

# **Aid within the Wider China-Africa Partnership: A view from the Beijing Summit<sup>1</sup>**

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We hold that the establishment of a new type of strategic partnership is the shared desire of China and Africa, serves our common interests, and will help enhance solidarity and mutual assistance among developing countries and contribute to lasting peace and harmonious development in the world.  
(FOCAC, Declaration of the Beijing Summit, 5.11.06)

This paper was written over the period of what has been possibly the largest, high level conference with Africa that has ever been held outside the continent.<sup>3</sup> The China-Africa Beijing Summit of 4-5 November 2006 is also claimed to be the largest international summit ever to have been held within China. As a major public event, it was taken extremely seriously in China. Many citizens of the capital city declared that the centre of their city had never been more beautiful. There were giant photographs of spectacular African scenery in the metros and of African peoples and wild-life on great bill-boards. Apart from the huge red lanterns, and flower displays, China news channels gave exceptional coverage to high level interviews and information about particular countries in Africa; and posters, hoardings, banners and the media proclaimed 'Amazing Africa' as well as the summit's theme of 'Friendship, Peace, Development and Cooperation'.<sup>4</sup> Almost 1 million ordinary citizens volunteered as helpers and as additional security on all street corners. The press, in Hong Kong as in Beijing,<sup>5</sup> carried front- and centre-page articles, special supplements and leaders on this Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

The Summit coincided with 50 years of diplomatic relations with China's first African partner, Egypt (1956), and almost as many decades of cooperation with several others such as Algeria (1958), Guinea and Sudan (1959) and Mali (1960), or Kenya (1963), and Tanzania and Zambia (1964). This Beijing Summit of 41 Heads of State was also the Third Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth King and a colleague, Bjorn Nordtveit who is also in the Comparative Education Research Centre, HKU, are beginning to collaborate on a research project that considers China's dual roles as re-emerging aid donor and as continuing aid recipient, illustrated principally from the education sector.

<sup>3</sup> An obvious parallel is the series of Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD) in 1993, 1998, and 2003. These were also Pan-African in their coverage.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the Conference theme is quite clearly not about 'aid' or 'development co-operation' but 'development and co-operation'.

<sup>5</sup> The article draws on the English language, *China Daily*; China's international English channel, CCTV9; the *South China Morning Post*; the main Beijing Summit and linked websites; and selected Western press. For instance, *China Daily* devoted no less than 4 of its 8 main pages to the Summit on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006

(FOCAC). In a way it constituted the summation of an extraordinarily intensive six<sup>6</sup> and more years of bilateral cooperation, not just at the level of senior officials but with heads of state and presidents to-ing and fro-ing between China and Africa, with a regularity very much greater than Japanese or Western leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the Summit was happening just a day or two after the China-ASEAN Summit, and though that 11-country co-operation is expected to reach US\$200 billion of two-way trade by 2008, as compared to just under US\$40 billion in 2005 between China and the 53 countries of Africa, the Africa Summit was given vastly greater public and media attention.<sup>8</sup>

The Summit offered therefore a unique occasion to review how China views its now accepted status as a major player in Africa, and how in particular it sees development assistance. We have argued elsewhere, based primarily on Chinese documentary sources, that China's engagement with Africa is an holistic partnership with a very bilateral feel to it (King, 2006a; 2006b). With the advantage of the Summit's visibility, we build here on these earlier perspectives, to explore how China's strongly bilateral approach is seen by its many African partners, meeting as a collective under the FOCAC umbrella. It is, however, less a question of bilateral versus collective or multilateral than of China not presenting itself primarily as an aid donor, whether bilateral or multilateral. This is not just semantics but is part of an almost 50 year history of China seeking to avoid the status of donor, but of its presenting itself as a friendly developing country (with much historical experience of external oppression) helping other developing countries, to the best of its ability. This relationship has always been, and it remains, a powerful illustration of South-South co-operation.

We shall note that aid, very unusually, did feature quite dramatically at one point at the Summit, but that this temporary visibility had returned by the end of the Summit to the more traditional position of aid's subordination to the wider politics of symmetrical collaboration between equal partners.

The paper will accordingly examine how China prefers to view its engagement with Africa, and how African leaders see China. It will also identify where development assistance fits within this wider partnership. In passing, it will review the evidence for China's becoming involved in what is sometimes thought of as the world's international development agenda such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes,<sup>9</sup> as well as the current forms of donor coordination and harmonisation.

### **China's view of Africa, and Africa of China**

This has been a particularly good time to review this two-way relationship since the media have been full of what African presidents and premiers as well as African students, academic analysts and businessmen are saying about the relationship; and

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<sup>6</sup> FOCAC was initiated in 2000. See the Beijing Declaration (China, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> There has been comment in Japan during the summit about their diplomatic missions in Africa now being many fewer than China.

<sup>8</sup> The China-ASEAN summit was in Nanning, while the African Summit was in the capital.

