

**A Comparison of China's and The European Union's Economic and Political Relations in
Africa**

Ahmet ARABACI¹
Kemal OZDEN²

Abstract

Africa has been one of the most attractive targets for many countries throughout history. Especially, Africa's abundant mineral and natural resources have been a determining factor for foreigners' interests towards Africa. European countries have long tried to exploit the resources of Africa by establishing a colonial relationship. On the contrary, China has been dealing with economic and political relations with Africa since the 1950s. More recently, rapidly growing countries such as India and Brazil have also established closer relations with Africa. Although the interests of different countries seem similar, their historical trajectories and instruments of engagement with Africa may significantly diverge. For example, the European countries have abandoned colonial practices and institutionalized political economic relations based on agreements, programs, policies and initiatives. On the other hand, China's relatively shorter period of engagement with Africa has been based on attractive and lucrative investment funds and business projects. The aim of this work is to provide a comparison for China's and the European Union's political and economic relations with Africa. The comparison includes both similarities and differences. However, the paper does not claim to be exhaustive in encompassing all the aspects of the issues under consideration. The scope of the study is limited to the main issues addressed in the literature of this work.

Keywords: China, European Union, Economic Relations, Political Relations, Africa

¹ Prof. Dr. Nile University, Department of Political Science and International Relations,
ahmet.arabaci@nileuniversity.edu.ng

² Prof. Dr. Nile University, Department of Political Science and International Relations,
ozden@nileuniversity.edu.ng

1. Introduction

Economic and political relations cannot be separated from each other. The most basic definition of economics is the “distribution of limited resources vs unlimited human desires” and the most well-known definition of politics is “who gets what, when, and how”. Therefore, they are the two sides of the same coin.

There are two main parts and a comparison in this work in terms of political and economic aspects. The first part deals with China’s relations with Africa and, the second part focuses on the relationship between the European Union (EU) and Africa. The conclusion part remarks on a comparative approach to the relationships of both entities with Africa.

Since many European countries established political and economic ties with several African countries throughout history, there is a rich literature on the relationship between a particular European country with an African country or a group of countries. However, this paper reviews and analyses the relations between the EU as a collective institution with African countries as continental entities share common characteristics. There are three main reasons why the paper prefers the EU's affairs with Africa as a collective entity. Firstly, starting from the 1960s, the EU as a single authority signed many agreements with several African countries collectively. Secondly, the EU as a unified body drafted and applied for many policy proposals and programs about African countries. Thirdly, the European Commission on behalf of the EU negotiates many trade issues and economic affairs with African countries. Therefore, it is more meaningful to deal with the EU as a unified political and economic actor in terms of its political and economic relations with African countries.

Briefly, this paper will analyse the political and economic relations of China and the EU with Africa and, it will compare the main similarities and differences between them.

2. China-Africa Relations: a New Form of Colonization or a Development Partner?

China’s interest and international relations had begun aftermaths of 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was established. In addition, decolonisation movements in the 1960s in Africa

have fostered these relations. There are different views on China's economic and political initiatives in Africa. One view says that economic, cultural, political and all relations between China and African countries are quite reasonable. Because any country is free to get into contact with any other countries. This is extremely a usual thing in the international arena. On the other hand, the opposite idea claims that the interest of China over Africa is a new form of economic and political colonisation and exploitation of the continent. For instance, according to Mawdsley, China was depicted as 'guzzling,' 'aggressive,' an 'economic juggernaut,' 'insatiably thirsty' for oils and minerals, and 'voraciously' capitalist (as cited in Ziso, 2018, p. 1)

Alden classifies China's position in Africa as China as 'development partner', China as 'economic competitor' and China as 'coloniser':

The first interpretation ('development partner') holds that China's involvement in Africa is part of a long-term strategic commitment to the continent, one that is driven by its own economic needs, a commitment to transmit its development experience to the continent and a desire to build effective cooperative partnerships across the developing world.

The second interpretation ('economic competitor') holds that China is engaged in a short-term 'resource grab' which, like some Western counterparts, takes little account of local needs and concerns, whether developmental, environmental or with respect to issues like human rights. Coupled with Chinese manufacturing and trade wherewithal, this approach suggests that African development gains are being challenged, if not undermined, by Chinese competitiveness.

The third interpretation ('coloniser') emphasises that China's new engagement in Africa is part of a long-term strategy aimed at displacing the traditional Western orientation of the continent by forging partnerships with African elites under the rubric of South solidarity. From this perspective, this is a process that will ultimately result in some form of political control over African territories (Alden, 2008, p. 5-6).

