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## Examination of China-Kenya Economic Relations between 1993 and 2003



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### Abstract

The contemporary international system is characterized by social, economic, and political interactions. The most significant of these are economic integration and globalization, which have brought together various actors in the international system, particularly states. In this regard, states develop foreign policies that seek to achieve their respective national interests and are informed by domestic, regional, and international conditions. Economic relations are essential tools that states deploy to achieve their national interests. The People's Republic of China has been notably effective in Africa, and its developing diplomatic and economic ties with Kenya, located in the east of Africa, have made it a vital strategic partner. Since 1978, the two countries have established strong economic relations, including bilateral trade, economic investments, and foreign aid. This study examines the economic relations between the two countries from 1993 to 2003, leading up to Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki's government's adoption of the "Look East Policy." This article analyzes the initiatives and their consequences that characterized the economic relations between the two countries during the period under review. The study relies primarily on secondary data from official documents, policy documents, newspapers with the highest circulation in both countries, and scientific literature on the subject. Between 1993 and 2003, China-Kenya relations gained economic momentum, and during this decade, steps were taken to strengthen bilateral relations. Additionally, the development of diplomatic and economic relations during this period created a more significant interactions between China and Kenya. These interactions also allowed the two countries to gain economic benefits and a bond over shared interests.

### Keywords

China · Kenya · Trade · Investment · Foreign Aid



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## Examination of China-Kenya Economic Relations between 1993 and 2003

Kenya and China relations began on December 14, 1963, when China opened its embassy in Nairobi just two days after Kenya's independence. Despite this good start, the relations were disrupted in 1966 after the Kenyan government made allegations of China sponsoring a coup in Kenya, followed by demonstrations culminating in the two countries severing their diplomatic relations. The Diplomatic relations were restored in 1978 by President Daniel Moi, marking the beginning of intense collaborations in trade, investment, and technology exchange between the two governments (Patroba, 2012). This relationship was encouraged in the 1990s, which set the stage for President Mwai Kibaki's government's adoption of the 'Look East Policy' in the early 2000s. In this policy, China's engagement and presence in Kenya increased exponentially, with more financial and technical aid being given to Kenya, particularly in infrastructure projects. State visits by President Kibaki of Kenya and Hu Jintao in 2005 and 2006 cemented these relations by constructing oil exploration and mining projects in motion by Chinese companies in Kenya (African Business, 2011). Several other deals were signed in subsequent years, and President Kibaki's 2008 Vision 2030 initiative reinforced the two nations' economic relations (Kenya Vision 2030).<sup>1</sup> The period covered in this study is 1993-2003. It is important to understand the establishment of China-Kenya economic relations and the kind of economic relationship that existed between the two countries before the 2003 presidency of President Hu Jintao. This study examined China-Kenya economic relations between 1993 and 2003 to help readers understand this relationship and contribute to the literature.

From 1993 to 2003, Kenya received significant development aid. Significant Chinese aid has also been used to promote trade, infrastructure expansion, and industrial development. It was stated that the Kenyan government welcomed China's approach towards development aid because it was seen as a tool to help improve the country's difficult social and economic situation (Elmi, 2012, p. 2). Aid played an essential role in bilateral relations between China and Kenya during the reign of President Daniel Arap Moi. For instance, during a visit to China in September 1980, President Moi, in his speeches, stated that he had traveled with the Kenyan delegation to China to "seek development aid and to strengthen the relations between Kenya and China." He added that the country had what it wanted in terms of aid. An official in the president's entourage speaking about the various high-level and elite negotiations stated, "From now on, you are going to see much activity between Kenya and China ... Things will now go very fast. " (Daily Nation, 1980, p. 4). As Moi explained, after 1980, China-Kenya relations deepened, and both trade and aid between the two countries increased significantly. During Moi's state visit to China in 1980, a new economic and technical cooperation agreement was established. This agreement brought China's expertise in agriculture and energy expertise to rural projects. The most significant project was the construction of the National Sports Complex in Nairobi, which included a 60,000-seat stadium, a gym, a swimming pool, and a boarding house. For these projects, China provided a six-year, interest-free loan of ¥70 million (KSh350 million), with a budget of KSh300 million allocated specifically for the sports complex (Sun, 2023 p. 131).

It is worth noting that this initiative has seen many infrastructural projects being executed, major among them being the Nairobi- Thika Highway and the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), which are viewed as the bedrock of achieving the Vision (Tripathi et al., 2021). In 2017, an upgrade was done to Kenya-China bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership by Kenya's President, Uhuru Kenyatta, and

<sup>1</sup>Vision 2030 sought to transform Kenya "into a rapidly industrializing middle-income nation by 2030.



his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017). This was meant to deepen cooperation in various areas and increase people-to-people exchanges to enhance bilateral relations (Xinhua, 2017).

