

Multilateral cooperation in Africa between China and Western countries: from differences to consensus¹

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Abstract. In the 21st century, it is a great event in the field of international politics that both China and Africa are marching towards revival and more cooperation among each other. The old international order which centered on the West can no longer meet the demand of the changes of African geopolitical pattern. Therefore, it is high time to establish a multilateral cooperation mechanism concerning Africa's peace and development. The authors argue that there are differences in historical experience, diplomatic ideas and principles as well as extensive common grounds of diplomatic strategy and national interests between China and the West in respect of their relations with Africa. Both China and the West should promote talks which are more open, more cooperative and more conducive to a win-win end. In doing this, they can achieve a win-for-all result for all the parties involved.

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Introduction

In recent years, China's fast development and its expanding influence in Africa has attracted great attention from the EU and US and meanwhile inspired heated debates among Western scholars over the multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries.² But so far till now, the Chinese government has not

¹ In this article, 'China' refers to the People's Republic of China founded in 1949 and 'Western countries' mainly refers to America, the EU and other European powers.

² See Uwe Wissenbach, 'The Renaissance or the End of Geopolitics? Towards Trilateral Cooperation in Africa', *International Review* (Summer 2008), pp. 83–97; Bernt Berger and Uwe Wissenbach,

formulated a clear policy concerning the multilateral cooperation. Neither are there quite many studies on that among Chinese scholars. Therefore, the international society is eager to know China's stance on it.

This article, from the perspective of Chinese scholars, argues that the multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries will gain themselves respectively the common interests through building a new multi-win model of cooperation besides the now existing African development mechanism. To illustrate that, the authors first of all analyse the necessity of conducting multilateral cooperation, then elaborate the difference between China and the West in respect of their foreign policy and ideas towards Africa, and last, propose the ways to promote multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and the West.

I. Africa once again becomes an important factor influencing the relationship between China and the West

Before the 1980s, Africa had ever influenced in its special way the relationship between China and the West. To break through the blockade of the Western countries led by America, the newly founded China in 1949 cried for political support from African countries. Though having made a political choice to lean to the Soviet Union on the eve of its founding, the new China all along maintained that it stood as a member of those ever oppressed nations and newly independent nations which together fought with imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. Especially during the 1960s and 1970s, isolated by both America and the Soviet Union, China pursued the broadest diplomatic line of anti-imperialism and anti-hegemonism. The developing countries, mainly of African, Asian and Latin American countries, comprised an important part of China's international united front. In February 1974, Mao Zedong put forward his 'Three Worlds' theory, which identified China with Africa at the level of diplomatic strategy.³ With support of the Third World including African countries, China not only resumed its legal seat at the UN in 1971, but also enhanced its capability to confront with America and the Soviet Union. During those specific years, China won respect and dignity though South-South cooperation and manifested its international influence by virtue of the whole Third World. While on the other hand, China's return to the UN increased the strength of the Third World, which impelled the Western countries to reconsider their relations with Asian and African countries.

After the 1980s, while maintaining political cooperation with African countries, China put more emphasis on the development of economy, culture and soft power.

'EU-China-Africa trilateral development cooperation: Common Challenges and new directions', Discussion Paper, Bonn (2007), {http://www.ec-an.eu/files/bergerweissenbach_0.pdf}; Denis M. Tull, 'China in Africa: European Perceptions and Response to the Chinese Challenge', SAIS working paper in African Studies Program, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC, {http://www.china-europa-forum.net/bdfdoc-1562_zh.html}; Jonathan Holslag and Sara Van Hoeymissen (eds), 'The Limits of Socialization: The Search for EU-China Cooperation Towards Security Challenges in Africa', BICCS policy paper, Brussels (30 May 2010).

³ In February 1974, when meeting a foreign guest, Mao Zedong said, 'America and the Soviet Union belong to the First World; Japan, Europe and Canada belong to the Second World; we belong to the Third World'. See Xie Yixian, *History of China's Diplomacy* (from 1949–1979) (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Press 1988), pp. 443–52.

Ideology in China's foreign relations with African countries gave way to being pragmatic and rational. This diplomatic adjustment brought forth the all-around development of Sino-African relations. In October 2000, the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Beijing, initiating the multilateral consultation regime between China and African countries. On 12 January 2006, the Chinese government issued its first ever *African Policy Paper*. In the same year, the Beijing Summit of FOCAC was held and leaders as well as high officials from 48 African countries attended the meeting. In recent years, China and Africa countries have built a new type of strategic partnership which features mutual political trust, win-win economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. The volume of Sino-African trade has quickly mounted up to \$106.84 billion in 2008, more than ten times of the figure in 2000 (\$10.59 billion). Now, the Sino-African relationship is at an all-time high in more than fifty years.

With the rising of China, the overall development of Sino-African relations brought unprecedented shocking impact on the world order.⁴ The rising of China in the international community can be illustrated by the following facts: rapid growth of its influence in Africa; the full cooperation among China and Africa; and the tendency of Africa's looking eastward during the course of cooperation among the two sides. Just as some scholar has pointed out, 'The impact of China's development on the world order and the West can be indicated to a large extent by the Sino-African relations and its influence in the whole world.'⁵

China's political influence multiplied the pattern of Africa's foreign relations. In the past, China's strategy towards Africa mainly aimed at winning political support from African countries so as to breakthrough the blockade of America and the Soviet Union. Today, the Sino-African cooperation has moved to the economic field. However, in regard to some important international issues such as human rights and the reform of the UN, the two sides still take each other as a reliable alliance. To some African countries, China is another diplomatic alternative for them besides the West, for the Sino-African relationship can balance their relations with the Western countries. Just as Uwe Wissenbach from EU Commission once has said, 'African leaders use China as a trump card in securing a new global position, and expressing a new-found self-confidence and sometimes a revenge on European pressures of the past.'⁶ The Beijing Summit of FOCAC successfully held in Beijing in 2006 manifested China's great influence in Africa.

China's economic influence whittles down the monopolised interests ever gained by the Western powers in Africa for hundreds of years. China has become the third biggest trade partner, only second to America and Europe. In 2007, the trade volume between China and Africa surpassed that of any European country with Africa. China's investment and aid to Africa are also growing fast. The all-around economic cooperation between the two sides provides a strong impetus to the development of African economy. It is estimated by the China Ministry of Commerce that the present Sino-African trade contributes 20 per cent to the

⁴ Li Anshan, 'Give the Right Name to China: China's Africa Strategy and Its National Image', *World Economy and Politics*, 4 (2008), pp. 6–15.

⁵ Liu Hongwu, 'Contemporary Sino-African Relationship and the Revitalizing Asian and African Civilizations', *World Economy and Politics*, 9 (2008), pp. 29–37.

