DISCUSSION PUBLISHERS
Research Center · Open Access Edition

EU, China, Africa towards a trilateral cooperation: Prospects and challenges for Africas development

Vasiliki Papatheologou

Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1432
Year	2014
Field	Social Sciences
DOI	10.5897/jasd2014.0282
Licence	CC-BY
Original source	Journal of African Studies and Development
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

Abstract

The trilateral Africa-China-EU cooperation represents a unique opportunity for Africas development without ignoring the interests of each of the parties including the European Union (EU) and China. This paper aims at advancing the debate around trilateral development cooperation between the European Union (EU), China and Africa. The trilateral approach includes common interests for all parties and it can be an effective mechanism for achieving common goals on Africa. The paper examines the development of trilateralism as a cooperative strategy by the European Union (EU), China and Africa and as a policy tool to existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation efforts between the EU and China in the direction towards fostering Africas development. The paper focuses on Africas role through its regional organizations in the trilateral cooperation. Africa has the responsibility to be more active and coherent by providing the platform for dialogue to gain benefits from both the European traditional presence and from the Chinese emerging presence. The main question of the paper is how does the trilateral cooperation among European Union (EU), China and Africa work by taking into consideration the differences in EU and Chinese foreign aid models towards Africas development and the role of Africa in the trilateral cooperation. The paper provides policy recommendations for the effectiveness of the trilateral cooperation. On the one hand, Africa should have an advanced role in the trilateral cooperation and domestically African governments should take responsibility for achieving greater transparency in the receiving foreign aid spending. On the other hand, European Union (EU) and China should deal with their challenges and their common interests on Africa. China needs to consider the political aspects of development. European Union (EU) needs to revise its trade relations with Africa. The trilateral cooperation should be progressive, but it is essential to deal with global developmental challenges in a more effective multilateral manner. Key words: European Union (EU), traditional actor, China, emerging actor, Africas role, trilateral cooperation, Africas development.

Republished by Discussion Publishers under the original CC-BY licence. Copyright remains with the original authors; please cite the original work.

Cite as: Vasiliki Papatheologou (2014). EU, China, Africa towards a trilateral cooperation. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-1432.

academicJournals

Vol. 6(5), pp. 78-86, June 2014
DOI: 10.5897/JASD2014.0282
Article Number: CC7866A44917
ISSN 2141 -2189
Copyright © 2014
Author(s) retain the copyright of this article
http://www.academicjournlas.org/JASD

Journal of African Studies and Development

Review

EU, China, Africa towards a trilateral cooperation: Prospects and challenges for Africa's development

Vasiliki Papatheologou

School of International Studies, Department of International Politics at Renmin University of China in Beijing, China.

Received 26 March, 2014; Accepted 15 May 2014

The trilateral Africa-China-EU cooperation represents a unique opportunity for Africa's development without ignoring the interests of each of the parties including the European Union (EU) and China. This paper aims at advancing the debate around trilateral development cooperation between the European Union (EU), China and Africa. The trilateral approach includes common interests for all parties and it can be an effective mechanism for achieving common goals on Africa. The paper examines the development of trilateralism as a cooperative strategy by the European Union (EU), China and Africa and as a policy tool to existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation efforts between the EU and China in the direction towards fostering Africa's development. The paper focuses on Africa's role through its regional organizations in the trilateral cooperation. Africa has the responsibility to be more active and coherent by providing the platform for dialogue to gain benefits from both the European traditional presence and from the Chinese emerging presence. The main question of the paper is how does the trilateral cooperation among European Union (EU), China and Africa work by taking into consideration the differences in EU and Chinese foreign aid models towards Africa's development and the role of Africa in the trilateral cooperation. The paper provides policy recommendations for the effectiveness of the trilateral cooperation. On the one hand, Africa should have an advanced role in the trilateral cooperation and domestically African governments should take responsibility for achieving greater transparency in the receiving foreign aid spending. On the other hand, European Union (EU) and China should deal with their challenges and their common interests on Africa. China needs to consider the political aspects of development. European Union (EU) needs to revise its trade relations with Africa. The trilateral cooperation should be progressive, but it is essential to deal with global developmental challenges in a more effective multilateral manner.

Key words: European Union (EU), traditional actor, China, emerging actor, Africa's role, trilateral cooperation, Africa's development.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Africa is emerging, more democratic and more vibrant making efforts to benefit from the opportunities of globalization. Africa has created a network of partnerships which imply taking more responsibility for its own development, looking for solutions to continent's problems. European Union (EU) and

E-mail: vasia12_pap@hotmail.com

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

China are long-standing partners of African countries, respectively the first and the third commercial partners and investors in the continent.

