

China and Africa: Policy and Challenges*

Li Anshan

Fifteen years ago, in an article entitled “China and Africa,” Gerald Segal predicted that China, as a rising global power, would be more important to Africa than vice versa – he even surmised that Africa would be the region of least importance to China’s foreign policy.¹ A look at current Sino-African relations clearly refutes Segal’s prophesies. In fact, Africa is very important to China. In January 2006, *China’s African Policy*, the white paper promulgated by the Chinese government was the first of its kind in China’s diplomatic history with Africa. This document embodies a comprehensive and long-term plan for enhanced cooperation in Sino-Africa relations, and it marks a milestone in the progress that China and Africa have made together.

A popular perception in the international community is that the recent rapid developments of the Sino-African relationship have arisen after a long, dormant period, revealing China’s new and potentially unsettling ambitions in Africa. Many Western scholars opine that China neglected Africa in practice in the past

Li Anshan is professor at the School of International Studies, Peking University and the associate director of the Chinese Society for African History Studies. He has published Research of African Nationalism as well as other books.

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30 years, and that its recent comprehensive engagement with the region not only reflects a set of ambitious and unsettling goals on the continent but that a competitive quest for energy, trade and geopolitical interests will underscore that agenda.²

Such viewpoints stress practical aspects of China's policy toward Africa, but fail to convey the most important element in Sino-African relations: that the development of the relationship over the past 50 years has been based on "equal treatment, respect for sovereignty and common development."³ Despite many shifts in the interactions between China and Africa, certain principles have remained constant, underpinning the relationship. To accurately judge China's strategic considerations in the Sino-Africa relationship, it is important to understand both aspects of continuity and change in China's policy towards Africa.

Transitions

Sino-African Relations are not new – dating back to ancient times and progressing gradually based on common historical experiences.⁴ However, it wasn't until 1956, when Egypt became the first African nation to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.), that inter-governmental relations between the P.R.C. and African countries were inaugurated. Over the subsequent half-century, the trajectory of Sino-African relations went through several fundamental shifts.

Ideological Beginnings

From the establishment of the P.R.C. to its economic opening (1949-1978), China's Africa policy was heavily influenced by ideology. During this period, China's foreign policy was deeply impacted by the unique international environment of the time.⁵ China placed itself on the front line of the struggle against colonialism, imperialism and revisionism in the Third World.⁶ By linking its ideological stand with its foreign policy, China's diplomacy in Africa was initially circumscribed by Beijing's ideological position.⁷ In the wake of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, China accused the pro-Soviet communist parties in various

African countries of “revisionism,” regarding them as ideological rivals. Based on this political bias, China refused requests by some African nations to establish diplomatic relations.⁸ All ties between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and pro-Soviet political parties in Africa were severed.

Although the political atmosphere dramatically changed in China during the mid-1960s, a dogmatic approach was maintained in relations with Africa. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, China’s diplomacy was affected by an ultra-leftist mentality. Some scholars have described China’s aims in Africa at that time as promoting Maoism.⁹ The slogan “exporting revolution” became the primary objective toward Africa, which was challenged by African countries on the re-

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ceiving end. This campaign threatened the power and position of many African governments and deviated from the principle of “non-interference in internal affairs.”¹⁰ Thus, only a handful of groups in Africa (for example the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party) sustained contact with the CPC. In the end of 1960s, China ended its policy of “exporting revolution” and started to provide more aid to Africa that was “free and unconditional.” As a result, the broad-based relationship between China and Africa gradually recovered.¹¹

Using free aid as the basis to build bilateral relations was an approach largely formulated in 1963-64, when Premier Zhou Enlai visited Africa and proposed the *Five Principles Governing the Development of Relations with Arab and African Countries* and the *Eight Principles of Economic Assistance*.¹² During this period, China supported the political struggles for African independence as well as provided some free aid to Africa.¹³ It was a time when China also helped African countries build a number of landmark structures (e.g. stadiums, hospitals, conference centers) – projects that were more than just bricks and mortar constructions – that were national symbols of independence and embodied the spirit of cultural decolonization.¹⁴ These China-supported projects played an important role in the formation of African nationhood.¹⁵ Despite very high economic costs, these projects provided

important assistance to African countries in need of moral support, and also resulted in positive impressions of China in the minds of the African people, laying a solid foundation for the path ahead in Sino-African relations.¹⁶ By 1978, China had established diplomatic relations with 43 African countries.

