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THE AFRICA POLICIES OF THE EU AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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article
abstract

EUROPE AND CHINA BOTH HAVE STRONG STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN AFRICA. HOWEVER, IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT, THE ACTIONS OF ONE CAN OFTEN BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHER, WHICH CAN OFTEN LEAD TO A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON AFRICA ITSELF. BOTH THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA HAVE ISSUED A POLICY ON AFRICA. THESE DOCUMENTS OUTLINE HOW EACH ACTOR INTENDS TO UNDERTAKE ITS ACTIONS IN AFRICA. THE POLICIES OUTLINE EACH ACTOR'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN AFRICA, AS WELL AS THE ROLE IT INTENDS TO PLAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION. THE POLICIES DIFFER

WIDELY, MOST NOTABLY IN TERMS OF HOW TO DEAL WITH STATES THAT HAVE POOR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORDS OR A HISTORY OF MISUSING FUNDS INTENDED FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. YET THE TWO POLICIES SHARE SOME SIMILARITIES, SUCH AS THEIR COMMITMENT TO AFRICA DEVELOPMENT. THIS PAPER EXAMINES THE CALL FOR TRILATERAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU, CHINA AND AFRICA AND LOOKS AT HOW SUCH A DIALOGUE WOULD OPERATE, WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST AND WHETHER IT COULD REPLACE THE EU'S AND CHINA'S CURRENT POLICIES ON AFRICA.

EUROPEAN UNION, CHINA, AFRICA, TRI-LATERAL COOPERATION AND DIALOGUE, CHINA AFRICA POLICY, EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR AFRICA

keywords

INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the 21st century Africa has return as a foreign policy focus for a number of states including the United States, Russia, India, Japan and a number of Persian Gulf states. However as Africa's two largest trading partners the European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of

China¹ are main external actors on the continent. Both the EU and China have each issued policies on Africa in recent years; the “European Union Strategy for Africa 2005”² and “China’s African Policy 2006,”³ respectively, and each actor has individually held major summits with African nations, such as the Africa-EU Summit in Lisbon 2007 and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit 2006. This evidence clearly proves that Africa, a continent often ignored or undervalued throughout history by both the Occident and the Orient, is emerging as a respected actor on the global stage. Currently, both the EU and China have major economic and political interests in Africa. Often these interests clash, thus creating competitors of the two global powerhouses. Irrespective of this, both the EU and China have declared that their main intention in Africa is to be a beneficial actor in African development. To this end, cooperation between China and the EU on African development would be a positive progression. In February 2007, Javier Solana, the EU’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, issued an article in China Daily in which he stated:

“Africa is an important focus for the EU’s comprehensive strategic partnership with China. The EU and China are both committed to helping deliver peace, stability, development, prosperity and good governance in Africa. I look forward to working ever more closely with my Chinese colleagues in helping to address these important challenges, in partnership with Africa.”⁴

At the 10th China-EU Summit, the two actors issued the following joint statement:

“Leaders welcome more practical cooperation by the two sides through respective existing cooperation mechanisms with Africa, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the EU-Africa Summit, so as to contribute to Africa’s peace stability and sustainable development on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.”⁵

It seems that the EU and China are intent on combining their efforts to achieve development in Africa. From an African perspective, neither cooperation nor competition between China and the EU is necessarily a

good development. Cooperation could lead to the next Berlin Conference;⁶ competition could regress developments in Africa, creating Cold War-like conditions, whereby different foreign actors support despots and proxy wars. As the African proverb says, “When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. When elephants make love it also gets trampled.”⁷ To benefit from cooperation between China and the EU while keeping in line with the EU’s “European Consensus on Development,” Africa needs to become a more significant stakeholder in the process. To this end, the EU has initiated a trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China.⁸ “The improvement of cooperation in Africa is essentially important because it is part of setting up a credible cornerstone for the EU-China strategic partnership in global affairs.”⁹ This paper will look at the context of EU-Africa relations and the context of Sino-African relations, and it will explain why China’s growing involvement in Africa is shifting the focus of EU-China relations. It will examine whether the European and Chinese approaches to involvement in Africa converge or diverge. It will also explore the extent of the dialogue between the EU and China and the implications for their wider “global” policies toward Africa. Are there prospects for expanding such dialogue?

EU-AFRICA RELATIONS

Although many members of the European Union – including the UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Italy – have a long colonial history with African nations, the EU’s relationship with Africa is relatively new, and it focuses on three areas: trade, aid and security. Historically, EU-Africa relations have been a focus of each of the previous incarnations of the European Union, dating back to the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which granted special treatment to the French and Belgian colonies from Africa through association status. This special dispensation later became known as *Etats africains et malgache associés*. A similar status was granted to former colonies of the UK after they joined the European Community in 1973. These two agreements were later incorporated into the Lomé Convention, signed in 1975, which extended the special treatment afforded to the former British, French and Belgian colonies to all 48 states of Sub-Saharan Africa. As Martin Holland highlighted, the Lomé Convention was traditionally the

1 Referred to as China through this text.

2 EU Strategy 2005.

3 China Africa Policy 2006.

4 Solana 2007.

5 EC 2007.

6 The conference of Berlin in 1885 divided the African continent between European powers, leading to an institutionalization of the Scramble for Africa. (Editor’s note – JvDB)

7 Berger, Wissenbach 2007.

8 European Communities 2008.

9 Berger, Wissenbach 2007: 2

major development framework: the rationale was largely historical rather than rational.”¹⁰ For this reason, the Lomé VI Convention was replaced in 2000 with the Cotonou Agreement, which came into force in 2003. Professor Daniel Bach of Comparative Political Studies and Sociology, University of Bordeaux outlines that the Cotonou Agreement was a fundamental reshaping of EU-Africa relations:

