

# Deception, Development or Interdependence? China's Approach to African Trade

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HARRY KAZIANIS, MAY 17 2011

### Deception, Development or Interdependence? Testing China's Historical "Mutual Benefit" Approach to African Trade and Investment

In November, 2006 China celebrated the commencement of an expanding global partnership that could change international politics along with the history of Africa's relations with the globe. Over forty African nations met in Beijing, China at the Third Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in an effort to dramatically expand Sino/African economic relations. President Hu Jintao of China remarked, "We propose to enhance South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue to promote balanced, coordinated and sustainable development of the global economy." [1] Such a courtship began slowly during the Cold War, born out of strategic calculation. This relationship slowly declined as China recovered from the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt its economy. In 2000, China began to re-emerge in Africa as its power and influence grew rapidly along with her hunger for diverse allocations of natural resources. China offers Africa a new approach to development that is similar to its own economic model of growth. China's economic, developmental and trade goals towards Africa represent a well-defined historical pattern of "mutual benefit" that is based on China's "Eight Principles for China's Aid to Foreign Countries." China has followed a traceable historical pattern of trade and development in Africa that is similar to its own economic development model it followed over thirty years ago trading with Japan and other nations.

China and Africa share similar stories of subjection and colonization from various European nations. According to Penny Davies in her analysis of Chinese trade with Africa, "China has an interesting dual role as both donor and recipient country. China has achieved remarkable success in lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.

Nevertheless, China is facing a number of challenges, many of them similar to those facing African countries." [2] China views itself as a benefactor of aid and economic trade but also a developing nation itself. China's vice minister of Commerce Fu Ziying noted,

"China remains a developing country. According to the poverty standards of the United Nations, that is \$1.25 a day, according to these standards, China has 200 million people living under poverty. On the one hand China has some impressive cosmopolitan areas such as Shanghai and Beijing, but on the other hand, rural areas in some parts of China's central and western areas are still stuck in poverty," [3]

Chinese President Hu Jintao also expressed a similar sentiment in addressing the Third Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in November, 2006, "China is the largest developing country, and Africa is home to the largest number of developing countries. Our combined population accounts for over a third of the world total. Without peace and development in China and Africa, there will be no global peace and development." [4]

China's economic fortunes have risen quickly over the last twenty years. Africa by most accounts has struggled for survival. Thirty years ago, it was a developing nation that could barely feed its population. China's economy is now worth \$5.9 trillion dollars and second only to the United States. [5] China is already the world's biggest producer of cars and steel. [6] China also overtook Germany as the world's largest exporter in 2009 totaling \$1.2 trillion dollars

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worth of goods.[7] China's rise offers potential trade partners a new model of economic progress to model their own development after besides the west. China is now focusing its bilateral trade relations on the nations of Africa in an effort to increase trade and expand its geostrategic influence.

Many western scholars and politicians have criticized China's quickly expanding trade with Africa as a "Rogue Donor" that focuses on nothing more than resource extraction.[8] Others have attacked China claiming her policies support dictators that loathe human rights and that Chinese infrastructure projects employ little of the local population. Scholars should objectively study China's recent economic development to understand its pattern of international trade relations. Scholars must also understand that China's mutual benefit policy is not a model of human development or model to acquire a democratic form of government. Neither party expects this model of mutual benefit to achieve such aims. China's history of economic development is the best template to understanding China's trade with Africa. China's trade policies in Africa are aggressive and competitive in nature, but not exploitive or neo-colonial.

There are various reasons and motives why one should desire a clear understanding of Chinese interests and trade relations with Africa. As China's economy has risen, so has trade with Africa. Chinese trade with Africa in 2005 was valued at over \$55 billion dollars annually.[9] Today, Chinese trade with Africa is now worth over \$100 billion dollars.[10] Africa is one of the last places on Earth that has large deposits of untapped oil, natural gas, and various other strategically important natural resources. In an era of high-energy prices and few places to explore for new untapped sources of raw materials, Africa's importance rises considerably. The International Energy Agency reported that China's oil imports will grow from 1.5 million bbl/d in 2000 to 10.9 million bbl/d by 2030.[11] At this point, approximately 77% of China's crude oil will be imported.[12] Securing African exports of oil and natural gas are extremely important if China wishes to continue its rapid economic growth.

