



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa

MASTER
DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION

MASTER'S FINAL WORK

DISSERTATION

THE ROLE OF CHINA IN COMBATING POVERTY IN
AFRICA IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

HOU JINGYING

10 - 2021



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Supervision:

Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco

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GLOSSARY

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

BRI – One Belt One Road Initiative

COVID-19 – Coronavirus

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DPRC – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

FOCAC – Forum on China–Africa Cooperation

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GNI – Gross National Income

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LDCs – Least Developed Countries

MGDs – Millennium Development Goals

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OOF – Other Official Flows

PRC – People’s Republic of China

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

SSA – Sub-Saharan Africa

UN – United Nations

USA – United States of America

WB – World Bank

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

Under the global circumstance, poverty is still a crucial problem, especially in Africa, which has the poorest people in the world. The principle goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals is to eradicate poverty. Foreign assistance is increasingly helping improve the condition in which poor people can earn more incomes, get a better education, and live healthier lives. Meanwhile, China has become one of the largest emerging donors, majorly due to lots of Chinese investment in Africa in trade, finance, and social infrastructure. Moreover, with the development of the “One Belt One Road Initiative” in Africa, the influence of China is more significant than before.

This dissertation first presents the objective and targets of combating poverty in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, and the current poverty situation in Africa. Taking China as an example, by using SWOT analysis, it evaluates the implementation of China to combat poverty in Africa and finds out the answer to the question “Does Chinese aid help poverty reduction in Africa?”. Undeniably, BRI made many contributions to poverty reduction in Africa. At last, it is taking the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the standard to evaluate China’s implementations in Africa to find out China’s role in combating poverty globally. The SWOT analysis would help improve Chinese foreign assistance in Africa.

KEYWORDS: Africa; China; Foreign assistance; Poverty Reduction; SDGs.

RESUMO E PALAVRAS-CHAVES

Nas circunstâncias globais, a pobreza ainda é um problema crucial, especialmente na África, que tem as pessoas mais pobres do mundo. O principal objetivo da Agenda 2030 para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável é erradicar a pobreza. A ajuda pública melhora a condição em que as pessoas pobres podem ganhar mais salários, obter uma educação melhor e ter uma vida mais saudável. Ao mesmo tempo, a China se tornou um dos maiores doadores emergentes, principalmente devido aos muitos seus investimentos na África em comércio, finanças e infraestrutura social. Além disso, com o desenvolvimento da Iniciativa “Uma Faixa e Uma Rota” na África, a influência da China é mais significativa do que antes.

Esta dissertação apresenta primeiro o objetivo e as metas de combate à pobreza na Agenda 2030 para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável e a atual situação da pobreza na África. Tomando a China como exemplo, usando a análise SWOT, avalia as implementações da China para combater a pobreza na África e encontra a resposta para a pergunta “A ajuda Chinesa funciona a reduzir a pobreza na África?”. Inegavelmente, o BRI fez muitas contribuições para a redução da pobreza na África. Por fim, usa a Agenda 2030 para os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável como o padrão para avaliar a implementação da China na África para descobrir o papel da China no combate à pobreza na África. A análise SWOT daria sugestões para a ajuda pública chinesa na África.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: África; Ajuda pública; China; Redução da Pobreza; ODS.

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1. Introduction

Under the global circumstance, poverty is still a crucial problem in the world, especially in Africa. The principle goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals is to eradicate poverty. During the period of the pandemic, poverty eradication in Africa is facing more challenges than before.

Foreign assistance is increasingly helping improve the condition in which poor people can earn more incomes, get a better education, and live healthier lives. When traditional western donors connected with African countries by all kinds of assistance, more and more developing countries have become donors now, their assistance in changing the world poverty. China also eagers to earn its interests from assistance. China's increasing footprint in Africa has sparked fierce discussion in recent years. Chinese motivations about foreign assistance are usually considered access to natural resources, as well as the trade interests through the One Belt One Road Initiative (BRI) investments in Africa. Besides, it is also a tool to protect their political interests, for instance, the “One China policy” to replace Taiwan’s position in the United Nations.

This dissertation is willing to find the answer to “Does Chinese aid work for poverty reduction in Africa?”. It is composed of five parts: the first part is the introduction; the second part is the general background to present the objective of combating poverty in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, and also to analyse the current situation of poverty in Africa by showing the statistics; the third part talks about the foreign assistance to Africa from Western donors and China about combating poverty; the fourth part is an evaluation to China’s role in combating poverty in Africa by using SWOT analysis; and the last part is the conclusion.

2. General background

2.1 The objective to combat poverty in the Agenda for Sustainable Development

Poverty has been measured on income and consumption traditionally. However, some other vital aspects should be considered poverty, which cannot be measured by monetary. The example from World Bank (WB) Group shows two families with the same income level but living in different houses with different levels. One has access to piped water, a private toilet, and electricity. The other one lives in an area without basic infrastructure, so that they have to spend time fetching water, using a communal latrine, and buying charcoal to cook and heat their house. Although they have the same income level, apparently, the first family enjoys a higher level of material well-being (World Bank et al, 2021). It shows that income should not be the only measure of poverty. The percentage of undernourished people, the illiteracy rate, and the percentage of people who do not have access to improved sanitation should be the indicators to measure poverty. Poverty makes many chain reactions in many aspects: vulnerability, social exclusion, and social capital are all factors that affect education, health, and access to social services.

As far as we know, Africa has the poorest and most fragile population in the world. The poorest populations are from five African countries: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe. Half of the world's poor also lived in five countries, three of which are African countries. More attentions are on the poverty reduction in Africa. Expectations are also rising. The focus will move to a new set of global development goals, which includes the ambitious targets of eradicating poverty worldwide by 2030 (Beegle et al, 2016).

To measure poverty more completely, the UN has set out goals with different targets and indicators to eradicate poverty from various aspects, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The

SDGs were set up in 2015, agreed by the world leaders, composed of 17 goals, which are universal, more complex, and broader in scope than the MDGs, at the same time, with higher standards. These goals are the urgent calls for action by all developed and developing countries. In the SDGs, “no poverty” is the principal goal in the 17 goals. It has five significant targets¹. Its first target is to eliminate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, which is currently defined as those who live on less than \$1.25 a day. The second target is to reduce poverty in all dimensions of the proportion of the population by sex and age. The third one is to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including the poor and vulnerable, such as unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new-borns, and work-injury victims; to help them get rid of poverty by these implements. The fourth one is to ensure all the people have equal rights to get essential services. The final target is to strengthen the poor’s resilience and decrease their vulnerability to climate-related extreme events as well as other economic, social, and environmental shocks. Furthermore, the traditional poverty measurement of individual income could not be the only indicator to decide a person or a family is in poverty or not. It should be measured by various indicators.