<sup>9</sup> In addition, in different sectors there are agreed international targets such as the 6 Dakar World Conference Goals which have been the basis for the Education for All Global Monitoring Reports.

equally China, with its very strong sense of the importance of history, is reminding both the internet and live audiences of its long tradition of friendly engagement with the continent. For example, in the days leading up to the Summit, the 15<sup>th</sup> century Chinese visitor to Eastern Africa, Admiral Zheng He, was a frequent reference point for the antiquity of the relationship, but also an icon for its peace-loving character.<sup>10</sup> In addition, on all the obvious Chinese websites there have been easily accessible a whole series of the basic documents which have detailed the rise of the strategic partnership between China and Africa both over the longer period and since 2000:

Fruitful China-Africa Cooperation over 50 years;  
China-Africa relations board the ship of a new century;  
The creation of FOCAC;  
Characteristics of FOCAC;  
1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Conference 2000;  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Conference 2003;  
Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation;  
Programme for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social  
Development. ([www.xinhuanet.com/english/zflt2006bj/](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/zflt2006bj/))<sup>11</sup>

What this documentation seeks to establish is that the much more intensive cooperation of the last six years since the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was established in 2000 is part of a much lengthier two-way cooperation, going back to the same principles (and practices) as were established by Premier Zhou Enlai during his Africa trip in 1963/1964. Even though those eight early principles of foreign aid use the 'aid' word, it is something of a public relations triumph that more than 40 years later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry can refer to them as relevant backgrounders to present China-Africa co-operation. They laid down the requirement that cooperation should be based on the principle of equality and of mutual benefit; that it should not be, in other words, the one-way distribution of alms, but mutually beneficial; that it should always respect the sovereignty of the recipient countries, and not impose any conditions on them, or extract any privileges; that such economic cooperation should discourage dependency but rather set countries on a route towards self-reliance, and independent economic development; cooperation projects needed to yield results quickly so that governments could increase their incomes and accumulate capital; when technical assistance was involved, Chinese experts needed to have the same standard of living as the local experts, and to avoid having special amenities (China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000).

These principles of course emerged at a point when China's foreign policy was fiercely critical of the bi-polar cold war world, and was seeking to wrest the leadership of the non-aligned nations away from Moscow (Snow, 1988; Jung & Halliday, 2006). But they also reflected China's own experience of being on the

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<sup>10</sup> The Chinese ambassador to South Africa made the point that Zheng He, unlike later visitors to Africa, had laid claim to no land, and seized no Africans as slaves (Liu Guijin, 2006); see also Snow's chapter on the Admiral in *The Star Raft* (1988). See also Qin (2006).

<sup>11</sup> Over the period of the Summit, there were many other accounts of the basic history of Sino-African relations, including in special supplements of *China Daily* and special articles in the *South China Morning Post*. See, for instance, *China Daily* 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, p.1; also Thompson ( *SCMP*, 2006) who was present on Zhou's first trip to Algeria in 1963 and witnessed the cutting of the ribbon on the proposed, China-financed, trans-Saharan highway.

receiving end of foreign aid and foreign interference in their internal affairs for many decades.<sup>12</sup> Yet the simplicity and accessibility of these eight Chinese principles compare very favourably with the seemingly endless and tortuous process of Western donors defining how donors can also be good partners with their recipients, and their continuing concerns about the asymmetrical nature of Western technical assistance and capacity building (King and Buchert, 1998; Kifle, Olukoshi and Wohlgemuth, 1997; Wohlgemuth, 2000). In fact, these Chinese principles captured some elements of what the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD was terming Official Development Assistance (ODA), in terms of grants, low or no-interest loans, and the character of technical assistance, at almost the same period in the early 1960s. But China was very far from wanting to follow Japan or other Western countries in setting up a formal development assistance agency for the long term,<sup>13</sup> or of defining what cooperation would fit within that framework; that would have changed the whole nature of their characteristic South-South co-operation.

But what is absolutely clear today, four decades later, is how China's discourse about common economic benefit, common political exchange, and common cultural cooperation appears to have been fully accepted by its African partners, as can be seen in any number of the comments from African leaders either in preparation for their meeting in Beijing or on arrival or discussions in the capital:

The best we can do is to do like the Chinese. (Sikatana, Zambian Foreign Minister, 23.3.06)

We are very comfortable to see China's increasing influence in Africa. So for Africa, the influence of China is not a source of concern or danger. African countries are happy to see the rise of China. (Meles Zinawi, Ethiopian Prime Minister, 16.10.06)

For me, visiting China is like going home. Egypt sees China more as a brother than as an ordinary friendly nation. (Hosni Mubarak, Egyptian President, 1.11.06)<sup>14</sup>

With rich resources, huge market potential, technical know-how and capital, Africa and China can achieve a win-win cooperation. (Ghanaian President Kufuor, 14.10.06)

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<sup>12</sup> Wen Jiabao commented in his 2006 trip to Egypt 'For over 110 years... China was the victim of colonial aggression. The Chinese nation knows too well the suffering caused by colonial rule.' (Chang, 2006). See Snow's chapter on 'The poor help the poor' (1988: 144-185) for fascinating detail on China's early aid architecture. A more lurid account of Mao's motives for overseas aid is contained in Jung and Halliday (2006: 465-8, 561-3).

<sup>13</sup> There was in the very early years a Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations (See Snow, 1988: 147); but later on what other countries would call development assistance became part of the Ministry of Commerce (See King, 2006b).

