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Should China join the GPEDC? The prospects for China and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation

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Should China Join the GPEDC?

The Prospects for China and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation

Xiaoyun Li

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Abstract

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) is regarded as being the 21st-century epitome of a partnership within a polycentric world in the arena of international development cooperation. This discussion paper highlights the debate on the role of the GPEDC and assesses this debate by reviewing the historical process of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-based development cooperation (in which the GPEDC is embedded) from a non-DAC member perspective. The paper argues that the GPEDC is considered to be just another form of the DAC's transformation. That is why the emerging powers are sceptical – they are not a part of it; hence, they are reluctant to join it, or are even inclined to reject it. However, the paper also takes the realistic approach that the GPEDC is a valuable platform for continuing the role of development cooperation for global development, in particular to spearhead reforms in the international development cooperation regime and contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The paper suggests how different stakeholders – including the emerging ones, particularly China – can work together to make the GPEDC a genuine partnership.

Keywords: GPEDC, Development Agenda, Development Aid, Global Development Governance

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Abstract

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Abbreviations

AIIB	Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
GNP	gross national product
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
NDB	New Development Bank
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSC	South-South cooperation
UN	United Nations
US	United States

1 Introduction

After the First High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) – held in Mexico City on 15-16 April 2014 and attended by more than 1,500 representatives from 130 countries – the second one finally took place in Nairobi from 28 November to 1 December 2016. The GPEDC was launched at the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which was held in Busan, South Korea, in 2011, and proved to be a turning point for international development cooperation. It recognised the increasingly important role of South-South cooperation (SSC) and the existence and relevance of diverse actors and practices of development cooperation (Assunção & Esteves, 2014). The first forum, in Mexico City, was aimed to kick off the agenda to transition from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, whereas the second one came at a critical juncture. This was a moment to review the evidence and lessons learnt from the decade-long attempts to implement the aid- and development-effectiveness agendas, and to look ahead to the role of effectiveness in the new era of sustainable development, anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Blampied, 2016). The core value of the GPEDC is to be more open in terms of its agenda and more inclusive in terms of its membership. However, due to their continued reluctance – or even suspicious attitude, which started right at the beginning of the GPEDC process – four of the five BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa; only Russia attended) were absent from the second forum. This has had a big impact on the “global nature” of the partnership (Klingebiel & Li, 2016).

Although the Mexico City and Nairobi forums offered a diversified range of participants (developed countries, developing countries, international development organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and think tanks), and the focus was changed from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, the role of the GPEDC has been questioned. Some suggest that, although various stakeholders involved in global development actively participated in the forums, the agenda was still in the control of developed countries, which continued to try to bring in more countries to support their development approach, which has already been proven a failure (Li, 2017). In addition, the absence of China and India in the two events – and the absence of Brazil and South Africa in the Nairobi forum – raised doubts as to the legitimacy of the forums. This signifies that the good intentions of starting an era in which traditional and emerging aid donors can hold talks on a level playing field in development cooperation have failed, and that the transformation of existing international development and cooperation architecture is still under way (Fues & Klingebiel, 2014). Some argued during the Busan forum that the Busan meeting symbolised the paradigm shift from “aid effectiveness” to “development effectiveness”, and that the increased diversity of participants could cause the further fragmentation of the cooperation plan or put at risk the internal consistency of the process (Kharas, 2014). Besides, some researchers are concerned that launching such a negotiation outside the United Nations (UN) Development Co-operation Forum will duly affect the legitimacy of the UN (Day, 2014). Some have also questioned the effectiveness of the agenda and believe that it will fail to achieve salient results in the immediate future (Glennie, 2014).

Contrary to these opinions, many have responded positively with regard to the shift in focus from aid to development, and towards more openness and inclusiveness. They consider it to be a perfect opportunity to develop a framework that is inclusive, sustainable and comprised of diverse stakeholders (Atwood, 2011, 2012). Chinese scholars are sceptical of the overall initiative, but they agree that the GPEDC provides a new space for China and

other like-minded actors to influence global development through learning and sharing (Li, Banik, Tang, & Wu, 2014).