Economic relations are embedded in the concept of economic diplomacy. According to Baine and Woolcock, economic diplomacy refers to procedures and techniques for international decision-making on cross-border economic activities like migration, aid, lending, investment, import, and export, pursued by national and non-national actors. (Bayne and Woolcock, 2017). Governments use resources to promote a country's economic interests and growth through international engagement with relevant actors. Due to globalization, economic diplomacy is deeply intertwined with domestic policymaking because it has increased economic interdependence between countries. Economic diplomacy is central to countries' foreign policies, which advance and achieve their interests through trade, investment, and technical support. In this way, a country's economic resources and relations are leveraged to attain its strategic foreign policy goals globally. Countries enter bilateral agreements where they outline areas of cooperation and the corresponding benefits to the parties involved. Moreover, the states align their national policies with the negotiated agreements so as to ensure that the international agreements support their national development goals and exhibit goodwill for credibility. These economic diplomacy pursuits are not the monopoly of states and their agents but incorporate all actors in international relations, including non-state actors. Notably, non-state actors, specifically non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and international organizations play a crucial role in economic diplomacy by shaping economic policies and interactions between countries. International organizations like the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and IMF impact economic diplomacy by setting rules, norms, and standards that countries must adhere to. This influence of non-state actors has defied the traditional state-centric model of diplomacy, whereby governments interact and negotiate with various stakeholders, not just other states, to effectively execute economic diplomacy. Kenya- China economic diplomacy has been characterized by several bilateral agreements and infrastructural developments with China's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), established in 2003, which offers a platform to strengthen ties between China and African countries.

Since independence, Kenya has been one of Africa's most stable economic and strategic countries. Since the 1990s, the nation's economy has grown progressively, creating an enlarged market for global merchandize. Consequently, Kenya has become an important conduit and gateway for foreign investors to cooperate in investment and trade with Africa (Farooq et al., 2008, p. 408). The country has notable economic relations with many other nations worldwide, both in the Global North and the Global South. In particular, China's presence in Kenya's economy is featured in trading, investment, and manufacturing undertakings, with most Kenyans importing Chinese products. Since the 2000s, Kenya has been developing new economic collaborations with Asian nations. After taking power in 2002, the NARC government<sup>2</sup> shadowed a "Look East" strategy<sup>3</sup> that targeted strengthening trade partnerships with Eastern nations. Consequently, the government engaged in economic and trade relations with five countries, including Singapore, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and China; however, the primary economic partner was China (Mullinge, 2012, p. 2).

<sup>2</sup>The NARC government came to power in 2002, led by President Mwai Kibaki.

<sup>3</sup>Under the Look East policy, Kenya has shifted its investment setting to favor the Sino-Indian-Persian triumvirate instead of its customary partners, the United States and Europe. This change resulted in significant investment from China in infrastructure development.

## Methodology

This study provides a detailed account of the economic partnership between the Republic of Kenya and the People's Republic of China between 1993 and 2003. Its main objective is to highlight the major economic activities that characterized these relations and to determine the intensity and corresponding impact of the two nations' association.

### Research Design and Data Sources

This study uses a descriptive research design to provide a detailed account of the economic relations between the Republic of Kenya and the People's Republic of China between 1993 and 2003. This study systematically describes the dynamics and implications of the relations between the two countries. In the analysis of the economic relations between China and Kenya between 1993 and 2003, the impact of Chinese investment, trade, and aid on the economic development of Kenya, its effect on China-Kenya relations during this period, and the related implications are assessed.

This study is based on secondary data that includes case studies of various trade initiatives and projects undertaken during the period. The data used in the analysis are drawn from public pronouncements made by officials of the two governments, policy documents, countries' newspapers, and academic literature. The analysis of this secondary data focuses on initiatives undertaken in these relations, their contributions, and their impact on the various sectors of the economies of both countries during the period. The Kenyan and Chinese governments' reports and statistics, which include official publications from government agencies, provide the necessary account of the relationship. On the other hand, academic sources are obtained from academic databases, which include data repositories, journals, and peer-reviewed articles, and provide high-quality, reliable data on the research topic. For data collection, a systematic review of the existing literature from the sources indicated shall be conducted to compile relevant studies and datasets.

### Limitations of the Study

In this study, the limitations of relying on secondary data are inevitable. Since the researchers do not have control over how the data is collected and analyzed, concerns about the reliability and validity of the data may arise. The errors and biases of the original researchers during data collection may also affect the results. Therefore, secondary data were ensured to be consistent with the research objectives and assessed for relevance to the original purpose of data collection and research questions. In addition, the reliability of the data sources was verified using reputable peer-reviewed publications and government reports.

## Economic Relations Between China and Kenya

### Mutual Trade Between China and Kenya

China is a growing global market for services and goods. It is also an alternative source of technology. Trade between Kenya and China grows every year. Global trade is recognized as a crucial tool for industrialization and economic development. (Morrison et al., 2008). Kenya's imports from China gradually increased compared to the subnormal growth in exports to the People's Republic of China, reaching an average of 29.3 million dollars in 1994. After 1995, when Chinese imports increased by five-fold, trade between China and Kenya increased significantly (Chege, 2008, p. 24). Kenya's real GDP increased by 1.9% from 1994 to 2003, whereas income per head in Kenya reduced by 0.6% during a similar period. Therefore, the expeditious rise in

Kenya's imports from China did not emerge from Kenya's rising incomes but from two factors: liberalization of the exchange rate and China's industrial modernization. In 1996, while receiving the Chinese Assistant Minister for Foreign Trade Liu Ziang, the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry chairman, Kassim Owango, stated that Kenya would form a joint committee to examine the goods that Kenya could export to China in bulk to narrow the trade imbalance. Mr. Owango stated that with innovation, the country could export tea to China with modifications to suit Chinese tastes. Mr. Ziang noted that China's 1.3 billion population offered Kenya an excellent opportunity to sell its commodities. Mr. Owango urged Chinese entrepreneurs to take a more vigorous role in Kenya's local economy by investing in industry and trade. He added that Kenyan consumers had built brand loyalty to Chinese products, including farm implements, bicycles, and lanterns. He commended the quality of Chinese products. Mr. Ziang stated that China could import more goods from Kenya to decrease the trade imbalance (Ngigi, 1996, p. 12).