Ziso categorises this debate as Sino-optimism and Sino-pessimism. Sino-optimists believe that "China's presence in Africa as an opportunity for Africa that would not only assist it to work towards shedding its 'Third World' status, but also an opportunity to extricate itself from over-dependence on the West". However, 'Sino-pessimists' claim that "China's presence in Africa is destructive and reversing many of the gains occasioned by Africa's hitherto close relationship with the West, for example, in the contentious areas of good governance, the rule of law, free markets and democracy promotion (Ziso, p. 11).

Moreover, the encounter of China and Africa can be interpreted as the interaction of *the sick man of the east* and *the hopeless country* of the time, respectively. To understand the discussions in detail, it is better to study the political and economic influences and relations of China in Africa.

2.1. Chinese Political Relations in Africa

Some countries in the world seem to have more uniform policies in the international political arena. Moreover, some others seem to be torn, in terms of Huntington's characterisation, in international policies. China is among the countries which have a durable uniform policy-making structure. However, Stahl states that Chinese foreign policy has become increasingly complex over the past years. Due to China's economic development and growing global outreach. In fact, there are three actors in China's international decision-making process. These are; the Chinese state, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Of course, among these actors, the strongest one is the Chinese Communist Party (Stahl, 2018, p. 128).

China's political relations with African countries are generally identified as *soft power*. According to Lahtinen, China's soft power includes an impressive intermingling of diplomacy, aid, trade and investments, and culture. In short, although China has succeeded in establishing its presence in Africa, it has yet to win African hearts and minds (Lahtinen, 2018, p. 65). Moreover, in ancient China, soft power was believed to be stronger than hard power. It was described as the "drips of water which can penetrate a stone." This old wisdom means that by using gentle means, one can overcome those who are hard and forceful (Lahtinen, 2018, p. 35). Therefore, it can be summarised that soft power is the winning of hearts and minds of the people to realise the political and economic ends.

To gain the hearts and minds of the people in Africa, China offers scholarship for exchange students who are granted to study in China, organises academic conferences, round tables, promotes academic research on China, cultural activities, teaching Chinese language and culture in Confucius Institutes which are established in many of the African cities. As of 2018, there are 54 Confucius Institutes, and 27 Confucius Classrooms in Africa. Actually, this number is very

small compared with the 500 Confucius Classrooms located in the US (“Confucius Institutes”, 2018).

China has a vibrant variety of humanitarian aid tools towards African countries. For example, as Brautigam mentions, there were 1000 Chinese medical workers in Africa in early 2008. A Chinese doctor who came to Maputo in 1991 on a foreign aid medical team, settled in Maputo and became the personal physician of two Mozambican presidents. However, many of the Chinese clinics sprouting up in towns and villages across Africa are opened by people with no connection to the medical teams. Chinese food aid had reached to Southern Africa region before the World Food Program (WFP) in a food crisis. In Zimbabwe's 2009 drought, the Chinese made a \$5 million cash donation to support WFP operations (Brautigam, 2009, p. 117, 118, 122).

One of the approaching policy of China is to support anti-colonisation and liberation movements in African countries. China presents her history and African history were shaped by a common characteristic; colonial period. Therefore, China makes propaganda of anti-colonialism in the name of *South-South Solidarity*.

Thorborg indicates the non-interference policy of China. However, in some instances, China overrules this policy. "China takes part in multinational peacekeeping in Africa which can be seen as a softening of this principle along the lines of the African Union (AU), stressing non-indifference. China has emphasised political equality and consistently treated all African leaders with dignity." (Thorborg, 2017, p. 70). Moreover, according to Jianhong, many of the African countries perceive China as the leader of the third world countries. In addition, western values, which are imposed as the *universal values* have been fading in the eyes of African people (Jianhong, 2017, p. 131).

China's position as being one of the five permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council secures her to hold more political power in the international arena. Moreover, African countries, due to the sound political and economic relations with China, give a hand to China in international bodies such as the UN. Kim insists that China is able to use her smart power very effectively:

With 54 countries, Africa is the largest voting bloc in the UN and subsequent global organisations. China's effort in Africa under Xi was more heavily aimed at political and economic elements on smart power, such as the UN Human Rights Commission and the international negotiation for the birth of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Silk Road Project. At every turn, African countries have given China strong support in foiling anti-China motions introduced by some Western countries at the UN Human Rights Commission including the Tibet issue (Kim, 2017, p. 48-49).

