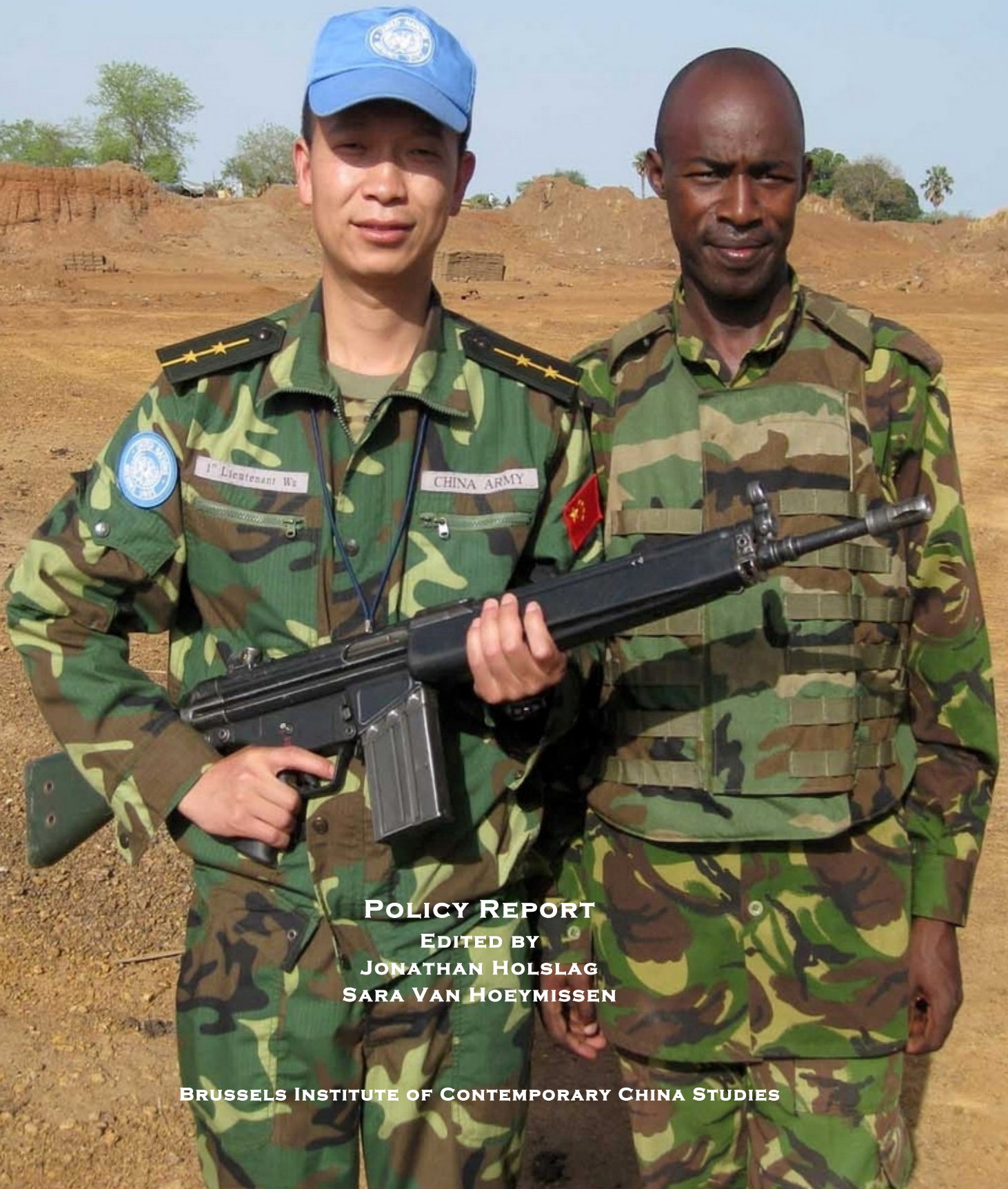


THE LIMITS OF SOCIALIZATION

**THE SEARCH FOR EU-CHINA COOPERATION  
TOWARDS SECURITY CHALLENGES IN  
AFRICA**



**POLICY REPORT**  
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**Abstract** – The European Union has welcomed China’s growing presence in Africa as a potential opportunity for the region’s development. But for this potential to be translated into tangible progress, Europe wants China to assume greater responsibility in promoting long-term stability and peace. BICCS invited thirty participants from fifteen different European institutes to participate in an intensive workshop about China’s response to security challenges in Africa. The aim of this meeting was to examine the new security threats that China has been confronted with, the way China perceived these challenges and how it has responded. The participants discussed the impact of China’s policies on the interests of the European Union and how the latter could respond.

Overall, the conclusion is that Europe’s policy initiative to establish trilateral dialogue and cooperation with China in the field of African peace and security has not produced substantial results. On the one hand, the workshop noted China’s continuing and in some respects deepening involvement with multilateral security initiatives in Africa and some ad hoc changes in China’s non-interference policy to respond to certain non-traditional security challenges, such as humanitarian crises. However, the workshop also revealed that **China still has a clear penchant for security free riding. Europe should therefore pursue a strategy that combines constructive engagement with tacit balancing.**

This policy report summarizes the main findings of the workshop. It will be followed by a comprehensive report that includes the original papers of the participants. It does not necessarily represent the views of the participants’ respective institutes.

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## THE LIMITS OF SOCIALIZATION

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#### 1. China's interests in Africa

China's policies towards Africa have transformed dramatically in the last decade and this evolution coincided with important shifts in the **institutional set-up** of decision-making on African affairs. There has been a proliferation of actors, resulting into a complex web of ministries, departments, commissions and companies that all try to defend their interests. Whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially has the responsibility of overseeing policies, it is