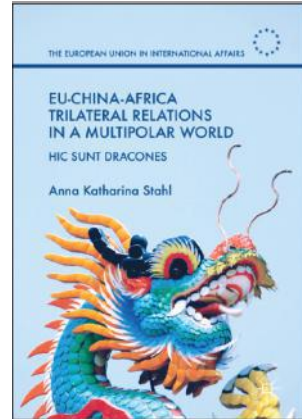


EU-China-Africa Trilateral Relations in a Multipolar World: Hic Sunt Dracones

Author: Anna Katharina Stahl; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; ISBN 9781137587015; xxiii+228pp.; €100.00



*Pratyush Sharma**

Departing from a European point of view, the research shows that the EU has started adapting its foreign policy to the emerging multipolar world order and presents new evidence for emerging EU-China-Africa trilateral relations.

EU-China-Africa Trilateral Relations in a multipolar world by Anna Katharina Stahl is book, which is mindful of the evolving global order. The introduction of the book explicitly mentions the rise of global South and the end of the bipolar world. The author explains that the term “Global South” is concerned with the countries of China, India, Brazil and South Africa, with two main characteristics in common. Firstly, all the above-mentioned countries have experienced exceptional economic growth. Since the 1990s China, India, Brazil and South Africa have achieved a considerable expansion of their economies, especially in comparison to the slow growth rates of the USA and the EU. Due to their extraordinary economic growth these four rising powers have also gained significant political influence, at both the regional and the global level. Secondly, the four countries in focus had been colonised by Western powers at different times of their histories. According to the author, this colonial past is a major rallying point for these countries to distinguish themselves to be developing countries from the South in spite of their recent economic and political rise.

The inspiration of studying and analysing China as against other Southern countries vis-a-vis the European Union (EU) and Africa is based on its penetration in the African continent and due to its size – in terms of geography, population and economy. China’s GDP grew considerably more than that of the other three emerging countries. The rapid economic growth of China has also

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led the country to acquire political heft in the international system. Its global overtures such as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) along with its presence in the BRICS and New Development Bank (NDB) have provided China with leveraging chip in the global community. For a long time, Africa has been considered the forgotten continent. It is now the home to six of the ten fastest growing economies and sometimes referred to as the world's new growth engine. African countries have made significant progress in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Against the context of an emerging multipolar world, the role of the EU in international affairs is changing. In order to remain a relevant international player, European policymakers have started realising that they need to reach out to China and Africa. The intensification of Sino-African relations bears important consequences for the European Union (EU), which traditionally considers Africa as its own backyard.

Against this background, the book describes the trilateral relations between the EU, China, and Africa, carried out at the Institute for European Studies (IES) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in collaboration with the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS). Departing from a European point of view, the research shows that the EU has started adapting its foreign policy to the emerging multipolar world order and presents new evidence for emerging EU-China-Africa trilateral relations. The book is unique in another sense. Most books on international relations and development studies pay emphases on bilateral and multilateral relations between nation states. But, this

book investigates the trilateral relations between EU, China and Africa. Also, the EU as an entity (bloc) is being studied perhaps for the first vis-a-vis a country (China) and a continent (Africa). The book examines three particular case studies of dialogues between the EU, China, and Africa, and thereby offers new empirical evidence on the emerging EU-China-Africa trilateral relations. In particular, the case studies explore three different forms of interaction between the EU, China, and Africa, namely *bilateralism*, *multilateralism*, and *trilateralism*.

The first case study examines the bilateral EU-China dialogue on Africa. The second case study looks at the multilateral interaction between the EU, China, and Africa in the framework of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). More specifically, it focuses on the China-DAC Study Group. Finally, the last case study explores the EU's attempt in 2008 to forge a specific trilateral dialogue with China and the African Union (AU) (European Commission 2008).

The three case studies draw on a rich body of evidence collected through fieldwork in China and Africa, and more than 100 interviews conducted with experts and policymakers from different European institutions, the Chinese government, the AU, and several African countries. The findings thereby make a contribution to the development of a new research branch on trilateral EU-China-Africa relation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the EU adopted a constructive response towards China's role in Africa and started engaging with both strategic

partners in a variety of different policy dialogues. Yet, despite the EU's outreach to its Chinese and African partners, the research reveals that the overall extent of trilateral EU-China-Africa relations still remains limited and did not reach the level of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The analysis suggests that the lack of EU-China-Africa Comprehensive Strategic Partnership can be explained by the fact that the EU chose an inadequate foreign policy instrument. In its interaction with

China and Africa, European policymakers opted for a form of engagement steered towards the unilateral adaptation of its partners. Instead, the research findings reveal that in the context of an emerging multipolar world order, the EU needs to engage with its Chinese and African counterparts in terms of a mutual exchange. This would require the EU to revise some of its policies and practices, taking into account the Chinese and African demands.

INDIA-AFGHANISTAN REVIEW DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

India and Afghanistan reviewed the development projects in the war-torn country being implemented with Indian cooperation, including security of Indian personnel, during a meeting of the Joint Working Group on Development Cooperation (JWG-DC) in Kabul. Both sides had an exhaustive review of the large number of ongoing development projects spread over varied areas of cooperation such as capacity building, infrastructure, education, healthcare, good-governance and human resource development. India is a leading development partner of Afghanistan having successfully implemented a large number of infrastructure projects, including the Afghan Parliament building, Afghan-India Friendship Dam, the first phase of the Chabahar port in Iran among others. The Chabahar port on the southeastern coast of Iran is being jointly developed by India, Iran and Afghanistan and is aimed at giving access to Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan. Both sides underscored the importance of access through Chabahar port for strengthening trade and economic relations. The Afghan side appreciated India's timely assistance of 170,000 tonne of wheat and 2,000 tonne of pulses during this year when large parts of the country were suffering from drought. Several small, medium and largescale projects have been picked up including the Shahtoot dam, low cost housing for the returning refugees in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif, and construction of a road connecting Band-e-Amir in Bamyán province with the Bamyán-Yakawlang Highway. The Shahtoot dam is a proposed dam in the Kabul river basin that is expected to supply irrigation water for about 10,000 hectares of agricultural land and drinking water to around two million people.

India accepted the request for consideration of new projects, shared by the Afghan side, based on the priorities of the people and the government of Afghanistan.

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