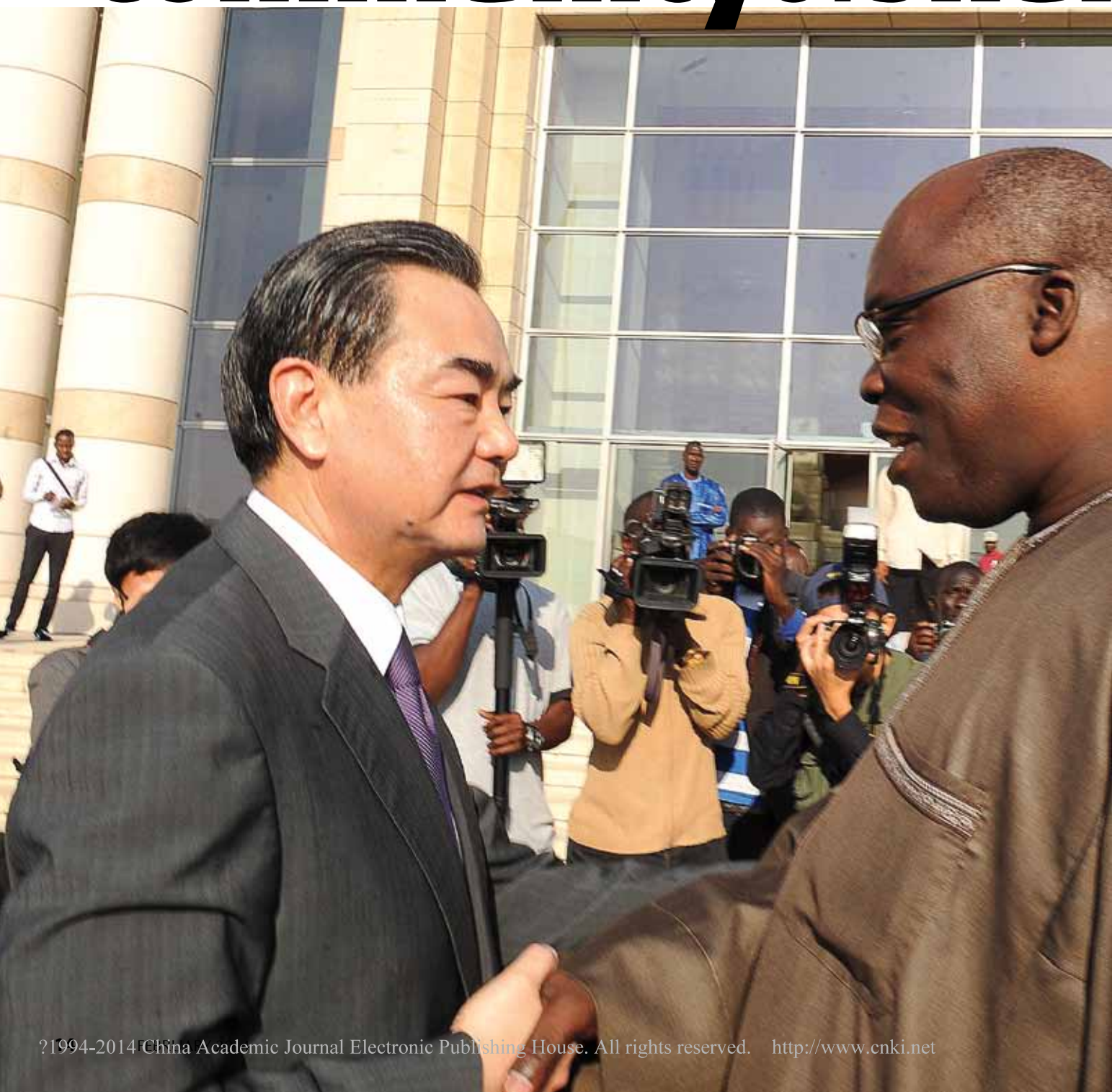


AFRICASTOP**PRIORITY**

Community of Shan



red Destinies



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi (left) shakes hands with Senegal's Culture Minister Abdou Azize Mbaye

Chinese FM's Africa visit promotes support for the continent's renaissance

By Zhang Zhongxiang

SINCE 1991, all of China's foreign ministers have traveled to Africa on their first yearly trip abroad. Continuing this long held tradition, Wang Yi set out for Ethiopia, Djibouti, Ghana and Senegal from January 6 to 11. The 24-year-long tradition confirms that China's cooperation with African countries continues to be the foundation of its foreign strategic thinking.