More practically, the European Union (EU)-China-Africa trilateral cooperation initiative (Policy note: 2009) has been driven largely by the European Union (EU), especially the European Commission, with Chinese and Africans beginning to be engaged with the issue of trilateral partnership (Veronika, 2007). In the 2007s communiqué, the two sides agreed to continue their dialogue on African issues, and actively explore effective channels of cooperation among China, European Union (EU) and Africa in appropriate area [i] .The trilateral cooperation has been introduced officially by the publication of a communication by the European Commission in October 2008, entitled: "The European Union (EU), Africa and China: Towards trilateral Dialogue and Cooperation". The communication proposed that the three parties work together in a "flexible and pragmatic way, linking their cooperation with existing commitment in multilateral forums[ii].

Though China's influence in African continent was increasingly evident by 2000, the EU begun to recognize the changes occurring in Africa. The criticism over China's Africa policy damaging in a way the EU-China partnership, so, the need for dialogue on Africa, on global governance and development issues was evident. In the frame of concerns for China's involvement in Africa from the European Union (EU) and its member states, the European Union (EU) took the initiative to set the dialogue through a series of conferences, workshops and shared discussions on how the two partners will cooperate with Africa.

European Union's engagement with China, on the one hand, based on the assumption that through formal agreements with China could ensure an achievement for the developmental aims and at the same time to bring benefits to member states. On the other hand, in fact China has the same level of enthusiasm for a trilateral dialogue with European Union (EU) and Africa. China demonstrates willingness to assess the potential of such a dialogue especially for Africa's development prospects. Although, the expectation that China will adapt its behavior according to European norms in Africa is not that realistic. In this sense, the main purpose of the trilateral dialogue is the three parties to cooperate in the direction towards Africa's prosperous development with mutual benefits.

The paper examines in particular the contribution of the two parties, the European Union (EU) and China in Africa's development in the framework of trilateral cooperation as it will focus on the role of Africa via the regional institutions in the continent in the trilateral cooperation. The paper reviews trilateralism in the context of multilateralism and it concludes with estimations for the future prospects of a successful trilateral cooperation in favor of Africa's development. The main question of the paper is to demonstrate how does trilateral cooperation among European Union (EU), China and Africa work by taking into consideration the differences in EU and Chinese foreign aid models towards Africa and taking into account the role of Africa in the trilateral cooperation.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHINA'S INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES AND REACTIONS

In mid 90s, China has stressed the importance of the development of Sino-African relations and of Africa's economic development. More specifically, China introduced the so called "Beijing Consensus" in Africa for strengthening its ties with individual African countries ranging from political (Anirudh Sethi Report: 2012; Ellen, 2007), economical cooperation on multilateral issues and as an alternative to "Washington Consensus" originated from the post-cold war international order. In particular, the "Beijing Consensus" based on the principles of Chinese Taoist tradition and it emphasizes on non-hegemony, non-interference and no alliances as the main axis of the Chinese foreign policy.[iii]

During the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in 2002, Wen Jiabao has initiated a new Chinese strategy for Africa. He emphasized that world peace and development cannot be sustained in the frame of division between the North and the South. In 2006, China has announced the "Year of Africa" and published its first African policy emphasizing that China and Africa relationship is based on mutual trust, win-win cooperation, cultural exchange, equality and friendship. The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC in 2012 which held in Beijing opened up new a prospect for a new type of China-Africa strategic partnership and it provides an opportunity for both parties to review their engagement and their mutually beneficial strategies. [iv]

In the context of China's engagement with Africa, it is obvious that a number of motivations are driven by Chinese national interests. Firstly, the access to African raw materials, especially oil and natural gas, is certainly one of the most important reasons for the recent Chinese interests in Africa as with continuous high economic growth, China is increasingly facing the problem of energy shortage. Secondly, as a developing country itself China shares a host of common interests with African countries. China in particular is a developing country experiencing economic growth and a successful integration in the global economy so, China's development could be an example for the African states; although China has the intention to give its own experience of domestic development and poverty reduction and in fact lacks of experience with African situations. However, this experience is not completely relevant in the African context given the huge differences between China and Africa in terms of

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

population numbers and density, ethnic diversity, geography, strength of administration and strategic capacity, market size, skills levels etc. China and Africa share common interests, but they also share challenges such as market access, industrialization and diversification of the economy, different culture of labour relations, and interest in commodities versus interest to escape the commodities curse and finally African values in terms of human rights, democracy. Thirdly, China needs assistance and support from Africa in a number of international institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO), especially when considering the large number of countries on the African continent. Moreover, Africa is also significant for the Chinese efforts on limiting the "international space" of Taiwan. Last but not the least, the Chinese engagement with Africa gives a new type of assistance to African countries, which provides an alternative to Western aid. Africa has benefited from the dramatic rise in prices for its natural resource exports, not only oil, but copper, zinc, platinum and other minerals are at record or near record high, largely due to the heavy demand from China and other fast growing Asian countries.