Diversification

The end of the Cultural Revolution marked a shift in China's policy toward Africa from one based almost exclusively on ideological alliance to one with a far more pragmatic and diversified approach.

With a new political direction and the uncertainty of economic development in China, the period from 1979-1982 saw a temporary fluctuation in Sino-African relations: economic aid was reduced, accompanied by a decline in bilateral trade and a drop in the number of mission medical teams.¹⁷ The 12th CPC National Assembly in 1982 officially marked a shift from a policy that emphasized "war and revolution" to one emphasizing "peace and development." Likewise, China shifted from policies that emphasized that "economy serves diplomacy" to policies based on "diplomacy serves the economy." In the same year, the Chinese premier visited Africa and announced the *Four Principles on Economic and Technological Cooperation with Africa*.¹⁸ This shifted the focus to practical effectiveness in assistance and in relations more generally, as well as to a spirit of "developing together."

The 12th CPC Assembly decided on two strategic elements that had implications for China's policy toward Africa: the first that the country would emphasize Chinese domestic economic development; and the second that China would pursue a peaceful and independent foreign policy.¹⁹ These were relevant to Africa in that China sought to bring the relationship down to earth and base it on very practical goals that were within its means. The 12th CPC National Assembly established principles for a new type of interstate political relationship based on "Independence, Complete Equality, Mutual Respect, Non-interference in Others' Internal Affairs."²⁰ Such shifts led to party-to-party relations between the CPC and numerous African governments of various stripes, gave great impetus for the development of its relations with Africa and represented a breakthrough in the

diplomatic history of the P.R.C. Sino-African inter-party relations ensured that the two sides maintained a steady keel despite the numerous political transitions of African governments. By 2002, the CPC had established relations with more than 60 political parties in 40 Sub-Saharan countries, which included both ruling and non-ruling parties.²¹ Relations based on these principles have convinced many Africans of China's sincerity in respecting African political choices and helping to promote economic and trade cooperation.²²

This new direction also shifted China's focus to "economic co-development" in its work with Africa. Therefore more extensive cooperation took place on far more diverse levels than previously.

From 1949 to 1978, China's policy toward Africa focused mainly on politics, fully supporting the independence movements in Africa, which went beyond mere moral support and extended to the provision of weapons and human assistance to cultivate military and political power for the movement.²³ Following the wave of national independence throughout

most of Africa, China sought Africa as an ally in its struggles against imperialism and hegemony.²⁴ During these times of political orientation, economic aid was provided to

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Africa gratis even though China's own domestic economic circumstances were far from optimal. Despite the Soviet Union supplying more arms than other nation to Africa during the 1970s, its economic aid to the continent was far behind that of China.²⁵ In short, relations were narrow in scope and without a practical or sustainable basis.

China's new approach, however, expanded its relations with Africa in many ways, including enhanced economic and trade cooperation, cultural and educational exchange, medical and public health, military exchange and non-governmental communications.²⁶

Spirit of Co-development

Another noteworthy shift in China's African policy was the change from pro-

viding aid for free to aid intended to benefit both sides economically.

From 1956 to 1978, China aided Africa with billions of dollars despite the fact that China's own economic situation was precarious. History has shown that aid alone is unlikely to significantly transform the reality of African poverty.²⁷ Thus, in the 1980s, China attuned its economic assistance to Africa by attempting to help Africa help itself. Improving Africa's ability to self-develop was seen to be more useful than free economic aid. China also began to explore reforming its foreign trade system and its approaches to foreign aid. Economic assistance began to include other forms of support such as preferential and discounted loans, cooperatives and joint ventures for projects in Africa.²⁸ Cooperatives and joint ventures helped to bring new technology and management practices to projects in Africa, while preferential loans pressed African nations to use money effectively.²⁹ Sixteen African countries benefited from such initiatives during the first two years of China's new aid policy.³⁰ Such shifts were, however, not a retreat by China from its commitment to relations with Africa. On the contrary, it sped up and expanded economic cooperation between the two sides.

Since diplomatic relations were first established in 1956, China's African policy has shifted from an unsustainable and ideologically-motivated approach, to political pragmatism and on to the present relationship based on economic pragmatism. While these shifts have markedly changed Sino-African relations over the past 50 years, another look reveals the persistence of core principles that continue to underpin the relationship.