The Chinese Government has long attached great importance to Sino-African cooperation. In March 2013, Xi Jinping visited Africa in his first visit abroad after being elected Chinese president. During the visit, he put forward the principles of "sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith" in deepening China's cooperation with Africa, and noted that "China and Africa have always been a community of shared destinies."

Foreign Minister Wang visited four African countries this year primarily to implement the achievements made by Xi during his 2013 Africa visit and further reiterate and illustrate China's Africa policy.

Upholding justice

After the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, especially after the FOCAC Beijing Summit in 2006, Sino-African cooperation has maintained rapid development, pushing the bilateral trade value from \$10.6 billion in 2000 to nearly \$200 billion in 2012. Since 2009, China has been Africa's largest trading partner. China's investment to Africa also grew from \$490 million at the end of 2003 to \$14.7 billion in 2011, covering various fields such as mining, finance, manufacturing, construction, tourism, agriculture and fishery. China has become an important impetus pushing Africa's economic development, contributing more than 20 percent to the continent's economic growth every year.

However, despite the rapid development in cooperation, many problems have emerged. On the one hand, China's going-global strategy faces new >>

» challenges in Africa. Chinese workers in Africa face the risk of being kidnapped, and conflicts and wars in some African countries also force Chinese workers and overseas Chinese to leave, leading to huge economic losses. On the other hand, while making great achievements, the going-global strategy has also led to a lot of problems in operation. These problems have resulted in the arrest of Chinese gold miners in Ghana, and some Chinese businesspeople squeezing the business space of African retailers. Targeting these phenomena, Western media have wasted no time blaming and criticizing Sino-African cooperation, asserting that China is engaged in so-called "neo-colonialism" in Africa.

These problems in China-Africa cooperation have drawn the attention of the Chinese Government. While visiting Africa, President Xi proposed a new outlook on justice and interests in Africa.

Wang elaborated on the new outlook during his visit. Talking to the media after meeting with his Senegalese counterpart, Mankeur Ndiaye, on January 10, Wang said that taking the correct approach of upholding justice and seeking mutual interests is a banner of China's diplomacy. According to him, China has prioritized treating African countries on an equal footing and promoting the legitimate rights and reasonable appeals of the African people. China will never embark on the colonialists' road of plunder so as to achieve mutual development and common prosperity with Africa, Wang said.

Africa's security affairs

In general, Africa's security situation has remained stable in recent years. However, conflicts flared up in some regions in 2013, including Mali, east Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Nairobi, Kenya, where a terrorist attack claimed the lives of 67 people.

South Sudan is the youngest country in Africa and only won independence in 2011. After many years of civil war for independence, the country is in urgent need of peace and stability for national reconstruction. But unexpectedly, the country became mired in conflicts at the end of 2013.

During Wang's visit to Ethiopia, he met representatives from both warring parties of South Sudan in Addis Ababa on January 6, conveying China's concerns. He hoped that the warring parties could put an immediate halt to the conflict for the long-term benefit of South Sudanese people so as to maintain law and social order and seek reasonable solutions through negotiations.

Later, while talking to Al Jazeera, a Qatar-based TV channel, Wang put forward four-point suggestions toward solving the

China would like to deepen its pragmatic cooperation with African countries in an all-round way with focuses on infrastructure construction, agriculture and the manufacturing industry.

Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister

conflict in South Sudan: First, a ceasefire should take effect and violence be stopped immediately, so as to make way for peace talks and maintain law and order in the country; second, it is imperative to launch an inclusive political dialogue process as soon as possible and find a solution acceptable to both sides; third, the international community should intensify efforts for peace talks, urging both sides to engage in serious peace talks; and fourth, it is important to improve the humanitarian situation in South Sudan.