In short, China has introduced a new dynamic within Africa's political-economic architecture. It is obvious that Africa is seen as a region where China's interests have systematically undermined EU's positions in key economic and normative areas. China's "business is business" type of aid to Africa concerns the European Union (EU) and other traditional donors, whose own African aid programmes have not met development goals. In particular, the EU has recognized the need to work with China in order to harmonize efforts to promote African development. It is true that geopolitically, economically and developmentally, China has different parameters with the European parameters. Furthermore, it is evident that the European Union (EU) feels the pressure from China's involvement in Africa. China is looking more and more to the South and the EU private sector has to deal with competition on the African continent. Therefore, the EU strategy towards China is aiming at a cooperation that narrows down the substantive differences with Chinese development cooperation programmes with African countries, especially in the areas of good governance, democratization and human rights.

Regarding the European viewpoints over China's involvement in Africa, the literature gives us examples of some European members' states and individuals that have raised their concerns about Chinese non-interference policy and its implications on EU Aid to promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. More specifically, Philippe Maystadt, the president of European Investment Bank emphasized on Chinese lending with easier conditions and he urges the European Union (EU) to open a dialogue with the Chinese development bank to discuss the problems of unconditional lending. However, some European views in favor Chinese involvement to Africa have been raised, such as for example, Louis Michel argued that Europeans should stop being against China for providing interest-free loans to African countries and that European Union (EU) should make China partner in promoting effective development aid.

Europe's concerns about China's involvement in Africa based on the fact that China has replaced the traditional donors and it could possibly replace the need for European aid. However, this idea is not so pragmatic due to the fact that both actors-donors European Union (EU) and China have different approaches towards the African continent; however, it is important to distinguish the official development assistance and these other state-sponsored loans, which include export buyers' credits, official loans at commercial rates, and strategic lines of credit to Chinese companies. For instance, on the one hand, China follows the non-interference policy that focuses on business activities and trade while European Union (EU) focuses on conditional policy and normative issues such as human rights, democracy with involvement in Africa's internal affairs. European Union's (EU) aid to Africa is mainly directed towards the support of public health programs, the democratization efforts, counterterrorism cooperation, the development of health infrastructure, and the improvement of regulatory institutions.

In the context of foreign aid to African countries, China's non-interference policy has not any ideological agenda and it is a tool for China's fast aid delivery. China's fast aid delivery makes the difference in providing foreign aid and it makes China an attractive donor among African countries compared to other donors such as for example the European Union. In parallel, China belongs to the developed and developing world and its donation policy differs from the western methods of good governance, democracy and human rights and privileges trade and investments in the place of aid.

In this frame, EU's ambition is to stabilize the political situation on the African continent and to reinforce peace and security by contributing to conflicts resolutions as peace in Africa is a precondition for its development; so, In the last few years, the EU's involvement in conducting civilian and military crisis management operations in Africa has been increased and is a sign of the EU's growing interest in the situation of the African continent. Another area of EU's activity in Africa is its aid in terms of good government, the reinforcement of institutions, the struggle against corruption and the promotion of human rights. EU is also striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), defined by the UN in 2000 as the struggle against poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and discrimination against women in developing countries. In this background, in July 2005, the EU agreed to reach the target of 0.7% of GNP to official development assistance by 2015.

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

As far as we can observe within European Union (EU), there are two dimensions of facing China's involvement in Africa, the first sees China as a competitor and the second sees China as partner in promoting Africa's development. However, the fact is that European Union (EU) and China can find common ground for partnership and dialogue to eliminate the challenges and to agree in a common framework of providing development aid to the continent. In this frame the trilateral cooperation among the three actors European Union (EU), China and Africa is essential in a globalised world for the stability in the region of Africa as well as for regional and international governance. However, the role of Africa in the trilateral cooperation should be dynamic as Africa has much to gain on the one hand from China's growing presence on the continent, though it is not without some negative impacts and on the other hand from the European presence and its traditional assistance.