⁶ Uwe Wissenbach, 'The Renaissance or the End of Geopolitics? Towards Trilateral Cooperation in Africa', p. 86.

increase of African economy.⁷ Though there exists imbalance in the Sino-African trade and lack of social responsibility of some Chinese enterprises in Africa, China's increasing investment in Africa and foreign aid to it without any doubt has brought a significant opportunity for its development and promoted Africa to integrate into the global economy. Harry G. Broadman, Economic Adviser for the African Region at the World Bank, once remarked, 'The dramatic new trend in South-South economic relations is transforming traditional patterns of economic development, and this is nowhere more evident than in African-Asian trade and investment flows.'⁸

The advance of Africa's revival and the overall development of Sino-African relations have led to the structural change of African geopolitical pattern, which in turn impacts China's relations with Europe and America. In the traditional sense, there were no face-to-face conflicts of geopolitical interests between China and Europe. However, in recent years, the competition of value system and economic interests between the two parties in Africa resulted in new type of competition of geopolitical interests. Compared with Sino-European relations, the Sino-American relations are more of a global dimension. Therefore, the cooperation and competition between the two parties in Africa are more of global and strategic significance. China has become an important role-player in Africa and the Sino-African relationship has constituted an external factor which can't be ignored for the West when dealing with its relations with African countries. In other words, Africa has become an important factor affecting Sino-European relations and Sino-American relations.

The reality is that the element of main powers in Sino-African relations or the element of Africa in relations between main powers grows more and more apparent. Africa has become the focus of the whole world again and it will constitute an important factor which will influence the evolution of the international structure and the development of relations among powers. The power structure and the hierarchical order dominated by the West can't meet the demand of African geopolitical pattern changes. Therefore, it is high time to establish a multilateral cooperation regime among China, Africa and Europe, among China, Africa and America or even among China, Africa, Europe and America. It is an ideal model for China and the West to confront the global challenges effectively in the 21st century by developing an international multilateral relationship beneficial to the peace and development of Africa.

II. Multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries is an option to maintain the interest of every party

Both China and Western countries have a proper demand to import resources from, conduct trade with and invest in Africa, but the conspicuous expand of China's demand in Africa's resource and market has brought pressure to Western

⁷ 'African Bank Shanghai Anniversary: Promote Mutual Benefit and Win-win', {<http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/i/jyj/k/200705/20070504702076.html>}.

⁸ Harry G. Broadman, *Africa's Silk Road: China and India's New Economic Frontier* (Washington DC: the World Bank, 2007).

countries, thus the competition in Africa has been growing more and more tough. As a consequence, strengthening the economic coordination and cooperation between China and Western countries will help to avoid the loss brought by malicious competition and to decrease the high cost of multiple games between the two parties. Besides the consideration of pragmatism in international economy, this multilateral cooperation will also bring great value in international politics and international strategy. In the perspective of Europe, enhancing cooperation with China concerning African issues will restrain China's behaviour and increase the EU's capacity in global security and governance through the development of effective multilateralism. On 24 October 2006, the EU released a policy paper towards China entitled *EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities*, demanding China to urge African countries to practice good governance and strengthen coordination with the EU in respect of African issues. In the perspective of maintaining its global hegemony, the US also regards cooperation with China in Africa as an important measure to protect its interests in African issues. At the same time, the US is urging China to display responsibility in its international behaviour to promote the democracy and good governance in Africa, which shows the consistent pattern of the US in dealing with China.⁹ Thomas J. Christensen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Department of State, and James Swan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs of Department of State, indicate that China's presence in Africa is growing and call for the US-China engagement.¹⁰ China has never opposed to the idea of multilateral cooperation, since conducting multilateral dialogue based on not undermining existing interests will undoubtedly counterbalance the criticism China faces now in its African diplomacy. China can also display its to-be-constructed image of a responsible major power through getting involved in African affairs in a further way.

The key problem lies in whether this international multilateral cooperation will bring Africa practical interests or whether African countries will gain more interests by taking part in this multilateral cooperation than by in bilateral cooperation with major powers. Taking into account this matter, the African Union (AU) also holds a cautious attitude towards multilateral cooperation with China and Western countries. Here we have to suppose two preconditions: (1) the multilateral cooperation must treat Africa as an equal participant or stakeholder, respecting the willingness and the choice of AU and African countries. Though most African countries fail to find the suitable local development pattern for themselves and the African Union is far from reaching the level of a supranational organisation that can transfer national sovereignty as the EU does, the improvement in management of macroeconomics in many African countries, the emphasis put by the AU on democracy and governance and the African Peer Review Mechanism launched by the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* all indicate that Africa has already possessed its own reflection and experience in development. Africa is no longer a receiver of benediction and edification from outside, but a

⁹ Robert S. Ross, 'Engagement in US China Policy', in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (eds), *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (London and New York: Routledge 1999), pp. 180–211.

¹⁰ Thomas J. Christensen and James Swan, 'China in Africa: Implications for US Policy', {<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2008/hrg080604a.html>}.

voice worth respecting by the international community in major issues that will decide the future of Africa. (2) The multilateral cooperation concerning Africa should follow the essence of international multilateral cooperation which requires a public and transparent process. The EU and AU both have experience in solving regional problems through multilateral ways; Western countries have long been discussing African development by international conferences; China, having recognised gradually the value of international multilateral regime since the 1990s, has become an active participant, constructor and main beneficiary of current international multilateral cooperation. Every party, including Africa, Western countries and China have possessed the idea and experience in constructing new multilateral cooperation regime in Africa. In history, there have been coordination and cooperation among major powers regarding Africa. For instance, European suzerain held Berlin Conference aiming at partitioning Africa from November 1884 to February 1885; the US and the Soviet had also conducted consultations on African issues during the period of Cold War. But this coordination and cooperation among major powers were to scramble for interests in Africa secretly, while African countries were being slaved and ruled crudely. Whether to respect African countries' sovereignty and to follow the essence of international multilateralism of openness and transparency have become the biggest differences between the current multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries and that among major powers aiming at scrambling for interests in Africa in history.

International multilateral cooperation based on the two preconditions above will be helpful to the peace and development of Africa. Take Oil Development and Oil Politics as an example first of all.¹¹ The revenue brought by enormous oil export of many oil-producing African countries failed to bring about economic development and the improvement of living standards, on the contrary, the unfair distribution of interests brought by oil led to ethnic conflicts which in turn incurred the instability of domestic politics and stagnation of economy. That is the so-called Resource Curse which has been found in Sudan, Angola, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad in varying degrees.¹² The high politicisation of oil is not only an endogenous problem in African countries, but is tightly connected with the interference of outside major powers in African internal politics as well. The disorder in competition between big powers not only increases the economic cost and political risk in oil production in African countries, but harms the peace and stability of African countries as well, posing a severe challenge to the revival of Africa. Though both the *Constitute Act of African Union* and the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* have set out general rules on African governance, and the more functional *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* (EITI) is paying much attention to the distribution of interests gained from resource, the transparency of oil drilling activities and the social responsibility of enterprises in the oil sector,

¹¹ Oil represents a highly politicalised international issue. To the oil-producing countries, it is an advantage but meanwhile it also constitutes an origin of disaster or curse. See Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, *The Politics of the Global Oil Industry* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2005), p. 3; Francisco Parra, *Oil Politics: a Modern History of Petroleum* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), pp. 1–5.

