

# Framing and Claiming: Contemporary Globalization and “Going Out” in China’s Rhetoric towards Latin America

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## Abstract

China’s increasing, and increasingly visible, engagement in Latin America has led to a variety of analyses, many based on either international relations notions of realism or international political economy precepts of trade. Rather than seeing China’s rhetoric on its relations with Latin America as fluff that conceals a harder reality, this article takes rhetoric seriously as a device of “framing and claiming”: a way in which political elites in China interpret the fast-changing developing world and China’s place in it. The article explores how political elites have understood the sources of China’s own domestic development and then projected those notions on to other parts of the developing world, through earlier “fractal” logics of development whereby each state repeats one model of development in its own way and a currently dominant “division of labour” logic that posits one integrated model of development whereby complementarity and comparative advantage hold sway. The article concludes with a comparison of China’s relations with Peru and Brazil, suggesting that China’s bilateral relations with Brazil indicate a newer, emerging rhetoric of global partnership based on equality.

**Keywords:** China and Latin America; rhetoric; development; fractal; division of labour; Brazil; Peru

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## Introduction: “Nothing Succeeds Like Success” – Alexandre Dumas

As much of the world economic system is now facing the sharpest double dip recession in three generations, China’s robust economic performance seems little short of a miracle. China has posted on average 10 per cent growth rates per annum over the last three decades, become the workshop of the world, presided over a substantial increase in material standard of living for the majority of its population, managed to weather the financial crises of 1998 and 2008, continued to expand its global trade, investment and “soft power,” and accomplished all this under the dominance of a one-party political system that has successfully resisted any significant movement towards open political pluralization. China’s

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continued growth is indeed so fundamentally transformative for the world economy (in terms of needing raw materials as well as fresh markets) that it seems to be – to the alarm of many – quite unprecedented. Undergirding much of the debate about China’s “rise” are a set of anxieties: whether in essence, China will turn out to be more-or-less like Europe or the United States, or whether it will be qualitatively different, with the capacity or desire to threaten established players, or to alter the rules of the game in fields as diverse as international business, the architecture of international aid and working models of development.<sup>1</sup>

Closely related is the question of how we define and understand the principles by which to understand China’s “rise” as it increasingly engages – commercially, diplomatically and culturally – with other parts of the global “South,” some of which have good reasons to feel left behind by the prescriptions and remedies for underdevelopment and poverty that have been promoted by the “North.” The conventional literatures to which we would normally turn – international relations and political economy – are surprisingly silent on this matter. The dominant international relations approach of realism axiomatically defines the field in terms of “interests,” particularly security interests that are often opaque but nevertheless “real,” while the principles of international political economy presumes measurable and divisible units of interest (such as in trade, currency, metric tonnage of agricultural or mineral commodities, widgets). However, many questions remain about how these interests are constructed and pursued. We still have little understanding of first, how China’s “interests” are conceived, demarcated, articulated and justified to multiple audiences, both domestically and internationally; second, how China’s current pursuit of its interests exhibits long-term continuities with or breaks from the past; and third, how similar or different these interests, and their pursuit, are from what one would expect of any rising power, given an international diplomatic and economic order in flux, in which the old hegemonies are increasingly questioned but have not as yet been replaced with anything lasting or convincing.

## Questions of Rhetoric

Consideration of China’s official and semi-official rhetoric is one way to observe its *own* ways of organizing reality, articulating principles and making sense of the wide range of relations that it now has with the rest of the world. At the same time a great deal of caution is in order. The analysis of official rhetoric is a tricky business: rhetoric is inconsistent, can and does opportunistically change, and is often a very poor guide to actual policy-making and action, particularly when policy is undergoing major changes. There is normally a gap between what states

1 For an explicit statement of this fear, see John Pomfret, “China invests heavily in Brazil, elsewhere in pursuit of political heft,” *The Washington Post*, 26 July 2010, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/25/AR2010072502979\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/25/AR2010072502979_pf.html), accessed 26 June 2011.

present themselves to be and what they actually do. Actions will often diverge from whichever principles are articulated through the rhetoric. China can certainly be criticized for a rhetoric that is not matched by action, but given the past century or more of the United States' repeated interventions in Latin America and elsewhere on behalf of repressive right-wing governments while continuing to trumpet the principle of democracy, it is obvious that China is hardly unique in this respect.

At the same time rhetoric is not merely fluff to discount before getting to the "harder" reality of China's intentions and actions. Official and semi-official rhetoric provides the framework within which policy and initiatives are developed, explained and legitimated both domestically and internationally, and is thus part of a complex of critical appeals between the state and significant audiences it wishes (variously) to attract, persuade, reassure, mobilize or consolidate support from. Even if the realities of policy implementation depart from stated ideals, the grounding rhetoric continues to matter to a range of different audiences, both domestic and international. Official rhetoric is also significant as the framing within which policy is articulated, what Chinese policy makers and elites accept as givens; less frequently it is a forum in which new policies and the concepts that legitimate them are floated. It serves as working shorthand for knowledge about the far-flung regions of the world China now engages for the Chinese population at large. And it presents as a set of legitimating claims about China's intentions towards other areas of the world. Thus the purpose of this article is to take seriously China's rhetoric as it "Goes South," and to consider this rhetoric as a simplifying device of "framing and claiming" – the principles by which China conceives of, understands and justifies its actions through a wide range of formal and informal relations with other countries, primarily Latin America, with some comparative reference to Africa.

Latin America and Africa are the two main regions in which China has increasingly engaged or re-engaged in the past ten years or so, and as such differ from an area such as South-East Asia, which is both geographically close to China and consists of many states with substantial minorities of ethnic Chinese. For both Africa and, increasingly, Latin America, China's seemingly sudden appearance (or, in the case of Africa, re-appearance) in the last decade has been startling in its scale and sheer visibility. Trade, particularly in imports of natural resources and agricultural products to China and exports of Chinese merchandise to Africa and Latin America, has grown exponentially. Lucrative deals have been signed with many Latin American and African governments. Major Chinese projects to create infrastructure – from Ecuadorian ports to Angolan highways – have broken ground and are transforming international commerce and communications. Chinese companies are increasingly visible players in natural resources acquisition, notably but not restricted to oil and mining. Chinese merchant activity in cities and towns seems also suddenly to be a phenomenon to be reckoned with. Reactions to this new, very visible Chinese presence have varied. While much of the discourse engaged by

Western commentators and policy makers is tinged with concern, doubt and alarm,<sup>2</sup> for most in Latin America and Africa, the more relevant issue has been how to understand and respond to these changes in comparison to other outside influences both past and present, to sort through how China's increasing presence affords both challenges and opportunities, and to respond in such a way as to maximize the opportunities while minimizing the challenges.