In brief, China has a new development approach that changes the future of African development and the future of western development practice and most likely of the EU.[v] On the one hand, regarding China's foreign aid model to African countries, China's approach to Africa could be characterized as "hard -no-string approach" managed mainly by the public sector (government, public agencies etc) and it focuses on trade and infrastructure as a path for economic development. On the other hand, regarding EU's foreign aid model, EU's approach to Africa can be characterized as "soft –normative approach" derived by the private sector (multinational companies, NGO's etc), and it focuses on political stability, human rights protection, and ecologic stability.

Although the European and Chinese models have many differences, they both can contribute to Africa's development. The two partners can find a common ground in the context of trilateral cooperation to share their experiences of development with the African partners, to exchange views on peacekeeping operations and political stability of African continent, to deal with global challenges and finally to achieve transparency and effectiveness of the foreign aid together with the African states. In this sense, African countries and their leaders have the responsibility for fighting against corruption and to preserve the effectiveness of economic development.

EU-China-Africa trilateral partnership in practice: Context and observations

The paper examines the implementation of "trilateralism" as an initiative within the context of the new regionalism. Regarding the strategic partners in the trilateral coope ration, the three partners which are involved in the trilateral initiative have different rationales based on their history, economic standing, domestic politics and regional ambitions. These rationales provide both the materialist and ideological basis within the frame of the developing and developed world and at the same time they impose limits on the successful outcome of the objectives of trilateralism.

However, the paper focused on the role of Africa in the trilateral relationship and on Africa's central position as the receiver of foreign aid from the EU and China. This paper examines EU-China-Africa trilateral cooperation by defining Africa as a region in the context of African regional institutions. The EU's strategy towards the region of Africa is undoubtedly one of many responses to China's growing presence in the African continent. The Africa-China-EU as a case of trilateral cooperation initiative has been driven largely by the EU, especially the Commission. The idea of trilateral EU-Chinese- African cooperation will be viewed in terms of the role of Africa. However, in the contemporary international relations which are based on interdependencies, the problems of individual regions become global ones, and resolution requires multilateral efforts based on co-ordinated action. The absence of coordination between those partners could influence the economic and political situation of the region; it can contribute to the slowing down the state-building processes in the African con-tinent and lead to a worsening of the economic and political situation. So within this context, coordination between the European Union (EU) and China in con-ducting developmental policies in Africa is a necessary precondition for initiating trilateral cooperation with the active participation of the African countries. However, because of the discrepancies in the principles of the European Union (EU) and China policies with regard to Africa, it could be difficult to reach a common understanding.

This paper provides an observation on EU-China-Africa relations and it examines possible areas of engagement between the European Union and China for Africa's development. The European Union (EU) is described as a "traditional" actor and China as an "emerging" actor in the African continent. Although European and Chinese efforts to promote development in Africa are common, the means through which the developmental agenda is promoted are different. In this context, it is observed that Europe's engagement is driven by aid; but China's engagement focuses on the pursuit of commerce. [vi]

In these terms, according to the official policy papers on the trilateral cooperation, the priority objectives of the partnership concentrate on reinforcing security and support for peace-keeping operations, to develop sustainable infrastructures, reinforce regional integration, the protection of the environment and management of natural resources within a context of economic and com mercial growth, and finally to increase the agricultural production, the quality of production and food security and in particular with a view to meet the objectives of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

In the context of trilateralism, the European Union (EU)

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

and China have both held high-level meetings with Africa over the past few years. These talks have been followed with policy papers assuming the EU's and China's principles of engagement with Africa, including the Cotonou Agreement, the Joint Africa-EU strategy, China's white paper and the FOCAC action plans. EU is seen as a "traditional" actor based on a "donor-recipient" relationship through the history, while China is presented as an "emerging" actor in Africa with engagement based on a "win-win" relationship. European Union (EU) which is Africa's biggest trade and aid partner has centered its activities on delivering aid, while China has followed a more commercial approach. In short, both actors, European Union (EU) and China have assumed that their activities are based on the improvement of development processes in Africa. Like the European Union (EU), China has provided financial support for African institutions such as the African Union (AU) and NEPAD, as well as support for Regional Economic Communities, African regional institutions which promote Africa's sustainable development based on African solutions and achieve-ments to African problems. In this frame, firstly, EU has recognized China's goal of supporting the princi-ples of Africa's regional organizations, such as African Union (AU). Secondly, both European Union (EU) and China have recognized the commitment to capacity building and effectiveness of regional organizations such as African Union (AU) which allow African initiatives to gain influence among Africans themselves. Thirdly, both China and the European Union (EU) acknowledge that African regional initiatives are crucial for maintaining and creating peace and stability in Africa, which in turn creates an environment conducive for sustainable development.