the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) that gained most influence. It organizes economic cooperation, guides investment, manages foreign aid projects and since recently dispatches high-level delegations on a more frequent basis. MOFCOM screens Chinese companies that bid for large concessional loans to finance their projects in Africa. Often these are part of a closed circle of larger state-owned enterprises, which maintain close relations with the State Council and the China Exim Bank. While companies certainly try to lobby the government, the large volume of state-backed loans is still an important instrument for the government to "steer" operations in Africa. But within the guidelines of the government, companies can be quite autonomous in pursuing their own agenda. Wheedling African political elites, they manufacture demand for their services, produce in-house feasibility studies for assuring the foreign government of the company's ability to undertake a project, and then persuade it to negotiate with the Chinese government to access project financing.

China's economic foray into Africa has been impressive. While China by no means surpasses the European Union as the main economic player, its growing presence created an economic setting that allows African countries to hedge more between different partners. It has been successful in crafting an economic diplomacy that suits its national interests. As an export market, China outweighs the European Union in eight countries. Especially in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, exports to China have expanded dramatically. The economic crisis of the last two years seemed not to have affected relative trade flows a lot. Between the second quarter of 2008 and 2009, African exports to the EU, China, India and the US all decreased substantially. Taking various statistical caveats into account, Chinese investments have also remained relatively small. Only in Niger, Mauritius and Sierra Leone, has Chinese investment as a share of total inflows reached more than ten percent. Interesting is also that in major raw material producing nations like the DRC, Nigeria and Chad, China still takes a very minor position as an investor. Labour services and construction have been the sectors that probably registered the most impressive growth. Hence, **the People's Republic by no means overwhelmed Africa and the economic crisis did not significantly boost China's economic**

**presence.** This also explains, why, the other way around, Africa represents a small part in China's raw material imports and an even smaller share in its exports.