In fact, the GPEDC is one of the important outcomes of the changing global context. The agenda is seen by many as a milestone in global development governance (Atwood, 2012). It came during a critical era in which the role of new players in global development began to increase, and the role of the traditional ones began to readjust their strategies. The GPEDC is certainly a new opportunity for all stakeholders to build a more inclusive global development platform; but a pertinent question is: Why did emerging powers decline to take part in it? This discussion paper aims to assess the reasons why emerging countries have been reluctant about the GPEDC by presenting China's case in particular. The paper further analyses if the GPEDC is a useful platform for global development and whether all stakeholders can work together under this new structure. Finally, the paper illustrates how – and under what conditions and circumstances – this can happen.

2 Critical accounts of the history of the GPEDC

Some accused China and others of rejecting the opportunities offered by the GPEDC. Some even questioned those countries' commitments to global development,¹ without acknowledging the fact that the emerging countries have been consistently sceptical of the legitimacy of the GPEDC: they do not consider the GPEDC to be a UN forum, as Bena summarised during the Nairobi forum (Bena, 2017). The emerging countries have been very careful not to get trapped in the problems that the Western partners have, and therefore not be brought into the system. The GPEDC is not just the outcome of the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Although the openness of the GPEDC is brought into question less, it is seen as an attempt to survive and another type of expansion of the DAC structure under the new situation (Li, 2017). Therefore, to understand the perspective of the emerging countries on the GPEDC, it is relevant and useful to review briefly the history of the DAC first.

There was a mix of motives that blended the security and protection of US and European global/regional power interests with the “recognition” of a “moral imperative” to assist poor countries (Abdel-Malek, 2015, p. 13) during the Cold War. Historically, after the economic rehabilitation of Western Europe and Japan, supported by the Marshall Plan, Western Europe and Japan joined the United States (US) to provide development assistance. From the perspective of the US, it was necessary to build a collective mechanism to coordinate the development aid provided by different countries, international organisations and non-governmental organisations. Out of this concern, the US and its allies co-established the Development Assistance Group in January 1960, which had 11 members, including the US.² This marked the founding of the Western-led development cooperation system. It is viewed as the first expansion of the Western-led development cooperation system, into which the US brought their allies to follow the interests of the US (Li, 2017). In October 1961, the

1 These opinions were heard during the first and second forums as well as in informal discussions, in particular during the Nairobi forum.

2 The members of the Development Assistance Group in 1960: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Commission of the European Economic Community, Japan and the Netherlands.

Development Assistance Group was integrated into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with a different name – the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). To support the work of the DAC, the OECD established a department that consisted of the development financing branch and the technical assistance branch. The development financing office was renamed the Development Assistance Directorate in 1969, and then renamed again as the Development Cooperation Directorate in 1975, which, since then, has been serving as the permanent office and secretariat of the DAC.

The institutionalisation of the DAC marked the formal establishment of the international development cooperation system led by Western countries (Li, 2017). The primary functions of the DAC are focused on the following considerations. First, although different aid providers share the same goal, their activities can hardly be termed effective if aid is provided inconsistently or not coordinated among the different countries. Second, among group members that share the same goal, it is difficult for them to honour their promises to provide aid accordingly, without peer pressure. Finally, it is also a challenge to ensure the quality of the assistance programme without a universal standard. Therefore, the DAC adopted a series of standards in 1961 that all members should follow and required that “developed countries should spare 1 per cent of their GNP for development aid”. The ratio was then modified to 0.7 per cent, based on the recommendation of the Pearson Report, issued in 1969. In 1993, the gross national product (GNP) was replaced by gross national income, but the ratio stayed the same. In addition, the DAC conducted the first evaluation of its member countries in 1962, which called a “peer review” today. Meanwhile, the DAC established a statistical gathering and reporting system that can be used to compare different donors, aiming to advance the peer review mechanism in a more effective way. However, the establishment of such a mechanism was not only a technical measure to ensure programme quality but, more importantly, a strategic effort to reinforce the political interests of the US and its allies in the Cold War context (Li, 2107).