However, although European Union's (EU) and China's approaches towards Africa's development have many differences, in the frame of the trilateral partnership all the partners could work together for building a common ground of cooperation. Firstly, a trilateral partnership of EU, China and Africa can provide an effective mechanism in moving towards common goals on Africa, including regional governance and sustainable development. More specifically, under the Joint Statement resulting from the 2007 China-EU Summit is noted that further discussions among all sides would be crucial to develop "political mutual trust and expand strategic common ground" (Chinese Foreign Ministry, 2007). Secondly, both China and the European Union (EU) have highlighted the need to promote and encourage policies that foster sustainable development in

Africa. In this frame, an EU-China dialogue on engage-ment with Africa could lead to an effective trilateral dialogue for common achievements on the continent, including effective governance and sustainable develop-ment.

Furthermore, European Union (EU) and China both have expressed the desire to support conflict resolution and peace processes in Africa and they both focus on mutually agreed areas such as environmental protection, human resource development, and technology transfer and food security cooperation in order to achieve the MDGs. In this frame, the European Union (EU) policy paper on China's activities in Africa calls on the European Union (EU) and China to discuss, develop and formulate, whenever possible, their African strategies with a view to a responsible commitment, aimed at fostering sustainable development and the pursuit of the MDGs' (Gomes, 2007: 11). Such as for example, food security, health services and people-centered development will foster sustainable development among Africans and will assist in creating peaceful and secure societies which can build democratic principles. China expects African countries to create and direct their own development. European Union (EU) has emphasized that any international partnership for development must be people-focused, since sustainable development is only possible with the empowerment of civil society (Gomes, 2007:11). All the three actors of the trilateral partnership can benefit from increased production capacity and improved infrastructure in Africa, so, EU's responsibility is to engage China and work together for the development of Africa and in parallel Africa should have an active role and to provide a platform for trilateral partnership.

Africa might get the most benefit from both partners by continuing to engage with China and the EU. Indeed, while China and European Union (EU) have a leading and proactive role by preserving comparative advantages, the concept up to now seems more centralized in the two partners, EU and China. In this sense, if Africa selects to take the path of a trilateral partnership, it should then play a significant and a more proactive role by providing the platform for a partnership for all three actors. If the European Union (EU) and China want to stress the importance of African ownership and development, it is time for both to leave space to Africa to be an active part of this trilateral relationship in a more proactive and leading way.

Africa's regionalism as response to the development of the trilateral partnership

Regarding Africa's role in the trilateral partnership, African countries should exercise their bargaining power more effectively to ensure that they benefit from the growing trilateral relationship, including areas such as modern technology transfer and trade. It is also Africa's responsibility and commitment in order to take advantage of Chinese and European investments, in the frame that competition is preserved and encouraged by increasing transparency and accountability of contracts. In addition, large flows of Chinese investment and aid should not be allowed to delay necessary domestic reforms, such as

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

strengthening economic management and improving the business environment. It is Africa's responsibility to counterbalance between European and Chinese foreign aid in order to avoid overdependence on China's investment.

In this sense, regionalism has the potential to bring better results to the African problems and it is beneficial for the trilateral partnership as well. More specifically, China and the European Union (EU) have acknowledged the African Union (AU) and NEPAD as important institutions that guide peace and development on the continent. This is the reason why the role of the African Union (AU) as a regional power should be increased to foster Africa's development and in extension in the development of European Union (EU) and China's approach towards Africa and their trilateral partnership. The trilateral approach can successfully work as a response to bilateral and multilateral approach for fostering Africa's development, only if Africa's role in the trilateral partnership through the regional institutions, such as the African Union is more active. Regional institutions could contribute for seeking solutions to African problems. Through these institutions, African leaders have asserted a collective desire to take the lead in forging a new development approach for the continent.

In this frame, the European Union (EU) and China should increase support to regional organizations as the driving forces for a sustainable development strategy to Africa. (Gomes, 2007:11). African organizations should be encouraged within the trilateral dialogue in order to voice the opinions of Africans. Both China and the European Union (EU) have declared that their relationship with Africa is based on equality, with both stakeholders on an equal basis. The European Union's (EU) stated intention to change from its traditional donor-recipient relationship – to better encourage an equal partnership – illustrates an important step and redirection of its perception of Africa.