China insists that the trade that has resulted from its "going out" policy is based on equality and mutual benefit. And indeed the crude statistics suggest that at a very general level these claims are roughly accurate. Bilateral trade between China and Africa, and China and Latin America has increased roughly tenfold over the past ten years, often, but not always, to the advantage of Africa and Latin America. For example, in 2008, China ran a deficit of \$5.16 billion of \$106.8 billion in total trade with Africa.<sup>3</sup> While sources give somewhat different figures for China–Latin America trade, one of the most widely cited is a CRS Report for Congress that states that in 2002–04 China ran a significant trade deficit with Latin America against a backdrop of a 600 per cent increase in trade over the previous five years; in other years trade has been slightly in China's favour. In aggregate, Sino–Latin American trade is roughly balanced if one considers overall patterns of import and export.<sup>4</sup>

However, these numbers also mask imbalances by sector and in scale. With few exceptions, most of what Latin America and Africa produces for China are raw materials, while most of what China exports to these regions are manufactured goods, often at prices that are ruinously low for domestic industry. Not surprisingly, many Africans and Latin Americans are troubled by concerns over sectoral asymmetry in trade relations, as well as less tangible but nevertheless powerful perceptions of unevenness in influence, leverage and sheer scale. China is now the largest or second largest trading partner for many countries in Latin America and Africa, including (just to name a few of the more significant cases in Latin America) Brazil, Peru and Chile. But Brazilian, Peruvian and Chilean trade with China are but small drops in a much bigger ocean of China's overall trade with the outside world. In many African and Latin American countries China's influence is visible and dramatic, while in China the impact of these countries is much more diffused and muted. And in both Africa and Latin America there is great complexity of response to China's

2 Emma Mawdsley, "Fu Manchu vs Doctor Livingstone in the Dark Continent? Representing China, Africa, and the West in British broadsheet newspapers," *Human Geography*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (2008), pp. 509–29.

3 These figures on China–Africa trade are drawn from Hayley Hermann, "South-south relations: Sino-African engagement and cooperation," 21 July 2010, [www.focac.org/eng/zfgx/dfzct/718472.html](http://www.focac.org/eng/zfgx/dfzct/718472.html), accessed 7 April 2011.

4 Kerry Dumbaugh and Mark Sullivan, "China's growing interest in Latin America," *CRS Report for Congress*, 20 April 2005, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22119.pdf>, accessed 8 April 2011; Gonzalo Paz, "China–Latin America and Caribbean relations: a preliminary balance of the first years of the century," unpublished paper, pp. 8–10 of draft.

increasingly visible engagement, which has created constituencies for and against, winners and losers, and ambivalence from those who do not fall neatly into either camp.<sup>5</sup>

What is often overlooked, or taken as given, is how different actors in China understand, justify and make sense of its increasing engagement in these parts of the developing world. This volume offers three pieces that redress this imbalance. While Simon Shen usefully considers how popular (or at least blog active) netizens view other regions of the developing world and Yinghong Cheng charts the ways in which Cuba has become a kind of distorting mirror by which different constituencies in the Chinese intellectual elite understand and critique their own current developmental trajectory,<sup>6</sup> my focus is the rhetoric that is produced by China's official and semi-official sector, particularly government pronouncements and semi-official publications from government research units and academics. I argue that different strands of China's official rhetoric are both extraordinarily consistent over time and logically inconsistent at any given point, as new principles and rapidly expanding content are added to the older bedrock. What the Chinese government conceives of as its fundamental principles in international affairs – non-interference, absolute sovereignty, anti-hegemonism and a leading role in the developing world – is startlingly resistant to alteration. This dogged insistence on principled consistency in international affairs from the early 1950s to the present day stands in marked contrast to the enormous political and economic changes China itself has undergone in both principle and practice. In the past 15 years, notions of mutual benefit, “win-win” and “giving and getting” have come to overlay this older set of core principles, and most recently, in just the last two years, newer notions of “going beyond ‘win-win’” have begun to be articulated for the particular relationship with Brazil. It is to this mix of consistency and inconsistency that this article now turns.

### **Early Developmental Rhetorics: Inviolate Sovereignty and Fractal Replication**

What China conceives of as its bedrock principles of foreign policy are consistent, cohering over time, across regions and in the face of significant differences in particular bilateral relationships. Official rhetoric reflects this consistency. For Africa, Latin America and all other parts of the world, the foundation to which the People's Republic of China returns, time and again, is the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. Since the “Five Principles” are trotted out to the point of fetishization, it is worth reconsidering the circumstances in which they were originally developed. They were agreed between India and China in 1953–54 to ease their then significant bilateral tensions. As such they

5 See Julia C. Strauss and Martha Saavedra, “Introduction,” in China Quarterly Special Series, *China and Africa: Emerging Patterns of Globalization and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–11.

6 Simon Shen, “Exploring the neglected constraints on Chindia: analysing the online Chinese perception of India and its integration with Chinese policy,” *The China Quarterly*, forthcoming.

were geared to a strictly post-Westphalian set of notions of international states, as the two largest Asian states were then both emerging from a lengthy period of colonization (India) and self identified “semi-colonization” (China). The “Five Principles” reiterated the sanctity of territorial integrity and state sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. This mid-century conception of international statecraft presumed that states are rational, indivisible, unitary actors with absolute sovereignty over their own (claimed) territories, able to conduct formal relations with similarly rational, indivisible, unitary actors in an international system of states.

Virtually without exception, the official and semi-official statements about China’s relations with Latin America and/or Africa either begin or conclude with direct reference to the “Five Principles,” even when the substance of the announcement or policy position seemingly has little to do with questions of sovereignty. Current business and policy-making circles might not give the “Five Principles” quite the same attention as the newer buzzwords of common economic development, mutuality, “giving and getting” and non-conditionality. However, China’s long-standing insistence on non-interference is if anything now even more rigorously adhered to because of the government’s sensitivities about Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. Insofar as most of the countries that still recognize the Republic of China are in Central America and the Caribbean, that some of the smaller states in Africa like São Thomé and Príncipe play the aid-and-recognition card by switching diplomatic recognition back and forth, and that governments with democratic political systems and vigorous civil societies like Mexico might wish to host individuals the People’s Republic of China considers to be *personae non gratae*, like the Dalai Lama, this bedrock is ignored at peril.

In addition to its insistence on the “Five Principles,” the Chinese government has equally consistently staked out an additional set of claims that position China, at least implicitly, as fundamentally *different from* as well as often *better than* the West in its relations with the developing world. This is particularly reflected in the way in which it conceives of and dispenses aid and promotes investment. When China was in competition with the United States and Soviet Union in the 1960s, the government announced the “Eight Principles for Foreign Economic and Technical Aid” for how its assistance to other developing countries would be managed: equality and mutual benefit rather than alms; non-conditionality and strict respect for sovereignty rather than attachment of conditions; aid in the form of no-interest or low-interest loans with rescheduling of payments to prevent further indebtedness of recipient countries; and enabling recipient countries to become self reliant rather than dependent.<sup>7</sup> This model of aid was directly counter to what the Chinese considered the morally dubious,

7 The original articulation of the “Eight Principles” can be found in Zhou Enlai, “Premier Chou En-lai: revolutionary prospects in Africa are excellent!” reproduced in *Beijing Review*, Vol. 7, No. 14 (1964), [http://www.chinasecurity.us/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=409&Itemid=8](http://www.chinasecurity.us/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=409&Itemid=8), accessed 10 April 2011.



ineffective and/or hypocritical practices of Western aid, with its moralizing and conditionality.