<sup>14</sup> The long standing leadership of Mubarak or of the Gabonese Head of State, Bongo, were presented were positively and without any negative comment on the length of their presidencies: thus Bongo: 'I am certainly the head of state with the longest relationship with China' (*China Daily*, 3.11.06).

Lesotho is convinced that the FOCAC is highly important as a practical mechanism for regular and high level political dialogue and consultations on cooperation in social, economic, cultural, scientific, technological and trade and investment areas. (Lesotho Prime Minister Mosisili, 1.11.06)

The language, as illustrated in the quotation from Lesotho, is of co-operation across the whole spectrum, from political to social, from cultural to scientific, and from economic to trade and investment. The emphasis is on securing common economic benefit, captured in the frequently used phrase, 'win-win', which was borrowed from the Chinese policy discourse. What was intriguing as the individual leaders arrived in turn in the capital was that they continued the intensity of their bilateral co-operation, through one-to-one meetings with the Chinese president or premier. A whole series of bilateral deals were signed before the Summit, for example between Liberia and China, and Guinea Bissau and China, and reported in the press (*China Daily* 2.10.06). The same happened with a whole line of other presidents and premiers, many of whom came several days before the formal opening of the two day Summit. The FOCAC Summit may have appeared therefore like a Pan-African multilateral event, but President Hu Jintao probably described it more accurately as follows: 'Hu said the summit, as the highest level bilateral meeting, will chart the path for Sino-African co-operation in the future' (*China Daily*, 3.1.06). Thus, on the day before the Summit alone, the President had separate bilateral, heads-of-state meetings with the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Cameroon, Madagascar, Tanzania and Nigeria, while Premier Wen had further bilateral meetings. Even on the first day of the Summit, the President found time for a further eight, separate bilateral discussions, with Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Ethiopia, Namibia, Mozambique, Djibouti, Mauritania and Senegal. On the day after the Summit, the President met separately with South Africa, Algeria, Benin, Togo, Eritrea, Zimbabwe and Niger. Two days after, he met with Egypt, Zambia, Somalia and Burundi. It seems entirely possible that all 41 visiting presidents and premiers timed their arrivals and departures in order to facilitate this crucial bilateral dimension of the Summit. At many of these bilateral, a whole series of new cooperative agreements were signed off.

Before turning to examine the different dimensions of collaboration covered in the Summit, it is worth re-emphasising the extraordinarily positive picture of Africa that was presented in Beijing.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see when we turn to the world of PRSP and MDG targets, or any of the other Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs), Africa has been very frequently characterised as failing to reach these world targets, as having the largest numbers of out-of-school children, HIV AIDS cases, or proportions of its populations that are poor. Typical of this approach to Africa were the great campaigns and rallies such as Live Eight, just before the G8 Summit in Scotland in July 2005. These were concerts to highlight poverty in Africa, with the powerful clicking of fingers by pop stars and their audiences every three seconds to symbolise that in that time another African child had died. Beyond this, the other iconic image presented by the organisers of that extraordinary campaign was very much a donor image: 'Eight world leaders sitting in a room in Scotland can save millions of lives...'; the message was clear: aid to Africa could and should be doubled at the stroke of a few G8 pens. It was a similar message that was associated with Jeffrey Sachs, - that the donor

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<sup>15</sup> In central Beijing, posters proclaimed 'Africa, the Land of Myth and Miracles'; this could also be a commentary on the way Africa has been portrayed elsewhere in the world.

nations can easily save Africa through extra money (Sachs, 2005; see also *Norrag News* 36). In another way, the white wrist-bands worn so widely at the time, said it all; they suggested that we, in the North, could “Make Poverty History”.

By contrast, the view of Africa in Beijing was one of life rather than death and disease; richness of colour and of culture rather than poverty; dynamism, energy and opportunity for business. One by one, day by day, in the media and the press, the countries of Africa were presented to the Chinese audience, but always it was their culture, religion, trade characteristics, including the totality of their trade with China, that was highlighted, and not their poverty, disease and poor governance.<sup>16</sup> It was doubtless a welcome relief. The whole of Africa was invited, including the five countries with which Beijing does not have diplomatic relations, and including those few who might not so easily get an invitation to London, Paris or Washington.

Although the emphasis of the summit was on ‘Friendship, Peace, Development and Cooperation’, not ‘Development Co-operation’, it was anticipated that it would be possible to gather much more of the scale of China’s current and planned assistance to Africa, given the sheer scale of the Summit. We shall look briefly at some of the dimensions of this development assistance, and see how they relate to other dimensions of China’s cooperation.

Initially, it looked like the President’s speech at the opening of the Summit would rehearse the time-honoured four or five dimensions of China-Africa Cooperation, which are repeated on the Foreign Ministry website for each of the countries of Africa (and indeed beyond). He talked therefore of ‘the political relations of equality and mutual trust’; second, of the broadening of ‘win-win economic cooperation with Africa’, along with the upgrading of human resource development; thirdly, the expansion of cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, with its links to education, sports and tourism; then, the cooperation and mutual support in international affairs, to maintain pressure on the UN system, and to enhance security cooperation based on mutual trust and benefit. A fifth dimension was the transfer to the world stage of China’s domestic priority for ‘harmonious development’. Under this banner, enhanced South-South cooperation could encourage the developed countries to deliver on their promises on market access, aid and debt relief. Also under this rubric, meeting the MDGs was briefly mentioned, but in the same sentence as the importance of steering ‘economic globalisation in the direction of creating prosperity for all’ (Hu, 2006).