In December 1996, President Moi received China's Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Development, Mr. Kiangdong. Mr. Kiangdong was in Kenya for the 1996 Chinese Commodity Fair (Ngigi, 1996, p. 12). The Kenyan president thanked China for holding the event in Kenya because it offered the Kenyans a chance to understand what China manufactures to reinforce trade collaboration between the two nations. The President also stressed that China and Kenya had signed numerous protocols associated with cultural exchanges and were now moving towards stronger economic relations. (Daily Nation, 1996), President Moi thanked China for its development collaboration, particularly in road construction. The president added that African countries' marginalization was due to economic weaknesses. Despite Africa having many resources, the continent needed more resources to exploit them. The president also hoped that the Chinese national airline would begin operating from Nairobi to allow smooth exports from Kenya. During the Chinese Trade Fair at the Kenyatta International Conference Center in Nairobi in 1996, Kenya's Minister for Commerce and Industry welcomed joint ventures between Kenya and Chinese entrepreneurs as an initial step towards industrialization. The minister stated that Kenya imported 5.8 billion shillings worth of goods from China and exported 77.8 million shillings worth of goods to China. The minister announced that a delegation of local businesspeople and officers from the Export Promotion Council and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry would participate in a business fact-finding visit to China in May 1996 (Daily Nation, 1996). Like its African colleagues, Kenya has experienced significant trade development with China. Kenya is viewed by China as an open space for the African region and has attracted special attention in its African economic strategy. Kenya is a peaceful country with stable institutions, making it a perfect regional stage for investors from China to grow their investments. China has provided favorable aid to Kenya for various development projects. Onjala avers that trade between China and Kenya picked up correctly in the mid-90s when there was a growth in importation from China (Onjala, 2008). In the second half of the 1990s, imports increased rapidly. These changes were not associated with limited growth in Kenya's real GDP or a decline in per capita income. Instead, economic liberalization programs and China's industrial modernization have influenced Kenya's rapid import growth. As China's products exported to Kenya diversified and offered competitive prices, the trade balance changed in favor of China. The liberalization of Kenya's exchange rate was also a section of economic liberalization backed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. (Chege, 2008, p. 24). This move led numerous Kenyans, excluding intermediaries, to travel to China for the first time to acquire goods directly.

The full liberalization of the exchange rate, which was part of Kenya's economic liberalization program, enabled Kenyan citizens and firms to buy foreign currency for importing products at a reduced total price than previously. Chinese exports to Kenya comprised machinery, building equipment and materials, drugs,

textiles, agricultural tools, capital goods, and household electrical appliances. On the other hand, Kenya's exports to China comprised leather goods, coffee, and black tea. (Embassy of PRC) Kenyan traders and firms began traveling to mainland China to acquire products directly instead of using intermediaries, such as old state trading corporations. The Maasai Ostrich Farm in Kenya and China's National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation signed a contract for the joint operation of the ostrich farm in 1997. The contract stated that the Chinese owned 40% of the farm with an investment of US\$1 million. Dollars in cash and equipment, whereas Kenyans owned the remaining of the shares, using the ostriches and land as investments. In 1998, Kenya exported 104 red-neck ostriches to China. Ostriches are resistant to disease, large, and fast growth. Chinese experts noted that introducing red-neck ostriches would encourage the development of China's ostrich-rearing sector and improve cooperation in agriculture between China and Kenya (Xinhua, 1998). In 1999, Kenya and China made a significant milestone in their trade relations by signing the Sino-Kenya Economic Cooperation Document. Under the agreement, China was to offer economic aid to Kenya (Xinhua, 1999). Mr. Sun Guangxiang, China's vice-minister for foreign trade and economic cooperation, stated that China valued economic collaboration with Kenya and was making strides to balance the advancement of two-way trade. The Chinese were to establish a trade and investment center in Kenya to provide services to the Chinese business community conducting business in Kenya and investing in Kenya. Mr. Sun stated that China encouraged its companies to invest in Kenya by opening plants to assemble and process machines and light-industrial goods. The Chinese project in Kenya is expected to increase Kenyans' incomes. The products assembled and processed by the Chinese will be exported to surrounding nations after satisfying Kenya's local requirements. In June 1999, the Kenyan Minister for Industrial Cooperation, Mr. Andrew Kiptoon, welcomed a Chinese delegation led by Mr. Xu Bingjin.<sup>4</sup> The Kenyan minister stated that Chinese technology was suitable for Kenya and cheaper than goods from other parts of the globe. He welcomed China's plan to build a trade and investment center in Nairobi. Mr. Xu stated that the Sino-Kenya economic collaboration and trade enjoyed sustained growth, with a trading volume in 1998 standing at 120 million US dollars (Xinhua, 1999a).