EU, China, Africa trilateral partnership in practice: Dealing with the Challenges

The challenges in the trilateral approach attract the attention from all the actors. More empirically, with regard to Africa's role to European and Chinese foreign aid and more specifically with regard to the trilateral partnership there are some challenges.

Firstly, the European approach to development co-operation with Africa is characterized by slow aid delivery, conditionalities and slow aid effectiveness.

Secondly, regarding the Chinese aid, various African countries have expressed their concerns. Such as for example, China set pre-condition for the non-recognition of Taiwan for financial support and future investment. China's foreign policy includes the one-China policy, non-interference in other nations' internal affairs, and respect of sovereignty of a country in its quest to follow its own development path. Another challenge is that some Chinese companies which have invested in Africa have not always had been adopted with the local people and governments. [vii]. So, in some cases in various African countries the anti-Chinese feelings have found expression and these facts are problematic for the Chinese aid. Such as for example, during the run up for Zambia's elections in 2006, the opposition candidate, Michel Sata urged China to comply with international working standards, and otherwise he would renew its ties with Taiwan if elected. Sata has also reacted because of the bad conditions in Zambian mines that are owned by Chinese companies. Another example of Chinese anti-feelings in African countries was the reaction of the former South African president, Mbeki about the Chinese development methods, the bad working conditions, low salaries and the preference to Chinese employees instead of the local ones. He warned China to be a second colonizer and he claimed that China can not only just come to Africa, dig for raw materials and then go away. However, despite some negative feelings, China's foreign aid to African countries is characterized by effectiveness without conditionalities in domestic issues of the countries. And finally a challenge which concerns China as a member of the trilateral partnership is a good cooperation with the European Union (EU) and African countries that could offer to China an insurance policy.

Given the challenges of the trilateralism, it is true that the trilateral cooperation is a concept which exists at the level ofa bilateral, sectorial dialogue between the European Union (EU) and China and which has not gone beyond the EU-Chinese declaration on the subject of common action for Africa's peace, stability and sustainable development.

More empirically, on the one hand, the main challenge for EU and China is to what extent the European Union (EU) and China can cooperate with Africa as part of a strategic partnership (The EU and Africa, 2005) given their contradictory positions on continent's development. On the other hand, the main challenge for Africa is whether, Africa can manage its multiple partnerships in such a way that it becomes an active in trilateral partnership and generally in international relations which can realize its objectives, rather than remaining an object of great power agenda.

Towards an EU-China-Africa trilateral partnership: future prospects

The result of this trilateral cooperation should be the contribution to share responsibility for regional and global governance. However, the challenges in the trilateral partnership among European Union (EU), China, and

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

Africa can be resolved by taking into consideration some options as being assumed. The first option is to bring China into OECD/DAC framework as it is advocated by a number of development officials and experts. China has a strategic interest in being considered as a South-South partner and wants to be perceived as a developing country that is helping other developing countries (Chris and Marco, 2005). The second option is pragmatic trilateral cooperation and progressive rapprochement in order to bring forward a common African agenda. The third option is a modernization of either side's development-approach towards Africa and to build around an African agenda and aimed at making globalization more equal and sustainable, including the building blocks of security, trade, investment, regional and continental integration and aid. [viii]

Regarding some policy recommendations for trilateral cooperation, firstly, in the frame of OECD/DAC, China could adapt its programs to the OECD's procedures. Secondly, it is essential for EU-China-Africa cooperation to be reinforced at ad hoc basis. Finally, European Union (EU) and China should be integrated in an African model of cooperation with emphasis on using existing African position from the African Union (AU), as a collective expression of African states.[ix]

In order to facilitate collaboration and partnerships between China, the European Union (EU) and Africa, the trilateral dialogue should focus on a direction to foster the development in Africa. However, the main characteristics of the trilateral partnership should identify the benefits for each partner of the dialogue; to continue to include interactions with regional organizations of Africa; to facilitate cooperation in themes related to the achievement of the MDGs and related to the capacity-building initiatives; to establish effective mechanisms in order to evaluate the follow-up actions of the trilateral cooperation of the three actors; and finally to focus on the support from the European Union (EU) and China to Africa for peace and security in the region.