Thus far, the speech followed a pattern that had been common in the President’s and Premier’s visits to Africa earlier in 2006. But then, after a brief reference to continuing to support Africa in its implementation of NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa’s Development), there was a return to the priority of forging ‘a new type of

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to suggest a deliberate or planned avoidance by China of the analysis of poverty, diseases, aid dependence, or conflict in Africa; see for example the discussion of all these in CCTV9’s Dialogue interview with President Kufuor of Ghana (3.11.2006). Rather these do not appear, with China’s policy community, or media, to be the immediate and obvious way to think about Africa. See also the trauma’s of Hong Kong’s medical workers in the Horn of Africa (Gooch, 2006)

China-Africa strategic partnership'. This too has been commonplace.<sup>17</sup> But suddenly there was listing of an eight point plan of commitments for the next three years. Of course, there have been commitments before, for instance at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Addis Ababa in 2003.<sup>18</sup> But this went far beyond that.

Indeed, it appeared to be a listing of 'aid' commitments and pledges, the very thing we have suggested the Chinese usually hesitate to present in this format. The first item, 'double its assistance to Africa by 2009' had almost a G8 Gleneagles feel to it.<sup>19</sup> The same was true of several other items such as the US\$5 billion of preferential loans and buyers' credit to Africa, the cancellation of further debt, and an omnibus item of training and institution building in the social sector (to which we shall return below). But it was far from being just a list of aid promises; there was a US\$5 billion fund to encourage Chinese businesses to invest in Africa, and a pledge to open 3 to 5 trade and economic cooperation zones in Africa.

We should mention here, however, that it has traditionally been rather unclear what China formally thinks of as aid. It seems entirely possible that while it may seem appropriate for Westerners to pick out the education and health sectors as obvious categories to be treated as aid, China's own preference has been to think of its relations with individual countries in a much more holistic way (see King 2006). Thus, the Summit in Beijing certainly confirmed the increase in educational scholarships to Africa, or in medical support, as we shall note in a moment, but that does not make it an aid event. Indeed, it was arguably much more about increased trade than just aid, as the official headline just before the conference has suggested: 'China will announce a package of measures covering aid, investment, trade and social development' according to the Vice-Minister for Commerce' (*China Daily*, 3.11.2006). All the Ministers of Commerce from African countries were invited, and the Summit was deliberately integrated on its first day with a High Level Dialogue between Heads of State and some 1000 Chinese and African Entrepreneurs; in addition, an African Commodities Exhibition was organised by the Ministry of Commerce immediately after the Summit. In fact, the emphasis in most of the heads of state interviews and in the summary reports of their bilateral meetings with the Chinese leadership was on this crucial dimension of two-way trade, with much attention to the need for increased Chinese direct investment.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See the President's speech to the joint session of the Nigerian parliament in 2006 (King, 2006b).

<sup>18</sup> The pledge, already claimed to be fulfilled, to train 10,000 African professionals, had been made on that occasion.

<sup>19</sup> It has been extremely unusual for China to mention what the aid total amounted to, though Premier Wen, in his 2006 visit to South Africa, admitted to a figure of Yuan 44.4 billion ((US\$5,61698 billion) over the last 50 years. The figure of US\$4.9 billion has been mentioned by Brautigam (1998) for the period of 1957-1989. The uncertainty about the total, of course, makes the pledge to double it much more problematic to assess.

<sup>19</sup> Sino-Gabonese bilateral trade would be just one example of many covered by the press

<sup>20</sup> Sino-Gabonese bilateral trade would be just one example of many covered by the press, with a US\$ 3 billion investment agreement in the Belinga iron deposit, 560 kilometre railway, port and hydro-electric plant. It ran its own 'Economic Days of Gabon' two day conference in Shanghai prior to the Summit (Peng, 2006).

For so many of the African countries present in Beijing, it appears to have been crucial to acknowledge the inseparability of the social developments associated with China from the Chinese investment in trade, in improved physical and communications infrastructure, and in business start-ups. From the Chinese perspective, social development needs these others to be sustainable.

When we turn now to look specifically at China's medical support to Africa, the Ministry of Health has provided figures which, like much else in China's statistics of development assistance, cover more than 40 years of cooperation. From the first medical team in Algeria in 1963 until the end of 2005, there have been some 15,000 people sent to Africa in medical teams;<sup>21</sup> they have worked in 47 countries, and have carried out no less than 170 million treatments (Zhang, 2006).<sup>22</sup> What is intriguing is the fact that there are claimed to be almost 1000 doctors and nurses from China present in 2006 in no less than 36 African countries;<sup>23</sup> of these nearly 100 doctors specialise in traditional medicine. The range of treatments includes training in traditional Chinese medicine, clinical medicine, disease prevention and management of rural medical services. But it is clear that not all medical interventions are delivered via the Ministry of Health or the provinces; the China National Overseas Engineering Corporation (COVEC) has built two pharmaceutical factories in Africa to make artemisinin, for the treatment of malaria. While the way these projects were financed is not discussed, the General Manager of COVEC's description of them doesn't make them sound like aid: 'We think this business is very beneficial to the locals' (Fang Yuanmin quoted in Xiao 2006).