One must also consider the potential of Africa to rise as a new economic power house in the not so distant future. China does not look to Africa for just extracting natural resources but an economic zone to allow for mutual development. Africa from 2000-2008 has grown on average at a rate of 4.8% of GDP per year.[13] Africa's total GDP is now worth over \$1.6 trillion dollars.[14] It is projected that collective African consumer spending will be equal to \$1.4 trillion dollars by 2020.[15] It is also estimated that 128 million Africans will have discretionary income to spend.[16] If forecasts hold accurate, Africa will be a large and rapidly growing consumer market that the world's economies will wish to cater to. The perception of Africa as a poor, "dark continent" may finally be on the cusp of being vanquished. China is attempting to enter not only the vast resource market of Africa, but also positioning itself for selling its various manufactured products, electronics and Chinese made goods to a rapidly growing economic bloc. The policy of mutual advantage is a key aspect of China's attempt to gain a dominant foothold in this new and rapidly growing African marketplace.

In assessing China's rapidly growing relationship with Africa, one must begin to test China's "mutual benefit" trade policies by studying the history of this partnership. Sino/African relations date back several centuries. Ties between both parties have waxed or waned based on historical events surrounding them. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese naval vessels visited Africa. China's Ming dynasty dispatched ships to the continent's eastern coast in early bids of exploration and possible trade creation. The famous Chinese explorer, Admiral Zheng, in command of a massive fleet explored the Eastern African coast in three historic voyages. His navy explored the areas around modern day Somalia, Mozambique, and Zanzibar. In this early time frame, their mutual visits created opportunities to trade merchandise as well as scientific and technological interactions. However, such a prosperous relationship would not be fully realized. Sino/African trade was small considering distance and available naval technology. Also, both parties would become prey to western colonization.

Relations would then reach another high point during the Cold War. From 1949 to 1978, China's geopolitical and trade policy towards Africa was influenced by the ideology of the Cold War. China would reach out to African nations in a strong diplomatic push after 1960 when China would seek new allies after the infamous Sino/Soviet split. China attempted to depict itself as a leader in the non-aligned movement advocating against colonialism and imperialist actions in the Third World. China attempted to link its ideological stand with its foreign policy goals.

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It was during this time that China began to implement its economic model of "mutual benefit" in Africa that is used on a much grander scale today. In a two-month tour of various African states in 1963-1964, Premier Zhou Enlai declared several principles that would guide China's relations with African nations. He proposed what we understand today as the "Eight Principles for China's Aid to Foreign Countries". A close study of these policies and guidelines are important in testing the concept of mutual benefit as the guiding principle of current Sino/African trade. These policies are the official strategy of the Chinese Communist party and have been recently re-declared at the Third Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2006 by China's President Hu Jintao.[17] He earlier remarked in a speech in 2005,

"We should carry out mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields on an equal footing. This constitutes an effective way for us to respond to the opportunities and challenges of deepening economic globalization. With a variety of resources and different industrial structures, our economies are complementary to one another, hence the great potential for cooperation." [18]

China has laid out these principles that all Chinese government agencies and companies must follow in its trade and economic relations with all countries.

In careful study of these principles, there is one guideline that influences all the others. This principle mandates, "The Chinese Government always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other countries. It never regards such aid as a kind of unilateral aim but as something mutual." [19] China in all of its interactions attempts to seek economic trade policies that are mutually advantageous to both parties. China does not seek to subjugate its trade partners and states clearly in the text laying out the eight principles, "In providing aid to other countries, the purpose of the Chinese government is not to make recipient countries dependent on China but to help them embark step by step on the road of self-reliance and independent economic development" [20]. China wishes to seek partnerships that are mutually advantageous and that are of benefit to all other parties involved. There is however one important prerequisite to Chinese trade and aid. This is the recognition of the People's Republic in all matters related to China instead of Nationalist Chinese located in Taiwan. China until the present day will only have limited economic trade and investment with nations that still have diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

During this period of trade throughout the Cold War, China largely attempted to influence African nations with large blocks of economic aid in its application of the eight principles and its goals of mutually beneficial trade. Chinese engineers in the 1960's and 1970's helped construct roads, stadiums and power plants in efforts to expand Chinese influence and economic links to Africa.[21] By 1978, China had established diplomatic relations with 43 African countries based on the popularity of its economic policy of mutual benefit as envisioned in the eight principles.[22]