In 1999, over 150 businesspeople and entrepreneurs from China and Kenya met to seek joint ventures and business opportunities between the two nations (Xinhua, 1999b). The talk began with a short introduction to China's electronics and machinery by Fan Shande.<sup>5</sup> Fan stated that China had developed a comprehensive and modern electric and mechanical industry, exporting goods to more than 180 countries and regions globally. Mr. Fan further stated that China's electronic and mechanical products were most appropriate for the needs of developing nations such as Kenya. The Chinese government inspired its companies to transfer and invest in technology and equipment to other nations. Such trade talks are important for strengthening economic diplomacy. The business community from Kenya gained significant value from the conference since the Chinese transferred their knowledge of electronic and mechanical manufacturing. With Chinese support, Kenyan small enterprises will continue to grow. Kenya and China have experienced rapid trade and economic expansion cooperation over the years, which will have a bright future based on mutual benefit and equality principles. Within Kenya, small-scale entrepreneurial investment from China is growing, usually foreshadowed by the construction specialized shopping malls that stock Chinese retail products. The prospects for technology transfer are real. (Kaplinsky, et. al., 2007). Kenya's Vice-President, Prof George

<sup>4</sup>Xu Bingjin was the head of the delegation organized by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation to hold talks with the Kenyan Minister for Industrial Cooperation, Mr. Andrew Kiptoon.

<sup>5</sup>Fan Shande held the position of Deputy Head of the Department responsible for the import and export of mechanical and electronic products under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. The meeting was organized and funded by the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the leadership of Kassim Owango.



Saitoti, invited more Chinese to invest in Kenya via the EPZ programs. By investing in Kenya, he said Chinese entrepreneurs would benefit from the 400 million people market provided by COMESA member nations (Malalo, 1999, p. 5).

Kenya and China's trade value reached \$186.37 million in 2002, a 29% increase over the previous year (Xinhua, 2003). Chinese exports took up \$180.576 million, while imports took up \$5.798 million. The jointly beneficial partnership between Kenya and China saw more than 20 Chinese organizations doing business in Kenya, including the China Import and Export Corporation for Complete Sets of Equipment, China Road Bridge Construction Corporation, Jiangsu International Economic and Technological Cooperation Co., Sichuan International Economic and Technological Cooperation Co. Ltd, etc. (Embassy of the PRC of Kenya, 2004).

**Figure 1**

*Kenya-China Exports and Imports 1993–2003*



**Source:** Kenya Investment Promotion Center

The figure shows annual data of exports from mainland China to Kenya (Ksh 000) between 1993 and 2003. Although exports followed a low and fluctuating course between 1993 and 1997, a significant increase started in 1998 and reached a peak in 2000. There was a significant decrease in 2001 due to the dot-com bubble burst and the September 11 attacks, which led to economic uncertainties worldwide. However, it recovered from 2002 and reached its highest level in 2003 as a result of an increased demand of Chinese goods as well as establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) platform, which promoted trade and investment opportunities that benefited both countries. This trend shows that China achieved significant growth and stability in its trade relations with Kenya after 1998.

According to the second figure, imports increased gradually between 1993 and 1995. Imports, which showed a slower increase between 1996 and 1998, accelerated from 1999 onwards and increased in 2000. Although there was a slight decrease in 2001, it increased again in 2002 and 2003. These data show that China's exports to Kenya have experienced a rapid growth trend since 1999, and the import volume is constantly increasing.

### China's Investment in Kenya

One of the primary sectors of economic collaboration between Kenya and China is infrastructure development. China has invested and offered significant funding and technical help to build transportation infrastructure, including roads, schools, hospitals, and sports centers (Xinhua, 2000a). These investments have facilitated investment and trade between Kenya and China and have assisted in increasing economic development in Kenya. For instance, China Sichuan International Co-operation Limited received a tender to rehabilitate the Kenyatta National Hospital at 400 million Kenya shillings in 1995 (Daily Nation, 1998a, p. 44). The areas under rehabilitation comprised the primary kitchen gas system that was out of operation for 20 years. The World Bank, through its representative in Kenya, stated that they were satisfied with the quality of the project; however, the pace could have been faster. Another Chinese company, Chinese Roads and Bridges Company received a 2.4 billion tender to reconstruct Mombasa Road. According to the agreement, the Chinese company was to conduct emergency repairs and construct the road simultaneously. The road construction was to be piecemeal, taking approximately 20 km at a time to avoid traffic disruption (Mwangi, 1998, p. 2). The large number of Chinese companies investing in Kenya has resulted in increased employment rates. Numerous Chinese businesses employ more local workers than foreign workers; therefore, Kenyans directly benefit from such businesses. For instance, in 1998, the China and Bridge Road Construction Company hired over 800 local workers to construct the Malindi-Hola road. Significant capital investments in various Kenyan economic sectors also help enhance the economy. Moreover, these businesses offer employment and help Kenyans gain relevant experience to start their businesses in the future (Daily Nation, 1998a).