Amongst the pledges announced by the President in the Summit's opening ceremony, on 4<sup>th</sup> November, however, was support for no less than 30 new hospitals in Africa, 30 malaria prevention and treatment centres, and a grant of US\$38 million to support the provision of artemisinin. The intention with this, and other pledges, is that they should be operationalised within the period between this Summit and the next in Egypt in 2009. It will be interesting to follow the process whereby this pledge gets translated into specific projects in a substantial number of the 48 countries which attended the Beijing Summit. It is also worth noting that these medical commitments sound very much like bilateral projects of the kind that have become very uncommon in the pledges of other bilateral donors. We shall return to the likely nature of these China projects when we look now at the same institutional promise in education.

Similarly in the sphere of what China prefers to call 'educational exchanges' rather than 'educational assistance' or 'aid', there had, again, been a good deal of open anticipation in the media in the days before the Summit. One emphasis continued to be on the mutuality or 'win-win' aspects of China's support to African students. Students are not just seen as a one-way act of generosity by China, since, according to the China Scholarship Council, Africans bring to China 'their unique experiences and colourful cultures' (Li Jianmin in Zhu, 2006). President Hu at the Beijing Summit

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<sup>21</sup> In the earlier period of Chinese aid to Africa, the medical teams were organised through an interesting process of twinning between a particular province of China and a country in Africa (see Snow, 1988: 147); it is not known if this has continued.

<sup>22</sup> The figures for total 'treatments' differ a good deal from 240 million 'patients' mentioned by Premier Wen in 19 June 2006 at a Cairo press conference (Sautman and Yang, 2006), to 180 million treatments in Shi Jiangtao (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Probably only Cuba has fielded more doctors and nurses than this figure.

confirmed that the numbers of African students on government scholarships would indeed double from their present level of 2000 a year to at least 4,000 by 2009. This annual African student quota had already just risen from 1300 in 2005 to 2000 in 2006, making Africa the recipient for about a quarter of total China Scholarship Council awards (Zhu, 2006). The latest pledge by the Chinese President will make Africa the recipient of no less than half of the total official scholarships. By contrast, the self-funded African students in China which had been 1390 in 2005 have thus already being surpassed by the scholarship students.<sup>24</sup>

But it is important to capture the totality of what China is doing in human resource development in Africa, and not focus only on the element of the relatively long-term scholarships. Another very important commitment in the previous FOCAC meeting of 2003 had been the pledge to train 10,000 African professionals in a whole series of technical, scientific and administrative fields. This had involved relatively short-term visits to China, organised by the Ministry of Commerce and the obvious sectoral ministries like Education, Health and Agriculture. The Beijing Summit of 2006 made a new and increased pledge of training 15,000 African professionals to be completed within the new three year period, 2007-2009.

The issue, however, which it would be fascinating to clarify in the case of the first round of African professionals, and indeed the new round, is the extent to which the offers of short-term training in China may relate to particular projects, such as the 30 hospitals just mentioned. In other words, in what sense are these training awards 'project-related'? And is it likely that they would be offered to sector ministries without some link to another part of China's overall bilateral strategy in any specific country? Is it conceivable that these awards could actually cross the aid-non-aid divide, and actually support the training of Africans working on the many projects of China's foreign direct investment in Africa?

We currently do not have the answers to these questions, but because training and capacity building<sup>25</sup> have been such crucial issues in the wider discussion of African development, it may be useful to explore in a little more depth what is known about the Chinese position. What is known with some certainty is that in the earlier periods of China's development assistance, e.g. during the building of the Tazara Railway,<sup>26</sup> the training and continuing tenure of skilled African workers and technicians were challenges to the sustainability of the project. Very little is yet known about this dimension in the new round of major infrastructure projects in Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia and Gabon. But early indications point to very diverse practices and experiences in terms of reliance on Chinese versus local skilled labour. Thus in Tanzania, the majority of Chinese construction companies reported that 80% of their labour was local, and in one case was as high as 95%. Elsewhere, e.g. in Angola and in Sierra Leone, the sheer lack of available educated and skilled manpower had led to a much greater reliance on Chinese workers (Centre for Chinese Studies, 2006:26, 38, 52). In this connection, it is worth noting the comment of Fang

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<sup>24</sup> The African student numbers in China are just 2% of the total of 141,087 foreign students in 2006. These can be compared with the largest sender of students, South Korea, which is responsible for 54,000 students (39% of the total).

<sup>25</sup> Intriguingly, there has been almost no mention of this rather strange donor term, 'capacity building' during the Beijing Summit.

<sup>26</sup> See Snow (1988:170) for the major problems connected to training in Tazara.