¹² Michael L. Ross, 'The Political Economy of the Resource Curse', *World Politics* (January 1999), pp. 297–322; James A. Robinson, Ragnar Torvik and Thierry Verdier, 'Political Foundations of the Resource Curse', *Journal of Development Economics*, 79 (2006), pp. 447–68.

these principles and standards failed to be approved by all African countries. Regarding it as a way for the West to impose its own standard and system on China, the Chinese government has not entered the EITI till recently. Hence, if China, Africa and Western countries could initiate frank and sincere talks in the aspect of African oil drilling and trade, it will undoubtedly be helpful to the orderly development of African energy and the setting up of a global rule that including the approval of China and Africa.¹³

Let's take foreign aid to Africa as another example. The EU and the US are the main sources of African aid. They not only have developed a mature set of mechanism on aid and a scientific system of decision-making and effect evaluation, but also have accumulated much experience in promoting the development of the private sector and NGOs in Africa as well as providing humanitarian relief. But Western aid is usually complicated, low efficient and entangles with Western doctrines of liberalism, which enjoys few successful cases in promoting African economy.¹⁴ The feature of China's aid to Africa lies in its high efficiency and not attaching any strings that interfere in African internal affairs, which makes China enjoy an obvious advantage in promoting exploitation of African resource, construction of African infrastructure and large-scale projects.¹⁵ Hence, China, Africa and Western countries could together improve the quality and efficiency of foreign aid to Africa through sharing experience and information based on taking into consideration the actual needs of African countries. Trying to take advantage of the divergence in opinions between China and Western countries and to have a foot in both camps in order to gain the economic and strategic benefits is not a way to achieve the long-term goal of development for African countries.

History also indicates that the scramble for interests in Africa by outside major powers is always the main reason for instability and conflicts in Africa. In the period of colonisation, big powers in Europe scrambled for interests and divided up Africa without taking into consideration the natural geological distribution of nations and religions in Africa, causing various conflicts in African countries so far as ethnics and religions are concerned. The scramble for Ogaden by Britain and Italy caused a problem yet to be solved until today. During the period of Cold War, the US and the Soviet fiercely competed for orbits in Africa through cultivating pro-US or pro-Soviet forces inside African countries or even through starting a proxy war. In the 1970s, the scramble in Africa by the US and the Soviet directly led to domestic conflicts in Angola and Zaire, etc. and the escalation of border conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia. Though some African countries gained benefits from the competition of the US and the Soviet, but in general, Africa was the victim rather than beneficiary of the Cold War. History has

¹³ President Li Ruogu of the China Export and Import Bank has ever pointed out that the Western countries exclude China when formulating these rules while requires China to obey them in the international economic activities, which is unfair to China. See Li Ruogu, 'Distorted China-Africa Cooperation and the Refutation', *World Economics and Politics*, 4 (2009), pp. 16–25.

¹⁴ Ray Kiel, 'Poverty Reduction Through Liberalisation? Neoliberalism and the Myth of Global Convergence', *Review of International Studies*, 33 (2007), pp. 415–34; Tim Conway, *Trade Liberalisation and Poverty Reduction*, Overseas Development Institute, London (February 2004), {<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/2267.pdf>}.

¹⁵ Hu Mei and Liu Hongwu, 'Ideology First or Livelihood Improvement First? A Comparison between the "Democracy Aid to Africa" of the West and "Livelihood Aid to Africa" of China', *World Economy and Politics*, 10 (2009), pp. 17–24.

indicated again and again that the malicious competition is the main reason for the instability of the world, while cooperation among major powers will effectively maintain the stability and peace.

Recognising the multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and the West does not mean denying the effect of existing international regime such as the UN, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc. The UN is the main executor of African conflicts management, and the WB and IMF have long been paying attention to the development and governance of Africa as well, but undeniably, current international regime led by the UN cannot solve all the problems in Africa. Based on the grounds of maintaining current international multilateral regime, the cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries may provide a new model to solve problems in Africa. In a broader sense, there are the more serious global problems in Africa, the solving of which plays a key role in settling the North-South issue at present. How China and the West deal with the issues of peace and development of Africa determines the harmonious and sustainable development of the whole world. To establish a multilateral relationship bearing great significance to Africa is an ideal way for China and the West to effectively confront the global challenges.

III. Different ideas and policy between China and the West in respect to Africa

The demand for cooperation does not necessarily and naturally march towards practical cooperation. There lies great difference between China and the West in respect of historical experience, diplomatic philosophy and diplomatic principles which will lead to different perceptions of each other's identification, role and interest. Understanding each other's ideas, policy and intention beforehand lays a solid foundation for effective communication and mutual trust build-up.

III.a. Different historical experience: attachment or equality and mutual benefit?

Africa's relations with the West started with the expansion and colonisation of European powers ever since modern times. In 1415, the Portuguese occupied the Ciudad of Morocco, and then Western colonisers came in a continuous stream and brought Africa into the Western colonial system by force. There had appeared at a very early time the concept of 'nation-state' and the diplomatic principle of 'sovereign equality' in modern Europe. However, the Westerners treated the Africans as objects to enslave and oppress instead of developing relations with them equally. In economy, the colonisers, through developing a single export-oriented economy in Africa, placed Africa at the very end of the chain of Western capitalism, which, as a result, had left so great a negative influence on African economy that until now most African countries haven't yet diversified successfully their economic structure. In politics, the West dominated the African continent and the Africans never equally participated in the international political affairs or even African affairs. In culture, Western colonisers even cooked up various tales of

racism in defence of their slavery trade and colonial invasion. P. Olisanwuche Esedebe pointed out in his book that the vile aspersion and foul calumnies had been heaped upon African blacks for the last four centuries by Western oppressors to prop up the impious dogma of their [supposed] natural and inherent inferiority.¹⁶ What the Westerners did to Africans profaned their personality and dignity, smashed their self-esteem and self-confidence and caused the Africans to feel inferior to the whites culturally, mentally and physically, which was a potential and most lethal mental shackle imposed on the Africans. Up to the present, its negative impact is yet to be eliminated. Obviously, in modern history, Africa was involved in the world in a way of being invaded and enslaved.

