cooperation and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), continuously optimize and upgrade the modes of China-Africa cooperation. China will support the building of subnational platforms for economic and trade exchange with Africa, and promote synergies between the development of local industrial parks in China and Africa. The two sides support enhancing policy guidance and information services for the development and cooperation of SMEs and encourage them to carry out cooperation on capacity building of management personnel. China will launch a special program to support the development of African SMEs, support Africa in better leveraging the Special Loan for the Development of African SMEs, to promote employment and improvement of people's livelihood through accessible and affordable financing.

b. Development Assistance

China's commitment to development assistance is another pivotal aspect of the Beijing Declaration. This includes financial support for health initiatives, education, and agriculture, aligned with Africa's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recent reports indicate that Chinese investments in African health infrastructure have increased, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Moyo, 2024). The development assistance agreement outlined in the FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2024 represents a robust commitment to fostering sustainable development in Africa. By focusing on financial aid, infrastructure, capacity building, healthcare, agriculture, and environmental sustainability, the agreement aims to address the pressing challenges faced by African nations while promoting mutual growth and cooperation. Successful implementation will require ongoing commitment, collaboration, and adaptability to the evolving needs of African countries in the years ahead. The Beijing Declaration underscores China's commitment to providing substantial financial support to African countries through various channels such as grants and concessional loans, China pledged to increase the provision of grants and concessional loans to finance critical projects in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. This financial assistance aims to alleviate the burden of debt on African nations while enabling them to invest in sustainable development. Also promised to promote Chinese investment in strategic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and renewable energy. This investment will help diversify African economies and create jobs. Focus on constructing and modernizing critical infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports, and energy facilities. This initiative aims to enhance connectivity within Africa and between African and global markets. Encouragement of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to leverage private sector expertise and resources in infrastructure development, ensuring sustainability and efficiency in project implementation.

Another key component of the development assistance worth noting in the FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2024 is capacity building and human resources development. The 2024 Beijing Declaration recognized the importance of human capital, the declaration emphasizes commitment to providing scholarships, vocational training, and technical assistance to African students and professionals. This initiative aims to equip individuals with the skills necessary for driving economic growth and innovation. Support for strengthening the capacities of

African institutions through training programs, knowledge sharing, and best practices in governance and public administration. More so, in the light of ongoing health challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the declaration highlights assistance in building healthcare facilities and enhancing medical services across Africa, including the construction of hospitals and clinics. Assurance of support in providing essential medical supplies, vaccines, and pharmaceuticals to bolster public health systems. The Beijing Declarations recognize food security as a pressing issue for many African countries thereby promoting investments in agricultural technology and infrastructure to improve productivity and ensure food security. The two sides agree that poverty is the natural enemy of humanity, and eradication of poverty is the primary objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as one of the objectives of the first aspiration of the African Union Agenda 2063. Enhanced cooperation in the field of poverty reduction and rural development will bring more benefits to people on both sides and contribute to building a world free from hunger and poverty. Africa commends China's targeted poverty eradication approach that has lifted nearly 100 million people out of poverty in rural areas under current standards and achieved the poverty reduction target of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule. The African side expressed appreciation to China for undertaking the 47th poverty reduction and agricultural projects in Africa since the eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC. The declaration includes commitments to support environmental sustainability and commitment to assist in times of natural disaster, pandemic, and other humanitarian crises, ensuring that the affected communities receive timely support.

To ensure effective implementation of the development assistance agreements, the Beijing Declaration proposes several mechanisms such as monitoring and evaluation by the establishment of frameworks for monitoring progress on development projects and assessing the impact of assistance, facilitating transparency and accountability.

c. Infrastructure Development

The two sides recognize infrastructure development as a basic guarantee for industrialization. The two sides will jointly implement the important consensus reached at the high-level meetings themed "Industrialization, agricultural modernization, and green development—the path to modernization" and "pursuing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation as a platform for modernization featuring planning together, building together and benefiting together." Africa appreciates China's assistance with the 21 key infrastructure connectivity projects implemented in Africa following the eighth FOCAC Ministerial Conference to enhance connectivity in Africa. China will encourage financial institutions and businesses to participate in African infrastructure projects following business principles through an integrated invest-build-operate mode, public-private partnerships, and so on, to create more enabling conditions for Africa's industrialization. The two sides will encourage, through market-based means, Chinese businesses to participate in cooperation on highways, railways, logistics, and overseas warehouses in Africa within the framework of Belt and Road cooperation. China encourages competent Chinese businesses to participate, following market principles, in the construction and operation of African ports, including the building of modern ports encompassing handling, logistics, and trade service, and supports shipping companies in opening new routes between China and Africa in response to market demand.