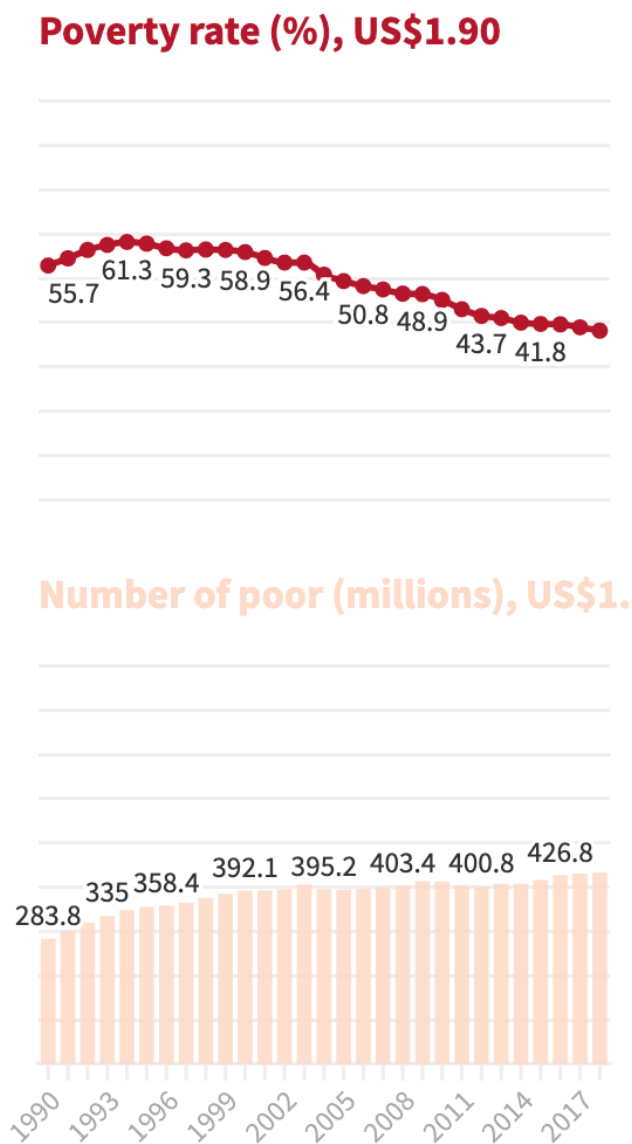
2.2 Current poverty situation in Africa

WB’s statistics showed that the poverty headcount ratio at 1.9 dollars a day of SSA had declined steadily from 1994 to 2018. As Figure 1 shown, the poverty rate in 1994 was 61.3%, which is the highest point; the number of poor was 348 million, while the poverty rate in 2018 was 40.2%, with 433 million poor. Even though the share of poor has declined 21.1%, the number of poor has increased 44.48%. Rapid population growth in Africa is the primary cause of this situation and will be a great challenge to its social services and resource demand. Over the next 15 years, Africa is expected to witness the highest relative increase in its population. It estimates that Africa’s

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development, No Poverty, Targets and Indicators, 2015.

population will increase to 1.68 billion in 2030, which is 42% larger than the 2015 population (United Nations, 2015). Meanwhile, the number of poor in Africa will still be increasing.

Figure 1 – Poverty rates and number of poor, US\$ 1.90, SSA 1990-2018



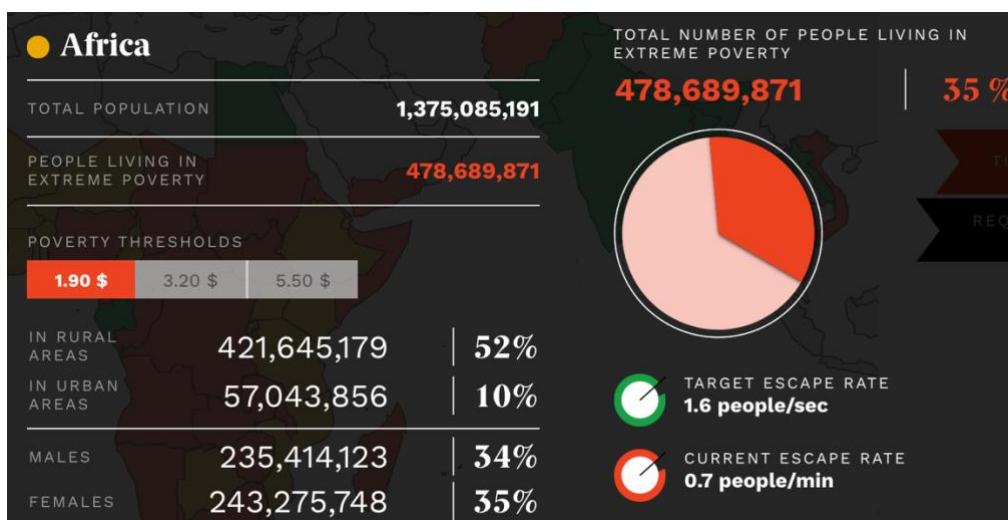
Source: PovcalNet, WB Group

What is more, the majority of the poor population of SSA² lived in rural areas. From the estimates of the World Poverty Clock in 2021 (Figure 2), in general, 35% of the

² Here, ‘SSA’ and ‘Africa’ will be used interchangeably in this dissertation.

population of the continent Africa is living in extreme poverty, about 478 million, composed of 52% from the rural area, 10% from the urban area, and composed of 34% males and 35% females. However, by the predictions from the Clock in 2030 (Figure 3), there will be more than 461 million of the population in Africa living in extreme poverty by 2030, which could not achieve the goal of the SDGs for eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere. Meanwhile, the share of the population living in extreme poverty of Africa will be 28%, composed of 43% from the rural area, 8% from the urban area, and 28% of males and 28% of females. Compared to Africa, the continent with the least poor population, Europe only has a 0.3% poor population with 2 million people³, the challenging poverty situation in Africa is easy to see. Even though rural areas are generally poorer than urban areas in most countries, the poor population in rural is still the majority of poor in SSA.

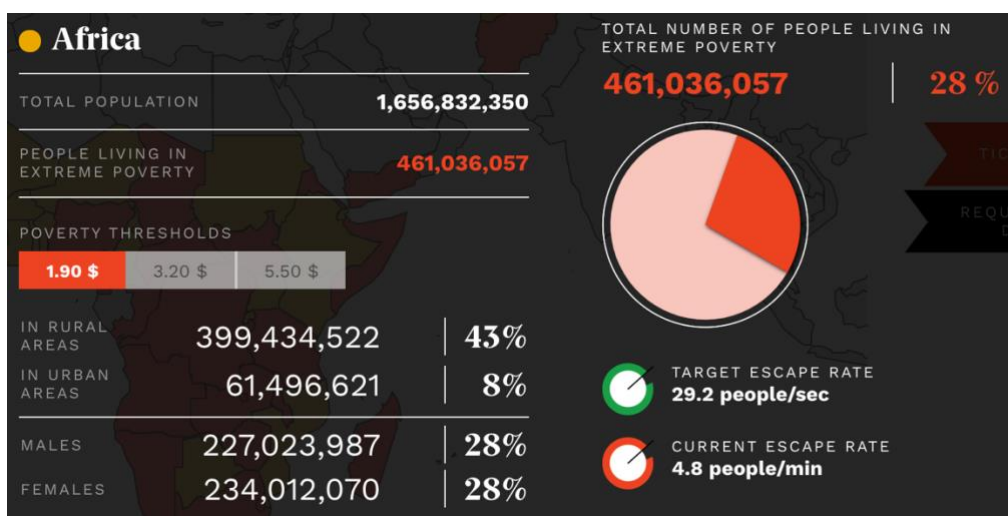
Figure 2 – World Poverty Clock of Africa in 2021



Source: Based on World Data Lab’s global poverty model.

³ Also shown on the World Poverty Clock of Europe in 2021.

Figure 3 - World Poverty Clock of Africa in 2030

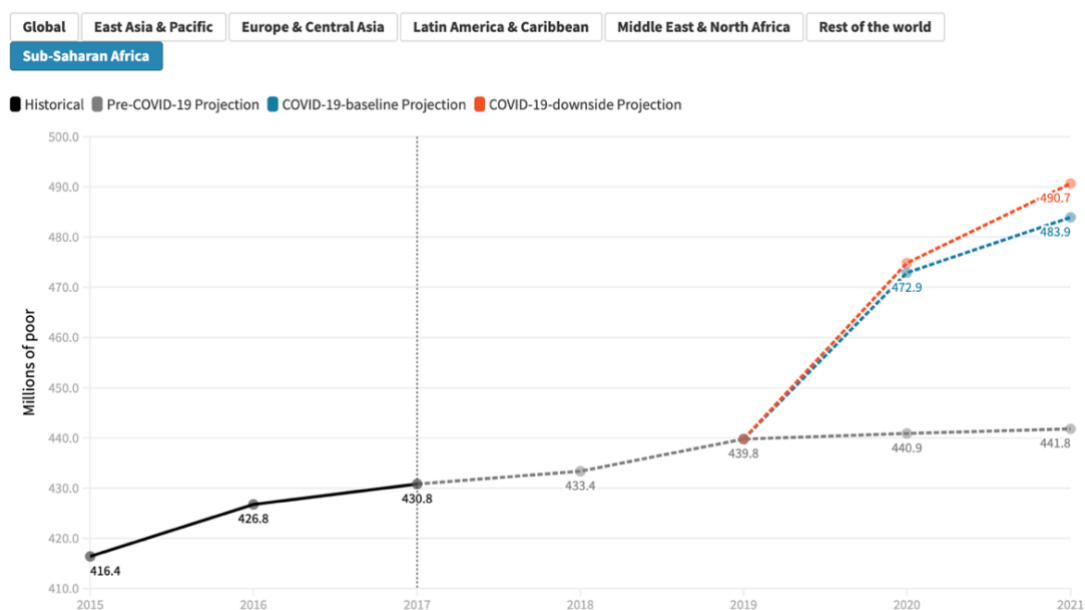


Source: Based on World Data Lab’s global poverty model.

