

**AFRICA AND CHINA'S 21st CENTURY
MARITIME SILK ROAD**

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Executive Summary

1. China's 'Belt and Road' framework offers funding, expertise and industrial technology for massive infrastructural projects in the geographical areas under the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' regional development plans. Located at the far west of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is Africa.
2. The massive infrastructural projects in the 'Belt and Road' framework represent important opportunities for Chinese companies to expand and diversify their businesses globally. In turn, China's partner countries can expect to accelerate their economic development thanks to the improvements in their infrastructure, without having to worry about political interference from China.
3. The 'Belt and Road' initiatives come at a key period for China. After enjoying double digit gross domestic product growth in the first decade of the 2000s, China's growth has decelerated to what its leadership has described as a 'new normal' of single digit growth.
4. The 'Belt and Road' framework can be placed in the context of the 'new normal' as one of China's new engines of growth, offering fresh sources of employment and business opportunities for China to achieve its national goal of a moderately prosperous society.
5. The infrastructural projects to be undertaken in Africa under the 'Belt and Road' framework include the construction and development of key transportation hubs and infrastructure such as deepwater ports and regional rail corridors.
6. Chinese firms had been active in Africa even before the 2013 announcement of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and are today engaged in a range of economic sectors including agriculture, construction, energy, health-care, mining, industrial manufacturing and transportation infrastructure.

7. The extractions of natural resources by some Chinese companies have led to accusations in some quarters that China is engaged in neocolonialism in Africa.
8. The continued acceptance of Chinese investments over the past five and a half decades by African states and their people is an important sign that China's presence in Africa should correctly be seen as that of a partner in economic development rather than that of an aspiring neocolonial hegemon.