Yuanming, the General Manager of China National Overseas Engineering Corporation (COVEC), as reported during the Beijing Summit:

‘Instead of bringing a lot of Chinese workers, we always employ local residents to carry out the projects’, said Fang. ‘In several countries, we have less than 10 Chinese workers; local employees are the majority of our workers.’ Fang has a name for this: Rainbow Programme. ‘By employing local people, we aim to improve the local people’s living conditions, and to increase communication with the local communities’ (Fang quoted in *China Daily*, 3.11.2006)

Apart from Government Scholarships and professional training, the third item of what could be termed educational assistance is the unusual one of offering no less than a 100 rural schools to African countries. It would be intriguing to know more about the background of this proposal. For instance, it might well turn out to derive from China’s experience of developing its own poorer Western provinces with the help of external aid. Here key rural schools have played an important role in centralising educational provision. Be that as it may, what is also unusual in today’s donor world, with its heavy emphasis on donor coordination in support of government-owned policy, are stand-alone external projects that sound like they represent the initiative of a single bilateral agency or country. Doubtless, a good deal more will shortly be known from the Ministry of Education about this proposal, but again it is noteworthy that there is no mention of educational level. Indeed, none of these three educational proposals make any mention of their connection with the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education; in fact the first two are certainly at the post-secondary or higher education level, and the rural schools may also prove to be post-primary.

These rural schools, like the 30 hospitals and 30 malaria treatment & prevention centres just mentioned, take us back to a bilateralism that many Western donors have abandoned, to the idea that there are particular approaches to education or health where they have unique comparative advantage. Language and culture remain one of the few areas<sup>27</sup> where this bilateral approach continues with the German Schools, French Lyceés, and British and American Schools etc,<sup>28</sup> which have been joined by China’s Confucius Institutes.<sup>29</sup>

Where the schools, hospitals and medical centres will be located, and whether they will operate as Chinese projects in the initial period will be important to study, as will the impact of the professional training;<sup>30</sup> but how they will be staffed may in small

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<sup>27</sup> The Japanese continue this older tradition of educational aid through their substantial support of science and maths education in many overseas projects since they have had great strengths in their own national system in these areas.

<sup>28</sup> These international schools are not often supported by Western development agencies but more usually Ministries of Education or of Foreign Affairs, as they are seen as cultural diplomacy rather than development assistance.

<sup>29</sup> 6 non-profit Confucius Institutes, teaching Chinese language and culture, have also been established since 2003; these too, if they are all like the first one in Africa in Nairobi, are also linked to higher education institutions.

<sup>30</sup> King and Nordtveit are planning to follow Chinese educational projects in at least 4 African countries.

part be answered by a fourth element of assistance, - the development of a corps of youth volunteers. This initiative, Overseas Youth Volunteer Programme, only started in a trial number of 8 countries in late 2004; but the plan to send 300 volunteers to Africa alone suggests that it has already proved itself a valuable way of tapping youth commitment. This in turn can be expected to feed into the growing pool of expertise that China will need as its overseas cooperation expands and intensifies (see Li, 2006).

In concluding this section on China's cooperation,<sup>31</sup> we have discussed elsewhere (King, 2006b) that there are very few accounts of China's own perspective on its development assistance which seek to treat it on its own preferred terms, which is as one element in a much more complex bilateral cooperative engagement.<sup>32</sup> Its hesitations about using the aid language to talk about Africa will certainly have been reinforced by the immediate reaction of the media to the eight point declaration mentioned above. From many sides, the aid dimension was the one that was picked out. From BBC World, to the Secretary General of the United Nations, to the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), and other media in the region, it was China's pledge to double its aid to Africa that made the headlines. Or as the SCMP put it: 'China pledges bumper aid package' (Shi, 2006), and the *Guardian Unlimited*, 'Beijing pledges aid billions to woo Africa' (McVeigh, 5.11.2006).

By contrast, there has been almost no attention given in the Western media to the significant Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation side of the Beijing Summit, which has been very extensive, on the streets,<sup>33</sup> in the National Museum,<sup>34</sup> in the gala entertainment for the heads of state, in the parallel exhibitions staged in Pretoria and Cape Town at the same time as the Summit (Le, 2006), and on the home page of Beijing Summit, right up front with Economic & Trade Cooperation. Disappointingly, BBC World covered the extraordinary success in representing Africa's colours and cultures across the centre of Beijing as 'Beijing facelift for Africa summit', while *Guardian Unlimited* (2006) referred to the representation of Africa as 'soft soap'. *The Economist* (2006) entitled their main article on the Summit as 'On Safari', because the initiatives in central Beijing looked 'like an effort to promote a new safari park', with the sub-title 'Practising for the Olympics'.<sup>35</sup>

### **Positioning Aid within the Strategic China-Africa Partnership**

From time to time in this account so far, we have suggested that China's approach to cooperation seems to differ substantially from many Western donors' preoccupation with poverty reduction, and with meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The whole UN apparatus of target-setting at the world level, and then measuring all countries against these time-bound goals (2015) is a deficit model in which Africa in particular comes out as a current and also likely future failure (See King & Rose, 2005). The same is true of several of the other measures, such as the six

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<sup>31</sup> We have not touched on the scale or character of China's technical assistance in education, or what Japan would term despatch of experts, but this too is increasing.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Tjonneland et al (2006) 'China in Africa', which has 3 pages out of 70 on development aid.

<sup>33</sup> 155 huge photographs of African scenery and lifestyles took over Wangfujing one of the main shopping streets

<sup>34</sup> Select Artworks from Africa in the National Museum of China.