Africa has been hard hit definitely by the COVID-19 pandemic. The poor population growth rate would have been expected to reduce before COVID-19. However, the impact of the pandemic is enormous, which made more people get into poverty all over the world, especially in Africa. It is estimated (Figure 4) that the number of poor would be 472.9 million in 2020 and 483.9 million in 2021 under the COVID-19, which are more 32 million than the prediction 440.9 million before COVID-19 in 2020, more 42.1 million than the prediction 441.8 million in 2021.

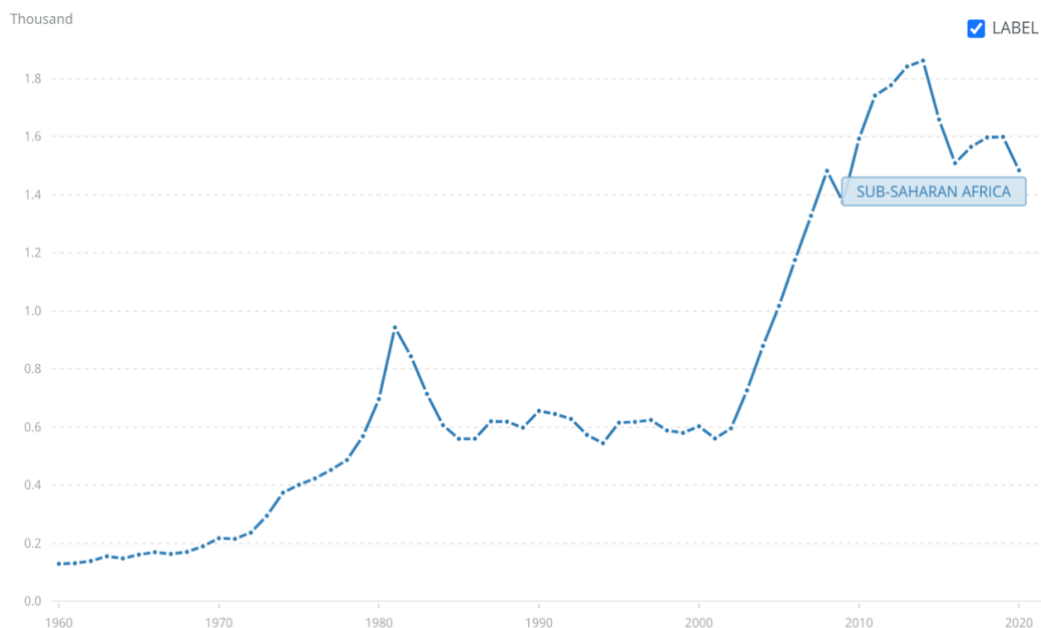
Besides, as Figure 5 shows, the GDP per capita from 2001 to 2008 increased rapidly and reached \$1.481k at the top. After being stuck in the 2008 financial crisis, the GDP per capita could also increase rapidly until the appearance of COVID-19. In 2020, the GDP per capita returned to \$1.483k, nearly to \$1.508k of 2016. Therefore, Africa has lost five years of efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.

Figure 4 - Nowcast of extreme poverty, 2015-2021⁴



Source: Lakner et al (2020) (updated), PovcalNet, Global Economic Prospects.

Figure 5 - GDP per capita (current US\$) – SSA

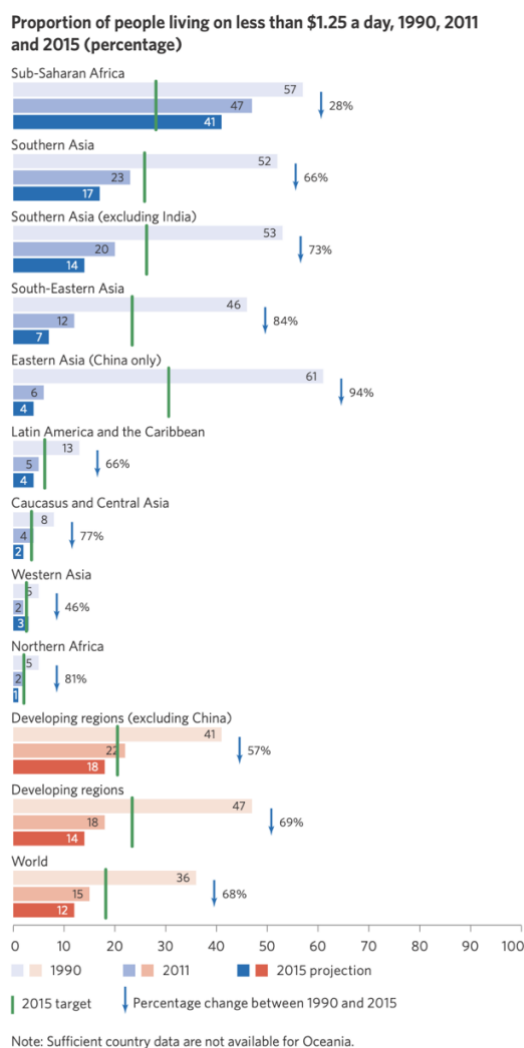


Source: WB national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

⁴ Extreme poverty is measured as the number of people living on less than \$1.90 per day. 2017 is the last year with official global poverty estimates. Regions are categorized using PovcalNet definition.

According to the MDGs 2015 Report, in most developing regions, the rate of extreme poverty has decreased dramatically. The proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in SSA has dropped 28% between 1990 and 2015. However, there was still 41% SSA people living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2015, which made SSA become the only area that did not reach the MDG 2015 target of halving poverty the proportion of people, and the regions left have reached the MDG 2015 target in advance before 2011 as Figure 4 shows. It could be predicted that SSA will be the only region with difficulty reaching the Agenda 2030 target of eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere.

Figure 4 - Proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, 1990, 2011 and 2015 (percentage)



Source: UN, The MDGs Report, 2015

It is worth mentioning that China has made significant progress in the target of halving poverty in MDGs. The proportion of poor people in China dropped 94% in 25 years. If it is possible to make this achievement for a country with a large population, maybe the continent of Africa could do this. However, the realistic situation in Africa is far more complicated.

On the one hand, the lack of comparable surveys in Africa makes it difficult to measure poverty trends. Africa only contributes less than 1% of global research output (Chu et al, 2014). Different African countries utilize composite measures for poverty – consumption, income, and human development indices. Researchers usually use GDP to calculate the annual poverty rate when surveys are not available in a given year. It is pretty limited to get the results from only one measurement.

On the other hand, other countries' development may give many restrictions to Africa's development. For instance, Asia's "growth miracle" happened in the leading country Japan and the other four countries, called Four Asian Tigers, South Korea, Singapore, Hongkong, and Taiwan. Industrialization makes development and also raises the salaries of workers, which helps to reduce poverty effectively. Besides, the extreme poverty rate in China has dropped from 61% in 1990 to 4% in 2015⁵. Economically, China has a short and prosperous economic growth history, providing an appealing model for African countries (Lokanathan, 2020). By following this transformation, African countries also want to be in the following line, expecting economic development and education development. Put differently; this industrialized transformation could not be obtained in Africa.