Other crucial cooperation sectors include telecommunications, tourism, and agriculture. China has offered Kenya technical help and funding for agricultural projects. This has helped enhance food security and enhance agricultural productivity. For instance, in 1998, the Daily Nation reported that Chinese investors would inject 1.2 billion shillings into the Kenya Farmers' Association. The funds would establish a farm machinery assembly plant, enhance farming methods and research, and pay the association's accumulated debts. The investors appreciated the association officials' significant measures to fight corruption (Daily Nation, 1998b). In 2001, Kenyan farmers benefited from a planned fruit and vegetable processing and export project. The Chinese government sponsored the venture, which targeted Nyeri's Mathira division. China's Economic and Commercial Counselor, Mr. Xiaochuan Zhu, stated that their tour was to establish cooperation



in the light goods sector, handicraft, food, and grain processing for export. The counselor added that China possessed food processing machinery and a ready market for Kenyan products in China (Daily Nation, 2001). China's investment in Kenya's energy sector has enabled the country to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, contributing to Kenya's efforts to combat climate change. In 2000, China donated \$160,000 to implement a pilot solar energy program in rural Kenya to alleviate power shortage (Xinhua, 2000b). China has played a crucial role in improving Kenya's telecommunications infrastructure and in enhancing access to information and connectivity. In 2001, Kenya's state-owned telecommunications company, Telkom Kenya Ltd., launched a prepaid calling card system in East Africa. The equipment required to make this happen was offered by China's Huawei Technologies Company Ltd. The equipment allows for premium services, virtual private network services, universal private telecommunication, free phone calls, and prepaid card calling. Kenya noted that the technology would benefit customers and the public by creating value for shareholders, better and more convenient cost usage management, and greater flexibility (Xinhua, 2001a).

Kenya has encountered a developing Chinese presence in its service and manufacturing industries. Since 2000, Chinese companies in Kenya have exported and produced numerous products, including solar panels, ostrich farming, bicycle building, mushroom growing, and wheat and maize processing. As of 2000, nine Chinese firms had established businesses in Kenya; between 2001 and 2002, there were eighteen new businesses registered, and in 2003 there were eleven new businesses. The investment rate has also varied. The Chinese Huangpai Grain Processing Limited spent US\$924,000 in capital costs in 2000, while the Chinese supermarket chain Horizon Ivato Supermarket Limited made US\$11,154,000 in capital costs in 2003 (Ombaba et.al., 2012). Between 2001 and 2002, seventeen Chinese investments were founded in Kenya, and in 2003, there were eleven new companies started. The Chinese wholly owned the companies. Eighty-two percent of the companies are in the service sub-sector, while the rest are in manufacturing. The company's capital investments were foreign, averaging 1.3 million US dollars per company, and most were invested in the service industry (Chege, 2008). Chinese investments in Kenya display significant positive factors. According to a World Bank report, on average, Chinese businesses employ three hundred and sixty locals, which is higher than other foreign-invested companies in Kenya. Additionally, China offered substantial aid and low-interest loans to fund the maintenance of the Moi International Sports Center, the expansion of Eldoret Hospital, and the construction of the Gambogi-Serem highway. (Farooq et al., 2018, p. 408) The positive effects are also witnessed within government and infrastructure projects. Previously, government construction projects within Kenya were characterized by inefficiency, which took too much time due to procrastination, corruption, and shoddy work. Several Kenyans were impressed by how quickly the Chinese worked and how quickly they finished tasks, including building and road construction. Therefore, compared to government projects, Chinese personnel demonstrated that their projects could be completed cheaply and quickly (Njuguna, 2010).

**Table 1**

*Chinese Direct Investments in Kenya between 1995 and 2003*

Year	Company Name	Activity	Capital Cost Kshs (in millions)
1995	Nanjing Agricultural University, People's Republic of China	Egerton University Horticulture Department	15
1997	Kenya News Agency (KNA)	Modern news equipment	2
1998	China Sichuan International Co-operation Limited	Rehabilitation of the Kenyatta National Hospital	400
	China Roads and Bridges Company	Reconstruction of Mombasa Road	2400



Year	Company Name	Activity	Capital Cost Kshs (in millions)
	Chinese consortium	Revival of the Kenya Farmers' Association	1200
	China Road Construction Company	Malindi-Garsen Road	473.7
2000	Sun Yu Enterprises, Ltd.	Petrol and diesel extraction from plastic waste	3.41
	Victory River Co., Ltd.	Export and import of goods	30
	Tisco Kenya Ltd.	Bicycle plant	50
	Crown Sea Enterprises, Ltd.	Shoe production	60
	Chinese Huangaoi Grain Processing	Processing rice oil, wheat, and maize	60.04
	Kenya Fulu Industrial Ltd.	Solar panels and televisions	15
	Hgy International Co., Ltd.	Export and import of Chinese goods	16
	Neo Smart suppliers Co. Ltd	Fabrication of PU shoes	16
	Penguin Grain and Oil Processing Machinery	Selling and importing milling machinery	15
2001	Youngstar International Ltd.	Fabrication of mosquito nets	8.2
	East Hegenoy Trade Co.	Export and import of goods	14
	Peng and Huo Medical Co.	Chinese clinic	1.26
	Dong Fang Dev. Ltd	Export and import of goods	11.5
	Double Leopard enterprises	Manufacturing motorcycles	55.4
	China Victory King Stone Material Co.	Making ballast	68.5
	Nantong Yuanxt Co., Ltd.	Export and import business	16
	Thai Star Restaurant, Ltd.	Chinese restaurant	4
	Chang Sheng International, Ltd.	Exporting and growing mushrooms	16
2002	Tabasa Food Company	Making sausages	3
	China Flying Dragon (K) Ltd.	Chinese furniture	11.5
	Newland Industries, Ltd.	Creating candles from wax	46
	Famonar Ltd	Manufacturing cigarettes	14
	Chinese Center for the Promotion of Trade,	Trade and investment promotion	140
	Famous Pharmaceuticals	Intravenous fluids	60
	Laibao (K) import and export Dev. Ltd.	Spare parts of the VCO and radio assembly	5.4
	An-Ning Holding, Ltd.	Distribution and production of textiles	16
2003	Super Beauty Parlor Ltd	Beauty parlor	10
	China Farm Products	Processing and importation of farm products	10
	Tianchi Health Products	Multi-Level marketing of food production	10
	Henan Company (K) Ltd	Exporting coffee	10
	Changhong Electronics (E.A) Ltd	Production and assembly of electronic goods	80



