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Q & A |

SINO-AFRICAN VOICES

Q&A with: **Jinkang WU**
Advisory Panel Member
Africa-China Centre for Policy & Advisory

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Sino-African Voices

The ***Sino-African Voices*** is a series of Q&A on broader issues regarding Africa-China economic, social and political cooperation.

The platform is used to share critical insights from individuals with first-hand experience in both Africa and China.

Jinkang WU shared broader perspectives and key insights on geopolitics, China's domestic economy, and, more specifically, Africa-China cooperation in this episode of Sino-African Voices.



The newly appointed Foreign Minister of China, Qin Gang, visited five African countries (Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin & Egypt) on his first international trip, shortly after his appointment on the 1st of January 2023. In his meeting with the AU Secretary General, FM Qin Gang made the 4-point proposal on the development of the Africa China relations.

What are the specific cross border opportunities that Africa can leverage for mutually beneficial results for both Africa and China?

On the macro-strategic level, both sides could further enhance their policy dialogues and exchanges to formulate a road map, both short- and long-term, for economic development cooperation. That road map should be as specific as possible, covering economic development strategy, free trade agreements, foreign direct investment to promote industrial development, particularly in the manufacturing sector, agricultural development to ensure food security for the African continent, as well as infrastructure, etc.

On specific sectors, efforts should be made to promote "Made in Africa," particularly for products both for local and external consumers, ranging from textiles to agriculture to manufacturing, and to extend the industrial and value-chains in Africa.

On specific actions to be taken, more efforts should be made to promote FDI, with a strategic approach to enhancing engagement with the Chinese private sector investors and creating an enabling environment for the Chinese private firms that are willing to move their production capacity to the African continent in a bid to seek more market opportunities.

On the country level, a country-specific engagement approach is critical to maximize the comparative advantage of individual countries, giving full play to the complementary role of economic development in boosting win-win cooperation between the two sides.

To facilitate actions as needed to promote cooperation opportunities, the enhancement of communications and personal exchanges is extremely important. As mentioned above, sending trade and investment promotion delegations to and attending business conferences and exhibition fairs in China or inviting Chinese business people, particularly private investors, to Africa is an important step to start with. Quick follow-ups are also critical, as the Chinese saying goes: "Strike the hammer while the iron is hot."

The food market disturbance didn't come alone: oil, gas, iron, and the auto parts industry were also impacted, increasing the fuel price, which also has a direct impact on supply chain mobility and cost.



China is the first country to support the AU in joining the G20, and supports a greater role of the AU and African countries in the global governance system. How significant is this gesture in boosting Africa-China cooperation geopolitically?

Joining the G20 would not only allow African countries to play a larger role in the international arena, but it would also help the African continent's economic position.

An economically stronger Africa would certainly help augment both the scope and level of cooperation between Africa and China. Once the African countries as a whole have reached the economic level of upper middle income countries, the trade volume between the two sides will increase beyond our imagination.

Multi-polarization is a global trend that no force can prevent from happening.

The developing world is traditionally composed of countries from Asia (a large part of it), Africa, and Latin America, and the rise of Africa would help strengthen the position of the developing south, and the world would become more balanced both in terms of geopolitical pattern and economic development, and therefore a more secured and safer place for mankind.



China holds a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Will China lead the quest of the AU to get an African country a permanent Seat on the UN Security Council? “to boost the representation and voice of developing countries, especially those of African countries, in the UN Security Council and other international organizations, as it seeks to work together to make the global governance system more just and equitable.

Without knowing the details of any discussions, if any, between AU and China on the subject matter, I cannot make any judgments or predictions about the actions that China may take when this issue is put on the table of the UN Security Council.

That said, we have surely noted the four-point proposal FM Qin Gang made during his recent visit to Africa. FM Qin Gang reaffirmed that China “supports a greater role for the AU and African countries in the global governance system.”

He added that “we should boost the representation and voice of developing countries, especially those of African countries, in the UN Security Council and other international organizations, and work together to make the global governance system more just and equitable.”