European Union (EU) as well as China can deal with their challenges and common interests on Africa. Both sides have common interest in Africa's stability and security. On the one hand, China needs to consider the political dimensions of development. On the other hand, European Union (EU) needs to revise its commercial relations with Africa. The trilateral cooperation should be progressive, but it is essential to be improved in addressing the global developmental challenges in a more effective multilateral manner. The three partners can develop common interests and discuss crucial global challenges while pursuing their bilateral relations. The process of trilaterarism will strengthen their bilateral relationship and will increase their role of Africa's regional institutions as key players in Africa's development and on international stage. However, the challenge for European Union (EU) and China is to harmonize policy-goals and implementation-strategies in aid and investment and ways to mainstream initiatives at a regional level. In this context, the success or failure of China and the EU to cooperate on African development could be a challenge for the EU–China strategic partnership.

In parallel, African countries should realize the need for all the three parties to cooperate. However, Africa should have an advanced role here; should ensure that they do not lose the support of the European Union (EU) by looking forward to short-term benefits from China. Africa should develop an effective negotiation relationship with China that will benefit Africa's development. It is evident that Africa is becoming a playing area for superpower confrontations. The trilateral cooperation could be a tool for strengthening EU-China partnership and at the same time could be a valuable tool for increasing Africa's institutional role in multilateral fora. In this frame, African countries need to ensure that steep competition allows them to build their own diversified economies and that they do not remain suppliers of raw material. African countries need to ensure that markets are regulated; trade agreements are in favor of African interests and the rule of law applies. However, an understanding between the European Union (EU) and China and the active participation of African states is crucial for the development of this trilateral cooperation. Africa, theoretically the most important link in the trilateral relation, should work out its own concept of relations with the European Union (EU) and China in such a way as would allow it to emerge from the present situation of political and economic dependence and for its development. In terms of the trilateral cooperation and dealing with tensions between the different approaches, Africa needs to put political and economic heavyweights to work for its own interest in dealing with the European Union (EU) and China.

Conclusion

The paper assumes that the trilateral cooperation is an effective mechanism for fostering Africa's development although in the frame of trilateral cooperation the paper focuses on the substantial differences between the Chinese and European approaches to Africa which they are nonetheless not irresolvable. The European approach emphasizes on good governance in Africa and it seeks to build a better framework for governance on the continent, while the Chinese approach stresses on effective governance and tries to build an improved economic basis for political governance in Africa. However, dialogues between China and Europe are needed on various levels, and policy coordination is necessary. China still does not have enough experience with its new engagement in Africa. Learning from Europe of its success and failure in engaging Africa would be a great benefit for China. China

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

needs to have a balance between its issue-related national interests, such as energy needs, and relational national interests like its important relations with African and Western countries.

The key to the future of EU-China engagement with Africa will be firstly, how the European Union (EU) and China reconcile aspects of their development paradigms to support Africa's development. Secondly, in the maintaining trade and economic relations with Africa, China will have to avoid outright confrontation or conflicts of interest. Finally, a major challenge for Africa through its regional institutions is the management of the effects of multiple external interests and partnerships such that it becomes more of an independent actor in international relations and stops of being an object of great power agendas.

China's impact in Africa is still needed to be empirically tested and trust can be built up in the meantime. It is therefore important to increase the research basis to improve the evidence as a basis for policy-makers for making informed decisions. The European Union (EU) has the experience of modernization of development approach to Africa but China is in learning process. So, all the three actors can learn from one other and Africa has an opportunity to steer this process in the desired direction. A consideration that should be highlighted is how African countries intend to define their international positions use their enhanced bargaining power and manage their domestic development. Therefore, the African side should intent to reinforce its partnerships with both the European Union (EU) and China. Africans need to put the two political and economic heavyweights to work for their own interests and become pro-active risk managers themselves in their political and economic relations with the EU and China. The role of the African Union (AU) as a regional organization which can represent Africa is crucial for the further win-win benefits from the trilateral relations as well as for the development of Africa. It is a main task for the African Union (AU) whether Africa's asymmetrical position in the world economy will change Africa. However, the question which still remains for future research is whether the trilateral partnership can be more effective than the bilateral and the multilateral approach.

In short, Africa needs trade and commercial activities for its development. A trilateral partnership with the European Union (EU) and China which focuses on Africa's development could be a solution to Africa's development. A trilateral dialogue could be a chance for Africa via its regional organizations, such as the African Union (AU) on one the hand to provide the platform for dialogue and on the other hand, to promote Africa's development by accepting the "traditional" way of donation by the European Union (EU) and by welcoming China's "emerging" approach with business to business aid. In this sense a trilateral partnership, with Africa's role via regional organizations such as African Union (AU) more active, is the best strategy for Africa. In this context, the main result of this research paper is to indicate that Africa should demonstrate a coherent united strategy through its regional institutions and to make efforts to maintain its relationship with both the European Union (EU) and China. In this framework Africa's challenges are firstly, to be represented itself in a dynamic way and with "one voice" in the trilateral dialogue as well as in the international arena and secondly domestically the African government to take responsibility on preserving transparency in receiving foreign aid processes and fight against corruption. In this sense regarding the issue of transparency a question for future research could be how the EU and China could preserve the transparency in foreign aid to Africa in order to be sure that foreign aid is effective for Africa's development and to work together with African governments in fighting against corruption in the common ground of trilateral cooperation.