It is quite controversial to what degree the colonisation in Africa by Western countries influenced the post-colonial relations between Africa and Western countries. In the report titled *The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: A Joint Africa-EU Strategy* issued by the EU in the EU-Africa Summit in 2007, it proclaimed that both Europe and Africa should 'move away from a traditional relationship and forge a real partnership characterized equality and the pursuit of common objectives'.¹⁷ The European scholars stress that the perceptions from linear continuations of colonial, post-colonial and Cold War politics could not reflect the intention of today's European policy towards Africa and the present EU-African relationship has transcended the old mode of it.¹⁸ However, it seems that the history of Western colonisation in Africa remains fresh in the memories of quite a lot of Africans who tend to relate Africa's current peripheral position in the world arena to the historical colonial system. Mwesiga Baregu, a Tanzanian professor of Politics and International Relations in the University of Dar es Salaam complains that 'Almost all of the African countries [...] still remain vertically integrated to the European countries creating a situation of persistent structural dependence'.¹⁹ Some Chinese scholars argue that although the present European policy towards Africa is not the extension of the old colonialism, its relation with Africa will inevitably be affected by the colonial experience in respect of ideas and policy towards Africa.²⁰ Some political reality seems to have approved this assumption. For instance, at present, France, Britain and some other European countries try to maintain special relations with African countries through political, economic and cultural links with them. In particular, France still keeps a permanent military base in Africa and in comparison with other Western countries it stations the largest number of soldiers in Africa. To France, Africa is its traditional sphere of influence and the important place of diplomacy. America did not carry out colonisation in Africa, however, it exerted wide-spread political influence in Africa through competing with the Soviet Union during the period of

¹⁶ P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: the Idea and Movement, 1776–1991* (Washington, DC: Howard University press, 1994), p. 18.

¹⁷ 'The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: A Joint Africa-EU Strategy', Lisbon, Portugal (7–9 December 2007), p. 3, {http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/Conferences/2007/December/eu-au/docs/joint_strategy_3_years_final_en.pdf}.

¹⁸ Uwe Wissenbach, 'The Renaissance or the End of Geopolitics? Towards Trilateral Cooperation in Africa', p. 85.

¹⁹ Mwesiga Baregu, 'Africa-China-EU: From the Perspective of Africa', *International Review* (Summer 2008), p. 68.

²⁰ Liu Xiaoping, 'Impacts of "Human Rights Orientation" in EU's Foreign Assistance on Africa', *Forum on Economy & Politics*, 3 (2009), pp. 24–32; Zhang Yongpeng, 'Comments on EU's Aid to Africa', *West Asia and Africa*, 6 (2003), pp. 34–42.

Cold War and maintaining hegemony after the Cold War. In view of the long-term colonial expansion conducted by Western countries in Asia and Africa in the past and the fact that such a history will remain long lasting in Asian and African people's memory, the Western countries should not simply complain that the Chinese and the Africans tend to stick to the old-fashioned ideas. Instead, they should put themselves in the Chinese and African people's position so as to understand their feelings and re-examine thoroughly their own foreign policies towards China and Africa. As to how to treat African countries equally, the Western countries may learn from China's experience of developing relations with African countries.

Compared with the relations between the West and Africa, the contemporary Sino-African relations took a quite different path. Sharing a common experience of being colonised by the West in history and being marginalised in the international system for a long term after political independence, both China and Africa yearned for equality and respect in the world arena. The Sino-African relationship of half a century mainly demonstrates three features.

First, in respect of politics the two sides stand together sharing weal and woe. In order to support African national liberation, the Chinese government selflessly offered African countries a great amount of aid to the best of its ability. It was estimated that from 1956 to 1977, China, despite its own great economic plight, offered economic aid amounting to \$2.476 billion to African countries, which accounted for 58 per cent of China's total foreign aid.²¹ What is mentioned most is the 1,860 km long Tanzania-Zambia railroad built by China from 1970 till 1976, which constituted great support for southern African countries' national independence and liberation movements. So far as power is concerned, neither China nor Africa by itself could counterbalance the Western countries or the alliance of them. However, during the special years in the past the unity of the Third World mainly comprised of Asian and African countries demonstrated tremendous strength which the West had to square up to.

Second, diplomatically the Chinese government treats African countries as equals. The Chinese government has been sticking to the diplomatic principles of 'sovereign equality' and 'non-interference in the internal affairs' ever since it began to establish diplomatic relations with African countries. So long as the African countries adhere to 'one-China' policy, the Chinese government will equally develop friendly relations with them despite the great difference in political ideas and modes and levels of development between the two sides.²² The most important feature of China's soft power lies in the ideas of respect and equality manifested in its foreign aid. Since the 1960s, the Chinese government has been pursuing a policy of offering aid to Africa without any political strings attached, which makes

²¹ Li Anshan, 'On the Adjustment and Transformation of China's Africa Policy', *West Asia and Africa*, 8 (2006), pp. 11–20.

²² 'China's African Policy' issued in 2006 by the Chinese government elaborates, 'The one-China principle is the political foundation for the establishment and development of China's relations with African countries and regional organizations. The Chinese Government appreciates the fact that the overwhelming majority of African countries abide by the one China principle, refuse to have official relations and contacts with Taiwan and support China's great cause of reunification. China stands ready to establish and develop state-to-state relations with countries that have not yet established diplomatic ties with China on the basis of the one China principle.' See 'China's African Policy', *People's Daily* (13 January 2006).

the great difference from that of Western countries. Moreover, so far as foreign aid to Africa is concerned, China never poses as an almsgiver. Instead, it places great emphasis on South-South cooperation and common development, trying to avoid words like 'donor' and 'aid receiver'.²³

Third, the Sino-African relations aim at economic mutual benefit and win-win. It is unnecessary to deny China's strategic intentions in Africa such as obtaining strategic resources, squeezing Taiwan's space of survival in Africa and so on. However, the basic starting point of China's policy towards Africa centres on helping African countries to cast off the economic dependence and realising the common development of developing countries. In order to lift Africa's capacity of industry development, China has set about to establish economic and trade cooperation zones in Zambia, Mauritius, Botswana, Egypt, Nigeria, Ethiopia. Meanwhile, in 2009 China decided to gradually accord the least developing African countries maintaining diplomatic ties with China a duty-free treatment of 95 per cent products from 2010 to 2012 so as to encourage their export to China.²⁴ The Angola Model of China's resource-backed aid to Africa had ever been widely criticised by the West, but frankly speaking, it undoubtedly enlarged African countries' export of resources, improved their infrastructure and at the same time increased the overseas resources supply to China.²⁵ Dr. Martyn J. Davies, the director of the Centre for Chinese Studies at Stellenbosch University in South Africa has acknowledged that, putting aside the moral judgments, China's aid to Africa is recognised by both China and Africa for its mutual benefit features.²⁶

The basic difference between China and the traditional colonial countries is that China does not attempt to attain any political claim against African countries. Just because China granted more economic aid to African countries with different aid policies from the West, they could have more choices in dealing with foreign relations and raise their international status. Mwesiga Baregu pointed out that the present Africa 'has at least two windows of opportunity', 'One is to embark seriously upon regional integration and continental unity [...] the second window is the opportunity to forge new relationships, particularly with the rapidly growing economics of China and India.'²⁷ Therefore it is an overestimation of China's influence in Africa to claim that China is carrying out neo-colonialism in Africa

²³ Professor Kenneth King once said that, in *China's African Policy* issued in 2006, China did not mention 'poverty' or 'poverty alleviation' and there was not even a clear expression of 'foreign aid' except the saying that 'In light of its own financial capacity and economic situation, China will do its best to provide and gradually increase assistance to African nations with no political strings attached.' See Kenneth King, 'The Partnership between China and Africa', *International Politics Quarterly*, 4 (2006), p. 13.