Access to raw materials and energy has been a key objective in China's policies towards Africa. Oil and gas production in the region will likely continue to increase in the next decades, and is thus of great interest to China. **It is forecasted that the Asian juggernaut will soon source forty percent of its oil and gas imports from Africa.** China has concluded oil and gas deals in at least 23 African countries. Since 2009 Angola has been China's top African supplier of crude oil. In Sudan, Sub-Saharan Africa's third largest oil producer, China National Petroleum Corporation essentially controls the oil industry. Yet, despite the rapid growth and expansion of China's oil business in Africa, the commercial value of the oil investments by China's national oil companies was just eight percent of the combined commercial value of the total investments of international oil companies in African oil. Particularly in Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil producer and holder of proven oil and gas reserves, China's attempts to gain a foothold through oil for infrastructure deals have on several occasions been frustrated. Chinese groups hold less than four percent of Africa's discovered oil and gas reserves. For the future it remains to be seen to which extent China's impressive investments in exploration activities will result into new equity projects. China's oil deals still tend to not shy away from risk, involving large investments for uncertain output and often in problematic conditions. As a consequence, many of China's ventures have been marred by financial losses, corruption and violence. Recent interest in buying up acreage and stakes in firms that have African assets could be considered as an attempt to avoid some of these costs, but it remains to be seen whether this will make a difference.

## **2. Challenges**

Opinion polls show that Africa is the continent with the most positive views of the People's Republic, in several cases surpassing the perceptions that Africans hold of various European countries. Positive perceptions come from investments in neglected areas including infrastructure, more affordable consumer goods, support for industrialisation, new job opportunities and a general consensus of considering the Chinese as "hard working". Since China plays the role of investor, donor and competitor at the same time, different parts of the society benefit in different ways. The position of African NGOs, trade unions and political elites significantly influences perceptions across states. On a country-by-country basis attitudes tend thus to be more complicated. Within one state, people can be disturbed about the influx of Chinese workers, while at the same time recognizing the positive impact that China has for their economy. **Popular criticism of China's investments in Africa stems from low environmental standards, labour safety, harsh working conditions, dumping and a lack of investment outside the mining and oil sector.**

There are several sources of uncertainty compromising China's aspirations in Africa. To start with, Chinese business activities often fall prey to endemic instability and violence in economic partner states. Between 2007 and 2009, at least thirty Chinese citizens were killed in violent incidents and more than seventy were abducted. In five countries Chinese energy operations were attacked. In six countries, rebel groups threatened to sabotage Chinese companies. Since 2003, there have been five coups in countries where China was expanding its economic influence. In several countries, political opposition groups have criticized the Chinese for backing corrupt or authoritarian governments, often forcing the latter to revise contracts. Public frustration about unequal economic growth has turned *Sinophobic* in at least seven countries. Violence also threatened economic interests indirectly. Beijing has invested increasing efforts into branding itself a responsible actor on the international scene, but mayhem in Sudan and Zimbabwe has thwarted this aspiration. Domestic violence reduces China's diplomatic manoeuvrability and its ability to maintain the policy of non-interference, which has facilitated business with many states.

### 3. China responds

Even at the highest political level, there is growing awareness of the risks that Chinese companies are exposed to in Africa. The outcome of several years of internal debates seems to be that **overseas economic presence is considered a vital national interest** and, consequently, that the government is responsible for protection. In the first place, Beijing has responded to these challenges by informing its companies and citizens. The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issue consular guidelines for most countries. In case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, MOFCOM advised: "During the past few years there have been many incidents where bandits wielding knives and carrying guns have robbed Chinese companies and injured Chinese staff. Chinese personnel must observe the security situation in Congo closely and be proactive in taking necessary security measures, and not turn pale at the mention of a tiger. When looting occurs here, one must not try to fight back, escape or call for help – robbers usually will not harm you." The Chinese **embassies became more proactive** in issuing security advices and organizing evacuations in case of violent contingencies. This happened, for instance, in Chad, Niger and Ethiopia after workers had come under gunfire. Frequently, **Beijing also more assertively demanded local governments to secure Chinese projects**. In most countries, police or military forces guard Chinese mining projects and construction sites. Contrary to often-heard rumours, China has, thus far, refrained from dispatching its own security forces.