d. Culture and People-to-People Exchange

The Beijing Declaration emphasizes cultural diplomacy, promoting people-to-people exchanges through educational programs, tourism, and cultural heritage initiatives. This approach seeks to strengthen mutual understanding and foster goodwill between Chinese and African populations (Chen, 2024). The 2024 Beijing Declaration, part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), prioritizes "Culture and People-to-People Exchange" as a crucial element in building a "China-Africa Community with a Shared Future." This theme seeks to deepen mutual understanding and respect, recognizing cultural exchange as vital to long-term partnership. Key initiatives include establishing a "Civilizational Mutual Learning Partnership," where China and Africa plan to engage in dialogue under the Global Civilization Initiative. This platform promotes shared governance practices and fosters partnerships through knowledge-sharing networks like the China-Africa Development Knowledge Network. Additionally, to enhance the skills and leadership of African governance professionals, the declaration outlines a plan to invite around 1,000 African political representatives to China for knowledge exchange and leadership training at institutions like the African Leadership Academy. The declaration also highlights support for cultural exchanges in education and the arts. For instance, China is setting up 25 China-Africa research centers, focusing on shared history, arts, and language studies. This aligns with a broader commitment to cultivating talents and building deeper cultural bonds. These activities aim to strengthen South-South cooperation by promoting shared cultural values and fostering mutual appreciation through diverse educational and social platforms. By emphasizing cultural and people-to-people ties, the 2024 FOCAC declaration advances a unique model for international relations based on mutual respect and civilizational exchange, providing a platform for Africa and China to collaborate as equal partners in an era marked by rapid geopolitical change and South-South solidarity.

e. Addressing Global Challenges

The declaration acknowledges the need for collective action in addressing global issues such as climate change, health crises, and food security. Both sides are committed to sustainable development practices and resilience-building strategies to confront these challenges (UN, 2024). The 2024 Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) addresses several global challenges through enhanced collaboration in key areas such as sustainable development, climate action, healthcare, and security. This partnership underscores the mutual interests of China and African nations, focusing on developing solutions that address regional and global needs.

Discussion

a. Sustainability and Environmental Consideration

As China increases its investment in Africa, concerns regarding sustainability and environmental impacts have emerged. Critics argue that some projects lack adequate environmental assessments, leading to detrimental effects on local ecosystems (Bräutigam, 2024). The Beijing Declaration's commitment to green development is essential to address these concerns and ensure that investments support sustainable growth. There is an ongoing debate about the sustainability of Chinese investments in Africa, particularly regarding environmental impacts. Committing to green development is a crucial aspect of the discussions, with calls for adherence to environmental standards.

b. Geopolitical Implications

The growing partnership between China and Africa has significant geopolitical implications. As China's influence expands, questions arise about its impact on traditional Western alliances in Africa. Analysts suggest that the FOCAC framework may shift power dynamics, allowing African nations to negotiate better terms with external partners (Alden & Alves, 2024). The growing China-Africa relationship raises questions about geopolitical dynamics, particularly concerning Western influence on the continent. Analysts are exploring how this partnership may reshape power structures in global governance.

c. Debt Dependency and Economic Risks

Concerns about debt dependency have been a prominent topic of discussion regarding China's financial engagement in Africa. Critics argue that while Chinese loans may facilitate development, they can also lead to unsustainable debt levels. The Beijing Declaration's emphasis on responsible lending practices is crucial to mitigating these risks (Khan, 2024). Some critics express concerns about debt dependency, suggesting that China's financial assistance could lead to unsustainable debt levels for African nations. The discussions surrounding debt relief and responsible lending practices are vital to ensure long-term economic stability.

d. Trade Imbalances

Despite the surge in trade between China and Africa, imbalances persist. Many African nations export raw materials while importing finished goods from China, leading to concerns about the long-term sustainability of these economic relationships. The Beijing Declaration calls for a more balanced trade approach, but concrete measures will be necessary to achieve this goal (Nye, 2024). While trade has increased significantly, there are concerns about trade imbalances and the nature of Chinese imports versus exports. The Beijing Declaration calls for a more balanced trade relationship, which will require concrete measures to enhance African exports to China.

e. Implementation and Accountability

The effectiveness of the initiatives outlined in the Beijing Declaration hinges on robust implementation mechanisms and accountability measures. There is a pressing need for transparent processes to monitor the progress of projects and ensure that they yield tangible benefits for African countries (Borkenhagen, 2024). The success of the initiatives outlined in the Beijing Declaration hinges on effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms. There are discussions about ensuring accountability in projects funded by Chinese investments to achieve tangible results.