“Cotonou purports to provide the roadmap towards (...) inter-hemispheric ‘partnership,’ based on subscription to common political norms, trade reciprocity and the conclusion of EPAs between the common EU and six regional groupings formed by ACP states, four of which are in sub-Saharan Africa.”¹¹

Since its inception, the Cotonou Agreement has shaped trade between the EU and Africa. “In 2010, the overall trade in goods (...) between the EU and the ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) was valued at EUR133 billion. This was a rise of 20% compared with 2009.”¹² The European Union does have an overall trade deficit with ACP countries. “The African countries accounted for over 90% of the total EU-27 trade with ACP countries.”¹³ The EU has a trade deficit with Africa in agricultural goods, textiles and energy products. It has a surplus in trade in machinery, chemicals and transport equipment. In terms of trade, however, two major difficulties in EU-Africa relations prevail: the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). “The ability of the EU to promote ‘sustainable development’ in Africa has arguably been constrained by domestic pressures within the EU itself (...) most graphically with the EU’s systems of subsidies and the Common Agricultural policy.”¹⁴ “The EU is a major player in global agricultural trade as the biggest importer and second largest exporter of foodstuffs.”¹⁵ However, this system is heavily subsidised under the CAP. Farmers in the EU are guaranteed prices for their products, which are higher than the global food prices, and restrictions on foreign imports of competing products from outside the bloc are in place. Export subsidies, also a feature of CAP, allow the dumping of surplus EU products at bargain prices in African countries. In 2002, Oxfam highlighted the case of Mozambique, which Oxfam describes as “one of the world’s most efficient

producers”¹⁶ of sugar. The EU heavily subsidises its sugar sector, resulting in Europe – one of the world’s highest-cost sugar producers – being the world’s second-largest sugar exporter. The surpluses of sugar produced by the CAP system in the EU results in a 17% fall in sugar prices, meaning that Mozambique sugar products are unable to compete in third markets against cheap, subsidised EU sugar.¹⁷ This, in turn, prevents Mozambique’s sugar sector from growing and slows the nation’s overall development. This story is replicated across different African states in different agricultural sectors, and as agriculture constitutes the biggest sector in most African economies, this slows their overall development. EPAs require the markets of partner nations to be opened up to EU products and all barriers to trade to be removed. As Ian Taylor Professor in International Relations and African Politics St Andrew University explains:

“This [EPA] necessarily introduces high levels of unfair competition into African economies as European producers are granted access to overseas markets while benefiting immensely from price competitive exports due to high levels of direct income support from the EU to enhance EU international competitiveness.”¹⁸

The result is that Africa’s infant industries are unable to develop or are forced out of the market because they can’t compete; they are no longer protected by trade barriers or government subsidies, which the EU industries that are competing in African markets enjoy. Throughout their historical development trade relations between the EU and Africa have created an environment where EU products gain access to African markets while benefitting from protection within their domestic markets through unfair trade barriers. Taylor highlights that this creates “negative images of the EU as a collective unit that gives with one hand but takes back with the other.”¹⁹ In terms of aid, the EU is a major actor. “In 2009, the EU (...) was once again the largest provider of development aid in the world with more than half of global Official Development Assistance – €48.2 billion.”²⁰ Most of this aid was distributed directly by member states, but “€10 billion were disbursed by the European Commission, and 39% of those €10 billion were dedicated to Africa.”²¹ Despite being the world’s largest provider of development aid, some doubt surrounds the effectiveness of such aid. According to Pontus Hansson,

10 Holland 2002: 51.

11 Bach 2008: 282.

12 Xenellis 2011: 1.

13 Xenellis 2011: 1.

14 Taylor 2010: 104.

15 EC 2011.

16 Oxfam Briefing 2002: 3.

17 Oxfam Briefing 2002: 3.

18 Taylor 2010: 106.

19 Taylor 2010: 111.

20 AUC/EC 2011a.

21 AUC/EC 2011a.

Department of economics Lund University: “European Union aid does not appear to affect economic growth in recipient countries.”²² Questions have also been raised regarding the misuse of EU funding, with the suggestion that some of the aid has been “handed over without public scrutiny to banks and private equity companies and funnelled into tax havens.”²³

Despite failed actions in a number of African conflicts, most notably Rwanda, the EU has started to play a more effective role in world security. As Rikard Bengtsson, Deputy Director of the Centre for European Studies Lund University highlighted, “institutional developments in the EU in the last ten years have increased the potential for effective EU foreign-policy making.”²⁴ This has led the EU to become more involved in global security, particular regarding conflict prevention in Africa. The Africa-EU Partnership on Peace and Security guides the EU’s involvement in African conflicts. This partnership has three major goals:

- to reach common positions and implement common approaches on challenges to peace and security in Africa, Europe and the world;
- to achieve the effective functioning of the African Peace and Security Architecture to address peace and security challenges in Africa;
- to financially enable the African Union (AU) and regional mechanisms to plan and conduct Peace Support Operations;²⁵
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The EU has played a role with some success in a number of conflicts in Africa – most notably in Darfur, where it contributed funding to the AU’s peacekeeping mission; in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where EU forces were sent for a peacekeeping mission; and in the Central African Republic (CAR), where the EU provided support to the peacekeeping operation led by the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). Despite such successes, some critics believe that the EU’s security policy in Africa is based on rhetoric and is overshadowed by the pursuit of the EU member states’ own security and economic interests²⁶ – that is, that the EU only involves itself in African conflicts when it suits the EU’s security interests.