Trade between Africa and China would decline as events would cause one party to look inward towards internal economic reform. The end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao Zedong marked a shift in China's internal and external thinking and economic relations. China's political and economic systems began to move towards capitalism and the free market. Between 1979 until 1982 there was a decline in Sino-African relations.[23] Economic aid was reduced accompanied by a turn down in bilateral trade overall. The Chinese economy regrouped from years of state planning and communist economic policies. China would seek out large monetary amounts of capital investment from the west to revitalize its economy. It would be at this time that China would receive from Japan a loan of \$ 20 billion dollars that would trade cash and technological investments for Chinese coal and oil resources.[24] China would then replicate this trade model later in its relations with African states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. China maintained existing African relations but did not partake in any major aid projects. China would witness in 1989 a massive upheaval when democratic protestors demanded democracy at Tiananmen Square. China would also witness the collapse of the Cold War. It would not be until the new century that China would focus on Africa as its power and influence began to grow.

China began to reinvest in its relationship with Africa in 2000, when Chinese economic power had increased dramatically. China began to reexamine its declining role in Africa with a new eye for potential areas of natural resource extraction with a possible future role of diversifying trade.

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China's current policy of trade for mutual benefit with Africa is a diverse and wide-ranging topic. China has spent billions of dollars in hundreds of various trade deals over the last eleven years. One case study of China's mutual benefit policy is its relationship with Angola. Angolan president Eduardo dos Santos describes bilateral relations with China as "being mutually advantageous partnerships that were pragmatic and had no political preconditions".[25] In 2000, Angola had just ended a bloody thirty-year civil war and was looking to the west for development aid and assistance. Angola had failed to pay back several IMF backed loan deals causing the west to be very wary of giving further assistance.[26] Angolan corruption is considered some of the worst in Africa. Angola also at the time ranked at the bottom of the United Nations human development index that ranks quality of life.[27] Angola was a nation that was in need of massive investment, infrastructure, and basic needs such as a sustainable food supply and basic medical care for its population. Angola's problems were vast and with IMF and western assistance seemingly declining, Angola seemed to be in a precarious situation.

At the same time as Angola was attempting to secure aid to rebuild, China was also looking to reestablish trade with Africa and rekindle its mutual benefit trade policies. In 2000, China would offer and Angola would accept a loan of \$2 billion dollars.[28] The repayment plan was very unique. China would be paid back its initial investment entirely in oil. This was similar to a deal Japan offered China in the late 1970's which traded developmental aid in the form of technology transfers for oil and coal. Angola had at the time one of the largest untapped oil reserves in all of Africa. To ensure China would be repaid and Angola would not waste the aid money in corruptive practices, China would build roads, bridges, schools and other critical infrastructure with the loaned money to Angola.[29]

This type of development would expand massively over the next ten years. China and Angola have negotiated and concluded several resources for infrastructure deals that have allowed Angola to rebuild its economy rapidly. Angolan GDP growth year over year from 2005-2009 averaged a remarkable 15.3% increase year over year.[30] The majority of Chinese financial assistance to Angola is reserved for rebuilding projects. These include infrastructure, telecommunications, and domestic food production under the Angolan government's specially designed civil war reconstruction program. Economic relations between China and Angola expanded when on March 2, 2004, China granted through its Export-Import Bank another \$2 billion dollar oil based loan to Angola to support even more reconstruction projects.[31] The first segment of this loan involved 31 contracts that hoped to expand various infrastructure projects in the areas of energy, public sanitation, public health, primary education, communication, and public works. Seven Chinese companies were engaged in these projects.[32] The largest of these involved the rebuilding of 371 kilometers of road between Luanda and Uige. This project alone is valued at over \$218 million dollars.[33] Vital infrastructure is being developed in order to revitalize Angola's economy and care for its population. Because aid is used directly to build various infrastructure projects, there is very little possibility of corruption.

Cooperation between China and Angola in the application of the mutual benefit policy has economically assisted both nations. Because of various trade deals that have been put in place because of China's mutual benefit policy, Angolan oil imports represents over 18 percent of China's total oil imports, with future increases all but certain.[34]. Angola now surpasses Nigeria as Africa's largest exporter of oil. From a nation that just eleven years ago was virtually begging western nations and the IMF for loan funds to now being the largest exporter of African only is truly an astounding feat. This is largely because of China's mutual benefit policy.

