

EU-CHINA COOPERATION ON AFRICAN
PEACEBUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT:
Seeking Engagement Or Rhetoric Window
Dressing?

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Outline

- Two external actors in Africa: China and the EU
 - What are the implications for African peacebuilding, development?
- 1. The EU and China in Africa
 - What are the characteristics / aims of their respective involvement
 - To what extent are these conflicting or converging?
 - The case of Angola
- 2. Frameworks for Multilateral Cooperation Africa-China-EU
 - Do these initiatives respond and take into account needs of African countries and societies?
 - Or on the contrary, are they framed solely within EU-China competition? → Proxy competition

The EU in Africa

- Former colonial ties → continued engagement in peacebuilding and development
- The EU itself, has become a strong player in Africa as an ODA donor, peacekeeping operations and EPA frameworks of trade.
- EU approach is characterized by conditionality: democracy, human rights, good governance, etc.
 - A 'moralistic' approach that, however, is often criticized by its rigidity and lack of effectiveness in delivering actual results

China in Africa

- China, on the other hand, is a relatively new player in Africa
 - But with a strong and increasing presence
- 'No strings attached' policy in line with China's foreign policy principles → no conditionality, absolute respect for 'internal affairs'
- The practices of China in Africa are often described as successful and having a significant impact, as it does not face significant competition from other actors

The EU and China in Africa

- As a result, a debate has emerged: what approach can bring more benefits to Africa? EU, China, Both in combination, none?
 - China's 'no strings' → soft power projection, south-south rhetoric
 - Yet it delivers infrastructure, very tangible material wealth.
 - But how good is this? China portrays European approach as old-fashioned, excessively interventionist in domestic affairs, and as ineffective in contributing to Africa's prosperity.
 - EU → holistic approach: security + development
 - China → development (business) + sovereignty
- Meanwhile, African demands on China are on the rise and European actors face increasing pressure
 - What new engagement beyond ODA can Europe take?

China and EU policies towards Angola

- Angola has become one of China's main trading partners in Africa
 - China has gained strong presence through oil credit lines, and is engaged in the country's reconstruction (housing, infrastructure, etc.) and minor programs on Civil Society promotion
 - But the early honeymoon seems to be over: Angola's criticism on China's practices, quality of infrastructure, and concerns raised by the Chinese community in the country have increased
 - Turbulent past: China FMLA links during Sino-soviet split
 - Arms trade has continued
 - Although: China is engaged actively in peacebuilding projects such as de-mining

China and EU towards peacebuilding in Angola

- The EU articulates its Angola policy through the Cotonou Agreement and the 2009 bilateral Partnership Agreement
 - EU declares 'good governance' and 'political dialogue' as priorities → strong reticence towards EU in Angolan political elite
 - Mainly ODA through government, and some support to SMEs, NGOs, etc.
 - Facing problems: limited administrative capacity, corruption
 - EU's approach could be increase effectiveness by focusing on health, justice administration, etc.
 - EBA framework towards LDCs
 - Lack of trust and knowledge
- More pragmatic Chinese engagement reveals the challenges faced by the EU's approach
- However a point to consider: does the Chinese 'no string attached' approach contradict directly the EU's approach? Is there some room for combination?

Africa-China-EU Trilateral Dialogue and Cooperation

- In line with the seemingly growing competition between the EU and China on Africa, the EC proposed in 2008 a Trilateral framework of cooperation and dialogue
- Still at a planning stage
- Envisioned objectives:
 - reinforcing security and support for peacekeeping operations;
 - developing affordable and sustainable infrastructures to reinforce interconnectivity and regional integration.
 - protection of the environment and management of natural resources within a context of economic and commercial growth. The Commission proposes to cooperate with the African Union (AU) and African countries in order to promote sustainable management, technology transfers and investments;
 - the increase in agricultural production, the quality of production and food security, in particular with a view to meeting the objectives of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program.

Africa-China-EU Trilateral Dialogue and Cooperation

- Not enthusiastically welcomed by either Africa or China, although potential benefits do exist
- Stage-0 flaws:
 - The potential of African partners is underlooked from the beginning
 - No African ownership
 - Chinese reticence to engage EU's way of multilateralism
- Similar projects existed, already with the same flaws
 - EU-Japan dialogue on African Development (1 yearly meeting)
 - On the other hand, were it conceptualized correctly, the EU-China-Africa could raise ownership of African partners in the processes of Peacebuilding, development and ODA Management.

Debate point

- From Africa, how are these initiatives received?
- Potential assessment of benefits?
 - Or it just sets the increasing EU-China competition on a number of global issues in an African scenario?
- What kind of engagement is more welcome?
- Suggestions and proposals

Thank you for your attention!