But that might change. In 2003, President Hu Jintao categorized protecting overseas interests as one of the PLA's historical missions. China's participation in the UN Security Council mandated anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden could be

interpreted as a signal that China **will not refrain from using its growing military capabilities to protect its interests abroad**. There has been a fundamental gap between China's interests and influence in international maritime security. In the long run, the country's program of military modernisation is aimed at limiting this gap. The five taskforces that have been deployed since January 2009 have escorted dozens of mainly Chinese ships. Beijing sought to demonstrate its capability of protecting Chinese nationals and Chinese-flagged ships abroad. Rather than merely relying on protection by foreign navies, the PRC showed that it could do no less than the other great powers. The Chinese taskforces have been interacting with European counterparts and were also increasingly involved in the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) meetings in Bahrain. However, the Chinese navy insisted on escorting commercial vessels without participating in the International Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC). Intelligence exchanges were also limited. There have thus been several limitations to China's cooperation with other countries, and it is not clear yet what its new experiences will imply for China's future posturing. Through increasing its fleet of destroyers, frigates and supply ships, and possibly by adding aircraft carriers, and through the use of commercial ports in friendly countries, **the PLA Navy would in the future be able to deploy also to other waters around Africa**.

China has also become an important contributor to **UN peacekeeping** operations in Africa, with about 1,600 soldiers being deployed in 2010. For Beijing this should be considered as an **attestation to its commitment to multilateralism and its peaceful development strategy**, taking responsibility in the international community's efforts to promote peace and stability. But peacekeeping can also be seen as an instrument in rather realist strategies. First, they allow gaining military experience in a non-threatening way. Second, peacekeeping permits strengthening linkages with local armed forces. In the DRC, for example, Chinese engineering units have been building training sites and facilities for the FARDC in South Kivu. Third, these operations are contributing to China's soft power and help fostering political goodwill. Finally, they are an important opportunity for gathering intelligence and monitoring areas that are of interest to Chinese investors. This is particularly relevant with regard to post-conflicts settings, such as Liberia, where Chinese companies can play an important part in infrastructure reconstruction.

One salient area of continuing importance for Beijing is the question of how to balance the formal principle of non-interference with an apparent desire to be regarded as a responsible power in Africa. In contrast to current perceptions of Beijing's immutable line on sovereignty, China now seems to agree to international involvement in humanitarian crises. Its posturing on the crisis in **Darfur** has been widely recognized as an indication of Beijing's growing support for international efforts to address violence Africa. But a closer look reveals the limitations to this apparent evolution in China's stance. China's involvement was still anchored by its support for the sovereignty of Sudan, a preference for Sudanese or regionally

brokered mediation processes and opposition to sanctions. **It has clearly sought to protect its Sudan-wide investment and has been particularly wary of US intentions in Sudan.** To the international community China presented itself as an active mediator and it seized on changing tactical calculations of Khartoum to showcase them as a Chinese diplomatic victory, but in the end it remained rather reluctant to exert pressure. So far, the Darfur issue also appears to have constituted a rather unique case in China's recent diplomacy, which cannot be considered evidence of a more general Chinese shift away from its traditional non-interference policy.

China's attitudes to five recent coups - the Central African Republic (2003), in Mauritania (2008), in Guinea (2008), in Madagascar (2009) and in Niger (2010) - seems to support this observation. In all five countries, China was steadily expanding its economic presence before the political turmoil and its pragmatic hands-off response allowed it to consolidate its position also under the new strongmen. All five dictators turned to Beijing for aid, a demand to which China willingly gave in. Whether it concerned paying wages of administrations, military aid or financing public infrastructure; for China this was all business as usual. Neither did much change in the official discourse. **After the coups in Guinea and Niger, the government defended its economic cooperation with the juntas** by stressing its concern with the wellbeing of the people. In most cases, China avoided high-profile political visits, but at the level of low-level everyday politics, little changed and the embassies facilitated contacts between Chinese companies and the new regimes. While African regional organizations were often divided over how to respond, China did not appear to feel constrained by even the most limited sanctions imposed by these bodies.