²⁴ 'Wen Jiabao: Promote a New Type of Sino-African Strategic Partnership', *People's Daily* (9 November 2009).

²⁵ Angola model refers to the resource-backed financing agreements signed between China and African countries. According to the agreement, the Chinese government provides mid-term or long-term loans for African countries to build infrastructure, social or industrial projects, the African countries concerned will provide China resources or products. Furthermore, in principle no less than 50 per cent of the contract's procurement in terms of equipments, materials, technology or services must come from China. Hannah Edinger and Johanna Jansson, 'China's "Angola Model" comes to the DRC', *the China Monitor*, 34, pp. 5–10.

²⁶ Martyn J. Davies, 'China's Foreign Aid Policy toward Africa', *World Economy and Politics*, 9 (2008), pp. 38–44.

²⁷ Mwesiga Baregu, 'Africa-China-EU: From the Perspective of Africa', *International Review* (Summer 2008), p. 72.

only because of the imbalance of economic structure of African countries.²⁸ Chinese premier Wen Jiabao said with perfect assurance when visiting Africa that the cap of neo-colonialism could never adorn the head of China.²⁹

III.b. Different concepts of development: Washington Consensus vs. Beijing Consensus?

From the 1980s, the Western countries impelled African countries to carry out an 'economic restructuring plan', 'political democratization' and 'good governance', which designated the essential philosophy of the Washington Consensus based on neo-liberalism.³⁰ It requires the developing countries to carry out liberalisation and privatisation of their economy with non-government control, the purpose of which is to let the market make its full play in economic life so that the role of the government can be reduced to the least. Theoretically, the Washington Consensus is gorgeous and perfect; however, practically it incurred failures in some countries. The 'economic restructuring plan' reduced some of the African countries and Latin American countries to the worst-hit ones in economic crisis; the 'shock remedy' led to the sharp drop of Russian development; the improper dealing with Asian financial crisis has once made the matter worse than ever.³¹ Though the 'Post-Washington Consensus', by increasing some contents such as governance, government control and mechanism building, made some amendment of the 'Washington Consensus' which over relies on the market and neglects the role of government and the social balance, nothing happened to the principle of liberalism held by the West.³²

²⁸ In recent years, the Chinese government responds to the critique of neo-colonialism in different occasions. It can be generalised in four points: the mainstream of Sino-African economic cooperation is good despite some problems; China's diplomacy with Africa is sincere and friendly and the negative activities of some individual enterprises have nothing to do with China's foreign policy; problems existing between the two sides are purely economic ones and can be solved; the African governments and scholars of insight hold positive comments on the Sino-African economic cooperation. See Luo Jianbo, 'The African NGOs and the Sino-African Relations', *Contemporary International Relations*, 4, pp. 10–15.

²⁹ Tunde Adelakun, 'Is the influence of China growing in Nigeria', {<http://www.helium.com/items/439062-is-the-influence-of-china-growing-in-nigeria>}.

³⁰ The term Washington Consensus was initially coined in 1989 by John Williamson to describe a set of ten specific economic policy prescriptions that he considered should constitute the 'standard' reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by Washington, DC-based institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the US Treasury Department. It includes the following recommendations: fiscal discipline; a redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary health care, primary education, and infrastructure; tax reform (to lower marginal rates and broaden the tax base); interest rate liberalisation; a competitive exchange rate; trade liberalisation; liberalisation of inflows of foreign direct investment; privatisation; deregulation (to abolish barriers to entry and exit); secure property rights. See John Williamson, 'What Washington Means by policy reform', in *Latin American adjustment: How much has happened?* (Institute for international economics, Washington, DC, 1990); Council on Hemispheric Affairs, *the IMF and the Washington Consensus: A misunderstood and poorly implemented development strategy* (19 July 2005), {<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wbimf/3493.html>}.

³¹ Zou Dongtao, "'Washington Consensus", "Beijing Consensus" and the Special Path of China's Development', in Yu Keping (ed.), *China Model and 'China Consensus': Transcend 'Washington Consensus'* (*zhongguo moshi yu 'Beijing gongshi': chaoyue 'Huashengdun gongshi'*) (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2006), pp. 409–34.

³² About the 'Post-Washington Consensus', please see World Bank, World Development Report: *The State in a Changing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 111.

The 'Beijing Consensus' represents another model of economic growth or even the path of social development. This term was first put forward in May 2004 by Joshua Cooper Ramo, a senior consultant of Goldman Sachs, to summarise the model of China's economic and social development since the opening-up and reform in 1978. According to Ramo, 'commitment to innovation and constant experimentation' is essential to the success of the Beijing Consensus. The basic experience includes: advancing cautiously instead completely relying on Western experience; pushing forward reform gradually instead of adopting radical 'shock remedy'; taking the advantage of market economy and at the same time maintaining and giving full play to the capability of macro-management and mobilisation of the government; encouraging creation and innovation and meanwhile handling properly the relations between development, reform and stability.³³ The 'Beijing Consensus' attracted close attention worldwide and become an important topic concerning China's rise and its soft power.

While the Chinese government has never officially used such terms as Beijing Consensus' or 'China Model', instead, it prefers the term 'Chinese experiences in development'.³⁴ Some Chinese scholars hold that, during the course of modernisation, China has accumulated quite a lot of experience and lessons some of which the African countries can learn from. For instance, they can learn from China the ways to enhance the government authority and the ability to mobilise people, to achieve social stability and ethnic harmony, to make full play of foreign aid and to alleviate poverty.³⁵ So far as poverty alleviation is concerned, China has gained outstanding success. According to statistics by the Chinese government, the rural populations in absolute poverty in China has reduced from 250 million in 1978 to 14.79 million in 2007, which accounted for 55 per cent of the population alleviated from poverty throughout the whole world and 75 per cent of that of the developing countries.³⁶ China has achieved the UN Millennium Development Goal of reducing half of the population in poverty ahead of time. Leaders of African countries attended the Beijing Summit of FOCAC not only for the aid and trade opportunities but also for the development model of China. In the article 'At the Heavenly Gate Hope Is Born' written after the summit meeting by the then President Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki of South Africa, he applauded the Sino-African cooperation and said that it would bring Africa to a promising future.³⁷ The president of Senegal even pointed out, 'not just Africa but the west itself has much to learn from China.'³⁸ As to those African countries confronting with serious

³³ Joshua Cooper Ramo (ed.), *The China Image: China in the Eyes of Foreign Scholars* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2006), pp. 283–333. (Chinese version)

³⁴ For instance, the *Declaration of the Beijing Summit Of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (Draft)* issued by China and Africa in 2006 proclaimed 'Increase exchange of views on governance and development to learn from each other, make common progress and enhance our respective capacity for self-development.' See 'Declaration of the Beijing Summit Of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation', *People's Daily* (6 November 2006).

³⁵ Li Anshan, 'Chinese Experiences in Development: Some Implications for Africa', in Liu Hongwu and Yang Jiemin (eds), *Fifty Years of Sino-African Cooperation: Background, Progress & Significance* (Yunnan University Press, 2009), pp. 81–90.