Firstly, the vast wage disparity between the West and the "rest" of Asia accelerated Asia's industrialization (Frankema & Waijenburg, 2018). For instance, the real incomes

⁵ Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, the world's most populous countries, China and India, played a central role in the global reduction of poverty. Because of China, the extreme poverty rate in Eastern Asia has dropped from 61% in 1990 to only 4% in 2015.

have grown much faster in leading Asian economies than in European at the same level of income. When China's manufacture is still prominent in the world market, it is difficult for Africa's labour industrialization to realize.

Secondly, the labour-intensive industrialization made productivity growth, which does not improve labour income growth instantly. This time lag will give a considerable challenge to the policy in Africa. Industrialization does not take effects on poverty reduction in the short term. According to the experience of Japan, with the aims of reinforcing their global competitiveness, Japan has an industrial policy that aims to shift resources to specific industries in order to achieve a competitive advantage in the worldwide market⁶. If Africa is willing to embark on this labour-intensive industrialization path, it could not benefit in the short run under the fierce international competition.

Thirdly, the population growth in Africa is higher than the growth of Britain, Japan, or later Asia in their industrialization period. However, the population densities in Africa are much lower than in Asia or Europe, which caused much unemployment under the less industrialization in Africa. In contrast to Britain and Japan, Africa does not have huge emigrations to support its underemployment when empires served as population values that helped alleviate downward pressure on working-class real incomes.

Fourthly, due to the dependence on mineral resource exports, African industry cannot develop without developing the secondary products. Only holding the natural resources would not earn permanent interests. The long-term specialization on their primary resource products made Africa lose the ability to process the primary products into secondary products. Meanwhile, it is difficult for Africa to recover this ability.

Fifthly, most developed countries make the economic policies, such as Britain and

⁶ Wikipedia (2019). *Industrial Policy of Japan* [Online]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_policy_of_Japan [Accessed: 15/08/2019].

Japan. These industrializers could gain market hegemony by gaining access to low-cost raw materials and exporting domestic products, granting their international competitiveness (Frankema & Waijenburg, 2018). These factors make it unlikely to transition to labour-intensive industrialization so that poverty reduction becomes problematic at a breakneck pace.

3. Foreign Assistance to Africa in reducing poverty

Aid can help to alleviate poverty by boosting economic growth, delivering direct benefits to the poor, and supporting and funding higher social spending (Morrissey, 2005). Many studies showed that foreign aid effectively reduced poverty, targeting health, agriculture, education, and other social services.

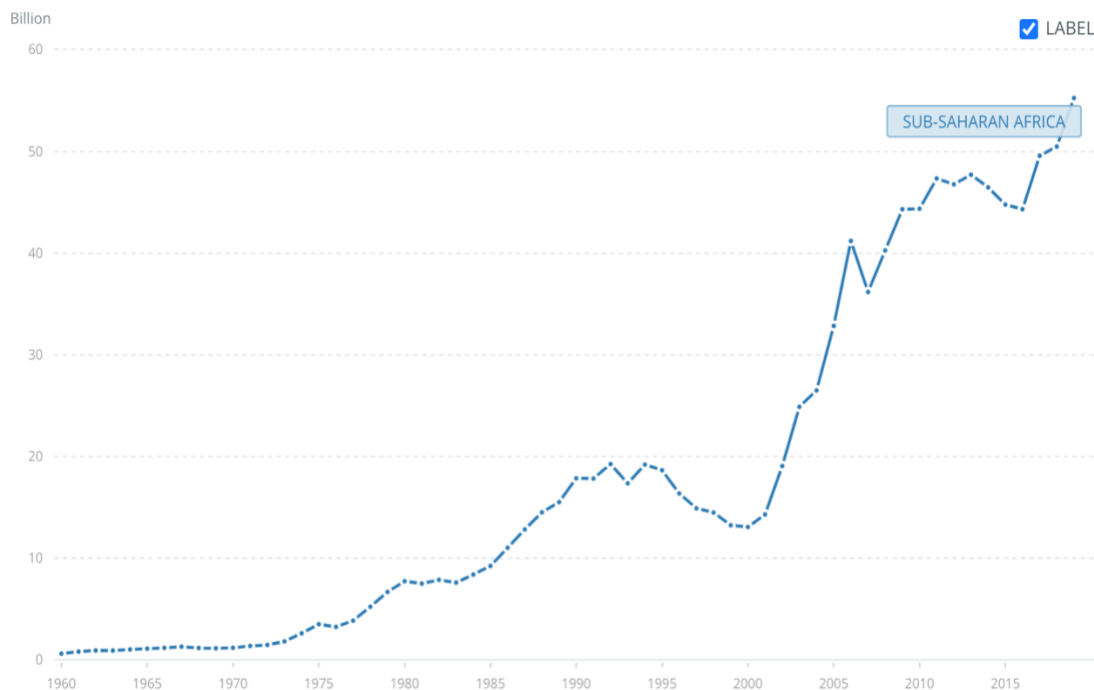
Since the end of the Second World War, many countries started to give foreign assistance to the least developed countries, especially SSA. Out of the humanitarian spirit, aiming to help all the human beings get away from poverty and promote economic growth and development (Tait et al, 2016), it emerges some new donors began to assist the least developed countries, and it is high time to give them a stage.

As Figure B shows, the net official aid received of SSA steadily increased from \$13.058 billion in 2000 to \$55.245 billion in 2019. Foreign aid received dropped sharply to \$36.172 billion in 2017 but rebounded quickly in 2018. Although the largest recipient in the world is India, with \$42.403 billion in 2007 (Wheat, 2017), the combination of foreign aid of SSA has exceeded India to become the largest recipient region. Foreign aid has become one of the majority financial sources of GDP to the nation. From the statistics from World Bank in 2019⁷, Somalia received \$1865k net official aids, shared

⁷ The data is from The World Bank, Net official development assistance and official aid received (current US\$) – Sub-Saharan Africa, by county; Net ODA received (% of GNI) – Sub-Saharan Africa, by country.

38.0% of GNI; the Central African Republic received \$753k net official aids, shared 31.6% of GNI. Nevertheless, does aid work? Does aid reduce poverty?

Figure 5 – Net official development assistance received (current US\$) - SSA



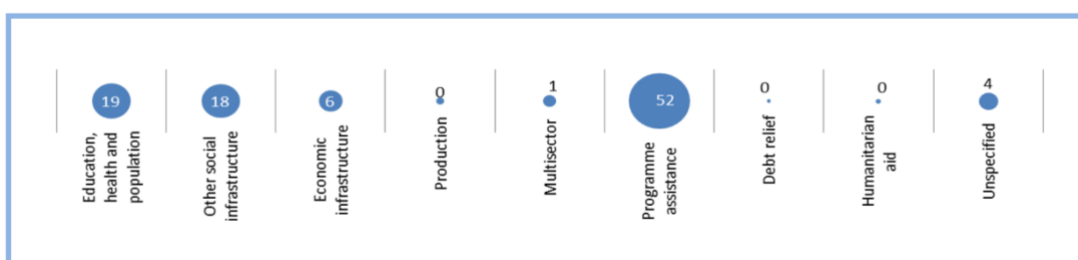
Source: DAC of the OECD, Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries, Development Co-operation Report, and International Development Statistics database. Data are available online at: stats.oecd.org.

3.1 The Foreign Assistance from Traditional Donors

The foreign aid to Africa was dominated traditionally by DAC members. Most of the European aids flowed to Africa as means of maintaining historical ties and express solidarity with former colonies (Diakite et al, 2019). European donors usually take assistance as a kind of “Cultural Diplomacy” to expand their influences, “which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural

cooperation or promote national interests”⁸. For instance, 70% of Portugal’s bilateral aid flowed to Africa between 2015 to 2017 (OECD, 2018). By sector (Figure 5), bilateral aid from Portugal in 2012-2013 is mainly divided into three parts: 52% program assistance, 19% education, health and population, 18% other social infrastructure.