China's policy of mutual benefit is also guided by the idea of non-interference in other states internal affairs. Beyond set government policy that China has declared in regards to trade relations with other developing nations, China's history sets precedent for how it will treat other countries. Principles and concepts of equal treatment, a respect for sovereignty, noninterference, and equally advantageous development are a constant aspect in China's mutual benefit policy as exemplified in the eight principles that guide trade relations. China is highly sensitive to notions of state sovereignty and equality among nation-states. History again is a factor in China's thinking. This policy was created by China's experience with western colonization and territorial conquest. China feels at the heart of all nations foreign policy should be a mutual respect in all matters. China believes all nations must avoid interfering in each other's internal affairs. China is against most forms of military intervention. A recent example of this was when China abstained in UN Security Council resolution 1973 authorizing force against Libya.[35]

China's policy of non-interference has been challenged by various critics who feel it gives China a license to trade

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with nations who are sponsors of state terrorism and commit human rights abuses. One must again look to China's history to gain perspective on this issue. China does not feel qualified to make judgments on the domestic affairs or historical arc of other nations and expects other nations to do same in regards to China's domestic policies. China above all else respects the sovereignty of nation-states and does not wish to interfere in a states governmental structure or internal affairs. 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." [36] China's trade relations however are not guided by any private internal national issues but purely by mutual benefit of both parties. I feel this is an important point as it explains why China will trade with nations that abuse human rights such as Sudan and Zimbabwe.

It however must be noted that China's non-interference policy has been shifting over the last several years. China will not be embarrassed or loose international standing in trading with nations who maybe committing the most egregious abuses of their people. Stephanie Hanson from the Council on Foreign Relations noted,

"For instance, it has altered its policy of blocking UN Security Council resolutions authorizing peacekeepers for Darfur and placed modest pressure on Khartoum to allow a UN peacekeeping deployment. Beijing's recent handling of the situation in Sudan shows that it is learning its limitations of non-interference, however much that principle remains part of its official rhetoric." [37]

China has recently began to make small shifts to its policy of non-interference as some of China's trade partners have committed grave human rights abuses such as genocide in Darfur. While China is standing for moderate action against the worst possible offenses of human rights, in this case genocide in Darfur, this is only in an extreme case. Considering the international pressure on Sudan in the case of genocide against its people, China may have been forced to act because of intense international pressure. Time will tell if this represents a true policy shift of a onetime decision based on historic circumstances.

In order to further test China's mutual benefit concept, one must look at the most important and influential literature on the subject. There are various authors who have written extensively about China's mutual benefit policy in support or against its postulated benefits. There is one author that argues China's interactions with Africa are clearly based on the concept of "mutual benefit" that is pivoted on its own history of economic development. The author theorizes Chinese economic relations with Africa are built upon China's own experience as a developing nation in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Dr. Barbara Brautigam in her epic work, *The Dragon's Gift* explains that China offers Africa an economic relationship that trades natural resources for capital improvements, roads, bridges, telecommunications, ports and various other heavy industrial improvements. She details in the book that China has used the same model of development in the 1970's and 1980's when it traded coal and oil with Japan for advanced technology and capital resources.

This school of thought advances the idea that Sino/African relations follow a logical evolutionary progression that starts from the 1960's until today. The author flatly denies that China's motives in Africa are purely exploitive or colonialist in nature. Brautigam's believes China's economic relationship is a long term that will clearly benefit both parties. Her most intriguing insight is that China is using its own economic development model and offering this as a counter to western forms of economic aid and assistance. The author clearly believes that China's policy is built on the mutual benefit concept with her whole book dedicated to proving her argument. Brautigam explains in an article for *Foreign Policy*, "This is an opportunity for African states to ride into the global economy on China's shirrtails rather than remain natural-resource suppliers to the world." [38]

The author builds on her thesis to counter many of the accusations that China supports dictators in Sudan and Zimbabwe, that China only uses Chinese labor in development projects and that China is attempting to merely acquire precious natural recourses. Brautigam explains that one of the key components of China's foreign policy is non-intervention in other nation's internal affairs. In excellent detail the author shows that China has no choice but to import labor into many development projects as various Africans works lack the advanced engineering and technical knowledge to work on most projects. She also rebuffs arguments of Chinese plundering natural resources. She demonstrates how many of these deals are similar to western nations and many times offer enhanced terms that best

