

# Establishing a «China-Africa Scholars Union»: Suggestions & Recommendations

## Introduction

The recent decades' relationship and cooperation between China and African countries have grown in leaps and bounds. As Africa is growing and playing a more important role in the world's global economy and geopolitics, there is a need for Africa's strategic partners like China to speed up the study of the continent and deepen the understanding of its people. Meanwhile, China's economy has grown tremendously in the past decades to become the world's second-largest economy after the United States of America and one of the most important fund and technical knowledge provider for Africa's development projects. So, it is for the common interest of China and African countries to deepen the knowledge of each other through Research, Education and Culture.

## Why is it so important to Establish a «China-Africa Scholars Union»?

Scholars are the frontline soldiers when it comes to the cooperation through Research, Education and Culture. So, it is for Chinese and African scholars a sole duty to brainstorm new patterns of cooperation, and so paves new ways for an in-depth study and understanding of China and Africa. Among the most urgent issues that requires Chinese and African scholars to work together is the increasingly biased image of China-Africa Relationship as well as the misunderstandings and prejudices that have been noticed in within. More precisely, “*the influence of western ideologies*”, the “*Chinese-Western duality view of the world*” and the need for “*African scholars to de-westernized their appraisal of China*”. By joining hands and working together, Chinese and African scholars will be given the opportunities to tackle these basic issues alongside with other tuff challenges that undermine the China-Africa Relationship.

## How Should such a «China-Africa Scholars Union» Operates?

It should operate at multiple layers, among others at an individual layer, at the institutional layer and most importantly at the governmental layer.

### a) Individual layer

It's all about a shift in attitude and posture that should be taking place in every scholar of the Union. A careful selection of scholars at the first step is key important. In fact, pro-western scholars no matter how, will always tend to hold negative rhetoric or depictions of the China-Africa image, therefore the necessity to select accordingly. However, objective critical mind should be an important criterion at an individual level of each scholar of the union, so that we can have an objective approach to tackle the China-Africa Problems. Moreover, a real “de-westernization” of the Chinese and African scholars' minds need to be worked out branded by the rebirth of the cultural identity and self-cognition, only then the African and Chinese scholars will embrace the world with a perspective that better serves the interest of China and Africa.

### b) Institutional Layer

It is true that African and Chinese Universities have been signing and implementing MoU, Confucius Institutes have been expanding over the continent, and more and more Chinese Universities have been setting up Centers for African Studies. China-Africa Think-Thanks Forums have been held, Museums, Cultural Centers and other institutions have been created to deepen the mutual understanding between China and Africa. Without underestimating these previous achievements, we will highly recommend the creation of “China-Africa Joint Research Centers” in both China and African Countries. Here we mean specialized institutions that will be devoted on specific questions with priority first hands data and a certain autonomy and budget of their own. We acknowledge that certain efforts have already been done in this way with the creation of institutions such as the China-Africa Research Center of Beijing, but a lot still remains to be done in term of the *efficient management and projects' contents* as well as *joint research team* of these institutions.

### c) Governmental Layer

At the governmental layer, more soft policies should be enacted to encourage African scholars' visits and research in China and vice-versa, more financial supports for Joint Research Projects as well as specialized scholarships and training programs should be provided to support scholars of both sides to work together. But most importantly they should be real followed up policies for these research programs or scholarships to make sure the target is reached and that the results benefit the country. Chinese and African governments through traditional platform such as FOCAC, should set up proper policies and frameworks for funding, sponsorship, and scholarship for “China-Africa Joint Research Projects”.

## Conclusion

As Education, Research and Culture are fuels for a sustainable partnership, there is an urgent need for a better cooperation among Chinese and African scholars. This should be done at an individual, institutional and governmental layers and so set up a strong foundation for research. We stick on the view that any consistent approach of Africa should to take into account the ways African people see themselves and write their history in this multicultural world and vice-versa for Chinese people. On the other hand, it is important for African and Chinese scholarship to “de-westernized” and improve the overall image of China and Africa Cooperation, therefore the very necessity to establish a «China-Africa Scholars Union».

**Author:** TALING TENE RODRIGUE (大灵·德内·罗德里格), PhD. from Cameroon is a Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, Vice-Director of the Center for Francophone Studies, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University. Email: [rodriguetailing@outlook.com](mailto:rodriguetailing@outlook.com)