

The West Still Harbors Colonial Attitude Toward Africa

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Editor's Note:

For the Chinese people, the past decade was epic and inspirational. The country, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China with Xi Jinping at its core, has made great endeavors in boosting its economy, deepening reforms, improving the rights of its people and acting as a responsible power globally.

China has been emphasizing the significance of bringing China-Africa cooperation to a higher level with more extensive fields. Global Times (GT) reporter Yan Yuzhu talked to Gert Grobler (Grobler), a former senior diplomat in the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and senior research fellow with the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, on the significance of China-Africa cooperation, different attitudes toward Africa between China and the West, and how China's experiences can help Africa in the field of poverty alleviation and other areas. This is the sixth of the series.

GT: In 2021, President Xi Jinping announced the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, which not only incorporates the China Vision 2035, but also corresponds to the AU Agenda 2063 and the development strategies of African countries. What does this mean for China and Africa to strengthen further cooperation and build a stronger China-Africa community with a shared future?

Grobler: African leaders welcomed President Xi's "community with a shared future" because it is a reality that China and Africa have long forged its own strong community of a shared future. It is therefore nothing new to Africa.

Africa has in fact already adopted President Xi's vision of "building a community with a shared future for mankind" and it represents a key pillar in the rapidly expanding friendship between Africa and China.

What was of significance was that this impressive range of programs announced by President Xi was the result of joint consultation and preparation between China and Africa. This has further enhanced the notion and acceptance on the part of Africa, that it is indeed an equal partner and that China "listens to its voice."

China and Africa with its strong commitment and solidarity will continue to increase the role, influence and

cohesion of the FOCAC, as its platform for collective dialogue and a mechanism for practical cooperation, in its endeavors to escalate its strategic partnership to the next level, toward the building of a China and Africa community with a shared future.

GT: Africa is a victim of Western colonization. Do you think the West still maintains a colonial master mentality when it comes to African affairs, even though Africa has been free from colonization for many years?

Grobler: I recently spent a few of years in China at the Institute of Africa Studies at ZJNU in Jinhua, in the dynamic Zhejiang Province which inter alia provided me with enriching insights into China, its culture and how China and its people view Africa.

In fact, from the outset, I sensed a strong fraternal bond and solidarity between the people of China and Africa on a daily basis. I detected a true, genuine feeling and wish on the part of China and its people to work with Africa and deepen its friendship and cooperation with the continent.

I further got the impression that China as a victim of colonialism itself, a developing country which once experienced widespread poverty but which had phenomenal success in lifting its population out of poverty, had a very sound understanding of Africa, its culture, its developmental and economic challenges and that China in fact listened to Africa's voice. As a South African diplomat, I worked in a number of Western countries, some of which were former colonial powers. In my interactions with their leaders and officials on cooperation with Africa, it was unfortunate that I sensed an underlying sentiment from time to time that smacked of paternalism and condescension. An approach that still reflected a "colonial" attitude that "we know what is best for Africa!"

Nowhere in my dealings with those countries, did I ever find the kind of strong and unwavering commitment to work with Africa on a basis of mutual respect, equality, good faith and a win-win basis, as I experienced in China.

GT: Poverty reduction is an important topic for the FOCAC in 2021. What lessons can China's experience offer to Africa?

Grobler: Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, China has launched targeted poverty alleviation initiatives and made remarkable progress.

Africa has witnessed these profound changes and progress which China has made over the past 70 years, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Africa views these people centered policies, which is unmatched worldwide, as a miracle of development and as an essential first step toward the building of a society of Common Prosperity. Such an accomplishment is not only a milestone in the history of the Chinese nation's development and the history of global poverty reduction, but also a vivid illustration of the understanding of human rights with Chinese characteristics that "the rights to subsistence and development are basic human rights of paramount importance."

Africa recognizes China's historic achievements in eliminating absolute poverty and is furthermore aware that



China stands ready to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries on poverty reduction.

In fact, China's growth model and success have inspired and gave confidence to African countries and other developing countries in their ability to achieve development and continues to give momentum to their approach toward modernization and enhanced prosperity. China's strong opposition to hegemonism in whatever form as well as against unilateralism, protectionism and trade bullying and its consistent position that it will not seek to progress at the expense of others, is appreciated by Africa.

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(Editors: JIANG Qing & JIANG Shiyang)