Complementing, and now normally superseding, these bedrock principles are two fluctuating set of notions that undergird China's rhetoric on development, as well as an embryonic third that attempts to "go beyond" either. The first I call "fractal," the second "comparative advantage" and the third still inchoate notion "horizontal co-operation." Fractal and comparative advantage logics of development are very different from each other, but in a Chinese context they share two important traits. First, they both reflect how Chinese political elites have understood and articulated the sources of their political and developmental successes at different points in time. In the 1960s and 1970s these were the Maoist principles of heroic sacrifice and self reliance that were then identified as integral to the miraculous triumph of the Chinese Communist Party in establishing "New China" in 1949. In the 2000s, the developmental principles seen to be at the heart of China's success raising so many millions out of poverty are efficiency, pursuit of global comparative advantage, competition, the provision of social stability and hard work. In both cases the elites producing the rhetoric have universalized a set of understandings about what they understand to be the particular causes of their "success."

Second, surprisingly given China's almost complete repudiation of its own revolutionary era strategy of domestic development, elements of the "Eight Principles" have continued to resonate and inform the official rhetoric, allowing those producing it to claim an unbroken line of continuity with the past, from the present through Mao back to the Zheng He voyages of the 15th century. This continued attachment to older, fractal logics of development allows China to continue to claim that its path to development and power is both unique and progressing along a positive evolutionary trajectory as it participates in contemporary globalization on its own terms; domestically understood as untainted by colonialism, differentiated from and normatively better than the West.

This "fractal" mode of development is intimately wrapped up with the ways in which the Chinese Communist Party came to power after decades of civil war and foreign invasion. It dates from the 1950s–1970s, when China represented itself both as a positive model for revolution and part of a mutually intelligible developing world sharing in the same challenges of colonialism and underdevelopment. This in turn reflected a set of even older ideas that legitimated the revolutionary People's Republic of China: long-held Mencian notions of self-cultivation and the importance of models for emulation, allowing "New China" to claim to be separate and better, old and new, developed and non-Western, with an explicit mission to challenge the "rules" of the game as established by other Great Powers (as then represented by the United States and the Soviet Union). Notable here is the repeated emphasis on imagined *commonality* – with an attendant presumptive *replication* and repetition of analogous experiences (common suffering, underdevelopment, poverty and, when China was locked into competition with the Soviet Union, the necessity of indigenous

revolution that replicated the Chinese pattern of the countryside surrounding the city). In this imagination, development was very much the product of indigenous, often revolutionary, elites figuring out what worked for their own particular circumstances; China's role was best articulated through presenting a model for emulation by sending technical assistance.

These notions were particularly pronounced in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, when China's foreign policy and aid was explicitly cast in terms of imagined fraternity with African anti-colonial and developmental struggles, and China's support in overcoming these challenges, both morally and practically, through such highly visible and political infrastructural projects as the TAZARA railroad. But even in its much more attenuated set of relationships with Latin America, which revolved around PRC cheerleading for "stand[ing] in the forefront of struggle against United States imperialism,"<sup>8</sup> the export of the ideational and exhortatory model of the 1960s and 1970s was based on China's own particular revolutionary experience, and how the producers of the rhetoric understood the reasons for their successes. Thus for China's relations with Latin America, blinding practicality (providing moral support for progressives and leftists since there was little to no practical aid that could be given) merged neatly with the revolutionary elite's insistence on self reliance, on the grounds that each set of revolutionaries finds its own path to revolution in the light of its own circumstances. This suggested a fractal form of replication that projected revolutionary China's *own* experience of self reliance: cellular organization, overcoming objective circumstances by superior organization and application of human will, and retreat when the circumstances for making radical revolution were not right. If China's communist revolution only really began to get traction in its own countryside when the CCP became confident enough to disregard the inappropriate advice being doled out by the Soviet-dominated Comintern, then by extension, the same would be true elsewhere in the developing world.

There was of course also a good deal of hard-headed recognition of revolutionary China's limited resources and its weak position in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, China's influence in Latin America was virtually non-existent outside the handful of communist factions that backed it rather than the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> After initial excitement and rhetorical support for the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s, China's involvement in most of Latin America was limited by geographical distance, the dominance of the United States, and the choice of most local communist parties to support the Soviet Union. Although PRC foreign policy at this time is typically characterized as highly ideological, the Chinese leadership was entirely pragmatic in its realistically low prioritization of Latin America in its pursuit of leadership of the developing world. With the sole exception of Cuba, for whom China's revolutionary support quickly soured,

8 Chou Enlai, *Peking Review*, No. 26 (20 August 1958), p. 21.

9 William Ratliffe, "Communist China and Latin America, 1949–1972," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 10 (1972).



what activity did take place was almost always in the context of “people to people” rather than state to state, or even party to party, terms.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, when China was pursuing a highly public diplomacy with Africa that included high profile visits and high profile joint projects like the TAZARA railroad, China’s relations with Latin America consisted of little outside rhetoric. The rhetoric of commonality, analogous underdevelopment, suffering at the hands of colonialism and encouragement of self reliance that was so prominent in China’s relations with Africa served equally well in its much more limited – indeed almost non-existent – actual involvement in Latin America. The combination of the “Five Principles” and Mao-style revolutionary self reliance was broad enough to be invoked globally, to suit circumstances. Echoes would continue to linger under the vastly changed circumstances of the 2000s.

### **Rhetorics of Comparative Advantage, Efficiency and Division of Labour**

Official rhetoric on China’s relations with the developing world began to change in the 1980s. China’s calls for continued revolution and real support for revolutionary groups were unceremoniously dropped. Once the post-Deng leadership of the PRC was secure, domestic marketization and integration into the world economy enabled China’s growth rates to roar ahead. By the early 2000s, the flurry of official documents on China and Africa released for the Forum on China–Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) meetings clearly demonstrate that notions of economic complementarity and international division of labour began to be superimposed on the older fractal rhetoric of friendship based on common suffering, exploitation and understanding each other’s problems. In 2008, the market oriented and reform minded Premier Zhu Rongji could insist on the positive forces of globalization based on the pursuit of mutual advantage, complementarity and division of labour: “Africa, on the one hand, boasts talented and hardworking people, abundant in natural resources and great market and development potentials [sic]. China, on the other hand, has got considerable economic strength, a promising market and a wealth of commodities, managerial expertise and production technologies suitable for African countries.”<sup>11</sup> But even an aggressively reformist and market oriented leader such as Zhu Rongji, who had crowned his career in a lengthy battle to conclude China’s accession to the WTO, could not jettison the comforting old tropes of commonality in mutual suffering: “the joint

10 “The China policy paper,” released on 5 November 2008, which states that “During the 20 years or so after the founding of New China in 1949, China and Latin America and the Caribbean mainly conducted people-to-people exchanges,” <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t521025.htm>, accessed 1 October 2010.