In terms of trade, aid and security, EU-Africa relations can, at best, be described as complex. Often the EU’s efforts to help African development are ineffective and can, in fact, have a negative effect on the development of African states. However, as Taylor affirms, “The EU is (...) a most important

22 Hansson 2007: 210.

23 Hencke 2010.

24 Bengtsson 2010: 44.

25 AUC/EC 2011b.

26 Pirozzi 2009.

factor in Africa’s international relations and will remain so for at least the short- to medium-term.”²⁷

SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS

Africa has experienced firsthand the impact of China’s economic, social and political development and its impact on the wider world. Sino-African relations date back to antiquity. Famous examples of ancient bilateral relations include the “cultural exchange between China and Egypt as early as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – C.E. 220)”²⁸ and the voyages of Zheng He in the early 15th century, who undertook a number of trade missions to Africa. However, China did not engage with Africa in a systematic way until the 1950s. In a search for allies, and in a bid to break its diplomatic isolation, the fledgling PRC found a cause commune in anticolonialism with African countries fighting for their independence. The colonial question, which concerned the African and Asian peoples that convened in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955, accelerated China’s involvement with Africa. The Bandung Conference laid the ideological and philosophical foundation for South-South cooperation;²⁹ A spirit and logic that Chinese and Africans still invoke in their common dealings today. In double opposition to the United States and the USSR, China tried to claim leadership of the nonaligned movement and supported liberation movements throughout the African continent more or less successfully.³⁰ The result of that support is illustrated by China’s demise in Angola, where the PRC lent its support, first of all to UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola), and later to the FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola). China’s engagement on the continent also had technical and economic dimensions, albeit limited or symbolic. The PRC shipped large numbers of technicians and doctors to Africa since the foundation of the PRC. The improvement to the lives of the people of the poorest countries in the world as a direct result of this aid was palpable.³¹ One of those symbols is the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA). This 1,870 km railway line, a turnkey project wholly financed and built by the PRC in the early 1970s, provided Zambia with a railway line that bypassed Rhodesia and South Africa. Although the benefits China attained from Sino-African relations did not match the volume of resources pumped into individual projects,³² it did not prevent

27 Taylor 2010: 98.

28 Li Anshan 2005: 60.

29 Choucri 1969: 1-17.

30 Van Ness 1971.

31 Snow 1988: 159.

32 Yu 1966: 461-8.

China from increasing its involvement in Africa, a strategy that would yield political gains, including the establishment of diplomatic relations with African states. Most independent African countries had officially recognised the PRC as a nation by the 1960s. This diplomatic harvest culminated in the PRC's admission to the United Nations and to the UN Security Council as a permanent member in lieu of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in no small measure thanks to the leverage of African states.³³ China's involvement in Africa stagnated in the 1980s. Preoccupied with the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and absorbed by the modernisation process undertaken by Deng Xiaoping, China's attention was diverted from Africa. When Gerald Segal wrote that Africa: "will remain the least important area for Chinese foreign policy"³⁴ in 1992, he seemed to have good grounds to believe so. However, the PRC had not abandoned Africa; instead, Sino-African relations had entered a phase that Li Anshan – Professor of the School of International Studies at Peking University – later classified as a "transitional period" (1978-1994).³⁵ China returned to Africa – if indeed it had ever left – with force in the early 1990s.



CONSIDERING THAT AFRICAN OIL HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE DOMAIN OF A FEW WESTERN COMPANIES, CHINA'S SIGNIFICANT PENETRATION OF THE FIELD IN SUCH A SHORT TIME SPAN IS PHENOMENAL

Two factors brought about a change in China's attitude toward African states: First was the relative diplomatic isolation that ensued after the Tiananmen Square massacre. Unlike Western countries, most African governments displayed a certain level of understanding toward the Chinese Communist Party's handling of the Tiananmen Square massacre.³⁶ A convergence of views as to the relativity or non-universality of the liberal democratic model revived the spirit of Bandung between China and Africa. The second factor is related to economic concerns. China's phenomenal economic growth resulted in an increasing need for energy and raw materials to fuel the economy, and a subsequent need for markets in which to sell the products of that economy. China looked to Africa to fulfil these needs. The Roman emperor Tiberius described governing Rome as "holding a wolf by

33 Taylor 2006: 40.

34 Segal 1992: 126.

35 Li Anshan 2006.

36 Taylor 2006: 62.

the ears."³⁷ Tiberius meant that, however terrifying it is to clutch on to the wolf's ears, you hold on, because the real terror lies in letting it go. When the CCP introduced reforms in the late 1970s, creating a market economy in a socialist state, it grabbed the proverbial wolf by the ears. The abandonment of the centrally planned market structure led to a loss of control over Chinese society, and, by deviating from the Marxist-Leninist system, the party lost some of its legitimacy. To remain in power, the CCP began to promote nationalism among the Chinese population, intertwining the party's identity with China's overall national identity. The CCP was also expected to deliver sustainable economic growth, resulting in an increase in the general standard of living of the Chinese people, and to return China to its former "great power" status. The Chinese government introduced a number of reforms that have resulted in substantial growth of the Chinese economy, with an average GDP growth rate of 10.06% over the ten years leading up to 2007.³⁸

However, the pace of this growth has burdened China with a number of practical problems: Enhanced prosperity has led to an increase in the use of motor vehicles. The number of motorways has doubled since the beginning of the reform era. The use of rail and air transport has also increased.³⁹ This has escalated the demand for oil, resulting in China's emergence as a net importer of oil. China is now the second largest net importer of crude oil.⁴⁰ The colossal growth in the manufacturing sector has created a demand for other natural resources: cotton for the textile industry, cobalt and copper for the IT and telecommunication sectors, iron ore for the steel and shipbuilding industries, and so on. As a result, China is no longer able to meet many of its demands from internal sources. China has also undergone a massive urbanisation as a consequence of its impressive growth rate. This has not only increased demand for building materials but has also increased demand for land, as urbanisation removes scarce arable land from the agricultural sector. In the late 1990s, the Chinese government launched its "Go-Global Strategy," which encouraged Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and privately owned companies (POEs) to expand into foreign markets, allowing these companies to strengthen and develop into multinational companies (MNCs), with Africa becoming the destination for a number of these companies. China is now Africa's largest trading partner. From 2000 to 2012, the proportion of China-Africa trade volume as a part of China's total foreign trade volume increased from 2.23% to 5.13%.⁴¹ Of this the proportion