China, now, is one of the greatest actors of peace-keeping in Africa. Among the members of the UN Security Council, China has the highest number of peace-keeping personnel through Africa and as of 2017, she had participated in 16 peace-keeping operations of Africa (Jianhong, 2017, p. 142). Lei points out that, currently China is mostly following the AU's policies in her peace-keeping operations:

In Africa, China's regional approach mainly rests on its cooperation with the AU, and Beijing usually respects and endorses the policies and stances of the AU. For instance, the AU has in several cases denied the recognition of African governments coming into power by means of a military coup, while China usually holds the view that it will not question the legality or constitutionality of means used by foreign governments in grabbing power. Yet, in those cases, under the AU policy of non-recognition, China will always show due respect to the collective will of AU member states. Thus, China's adherence to the non-interference principle has been based on a regional approach in Africa, which may be better suited for striking a balance between upholding of principles and the necessity for intervention (Lei, 2018, p. 86).

2.2. Chinese Economic Relations in Africa

China's *oil diplomacy* is the primary parameter in China's economic relations in Africa. Thomson states that oil lies at the heart of this country's new engagement with Africa. According to him; "Much of this growing trade can be explained by China's global search for raw materials. Among other commodities, Beijing is involved in extracting copper from Zambia, chrome and platinum from Zimbabwe, timber from Cameroon and the Congo basin, iron ore from Gabon, and cotton from Tanzania" (Thomson, 2010, p.172). To secure her "oil-thirst" industries, China uses certain technical instruments. These are mainly; notionally unconditional aid, low-interest loans and technical cooperation agreements to cement bilateral deals over oil supply, engineering contracts and trade agreements (Power, Mohan, and Tan-Mullins, 2012, p. 221). However, to maintain these benefits is really very difficult. As Hodzi points

A Comparison of China's and The European Union's Economic and Political Relations in Africa

out; “The dilemma for rising powers, China in particular, is that the biggest concentration of energy and other strategic natural resources needed to sustain their domestic economic growth, which is critical to maintaining their relative economic power and global power status, lie in countries at risk of both political instability and intrastate armed conflicts” (Hodzi, 2019, p. 4).

China's enormous need for energy, particularly oil and Africa's position as having the highest share in oil production result in the growing economic relations with these two partners. China's oil export from Africa has been increased dramatically within a few decades. As Jianhong presents that China began importing crude oil from Africa in 1992, at the time imports amounted to 500,000 tons, that is, 4.4 % of total imports. It rose to 2.13 million tons in the following year, accounting for 14 % of the total import volume. In 2000, China imported 16.95 million tons of oil from Africa, accounting for 24.1 % of China's total oil imports. In 2009, China imported 8.9 million tons, 41.7 million tons, and 12.2 million tons from North Africa, West Africa, and Southeast Africa, respectively, together accounting for 26 % of China's total oil imports, wherein Angola, Sudan, Congo (Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Chad, and Egypt were China's leading oil suppliers. In 2009, China imported a total of 204 million tons of crude oil, of which China's oil imports from Africa have reached 30.39 % of China's total oil imports (Jianhong, 2017, p. 132-133).

China's oil-thirst situation forces her to enter into economic contracts with an untreated manner. Actually, this fact cannot be interpreted negatively because this oppressive policy of China is also for the benefit of African countries. Since 2007, one can see China in every part of Africa. She is building a huge shopping mall in Zimbabwe, ring road in Mozambique, a newly refurbished railway in Nigeria (Lahtinen, 2018, xiii). Among China's infrastructure aid, the most famous one is TANZARA Railway, Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority. When it was finished in 1975, it was the longest railway in Africa. The railway was connecting Tanzania and Zambia. The primary purpose of building this railway was to eliminate the dependency of landlocked Zambia to Rhodesia and South Africa which were ruled by white minority governments.

Africa is the most crucial continent for China and its most significant economic partner. Therefore, each Chinese government paid particular attention to China-Africa relations. For instance, Africa

is the first continent visited by President Xi Jinping in 2013 who perceived Africa as a strategic partner in the New Silk Road project of China. For this purpose, he established a new international financial fund, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. The purpose of this bank is to eliminate international financial organisations such as IMF, and World Bank. Six years earlier than this bank, China Development bank had established the China-Africa Development Fund and secured five billion US \$ at first glance.

China is the most significant supplier in Africa in consumer products. These products mostly include stationary, home electrical goods, textile, mobile phones, computers, toys, shoes, etc. They are the cheapest items in the market, and their quality is below the average. Moreover, there is no warranty for these products, and it seems to be almost impossible to find spare parts. Low quality but cheap Chinese products in the African market seems to be an unavoidable reality. Moreover, thousands of Chinese citizens have flown into African countries to open small shops and even to farming.