Furthermore, the US endeavoured to link the DAC’s agenda with the First Development Decade of the UN, with the aim of making the development assistance system global and, hence, more legitimate. In the same way, the adoption of the resolution by the UN in October 1970 that “developed countries should spare 0.7 per cent of their GNP as global development resources” further consolidated developed countries’ economic power and gave them a more dominant role in international development policy. At the same time, with the support of the US, the OECD established the Development Center. Many developed countries hurriedly established think tanks on development issues to provide knowledge bases to make development assistance more technical and depoliticised in order to reduce potential political conflicts (Li, 2017). Concepts such as “basic need strategy”, “gender and development”, “participatory development”, “sustainable development” and “poverty reduction”, etc., which have all been widely used since the 1970s, all fall into the category of “development knowledge”. In the name of “shared values”, similar concepts emerged, one after another, by claiming to be neutral – and even being sympathetic – towards developing countries, and won the hearts of a large number of loyal supporters. However, the metaphors about such knowledge could actually be argued as embodying the West’s hegemony to a certain degree (Li, 2017), and the bureaucratisation of development aid could be seen as covering up the political face and intentions of development aid (Mosse, 2011).

On the other hand, the development of the GPEDC is also closely related to a growing debate within the DAC member countries on the effect of the development aid provided by

DAC members. To respond to the question, all development ministers of the DAC put forward the issue of how to measure aid effectiveness during the ministerial-level meeting in 1995, which later emerged as the “aid-effectiveness agenda”. “Halving the global population under extreme poverty” was enacted after the meeting as the central element due to the report “Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation”, which was adopted later as a priority of the Millennium Development Goals by the UN. Later on, at the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, the effectiveness of development aid started to draw attention, and the DAC quickly included aid effectiveness into its major work. In February 2003, the DAC held the First High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Rome, Italy. At the forum, DAC members found that the reports they required from recipient countries were an additional burden to them and distracted them from focusing on studying their own development strategies. Therefore, the declaration adopted at the forum raised the concept of “harmonious aid” and established the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. Meanwhile, the DAC also realised that, in order to improve aid effectiveness, their own efforts would not be enough. As a result, they called for the participation of bilateral institutions, multilateral institutions, governments of developing countries, emerging countries, social organisations and the private sector. This was the first time that the DAC extended its policy discussion range to the outside. The working group was eventually formed by 80 representatives from the abovementioned institutions. This was different from the first expansion of the system, in which only the US and its allies were members. This expansion is viewed as the second expansion of the US-led DAC to include a wide range of stakeholders, signifying that the DAC’s influence in the decision-making of aid policies has started to decline (Li, 2017).

After the Rome forum (2003), the Working Group on Aid Effectiveness held the Second High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, in Paris in 2005, and issued the Paris Declaration after the forum concluded. The declaration proposed 56 specific measures on issues, including ownership, aid alignment, aid harmonisation, management of results and mutual accountability. The most positive contribution to the forum was that the working group started to realise the asymmetric relation between aid and development and tried to fully mobilise recipient countries’ initiatives in aid utilisation. Later, in September 2008, the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held in Accra, Ghana, which adopted the Accra Agenda for Action. The attending parties reached a consensus on how recipient countries should make better use of aid, particularly how they should rely on their own systems and resources. In November 2011, the working group held the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea. More participating parties attended this forum than any of the previous forums. As a more marketable platform, this forum shifted its attention from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, which posed unprecedented challenges to the influence and dominant position of the West in the field of international development. To cope with the challenges, the dominant parties, including the DAC, made big concessions in areas including forum documents, issues and participation mechanisms. Meanwhile, they also hoped to hold their bottom lines by relying on the traditional buy-in approach. Therefore, the GPEDC is viewed as the one partnership agreement that symbolised the third expansion of the DAC-dominated development cooperation system; in essence, it is an exercise of the hidden “buy-in” approach (Li, 2017).

3 Realistic view on the role of the GPEDC

One critical perspective on the GPEDC states that it is unilateral in its approach to history. This examination probably unpacks one side of the story – that the DAC needs to survive. However, it also uncovers another fact: that the change in the global context has changed all global structures, and this change perhaps does not alter the role of international development cooperation, in which the DAC plays an important role in global development. Even in 1996, the DAC had already realised that the distinction between the West and the East as well as between the South and the North were no longer relevant (Abdel-Malek, 2015, p. 14). Justifying the legitimacy of the GPEDC is not the purpose of this paper. Rather, it aims to provide a realistic account of the fact that the GPEDC will have to play an important role in global development, particularly to support the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Firstly, the international development cooperation system has focused on global development based on the ethics of global equality established since the Second World War, despite its political implications and Western domination. It has been, perhaps, the only means to transfer resources to balance the unequal wealth distribution between the rich and poor countries, at least according to its stated intentions. In reality, the operationalisation of the 2030 Agenda, with its 230 indicators, relies heavily on the traditional concept of official development assistance (ODA) (Mahn, 2017). Therefore, from a moral perspective, the system should be improved rather than undermined. This should be the basis upon which consensus can be reached among different parties; in fact, the emerging powers have endorsed it. A total of \$4.02 trillion of ODA was contributed from DAC members towards global development from 1960 to 2016, according to data from the OECD/DAC.