Year	Company Name	Activity	Capital Cost Kshs (in millions)
	For Your Chinese Restaurant	Restaurant	11
	Baus Optical Co., Ltd.	Optical lens manufacturing	26.8
	Phoenipaper Ltd	Production of Paper Products	4
	The china San Yuan (Kenya) Ltd.	Processing farm products	10
	China Agricultural Technology Co.	Imports	10
	Horizon Ivato Supermarket, Ltd.	Supermarket	725

**Source:** Authors' compilation from various Kenyan Newspapers.

## China's Foreign Aid to Kenya

The term "foreign aid" refers to several assistance one nation provides to another through donations. Governmental and non-governmental organizations comprise the donors and recipients. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provides the definition of foreign aid that is widely accepted. As per their guidelines, foreign aid also refers to foreign assistance, encompassing financial flows, technical assistance, and commodities aimed at promoting economic development and welfare. Moreover, foreign aid can be provided in the form of grants or subsidized loans (Radalet, 2006, p.4). China's foreign aid practices differ from those of Western countries. According to Jiang, China's aid is characterized by the principles of "equality and mutual benefit, no strings attached, non-interference in internal affairs, and promotion of self-reliance in aid recipient countries" (Jiang, 2016 p. 81-108). It is important to consider some caveats when analyzing the use of Chinese aid. One of these caveats is the limited clarity surrounding the rationale behind China's use of aid. The availability of the information is somewhat questionable, and it is not clear whether China is deliberately withholding this information from the public, making interpretation difficult. However, Ombaba et al. They emphasized the importance of China's assistance in developing political and economic ties between Kenya and China (Ombaba et al., 2012 p. 533).

Until the mid-1990s, some Chinese developmental assistance was effective in supporting African liberation movements. In the late 1990s, China turned its attention to debt reduction, investment promotion, and human resource development. China's assistance to Kenya primarily focused on specific projects, as reported by multiple news sources and scholarly literature. China has provided Kenya with various assistance and aid projects throughout diplomatic relations. These entities constitute an integral component of a comprehensive package agreement alongside other collaborative ventures involving Kenya. (McCormick et al., 2007). The nature of China's developmental assistance to Kenya exhibits notable distinctions compared to the aid provided by Western donors. There exists a distinction in the terms and conditions that are imposed, as well as in the concept of tying. China's approach to internal governance issues, democracy, and human rights in Kenya differs from that of Western countries (Tull, 2006).<sup>6</sup> China ties its assistance to purchasing materials from China and using Chinese organizations. Regarding technical training and scholarships, relevant ministries in Kenya make decisions. China does not contribute to donor coordination undertakings but instead functions independently (Kamau, et. al. 2009, p. 1586-1612). Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan stated that Chinese aid to Kenya has no strings attached. The foreign minister was in Kenya for a three-day visit. He further stated that Chinese assistance to Kenya was founded on the country's requirements. Mr.

<sup>6</sup>According to Tull (2006), by giving aid without conditions, China has offered an appealing substitute to conditional aid from western countries' aid. China has acquired valuable diplomatic will to protect its global interests.

Tang commented at the Kenyan Foreign Affairs Ministry, where Minister Dr. Bonaya Godana received this gift. Mr. Tang and Dr. Godana signed a memorandum of understanding to bring about new development between Kenya and China. Mr. Tang's visit aimed to improve investment and trade (East African Standard, 1999, p. 4 ). The inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) from China to Kenya can be influenced by a range of factors, such as macroeconomic and macro-political conditions, as well as the quality of local institutions and the business environment in Kenya and the surrounding region. The interrelationship between trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) among Chinese enterprises in Kenya can generate favorable spillover effects in the country. These effects can be observed through the attraction of investments in infrastructure and related services and through the transfer of intangible assets such as managerial expertise and technological advancements that often accompany FDI (Broadman, 2006, p. 292). Additionally, higher FDI diversification has increasingly occurred in numerous investment fields. Investments from Chinese individuals have been in telecommunications, power plants, construction, transport, tourism, and retail ventures. Globally, the availability of foreign companies often significantly influences a host country's participation in global trade. This is because increased import and export are frequently linked to FDI. A crucial possible by-product of China-Kenya public relations is that Kenyan companies might become exposed to the exchange of technological advances or improved skills (Broadman, 2006, p. 324).