11 Zhu Rongji, “Strengthen solidarity, enhance co-operation and pursue common development,” speech given at the closing ceremony of FOCAC, Beijing, 12 October 2002. <http://www.focac.org/eng/wjjh/t404118.htm>, accessed 18 June 2008.

struggle waged by the Chinese and African peoples shoulder to shoulder ... unconditionality, and standing together through thick and thin.”<sup>12</sup>

In marked contrast, the vast majority of China’s official and semi-official pronouncements on Latin America date from the mid to late 2000s, and are at least relatively relieved of much of the revolutionary-era rhetoric that now sounds so dated and incongruous in China–Africa relations. This is not to suggest that China’s official and semi-official rhetoric on Latin America is entirely devoid of earlier fractal modes. The older, comforting notions of China as a developing country are still there.<sup>13</sup> Commemorative occasions of any sort, such as the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the CASS Institute of Latin American Studies in July 2011, still engage explicitly martial and heroic supporting vocabularies even as they celebrate institutional differentiation and functional, specialized knowledge: “brought up by Mao Zedong, put under the personal care of Zhou Enlai and approved by the Party Central ... for the past 50 years ... the Institute’s pioneering work has experienced all kinds of hardships, been on the receiving end of history’s trials, and undergone several generations of industrious struggle.”<sup>14</sup> This language of hardship, industriousness and combat, and the legitimacy drawn from the personal leadership of the two key heroes so core to the foundation of the PRC itself, were standard from the early 1950s until the late 1970s. Recourse to this kind of fractal and revolutionary rhetoric is at present rare. The very newness of “going out” to Latin America affords China a remarkable opportunity to define itself and its actions without being unduly bogged down by the historical baggage of its rhetoric and actions in the Maoist past.

China’s official rhetoric on Latin America has produced three official documents of particular note that were released between the end of 2004 and the end of 2008: “Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing’s comments on the fruitful results of President Hu Jintao’s trip to Latin America” (24 November 2004), “Vice-Minister Zhou Wenzhong talks about Vice-President Zeng Qinghong’s visit to five Latin American and Caribbean countries” (5 February 2006), and a lengthy document released the day after the US presidential election of 2008, China’s long-awaited “Policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean” (5 November 2008), publicized as the most recent official policy paper on a region, complementing official policy papers on Europe (2003) and Africa (2006).<sup>15</sup>

The first two of these documents were direct follow-ups from high profile presidential and vice-presidential tours to Latin America: Hu Jintao’s trip in November 2004 included an APEC summit and state visits to Brazil,

12 *Ibid.*

13 See Yu Zhongwen, “China’s developing-country identity remains unchanged,” [www.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-08/13/c\\_13443881.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-08/13/c_13443881.htm), accessed 10 October 2010.

14 <http://ilas.cass.cn/cn/xwzx/content.asp?infoid=17092>, accessed 11 July 2011.

15 These documents are available in English, Chinese and Spanish on the PRC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. In order (Li Zhaoxing, Vice-Minister Zhou Wenzhong, and the “Policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean”), the versions I consulted are to be found at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t172349>, accessed 10 October 2010, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t183695.htm>, accessed 1 October 2010, and <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t521025.htm>, accessed 1 October 2010.

Argentina, Chile and Cuba; the vice-presidential tour only two months later covered Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, and Trinidad and Tobago, along with appearances at two multi-lateral fora (the Andean Community and the first China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Co-operation Forum). Apart from the obligatory stern warnings against “Taiwan independence” and reiteration that all relevant countries reaffirm adherence to the one-China policy, Li Zhaoxing’s comments on Hu Jintao’s tour are almost devoid of rhetoric, beyond a commitment to multilateralism and vague pronouncements on consolidating friendship, deepening political mutual trust and seeking common development. The primary goal of this early trip seems to have been to render China intelligible and non-threatening to an unfamiliar set of audiences.

Zeng Qinghong’s tour some two months later was conceived of as an immediate follow up. Zeng was accompanied by Zhou Wenzhong, then Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had previously served as the head of the desk that dealt with Latin America. Zhou’s comments, made en route back to China to a set of journalists, provide the first contours of a more focused rhetoric on China–Latin America relations. This particular statement, however, may well have been more for foreign, quite possibly North American, consumption than for a Chinese audience. Although Zhou Wenzhong was at this point still Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had either already been appointed incoming Ambassador to the United States or was soon to take up this appointment. The remarks are available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website in English and Spanish, but the Ministry has only released shorter and less rhetoric-heavy press releases in Chinese. The key ingredients of this speech reiterate that friendly co-operation involves “mutual beneficial, win-win result (sic) and common development ... [in order to] ... build a new international political and economic order and promote multilateralism. China’s development means opportunities, instead of threats ... equality and mutual respect... and [that] China never imposes its own will on others ... its support for other countries is always sincere, without any political conditions attached.”<sup>16</sup>

This summary also specifically incorporates the keywords and tropes of the earlier, fractally based past of suffering, underdevelopment and the uniqueness of China’s special path. Zhou mentions Zeng Qinghong’s statements during the trip that “from the historical and strategic perspectives that China and the five countries [Peru, Mexico, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica] have had the same historical experiences and today are working hard to promote development.” And the leaders of the Latin American countries “expressed admiration for ... China’s successful experience at adhering to its own road.” Also reiterated were the hoary “Eight Principles” ideals of equality and mutual benefit, sitting in somewhat uneasy juxtaposition to a new notion of “common development.”

16 “Vice-Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong talks about Vice-President Zeng Qinghong’s visit to the Five Latin American and Caribbean countries.”

“Common development” (*gongtong fazhan* 共同发展) is the hinge that links earlier notions of worldwide underdevelopment and quests to articulate a convincing official discourse on China and Latin America. The phrase is general enough to cover a large range of actual bilateral circumstances, and when necessary to refer to older, fractally based ideas of development and exchange. But since it is typically paired with the other oft-invoked principles of “mutual benefit” (*huxiang liyi* 互相利益 or *huli* 互利) and “win-win” (*gongying* 共赢), *gongtong fazhan* hints at complementarity, comparative advantage and division of labour without explicitly saying so. The summary continues: “China and Latin America and the Caribbean have the demand for exchanges in technology, investment, resources and commodities and *can complement each other so as to realize strike [sic] a mutually beneficial and win-win result*” (emphasis added).