**China has extended its diplomatic support to security initiatives undertaken by African regional organizations but has also been instrumentally using these bodies to deflect criticism and to reduce image costs.** All in all China's financial support to regional organizations remains very limited, compared to aid provided by the European Union and the United States. Apart from some assistance to specific peacekeeping missions, by far the main project sponsored by China has been the construction of the African Union's new headquarters. As African countries continue to hold differing views on issues of sovereignty and intervention, the compromise that emerges on specific issues in African regional arrangements is often the lowest common denominator in terms of its impact on the target state's sovereignty. This compromise stance thus provides China with a reference point that does not greatly challenge the cherished principles of sovereignty and non-interference. The outcomes of African regional mediation processes that safeguard the position of ruling elites enjoy considerably legitimacy in China and are likely to receive unconditional diplomatic and material support.

Even though China considers the rule of law and government transparency a condition for development at home, it has remained reluctant to embed these principles in its policies towards Africa. Corruption and bad governance repeatedly imperilled Chinese business interests, but **there is no evidence that Beijing is considering attaching some form of conditionality in regard to governance practices to its economic cooperation.** The Chinese understanding of good governance still differs a lot from the traditional European definition of good governance as a democratic, transparent and efficient system of administration. While good governance is a key element in most European foreign policy documents, Chinese official foreign policy rhetoric barely refers to the concept. In China good governance remains primarily associated with internal stability and maintaining sovereignty. The security dimension of China's policy in Africa will therefore most likely continue to be characterised by a particular emphasis on territorial integrity and non-interference over multilateral interventions.

In areas where China did adapt its policies, implementation remains problematic. Arms trade is a case in point. China has been a small supplier of arms to Africa, but the volume of arms sales is expanding rapidly. Beijing has repeatedly vowed to limit the illegal trade in light weapons. At the same time, Chinese firearms are increasingly used by rebel groups and criminal gangs throughout Africa. The discovery of a ship loaded with weapons that was bound for Zimbabwe in 2008, also showed the **gap between China's voluntary discourse and the extent to which it really manages to control arms exports to conflict-prone countries.** China's 2006 FOCAC commitment to help Africa combat the illicit trade in SALW is yet to be implemented. The November 2009 FOCAC meeting in Sharm-el-Sheikh was dominated, as expected, by the economic relationship between Africa and China in the face of the global recession. The combat against illicit arms trade dropped off the agenda, with no specific references to SALW made in the agreed Action Plan, clearly suggesting that the issue is now less of a priority in China-Africa dialogue.

#### **4. Limits to socialization, limits to cooperation**

**The European Union has welcomed China's renewed interest in Africa.** The European Commission and the European Council stressed that China's expanding economic ties with the continent are an important opportunity for growth and development. To optimize the benefits for Africa, they suggested to coordinate policies and to set up a trilateral dialogue. Peace and security are an important element in this cooperation. The 2008 Communication of the Commission, for example, proposes to "cooperate in order to promote stability and prosperity in African countries and to work with the African Union (AU) and in the United Nations with China to strengthen the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture and assist with AU peacekeeping operations, capacity building and training."

The expectation has been that by inviting China to participate in frequent exchanges, it will gradually adapt its behaviour and embrace European norms in addressing and preventing security challenges in Africa. Three main assumptions implicitly and explicitly underpin this engagement policy. First, given its strong relations and its proximate geopolitical position, the **European Union has an important interest in maintaining stability** in Africa. It shares this interest with other prominent partners like China, the United States and India. Policies and actions by third actors that destabilize African countries, indirectly threaten the security of the European Union. Second, in a region where instability still looms large, **it is vital to coordinate policies** and jointly strengthen the coordinating role of regional actors and the UN Security Council. Third, combating corruption and promoting **effective governance is inevitable** to prevent political tensions and violence. Each society has the right to pursue its own development model. But as an important economic partner and donor, external partners can expect that their investments contribute to sustainable and equitable development.