Theoretically, China claims that her economic strategy is not to construct a new kind of Chinese colonialism in Africa or dominate the internal economic system in Africa, but she claims to create mutual benefits and joint development. That means *win-win* policies in economic and political relations with African countries. On the other hand, Jianhong mentions the western countries' negative propaganda against China's economic and industrial activities.

Cooperation on oil exploitation with governments that Western countries regard as 'authoritarian' or 'rogue state', often led to China being accused of 'losing principles' and being 'irresponsible', sometimes even accusations of 'neo-colonialism', 'economic plunder', 'resource plundering', and the like. Western countries pin four labels on China: The first one is 'new colonialism in Africa'; the second one is 'plundering resources'; the third is 'getting Africa into a debt crisis'; and the fourth one is 'assistance in and encouraging African tyranny' (Jianhong, 2017, p. 130).

Actually, these concerns and accusations are shared by the general public, politicians, and academics. Thomson focuses on these discussions and claims that African manufacturers cannot compete with this unfair competition, that can be called as neo-colonialism. Also, he tells the destructive effects of this uncontrolled invasion of Chinese product in African markets. He states that almost 800 South African textiles factories have been forced to close, and it cost approximately 60,000 jobs. Furthermore, Nigeria has lost upwards of 80 per cent of its factories, putting 250,000

workers out of employment. Indeed, the situation became so bad by 2006 that China, concerned about the knock-on effect on its standing in Africa, voluntarily imposed a quota on textile exports to South Africa (Thomson, 2010, p. 174). These kinds of side effects can be observed throughout the whole continent. Moreover, in certain sectors, particularly in construction, Chinese companies transfer Chinese workers from China instead of employing local people in Africa and creating new employment opportunities. This situation creates some severe doubts on Chinese presence in Africa although own Chinese labours work in more severe working conditions than their African counterparts do.

For the win-win perspective of China-Africa relations, China offered duty-free imports from African countries. With the *Zero Tariff Treatment*, no customs tax was asked from a list of 440 commodities afterwards of 2007. This is similar to “Europe’s “Everything But Arms” (EBA) program generally allows duty-free and quota-free entry into the European Union for all goods from the least developed countries, except armaments. Moreover, it is similar to the United States’ Africa Growth and Opportunity Act that allowed duty-free entry of most commodities” (Brautigam, 2009, p. 96).

China is very pragmatic and fast in any kinds of projects. China decides and does it immediately. The other countries and international financial institutions such as World Bank have a massive bureaucracy, and they require stringent rules such as the demands of good governance, transparency in the use of credits, and human rights in providing the credits and donations. On the other hand, China has no such requirements other than net economic and political benefits. For example, on the issue of TAZARA railway, western governments have rejected this project claiming that it cost too much. However, China quickly approved the project and began to construct it. Alden acknowledges a strange dialogue: As the head of Nigeria’s Investment Promotion Commissions says, ‘The US will talk to you about governance, about efficiency, about security about the environment. The Chinese just ask: “How do we procure this license? (Alden, 2008, p. 103)’

3. The European Union-Africa Relations: Dynamism and Change

European countries' interest in Africa goes back to 1500s in the form of colonialism including slave trade and asymmetric power relations. However, post-colonial period and independence of African countries have created a basis for more dynamic relations and opportunities for change. The European Economic Community (EEC) established relations with African countries in the 1960s. The approach of leading members of the EEC was to protect their post-colonial interests in their ex-colonial territories in the post-independence era. Especially, France was particularly concerned with her interests in its ex-colonies in Africa. In the Treaty of Rome, France insisted on including some clauses to form associate relations with Africa. "The goal of the association was to promote the economic development of the colonial territories" (Pallotti, 2018, p. 3). When the UK joined the EEC in 1973, the motivation of the EEC in dealing with Africa has increased.

During the Cold War, the EEC's concern was also to keep African countries closer to the Western camp. Although many African countries stayed in the Non-Aligned Movement, their connection with the EEC and Western club has protected them from direct involvement into the Soviet Bloc.

After the end of the Cold War, the EU started to act more independently and put binding conditionality about democratization and human rights issues in exchange of trade agreements and aid programs.

Starting from the EEC, the European countries have tried to institutionalize their relations with Africa in the form of international agreements, policy programs and initiatives. The following section briefs the main characteristics of these political and economic engagements.

Just after the creation of the EEC, the Community rushed its relations with Africa. Thus, the European Development Fund (EDF) established in 1958 which was also one of the first initiatives targeting African development.

Yaounde Conventions has put the EEC's influence over newly independent African countries and consolidated 'neo-colonial' relationship. Yaounde Conventions provided African countries preferential access to the EEC market and an additional source of foreign aid.