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IMF and various western governments' developmental packages. The author notes,

"China's own (economic) experiments have raised hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty, largely without foreign aid. They believe in investment, trade and technology as levers for development, and they are applying these same tools in their African engagement, not out of altruism but because of what they learned at home." [39]

*The Dragon's Gift* has spawned a host of secondary materials that attack this position and many more who support this viewpoint and attempt to expand on it. This secondary source is now the dominant viewpoint in the literature on Sino-African relations. What makes this viewpoint so strong is Dr. Brautigam has studied this topic since the early 1970's and is this field's subject matter expert. Her viewpoint does not attempt to advance any political agenda. It does not attempt to make China into a villain or rising superpower bent on colonial aspirations. Her argument is clear; it is well researched and visibly differentiates from other scholars. It is based on over thirty years of empirical research and builds on other historical and international relations scholarship. The author's theory is clearly the most researched and well developed of all three schools of thought on this subject.

Many scholars have attacked the Chinese concept of mutual benefit as a utopian notion. Many have argued that China is just leveraging its economic position with Angola and various others nations to gain natural resources. Other scholars have argued that development offered for natural resources in infrastructure such as roads and bridges is futile in that poor African nations can't possibly hope to maintain without further funding. In a widely cited article in the *New York Times*, Moisés Naím, the editor in chief of Foreign Policy magazine declares,

"What's behind this sudden Chinese drive to do good around the world? The three short answers are money, international politics and access to raw materials. China's central bank has the world's largest foreign exchange reserves, totaling \$1.06 trillion. Beijing is increasingly leveraging this cash to ensure its access to raw materials and to advance China's growing global influence. What better than a generous foreign-aid program to ensure the good will of a petro-power like Nigeria or a natural-resource-rich neighbor like Indonesia?" [40]

There is a large amount of scholars who feel China's policy of mutual benefit is nothing more than a neocolonialist policy of a rising hegemonic power attempting to spread its influence over the continent of Africa. An excellent secondary source that endeavors to document China's imperial aspirations is entitled "The Next Empire" in the publication *the Atlantic Monthly* by Howard French. This article summarizes many of the neocolonialist views that China has less than positive aspirations in Africa. French's argues China is utilizing African natural resources to build Chinese industry with blatant disregard for Africa and its population. The author depicts Chinese actions in various first person interviews while in the background taking a long and arduous train ride through the center of Africa. His train ride is a clever literary metaphor to demonstrate a failed economic development plan. This metaphor is potent in that the railcar and railway are all Chinese made and in bad condition. The author depicts a train to nowhere, just as he attempts to show this same concept in Africa's economic relations with China.

French depicts as evidence various development deals from Angola to Zambia in an attempt to show duplicitous Chinese motives. He weaves a tale of China building important infrastructure in Africa while most African nations do not have the resources to maintain the roads and bridges the Chinese are building. French details highways built by Chinese workers that go hundreds of miles not to a village or town but straight to a corrupt African leaders doorstep that serves no one else. The author also explains most of the various capital improvements are done by imported Chinese labor and paid for by the host's countries natural resources. The author attempts to make veiled references linking old European colonial aspirations to China, "Recently, a very interesting Chinese delegation visited Brussels...They asked to see all the old colonial maps of the Congo. These are the only maps that reflect reasonably accurate surveys of Congo's underground, and they want to use them for development plans in Katanga and elsewhere." [41]

The thesis that China is nothing more than a twenty-first century colonial power attempting to take over Africa's precious natural resources has many clear flaws that have been well documented by various scholars. The biggest flaw in this argument is that it does not look to China's history, its own past as a former colony, nor does it look at China's stated economic policy goals of mutual benefit. If one is to accuse China of being a colonial power, one

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needs to look at China's own past as a guide to its future intentions. Critics of China's policies in Africa are completely divorced from China's history. French attempts to breathe new light into this historical argument by drawing many of his conclusions from firsthand accounts that have negative viewpoints of the Sino/African relationship. In the author's analysis he does not attempt to examine the positive aspects of Chinese trade and investment in Africa. He only focuses on natives who have a negative viewpoint on this topic. There is no objectivity or self-examination that could strengthen his argument. There is also a veiled political agenda that French seems to advance throughout the article. Many scholars that advocate this thesis seem to be looking to create an overall negative viewpoint of China as a whole with a research agenda that looks decidedly biased.

