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Editorial.

China and Africa – Allies, Friends, or Both?

In today's geopolitics scientists pay a lot of attention to political and relations between China and Africa. They often ask questions about its purpose and nature. The Chinese government depicted them in January 2006, claiming it is based on four pillars: peaceful coexistence, mutual economic benefits, tightening cooperation in the international area, and support for African countries' development (China's African Policy, 2006). Some researchers question China's intentions. They indicate the aims are purely pragmatic and assume gaining access to Africa's resources and market (Anshan, 2007; Niquet, 2006). If the claim is valid, it means we deal with new type of colonialism. If the claim is invalid, then we need to ask what kind of relation we deal with. Since the former seems ideological and politically biased, I think we should ponder on the latter.

This paper, however, does not aim to answer the question concerning the relation's classification, since it is an apt problem for a wider research project. It is much more important though to grasp elements that influence the potential research's results. Młynarski (2012) observes that China's diplomacy is very active in Africa, having more representatives than the US. However, it would be difficult to logically defend the claim the author tries to make that extensive diplomatic presence has moral or ideological value. It certainly means that China is active in the region, but says nothing about its goals.

It seems that the Chinese diplomacy puts a huge emphasis on developing and tightening economic ties with Africa, and does not impose Chinese views concerning a political system or intervene in African internal affairs. For some researchers, surprisingly, it translates into supporting African non-democratic regimes. I think finding logical evidence connecting the two facts would be truly challenging.

Another important aspect is Chinese investment in Africa which has spontaneously increased since 2001, when China joined the World Trade Organization. Although for a long

time it had not been a leading investor in Africa and lagged behind the US and Europe, in 2009 China surpassed its competitors and became the largest partner of Africa in terms of trade. The reason is the 2008 financial crisis did not affect China as much as other economies; or rather: it did but positively, stimulating China's foreign investments. Some researchers claim that the exchange between Africa and China is asymmetrical, and blame the latter for monopolizing the export of African resources. There is the other side of the coin though, which is growing China's dependency on African supplies.

Being objective requires noticing that China provides development funds that are appreciated in Africa because they support creating or upgrading African infrastructure and improving living conditions. Moreover, the Chinese support is bigger than other states' or institutions. For instance, in 2000-2010, China provided the Sub-Saharan Africa with loans of total value \$12,5 billion bigger than the World Bank, without political stipulations based on human rights, democratic rule of law, and others (Cohen, 2011). While China's development funds improve African people's lives, China is blamed for supporting non-democratic regimes and infringing human rights. The logical fallacy is a reason why the West naturally loses influence in African countries. However, it is not a one-directional trend since China loses the African credit on the social level, which is caused by Chinese settlement in Africa that is not always welcomed.

The proposed set of factors depicts the complexity of presented issue. Short comments given on them demonstrate that in a wider context all Chinese activities in Africa are and will be perceived as a race of superpowers. My critical comments aim to introduce some objectivity into discussions and arguments through demonstrating that other superpowers undertake the same or similar initiatives to increase their influence in Africa and other regions of the world. Assessments of these actions very often are politically or ideologically biased, while they do not have moral values. Are China and Africa allies, friends, or rivals? These are not political terms but journalistic or ideological labels. May everyone answer the question about the nature of the title relation individually. I hope this short paper will help understand its complexity, and avoid political affinities and other traps waiting in this task.

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