These hints are more fully elaborated in the “Policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean” (5 November 2008),<sup>17</sup> which opens in an even more frankly developmentalist vein that explicitly links successful development to globalization: “As the largest developing country in the world, China is committed to the path of peaceful development and the win-win strategy of opening up. It is ready to carry out friendly co-operation with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity.” Latin America’s development potential is articulated in words nearly identical to those in China’s policy paper on Africa: “Latin America and the Caribbean have a long history, vast territory and abundant resources, and the region enjoys a good foundation for economic and social growth and huge development potential.” However, *unlike* Africa, which (like Latin America) possesses abundant territory and natural resources while China has technical know-how and managerial capacity, China and Latin America “are at similar stages of development and face the common task of achieving development.” Despite the policy paper’s nod to the earlier fractal rhetoric of countries “exploring development paths suited to their national conditions,” the “similar stage of development” enjoyed by China and Latin America emphatically does not connote the kinds of replication invoked by the fractal mode. As is the case for China and Africa, the “Five Principles” remain the foundation of China’s policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean, and the policy principles conclude with the reassertion of the one-China principle. The bulk of the points that deal with economic, political and people to people contacts reiterate the conceptualization of “win-win results” to be based on global complementarity and division of labour. Thus an otherwise ambiguous feel-good term like “common development” (*gongtong fazhan*) is in this policy paper explicitly linked

17 The China policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean was released simultaneously in English, Chinese and Spanish versions on 5 November 2008, immediately after the US presidential election. I have worked with the English version available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, [www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t521-25.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t521-25.htm). The Chinese version is “Zhongguo dui Lading Meizhou he Jiajinbi zhengce wenjian,” released by Xinhua on 5 November 2008, at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-11/05/content\\_10308177.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-11/05/content_10308177.htm).

to trade based on comparative advantage and differentiation: “the two sides ... leverag[ing] their respective strengths ... and seek[ing] to become each other’s partner in economic co-operation and trade for mutual benefit and common development.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Framing and Claiming in Bilateral Relationships 1: Peruvian Unanimity on Complementarity**

Sweeping statements about world regions or international collective forums are the currency of foreign relations rhetoric, but in an international order in which the key unit is still the sovereign state, much is conducted either by or through states. It is therefore worth considering how China’s rhetoric on Latin America plays out one level down, at the interface of individual bilateral relationships. There is, of course, a wide diversity of types of states and regimes in Latin America. They range from the small (Guatemala, El Salvador, Uruguay) to the very large in territory (Brazil, Argentina) or population (Brazil), with governments that are deeply wary of neo-liberalism (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia) to those that have embraced neo-liberal principles (Peru, Chile). There are those who switched diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China relatively early on (Chile, Peru), those who have only changed over very recently (Costa Rica, 2008), and others who have at least so far refused to withdraw recognition from the Republic of China on Taiwan (Panama, Paraguay). Two in particular will be considered in the remainder of this analysis: Peru and Brazil. At present, both have exceptionally cordial relations with China, even though their country profiles are very different. Peru has a relatively small, heavily mining based economy that is almost exclusively geared towards commodity export, with all the complementarities with China that profile suggests. Brazil’s sheer size in land, population and economic growth have propelled it (alongside China) to a new role as a BRICS emerging economy with whom China declares its interests to be in parallel.

Peru, along with Chile, stands as a paradigmatic example of a state that has fully embraced the neo-liberal international economic order and extended unusually early recognition to the People’s Republic of China. After Cuba (1960) and Chile (1970 – then under a leftist government), Peru was the third state in Latin America to recognize the People’s Republic in late November 1971, at just the time that the People’s Republic was replacing the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the internationally recognized government of China in the United Nations. Peru is also a state in which decision making has historically been dominated by largely white commercial and political elites based in Lima. The Peruvian government only came around to neo-liberalism in the 1990s, after a chaotic decade of high inflation, labour unrest and an upswing in violent insurgency, but since then it has stood as one of the most stalwart defenders of free

18 *Ibid.* section III, point 3.

trade liberalism, going as far as to conclude the region's second free trade association (FTA) with China in 2009.

Chile and Peru have both recognized China earlier, changed over to a full embrace of neo-liberalism earlier and concluded FTAs earlier than anywhere else in Latin America. But the way in which neo-liberalism has worked in these two countries has until recently been quite dissimilar. Despite questions over unequal distribution and bilateral trade with China that is heavily reliant on copper mining, Chile's population is smaller (roughly 15 million), is relatively ethnically homogenous and seems to possess political institutions with greater capacity for absorbing stress and avoiding the worst of the "resource curse." Peru, with roughly twice the population of Chile (29.5 million) has highly skewed concentrations of wealth and poverty that are superimposed on strong ethnic/language and urban/rural divisions. Peru's comparative advantage is in mining and fish meal, primary commodities with low or non-existent value-added. Those who pay the heaviest price of the resulting pollution and dislocation are Native American and/or poor and rural, and, not surprisingly, alliances of poor and indigenous groups in the Andes and the Amazon have vigorously protested against despoliation of the forest, the ravaging of local livelihoods and the government's earlier willingness to permit foreigners to buy large tracts of land in sensitive ecosystems.<sup>19</sup>

Given the significant rural opposition to globalization in general and Chinese involvement in particular, Peruvian political elites' commitment to globalization and neo-liberal norms has been unusually consistent since the early 1990s, including individuals who had previously pursued leftist and populist paths. For example, despite his leftism and populism in the 1980s, when Alan García was re-elected in 2006 after a long hiatus, his government (2006–11) promptly aligned with the neo-liberal policies of the previous two presidents and continued to mirror China's rhetoric of mutual benefit on the basis of trade. The official record of a meeting between Zeng Qinghong and Peruvian Vice-President Weisman in January 2005 reified in no uncertain terms the cardinal neo-liberal tenet of China and Peru relations "expanding and deepening mutual benefit and mutual co-operation ... in order to bring benefit to the people of the two countries" (*huli hezuo, yi zaofu yu liang guo rein* 互利合作, 以造福于两国人民).<sup>20</sup> Key here is the bland assumption that deepening trade on the basis of "equality and mutual interest" (*pingdeng huli* 平等互利) results in "a future path of even and healthy development, through joint discussion on such matters as investment, technology transfer, personnel training, baseline infrastructure, natural resources, agriculture,

19 The literature on the "resource curse" is vast, but some of the more useful pieces that lay out the importance of (political) institutions and ethnicity, and, by implication, some of the differences between Chile and Peru are: Michael Ross, "The political economy of the resource curse," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1999); Halvor Mehlum, Karl Moene and Ragnar Torvik, "Institutions and the resource curse," *The Economic Journal*, No. 116 (2006); and Ruikang Marcus Furm and Roland Hodler, "Natural resources and income inequality: the role of ethnic divisions," *Economic Letters*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (2010).

20 "Zeng Qinghong yu Milú zongtong Weisman jùxing huitan" ("Zeng Qinghong and Peruvian Vice-President Weisman hold a discussion meeting"), 27 January 2005, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjb/zzjg/lmzs/wxwlb/t181453.htm>, accessed 11 July 2011.



mining, and tourism.”<sup>21</sup> The language was almost identical two-and-a-half years later, when a presidential meeting between Hu Jintao and Alan García reiterated the invocation of Peru’s friendliness on the basis of its early recognition of “New China.”