Challenges facing FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2024

There are several challenges the FOCAC Beijing Declaration 2024 will likely face, especially regarding sustainability, climate action, corruption, and green development. Here are the main challenges it may encounter.

a. Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Stability

African countries are focused on rapid industrialization and economic growth, which can sometimes conflict with environmental goals. There's a risk that pressing economic needs may lead to prioritizing infrastructure projects or industries that aren't environmentally sustainable,

especially when these projects create immediate jobs and revenue. China, known for large-scale infrastructure projects, has faced criticisms over some of its overseas projects that have environmental impacts, such as deforestation, water use, and carbon emissions. Ensuring that all projects align with sustainable practices will be challenging given the scale and speed of development.

b. Financial constraints and Debt Concerns

While financing is crucial for sustainable development, there is also concern about African countries' debt levels. Some African nations are cautious about taking on additional loans, even for green projects, given their existing debt burdens. This can make it challenging to secure enough funding for the large-scale infrastructure needed for sustainable development. There is a growing need for concessional loans or grants instead of traditional loans to make green projects more viable without increasing debt.

c. Technology Transfer and Capacity Building

Effective technology transfer is essential for implementing sustainable projects, but differences in technical infrastructure, expertise, and training can limit this process. Many green technologies require skilled personnel and infrastructure, which are unevenly available across African countries. Adapting technology to the local context and ensuring access to technical training is critical but challenging. Additionally, some of these green technologies are costly and may require further adaptation to be suitable for the African context, particularly in rural or underserved areas.

d. Political and Social Stability

Political instability in some African nations poses a challenge to the long-term implementation of FOCAC goals, as political transitions, conflicts, or regional disputes can disrupt projects. Sustainable projects, which often require a long-term approach, are particularly vulnerable to changes in government and policy shifts. Social dynamics, including community resistance to certain projects (e.g., due to displacement or resource use), can also delay or disrupt progress. Ensuring that local communities support and benefit from these projects is crucial for sustainability. Additionally, gaining community support is essential to avoid resistance or delays due to social opposition.

e. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

FOCAC partners are expected to align their goals with global commitments, like the Paris Agreement, yet different national priorities and economic conditions can make it challenging. African countries often prioritize adaptation measures, given their vulnerability to climate change, whereas China has a greater emphasis on reducing emissions. China's focus might be more on emissions reductions, while many African nations prioritize adaptation to climate effects like droughts, floods, and biodiversity loss. Balancing these differing focuses within the declaration could be complex. There may also be concerns about the transparency and accountability of these commitments. To be credible, projects funded under FOCAC need to demonstrate measurable environmental and social impacts, which require effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms. There may also be concerns about the transparency and accountability of these commitments. To be credible, projects funded under FOCAC need to

demonstrate measurable environmental and social impacts, which require effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

f. Monitoring and Accountability of Project Implementation

Effective monitoring is crucial to ensure that projects meet environmental and social impact goals. However, monitoring across multiple countries and regions can be difficult, especially for remote projects. Without transparency and accountability mechanisms, there is a risk of environmental and social impact goals being unmet or misreported.

g. Global and Geopolitical Pressures

The FOCAC declaration exists within a broader geopolitical context, with global powers like the U.S. and European Union showing increasing interest in Africa's development. Competing interests and scrutiny over China's role in Africa can place additional pressure on the FOCAC partnership. Addressing these dynamics requires clear communication and actions that demonstrate mutual benefit and respect for African sovereignty.

Conclusion

FOCAC and the Beijing Declaration 2024 represent a significant step in China-Africa relations, focusing on mutual development and cooperation. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives will depend on addressing concerns related to sustainability, debt, and equitable trade. As these partnerships evolve, ongoing dialogue and collaboration will be essential to navigate the complexities of international relations and development. Balancing development and sustainability, addressing financing and debt concerns, and ensuring transparent implementation will be pivotal for the Declaration's success. In this context, FOCAC 2024 illustrates both the opportunities and challenges in aligning cross-continental collaboration with global sustainable development goals. The Declaration underscores a shared vision but highlights the importance of adaptable approaches that consider the diverse socio-economic and political landscapes within Africa.

Recommendation

- a. **Strengthen Financial Support Mechanisms:** To address concerns about debt sustainability, FOCAC partners should explore concessional financing, debt-for-nature swaps, and grants, particularly for green projects. This approach will support African nations' development goals without overburdening their economies.
- b. **Enhance Technology Transfer and Capacity Building:** Tailored training and skills development programs should be implemented to equip African countries with the technical expertise required for green technologies and sustainable infrastructure projects. This could include establishing regional training hubs or centers of excellence within Africa.
- c. **Implement Rigorous Monitoring and Accountability Frameworks:** Developing clear metrics and third-party oversight mechanisms will ensure that FOCAC projects meet environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. Annual or biannual reviews could provide transparency and build trust in the partnership.
- d. **Promote Inclusive, Community-Centric Development:** Prioritizing community involvement in planning and decision-making processes can help mitigate social resistance and ensure that local populations benefit directly from FOCAC projects.

Engaging local governments and organizations can help in designing projects that address the needs and concerns of communities.

- e. Align with Global Climate Goals: Reinforce FOCAC's commitment to international climate agreements, including the Paris Agreement, by setting specific, measurable targets for emissions reductions, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. These commitments should reflect a balance between China's and Africa's priorities, providing pathways for both emissions reduction and adaptation.
- f. Strengthen Political and Institutional Stability: Encourage collaboration between African and Chinese policymakers to address regional stability challenges that may affect long-term projects. FOCAC could provide institutional support to African governments to strengthen governance frameworks, making projects more resilient to political changes.

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