This is indeed, in my view, a very strong statement indicating China’s political stance concerning this issue.

For the first time in over 60 Year, China has experienced a decline in population growth. This decline is forecast to persist into the end of this century and beyond. This decline is occurring in a time where the Chinese population is aging population largely due to a high quality of healthcare, and technological advancement. There is also a steady increase in urbanization of China.



Why should the world be bothered by these statistics?

The world should not be bothered by these statistics. Let's put it in perspective.

First, one should not neglect the fact that China's total population still stands at 1.4118 billion in 2022, almost the same size as the total population of the African continent.

Secondly, the latest statistics show that China's working-age population, aged between 16 and 59 years old, was as large as 860 million in 2022, accounting for about 61 percent of the nation's total population, which is still "young and vibrant" with an average age of about 39.

Thirdly, apart from the size of the total population, the quality of China's labor force has been on a steady rise. At present, there are about 240 million people in China with a university education, and more than 44 million are currently studying at universities, with about 9 million college students graduating from their schools each year (as will be the case in 2021).

Finally, China has taken steps to relax its family planning policy, with a view to maintaining an appropriate balance in its demographic structure. This move might help address the aging issue as well as population decline in China, although the result of the relaxation has yet to be seen.

In conclusion, the forecasted decline in China's population growth will be compensated by the quality improvement of its labor force, which will lead to a significant increase in the country's productivity, with the development of artificial intelligence and production automation.



Is this an opportune time for China to consider a Canada Style Migration program, especially for skilled Africans and their families to work in China?

At present and for the foreseeable future, China will continue to face employment pressure other than a lack of labor force, and therefore, in my view, the "Canada Style Migration Program" does not work for China. But this does not mean that China will close its door to talented people, business professionals, college students, and so on, including those from the African continent, to work and study in China.

It should be noted that China's country circumstances are vastly different from those of Canada, the latter being a nation built on migrants in its brief history.



How will this Impact China's label as the worlds manufacturing powerhouse?

Given the reasons stated above, this will have no significant impact on China's manufacturing capability.

China's manufacturing industry is shifting toward high-tech products that place a premium on quality rather than quantity. With the advancement of high technology in the manufacturing sector, China will need more skilled workers and talented engineers.

The development of high education and college-level vocational schools will be the primary driver of meeting future labor-force demand.

About Expert



Jinkang Wu

Advisory Panel Member
Africa-China Centre for Policy & Advisory

Former Special Advisor to the President of IFAD & Director of APLO under the PRM Office of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Jinkang WU joined the Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China in 1989.

Through his entire career in MOF from 1989 to 2012, Mr. Wu once served as the deputy director of the Program Division in the World Bank Department, the Director of IFIs Division, and the Deputy Director-General of the International Department.

During this period, Mr. Wu also served as the Alternate Executive Director for China in the World Bank, the IFAD Board Member for China, and the GEF Council Member representing China.

While mainly focusing on external relations and cooperation with the World Bank and other IFIs, such as ADB and EIB, Mr. Wu was also an active member of the Chinese delegation responsible for financial matters in the negotiation of international environment conventions, such as UNFCCC, CBD, Montreal Protocol and Stockholm Convention, and served through the whole process as the Chinese representative for the Green Climate Fund Transitional Committee, and accumulated rich experience in green and climate financing.



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The views and opinions expressed in this Q&A are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of any entities he works with or represent.



INSIGHTS

Who we are.



The Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory is a Sino-African research and policy think tank and advisory firm headquartered in Accra, Ghana.

The Centre is dedicated to providing unbiased policy and market research as well as distinct views on Africa-China relations.

We offer strategic guidance on key issues regarding China and Africa, covering multiple sectors and industries.

www.africachinacentre.org



CONTACT

Building No. 49-01, North Legon,
Accra, Ghana
+233 303 965259
info@africachinacentre.org

www.africachinacentre.org