With the Lome Conventions, the EEC introduced non-reciprocal trade preferences to the ACP countries which include many African countries. Especially, the last round of Lome Conventions, the Lome IV Convention, brought binding conditionality for African countries in terms of democratization and human rights issues.

The Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) seemed to focus solely on trade issues. Nevertheless, the CPA promoted development and common interests, while strengthening the partnership between equals (Carbone, 2013, p. 743). The CPA also had a new perspective on good governance and corruption. The CPA brought binding conditionality about corruption. If a state seriously indulges in corruption, the state may be suspended from the CPA.

After the 2000s, the EU has adopted a new vision towards African countries. The EU initiated a continental approach and engaged more with the African Union. The head of states and governments of both continents have come together the first time in the history of EU-Africa relations at the Cairo Summit of 2000 (Mangala, 2013a: p. 3-4). The EU's new vision was indicated in the following motto: 'one Europe, one Africa'.

3.1. The EU's Political Relations with Africa

The EU's relations with Africa, mainly, include development aid, project finances and several funds related to good governance, democratization and migration. The European Commission finances most of its development programmes for African partner countries through the EDF, established in 1958. The EDF has been revised in many instances.

The approach of EU and African countries towards the implementation of development policy has been divergent. The original focus of the Yaoundé Convention in 1963 between the EC and African, Caribbean, and Pacific states (ACP) was on economic and trade relations. In those early periods, the development policy of the EU did not include human rights aspects (Mangala, 2013b, p. 70). Although the EU intended to initiate conditionality from the beginnings of the development aid policy, African countries refused based on the following concerns. Mangala argues that "former European colonies also insisted on the non-conditionality of development aid, which came

to be generally seen as a “right” and a form of compensation for colonial inequities” (2013b, p. 70). Africa’s denial of binding conditionality can be seen as an aspect of anti-colonial approach to its relations with the EU.

The EU’s development aid policy has been criticized by many aspects. At the beginnings of the 2000s, the EU’s development policy has been reformed. These reforms aimed at making the EU’s development policy more poverty-oriented (Carbone, 2012, p. 6).

The critics of African regimes have brought some major changes in the development and aid policy of the EU. The 2005 European Consensus on Development which is a key document of this policy included many articles implying that good governance, democracy and respect for human rights are all integral parts of the EU’s development policy.

As it is mentioned above, the CPA was more coercive in character and allowed for the mainstreaming of human rights considerations in all aspects of EU’s development relations with African states. “The Cotonou establishes a relatively well-developed enforcement mechanism which includes the use of both positive and negative measures in case of human rights violations. In the latter case in particular, the Agreement states that sanctions must be of last resort” (Mangala, 2013b, p. 73).

The EU has been employing its asymmetrical power relations and instruments in its relations with Africa. The instruments of binding conditionality and sanctions have been frequently adopted. The political relations have also extended the connection between development aid and stability and peace in Africa. Stahl argues that “particular attention has been paid to the so-called ‘security–development nexus’, which underlines that good governance is an essential precondition for stability and peace” (2011, p. 152).

Currently, the EU’s development policy’s budget targets several aspects of development. The EDF funding for 2014 to 2020 has reached a total of 30.5 billion euros. Based on the emphasis over good governance, only a slice of 2.7 billion euros was allocated for the governance incentive. The EU’s ambitious program, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), addresses new aspects of development and strategic relations between the EU and Africa. “The Roadmap 2014- 2017 of the JAES agreed on the strategic objective of human development in three specific areas: science,

technology and innovation; higher education; mobility, migration and employment. It must be highlighted that the general criteria to allocate funds were not discussed with SSA's partners" (Venturi, 2016, p. 8).

EU-Africa relations were for a long time mainly based on the economic and development dimension, but the issues of conflict prevention and security have gained importance since the beginning of the 1990s (Venturi, 2016, p. 5). Security and conflict prevention have also become a determining part of the EU-Africa relations. After the second half of the 1990s, "EU to direct its attention to the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts in Africa, with an emphasis on the promotion of 'African solutions to African [security] problems'" (Pallotti, 2018, p. 12). After the Cairo Summit of 2000, the EU tried to deal more with the African Union in many areas as well as the security issues.

The EU does not want to be seen as a post-colonial actor who applies asymmetrical power over Africa, it initiates a new approach starting from the main agreements. "As a new initiative of the EU's side, the CPA introduced 'political dialogue' between the EU and Africa. The Article emphasises that the CPA should 'contribute to peace, security and stability and promote a stable and democratic political environment'" (Bagoyoko & Gibert, 2009, p. 792).