Here there is a neat elision between the interests of the two populations of Peru and China and the states themselves (*liang guo he liang guo renmin* 两国和两国人民), the region and the world in China–Peru adjustment and co-ordination on the basis of mutual interest. In this condensed view of the bilateral relationship, the expansion of mutual trade, the deepening of mutual co-operation and the commencement of discussions for an FTA lead to the expansion of human culture (*renwen* 人文) and mutual understanding. García in turn ritually reiterates support for the one-China policy, admiration for China’s enormous successes in development and commitment to the one-China policy, and the significance of China–Peru relations, particularly in relation to such projects as port infrastructure development, electric power and mining.<sup>22</sup>

There is extraordinary rhetorical mirroring between the Peruvian and Chinese governments, in their insistence on mutual benefit through complementarity and comparative advantage. In February 2007, the US Ambassador to Peru confirmed a picture of minimal Chinese direct investment and Peru’s extraordinary dependence on mineral exports to China. He also noted the political establishment’s rejection of complaints from the Peruvian textile industry of unfair competition from Chinese textiles when the National Institute for Defence of Competition and Intellectual Property (INDECOPI) “ruled that no harm was caused to the local industry from Chinese textile imports.” Indeed INDECOPI ruled that “there was actually an increase in tax revenue for the government as well as an increase in employment because of Chinese imports.”<sup>23</sup> These sentiments were repeated in even clearer language in March 2008, when García made a visit to the Great Hall of the People, at which Wu Bangguo repeated that “the mutual complementarity of China–Peru relations is strong (*ZhongMi jingji hubu xingqiang* 中秘经济互补性强) ... and that under the principle of mutual benefit and common development ... China–Peru co-operation will reach a new plateau” (*zai huxiang shuangying, gongtong fazhan de yuanze xia, ... ZhongMi quanmian hezuo ... wanshang xin taijie* 在互相双赢, 共同发展的原则下。。。中秘全面合作。。。万上新台阶).<sup>24</sup>

In no area does one see a clearer convergence of the rhetoric than in the negotiations for the FTA between China and Peru in December 2009. The official preparations began in March 2007. Unusually the negotiators from the Ministry

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 “Peru–China trade diversifies, but investment struggles,” cable from Embassy Lima (Peru), 5 February 2007, cable reference ID #07LIMA330, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/02/07LIMA330.html>, first published on 17 June 2011, <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07LIMA330>, accessed 15 July 2011.

24 “Wu Bangguo, Li Changchun fenbie huijian Milü zongtong Jiayi” (“Wu Bangguo and Li Changchun divide meetings with Peruvian President García”), 20 March 2008, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/pds/wjb/zjjh/lmzs/xwlb/t416702.htm>, accessed 11 July 2011.

of Commerce (China) and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (Peru) published a feasibility study in English, which was posted on the internet well before the conclusion of the negotiations.<sup>25</sup> The report situates its findings in an evolutionary framework of increased contact and co-operation between China and Peru, in which China first signed a treaty for bilateral trade with Peru in the wake of China's entry to WTO (2001), Peru (under Toledo) formally recognized China's market status (2005), and China and Peru concluded an "all round partnership" under García (2005). Backed up by reams of statistics that illustrated rising volumes of bilateral trade, "scientific" equilibrium models that projected trade increases, trade diversification and increases in GDP for both sides, the report suggests that the main advantages to China will accrue in higher-value products like electronics, telecommunications, transport, livestock, the food industry, tobacco processing and textiles, while Peru's will grow in sectors such as fish oil, petroleum and mineral products, fishmeal and agriculture.<sup>26</sup> While possible tensions are glibly noted, there is no explicit acknowledgment of the disturbances, protests and violence already directed against Chinese mining interests, and no form of acknowledgment of Peruvian environmental and community livelihood issues. The report concludes with the (re)affirmation of complementarity and comparative advantage through its demonstration of "significant complementarities exist between the economies of China and Peru ... and that an FTA would benefit the people and economies of both countries." It unsurprisingly recommends that official negotiations for an FTA commence with all due speed.<sup>27</sup>

In the end, the FTA between China and Peru was concluded with a minimum of fuss in late December 2009, coinciding with the much larger FTA that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Commerce concluded with ASEAN. In the flurry of excitement surrounding the announcement of the FTA, both sides were keen to express how positive this was for Peru's trade, "besides traditional exports such as fish and minerals, the FTA [opens] the door to new products ... like fresh fruit, grapes, mangos and avocados, as well as natural colorants, grains, cereals and giant corn."<sup>28</sup> It is notable that mutual stress is on the ways in which the FTA's presumptive easing of trade restrictions mean a broadening of trade that continues to be firmly anchored in Peru as a supplier of primary, low value-added goods, whereby ores and fishmeal are now diversified to include fresh fruit, vegetables, coffee and cereals. Diversification (*duoyang hua* 多样化) for Peru means becoming less dependent on copper and fish meal, "diversifying"

25 Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism of Peru and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "China free trade feasibility study," [www.mincetur.gob.pr/newweb/portals/0/Peru-China\\_percent20jfs\\_percent20Final.pdf](http://www.mincetur.gob.pr/newweb/portals/0/Peru-China_percent20jfs_percent20Final.pdf), accessed 13 July 2011. This report is not dated but was clearly written in 2007, as the last data from a large range of sectors cited in support of its positive conclusions are from 2006.

26 *Ibid.* p. 160.

27 *Ibid.* p. 160.

28 "Minister: Peru-China FTA to boost Peru's exports," report from Xinhua, 1 March 2010, in *The China Daily*, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-03/01/content\\_9518779.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-03/01/content_9518779.htm), accessed 15 July 2011.

into farm produce to satisfying the more “diversified” tastes of a growing Chinese urban middle class that can afford such luxuries as imported Peruvian coffee and mangos.

Thus far, China’s pursuit of direct foreign investment and the creation of a market economy (the 1990s) and its “going out” policy (the 2000s) has found a particularly sympathetic series of Peruvian governments that have until now accepted and replicated the cardinal tenets of this rhetoric of complementarity and comparative advantage. Early convergence in rhetoric and genuine economic complementarities between China and Peru have resulted in an unusual degree of smoothness in the acceleration of trade since the mid-2000s. But the recent election of Ollanta Humala, a Peruvian president who professes social democracy in a similar vein to Brazil, poses a potential challenge to this easy convergence of rhetorical assumptions. It remains to be seen how Chinese companies will negotiate with a ruling executive that may be much more sympathetic to workers’ rights, the environment, and the livelihood of the rural and the poor.

### **Framing and Claiming in Bilateral Relations 2: From Complementarity to Mutual Co-operation**

China’s official rhetoric on Brazil presents a very different picture. The Brazil–China relationship is by far the most important of China’s bilateral relationships in Latin America. China and Brazil are both substantial in all dimensions of scale – territory, population and emerging economic clout – and each holds a disproportionate weight in its respective geographical region. Although formal relations between China and Brazil were established in 1974, and high-profile collaboration in creating a joint satellite for natural resources monitoring was planned from 1988 and a strategic partnership agreed at the relatively early date of 1993, the significant development of this relationship only took off in the 2000s. The years of Lula’s presidency in Brazil encompassed particularly warm bilateral ties, which were expressed through a progression of deals, high level visits, Brazil’s acknowledgement of China as a market economy (2004), the establishment of the China–Brazil High Level Co-ordination and Co-operation Committee (COSBAN) (2006), initiation of strategic dialogue (2007), China’s replacement of the US as Brazil’s largest trading partner (2009), the deepening of the China–Brazil Strategic Partnership (2009), and China and Brazil’s participation in the three BRICS meetings that have thus far been held in Ekaterinberg (2009), Brasilia (2010) and Sanya (2011).