China has always played the role of a responsible power on peace and security issues in Africa and is an active participator in this regard. In light of the UN resolutions and related international laws, China sent 16 escort fleets to the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters to escort vessels. China also participated in 15 UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. So far, there are more than 1,800 Chinese peacekeepers on the continent. China has dispatched the largest number of peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

At the Fifth FOCAC Ministerial Conference in 2012, China also launched the Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security to deepen cooperation with the African Union (AU) and African countries in peace and security in Africa.

African renaissance

Thanks to the strengthened cooperation between emerging economies and Africa, the continent has been maintaining rapid economic development in the 21st century. In the first decade of the century, six out of the 10 countries with the fastest economic development worldwide were in Africa. The international community also has a positive outlook on the continent's future development, regarding it as a "hopeful continent." Africa's opportunities have been increasingly discovered by the outside world. With the continent reaching



China has participated in 15 UN Africa peacekeeping missions, now with more than 1,800 Chinese peacekeepers there



✎ Zhang Zhongxiang

unity on self-improvement, more and more African politicians have gained confidence in the African renaissance.

Wang reiterated China's affirmation of supporting the African renaissance on his Africa tour, adding that China would be committed to joining hands with Africa to fulfill their renaissance dreams. While addressing the media after his talk with his Ethiopian counterpart Tewodros Adhanom on January 6 in Addis Ababa, Wang said that the 1.3

billion Chinese people are working hard to realize their Chinese dream, and more than 1 billion African people are struggling for their African dream of unity, self-improvement, development and renaissance. China would like to join hands with Africans in fulfilling their dreams.

Supporting the African renaissance mainly relies on mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation. In this sense, Wang stressed on several occasions that China would like to deepen its pragmatic cooperation with African countries in an all-round way with focuses on infrastructure construction, agriculture and the manufacturing industry. These are the areas where China should strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation with Africa. In addition, efforts should be made to support cooperation in improving people's livelihood in Africa.

African integration

African integration is the necessary road of the African renaissance. Africa has 54 countries with 15 having no access to the sea. Some African countries are quite small in size. Against this backdrop, only through integration can African countries be better developed and fulfill their dream of the African renaissance.

One of the advantages of African integration is that pan-Africanism has a long history and has maintained wide support on the continent. While visiting Ghana, Wang fully affirmed pan-Africanism, noting

that as a friend of Africa, China understands and supports pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism essentially means self-confidence, self-support and self-improvement with the goals of unity, development and renaissance. This is Africa's development orientation, as well as the trend of the era.

The AU has been playing a positive role in the process of African integration. At the 18th AU summit held in February 2012, AU countries agreed to make the continent a free trade zone by 2017. At the current stage, the AU is encouraging the plan of transnational infrastructure construction, aimed at promoting African integration through the infrastructures that connect various countries. The planned pan-African road network totals 56,683 km, including three horizontal and six vertical transnational roads. So far, 35 percent of the road network has been built.

China has strengthened its support to the AU in recent years. In January 2012, the AU Conference Center, the largest China-built construction project in recent years, was completed, and China also announced aid worth 600 million yuan (\$100 million) to the pan-African organization in the next three years. In Wang's visit to Ethiopia, he specially visited the center, and noted that the AU Conference Center is another monument for China-Africa friendship.

China's active participation in infrastructure construction in Africa shows its solid support to the continent's integration. To date, China has launched effective cooperation with African countries in infrastructure construction. At the Fifth FOCAC Ministerial Conference, the Chinese Government proposed to support Africa in achieving connectivity and integration and developing more integrated infrastructure. According to the conference's agreements, China and the AU would establish a cooperative partnership in the design, inspection, financing and management of projects under the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative.

In addition, China has proposed to provide a credit line of \$20 billion to African countries to mainly support the development of infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa in 2013-15.

The African renaissance mainly depends on the self-independence and hard work of African people. However, assistance and cooperation from the international community are also very important. China's cooperation with Africa is not exclusive. China is open to the international community's cooperation with Africa and hopes that all parties can work together and play a positive and constructive role in promoting peace, security and development in Africa. **CA**

(The author is deputy director at the Center of African Studies, Shanghai Normal University)