Although the CPA based more on trade and development issues, the reviews of CPA moved its attention to security-related issues. In 2003, based on the CPA, the African Peace Facility (APF) was created in order to address African security issues. The African Peace Facility will financially support the peacekeeping operation of the African Union and other African regional organisations (Pallotti, 2018, p. 13). The 2005 review of the CPA has strengthened the security cooperation against international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

After the 2010s, emerging geopolitical concerns such as the Arab Spring and Libya crisis as well as climate change and environmental concerns have fundamentally changed security perception. New security threats in the form of environmental security, border security (migration) and human security have dominated the agenda. The 2010 revision of the CPA "strengthened cooperation in regional integration, climate change and the role of national parliaments as actors of cooperation" (Venturi, 2016, p. 7).

Out of these newly perceived security threats, migration has become a priority issue for the EU. Since the continuous flow of illegal immigrants from Africa to Europe alerted the EU member states, the EU adopted several initiatives to address the migration issue. In 2015, the EU Trust Fund for Africa was created in order to define the root causes of migration from African countries to the EU. The fund includes rapid financing mechanisms to fight against illegal immigration (Pallotti, 2018, p. 16-17). Currently, illegal migrations from Africa to Europe and, youth unemployment in Africa are the two crucial agendas between the EU and Africa.

The EU is trying to launch new initiatives to attract more attention and to boost its enduring relations with Africa. In the areas of development and investments, the Marshall Plan with Africa (by the assistance of Federal Republic of Germany), and the External Investment Plan (by the European Commission) provide new frameworks to improve investment in Africa. In order to address the problematic areas of migration and youth unemployment in Africa, as it is indicated above, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and EU Youth Employment Initiative have been initiated by the EU.

3.2. The EU's Economic Relations with Africa

The EU-Africa economic relations have been interpreted in the framework of post-colonial dependency of African countries on the EU's market and EU's exploitation of African mineral resources. The vast bulk of the literature on the relations between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa have long been more focused on the issues of trade and development cooperation since the signing of Yaounde' and Lome' agreements. However, both Yaounde and Lome have been severely criticised in terms of their adverse effects on the economic and trade interests of Africa as a post-colonial intervention.

Some critics argue that the EU prioritises its own interests over African development and economic growth. According to them, the EU imposed neoliberal trade policies over African countries. Initially, during Lome' Conventions, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were given particular importance. The EU Council stressed that SAPs are essential for economic growth in Africa. According to the official documents of the European Commission (1996) "the Lomé

A Comparison of China's and The European Union's Economic and Political Relations in Africa

Convention granted the ACP duty-free market access to the EU on a non-reciprocal basis for almost all goods, including a series of commodities (bananas, beef, rum and sugar) that also benefited from internal price support mechanisms. However, Heron and Murray-Evans (2016, p.7) argue that the Lomé regime, although it was renewed on three separate occasions, “was ultimately deemed to have failed in its principal objectives of promoting economic growth and diversification.” Kaya brings more fundamental critics to Lomé conventions. “Despite 25 years of trade preferences and aid, Lomé did not achieve its principal objectives such as export diversification and economic growth” (Kaya, 2017, p. 186).

On the other hand, Kaya explains the EU's position in relation to aid and trade nexus. Kaya argues that "economic aspects of the EU's aid relationship with sub-Saharan Africa are centred on non-reciprocal trade concessions. The Union granted sub-Saharan African countries non-reciprocal preferential access for many goods except for some agricultural products until the 2000s. The non-reciprocal preferences given under the Lomé Conventions weakened the EU's negotiating position at the World Trade Organization (WTO)” (2017, p. 187) Thus, the EU's approach to Africa has become a serious concern for multilateral trade regime in the World economy.

Subsequently, the CPA continued the EU's hierarchical superiority over African countries (together with the ACP) in economic and trade issues. The EU has also been criticized by its coercion and domination on the African economy and trade regarding the nature of CPA. Concerning the CPA, the EU has also been criticized by exercising its hegemonic dominance of neoliberalism with Africa. Critics argue that the EU emphasizes the weaknesses of Africa during trade negotiations. It indicates the EU's coercive character even without using its military coercive force (Haastrup, 2013, p.792).

After severe critics, the EU changed its position in the area of economy and trade. The new instrument has been introduced. "The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) became a new trade arrangement that changed the economic aspects of relations between the EU and sub-Saharan African countries. The EPAs were offered as a substitute for the replacement of non-reciprocal preferences. They regulate the opening up of sub-Saharan African countries' markets to EU products and exporters over a period of up to 12 years” (Kaya, 2017, p. 188).