³⁶ 'China is an Important Practitioner of Poverty Alleviation among the World', *People's Daily* (2 September 2008).

³⁷ Thabo Mbeki, 'At the Heavenly Gate in Beijing Hope is Born', *ANC Today* (10 November 2006).

³⁸ Abdoulaye Wade, 'Time for the West to Practice What it Preaches', *Financial Times* (24 January 2008).

issues of governance, they do need an effective and uncorrupted government and a development model of their own. Maybe this is where the great attraction of China's development model lies for Africa.

During the years of Cold War, the world was divided into the East and the West. The developing countries chose to take either the West or Soviet Union as a model. After the Cold War, the West behaved as a proud 'history terminator' to promote its political ideas and development model in the developing world. China's rapid development brought light of hope for the developing countries which experienced great difficulty in their development after achieving political independence to independently realise their national revival. China's success provides a new option and possibility for Africa's development, the African countries 'look eastward' and attempt to independently explore a development path of their own. China's development experience demonstrates its tremendous attraction and influence, enhances China's soft power and earns China the international say. Ramo remarks that China is showing other countries how to protect their ways of living and political choice and is demonstrating its power through being a marvellous example and exerting formidable influence as a big nation other than by traditional means.³⁹ A certain prominent foreign-policy specialist in Britain even sees the ability of Beijing to present an alternative political-economic model as 'the biggest ideological threat the west has felt since the end of the Cold War'.⁴⁰ Without any doubt, to some extent, the future development of African countries through their own choices will not meet the Western expectation, which will surely result in uneasiness and confusion of the West.

III.c. Difference between diplomatic principles: interference or non-interference of internal affairs?

Based on political liberalism, the Western countries are inclined to promote their values of human rights, democracy and standard of good governance in African countries by means of economic aid with political strings. Or they interfere in the internal affairs of African countries in the name of protecting human rights. Facts indicate the history of the West's attempt to dominate the world development in comply with their own will. In early history, the Europeans conducted slavery trade and colonial rule in Africa; later they imposed political and economic control over the independent African countries; during the years of Cold War and after the end of it, they carried out various 'economic restructuring plans' and humanitarian intervention. In 2004, America set up the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) to offer aid to Benin, Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania so as to encourage more countries to step up the road of good governance. To be frank, the Western human rights policy towards Africa may not be unjustified and their foreign policies are not always egoistic, but their international intervention always results in imposing their own value system and interest on the African countries.

³⁹ Joshua Cooper Ramo (ed.), *The China Image: China in the Eyes of Foreign Scholars*, pp. 283–333.

⁴⁰ Mark Leonard, 'The Road Obscured: New Left or "Neo-Comm"?', *Financial Times* (9 July 2005); also see Bates Gill and Yan Zhong Huang, 'Sources and Limits of Chinese "Soft Power"', *Survival*, 48:2 (2006), pp. 17–36.

The Chinese government sticks to the basic principle of ‘non-interference of internal affairs’ when dealing relations with African countries, which is also the basis of Chinese foreign policy. The principle has the following connotations. First, the Chinese government firmly believe that the African countries have the ability to choose their own path of development and will not intervene in their politics and economy, but that doesn’t mean that China turns a blind eye to Africa’s peace and development. On the contrary, during the past 50 years, the Chinese government stood together with African countries to combat imperialism, colonialism and racism, and helped them to realise their self-independence through supporting the construction of key infrastructure projects. Till now, China totally has helped African countries construct 519 infrastructure projects, among which are 375 public facilities and 144 economic infrastructure projects, and build 2,233 km of railroad, 3,391 km of highroad, 10 bridges and stadiums and gymnasiums which can hold 780,000 people.⁴¹ Ever since China participated in the UN peace-keeping operations in Africa in 1991, it has dispatched peace-keeping forces amount to 4,300 soldiers to take part in UN missions in 10 areas of Africa. At present, there are still 2,000 Chinese peace-keeping soldiers involved in six UN operations.⁴² Second, the principle also means the Sino-African relationship has risen above the ideological difference. So long as the African countries stick to ‘one-China’ policy, China will equally establish diplomatic relations with them despite the different culture, political system and diplomatic ideas; and third, the principle also means that the Sino-African relationship is not aimed at any third party.

The Western countries allege that China’s policy towards Africa which separates politics from economy not only clashes against European diplomatic principles dealing with African affairs after the Cold War, but also impedes the progress of good governance of African countries. Therefore, they demand China’s participation in the multilateral aid and investment so as to bring China into the established international system and force it to play by the given rules. As a matter of fact, China also shows great concern about the effect of African governance which is sharply differently from the Western good governance. Some Chinese scholars argue that the good governance in Africa preached by the West is based on Western values and copies the Western political system, which may turn Africa into a ‘White Africa’ in the end. China’s policy towards Africa lays stress on the effective performance of the government, the political stability and proper economic policy.⁴³ China will not accept the Western political values, nor will the African countries practice the so-called ‘good governance’ completely in comply with Western values.

⁴¹ ‘Enhance Sino-African Cooperation and Improve Foreign Aid Efficiency’, *People’s Daily* (9 February 2009).

⁴² The missions are African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). See ‘UN Peacekeeping’, {<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/currentops.shtml#africa>}.

⁴³ Fang Xiao, ‘Sino-European Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges’, *International Review* (Summer 2008), pp. 139–43.

IV. Can China and the West achieve a win-win result in promoting Africa's development?

According to constructivism, the international structure is in a course of dynamic development, and communications and contacts between actors will reconstruct new knowledge and identification of each other, which in turn will lead to the changes of relations between actors.⁴⁴ Therefore, China and the West should transcend differences and suspicions and spare no efforts to attain a result of win-win in dealing with African affairs.

IV.a. Adjustment of ideas and ways of thinking

In light of perception of each other's diplomatic strategies and policy towards Africa, there have cropped up to some extent emotional or even ideological viewpoints in China and the West. The sentimental denouncement only leads to more differences and contradictions between each other, while frank dialogues will offer a way out. Therefore, it is imperative for both sides to change from their rigid, one-sided and even Cold War thinking to more open and cooperative one to achieve a multilateral win-win.