<sup>35</sup> In a patronising comment it added: 'For a country still finding its feet as a global diplomatic player, these events have been an exceptional workout'.

Dakar Goals set by the World Forum on Education for All in 2000. These too suggest that Africa is 'off track' for success, as measured by the Global Monitoring Reports on Education for All (e.g. UNESCO, 2004). Undoubtedly, these social development targets may prove a useful assessment mechanism for an individual country; but the construction of a whole architecture of international development based on measuring all nations against the attainment of these goals, first set by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1996 and confirmed by the UN in 2000, leaves a good deal unaccounted for.<sup>36</sup> China is not alone in thinking that it is economic growth, encouraged by trade and direct investment, that have been critical to poverty reduction, including in several of its own Western Provinces.<sup>37</sup> This would also be the traditional position of Japan (see Japan, 2005).<sup>38</sup> And even the UK, which has been such a steadfast supporter of the MDGs since the new Labour Government in 1997, has begun in its most recent White Paper (DFID, 2006) to accept that sustained growth is essential for poverty reduction.<sup>39</sup>

Just as Japan would assert that their two-way trade and direct foreign investment in the economies of East and South East Asia played a key role, along with their aid, in the transformation of the region, so this emphasis on trade is one of the key messages of the Beijing Summit, coming from so many of the African premiers and presidents about their continent. In interview after interview, they have claimed that it is China's involvement in infrastructure development, in foreign direct investment through its own entrepreneurs, both large-scale and small, and in increased market access that has been making a difference in their countries. Nor is this a message associated only with the leaders of the most resource-rich countries at the Summit; it has gone across the board from Ghana to Burundi and Rwanda and from Lesotho to Mali and Benin.<sup>40</sup>

We have argued that China's political, cultural and people-to-people perspectives on Africa, along with the support to health, agriculture, education and human resource development have certainly all been vital to the China-Africa relationship; but China has also begun to supply, over the last 6-10 years especially, those vital elements in foreign direct investment that have been so evidently missing in so many African countries, large and small. This was, after all, also one of the key messages of the Commission for Africa (2005), and of the UN Millennium Project (UN, 2005).<sup>41</sup> So, for many African leaders, central elements in the 8-point series of promises by the Chinese president at the Summit were the China-Africa Development Fund of US\$5

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<sup>36</sup> See King, 2007, for the detailed historical process of constructing what is claimed to be the world's international development agenda.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, China's account of the 'holistic measures' needed for growth and poverty reduction in its own country: 'We must intensify our effort to build water conservancy, transportation, electricity, and communication infrastructures in order to contribute to the development of the poor areas' (State Council, 2003: 98-9).

<sup>38</sup> See Japan's view of the necessity of 'poverty reduction through economic growth –the view from Asia's experience:

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/white/2005/ODA2005/html/honpen/index.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Chapter five of its new White Paper is entitled: 'Relieving poverty by economic growth' (DFID, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Many leaders of course also talked about their countries investing in China.

<sup>41</sup> Sachs's message is essentially that countries can't reach the MDGs by focusing only on the MDGs; a whole series of other investments in infrastructure, agriculture and market access need also to be in place for the MDGs to be reached, let alone sustained (Sachs, 2005).

billion to encourage Chinese businesses further to invest in Africa, and the planned establishment of 3-5 trade and economic cooperation zones. In this connection, it would not be regarded as anything but positive by many attending the Summit that China had reportedly committed US\$8.1 billion to Africa in 2006.<sup>42</sup>

While the pledges of schools, scholarships, hospitals and volunteers are all welcome, and especially for building two-way human commitments between China and Africa, the formal establishment of a China-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce and the signing of an additional US\$1.9 billion of contracts on the second day of the Summit are powerful pointers to the wider success of the FOCAC meeting.<sup>43</sup> One of the problems about the G8 agreement in July 2005 to double aid to Africa was that there was no mechanism or time-line set up for monitoring this commitment.<sup>44</sup> By comparison, in just three years' time at the next FOCAC conference in Egypt in 2009, there will be a direct assessment of the implementation of the commitments made in 2006 in Beijing, just as there has been a review in Beijing of the past six years of commitments (He, 2006).<sup>45</sup> Nor will it be a question only of looking at what China has fulfilled. The commonest phrase to be found in the Beijing Action Plan for 2007-2009 is 'The two sides noted' (or 'agreed', 'welcomed', 'reaffirmed', 'recognised', 'decided' etc). This underlines of course that, unlike Gleneagles, this is not a donor document, but a joint commitment to act by both China and African countries.

This Summit, of course, has not at all been about donor coordination and harmonisation, even though a number of international organisations, such as the World Bank have been present at the conference. With 48 African states present in Beijing, the Chinese leadership have been much too busy organising the bilateral and collective sides of this Summit to be concerned with the very different world of donor coordination. But we hope we have sufficiently discussed the particular character of China's institutional development pledges at this Summit to suggest that, for example, the proposed schools and hospitals are at the very opposite end of the spectrum from the language of sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) that many donors have adopted in the last ten years, instead of individual projects. While SWAPs propose that donors or development partners provide their moneys in common basket funding across the whole education or health sector, China's pledges are straightforwardly bilateral commitments. It remains to be seen how much they will turn out in practice to be visible Chinese projects.