Figure 6 – Portugal’s bilateral commitments across sectors (as share of bilateral aid) 2012-13 average

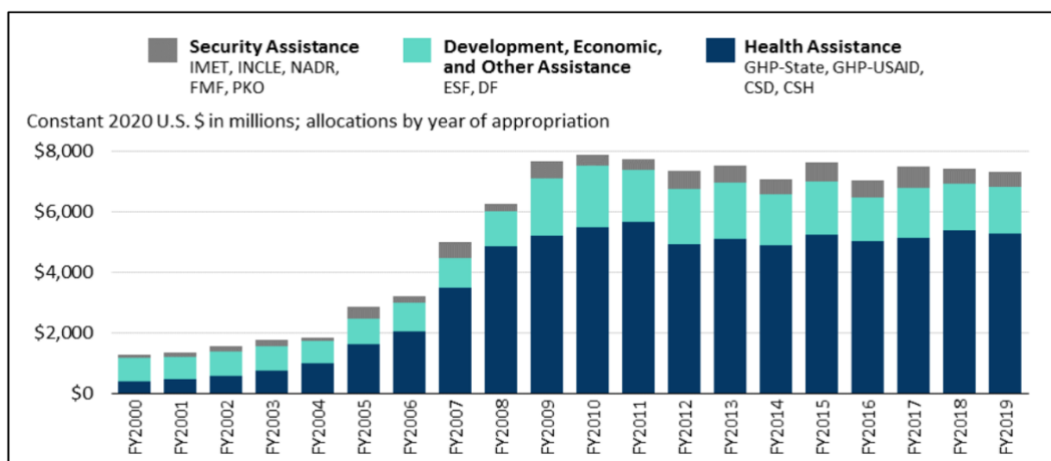


Source: OECE-DAC statistics

Meanwhile, the U.S. as the largest donor to Africa has a long history of donation. From the year 2009 until now (Figure 6 and Figure 7), U.S. aid to Africa allocated between \$7.0 billion to \$8.0 billion annually, in which health assistance programs share more than 75% of the total, at \$5.348 billion, notably focused on HIV, AIDS, nutrition, malaria, and child health (Congressional Research Service, 2020).

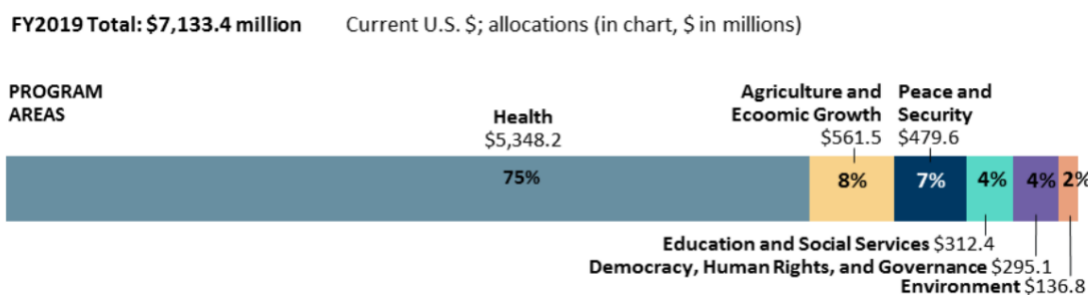
⁸ Institute for Cultural Diplomacy. *Definition of Cultural Diplomacy* [Online]. Available from: http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy

Figure 7 – U.S. Aid to Africa, Select State Department and USAID Accounts⁹



Source: CRS, based on State Department Congressional Budget Justifications (CBJs) for FY2003-FY2021.

Figure 8 – U.S. Assistance to Africa in FY2019, by Program Area¹⁰



Source: CRS calculation based on FY2019 sectoral data provided by USAID, February 2020.

People with disabilities are more vulnerable to be affected by poverty than other groups. COVID-19 impacts on work, school, and incomes. Even the developed countries have been greatly affected, the vulnerable and least developed countries in Africa will be

⁹ Notes: CSD=Child Survival and Disease Programs; CSH=Child Survival and Health Programs; DA=Development Assistance; ESF=Economic Support Fund; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; GHP=Global Health Programs; IMET=International Military Education and Training; INCLE=International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; NADR=Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs; PKO=Peacekeeping Operations. Calculations do not include funding allocated from global accounts or programs.

¹⁰ Notes: Funding allocated from global or functional programs, including emergency humanitarian assistance, is not included. International food assistance provided under Title II of the Food for Peace Act (P.L. 480) is also excluded, whether provided for humanitarian or development purposes.

even more affected. From the estimate of PovcalNet (Figure 2), COVID-19 will push 30 to 40 million people into extreme poverty in Africa. Besides, due to the nursing density, Africa has to shoulder a heavy health burden. A large amount of health aid played an essential role in reducing poverty, especially during COVID-19. Africa has made significant progress in many health areas in the last two decades, including improving maternal and child health, and combating HIV and malaria. For example, HIV incidence among adults aged 15 to 49 years declined by 47% between 2010 to 2019 in Africa (Min, 2021). However, Africa continues to have the weakest health infrastructure in the world and there is still a tough way to go.

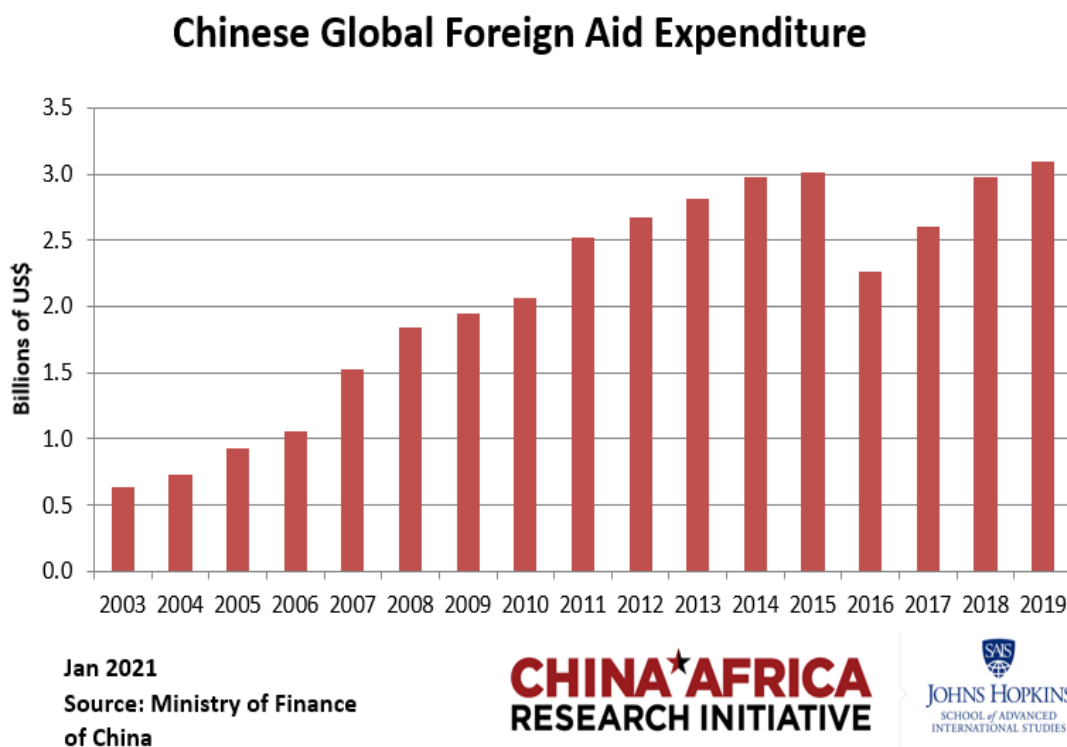
Lower incomes and education with lower quality caused more poverty and inequality. Large numbers of workers were out of work due to the pandemic. For instance, tourism had to close due to the lockdown measurements, one-third of workers stopped working, and the remaining two-thirds of workers who managed to keep their jobs have to see their income decreased between 11.5% to 15.6% (Blokhuis, 2021). Besides, many schools also closed to prevent the spread for at least 100 days, more than 200 days in some countries. In 2019, only 17.8% of the population in Africa had access to the internet at home (Blokhuis, 2021). Lots of children who could not go to school also could not study online at home. The effect of missing part of education will have a chain effect on poverty after the pandemic.