37 "auribus teneo lupum"

38 World Bank Beijing Office 2007.

39 Skeer, Yanjia Wang 2007: 1.

40 Energy Information Administration 2014:1.

41 State Council 2014.

consisting of China's imports from Africa was up from 2.47% to 6.23%, and that of China's exports to Africa from 2.02% to 4.16%.⁴² During the same timeframe, the proportion of China-Africa trade volume as a part of Africa's total foreign trade volume increased from 3.82% to 16.13%: the proportion contributed by Africa's exports to China up from 3.76% to 18.07%, and that by Africa's imports from China from 3.88% to 14.11%.⁴³ However this trading relationship goes beyond the export of African raw materials and the import of cheap Chinese consumer goods. Chinese economic engagement in Africa is all encompassing with Chinese economic activity being found at all levels of African economies. From 2009 to 2012, China's FDI into Africa increased from US\$1.44 billion to US\$2.52 billion. China's accumulative FDI in Africa during this period increased from US\$9.33 billion to US\$21.23 billion, 2.3 times the 2009 figure.⁴⁴ China is now Africa's sixth largest FDI representing 4% of all FDI.⁴⁵ Over 2000 Chinese enterprises (both state and private) are now active Africa in almost every sector of the economy.⁴⁶

China's participation in the oil industry in Africa has gained much notoriety in the media and features prominently in the "Report on China's Policy and its Effects on Africa," created by the European Parliament's Committee on Development.⁴⁷ China's energy security problem lies in its growing oil deficit. Between 1993 and 2002, China's oil consumption surged from 2.9 million barrels per day (b/d) to 5.4 million b/d, while oil production only grew from 2.9 million b/d to 3.4 million b/d over the same period.⁴⁸ Therefore, China has become more reliant on foreign imported oil. It is estimated that 19.62% of Chinese total oil imports originate from just three Africa countries Angola, Congo-Brazzaville and Sudan.⁴⁹ Since 9/11, African oil has become relatively safer to access than that of its Middle Eastern counterparts. China is now a major customer of the oil industries of Nigeria, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, to name but a few. A number of Chinese state-owned oil companies are active in Africa, including China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), China National Petrochemical Corporation (SINOPEC) and PetroChina. In terms of the oil trade, the PRC is most active in Angola, Sudan and Congo-Brazzaville.⁵⁰ In absolute terms,

42 State Council 2014.

43 State Council 2014.

44 State Council 2014.

45 UNCTAD 2013: 43.

46 State Council 2014.

47 Gomes 2008.

48 British Petroleum 2003: 6-9.

49 Energy Information Administration 2014: 12.

50 Hanson, Martin 2006: 47.

however, Chinese companies' presence in the African oil sector is modest compared to major players such as Shell, Exxon, Chevron, Total and Agip.⁵¹ "The commercial value of the oil investments in Africa of China's NOCs [national oil companies] is just 8% of the combined commercial value of the IOCs [international oil companies] investments in African oil and 3% of all companies invested in African oil."⁵² But considering that African oil has traditionally been the domain of a few Western companies, China's significant penetration of the field in such a short time span is phenomenal. African governments and the traditional major oil companies now perceive China to be a credible player.

The growing volume of trade between China and Africa tends to eclipse aid. However, aid also features prominently in the "Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa," created by the European Parliament's Committee on Development.⁵³ It is, therefore, worth recalling some of China's actions in the field of aid and cooperation. Although we know very little about the quality and impact of Chinese projects and assistance activities in Africa⁵⁴ a few projects have been made public. At the 2006 China-Africa Forum, the PRC launched the Beijing Action Plan (BAP). The BAP involves cooperation in agriculture, investment, trade, finance and infrastructure. More specifically, the BAP has been designed to improve Africa's agricultural sector and prevention, as well as treatment, of epidemic diseases.⁵⁵ By the end of 2005, China had helped to establish more than 720 projects for Africa, dispatched more than 15,000 medical personnel and treated some 170 million patients in Africa.⁵⁶ Further commitments included the building of 10 hospitals and 30 antimalarial clinics. China provided approximately €27.19 million for the purchase of antimalarial drugs. In the agricultural sector, China sent 100 senior Chinese agricultural experts to Africa, where it set up 10 agricultural demonstration sites. Under the "Chinese Young Volunteers Serving Africa Program," 300 youths were sent to Africa on field missions to support education, agriculture, sports and health-related programs.⁵⁷ Underpinning Chinese cooperation is Beijing's professed belief that African states should "find their own path," a doctrine that echoes the "African solutions to African problems" motto. An important part of China's aid program is "trade and aid." This is a combination of aid projects, as well

51 Downs 2007: 43.

52 Downs 2007: 44.

53 Gomes 2008.

54 Tjønneland et al. 2006: 9.

55 Bates et al. 2007: 9.

56 Xinhua News Agency 2006.

57 Forum on China Cooperation 2006.

as state and private investments in local African economics – for example, a €6.5 billion project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which included investments in infrastructure projects and cobalt mining.⁵⁸ These projects mainly involve “dual-use infrastructure, such as roads, railways and ports, all of which are needed to extract the minerals but are further utilized by the host country to increase its trade.”⁵⁹ The aim of this combination of trade and aid is to generate sustainable domestic-led growth by stimulating domestic demand and ending the reliance on traditional aid.