The West should look upon the Sino-African relations more rationally and pragmatically. It is vital for the West to understand the following facts: (1) The Sino-African relationship doesn't bear any sign of ideology and the strategic cooperation between the two sides doesn't aim at any third party. China doesn't seek to challenge the established political and economic links between the West and Africa. As a matter of fact, China has no ability to do that in the near future. (2) China will adjust its foreign policy in comply with the UN's resolutions and the real requirements of African countries. In recent years, China has begun to interpret and apply the principle of 'non-interference of internal affairs' in a more flexible way, supporting and participating actively in the UN peace-keeping operations in Africa. For instance, since 2006, China has been urging Sudan government in various ways to cooperate practically with the AU and the UN, and, to some extent, has helped to bring about the restart of the political compromise process in Sudan and the deployment of AU-UN peace-keeping forces, which earned China high praise in the international community.⁴⁵ (3) The Sino-African trade cooperation is more open and transparent and possesses no sign of exclusivity. Though China does maintain intimate political relations with some African countries, it relies on low price, high quality, good service and the so-earned reputation to gain the upper hand in biddings in Africa instead of taking advantage of politics. (4) China's economy in Africa is exaggerated too much by the Westerners. The oil assets of Chinese companies are left far behind of those of

⁴⁴ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005), pp. 1–58. (Chinese version)

⁴⁵ On 13 March 2008, the *Economist* published an article titled 'The New Colonialists', pointing out that China was getting hungrier for commodities. But meanwhile, it also mentioned the positive changes of its foreign policy, especially its policy adjustment towards Darfur issue. The *Economist* print edition, 'The New Colonialists', *The Economist* (13 March 2008), {http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10853534}.

European and American transnational companies.⁴⁶ In 2006, the total oil output of Chinese companies in only arrived at 267,000 barrels a day, which only amounted to one third of that of Exxon Mobil, the largest foreign oil company in Africa.⁴⁷ In April 2008, The Chinese Foreign Ministry voiced its opposition to censures of Sino-African energy cooperation by European Parliament, 'In light of scale and quality, China's energy cooperation with African countries lags far behind of that between European countries and America with Africa. 79% of the African oil output is for export, among which 36% is exported to Europe, 33% to America and long 8.7% to China. If the share of 8.7% is regarded as "plundering energy", so what is the share of 36%?"⁴⁸ (5) The Sino-African trade cooperation has attained and is attaining achievements. The low-priced Chinese goods has conformed to the consumption level of ordinary Africans and improved their life quality. China's investment and aid has brought forth African economic development and flourished African market, which is objectively beneficial to Western countries. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) acknowledged that the Sino-African trade, China's investment and aid played an active role in Africa's development, which facilitated the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goal in Africa.⁴⁹ (6) Chinese enterprises are at the stage of exploiting international market and capital accumulation. They lack management experience in the international market. Therefore, there is much room for some enterprises to improve their images of social responsibility. But in the long run, they certainly will adjust their trade activities in accordance with international practice. Professor Fredrick Mutesa of Zambia University indicated that the Chambishi Copper Mining Company belonging to China Nonferrous Metal Mining Co., Ltd is gradually improving the working conditions and raising salary by learning lessons from the gas explosion in April 2005 and the strike of Zambian workers in July 2006.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that the negative activities of certain Chinese enterprises tell nothing of China's policy towards Africa. Thomas J. Christensen and James Swan has ever cautioned their colleagues, 'We must distinguish between Chinese energy companies' pursuit of exploration agreements and the Chinese government's Africa policy [...] There are often exaggerated charges that Chinese firms' activities or investment decisions are coordinated by the Chinese government as some sort of strategic gambit in the high-stakes game of

⁴⁶ The American Council on Foreign Relations admitted, 'Despite new investment from Asia, the US, the UK, and France still account for 70 per cent of foreign direct investment in Africa. US oil companies still lead in the offshore extraction technology critical to West Africa's growing energy production. The US continues to import substantially from African oil and gas producers, and the market is still controlled more by international supply and demand than by any individual country's manipulations.' See The American Council on Foreign Relations, *More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic US Approach toward Africa*, Independent Task Force Report No. 56 (New York, 2006), p. 53.

⁴⁷ Erica S. Downs, 'The Fact and Fiction of Sino-African Energy Relations', *China Security*, 3:3 (2007), pp. 43-7.

⁴⁸ Spokeswoman Jiang Yu Holds the Regular Press Conference on 24 April 2008, {<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/xwfw/fyrth/t428635.htm>}.

⁴⁹ UK Department for International Development, 'Cooperate with China to Realize the Millennium Development Goal in Africa', {<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/China/partners.asp>}.

⁵⁰ Fredrick Mutesa, 'China's footprints in Zambia', Paper presented at the meeting of 'China's Footprint in Development Countries Research Sharing Workshop', Hong Kong, YMCA International House (22-24 January).

global energy security. In reality, Chinese firms compete for profitable projects not only with more technologically and politically savvy international firms, but also with each other.⁵¹

China and African countries should recognise the good will of Western diplomatic relations with African countries. At least until present, the Western countries led by the EU and America have played an active role in promoting Africa's peace and development, or even a leading role in some aspects. Both China and African countries should, in accordance with the changes of international situations, re-examine the Western countries' global role and policy adjustment towards Africa. Certainly, out of the historical inertial thinking and the actual interests, the Western countries will continue to strive for the safeguard of the leading status against other new rising powers in Africa. However, there have happened some positive changes of the Western policy towards Africa since the 21st century. On the one hand, they begin to stress the equal relations with African countries. France proclaimed to cast off the post-colonialism attitude and build a new partnership with African countries. For that, in 1998, the title of the France-Africa summit meeting was changed from the 'Conference of Heads of State of France and Africa' to the 'Conference of Heads of State of Africa and France'.⁵² In the *National Security Strategy of the US of America* published in 2006, the relationship between America and Africa was described as 'friendly partnership' instead of paternalism.⁵³ At present, the US and Europe have acknowledged that the old mode of relationship with Africa has gone and they cannot take Africa as their *Chasse garde* any more. On the other hand, the Western countries advocate multilateralism in dealing with African affairs. In view of China's and India's fast increasing influence in Africa, the Western countries cautiously welcome China and Indian to participate in the activities promoting Africa's peace and development. Under this circumstance, the international multilateral cooperation relating to African affairs has been launched, while it is behind time to still seek to gain absolute monopolised interests in Africa.

China and the Western countries should take Africa's development as the starting point and take full consideration of interests and advantage of Africa during the multilateral cooperation. As far as cooperation is concerned, Africa should be treated as an equal partner and a stake-holder instead of an object to be preyed upon. The members of the AU have been hanging together to enhance their own self-reliance and dominance in Africa's development. Therefore, the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) specially lays stress on determination of destiny by African countries themselves and the new type of equal relations with developed countries as well as the international multilateral institutions.⁵⁴ Based on the AU and according to the prime goals of NEPAD, African countries should maintain a clear, coordinative and unanimous stance to advance their relations with China and the West. African countries need to reach

⁵¹ Thomas J. Christensen and James Swan, 'China in Africa: Implications for US Policy', {<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2008/hrg080604a.html>}.

⁵² Rachel Utley, "'Not to do less but to do better...': French military policy in Africa", *Internal Affairs*, 78:1 (2002), pp. 129–46.

⁵³ 'The National Security Strategy of the US of America', {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>}.

⁵⁴ 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development', {<http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/documents/inbrief.pdf>}.

a strategic consensus regarding their own development both under the framework of the AU and at the level of nations. Only in this way can Africa enjoy an equal status that cannot be ignored in a to-be-constructed international multilateral cooperation.