Policies Change, Not Principles

Equality

Principles of equal treatment, a respect for sovereignty, noninterference, mutual benefit and co-development have endured. China is highly sensitized to notions of *sovereignty* and *equality* among nations. This is largely due to the fact that violations of China's sovereignty by other major powers and the intervention of outside powers into China's internal affairs have been salient diplomatic threats since the foundation of the P.R.C.³¹ Past experience has led China's foreign policy

to embrace a principle of “noninterference” in the internal affairs of other sovereign countries. This principle emphasizes sovereignty as the common denominator among all nations regardless of other factors, and fundamentally holds that all countries should be equal and no country has the right to dictate the sovereign affairs of others.

This principle of noninterference has served to safeguard China’s own sovereign rights. Take human rights as an example. The West is inclined to believe that human rights have historically arisen from a need to protect citizens from abuse by the state, which might suggest that all nations have a duty to intervene and protect people wherever they are. But the developing countries, including China and most African nations, argue that state sovereignty is paramount, not least because the human rights protection regime is a state-based mechanism. A noninterference principle holds that human rights should not be a reason for one country to interfere in another’s internal affairs.³² By holding to this principle, China can both ensure its own sovereignty and gain the trust of African nations. Over the past decade, human rights proposals against China were defeated 11 times at the United Nations. Without African nations’ support, China could not have defeated those proposals.

The principle of noninterference has served to safeguard China’s own sovereign rights.

Both China and Africa have suffered the ill-effects of the colonial era. This shared experience underlies the ideas of equality and respect for sovereignty that each highlight in their approach to international relations. For example, China shares the position of noninterference with the African Union on the Zimbabwean issue. In 2005, when Robert Mugabe demolished countless urban dwellings in an attempt to crack down on illegal shantytowns in Harare, Britain and the United States called on the African Union to act. However the African Union felt that it wasn’t appropriate for the African Union Commission to start running the internal affairs of member-states and gave Mugabe its blessing to resist sanctions imposed by the West.³³

In the context of Darfur, there is debate among the international community

over whether or not the situation there should be described as “genocide,” invoking a responsibility on the part of the international community to protect the people there. The United States was the only major player to describe the conflict as “genocide,” neither the United Nations nor regional organizations use this term to describe that complex issue.³⁴ While the situation in Darfur is complicated, China and Africa share the view that different countries are in different stages of development and it is neither fair nor effective to use the standard of developed countries to judge the situation of developing countries. This foreign policy approach has remained unchanged since the beginning of Sino-African relations.

But the principle of noninterference is not absolute to the African Union. When joining the African Union, all members agreed on the aim of bringing an end to intra-African conflict. In Sierra Leone and Liberia the African Union has stepped in to halt humanitarian disasters. In Togo and Mauritania, the African Union intervened in support of democracy. China respects the African Union’s principles and the goal to end conflict on the continent, but views itself as having no right to intervene in the domestic affairs of African countries as an outsider.

And though there are many critics of China’s absolute adherence to the principle of noninterference, even in the face of human rights violations and political corruption in African countries,³⁵ China does not consider itself qualified to make judgments on the domestic affairs of African countries and considers the African Union more qualified to do so. China’s policy of noninterference does not equate to ignoring humanitarian disasters, rather that China respects the sovereignty of nations and acknowledges its limits in solving such a crisis. In diplomatic discussions with African nations, China does make suggestions on issues of governance and intra-state affairs. What distinguishes Chinese suggestions from Western interventions is that they are provided in a friendly rather than coercive manner.

On the issue of Darfur, China has consistently opposed economic sanctions on Sudan.³⁶ China believes the Darfur issue is an issue related to development,

where sanctions would only bring more trouble to the region, especially in light of a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2007 report that states: “Environmental degradation, as well as regional climate instability and change, are major underlying causes of food insecurity and conflict in Darfur.”³⁷ Since the Darfur issue is a conflict between different Sudanese peoples, and nation building is a difficult process for any country (in the United States for example, the civil war killed about 600,000 people after 80 years of independence), the international community has to give Sudan some time to solve this problem. China’s aid targets the root cause of conflict – poverty. China has aided infrastructure development such as schools, hospitals and water projects for Sudan. China has already given US\$10 million in humanitarian aid and promised to offer more.³⁸

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China also insists on using influence without interference – they view respect as vital to finding solutions. China has used its ties with Sudan to persuade the Sudanese government to cooperate with the United Nations.³⁹ Since China has sought to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people with a solution agreeable to all parties, the Sudanese government trusts China. Recently, the Sudanese government has accepted the “hybrid peacekeeping force” in Darfur.⁴⁰ The turning point for the political process resulted from negotiations with the Sudanese government based on equality – not coercion or the threat of sanctions.