Undisputedly, China’s policies in relation to Africa will bring opportunities and challenges for African development. “The failure to consider the direct and indirect political implications of aid and investment strategies has led to international concern.”⁶⁰ Western donors, African governments and civil society have raised alarms about what this will portend for issues such as poverty reduction, democracy, good governance, peace and security, sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, agriculture, and human rights. “There is a risk that China’s assistance and cooperation with Africa will leave governments, institutions and organisations [that are trying to deal with such problems] by the wayside.”⁶¹ This means that China will have a greater influence on the development of Africa, which many fear will allow governments in Africa who have been accused of neglecting their own people to continue doing so. From a Chinese perspective, many of these expressed concerns mask the vested interests of the EU and other Western governments in Africa, making the Chinese suspicious of any efforts made by these governments to integrate China into the international donor community.

However, Chinese investment in the oil industry and China’s aid programs “need to be seen in relation to China’s economic engagement with the African continent as a whole and in comparison to the size of the aid programs of the West.”⁶² They also need to be observed in light of China’s overall African policy and in comparison to the West’s policies – in particular, to the European Union’s “Strategy for Africa.”

58 Whewell 2008.

59 Feingold et al. 2007.

60 Berger, Wissenbach 2007: 14.

61 Davies 2007: 96.

62 Davies 2007: 96.

CHINESE AND EUROPEAN POLICIES ON AFRICA: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

China’s former president, Hu Jintao, made the following statement at a meeting of the UN Security Council in 2005:

“We should pay closer attention to African concerns and ...This meeting should renew our commitments to Africa (...) listen more attentively to the concerns and positions of African countries and take into full account their fervent desires for peace, development and cooperation.”⁶³

Within a year of this statement, both the EU and the PRC had published papers, the European Union’s “Strategy for Africa 2005” and “China’s African Policy 2006,” respectively, which outlined their adjusted role in African development and the aims and goals of their involvement on the African continent. This section of the paper will look at the European Union’s “Strategy for Africa 2005” and “China’s African Policy 2006,” and discuss their similarities and differences. It will then look at how the EU’s proposed trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China intends to build upon the common ground in the EU’s and China’s policies on Africa and, in doing so, bridge the gaps that exist.

China’s African Policy 2006 – “At the beginning of 2006, the Chinese government published ‘China’s African Policy,’ which represents a milestone in Sino-African relations, symbolising a period of comprehensive development of relations between China and Africa.”⁶⁴ China’s African policy defines the politico-economic bilateral goals and relations of China and Africa. The document presents China’s goal of creating “a new type of strategic partnership with Africa”⁶⁵ based on the long-standing principles of Chinese foreign policy – for example, the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” and the “Five Principles for Engagement with African and Arab Countries” laid out by Zhou Enlai in 1963–1964. This new type of strategic partnership will establish and develop a Sino-African cooperation built on political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation and reciprocal cultural cooperation. The document pledges China’s support for African development, particularly in agriculture. It raises the prospect of the cancellation of debt owed to China by some African countries, as well as strengthening the argument for international debt relief and “economic

63 China.org 2006.

64 Xu Weizhong 2008: 67.

65 Gov.cn 2006.

assistance (...) with no political strings attached”⁶⁶ for Africa. The document also commits China to increasing science and technology, cultural, and environmental cooperation, and it offers increased human resources training, health sector assistance and education support, such as Chinese scholarships for African students. In economic terms, the policy seeks to boost Sino-African trade, and through the potential negotiation of free trade agreements, it proposes that China increases its duty-free treatment for some African exports. The policy calls for the provision of export credits for Chinese companies looking to invest in Africa, with infrastructure and utilities contracting high on the list of priorities. In the political sphere, the document looks to increase political interaction through international forums, staff exchanges and training programs, and a high level of reciprocal leadership visits. The document outlines officially that bilateral relations between China and African states can only take place if those states agree to adhere to the PRC’s “one-China principle.”

European Union Strategy for Africa 2005 – The “European Union Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa’s development” was adopted by the European Commission in 2005. The EU shifted its priorities to include development in Africa at the top of its international agenda and saw the creation of this strategy as a window of opportunity to push Africa toward sustainable development. The document points out that, as a long-standing partner and a close neighbour of Africa, the EU is well placed to assume a leading role in this process. Together, Africa and the EU should reinforce their efforts to tackle the scourge of HIV/AIDS, poverty, environmental degradation, violent conflicts and the lack of basic social services and essential investment. The basis of the strategy is to build an integrated, comprehensive and long-term structure for the EU’s relations with Africa. The strategy outlines a framework for action to support Africa’s efforts to achieve its UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The “European Union Strategy for Africa” promotes peace, security and good governance, encourages economic growth, trade and interconnection, and supports social cohesion and environmental sustainability, all of which are prerequisites for achieving the MDGs in Africa. The EU’s Africa strategy aims to provide a coordinated and coherent European response to the challenges Africa faces, and, therefore, it constitutes the first practical example of the implementation of the European Consensus. The strategy proposes a tactical partnership for security and development between the EU and Africa in order to facilitate quicker implementation of improved development aid. The document also aims to make aid effectiveness and donor coordination central priorities. On this basis, the EU should pursue a three-pronged strategy:

66 Gov.cn 2006.

1. Strengthened EU support in priority areas

Priority areas of EU support include:

- Reinforcement and respect for human rights and democracy;
- Delivery of adequate health care;
- Expansion of access to water supply and sanitation;
- Sustainability and promotion of cultural diversity;
- Transformation of migration into a positive force in the development process;
- Offsetting the effects of climate change;

2. Increased EU financing for Africa

In line with the strategy, the EU’s commitment should result in an additional €23 billion per year for Africa by 2015. This will be attained through the implementation of the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) multiannual financial framework for the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific), and the European Neighbourhood Policy. A new financial instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which will replace other instruments currently in operation in neighbouring countries, should support the implementation of new action plans.

