

China Seen by Africans as Partners, America and Europe Seen as Predators

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A recent op-ed piece in the New York Times by Dambisa Moyo takes a firm position that the role of the People's Republic of China in Africa is a positive one. This comes amid the growing U.S., U.K. and French military interventions on the continent which has resulted in the massive destruction of Libya, Somalia and Ivory Coast. She notes in the Times that "Despite all the scaremongering, China's motives for investing in Africa are actually quite pure. To satisfy China's population and prevent a crisis of legitimacy for their rule, leaders in Beijing need to keep economic growth rates high and continue to bring hundreds of millions of people out of poverty." (NYT, June 27) This same writer goes on to point out that "China needs arable land, oil and minerals.

Pursuing imperial or colonial ambitions with masses of impoverished people at home would be wholly irrational and out of sync with China's current strategic thinking." Yet even though the U.S. and other NATO countries are facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression with high unemployment and rising poverty, the imperialist aims of the West are clearly guiding its foreign policy toward Africa. This statement by Moyo comes a year after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the Southern African nation of Zambia where she arrogantly told the government and people that "China's foreign assistance and investment practices in Africa have not always been consistent with generally accepted international norms of transparency and good governance, and that it has not always utilized the talents of the African people in pursuing its business interests." (Reuters, June 10, 2011) This statement came at the same time that the U.S. along with its NATO allies were bombing Libya on a daily basis.

Libya was prior to the overthrow of Gaddafi the prosperous and stable country on the continent. Despite the objections by the African Union as spelled out in numerous resolutions and public statements calling for a negotiated settlement of the Libyan crisis, Washington and its NATO partners totally ignored the will of the governments and people of the continent and continued the war that resulted in regime-change and the assassination of Col. Muammar Gaddafi. These actions in Libya follow a historic pattern of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism as reflected in modern times through Washington's opposition to all genuine national liberation movements and progressive governments in Africa. Refuting Clinton's assertion, Zambian President Rupiah Banda noted that "Our country has been in a close relationship with China since before independence (in 1964)." The president continued saying that China had assisted numerous African states in dealing with the global financial crisis which originated in the U.S. Differences in Approach China Daily took notice of one of Clinton's statement that was made in neighboring Tanzania as well warning that a "new colonialism in Africa from foreign investors and governments interested only in extracting natural resources to enrich themselves" was underway. (China Daily, June 17,

2011)

Although the top U.S. diplomat did not mention China by name, the implications were obvious. According to China Daily, "The most ironic thing is that Hillary Clinton apparently does not know the significance of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania in the history of China-Africa relations. It is the site where China built its first railway for Tanzania and Zambia" during the early 1970s under the leadership of Chairman Mao. The China Daily continues saying that its "government invested in the project that has benefited the local people tremendously, and Chinese workers endured the extreme weather conditions and made huge sacrifices in completing this railway project in the most difficult terrain. That railway project sets China apart from Western nations that were involved in Africa earlier than China." Other scientific transfers of technology have the potential to address the agricultural crisis in Africa. The Desert Control Research Institute of Gansu has dispatched 10 scientists to Niger and Nigeria to implement a water resource preservation program sponsored by both the Chinese government and the United Nations. (Xinhua, July 2)

The Chinese scientists are doing research and training local personnel in Niamey, Dosso, Tahoua, Maradi and Zinder in south Niger as well as in Kano state in Nigeria. The project is designed to address the problem of scarce water resources which impacts agricultural development and animal husbandry that are caused by drought and the expansion of the deserts. In contrast the U.S. under the Clinton administration established what is known as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The U.S. Congress has been inconsistent in providing provisions for investments by corporations which have opened factories in several countries. Although the Brookings Institution says that AGOA had created 300,000 jobs on the continent, thousands of these jobs have been lost due to bureaucratic bungling on the part of the U.S. government. In a June 30 opinion piece Nicholas D. Kristof, a longtime proponent of Washington's intervention in Africa both militarily and economically, attempted to place responsibility for most the problems on corruption within various nation-states on the continent.

However, Kristof was forced to admit that "In Lesotho alone, about 5,000 garment workers have lost their jobs because of this maddening Congressional delay" in renewing AGOA. While America may largely misperceive Africa as a disaster zone, China does get the promise on the continent." (NYT, June 30)

Look East Policy Viewed As Partnerships Not Exploitative In Zimbabwe the government has been negatively affected by sanctions imposed by the U.S., U.K., the European Union and Australia. The reason for this economic war against Harare is that the ruling ZANU-PF Party initiated a comprehensive land reform program twelve years ago to take back 50 percent of the land stolen by British imperialism a century ago during the advent of colonialism.

The western imperialists have denied trade and investment to Zimbabwe and have supported opposition forces bent on undermining land reform and national sovereignty. China has built stronger economic ties to Zimbabwe, whose liberation movement it supported during the 1960s and 1970s during the war for independence against British settlers. China has also defended Zimbabwe and Sudan when both countries were threatened with further sanctions by the UN Security Council. The imperialist states have continued their policies of opposing any genuine efforts on the part of African states to develop along the lines that serve the interests of the people within their societies. Consequently, the West will continue to be perceived as a negative force in Africa while

China's role is growing in popularity. A Pew Research report from five years ago indicated that in 10 African states, the majority of the people have a favorable view of China's role on the continent.

In Senegal 86 percent said that China policy was making things better in comparison to 56 percent in relationship to the U.S. role. Even in Kenya, whose government is closely allied with Washington, 91 percent of respondents said that they believed China's role was positive in comparison to 74 percent for the U.S. (China Digital Times, June 2012)

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