This principle of noninterference reflects China’s respect for the economic and political choices that African nations make: a position, it should be noted, that does not always play to China’s advantage. In fact, during the past 50 years, China has never used its aid commitments to intervene in African internal affairs.⁴¹ In 2003, a Canadian oil firm decided to sell its interests in Sudan, which the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) wanted to purchase. However, Khartoum turned the Chinese offer down and awarded the shares to an Indian firm instead. China respected and accepted the decision without interfering.⁴²

The principle of equality in China’s dealings with other countries is more than

a slogan. Although today the concept is largely the norm between individuals, it has never been effectively applied to the realm of international relations. Powerful nations have always made the rules in the global community. Perhaps China's practice in Africa challenges this reality and offers an alternative model for interstate behavior.

Mutual Benefit

Both China and Africa have always supported the common development of politics, economics and other areas. Prior to the 1980s, China backed the anti-colonial struggles and independence movements in Africa. During this period, numerous African nations returned the favor and gave political support to China. In 1971, China regained its seat at the United Nations with the help of 26 votes from African countries (out of 76 affirmative votes). Chairman Mao Zedong described it bluntly: "We were brought back into the United Nations by our black African friends."⁴³ In the last number of years, China has supported African candidates for the position of U.N. Secretary-General as well as reform of the Security Council in favor of greater representation of African nations; while the African countries have supported China on the issues of human rights and Taiwan.⁴⁴

However, a reorientation of China's policy towards Africa has given priority to economic cooperation. The rich natural resources of Africa help satisfy China's increasing demand for raw materials and energy. Conversely, Chinese energy investment in Africa is often accompanied by aid for infrastructure, which helps to attract more foreign investment in Africa. In Sudan, Chinese companies have been involved in the oil production industry for roughly a decade. China not only now imports a great percentage of Sudan's total oil exports,⁴⁵ but these companies also help Sudan to establish a complete and viable oil export industry from exploration, production and refining to sales of crude oil, gasoline and petrochemical products.⁴⁶ China also shares the benefits of trade and commerce with Africa. In 2006, trade volume between China and Africa reached a value of \$55.5 billion, with African exports to China making up over half of that at \$28.8 billion.⁴⁷

Some African scholars acknowledge China's role in helping African economies to achieve long-term growth through the principle of mutual benefit.⁴⁸ One particularly poignant analysis explains, "Unlike Belgium, which built roads solely for the extraction of resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo, China is constructing or improving roads that are suitable not only for the transport of resources but which citizens can also use to travel."⁴⁹

Mutual benefit is also reflected in such areas as fair trade and debt reduction. China will further open its market to Africa by lifting tariffs on the number of items (from 190 to over 440 before the end of 2009) exported by countries in Africa that are least developed and have diplomatic relations with China.⁵⁰ In addition, when China benefits economically from Africa's emerging markets, it reduces and relieves African countries' debts. At Beijing Summit of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2006, China waived all debt from governmental interest-free loans due at the end of 2005 for 31 heavily-indebted African countries.⁵¹

Technical assistance and cooperation in science and technology with Africa is an area that has largely been refused by Western countries but is now a rapidly expanding part of Sino-African relations.⁵² Recent collaboration between China and Nigeria to launch a communications satellite, Nig-Sat I, is a groundbreaking project in which China has provided much of the technology necessary for launch, on-orbit service and even the training of Nigerian command and control operators. While Nigeria acquired satellite technology, China also gained from the collaboration by burnishing its credentials as a reliable player in the international commercial satellite market.⁵³ Additionally, China has recently sent oil expert and engineer Wang Qiming of Daqin to Sudan to provide African engineers with new technology that assists with the best-use practices of seemingly exhausted oil fields.⁵⁴

China is bringing science and technology to Africa.