The relationship between China and Kenya was viewed as mutual, with Kenya serving as the market for Chinese manufactured products and as a source of raw materials for Chinese manufacturing. However, Kenya received increased unconditional foreign aid from China. Research has indicated that even though very limited bureaucracies accompany Chinese aid, such aid is often accompanied by certain conditions based on China's national interests, for instance, access to markets, development of export-free zones, and others (Callaghy, 1995, p. 51). Notably, the bilateral agreements between the two countries facilitated their continued cooperation in various programs and trade enhancement. China's investments in Kenya were and continue to be in infrastructural developments. A 2001 bilateral agreement on the promotion and protection of investment was signed between the two countries, which enhanced the legal framework for Chinese investments in Kenya. Kenya's economy was liberalized in the late 1990s and early 2000s, leading to a huge flow of Chinese products into the Kenyan market (Githaiga, 2021).

China offered nonmonetary and monetary assistance to Kenya. Development assistance from China supports investments in tariff exemptions, human relief, technical and academic training, plant and equipment, and infrastructure. The projects mainly involved the construction of a malaria center, drugs, and medicine for fighting malaria, the renovation of an international sports center, and water and road construction projects. In 1993, the Chinese government offered Kenya general commodity aid of 59 million shillings to close the budget deficit. The Kenyan government stated that the commodities would be shipped from China and sold within the country in an open market to raise extra funds for the state. The Commodity aid brought the sum of Kenya's grants to 396 million shillings from China. The Finance Minister, Mr. Musalia Mudavadi, stated that Kenya appreciated the interest-free loans and grants the Chinese government offered. The minister mentioned that Chinese aid had set up a sports complex in Kasarani, which allowed Kenya to host the 4<sup>th</sup> All-Africa games (AAG). The Chinese help also empowered Kenyans to train in agriculture and fishing. The minister also added that Kenya pursued policies that would inspire domestic savings and export promotion to guarantee sustainable development. Mr. Mudavadi stated that the Kenyan government backed the discussions between the Chinese and the Ministry of Health on developing a joint venture for producing drugs (Nduati, 1993). In 1993, Kenya received aid totaling 247 million shillings to help upgrade the Eldoret and Uasin Gishu Memorial Hospital, general commodity aid, and purchase food and drugs. (Daily Nation, 1993,



p. 12). In 1994, Kenya received a development loan totaling 350 million shillings (Daily Nation, 1994, p. 2). In 2002, China offered Kenya loans totaling 800 million shillings for constructing the Kipsigak Shamkhokho road and buying gai (East African Standard, 2002, p. 3). The Chinese government offered Kenya an interest-free loan of 262 million shillings and two grants of 42 million and 75 million shillings in 1998. This loan was used to finance construction of the Kima-Emusutswi road in Western Kenya. The 42 million grant was used to supplement road construction, and 75 million was used to rehabilitate the gymnasium and replace the scoreboard and other minor repairs at the Moi International Sports Center, Kasarani. Kenya received several loans and grants from China to help in various development projects within the country (Daily Nation, 1998, p. 12).

In 1996, China partnered with the Kenyan government to finance a 986 million shilling glass factory in Kenya. The Chinese Ambassador, Mr. Chen Pingchu, stated that China would offer 870 million shillings for the glass project (Onditi, 1996). The funds were part of the 1 Kenya and China's 104.4 million subsidized loan agreements. Pingchu stated that the project would integrate private sector investments from both nations. The entire capital for the glass sheet factory project was USD 17 million; however, the Chinese investment was USD 15 million. Mr. Pingchu also added that the project would help in transferring technology from China to Kenya, which was the foundation of good relations. In the relationship between China and Kenya, mixed loans were not less popular than concessional loans with interest rates (Brautigam, 2011, p. 175). However, in 2002, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji announced that China would offer Kenya a 500 million shillings interest-free loan to construct the Kipsigak-Serem-Shamakhokho Road. The Prime minister also said that his government would offer Kenya 3 million dollars to purchase grain. The Prime Minister disclosed the information while he was touring Parliament Buildings with the National Assembly Speaker, Mr. Francis Ole Kaparo. Although most loans boast zero interest rates, Kenya will still have to pay them back in full in the future. These future financial relations reinforce the relationship between the two countries since Kenya will not be pressured to pay higher amounts due to interest (East African Standard, 2002). According to Kipngetich, (2008), foreign direct investment from China has become vital, as illustrated by two major factors. One factor is that the weakening of Kenya's keenness to attract direct foreign direct investment has been taken over by Chinese FDI inflows, constituting a crucial proportion for Kenya. The second factor is that the Chinese adoption of novel policies to Kenya with closer financial ties has grown Chinese enterprise presence in Kenya. Chinese FDI inflows have been vital because they go along with technological transfer using innovation and managerial skills; therefore, Kenya benefits from Chinese FDI. The Chinese have diversified their FDI and can invest in telecommunication and power plants, construction, transport, tourism, and retail services. These investments lead to employment creation for Kenyans (Kipngetich, 2008). Generally, economic diplomacy between Kenya and China has been featured in cooperation and benefits. China has offered substantial backing for Kenya's economic growth, whereas Kenya has offered a friendly environment for Chinese trade and investment. As Kenya and China continue to strengthen their economic relations, their economic diplomacy may become a vital factor in their bilateral relations.