3. A more effective EU approach

In order to improve the quality of its aid, the EU should adopt an action plan on aid effectiveness and apply it to Sub-Saharan Africa as a priority. The plan was presented in 2006 and was built on the following initiatives:

- the establishment of national roadmaps for coordination
- the adoption of joint programming documents
- the development of common procedures

Similarities – despite differences in principles, the EU and China have much in common when it comes to the groundwork. Both China and the EU have implemented projects in areas such as education, training, culture, health, agricultural productivity, and police and judicial reforms, as well as the environment (water, anti-desertification, and so on). As outlined by the Council of The European Union: “Both are interested in combating terrorism and organised crime. Both sides expressed the need to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.”⁶⁷ In terms of security cooperation the EU and China have a particular joint interest in combating piracy off the coast of Africa. This led to China-EU anti-piracy joint drill held March 19, 2014 as well outlining plans for future cooperation in future escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Guinea.⁶⁸ The EU and China could certainly try to cooperate in these fields by implementing common or complementary projects. Another area of common interest is economic development. Cooperation in this area will be unquestionably difficult to accomplish,

67 Council of The European Union 2007.

68 PLA Daily 2014.

as the EU and China often target the same common interests in Africa. However, there might be some space for collaboration in the development of infrastructure, where the challenge lies in ensuring competition benefits Africa's peoples and leads to sustainable economic growth.

Differences – Although the policies differ in their use of rhetoric, the core differences between the Chinese and European policies are their views on the role of the sovereign state. China's policy places the sovereign state at the centre of its exchange with Africa. Sino-African relations concentrate mainly on bilateral relations, treating each country as an equal. China pursues a policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations. In terms of human rights and peace and security matters, which both China's and the EU's policies seek to promote, China believes the protection of human rights and the development of good governance needs to be developed within the framework of the sovereign state, and that intervention should only take place under the guidance of the United Nations (UN) or at the invitation of the state in question. In terms of development assistance, China places the sovereign state at the centre of its dialogue with African nations. Chinese aid projects allocate funding based on the requests made by African nations and, unlike the EU projects, which call for the reform of government structures, China donates aid without any political strings attached.

The EU sees an individual African state as one of many actors in African development. Under the EU's policy, regional organisations, such as the African Union, are important partners and coordinators of development cooperation in Africa. The EU demonstrates a strong interest in human rights protection and governance reforms based on the African agenda through micro-, maestro- and macro-levels of African society. The EU does not rule out interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. This means that the EU is prepared to engage at all stages of a conflict's cycle, from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction. It also means that, in terms of development assistance, the EU seems to pay more attention to ensuring more predictable and structured aid flows, often making this a condition of aid programs.

THE EU, AFRICA AND CHINA: TOWARDS TRI LATERAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

Both China and Africa are fully aware that their commercial and political interests may not be incompatible. Berger and Wissenbach highlighted this, stating: "Europeans and Chinese have in common the

problem of combining their commercial and political interests with short- and long-term developmental needs of the African continent."⁶⁹ Trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China is designed to remedy this problem.

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CHINA HAS IMMERSSED ITSELF IN SINO-AFRICAN RELATIONS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 1990s. CHINA'S TRADE WITH AND INVESTMENT IN AFRICA HAVE RISEN SHARPLY SINCE 2000.

On October 27, 2008, the European Commission published a communication entitled "The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation." This document notes that a shift has taken place in geopolitics in recent years, creating the opportunity for African development. The foundation of a network of institutions, which includes such associations as the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism, has redoubled efforts to assert Africa's position on the global stage and has worked to find "African solutions to African problems." This network is becoming increasingly active regarding international issues such as "food security, energy and climate change, and changing economic environments."⁷⁰ Coupled with a coinciding revival of international interest in the African continent for various political and economic reasons in recent years, this network "provides a genuine and welcome opportunity for Africa's development and its fight against poverty."⁷¹ "The EU and China are respectively the first and the third commercial partners of, and investors in, Africa."⁷² The EU is the single largest provider of aid to Africa. In 2007, the EU signed an accord with Africa, agreeing to help eradicate poverty, to reach Africa's MDGs, and to promote "security, human rights, democratic governance, sustainable development, regional integration and integration into the world economy."⁷³ China has immersed itself in Sino-African relations since the beginning of the 1990s. China's trade with and investment in Africa have risen sharply since 2000. As a result of the deepening relationship, China has offered many development programs and poverty reduction schemes to African nations. China's commitment to Africa was cemented with the 2006 white paper, which outlined China's

69 Berger, Wissenbach 2007: 9.

70 European Communities 2008: 3.

71 European Communities 2008: 3.

72 European Communities 2008: 3.

73 European Communities 2008: 3.

promotion of peace, stability and growth in Africa, and the use of a policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations.

“The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation” demonstrates that China and the EU share many of the same objectives regarding Africa. Indeed, China and the EU acknowledged the obvious similarities in their African policies at the tenth China-EU Summit held in Beijing on November 28, 2007, and agreed to continue and deepen joint dialogue on cooperation in Africa. The joint Africa-EU Strategy invites contributions from external third nations regarding the development of the strategy and relations. As such, this creates an “explicit opportunity to strategically link and mutually strengthen the EU’s partnerships with both Africa and China.”⁷⁴

Can more be done to strengthen EU-China-African trilateral dialogue on cooperation and development? How can this be achieved without obstructing bilateral relations between each of the three parties, yet maximizing benefits for all three parties?