Summit Diplomacy

China's core Africa policy principles have been elucidated by China's leaders.⁵⁵ Chairman Mao, while meeting with Asian and African visitors for the first

time in 1964, declared them close friends.⁵⁶ Despite changes in leadership and a transformation of political outlooks, President Hu Jintao, in reinforcing China's position in 2006, stated that "China and Africa are good friends, good partners and good brothers."⁵⁷

Major meetings or "summit diplomacy" between Chinese and African heads of state also clearly reveal China's core policy principles. Since the 1960s, these meetings have been a key way to establish direct communication at the highest levels of government and set the tone of relations and bilateral policies. They have created mutual trust between heads of state and demonstrated mutual respect between China and African countries. As early as 1963-64, Premier Zhou's visits to Africa impacted the structure of international relations as China won the friendship of many African nations, expanding its diplomatic reach.⁵⁸ Throughout China's policy shifts in Africa in the 1980s, the Chinese Premier initiated more visits to Africa, designed to reassure Africa of China's committed friendship despite China's burgeoning growth and new business partnerships with previous ideological competitors. China stated publicly, "we will not forget old friends when making new friends, or forget poor friends when making rich friends."⁵⁹

Importantly, summit diplomacy has sought to instill confidence in the consistent application of these principles to Sino-African relations. Reinforcing Sino-African cooperation on the basis of equality has become a tradition in Chinese diplomacy. While the West largely neglected Africa after the Cold War, China's foreign minister made his visits to African nations the first official stop abroad in every year from 1991 to 2007.⁶⁰ These visits have been both symbolic and real gestures of China's respect for Africa. Since the turn of the 21st century, two-way visits have dramatically increased.⁶¹ The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has also been established, which in addition to its ambitious plans for Sino-African cooperation, provides a mechanism for routine meetings between Chinese and African heads of state.

Challenges and Risks

While Africa has been transformed by China's growing presence on the con-

continent, conflict has also surfaced with expanding interaction, particularly with labor practices and market strategies, competing commercial and national interests, competition from Western players already established on the continent and striking a sustainable balance between industry and the environment China has recognized these challenges and is searching for the most tenable solutions.

Labor Practices and Markets Strategies

With Chinese businesses and manufactured goods flowing into Africa, conflict over differing labor practices and market strategies has arisen between Chinese and African enterprises. Chinese entrepreneurs rarely employ local workers in Africa.⁶² Rather, they are accustomed to bringing laborers from China and most management positions are filled by Chinese nationals. From an economic perspective, it is more efficient and convenient for Chinese entrepreneurs to recruit skilled workers in China than to train local workers. The former are often more familiar with the technologies and face fewer language and cultural obstacles in communication with management. Chinese laborers abroad are also more compliant to the demanding labor practices Chinese managers insist upon, and are accustomed to working longer hours, working during local holidays and working overtime on weekends.⁶³ Employing African workers entangles Chinese enterprises in local laws to a higher degree than employing Chinese nationals. There is no doubt that these factors have a dramatic effect on efficiency.

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Chinese company practices also lead to discontent among the communities in which these enterprises operate, who perceive that Chinese companies are not contributing enough to local economies and employment.⁶⁴ However, China's participation in African markets does help to improve the situation of African communities. Furthermore, as the role of Chinese enterprises shifts in Africa, the opportunity to contribute more to African society will emerge. In the past, Chinese enterprises were engaged in finite, short-term infrastructural "aid projects." However, profit-driven Chinese businesses are increasingly establishing them-

selves in African countries, with longer-term prospects. While for the moment such enterprises hire Chinese workers due to the short-term benefits they provide, as Chinese business continue to expand in Africa, they will shift towards greater localization of their practices. This change has the potential to eventually lower production costs and build a virtuous cycle of increased investment by Chinese companies and benefits to the local community.⁶⁵

Another source of conflict arises from the success of Chinese goods in African markets, which are often better quality and cheaper than local products. While African consumers are happy, parallel domestic industries (especially textile industries) suffer as a result. This conflict is evidenced through two mass demonstrations in Dakar, one in support of Chinese merchants, the other in opposition.⁶⁶ Similar protests have occurred in South Africa. However tensions dissipated when Sino-South African government discussions over the issue led China to unilaterally impose quotas upon its textile exports in order to allow the South African producers time to make their products competitive. Solving these situations has been difficult but includes, in the first place, consultation between the governments of both sides.⁶⁷ In this regard, routine multilateral talks between China and Africa have the potential to play an important role, as the two sides can rapidly facilitate communication between the conflicting parties, reach an understanding and diffuse trade frictions before they escalate any further. In addition, China's willingness to export technologies to Africa will also help local industries to gradually raise the quantity and quality of production.