In practice, the rationale of Western aid is to integrate African economies into a global capitalist system that, in turn, depends on Africa's resources for prosperity. "Africa suffers a net loss of more than \$85 billion every year, far from the West aiding Africa; it is Africa that is aiding the West" (Manji & Yangua, 2018), Manji said. The function of West foreign assistance is a white-saviour industry, one that enjoys social acceptance through acts of charity but ignores tackling serious issues like corruption and oppression.

3.2 Chinese foreign assistance and BRI

China is now the most significant non-traditional contributor of aid to SSA countries and one of the most important donors to Africa currently, with 45% of foreign assistance to Africa from 2013 to 2018. Chinese foreign aid to Africa has maintained more than \$2.0 billion every year during the last decade (China Africa Research Initiative, 2021). China’s assistances are focused mainly on agriculture, energy and transportation by the means of Concessional loan, Gratuitous assistance, and Interest-free loan (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2021). Chinese assistance aims at promoting common development, solidarity and stability based on “Eight Principles” of mutual equality and respect Although China is called a “new donor” to Africa, it already has a long foreign aid history, no less than those traditional donors. China has extended its foreign aid to 51 African countries since the 1950s (Cheng & Taylor, 2017).

Figure 9 – Chinese Global Foreign Aid Expenditure



Source: Ministry of Finance of China, Jan 2021.

China's aid to Africa covers various fields, such as agriculture, education, transportation, energy, communications, and health. China has supported around 900 projects in Africa since 1956, including textile factories, hydropower plants, stadiums, hospitals, and schools (Sun, 2014).

Being one of the world's most populated countries, China plays a critical role in reducing global poverty. Because China, the extreme poverty rate in Eastern Asia has dropped from 61% in 1990 to only 4 % in 2015 (as mentioned before). Nowadays, China's global position has shifted and its aid to the world is rising. The transition from a developing country into a donor country is relatively rapid.

In recent years, China's assistance presence in Africa has led to a heated debate. Chinese investment in Africa grew from \$210 million in 2000 to \$3.17 billion in 2011. Meanwhile, since the founding of the PRC, aid has been a critical policy tool in China's relations with Africa (Sun, 2014). It leads to many suspicions about China's motivations for offering donations to Africa. In the beginning period of Chinese aid to Africa, Chinese interests came about due to political tensions between China and the Soviet Union, as well as increased American and Japanese competition in Asia (Sun, 2014).

The aid projects are typically classified as either coming from an official source of money or not coming from an official source of funding. In China's foreign aid funding, it is hard to distinguish "official" and "non-official" because of state-owned or state-backed enterprises and banks functioning on a commercial basis (Strange et al, 2017). China is a state with a centralization of authority, which could date back to the Qin dynasty. In modern society, China also centralizes its authority into the foreign aid programs so that almost all China's financial flows are from the official government.

Firstly, during the period of China starting foreign assistance, due to the friendly relations with DPRK and Vietnam, China established the "Eight Principles" as a

framework for its overseas aid operations¹¹. As a country that gained independence from a semi-colonial, based on the same or similar historical memory, China respects developing countries' sovereignty, which is the foundation and fundamental starting point for China's development of foreign relations. China especially emphasizes that it will never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries through any form or channel (Song, 2019).

Secondly, DENG Xiaoping proposed that "The aid to the third world should focus on truly benefiting the recipient country, and do not let it lie on the donor country." With the principle of "Gives it fish and teaches it fishing," China has sent lots of expert engineers, teachers, and doctors, and has helped to train nearly 50 thousand professional talents of various areas, such as economy, public administration, agriculture, fishery, medical and health, science and technology, environmental protection (He, 2013). "Gives it fish" could only solve the instant problem, "Teaches it fishing" could improve the self-capability of development of Africa and solve the long-term problem.

What is more, aid often has been seen as a tool to counter the influence of traditional donors (Brautigam, 2010). It dates back to the Bandung conference in 1955, the countries from the Third World were supported by aid to counter the two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union. ZHOU Enlai called that China's supporting African countries against imperialism is "the poor helping the poor" in 1964, the critical starting period of Chinese development. Gradually, Western donors realized that China was restricting Western expansion to developing countries, especially African countries. Nevertheless, China has promised that China will never to interfere with the recipient

¹¹ The guideline was announced by Premier Zhou Enlai when he was visiting Africa from December 1963 to February 1964. The "Eight Principles" could be short as: mutual benefit; no conditions attached; the no-interest or low-interest loans would not create a debt burden for the recipient country; to help the recipient nation develop its economy, not to create its dependence on China; to help the recipient country with project that needs less capital and quick returns; the aid in kind must be of high quality at the world market price; to ensure that the technology can be learned and mastered by the locals; the Chinese experts and technicians working for the aid recipient country are treated equally as the local ones with no extra benefits for them.

countries through giving aid. In the 2000 FOCAC declaration, China and its partner countries agreed that:

“No country or group of countries has the right to impose its will on others, to interfere, under whatever pretext, in other countries' internal affairs, or to impose unilateral coercive economic measures on others. The North and the South should strengthen their dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality.”

In FOCAC (2000), p. 1.

All in all, aid is usually considered one of the instruments to counter such unbalanced international relations. Despite supporting African countries to eliminate Western donors' expansions, China also wants to strengthen its international position in the Third World. China provides aid through grants and interest-free loans as political rewards for countries supporting its political leadership. China's foreign aid has served as a tool to protect China's political interests, especially “One China Policy”. China has invited African partners not to recognize the Taiwanese government as the legitimate representative of China (Rotberg, 2008).

Meanwhile, African governments' political recognition of the PRC was a key driver of China's aid allocation to those countries (Taylor, 2009). Through diplomatic aid, China has gained a seat at the UN, replacing the position of Taiwan. China has always considered solidarity a guiding principle to the relations with recipient countries and looked at them as friends. The reward of aid also could be considered as means to achieve “modernized-colonial” for China. Until now, Eswatini is the only African country that refused China's projects and continues to be the only ally of Taiwan in Africa (Lokanathan, 2020). Despite China saying the assistance is not related to policy, the official document said that the presuppose is to admit the policy of One China.

Besides, China has also been using its aid to maintain its soft power and nurture its influence in recipient countries in Africa, such as aid of scholarship programs, technical

assistance programs, and the establishment of Confucius centres for Chinese language and cultural teaching. Until 2018, there were already 54 Confucius Institutes in 43 different African countries (Diakite et al, 2019). Other institutions like Chinese Embassies, TV, and Radio stations have also exerted China's influence in African countries (Cabestan, 2013).

In addition, China's primary motive for foreign assistance is to ensure economic interests, connecting with its mutual benefit strategy. Two types of Chinese aid are tied, namely grants and interest-free loans from the Ministry of Commerce. These two instruments tied Chinese companies to implement aid projects and procuring goods and natural resources from China (Diakite et al, 2019).

Although the extra condition of generous financial aids is the natural resources in Africa, China's aid does have improved poverty eradication. According to the data provided by the White Paper, 52% of China's foreign aid goes to the LDCs where there is extreme poverty, and where people live with less than \$1.25 a day, following the UN standard of the first target in Agenda 2030. Compared to traditional donors' "post-colonial", China's "win-win" strategy and this kind of economic relation could help eradicate poverty to the point where they truly needed it. However, giving aid provides China with economic and political benefits, as well as increased trade opportunities and access to natural resources. At the same time, China's image in Africa has enhanced, and their friendly relationship is also improved (Cheng & Taylor, 2017: 2).