The European Commission has published some best-practice guidelines for trilateral cooperation:

- Parties should take a “pragmatic and progressive” approach to the relationship, which focuses on tangible projects and sectors. This result-oriented strategy will help to formulate common objectives of all the parties involved.
- China, the EU and Africa should each take a shared approach to the relationship. Cooperation should be conducted with all parties present, and agreement must be met at each stage with interested African partners.
- Aid should be effective and should avoid duplication. This requires a high-level of coordination between the EU and China, and the development of strong partnerships between EU and Chinese aid providers. These measures will facilitate the “exchange of experience”⁷⁵ and will increase dialogue on FDI and aid.

These measures are expected to reap the greatest rewards in the development of peace and security on the African continent, the growth of a vast network of new infrastructure in Africa, and the sustainable development and management of the environment, agriculture, food supply and natural resources. In order to achieve these rewards, an ubiquitous “culture of exchange and consultation” between China, the EU and Africa needs to be fostered to inform one another how each side carries out development

⁷⁴ European Communities 2008: 4.

⁷⁵ European Communities 2008: 6.

policies. Only in this way can best practices be discovered and cultivated. “The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China aims to become a platform for such exchanges and has reached out to the OECD-Development Assistance Committee and traditional donors (...) The EU should support such endeavours.”⁷⁶ Trilateral think tanks should be established to support policy makers, to continue dialogue and to identify and research opportunities on the horizon. Dialogue needs to be strengthened and improved at continental, regional and country levels within Africa. EU-China bilateral dialogues on Africa should also be conducted on a regular basis and should involve the relevant African party, where possible.

It is clear that trilateral relations can be progressive and beneficial to all parties involved, as dialogue allows problems to be discussed and addressed multilaterally. The three parties can jointly develop common interests and discuss crucial global challenges while pursuing their bilateral relations.

THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF TRILATERAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

A number of problems and challenges are associated with trilateral cooperation and dialogue between the EU, Africa and China. Bernt Berger, Senior Research Fellow and the Head of Asia Program at the Institute for Security and Development Policy and Uwe Wissenbach, Coordinator for Africa-China Relations in the European Commission have identified some of these issues:

“Challenges in the field of development cooperation between China, Africa and the EU, such as finding a common approach and concepts which do not only serve narrow and short-term national interests; harmonise implementation strategies, developing common intent; define practical initiatives, while not harming respective interests and maintaining a competitive economic environment; organise the so-called trilateral-cooperation or even a strategic forum between the EU, China and Africa/African regional organisations including consultation, dialogue and common initiatives.”⁷⁷

There are, however, a number of wider problems with trilateral dialogue and cooperation. The first problem is that “The EU, Africa and China:

⁷⁶ European Communities 2008: 7.

⁷⁷ Berger, Wissenbach 2007: 2.

Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation” does not take into account the lack of a coordinated African position on the EU, China or a trilateral cooperation. A coordinated African position will be required if Africa is to set the agenda, as outlined by the document. It would be unrealistic to expect Africa to develop and sustain a coherent approach solely to meet the needs of this trilateral cooperation. It would be more beneficial if a number of common frameworks could be developed regarding the involvement of non-African actors’ involvement in trade and investment in Africa. Fantu Cheru, Research Director of the Nordic Africa Institute, outlined a number of common regional frameworks to help organize Sino-African trade relations:

“Common regional framework on industrialization: directing Chinese expansion into areas of national/sub-regional interest; technology and management skills transfer, etc. Common framework on natural resource exploration: and social and environmental responsibilities. Common framework on trade as opposed to bilateral EPAs that can only help fragment the continent and weaken the capacity of individual African countries to negotiate with China from a strong platform.”⁷⁸

These frameworks could easily be applied to other players in Africa and could become a basis for Africa’s interaction with the global market.

The second main problem is that there is no reference to the fact that each of the 28 member states of the EU⁷⁹ has its own agenda and policies in Africa, as well as its own bilateral relations with China and the 54 African states. The EU member states with strong commercial and geopolitical interests in Africa – such as France, Portugal and the UK – will often have former state-owned or state-backed multinationals acting as major players in Africa, particularly in the transportation sector, the telecommunications infrastructure and the energy market. Although these companies are no longer under the direct control of their respective governments, often they are still major providers of employment and tax revenues and feed spin-off industries in their countries of origin. Therefore, the success of these companies is frequently of strategic importance to the government of the country where they were founded, and this is often reflected in the African policy of individual member states. Other member states, such as Italy and Spain, who have weaker commercial and geopolitical interests in Africa than for instance the UK or France, do have a vested interest in the economic development of Africa because it would help reduce illegal immigration

78 Cheru 2007: 12.

79 Total EU membership at the time of writing.

from the continent. Other EU states with no colonial history in Africa – for example, Finland, Ireland, and Poland – have more progressive humanitarian development strategies in Africa.

The varying policies of the EU member states often overlap or are counterproductive. Clashes of interests are regular occurrences. Different decision-making processes created at the EU level, such as the “EU policies toward Africa,” have gone some way in creating a common position on how the EU sees its role in promoting development in countries that have not benefited from the global market and find themselves on the periphery of the international community. Similarly, EU member states often vary in their approaches, policies and interests in China, frequently differing from the overall spirit of the EU-China policy. Any trilateral cooperation will have to take into account that, in particular sectors of strategic interest to member states, those member states may act outside the spirit held within a common EU position. This would be circumvented by introducing these states as subactors in the dialogue pertinent to particular sectors.