**Table 2**

*Chinese Direct Investments in Kenya between 1995 and 2003*

Year	Aid type	Project	Amount Ksh. (in millions)
1993	Relief	Somali refugees in Kenya	22
	Loan	Upgrading of the Eldoret and Uasin Gishu Memorial Hospital.	482
	Grant	General Commodity Aid.	59

Year	Aid type	Project	Amount Ksh. (in millions)
	Grant	Drugs and Food.	28
1994	Loan	Development Loan.	350
	Grant	Commodity Grant	59
	Grant	Laboratory equipment at Egerton University	17.2
	Grant	Egerton University Funding	10
1996	Grant	Commodity grant	104.4
	Loan	Glass factory	870
1998	Loan	Construction of the Kima-Emusutswi Road	262
2001	Grant	Solar power to 20 schools in Baringo	13
	Grant	Construction of the Kima-Emusutswi Road	42
	Grant	Rehabilitate the gymnasium and replace the scoreboard and other minor repairs at the Moi International Sports Center, Kasarani.	75
2002	Loan	Kipsigak Shamkhokho Road.	500
	Grant	Purchasing grain.	219
2003	Loan	Gambogi Serem Road.	3100
	Loan	Kasarani Sports Ground Maintenance.	39
	Grant	Various Training Courses in China.	300
	Grant	Tractors Purchase.	66

**Source:** Authors' compilation from various Kenyan Newspapers.

According to this data, most of the financial assistance to Kenya has been directed toward development and infrastructure projects. In particular, projects such as road construction and hospital renovation were financed through large-scale loan agreements. Various grants were also provided for sectors such as education, agriculture, and energy. The construction of roads, railways, and power plants has facilitated Kenya's development goals and improved connectivity within the region. The improved infrastructure led to increased economic activity by reducing transportation costs and business time. This development has facilitated local industries' flourishing due to better access to markets and resources and, hence, overall economic growth.

## Conclusion

Although relations between the People's Republic of China and Kenya, established in 1963, were in trouble for a while, they began to show themselves, with bilateral relations restored in 1978. Economic ties between the two countries progressed positively, especially until the 1990s. An examination of the study period, 1993-2003, shows that China has prioritized economic ties and diplomacy with Kenya. Economic acceleration occurred between 1993 and 2003. These past ten years have taken steps toward strengthening bilateral ties. The development of diplomatic relations with economic relations has led to increased contact between China and Kenya. The two countries have created both economic gain and an essential opportunity for the two nations to get to know each other. With the foundation laid during the period under study, the subsequent years post-2003 saw relations between the two countries significantly deepen in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, anchored on mutual economic interests and strategic cooperation. The China-Kenya relations are characterized by a shared commitment to cooperation, development, and friendship that extends beyond

bilateral relations to incorporate broader regional and global dynamics (KBC- May 15, 2024). Like other African countries, Kenya has created a robust marketplace for China. China, which supports Kenya's development and economy, has succeeded in strengthening its position in Kenya in the coming years.

China is now Kenya's leading trading partner. The trade volume between the two countries has increased over the years. China is the largest bilateral lender to Kenya and a major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). While China exports various goods to Kenya, Kenya also imports other goods. China's investments in Kenya have been directed toward infrastructure projects. For example, major projects such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which Kenya joined in 2017, facilitated the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) that connected the Coastal Port City of Mombasa to Naivasha, with the final destination projected to be Malaba in Western Kenya. This major infrastructure project was financed and built by China and has helped modernize Kenya's infrastructure and improve its transportation network. Some China-Kenya collaborations have promoted technology transfer. China's presence in Kenya's telecommunications and construction sectors has enabled knowledge sharing in technology and expertise. Major infrastructure projects have employed thousands of people and increased economic activity. Trade expansion and investments from China have also increased Kenya's growth potential (Merics- 18, 2022).

China has made significant inroads into developing countries, particularly in Africa and Kenya. Both countries have made significant contributions to each other's economies through the exchange of goods and services and by aligning policies to support these efforts. The trade liberalization policy adopted by both nations has been a key factor in facilitating this. Furthermore, the modernization and specialization of products have also supported this venture. Kenya has benefited greatly from the investment made by China, which has supported its economic growth through loans and grants as well as foreign direct investments. This has had a positive impact on the employment of locals and the efficiency of project completion.

China has also shown generosity and unconditional support to Kenya, reciprocated in the positive media language displayed in Kenyan newspapers regarding the relationship between the two countries. The Look East Policy, which has become popular among many developing countries, is based on China's policy of non-interference with other countries' domestic affairs. Kenya has been a reliable partner in the infrastructure projects carried out as a basis for China's Belt and Road Initiative project, and the economic relations between the two countries have allowed them to get to know each other better. Overall, the economic relations between China and Kenya have been a significant beginning and structuring for the new era of partnership. However, it is worth noting that this economic relationship has its lipide, with debates emerging on Kenya's indebtedness to China, which has elicited the debt-trap conversation with concerns raised on Kenya's debt sustainability and the opaqueness of terms and conditions, including the collaterals attached. Moreover, the environmental impact of China's projects in Kenya has raised concerns with calls for transparency and environmental consciousness. Despite these concerns, the future outlook for the two countries' economic ties remains positive. Kenya is strategically located and its economy is vibrant, making it an attractive destination for any international actor, particularly China, in its geopolitical quest. With the upgrading of their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership and the two countries' national interests, their economic partnership is likely to deepen further.







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