China's One Belt One Road Initiative was set up in September 2013. BRI's ultimate goal is to create a "Community of Common Destiny for Mankind", defined as a new global system of alternative economic, political, and security "interdependencies" with China at its centre. As a result, Chinese policymakers refer to BRI as a national strategy comprising economic, political, diplomatic, and military, rather than a collection of initiatives (Nantulya, 2019). China has an ambitious economic diplomacy initiative with two components: the overland route from Asia to Europe and the maritime route

between Asia and Europe. BRI is a transcontinental and long-term program that aims at infrastructure development and economic trade along the route of the historic Silk Road. Besides instruction and trade interests, the initiative also serves many functions for Chinese political diplomacy¹². China has three main roads of BRI: The Belt and Road Initiative, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and the Polar Silk Road. China's ambitions are apparently on the surface.

African countries mostly participated in the Maritime Silk Road as part of the BRI. The Maritime Silk Road runs from Djibouti to Sudan, Mauritania, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea, So Tomé and Príncipe, Cameroon, Angola, and Namibia, connecting planned and built Chinese port clusters. Djibouti also has connections to Gwadar, Hambantota, Colombo, Myanmar, and Hong Kong via another route. The corridor's final arc connects Walvis Bay to Chinese port clusters in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Kenya, as well as Gwadar (Nantulya, 2019). In the first forum of BRI in 2017, president XI Jinping declared that China would offer 60 billion yuan in support to developing countries and international organizations that involved in the BRI's building, including 2 billion yuan in emergency food aid and 1 billion yuan in a South-South cooperation fund in the next three years.

Nevertheless, the majority of 60 billion yuan includes 15 billion yuan of interest-free and concessional loans, 20 billion yuan of credit lines, 10 billion yuan of special funds for China and Africa development, and 5 billion yuan of special funds for imports from Africa. China has denied engaging in “debt trap” diplomacy and warning against funds being used for “vanity projects” (Shepherd & Blanchard, 2018). China has consistently focused on Africa's infrastructure because “inadequate infrastructure is the most significant obstacle to Africa's development”, which is a view shared by many African leaders (Nantulya, 2019).

¹² It has five cooperation principles: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds.

XI Jinping said that “China-Africa” cooperation must result in tangible advantages and successes that can be seen and felt by Chinese and African people. China’s cooperation with Africa targets the major bottlenecks to development. The cooperation must be invested on where they are most needed, not on vanity projects.¹³ China has also denied that it is only interested in natural resources to feed its booming economy (Shepherd & Blanchard, 2018). The BRI can benefit African countries, but it will be dependent on whether the China-Africa relationship can be placed on an equal footing. As a result, the BRI, a Chinese geopolitical endeavour, is intended to further China's grand strategy (Nantulya, 2019).

In globalization, African countries are still in a weaker position and have less advantage in the global trade market, especially compared to the developed countries. BRI gives African countries a better trade market which could give Africa a more fair-trade environment. With the support of BRI, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia, said that “We do not want to see the emergence of a new type of colonialism, because developing countries cannot compete with rich countries in open and free trade. It must be fair trade.”¹⁴

The debates about BRI focus on the function of Chinese infrastructure projects. Many scholars are sceptical about whether BRI projects can support their infrastructure needs. It estimates that Africa’s need for infrastructure in investment will increase to 170 billion dollars a year (Nantulya, 2019). The investment in Africa of BRI is significant in infrastructure and industrial programs required critically by African governments, not African poor people. The significant BRI project in East Africa is the railway connecting Mombasa to Nairobi and is also the most significant investment in Kenya since its independence. Furthermore, nearly 70% of BRI projects are located along Africa's coast, with sixteen in the west, eight in the north and east, and two in the south,

¹³ Xi Jinping, speaking at the 2018 Beijing Summit of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held from September 3 to 4.

¹⁴ Mahathir, speaking at conference when visiting Beijing, August 20, 2018.

including Djibouti Port (Djibouti), Port Sudan (Sudan), Port Said-Port Tewfik (Egypt), Port Ain Sokhna (Egypt), Zarzis Port (Tunisia), and El Hamdania Port (Tunisia (Algeria). China may gain interests in these ports as a means of transporting raw resources, finished commodities, and labours (Lokanathan, 2020).

Nevertheless, Africa's urgent need is to get away from poverty and improve their living standards, not the developed railways or long bridges. The public infrastructure of BRI could not reduce the poverty rate.

4. Evaluation to China's role in combating poverty in Africa according to SDGs

China's foreign aid to Africa definitely could benefit African countries' development. However, China's foreign assistance presence is always in a heated discussion. Many scholars criticized China's government's motives and they considered that China's aid interest is on natural resources and international positions. However, the then-Vice Minister of the Ministry of Commerce Fu (2011) replied that China's foreign assistance to Africa is just 'for friendship'. Despite these negative comments, it is possible that China's rising prominence as a global development actor can offer Africa alternative policy options for economic development, while simultaneously posing longer-term ideological questions around the very set of ideas that underpin development itself (Gilpin, 2021). To further understand China's implementation of foreign aid to Africa, this dissertation will use SWOT analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, to evaluate China's implement of combating poverty in Africa and to find out its role in this target SDGs.

(1) Strengths:

Despite some flaws in China's foreign aid to Africa, China's funding and implementation of project aid had a positive impact, such as increasing the availability

of services, increasing skill levels, increasing production levels, knowledge transfer, and the availability of machinery, equipment, and employment opportunities (Nour & Samia Satti, 2010). China's financial assistance in grants, concessional loans, interest-free loans, and debt relief have all gone to reduce African countries' debts. China has reduced or forgave more than 20 billion yuan in debt for Africa.

China's development projects in Africa are in sectors such as transportation and power supply. When Western countries pay attention to "software projects" such as "capacity building", China has invested more investments and assistances in infrastructure such as roads and bridges, which are visible and tangible and can directly benefit local people from the "Hardware Project". China has assisted in constructing more than 2,000 kilometres of railways, more than 3,000 kilometres of roads, has built nearly 20 ports and more than 80 large-scale power facilities. China, a country that has passed the initial construction of the state's funding, realized clearly that only hardware construction could rapidly help African people get away from poverty. China's construction projects in Africa have taken lots of employment, rising the income from Agenda 2030. Even the lowest-paid low-skilled workers earn wages higher than the extreme poverty line in international standards¹⁵. Besides, China is willing to give their construction skills to Africa to construct their homes by themselves one day.

As mentioned before, Africa's population will increase by 40% until 2030. In this aspect, China is an excellent example to Africa. In 1962, China had the first baby boom after the poor period. Rapidly, due to the arisen of a considerable population, China came into another poor period. At that time, China considered that the larger quantity of people could take more productions. After that, China has realized that only the higher production skills could increase productivity, but it came out many population problems to China until today. Africa should learn from China's experience to take some

¹⁵ Since 2015, the World Bank has defined *extreme poverty* as people living on less than \$1.90 a day, measured using the international poverty line. However, extreme poverty is not only about low income; it is also about what people can or cannot afford.

measurements to control population growth, and to avoid future population problems. Productivity should not be achieved through a large number of labours but achieved by the higher productive skills.

(2) Weaknesses:

Although Chinese construction takes employment, there are many problems when African labourers working in Chinese factories. Even though workers' wages are higher than 1.9\$ a day, it is far from enough to eradicate poverty. In Ghana, an Emprise named GUMCO paid 2.2\$ a day to Ghanaian workers (Akorsu & Cooke, 2011), slightly higher than the standard. Besides, their labour rights also could not be granted, for instance, lack of a formal contract and too long working hours, which violate the basic labour laws.

Besides, from the definition of aid, ODA is defined by the OECD and DAC as government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries¹⁶. China is not a member of the OECD and does not follow its development aid criteria or practice. The majority of Chinese investment in Africa is in the form of development finance, not aid. Although Chinese literature frequently blurs the boundary between the two categories, this fact is openly acknowledged by Chinese government analysts (Sun, 2014).