Conflict of Interest

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

"Policy note (2009). Africa-China-EU cooperation in Africa: Prospects and Pitfalls". The Nordic Africa Institute, p.2-5, http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/series/notes/PN-EU-0911.pdf

"Chinese president's speech at opening ceremony of Fifth Ministerial Conference of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation", (2012). latest access on December 2012 at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-07/19/c_131725637.htm

Anirudh Sethi Report (2012). "Zuma Warns on African Ties in China", Anirudh Sethi Report, July, latest access November 2013 at http://www.anirudhsethireport.com/zuma-warns-on-africas-ties-to-china/

Bates G, Andrew S (2013). "Untapped Trilateralism: Common Economic and Security Interests of the EU, the US and China", Europe, China Research Advice Network latest access December 2013, available at http://www.euecran.eu/publications-2011/untapped-trilateralism

Bernt B (2007). "China outwits EU in Africa", Asia imes published in www.atimes.com

Bernt B, Uwe W (2007). "EU-China-Africa Trilateral Development Cooperation", German Development Institute pp 23-24.

Chris A, Marco AV (2005). "The New Diplomacy of the South: South Africa, Brazil, India and Trilateralism", Third World Quarterly, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. available at http://www.ipc-undp.org/ipc/doc/ibsa/papers/ibsa9.pdf 26: 7.

Ellen L (2007). "How will Beijing Consensus benefit Africa?" The Broker, http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/How-will-the-Beijing-Consensus-benefit-Africa

EU-China: Closer Partners, growing responsibilities, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Brussels 2006

EU, China and Africa (2007). A trilateral partnership in theory, a bilateral one in practice? EU, China and Africa: A trilateral partnership in theory, a bilateral one in practice? 2007, http://docs.china-europa-forum.net/eu__china_and_africa__.pdf

Hayley H, Dr Martyn D (2009). "The EU, and China": Prospects for Partnerships in Democracy Building in Africa" IDEA, pp.3-13 latest

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3

access on November 2013 at http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&pageid=35012

Sanusha N (2007). "The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) What does the future hold", China Report Sage, 43(3):283-296. http://chr.sagepub.com/content/43/3/283.abstract

The EU and Africa (2005). Towards a strategic Partnership Brussels, 15961/05, 19 Dec.

Veronika T (2000). "EU, China and Africa: A trilateral partnership in theory, a bilateral one in practice?", European Centre for development policy management. http://mascareignas.blogspot.com/2007/08/eu-china-and-africa-trilateral.html

[i] The 10th China-EU Summit Beijing, 28 November 2007 Joint Statement, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-07-279_en.htm

[ii] "Africa, China, EU cooperation in Africa: Prospects and Pitfalls" , The Nordic Africa Institute, 2009, p. 2-5, http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/series/notes/PN-EU-0911.pdf

[iii] Sanusha Naidu, "The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation(FOCAC) What does the future hold", China Report Sage,43:283, 2007

[iv] "Chinese president's speech at opening ceremony of Fifth Ministerial Conference of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation",2012 *latest access on November 2013 at* http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-07/19/c_131725637.htm

[v] Veronika Tywuschik, "EU, China and Africa: A trilateral partnership in theory, a bilateral one in practice?", European Centre for development policy management (ecdpm)

[vi] Hayley Herman and Dr Martyn Davies, "The EU, and China":Prospects for Partnerships in Democracy Building in Africa" IDEA 2009, pp.3-13 *latest access on November 2013 at* http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&pageid=35012

[vii] "Zuma Warns on African Ties in China", Anirudh Sethi Report, July 2012, *latest access November 2013 at* http://www.anirudhsethireport.com/zuma-warns-on-africas-ties-to-china/

[viii] Bernt Berger, "China outwits EU in Africa", Asia Times 2007 in www.atimes.com

[ix] Bernt Berger/Uwe Wissenbach, " EU-China-Africa Trilateral Development Cooperation", German Development Institute 2007, pp 23-24

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1432 https://discussionpublishers.com/research/37f146dd-6391-4110-83a0-e5867a05f5e3