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<sup>42</sup> This compares to just US\$2.3 billion from the World Bank in the same period (Swann and McQuillen, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> The 9 deals covered an aluminium plant in Egypt; maintenance of a highway in Nigeria; mining in South Africa; copper in Zambia; textiles in Sudan; cement in Cape Verde and telecommunications in Ghana.

<sup>44</sup> The UK, as the organiser of the Commission for Africa, and the G8 Summit, has certainly substantially raised its official development assistance for Africa since Gleneagles, and the sheer scale of popular support for the campaigns will have been a factor in this.

<sup>45</sup> 'The experience and practice of the China-African Forum over the past six years since its founding indicate that it is not an empty-talk club' (See further He, 2006). For reasons mentioned earlier, one of assessment challenges will be analysing the doubling of aid to Africa. This looks to be straightforward with some items like scholarships and zero tariff items which are set to be doubled, but may prove difficult for the regular project aid reported in the *China Commerce Yearbook* but not quantified (see King 2006b).

### **Concluding Comments on Aid in the Wider Partnership**

It is important to locate the specifically aid dimension of the Summit within the wider Partnership perspective. By the time the final Declaration of the Beijing Summit had been read out, not by China alone, but in sections by China's president, the Ethiopian premier who is Co-Chair of FOCAC, and by the Egyptian president who will become Co-Chair through to the next summit in Cairo, references to aid or development assistance were much less in evidence. Interestingly, 'development assistance' was only used once in the Beijing Summit Declaration, and was reserved for the attention of the developed economies, along with a single mention of the MDGs and poverty reduction:

We call on the international community to encourage and support Africa's efforts to pursue peace and development. In particular, we urge developed countries to increase official development assistance and honour their commitment to opening markets and debt relief to enhance Africa's capacity in poverty and disaster reduction and prevention and control of desertification, and help Africa realise the UN Millennium Development Goals. (FOCAC Declaration in *China Daily*, 6.11. 2006)

What had appeared as specific assistance commitments in President Hu's eight points had been reworked within FOCAC's preferred language of 'political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges'. The commitments now appeared in a much more comprehensive statement of two-way cooperation:

Deepen and broaden mutually beneficial cooperation and give top priority to cooperation in agriculture, infrastructure, industry, fishing, IT, public health and personnel training to draw on each other's strengths. (FOCAC, *ibid.*)

The greater detail of the Action Plan from the Beijing Summit,<sup>46</sup> of course, still contains the specific pledges of President Hu, on hospitals, anti-malaria centres and rural schools, and goes beyond his speech to mention Confucius Institutes to help meet local needs in Africa for Chinese language. But as is traditional in these cooperative FOCAC agreements, the priority is first given to political relations, then to economic cooperation, then international affairs, and only then to social development. And within social development, the agreements typically cut across what we have called the aid/non-aid boundary. Thus, two-way cultural and media exchanges, twinning, and people-to-people agreements all fall within this category, as does the granting of Approved Destination Status for tourism.<sup>47</sup> So do the more one-way agreements on scholarships, schools and hospitals (FOCAC Action Plan in *China Daily*, 6.11.2006).

As far as coverage in the immediate aftermath of the Summit is concerned, the African presidents who stayed on for a time, such as Mbeki of South Africa, and Bouteflika of Algeria have continued a strong emphasis on their bilateral ties and on

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<sup>46</sup> It will be interesting in due course to examine the earlier drafts of both the Declaration and the Action Plan, to note how they had altered during the immediate pre-Summit and Summit process. For example, the numbers of schools and hospitals were not in early drafts.

<sup>47</sup> Nine new countries gained this approved status, bringing the total to 26 in the continent.

bilateral agreements with China, across a wide range of cooperative endeavours. Meanwhile, the opening of the African Commodities Exposition in Beijing's International Conference Centre on the day after the Summit strongly reinforced the two-way trade focus of the larger Forum. No less than 170 firms from 23 African countries have taken advantage to display at the Exposition.

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We shall look, finally, at what may prove influential from this Summit.

- It would seem successfully to have married intensive bilateral cooperation in a wide and inclusive, collective framework, apparently without a prescriptive tone;
- Two-way trade and business opportunities have been very visibly associated with the Summit and new business instruments set up to maintain the momentum;
- A series of new development assistance initiatives have been promised in education, health, preferential loans, market access and debt cancellation;
- Possibly, as influential as anything over the period of almost a week surrounding the Summit has been the positive engagement with Africa in innumerable articles, interviews, pictures, films, hoardings and posters. With presidents and premiers, with students and researchers, with business people and traders, with ambassadors and with school-children. Not to mention Africa in dance, song, music, cuisine, dress and art. The theme of 'Amazing Africa' has been a welcome change from the skeletal Africa of starving, staring children, HIV AIDS and refugee camps.

Will the images last? The Summit has offered no Beijing Model, or Beijing Consensus<sup>48</sup> Rather, it has confirmed a strategic partnership that does not depend on a donor to deliver but on African countries' efforts independently to resolve African problems. It has disseminated the Chinese notion of 'win-win' for both China and Africa; and has preferred to propose the goal of 'prosperity for all' to the goal of 'making poverty history'.

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<sup>48</sup> See Ramo (2004).

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