In addition, even though China is one of the major donors in Africa, aid flows from China are relatively smaller than the flows from the OECD and the DAC countries. The most traditional foreign aid is ODA, while most of China's foreign aid is OOF. The difference between ODA and OOF is that OOF is defined as official sector transactions that do not meet ODA criteria (OECD, 2021). Although China has "generous"

¹⁶ OECD. *Official Development Assistance (ODA)* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

concessional loans and low-interest loans to Africa, these kinds of loans were established solely relying on China's government foreign aid budget and were utilized to sustain China's foreign aid. At the same time, China's economic capacity was minimal (Cheng & Taylor, 2017: 4), especially compared to the traditional donors' foreign assistance amount. Besides that, concessional loans have a particular condition. According to the loan regulations for concessional loans, the concessional loan of foreign assistance projects must meet the ability to repay capital and interests. For chasing the economic benefits, China would no longer offer concessional loans as social charitable projects.

Limited by the administrative level, the Foreign Aid Department of the Ministry of Commerce, which is nominally in charge of foreign aid, actually has no control over other departments. Therefore, the diplomatic departments often restrict China's aid to Africa and development cooperation projects, making foreign aid ineffective.

(3) Opportunities:

While domestic finance in Africa plays a dominant role in funding African investments in its infrastructure and human capital, it is needed to depend on external funding to close a significant gap that private investment and public support from the OECD countries could not close. As the statistics showed before, African countries like Somalia and the Central African Republic, their foreign assistance received a large share of GNI. There is a significant funding country that could help over the long term, that is China (European Union, 2015). Although domestic finance in Africa is increasing, external funding will still be essentially needed.

Furthermore, BRI is not a bad thing for Africa. BRI projects give tremendous opportunities for Africa, which take positive economic outcomes since the Chinese presence. Africa could seize these opportunities to develop its "hard power". "The initiative comes at a crucial time in geopolitics where there is a crisis in multilateralism

and globalization" (Mingmei, 2019). No matter what China's motivation is, Africa can build their infrastructure, such as health construction, and improve its transportation level.

(4) Threats:

Africa has become an increasingly important economic partner for China during Chinese reform and opening up. Africa enjoys rich natural resources, such as Gold, Platinum, and Diamonds. China could gain its natural resources by giving loans to help its infrastructure and development financing needs. It could be said that Chinese foreign assistance, aims to benefit the local recipient countries, and China itself. Besides that, it is frequently asserted that China's generosity as a function of the recipient countries' stance on the "One China" policy and the abundance of its natural resources (Dreher et al, 2015).

The widespread notion is that "emerging donors" are less charitable and more eager to help corrupt countries and autocratic governments with abundant natural resources. (Dreher et al, 2015). In fact, China has been accused of hunting for natural riches in Africa, and of exacerbating corruption, impeding purported Western efforts to develop African democracies, and generating environmental issues (Brautigam, 2010). The corruption problem in Africa is common and serious so that many foreign financial assistances could not achieve by the poor people. What is worse, the participation of emerging donors' assistance made this problem worse. Due to the principle of non-interference, China would not participate in the issues in the recipient countries. In other words, China does not care about the quality of governance and where their financial aid goes, which is the common problem of most donors. It is possible that "China often gives aid directly to state leaders and regimes" (Kishi & Raleigh, 2015).

Chinese foreign aid in the name of development. China does not give any development advice at all, only to care about its interests in both economy and natural resources.

From the environment aspect, it is doubly to see whether China's behaviour in Africa follows sustainable rule. Many developed countries are likely to build factories in African countries in order to release harmful gas. China also wants to learn this bad behaviour. China could utilize the labour resources and its rich natural resources without any environmental pollution only by giving a little financial aid to build a factory. From the perspective of those poor labours, their life relies on the natural resources. Their jobs are not stable anymore when it is a lack of natural resources one day if all the donor countries continue to abuse the resources without sustainable consciousness. According to the SDGs, an unstable job makes the poor vulnerable.

On the other side, as China does not care about the sustainable development of natural resources in Africa, China would not take those African labourers' human rights into consideration. It is not surprising that China is silent on human rights problems in its foreign aid policy towards Africa (Ofodile, 2019). As Bhola (2007) said that "The responsible comity of nations cannot expect China, a communist, military-led oppressive regime, has no experience in good governance, the value of human rights, respect for the rule of law, property right..."

In addition, China looks at Africa as a consumer of solving their industrial overcapacity problems. To supple BRI projects, China has exported much industrial products to Africa, such as coal, steel, glass, solar, aluminium, cement. The exports of Chinese cement to Kenya increased ten times in 2016 to achieve the railway from Mombasa to Nairobi. In 2018, the exports of steel to Nigeria increased by 15%. Due to the requirement of aluminium by Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana, China's aluminium investment has reached 46 billion dollars, and its global exports have risen 20% (Nantulya, 2019). It could say that African countries help a lot to solve China's industrial excess capacities.

On the other hand, China's action made the domestic market of African countries less economic competitive in the global market, such as Kenya. China's invading of

industrial products made the output from the local industry drop a lot. For instance, Kenya's cement exports dropped by 40% in 2017 due to the flood of Chinese cement entering their country (Nantulya, 2019). Besides, China not only domain Africa's domestic market by exporting their industrial products but also affect Africa's labour market by hiring Chinese labour to work for Chinese Emprise. China has always been accused of depriving some African people of employment, making poor people poorer due to unemployment. China has employed more than 2 million Chinese workers, even reached more than 2.5 million in 2014 and 2015 on BRI infrastructure projects in Africa (China Africa Research Initiative, 2021). China's justification, on the other hand, is the protection of foreign nationals. According to a report published by "*The Standard*", one of Kenya's leading news outlets, Kenyan labourers are discriminated against by Chinese nationals who have formed a little kingdom (Wafula, 2018).

There are growing concerns about a rising "debt trap" on African countries. African governments have many financial debts to China for its infrastructure and construction projects which made them get financial crisis. China is one of the most rapidly growing economies globally so that China could provide many loans to African countries. China owned over 72% of Kenya's external debt and 90% of the new bilateral debt with Ethiopia. Djibouti's public external debt has risen from 50% to 85% of GDP, making it the least developed country with the greatest debt (Lokanathan, 2020). Although China's loan consisted of the Concessional loan, Gratuitous assistance, and Interest-free loan, it is still a significant amount for African countries. To pay back the debts, the governments would take some actions, such as collecting more taxes by raising the tax rate, giving more stress to the poor people. In some certain, this will deepen the poverty of Africa.

"China's activities are either 'evil' because they represent China's selfish quest for natural resources and damage Africa's fragile efforts to improve governance and build a sustainable future; or they are "virtuous" because they contribute to a foundation for long-term economic development, through infrastructure projects and revenue creation."

In Sun (2014).

5. Conclusion

Due to the worsening poverty situation in Africa, more and more countries joined in the list of foreign assistance. Nevertheless, maybe the emerging donors could not really benefit African countries. They want to gain all kinds of interests by offering foreign assistance. However, foreign assistance should solve poverty problems first and after the mutual economic interests or political rewards.

Let us come back to the problem: Does Chinese aid work for poverty reduction in Africa? The answer is yes but limited. Donors have to offer adequate assistance but avoid dependent. The western donors' aids focus on health, education, and development, which could help reduce poverty in Africa. Although health assistance is enormous, the health infrastructure in Africa is still at a weaker level. Especially under COVID-19, more people get into poverty, health assistance becomes more essential.

Chinese foreign aid has many problems to be solved. China's motivation "for friendship" should be understood as a kind of cooperation with African countries. When China was obtaining economic interests from foreign assistance, Africa would engage in debt problems. China should attach as much importance to improving its foreign aid capacity (Cheng & Taylor, 2017). Infrastructure is essential but not the primary needed; indeed, those assistance programs to help eradicate poverty are crucial for Africa. Even if the function of Western donors' colossal health and education assistance to combat poverty in Africa does not matter, the Chinese assistance in infrastructure will not solve poverty. Besides, for the improvement of Chinese policy, the government should integrate human rights into its policy. Due to the severe corruption in many African countries, the donors should verify the direction of financial aid.

All in all, China's role in combating poverty in Africa in the Agenda 2030 is not very favourable. As a developing country with prosperous economic growth, China should offer more useful assistance to Africa, taking African countries like cooperation

partners and a friend who needed help to get away from poverty. China's interests should not take African's development as a cost.

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