Langan also criticizes the EU's EPA's with African countries from the aspects of the related articles regulating the 'reciprocal trade'. Langan forwards much empirical evidence that the reciprocal trade clause much benefited to the EU and harmed African countries. The empirical studies show the "regressive consequences of EPA liberalisation for vulnerable people in ACP countries" (2012, p. 261).

Further critics of the EPA's have pointed out the outcomes of these agreements. Due to the surge in imports from the EU following the removal of tariffs and duties in the African countries, the process of de-industrialisation and the crisis in the agricultural sector have deepened. The fall of tax revenues and a reduction of the state budget for social services have been among the challenging critics (Langan & Price 2015).

Current trends in economic and trade relations between Africa and the EU can be summed as in the following. According to the European Commission's data, Africa's exports to the European Union (EU) amounted to more than €116 billion in 2016. Europe is by far Africa's largest export market (35% of Africa's exports), followed by Africa itself (18%), China (11%), the USA (8%) and India (7%). The EU is also the main market for African food and manufactured products. Both categories accounted for 51% of Africa's exports to the EU in 2016 (Food and beverages: 16%, Manufactures: 35%) whereas raw materials accounted for 49%. The EU offers African countries by far the most open access to its market of any major economy through Economic Partnership Agreements, Free Trade Agreements, or preferential schemes. Under Economic Partnership Agreements or the Everything-But-Arms scheme, most African countries enjoy duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market. Free Trade Agreements with North African countries also offer duty-free quota-free access for most goods. A few other countries benefit from preferential schemes (European Commission, 2017).

4. Conclusion

There are both similarities and differences between Chinese's and EU's approach in their relations with Africa. The similarities are less than the differences. However, one should notice that it is technically not possible to find out clear cut differences.

A Comparison of China's and The European Union's Economic and Political Relations in Africa

One of the similarities between China and the EU is the free tariff policies for particular products. For example, China's Zero Tariff Treatment for more than 4000 products is similar to the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Everything But Arms program.

Another similarity is that both actors intend to reach to Africa's precious mineral resources and crude oil with the possible cheapest cost. Almost all of their agreements and relations with Africa have been based and designed around this target.

Another similarity is that China has her own unique initiatives and financial institutions for Africa such as the New Silk Road Project, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank and China-Africa Development Fund. Likewise, the EU has always been very active in establishing joint initiatives with Africa. The EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (EITF), the External Investment Plan, the Marshall Plan with Africa and Boost Africa are only a few of them. For example, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the European Commission (EC) are partners in the EU Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa and the African Water Facility.

Other than these similarities, there are more striking differences between the approaches of the two actors.

Firstly, there is a general perception that the EU seems to be more respectful towards the environment. On the other hand, China's investments in Africa seems to have fewer concerns about environmental protection.

Secondly, as it is explained above, there are specific concerns about the labour force employed by Chinese companies. For example, employment policies of China are to bring Chinese nationals from China to work in Africa which results in low local employment opportunities for African citizens. Moreover, these Chinese workers are generally living in their isolated environment, and they have little interaction with the local people. Moreover, their working conditions are believed to be more robust than local African workers.

Thirdly, an increasing number of Chinese nationals are entering the small size business in different African cities. Now, there are thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises run by Chinese

citizens. Even, they engage in the agricultural sector. However, they are not always welcome by African people who saw their existence as an economic threat.

The fourth difference is that the EU's aid and donation policies for Africa have been almost always constrained by binding conditionality such as democratisation, good governance, human rights, and environmental protection. Therefore, the decision – making process about the transfer of funds is very slow. On the other hand, China's funding and credit policies have almost no conditions. The most significant criteria for China is mutual benefits. This policy of China brings more reputation than the EU policies. Hence, the Chinese economic and political collaboration is growing faster than any other countries.

The fifth one is that China embraces different varieties of soft power policies. For example, there are thousands of thousands of Chinese engineers, teachers, doctors, and technical experts who work in Africa. Moreover, every year thousands of African students are offered scholarship in China.

The last but not the least difference is the historical background of China and Africa relations. The perception of Chinese historical relations with Africa is very clear and innocent. Since China did not engage in slavery trade in Africa, her image has been more positive than western countries. In addition to this, the European colonial period has been regarded as a very negative experience for Africans throughout the centuries. These outstanding differences contribute to China's reputation which attracts further economic and political advantages.