**Cooperation with China has remained disappointing.** There is no evidence that it will assume a level of responsibility in African security affairs that is commensurate with its strong economic presence in the region. China still has a penchant for security free riding. Its support to regional organizations remains nominal. In case of political unrest, China remained disinclined to work with the international and African regional community, and opted for a business-as-usual attitude. Even its mediation in the question of Darfur cannot be considered as a departure from its traditional hands-off approach. Beijing refused to use its growing economic leverage to help combating corruption. Its arms trade policy also shows that even when it does pledge to take measures, their implementation remains problematic.

China wants to be seen as a responsible partner in Africa, but **responsibility tends to be conceived from the narrow perspective of local political elites**, rather than African societies. Non-interference is seen as a guarantee for regime security and domestic stability. It also helps expanding economic relations with governments that still act as gatekeepers to Africa's natural resources. Whenever violent contingencies occur, the Chinese government tends to step up support for political elites, by providing financial aid, military assistance and diplomatic backing.

China's growing contribution to peacekeeping operations and its recent participation in the anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden could express growing preparedness to join the international community in promoting security in Africa. Yet, it is as yet too early to formulate such conclusion. Whereas China now supports Peacekeeping Operations, its posture in the Security Council is still very conservative. In addition, **the costs for China to participate in such operations were fairly low**. China does not contribute much to the UN budget for peacekeeping, while dispatching blue helmets is a vital opportunity to gain military experience, to collect intelligence and to guard economic interests. This also applies to the

operation in the Gulf of Aden, where China decided not to cooperate with the West in patrolling one corridor. All in all, coordination with the European Union on military operations in Africa is negligible.

Given the fact that many of these issues are fairly new to China, one could assume that it takes a time for China to arrive at a different understanding of security challenges whereby continuing business-as-usual is no longer considered a viable strategy for contributing to Africa's stability or to protect China's long term interests. Yet, China has been experiencing security challenges in Africa now for more than ten years and its dialogue with the European Union on African affairs goes back to 2005. **The fact that no significant shifts occurred might indicate that Europe's engagement policy is failing and that there will be no convergence in terms of policies in the foreseeable future.**

There are several **explanations for China's intransigence** and the failure to develop cooperation with the European Union. First, China still experiences strong pressure to secure its supplies of raw materials. Second, many Chinese sincerely believe that as long as China creates opportunities for Africa to grow, it automatically contributes to political stability. It is also widely accepted that some corruption is inevitable in Africa's economic take-off. Third, there are several constituencies in the Chinese decision-making process that have not been affected much by Europe's engagement policy, such as the armed forces, conservative members in central Party organs and leaders of state-owned mining companies. Fourth, China might have become more confident in its Africa policies because it has not been confronted with major setbacks and because African leaders have frequently expressed their appreciation. While there have been instances of civil society actors in Africa showing their disaffection with China's military cooperation with Africa, African trade unions' reaction to the 2008 arms shipment to Zimbabwe being a case in point, in general views of China still tend to be quite favourable among the African public. Finally, China is not impressed by the European Union as a security actor in Africa. Many Chinese tend to believe that some member states want to obstruct China or that they cannot be trusted because of their colonial past. Member states have also failed to coordinate ad-hoc synergies with China at the level of the European institutions. Decision makers also stress that the United States is the main security actor in Africa and that the latter also has not taken Europe's Africa policies very seriously.

## **5. Options for Europe**

The European Union remains a key security actor in Africa, but emerging powers like China have not entirely recognized this. Partially this is because Europe has done a bad job in streamlining policies beyond a few occasional operations, in

developing the internal mechanisms to pool initiatives towards other protagonists like China and in explaining its concerns to these players.