Secondly, despite the argument on the effectiveness of development cooperation, it has a broad scope and wide domain, such as offering support for multilateral activities and institutions, including the UN, humanitarian assistance, food assistance, health and education, etc. It has been indispensable for poor countries. Furthermore, development cooperation also has helped the economic development of many countries such as Korea (from the 1950s to 1980s) and China: from 1980 up to the year 2000, China had become the largest recipient of support from bilateral and multilateral channels. This was in response to the fast-growing period in the country, although China's growth record alone cannot account for development cooperation's contribution. However, substantial support from the World Bank and Japan for infrastructure cannot be ignored. From 1979 to 2010, the World Bank had provided a total \$52.77 billion to China.

Thirdly, the DAC-based development cooperation system has accumulated rich experiences and lessons in almost all aspects of development assistance. Those experiences and lessons cover numerous critical issues such as recognition of knowledge-based programmes, local ownership, using local systems, country-led mechanisms, etc. Important lessons were also learnt about issues such as poor linkages with economic growth, the high costs of management, donor coordination, fragmentation, etc.

Finally, the system has built up useful knowledge on production systems and also the system for international development-oriented human resources. It is clear that the DAC-based development cooperation system is the party of the global governance system that has been developed over the last 60 years. It is expected to continue its vital role in global development with its strong comparative advantages.

There is also another narrative: that the emerging players should take a stake in – or even lead – the international development process due to its increasing economic role in the global system. However, this view does not account for the real capacity of emerging powers. Firstly, the economic capacities of all emerging powers are still weak compared to the DAC members. Taking China as an example – the most developed country in the emerging group – its average gross domestic product per capita is still less than 30 per cent than that of the US and other DAC members. It is unrealistic to expect those countries to take a leading role in global development from a financial point of view. The total amount of ODA provided by 29 emerging countries in 2014 was only about \$32 billion, compared to \$150.8 billion of the 28 DAC members – although their contributions have increased. Secondly, the emerging powers (Benn & Luijkx, 2017), in particular China, have provided alternative development experiences. This, however, can only be a complementary model because their engagement with other developing countries has not been as intensive and extensive as that of the traditional ones. They also have less experience in international development than the traditional donors. Thirdly, the emerging powers' engagement with other developing countries is less systematic than that of the traditional donors in terms of knowledge production, management and human resources supply. Lastly, the emerging powers' approach to engaging with other developing countries is mainly through trade and investment rather than development cooperation. Therefore, the role of emerging powers in international development can only be complementary to the existing development cooperation structure.

Another argument for the GPEDC is the role of the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). There are two perspectives on this: one, from a political point of view, is that there is already a UN platform to discuss development cooperation issues. China, India and Brazil believe that the UN forum is more internationally legitimate to discuss development cooperation than the “OECD-led” forum, which is not considered to be as globally inclusive (Abdel-Malek, 2015, p. 180). Another perspective refers to the issue of efficiency (Janus, Klingebiel, & Mahn, 2014). Some argue that it wastes resources for two systems to focus on the same issue. Synergies and complementariness between accountability mechanisms for development cooperation and those for the 2030 Agenda remain limited, and the established accountability frameworks for development cooperation, such as the GPEDC, are currently missing a linkage to global accountability (Mahn, 2017). The debate from both perspectives is sensible, and the full utilisation of the UN platform for discussing development cooperation should be explored further.

Another view is that, indeed, it is true that the UN DCF is the legitimate platform, and that the GPEDC should not – and cannot – replace the role of the UN DCF. However, one should also take note that, historically, the DAC has provided strong support for the UN DCF and is very knowledgeable of the functions of the UN DCF through both its financial and knowledge support structures. It is due to this over-exercised role of the DAC in international development that many feel uncomfortable. Realistically – along with the consensus to make more viable reforms to strengthen the role of the UN platform in

international development – by making the DAC more open and inclusive so that the DAC does not belong exclusively to the 28 DAC members, the GPEDC stands for its legitimacy. It also needs to realise that the UN platform is often inefficient for consensus-making purposes, thus intermediate mechanisms would still be necessary to propose agendas and be attached to the UN as a functional mechanism. The GPEDC can be developed for this role.