The sheer geographical and demographic scale of both China and Brazil, their respective growing shares in world GDP, Brazil’s domestic pursuit of a version of social democracy, and the range of cross-cutting interests together render the China–Brazil relationship especially multifaceted, with rapidly accelerating content in a large number of spheres, each with strands of complementarity, active co-operation and the ever present possibility of competition. In the realm of trade and investment, Brazil’s own domestic economic profile includes

agricultural and mining interests that have every incentive to welcome increasing trade with China, domestic industries (electronics, clothing) that have every reason to be wary of competition with China, other domestic industries delighted by the prospect of Chinese investment (infrastructure, port development, ore processing and a range of other greenfield projects), and still others that simultaneously have grounds for welcome and concern (soy exports are good for the livelihood of Brazilian farmers but potentially quite damaging for natural resources, soil erosion and biodiversity). In terms of macro-diplomacy, Brazil offers China a foil and sometimes partnership in China's current claims to pursue peaceful multilateralism and equal, common development through the now annual BRICS summits that have taken place since 2009. China offers Brazil a source of investment, a destination for exports and a potential supporter in increasing its international profile. In comparison to Peru, the Brazilian political system seems to be much more able to accommodate openly a plurality of different domestic interests, and to respond when the activities of Chinese investors and companies raise grounds for concern, whether this is in response to Chinese purchase of agricultural land, dumping of manufactured goods or imbalances in trade.

China's official and semi-official rhetoric on Brazil at first glance matches its rhetoric on other states in Latin America: the requirement of reiteration of a one-China policy, mutual benefit, "win-win" and common development.<sup>29</sup> But the diversity of interests in Brazil, their articulation through the democratic political process and the ongoing existence of a heavily regulated business environment has meant that the blithe Chinese rhetoric of neo-liberal "win-win" based on complementarity is insufficient. The concerns of core Brazilian elites in manufacturing need to be at least indirectly addressed, and future paths of direct co-operation (and potential roadblocks) need to be dealt with through COSBAN. Since there is so much real content to China–Brazil relations – from the export of soy and iron ore to Chinese investment in the Açú Port, and from currency swaps to space co-operation and research and development in agriculture, to mention nothing of the BRICS summits – relatively little of it needs to be rhetorically gilded and gift wrapped. What is there faces in two quite different rhetorical directions, encompassing both the kinds of complementarity/division of labour based on notions of comparative advantage that are so dominant in other bilateral relations between China and Latin America, and strikingly new forms of co-operation that do indeed suggest a rough but substantive equality, rather than the more typical formal sovereign equality that overlays profoundly real asymmetries.

China's official rhetoric on Brazil displays no shortage of the "globalized" rhetoric of ever greater amounts of trade based on economic complementarity and division of labour. To cite just one prominent example, in 2008 the Chinese Ambassador to Brazil, Chen Duqing, noted that the Chinese and

29 "China, Brazil strengthen relations," *Xinhua*, 29 August 2006. [http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-08/content\\_372510.htm](http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-08/content_372510.htm), accessed 16 July 2010.

Brazilian economies are mutually complementary, and said in his address to Brazilian businesses worried about a lopsided trading relationship: “We understand globalization ... Commercial exchange is inevitable. You must buy, we must sell.”<sup>30</sup> But since 2009 the rhetoric on Brazil has evolved to give more substance to its claims of equality and co-operation. The Joint Communiqué between the People’s Republic of China and the Federative Republic of Brazil on Further Strengthening of the China–Brazil Strategic Partnership (May 2009) tentatively suggests an emerging set of new principles, even as it continues to maintain some of the older pro forma rhetorical requirements.<sup>31</sup>

The Communiqué notes 35 years of diplomatic relations, reiterates the importance of the one-China policy, announces the signing of a number of agreements, and more than nods in the direction of the COSBAN for co-ordinating a range of exchanges, from political to legislative and defence, as well as the formulation of future joint action plans. No other state in Latin America has been important enough to China to merit such a high-level steering and planning committee for future “deepening” of mutual co-operation and strategic dialogue. The Communiqué directly mentions the importance of diversification and promotion of bilateral trade, and announces a host of genuinely bilateral projects: the establishment of a joint agricultural research laboratory in Beijing, a China–Brazil nanotechnology research centre and a China–Brazil Centre on Climate Change and Innovative Technology in Rio de Janeiro, as well as further co-operation on the joint Earth Resources satellite. The points in the Communiqué that describe China–Brazil convergence in international affairs are equally important. China and Brazil are styled as implicitly equal leaders for the developing world, with a joint stake in opposing protectionism and with a major role to play in bringing more voice to the poor, insisting on greater responsibility from the rich and greater representation for the poor in international financial institutions and its policies. They are both “major developing countries ... strengthen[ing] international efforts within the framework of the five developing countries and of the BRICS ... stepping up communication and co-ordination with other developing countries to promote ... the say of developing countries in major international affairs.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition to this high-profile diplomatic communiqué, a newer language of joint co-operation and unity is now beginning to be incorporated alongside the neo-liberal rhetoric of division of labour in a globalized unitary economy. Brazilian complaints about unbalanced development have clearly been heard and are implicitly responded to. In May 2011, China’s Minister of Commerce Chen Daming concluded a China–Brazil Trade and Economic Co-operation Seminar by saying: “Although China and Brazil are not in the same hemisphere,

30 Julie McCarthy, “Growing trade ties China to Latin America,” 1 April 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89275971>, accessed 8 April 2011.

31 Beijing, 19 May 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjzb/zjzg/ldmzs/gjlb/3473/3474/t566945.htm>, accessed 28 March 2011.

32 *Ibid.* points XIV–XVIII.

*strong economic complementarity and co-operation potential* pull them together [to promote] the diversity of bilateral trade and the further development of two-way investment ... Brazil has high value-added and comparative products, many of which are unknown to Chinese consumers,” and he promised special opportunities for Brazilian enterprises to promote their products. At the same time, he urged “realiz[ation] of direct trade *in advantaged products*, particularly soybeans and other agricultural products, *with the purpose of benefiting for [sic] Brazilian producers, exporters and importers* ... hop[ing] that Brazil could get more Chinese enterprises to invest in Brazil by more open investment policies and realize the diversity of export by diversified industrial structure” (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the most significant piece that points in a possible new direction is a *Renmin ribao* article from April 2011 which headlines China–Brazil relations as “united hands in creating a [new] ‘train locomotive’ (*ZhongBa lianshou jianzao ‘huoche tou’* 中巴联手建造 火车头).” This article reports on a conference in Beijing in mid-April entitled “China–Brazil: going beyond ‘mutual support, co-operation and win-win’” (*ZhongBa chaoyue hubu, hezuo gongying* 超越互补, 合作共赢).<sup>34</sup> While it concludes with the familiar linkage of (Chinese) investment going to Brazil and mutual co-operation providing direct benefit to the people (*Zhongguo qiye fuBa touzi, shuangfang hezuo hubu, renmin qude shizai liyi* 中国企业赴巴投资, 双方合作互补, 人民取得实在利益), the article offers concrete examples that suggest, however embryonically, a notion of “mutual co-operation” (*hezuo hubu* 合作互补) as common and indivisible goods rather than the simple exchange of one divisible resource (cash) for another (a primary product such as soybeans) in a unitary global economy. Thus the article’s example of agriculture situates Brazil (and its agriculture) globally, as “the country with the world’s greatest natural resources and plant biodiversity.” It stresses the importance of co-operation in agricultural technology, through the establishment of a joint experimental station to work closely on different types of applied technology: in agricultural biota, biofuel and poultry raising.<sup>35</sup>