The third major problem with the trilateral dialogue and cooperation is an overestimation in the power that the Chinese government has over some of the Chinese actors in Africa. One prevalent perception, particularly in Western media, states that China’s involvement in Africa is part of a coherent strategic plan for China to regain its place as a world power. However, China “is not a monolithic political structure with all power emanating from Beijing.”⁸⁰ A number of constraints limit the control the Chinese government has over different actors in the economy. This is not to say that Chinese businesses are as free of government control as their Western counterparts, but they have developed a level of independence from state control, restricting how much the Chinese government can direct them. As Wenran Jiang, Director of the Canada-China Energy and Environment Forum has pointed out:

“Constraints and limitations primarily come from the current stage in China’s own domestic development, which is characterized by (...) severe exploitation of labour forces (...) widespread corruption in both political and economic areas, the worsening of environmental and ecological conditions, (...) These market driven developments will not just stay within Chinese borders; they will move to the rest of the world as China expands into Africa and other parts of the globe.”⁸¹

The intensive competition in the Chinese marketplace between private companies, ministries, bureaucracies, SOEs and provincial governments

80 Breslin 2007: 61.

81 Jiang Wenran 2009: 61.

for state funding and investment opportunities has created an atmosphere where actors undercut and bend the rules of the game. This is due to the fact that, although China has grown in wealth in recent years, limits to funding and investment opportunities still exist in a country of 1.3 billion inhabitants, which can still be considered a part of the developing world. The large numbers of actors in the Chinese economy and foreign economic policies means a growing number of vested interests. Take, for example, the case of Guinea, where the Chinese government promised €3.6 billion in aid, comprised of direct aid and investment packages. Due to the global financial crisis, many Chinese investors can no longer afford to invest. The Chinese investors are acting in a very rational fashion by choosing not to invest during indecisive times in an area without a proven record of return. As Ibrahima Sory Diallo, a senior economist in Guinea's Ministry of Finance highlighted, "They [the Chinese] are not going to inject USD5 billion into an unstable country in an uncertain market climate."⁸² This case highlights the fact that nongovernmental Chinese actors have enough independence to undermine official foreign economic policies. The growing diverse nature of China's foreign economic policies means that Sino-African relations are much more complex than they might first appear. A trilateral dialogue that does not take this into consideration is doomed to become, at best, a talking shop.

"The improvement of cooperation in Africa is especially important because it is part of setting up a credible cornerstone for the EU-China Strategic Partnership in global affairs. If cooperation on Africa does not succeed, it may signal that cooperation on global challenges more generally will become more difficult, while positive cooperation may spill over to other policy fields. Thus cooperation on Africa will be seen as a litmus test for the EU and China as strategic global partners."⁸³

However, the core problem with this proposed trilateral cooperation between the EU, China and Africa is that each of the actors involved in the dialogue has a number of stakeholders with an array of interests that often conflict with each other – for example, the conflict of interests between EU member states and the EU as an institution. Identifying stakeholders who share common interests and finding a practical form of collaboration is the key to creating a successful trilateral cooperation. If cooperation can be created and maintained on a practical level, such as agriculture, it might spill over into areas that are seen as more difficult, such as the energy sector.

82 Polgreen 2009.

83 Berger, Wissenbach 2007: 2.

The implications of trilateral dialogue and cooperation between China, the EU and Africa will have different effects for each player, as well as other important global parties with interests in Africa, such as the United States, Brazil and India. The success of such practical cooperation could easily encompass other major actors in Africa, allowing them to play an influential and positive role in African development and preventing conflict over access to resources, for instance. If successful, Africa will develop more rapidly, conflict on the continent will abate, and Africa's share of global trade will increase, augmenting the overall size of global trade. This will have a positive effect on the wider world. However, if successful, it will strengthen the EU-China partnership, as well as giving greater influence to China and the EU in Africa without considering other international players. This could leave many other actors who desire influence in Africa, such as the US, Brazil and India, as mere bystanders in Africa's development.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Three possible scenarios could transpire for China-EU-Africa trilateral cooperation in Africa. First, the current status quo could continue. In this scenario, both China and the EU would continue to have overlapping and counterproductive policy, which would likely damage the Africa's development. Within this scenario, the EU's lack of internal coherence would continue to hamper the development of an affective EU-Africa policy. Large states such as the UK and France would continue to determine the overall direction of interaction between Africa and Europe. As the EU states compete against each other in Africa, a lack of a coherent policy would prevent the EU from become an effective counterweight to China's increasing influence on the continent. The result would be a dramatic reduction in the EU's overall influence in Africa.



IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT CHINA AND THE EU WOULD ADOPT AN OPENLY HOSTILE RELATIONSHIP IN AFRICA

A second possible scenario could be an increased level of competition between China and the EU. It is highly unlikely that China and the EU would adopt an openly hostile relationship in Africa, such as aggressively fighting for influence through proxy wars, as was the case between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. However, if China and the EU fail to cooperate in Africa, and the EU develops a coherent Africa

policy, competition between China and the EU would increase. In financial diplomacy and support in international bodies such as the IMF and the UN, African states would be able seek support from either China or the EU. Not only would this raise the cost of increasing both actors' involvement in Africa, it would also create a situation whereby different groups within African states would seek support from either China or the EU. This would make it difficult for both China and Africa to develop long-term plans, because the alliances of African states would shift with each new government. Increased levels of competition between China and the EU in Africa is unlikely to unfold, because the EU faces internal financial difficulties brought on by the euro sovereign debt crisis, which means it lacks the resources and focus to compete with China in the short term.

The final scenario is that China and the EU will cooperate more in their actions in Africa. It is unlikely that this scenario would transpire to the degree that is outlined by the "The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation." Moreover, it is unlikely that there would be extensive involvement of the Africa Union. However, given the extensive economic interdependence between China and the EU, some level of cooperation in Africa would be of benefit to both actors. Cooperation between China and the EU would most likely take the form of complementary development rather than direct cooperation. This would mean that, rather than direct coordination of actions while projects are being designed and implemented by both sides, each actor would simply build on each other's projects with complementary rather than counterproductive projects. However, this kind of cooperation would be limited to areas that would not be considered strategically important. Given the connections between the Chinese state and Chinese state-owned enterprises, it is difficult to see which areas would not be considered strategically important. Therefore the area of complementary cooperation would be limited.

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