IV. b. Field and path of cooperation

The related parties should propel the cooperation in African pragmatically and gradually. At the first stage, cooperation and coordination can be carried out in light of projects and specific problems. Priority should be given to the following fields: (1) Field of environment which includes food crisis, natural disasters, climate changes and water resources. Non-traditional issues in the field of Environment not only diminish what Africa has achieved in economic development, but also constitute potential roots of political conflicts. For instance, the Darfur Crisis is directly due to the contending for water and soil resources by related parties.⁵⁵ (2) Field of energy. It serves the common interests of every party to ensure the rational development and effective supply of energy and to prevent the unreasonable rising of energy price which breaks with the balance between supply and demand. (3) Field of infrastructure. Backwardness in infrastructure is the bottleneck restricting Africa's economic development; therefore, the AU and the NEPAD place this field at top priority. Western countries' capital and project management experience and China's engineering technology of low price and high quality can complement each other and promote Africa's infrastructure construction. (4) Field of peace and security. These are prerequisites for development. Therefore it is in the interest of Africa, the EU and China to cooperate in order to promote stability and prosperity in African countries and to work together to assist with AU peace-keeping operations, capacity building and training. (5) Field of education and public health. China has gained abundant experience in medical and educational aid work,⁵⁶ while various Western charity institutions, churches and social groups have been engaging in primary education and public health work at the grass roots of African countries. China and Western countries can strengthen cooperation in respect of human resources development and combating diseases such as malaria, Aids and tuberculosis.

After gaining experience and mutual trust in the above fields, the parties concerned can carry out cooperation in political fields such as governance of Africa, political ideas and development models and so on. Through consultation and coordination, they can reduce suspicion and enmity between each other and enhance mutual trust and understanding. Anyhow, the fundamental way out for Africa is to find a development model of its own and a path to build self-esteem and dignity internally.

⁵⁵ Luo Jianbo and Jiang Hengkun, 'Settlement of Darfur Crisis and the Shaping of China's Image', *Foreign Affairs Review*, 3 (2008), pp. 44–50; Adam Al-Zein Mohamed and Al-Tayeb Ibrahim Weddai (eds), *Perspectives on tribal conflicts in Sudan* (Institute of Afro-Asian Studies: University of Khartoum 1998).

⁵⁶ For the past 50 years, China has assisted to construct 900 complete projects in Africa, trained 30,000 personnel for Africa and dispatched 17,000 medical workers to 43 African countries. See 'Enhance Sino-African Cooperation and Improve Foreign Aid Efficiency', *People's Daily* (9 February 2009).

IV.c. Cooperation mechanism and bodies

The cooperation mechanism can be bilateral. For instance, China and Europe regularly hold talks concerning African affairs through consultation channels such as China and Europe Strategic Dialogue Mechanism and Asia and Europe Conference. Besides the EU, China and Britain as well as other European powers built a mechanism of trust and a mechanism of conveying information regularly to discuss international development including Africa's development. In light of aid to Africa, the Sino-Britain cooperation aims at fulfilling Africa's self-development especially the goals proposed by the AU and NEPAD.⁵⁷ Topics of African affairs have also entered into the agenda of China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue which has been held two rounds and other high-level talks between China and the US. The cooperation mechanism can also be a trilateral one involving China, Europe and Africa or China, America and Africa. In June 2007, the EU initiated a seminar entitled 'EU, Africa and China: Competitive Partners?' and the trilateral cooperation among China, Europe and Africa rapidly became a hot topic in Europe. In October 2008, the EU commission issued a policy paper titled *The EU, Africa and China: Towards Trilateral Dialogue and Cooperation*, proposing to build a long term cooperation mechanism involving China, Europe and Africa at a continental level, a regional level, and country (Ambassador) level.⁵⁸ In the short run, in view of the EU's experience of dealing with regional issues in flexible ways and its being more inclined to multilateralism than America, China can first carry out the trilateral cooperation with the EU and Africa. While in the long run, a broader cooperation mechanism involving China, Europe, America and Africa is also strongly suggested.

Besides the official channels, communication and cooperation among related parties at the civil level are also of great significance, for civil contacts can facilitate the mutual understanding so as to eliminate the established prejudice and misperceptions. The Africa-China-US Trilateral Dialogue launched by the Brenthurst Foundation of South Africa, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation was held three times in South Africa, China and America from 2006 to 2007. It reached a final statement indicating the possibility and the roadmap of trilateral cooperation among Africa, China and America.⁵⁹ In March 2008, the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung of Germany jointly sponsored a seminar titled 'China-Europe-Africa cooperation: Chances and Challenges'. 50 scholars and officials from Africa, Europe and China attended the seminar and discussed the trilateral cooperation among the three sides. In view of the criticism which mainly comes from the West and the civil society in Africa, China should place stress on conducting dialogues and communications with medias and NGOs in African countries and Western countries which exert great public or political influence in the

⁵⁷ UK Department for International Development, 'Cooperate with China to Realize the Millennium Development Goal in Africa', {<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/China/partners.asp>}.

⁵⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', {http://ec.europa.eu/development/icentre/repository/COMM_PDF_COM_2008_0654_F_COMMUNICATION_en.pdf}.

⁵⁹ 'The Final Statement of the Dialogue between Africa, China and the US of America', *West Asia and Africa*, 1 (2008), pp. 63–5.

international community. In 2005, the China NGO Network for International Exchanges was founded to propel China's NGOs to step in African countries and Western countries.⁶⁰ In the coming years, the Chinese government should do its utmost to mobilise the civil diplomacy resources to enhance trust and diminish suspicion through civil communications. Civil diplomacy had ever played a vital role in making a breakthrough in new China's diplomatic relations with other nations. The Chinese government should continue to take the advantage of this 'second-track diplomacy' in the future.

Conclusion

The multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and the Western countries which is still in its infancy constitutes a topic needing further discussion. The multilateral cooperation mechanism and the structure of interest distribution are yet to be established. It serves China's diplomatic interest to formulate relevant prospective and foresighted policies. At the strategic level, China should actively and cautiously re-examine this new topic. On the one hand, China should welcome the Western countries' attention to African affairs and the Sino-African relations and maintain a constructive stance to participate or even actively promote the coordination and cooperation among all parties in respect of African affairs. On the other hand, China should act with prudence to make no haste in respect of mechanism building. China's national power is rising rapidly; therefore, the Chinese government should take the increase of its political and economic interest into consideration when making any mechanism arrangement so as to leave enough room its own development. At the policy level, China should maintain the dynamic balance between multilateral diplomacy and bilateral diplomacy and that between official diplomacy and public diplomacy. At the same time, China should not only conduct coordination and cooperation with Western powers and African regional powers, but also develop relations with the EU, the AU and other regional organisations.

⁶⁰ Some of the Chinese non-governmental organisations begin to become active in Africa. On 7–15 December 2009, China NGO Network for International Exchanges, China Family Planning Association, Beijing NGO Association for International Exchanges and Beijing Charity Association jointly carried out a training programme on prevention of HIV/AIDS in Harare, Zimbabwe together with Zimbabwe New Hope Foundation and Africa Medical-Volunteer Association.