Another gapping flaw in those who attempt to discredit China's mutual benefit approach to Africa is that China is not the only investor. Western nations have taken notice and are making large inroads into Africa. If African nations do not like the terms Chinese trade partners offer they have increasingly large options of partners to trade with. In an article by *Newsweek* entitled "China Misadventures in Africa" that largely attacks China's goals in Africa nicely makes the point,

"Every economy the Chinese help revive becomes that much more attractive to their rivals, too. Already American firms Bechtel and KBR are bidding for infrastructure projects in Angola. Oil giants ExxonMobil and Chevron are increasing their presence in the country. The Brazilian firm Odebrecht is building a highway to compete with the Chinese railroad to Lobito, South African companies are repairing the electrical grid near the oilfields in northern Angola, and the Portuguese are horning in on construction projects in and around Luanda." [42]

If African nations feel China is not giving them best "mutually beneficial" deal, Africa has vast options to look elsewhere.

China's mutual benefit ideas as conceptualized in eight principles when it comes to trade with Africa is vastly different than the standard western approach to African nations. China's policy began during the Cold War to ensure trade relations among nations were mutually fair and mutually profitable. This policy has shifted in nature from having overtones created in the Cold War to being based entirely on economics. China does not seek to dominate its trade partners in Africa. Even if China did seek economic hegemony, African nations could look to other trade partners in Brazil, India and various others. In a response to western claims China is nothing more than a colonial power, Du Xiaocong, counselor of the Chinese permanent mission to the United Nations remarked,

"When a politician from Europe made a speech in Africa, he bluntly pronounced that what China is doing in Africa is the same as what his ancestors did several hundred years ago, and China is repeating the mistake that European colonial countries used to make. To my understanding, he is either demonizing China's policy toward Africa aimed at undermining China-Africa relations on purpose or at least was distorted by prejudice and underestimate the wisdom and judgment of Chinese and African peoples." [43]

African nations are in a unique position to grow their economies rapidly and acquire the basic infrastructure they need to enter the global economy and pull large segments of this population out of poverty. These countries must be responsible stewards of China's mutual benefit policy and not squander this opportunity. Mr. Macharia Gaiho, managing editor of the Kenyan daily *Nation* noted "As long as China is so willing to invest in Africa, we must not miss out on the bounty," "But we must engage with our eyes wide open." [44]

At its most basic level, China and the west view Africa with a different set of eyes. China's sees viable trade partners that are in a similar state to themselves thirty years ago. The west sees Africa as a fixture of its past as former colonies and aid recipients, without looking to the possibilities and capabilities of its people. Professor Brauigam summarizes the differences of these views,

"While the West supports microfinance for the poor in Africa, China is setting up a \$5 billion equity fund to foster investment there. The West advocates trade liberalization to open African markets; China constructs special economic zones to draw Chinese firms to the continent. Westerners support government and democracy; the Chinese build roads and dams. In so doing, China may wind up supporting some dictatorial and corrupt regimes, but

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— and this is an inconvenient truth — the West also supports such regimes when it advances its interests. And given the limits of the West's success in promoting development in Africa so far, perhaps Westerners should be less judgmental and more open-minded in assessing China's initiatives there." [45]

China's mutual benefit policy is not a perfect economic developmental model. In supporting trade with any and all nations in Africa and around the globe, China by default supports nations that have horrendous human rights track records that do not support democratic institutions. One must remember, China itself is not a democracy and has been cited for human rights abuses. China at its core offers an economic development model of mutual benefit that employs economic methods of development and growth. It is not a human development model for acquiring democracy, freedom of speech or any other democratic norms. China is against any interference in any nations internal affairs based on its own subjugation by western imperial powers. China's model of economic aid can be used by African nations to pull millions of people out of poverty. If one is to attack this model for its lack of democratic leanings and emphasis on economic development then it is a fair complaint to make. However, this model makes no room for democracy, human rights or for a human rights agenda. The "Dragon's Gift" as Professor Brautigam describes it is for both parties to mutually gain economic advantage and grow through the profitable enterprise of trade. It is nothing more, nothing less. Judging on the merits of economic development, it is a powerful model. If you wish to judge this model for its creation of democratic values, then one has not studied Chinese history or what China is offering in the first place.

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