From a global development perspective – particularly from those whose social and economic development still need financial support from the development cooperation modality – although the amount of development cooperation or ODA on balance is smaller than many other resources, it is the unique altruistic character of the intentional development of public resources (Strawson, 2015, p. 6). The reality is that large parts of development cooperation can still – even for emerging powers – be channelled in a bilateral manner. However, there is a need for a collective agenda and an agreement to ensure that both the strategy and implementation are more coordinated to ensure efficiency and effectiveness within development cooperation. Therefore, from all perspectives, instead of maintaining the DAC's hegemonic role, it is important to support the DAC-led development cooperation move towards more openness and inclusiveness – thus, the GPEDC is the first step in this direction.

4 Towards genuine partnership: what can we do?

Making the GPEDC more legitimate in terms of the participation of emerging powers requires efforts from both sides. In this regard, the first step is to reduce the suspicions about the intentions of the DAC on behalf of the emerging powers. The OECD-DAC was seen by the emerging powers to have an inherent bias favouring OECD-DAC members and was bent on applying its aid principles and modalities worldwide, as Abdel-Malek highlights (Abdel-Malek, 2015, p. 180). Thus, they view that the GPEDC is another form of the DAC's expansion of this historical process. The emerging powers think that the GPEDC is the strategic way to buy-in the emerging powers in order to share the DAC's heavy burden accumulated over the decades. Therefore, the emerging powers have been reluctant to join, or have even rejected the offer. The emerging powers need to recognise that the DAC has recognised the changing context, even since the middle of the 1990s, as reflected in the DAC's 1996 "21st Century Report". From the DAC's viewpoint – and according to the concessions made in the documents in Busan, Mexico City and Nairobi – the principles for the emerging powers through "differentiated commitment" have been confirmed; the SSC is only regarded as being complementary rather than being equally important, as with North-South cooperation. Those principles have helped remove the major obstacles preventing the emerging powers from taking part. Therefore, emerging powers – China in particular, because it has a larger capacity and extensive experience in SSC – should take the GPEDC as an opportunity to form a joint force to play a role in global development.

China has reiterated that it was and has been the creator, benefactor as well as supporter of global governance. In the 1920s, China was the first country that appealed to the international community for financial and technical support. From 1929 to 1941, the League of Nations provided technical support to China (Ali & Zeb, 2016). The GPEDC is certainly a part of the global governance structure, thus China should be a part of it. Secondly, despite the political arguments, the GPEDC originates from the High-level Forum on Aid

Effectiveness. The agenda and main context presented in both forums still reflect aid-focused issues and still largely reinforce the traditional donor-recipient model (Li, 2017). The relatively narrow OECD-DAC aid-effectiveness agenda is viewed as being inadequate to address the issues resulting from broad development cooperation (Abdel-Malek, 2015, p. 180). Because of the limitations of the mandate and capacity of the DAC, it is also difficult – and unrealistic – to expect development ministries of the DAC members to move completely beyond an aid agenda.

The emerging powers also need to understand that aid is a business that involves many stakeholders. Changing the nature of aid-development cooperation would require changing the capacities of both institutional and individual structures as well as the whole portfolio structure within the DAC system. The difficulty is that, unless the agenda and context are focused on development, the active participation of emerging powers is unlikely to happen. The emerging powers, in particular China, believe that promoting development for developing countries requires different discussions that should relate to how development cooperation can promote trade, investment, agriculture and industrialisation so that economic growth can be accelerated. Under this scenario, both sides would need to find consensus on how to move ahead.

The third issue varies slightly from the second issue. The original purpose of the World Food Programme was to strengthen the collective action and commitment of DAC members. Therefore, a series of requirements and indicators for data collection and reporting were enacted for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The GPEDC agreed that emerging powers would not need to follow these requirements. However, this privilege would demoralise the emerging powers if they were not able to present the data publicly.

Fourthly, even if they were to actively join the GPEDC, the emerging powers would feel that their development narratives could not be fully recognised because of their weak knowledge base, compared to the strong voices of DAC-based research institutes. Despite the changes made by the GPEDC agenda, conventional political and technical language still dominates the entire agenda.