Chinese National vs. Corporate Interests

The reality is that the interests of Chinese corporations operating in Africa lie in maximizing short-term economic gains, while Chinese national interests are more long term and focus on the overall relationship between China and Africa. Take the oil industry as an example. The main purpose of Chinese transnational oil enterprises in Africa is to make profits, which in this case means often selling processed oil back to the country of origin or another country wishing to purchase it, rather than back to China. In 1999, the Sudan project undertaken by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) began producing oil with

an annual crude production figure over 2 million tons. However, only 266,000 tons were imported to China.⁶⁸ Although CNPC is a state holding company, its pursuit of profit is not necessarily coincident with China's pursuit of national interests.

The view that state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can be equated with the state is largely outdated.⁶⁹ Government and SOEs must compromise in order to maximize benefits for their increasingly divergent interests. China's inability to control the actions of its SOEs in Africa has been the subject of intense criticism by the West and is a significant cause of Western concerns about China's rising influence in Africa. This censure is unreasonable when the diverging interests and increasingly distant relationship between the government and these companies is taken into account.

Western Suspicions

The presence of Western powers has been felt in Africa – from the colonial legacy and their geo-strategic influence during the Cold War, to the current advantage that their transnational corporations hold on the continent. Western countries still consider Africa in terms of their “spheres of influence” and China is usually considered as an “external player” in the region.⁷⁰ As the Chinese presence in Africa spreads and deepens, it is increasingly likely that conflicts between Chinese and Western interests will emerge, particularly in the competition to secure energy supplies.

Some Western analysts have criticized China's developing relations with Africa as based purely on securing oil supplies and other natural resources,⁷¹ which has led to claims that China supports authoritarian regimes at the expense of “democracy” and “human rights.”⁷² Sino-African relations were established long before China's demand for raw materials caused it to shift from a net oil exporter to importer in 1993. Also, while China imports oil from Africa, it exports electromechanical and high-tech products that satisfy critical needs in Africa, creating a rough equilibrium in the economic and trade relations between China and Africa. The oil drilling and exploration rights China has obtained in Africa have been obtained through international bidding mechanisms in accordance with in-

ternational market practices, posing no “threat” to any particular country. Rights to oilfields in Sudan and Nigeria were purchased by Chinese companies after the withdrawal of competitors.⁷³

China’s demand for raw materials and energy enables the rich resources of Africa to be fully utilized, benefiting both Chinese purchasers and African suppliers. Chinese demand has stimulated raw material prices, increasing the income of resource-rich African countries and accelerating African development. For example, Nigeria has paid off its outstanding loans;⁷⁴ Sudan has gone from being a

Profit-driven Chinese businesses with longer term prospects are establishing themselves in Africa.

net oil importer to exporter. The investment of over 800 Chinese enterprises has promoted African industries and is breaking the longstanding hold that the West has had over trade in commodities between Africa and the rest of the

world.⁷⁵ Such investment is also enhancing the autonomy of African countries in production, sales and investment, which offers Africa more opportunities in terms of market options, investment partners, product prices, etc. Nevertheless, Sino-African trade in resources has the potential to help Africa win greater and truer independence.

As for the criticism that China is dealing with corrupt African regimes, a number of issues are at stake. First, the limits and norms of the international system only allow China to deal with sovereign states through their governments. Second, China has its own problems of human rights and corruption and therefore feels it does not have the right to criticize others. All governments, Western included, as well as international financial institutions, have corrupt elements. Rather than preaching good governance to others, they would gain far more credibility and avoid the label of hypocrisy if they first tackled their own corrupt practices.⁷⁶ Third, each nation may have a different judgment and opinion of “corruption.” China does not necessarily accept the naming and shaming of certain African regimes as corrupt by Western standards.

In its relations with Western powers in Africa, China needs both courage and wisdom – the courage to withstand Western criticism of its African policy

and the wisdom to fully engage with Africa while at the same time reassuring Western powers that such acts will not contradict their interests. The West and China have common interests in Africa regarding economic development and environmental protection, for example. China, Africa and Western countries must discuss effective methods for increasing cooperation on the continent together. Creating mechanisms of mutual trust and improving dialogue is the best way to prevent potential conflicts between China and the West over Africa.