References

- Aiqin, C., & Jianhong, C. (2017). Chinese energy diplomacy towards Africa from the perspective of politics. In Y-C. Kim (ed.), *China and Africa: a new paradigm of global business*. Springer.
- Alden, C. (2008). *China in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Bagoyoko, N., & Gibert M. V. (2009). The linkage between security, governance and development: the European Union in Africa. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 45, 789-814.
- Barigazzi, J. (29 November, 2017). EU seeks new start with Africa – again. *Politico*. Retrieved 25 January, 2019, from <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-africa-seeks-new-start-again/>
- Brautigam, D. (2009). *The dragon's gift, the real story of China in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Carbone, M. (2012). Between EU actorness and aid effectiveness: The logic of EU aid to Sub-Saharan Africa", Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Società Italiana di Scienza Politica (SISP)*, 13-15 September 2012, University of Rome.
- Carbone, M. (2013). Rethinking ACP-EU Relations after Cotonou: Tensions, contradictions, prospects. *Journal of International Development*, 25, 742–756.
- Confucius Institutes are a win-win proposition, (2018, August 2018). *The Telegraph*. Retrieved February 17, 2019, from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/china-watch/culture/confucius-institute/>
- European Commission. (1996). *Green Paper on relations between the European Union and the ACP countries*.
- European Commission. (2017). *EU trade policy and Africa's exports*.
- Haastrup, T. (2013). EU as mentor? Promoting regionalism as external relations practice in EU–Africa Relations. *Journal of European Integration*, 35 (7), 785-800.

- Hackenesch, C. (2013). Aid donor meets strategic partner? The European Union's and China's relations with Ethiopia", *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 42 (1), 7–36.
- Hansen, P., & Jonsson, S. (2014). Another colonialism: Africa in the history of European integration. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 27 (3), 442-461.
- Hodzi, O. (2019). *The end of China's non-intervention policy in Africa*. Springer.
- Heron, T., & Murray-Evans, P. (2016). Limits to market power: Strategic discourse and institutional path dependence in the European Union–African, Caribbean and Pacific Economic Partnership Agreements. *European Journal of International Relations*, 1–25.
- Hurt, S. R. (2003). Cooperation and coercion? The Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and ACP states and the end of the Lome' Convention. *Third World Quarterly*, 24 (1), 161–76.
- Kaya, A. S. (2017). The evolution of the European Union Development Cooperation Policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa: Achievements and challenges". *Sosyal Bilimler Meslek Yksekokulu Dergisi*, 20 (2), 183-191.
- Kim, Y-C. (2017). 'Safari Tour' and Zhou's dream of Mao's land in Africa. In Y-C. Kim (ed.), *China and Africa: a new paradigm of global business*. Springer.
- Lahtinen, A. (2018). *China's diplomacy and economic activities in Africa, Relations on the move*. Springer.
- Langan, M. (2012). Normative power Europe and the moral economy of Africa-EU ties: a conceptual reorientation of 'normative power'. *New Political Economy*. 17 (3), 243–270.
- Langan, M., & Price, S. (2015). Extraversion and the West African EPA Development Programme: Realising the development dimension of ACP–EU trade? *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 53 (3), 263-287.

A Comparison of China's and The European Union's Economic and Political Relations in Africa

- Lei, X. (2018). China's development-oriented peacekeeping strategy in Africa. In C. Alden, A. Alao, Z. Chun, & L. Barber (ed.), *China and Africa: Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent*. Springer.
- Mangala, J. (2013a). Africa-EU strategic partnership: Significance and implications. In J. Mangala (ed.), *Africa and the European Union*. Springer.
- Mangala, J. (2013b). Africa-EU partnership on democratic governance and human rights. In J. Mangala (ed.), *Africa and the European Union*. Springer.
- Pallotti, A. (2018). The European Union and Africa: depoliticised development and the elusive quest for democracy and security. *GLOBUS Research Paper*. November 2018, Retrieved 17 February, 2019, from <http://www.globus.uio.no/publications/globus-research-papers/>
- Stahl, A. K. (2011). Contrasting rhetoric and converging security interests of the European Union and China in Africa. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. 40 (4), 147-173.
- Stahl, A. K. (2018). *EU-China-Africa trilateral relations in a multipolar world*. Springer.
- Thomson, A. (2010). *An introduction to African politics*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Thorborg, M. (2017). From white elephants to flying geese: China in Africa, a new model for development or more of the same. In Y-C. Kim (ed.), *China and Africa: a new paradigm of global business*. Springer.
- Venturi, B. (2016). The EU's struggle with normative leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) Working Papers*. Retrieved 1 January, 2019, from <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1629.pdf>
- Ziso, E. (2018). *A post state-centric analysis of China Africa relations, internationalisation of Chinese capital and state-society relations in Ethiopia*. Springer.