Finally, the emerging powers, in particular China, decided to develop different financial institutions, such as the BRICS's New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). From the emerging powers' perspective, they would also like to see how this could work together with existing development institutions. This presents another opportunity for DAC members to explore whether DAC-led development cooperation can be joined with those new development financing modalities. Concretely, the GPEDC should approach the NDB and the AIIB and invite them to take part in the forum to explore how they could work together.

Based on the above analysis, one can see that there are various obstacles hindering the emerging powers from actively participating. However, the commitment made by all parties towards global development, in particular the SDGs, and the strong claims of the GPEDC to contribute to the SDGs (and also the agreement of a “common goal but differentiated responsibility” between the DAC members and the emerging powers envisaged in the GPEDC process) by making the GPEDC more inclusive and effective to support the SDGs should be the concrete step that encourages the participation of the emerging powers.

The paper offers China as the case example in order to provide the following recommendations for the GPEDC to move ahead. Although the emerging powers have behaved similarly towards the GPEDC, they are not coordinated in their foreign policy, and there is no common policy towards the GPEDC among them. The GPEDC should not categorise “the emerging powers” as being one and the same, but it should discuss the issues separately with each in order to understand their different viewpoints on the GPEDC.

Firstly, China has demonstrated a strong commitment to global development. It has claimed to be the creator, benefactor and developer of global governance. China’s SSC programmes have been increasingly more aligned with the model advocated, practiced and led by the DAC in terms of modalities. Taking part in the GPEDC should be the focus of China, rather than being brought in passively. China should take the GPEDC as an opportunity to exercise its “soft power”. China’s development experiences have been highly regarded by the GPEDC, and China can certainly make significant contributions to the paradigm shift of the GPEDC from aid to development. However, the importance of the GPEDC to China’s own interests has not been recognised by the Chinese side for two reasons. The first is that the message of the GPEDC has not been presented properly within the Chinese foreign policy and think tank community, thus the GPEDC still lacks policy attention in China. Second, due to the fragmentation of the development cooperation policy process in China, the designated institution-to-institution approach routinely applied by development ministries to China does not sufficiently ensure the acknowledgement of the GPEDC by a wide range of institutions relating to decision-making in China. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the linkage via think tank research and policy advocacy to advertise the GPEDC in existing policy dialogue via separate DAC members with China, such as Sino-German and Sino-UK dialogues, etc.

Secondly, the GPEDC should propose a concrete field that China might be interested in. For instance, for the next high-level forum, the topic on how development cooperation could better contribute to China’s “Belt and Road Initiative” could be suggested as one of the topics of the next forum. China sees this programme as being a concrete measure to implement its global development commitment, and it has also asked for its own development cooperation programme to align with the “One Belt, One Road” initiative.

Thirdly, the GPEDC should realise that its legitimacy largely depends on the active participation of the emerging powers, thus the GPEDC should set up a working group to begin talks with the emerging powers to ensure their participation via process approaches rather than just event-based ones; the emerging powers’ – even China’s – capacities and human resources are limited, and they are not ready to provide an immediate response.

Lastly, the GPEDC also needs to realise that many topics listed in the working programme are not the primary interest of the emerging powers. For instance, the GPEDC continues to focus on the “aid management” agenda, and a strong linkage between development cooperation and development is still missing. The GPEDC needs further concessions to dispel the impression that it is another form of the DAC. Moreover, importantly, the GPEDC needs to highlight clearly how it can link with the UN DCF and other platforms such as the G20 development working group.

5 Conclusions

The rapid development of emerging countries is not only changing the global political and economic landscape, but also reshaping the architecture of global development governance through initiatives such as the BRICS' NDB and AIIB. The emerging powers influence the global development agenda mainly via what they called the SSC approach, which emphasises trade and investment in development, whereas the GPEDC largely focuses on an aid-based development cooperation system, and its agenda is still largely to provide aid. However, due to the fact that the GPEDC has moved towards a development-effectiveness agenda and the emerging powers have influenced global development via a developmental approach, there appears to be an opportunity to persuade different forces to contribute to the SDGs. To do this, both sides need to overcome difficulties via understanding the realities and demands of each side and take concrete steps towards a truly genuine partnership.

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