Sustainable Development

China has now realized the importance of comprehensive development, not just GDP growth. While China's past 30 years of rapid economic growth have led to unprecedented achievements, its negative effects are also becoming apparent. They include poor workplace safety, a deteriorating environment and a deficient social safety system, all of which must be balanced against sustainable economic growth. And, worse, some harmful and damaging Chinese practices are making their way to Africa. If China transplants these problems to Africa they will not only affect the healthy development of Sino-African relations, but also the future well-being of African people.⁷⁷

Chinese investment is breaking the hold the West has had over trade between Africa and the world.

Because a culture of corporate responsibility has yet to mature in China, many of its unsafe production methods have appeared in Africa.⁷⁸ Unsafe working conditions in China lead to the deaths of 320 Chinese people each day.⁷⁹ In 2005, a blast at an explosives factory on the premises of a copper mine in Zambia killed 47 people; both the mine and the explosives factory were owned by Chinese enterprises.⁸⁰ Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Congress of China, Cheng Siwei, has harshly criticized Chinese enterprises, warning that a lack of social responsibility toward the communities they are working in will threaten their reputation and even their viability in African markets.⁸¹

Another issue, perhaps the most pressing in China now, is the environmental implications of China's rapid economic development. Some progress is being

made as the Chinese government works to standardize the behavior of Chinese enterprises overseas through the development of environmental and corporate laws.⁸² Through these regulations, companies working overseas must factor social responsibility into their business plans and the Chinese government will have a closer supervisory role over them and an approval system for project applications. Successful implementation of these regulations will require government-to-government cooperation between China and African nations. The action plan agreed upon at the China-Africa Summit stresses the critical need for both sides to enhance communication and cooperation on environmental protection. While a good beginning, concrete steps to implement this are what is really needed, which are still absent to date. The interests of the local society must be considered adequately and only through establishing good relations with African people can win-win results be guaranteed for both Chinese enterprises and local communities.

A Promising Future

China can enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation by continuing to use its unique multilateral channels with Africa, as well as continuing to use international mechanisms, such as United Nations peacekeeping operations, to secure Africa's future. China can also use such routes to minimize and prevent conflict both today and in the future. China should exchange information and promote full and flexible consultations with other groups affected by its relations with Africa.

In order to manage the growing tensions resulting from the closer economic relationship between China and Africa, China must increase the frequency and depth of consultations both with African nations and other nations with interests in Africa. These tensions are most acute in the context of energy. China can help to reduce tensions resulting from competition for energy resources in Africa by building mutual trust in relations with other emerging countries (India and Brazil, for example), the European Union nations, the Group of Eight powers and international organizations. China should also initiate dialogue with a view to establishing an energy security mechanism on the basis of enhancing joint re-

search and development of alternative energy sources.

China's aid program will also require cooperation with other aid donors such that resources are utilized in the most effective way possible and for the maximum benefit of Africa is attained. The international effort of research and development related to AIDS and malaria control also provides broad prospects for medical cooperation and coordination between China and the United States or European countries, in Africa.⁸³ In order to achieve this, reliable mechanisms for collaboration based on mutual trust, should make a priority to help Africa.⁸⁴

Sino-African cooperation has played a positive and multifaceted role in Africa. However, China's expanded presence in Africa brings new challenges for China's policies on the continent. China's policies will naturally lag behind the rapidly evolving economic, social and security environment in Africa and China will need to adjust accordingly. Although committed to meeting these fluid challenges, China will never waver in its principles of treating Africa with equality, respect and mutual development. ☺

Notes

* This is a revised version of my speech at the IFIC-JICA Seminar on "China's Aid to Africa – the Beijing Summit and its Follow-up," Jan. 29, 2007, *Japan International Cooperation Agency*, Tokyo, Japan.

¹ Segal, Gerald. "China and Africa," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 519 No.1 (January 1992) p.126.

² "CSIS Prospectus: Opening a Sino-U.S. Dialogue on Africa, 2003;" Muekalia, Domingos Jardo, "Africa and China's Strategic Partnership," *African Security Review*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2004) p.8.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *China's African Policy*, published in January 2006.

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of Enterprises Undertaking the Construction of the Complete Foreign-aid Projects (2004), Measures for the Accreditation of Qualifications of Projects for Foreign-aid Materials (2004), Administrative Regulations on Operation Qualifications of Foreign Cooperation of Labor Service. Currently, the government is working on the Provisions of the Management of Foreign Contracted Projects and the Provisions of the Management of Foreign Cooperation of Labor Service and will put them into effect soon.

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