The report of this particular meeting in Beijing is clearly beginning to grapple with new rhetorical registers that could possibly supplant both the older fractal (replicative suffering and underdevelopment) and currently dominant division of labour rhetorical modes. At the time of writing in 2011, it is still too early to say how much purchase these kinds of ideas will get. They may well be limited to a big, globally important country such as Brazil, which shares no common border or historical legacy of tension with China, and whose profile offers unusual opportunities for both joint co-operation among equals and complementarity,

33 “Minister Chen addressed the closing ceremony of China–Brazil Trade and Economic Co-operation Seminar,” 18 May 2011, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/column/print.shtml?newsrelease/significantnews/201105/20110507569587.html>, accessed 22 June 2011.

34 “*ZhongBa lianshou jianshe ‘huoche tou’*,” 14 April 2011, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/14384895.html>, accessed 5 July 2011.

35 *Ibid.*



but equally they have the potential to radiate outwards to encompass other bilateral relations in the region.

### **Past, Present and Future Modes of Development Discourse in Latin America and China**

I have argued that China's official rhetoric on its relations with the developing world have historically grafted two quite different notions of development on to a set of "unchanging" core "Five Principles." The first, "fractal mode" imagines China to be part of and a leader within the developing world. This mode amplifies presumptive commonality in past suffering and underdevelopment. It posits that China is a practical and moral model to be emulated and is predicated on a fractal, fundamentally replicative understanding of development. In this, a particular model or path is then adapted in the light of a given country's own circumstances, and, through a process of imitation and replication, each "finds its own way" on the basis of its own resources and conditions. In practice, this has meant that China could trumpet this kind of fractal, replicative, model-based logic virtually anywhere in the developing world, as the principle of self sufficiency could be invoked in support of any of China's involvements (or total lack of direct involvement) in any given country or region.

In the last decade, a quite different set of notions about development has emerged and come to overlay the older fractal logic. These new ideas start from a quite different set of organizing principles: that there is one game rather than many, one integrated global market rather than many national or regional ones, and that the way forward for developing countries is within an established set of globalized practices predicated on specialized division of labour, comparative advantage and economic (as well as to some extent political) interdependence. This is trumpeted in current rhetoric of "giving and getting" (Africa), "win-win" (both Africa and Latin America) and "mutual benefit" (both Africa and Latin America). This is the rhetoric that dominates the "Policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean," and is found, albeit in a much more muted form, in most of the official papers to emerge from FOCAC since 2002. Since 2009, a still newer set of notions about co-operation in terms of balanced and diversified trade, as well as hints of common *collective* goods in relieving pressure on Brazilian (and therefore worldwide) biodiversity or promoting global fairness through BRICS have begun to appear in the official and semi-official rhetoric alongside the more mechanistic and individualized notions of "win-win" and global complementarity. It remains to be seen how deeply these will either become embedded into China–Brazil relations or spread beyond the particular China–Brazil relationship.

Ironically, China's earlier lack of purchase and relative failure in Latin America has meant that as it "arrives in" (*desembarco*) Latin America in the present, it comes with a presumptively clean slate. China's very lack of entanglement in Latin America makes it look very attractive from a distance, especially in

comparison to the enormous historical baggage that the United States carries in the region. China now has the opportunity to make itself intelligible in Latin America, and it is advantaged by not needing to extricate itself from older rhetorical modes and the weight of expectations that this older rhetoric engenders. The fractal notions of commonality, amity, suffering and leading by example pop up occasionally, but are muted in comparison to China's rhetoric towards Africa. The dominant rhetoric for Latin America is educative and reassuring (we are responsible, without conditionality and offer a different way of doing things from the West), while reiterating China's core principles (absolute sovereignty and the one-China principle). Most of the imagery speaks to "common development," but this is a common development based on complementary advantage rather than replication. Clothed in the language of popular economics, as "mutual benefit" and "win-win," this stress on the positive fruits of economic interaction and trade as a non-zero sum game are part of China's wider framing and claiming to be engaging in a normal and natural "peaceful rise."

A great deal of ambivalence remains, however. Elements of the fractal mode are often juxtaposed with features of the division of labour mode. The proportions of each for different occasions in different bilateral relationships vary, and much of the rhetoric tries to have it both ways. Despite China's intention to become a "well off country" and its unquestioned economic clout, there is still enormous reluctance to give up on its identification as underdeveloped,<sup>36</sup> and even within a larger rubric of "win-win" and complementarity, significant lip service continues to be paid to the notion of China as a model for "seeking common development" with its "long history, vast territory and abundant resources."

There continues to be uneasy oscillation between China's own insistence on sovereign and unitary actors in this discourse of "win-win." "Win-win" is all very well, but it begs the question of *who* wins. A narrow political or commercial elite may win while workers lose; business elites may win while indigenous communities lose; exporters for agricultural products may win while manufacturers lose: Brazil may, relatively speaking "win" while Argentina "loses." Elsewhere in the Latin America policy paper, however, there are explicit references to legislative and political party exchanges, enhancing trade and investment, and co-operation in everything from finance and agriculture to customs, quality inspection, cultural and medical exchange, environmental protection and poverty alleviation, and China's intention to join a range of multilateral organizations as an observer. All of these measures are explicitly justified in terms of "harmonious society," multi-polarity and peaceful and/or common development.

China's rhetoric towards other parts of the developing world is likely to continue this uneasy straddling between two fundamentally divergent framings of development for quite some time. Its official rhetorical discourse towards Latin America comprises a range of claims that are not all reconcilable. Claims to

36 Yu Zhongwen, "China's developing-country identity remains unchanged."

particular amity and mutual understanding on the basis of being developing countries and having undergone past histories of (neo-) colonialism sit uneasily with other claims to be a positive model, having lifted so many millions out of poverty on the basis of neo-liberal notions of complementarity and division of labour in a globalized market world that is often perceived as exploitative. The tilt towards the latter set of notions is clear in its rhetoric and relationships for Latin America; for Africa, the reluctance to jettison the older, fractally based rhetoric in favour of this set of notions is equally pronounced. Both speak to important and deeply held philosophical and ontological conceptualizations about world development and China's increasingly important role in world development, and as such command our continued interest.