From a strategic point of view, **the European Union can be an indispensable partner if it manages to address these shortcomings.** Compared to China and even the United States, it has a natural geopolitical advantage due to its proximity. Europe also has the advantage that it is not a strategic challenger to the United States, China or India and that it could gain tremendous leverage vis-à-vis these powers by playing a proactive intermediary role. In spite of their enthusiasm about the emerging powers, African countries will need Europe to keep the aspirations of their new partners in check.

In order for the EU to be regarded by China and the US as a relevant dialogue partner on African security it is necessary for the EU to increase its visibility as a security actor in the region. There are several levels at which Europe could improve its performance. All in all, the challenge is to **take small steps towards a grand strategy** for engaging emerging powers like China.

First, human resources should be pooled in order to make cooperation possible. There has been a serious lack of capacity to actively develop cooperation with China in Africa. There should be a **policy coordinator at the level of the European External Action Service (EEAS).** This person should be responsible for promoting a smooth division of labour among officers in relevant departments, delegations and member states. Member states should be encouraged to second policy experts to the EEAS.

Second, the EU's current dialogue with China on Africa has been too much of a bureaucratic exercise. In order to gain support from the member states for its engagement, the EU-China **dialogues should be prepared and evaluated by a separate working group that includes officials and experts from the capitals,** different Commission DGs, the Council Secretariat, the European Parliament and the European Military Staff. This group should be chaired by the EEAS. It has to put forward priorities for cooperating with China and coordinate initiatives at different government levels.

Third, the **European Military Staff should establish a liaison office for coordination with countries like China.** While there are obvious limitations in exchanging confidential operational information, it should explain the objectives of European missions, the lessons learned and explore options for cooperation in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. In addition, the European Military Staff should step up its capacity to coordinate member states' initiatives with countries like China in the field of peacekeeping, training, humanitarian operations, disarmament, etc. Member states initiatives are welcome, but without streamlining

at EU level, they will not create the leverage and credibility that is needed for building solid long-term security cooperation with China.

Fourth, **civil society, think tanks and universities should be more closely involved** on a permanent basis. NGOs and experts could help raising China's awareness of the many security challenges in Africa. The European Union should coordinate a policy to dispatch European Africa specialists to Chinese universities or news media. It should create a network of European specialists to monitor China's evolving presence in Africa, to formulate policy recommendations and to promote these recommendations also at the level of the member states.

Any attempt to build synergies with other powers is set to fail if the EU neglects to address the incoherencies in implementing its own Africa strategy. Too often **member states are inclined to free ride**. Being preoccupied with short-term gains themselves, they outsource issues like good governance to the European institutions. This partly explains double standards in Europe's policies towards China and Europe's weak legitimacy when promoting standards.

These five recommendations could help upgrading Europe's policymaking capacity. They are organizational preconditions for the European Union to be recognized as an effective actor. How then to approach China?

The European Union first and foremost needs to develop much more persuasive arguments and therefore **link the standards that it promotes to a clear set of common interests**. Departing from common interests will be essential for developing a consensus with China.

There remains a clear wariness on the Chinese side concerning entering into any type of cooperation with a third party that does not enjoy strong African support. On the other hand, China has also shown concern about African perceptions of its actions on the continent. European efforts to develop concrete trilateral initiatives should therefore be careful to engage Africa and sufficient attention should be devoted **to strengthening dialogue among the EU-Africa axis of the triangle**.

The European Union should not just focus on China, but **also engage India and the United States**. Without this rebalancing China might feel targeted and the EU would miss an opportunity to gain leverage as an intermediate.

While good governance, human rights and democracy might be too difficult to promote at an early stage, Europe can expect China to support the promotion of the rule of law. The **rule of law** is central in China's own harmonious development philosophy and Chinese leaders also stressed its importance in pursuing economic diplomacy. It could also help to overcome the differences over *good governance*. Since the Chinese often assume that the latter implies shaping regimes and the end-goals

of African countries political transition, approaching cooperating from the perspective of the rule of law would circumvent this problem.

Regarding the **promotion of good governance in the mining industry**, Europe should follow a two-track policy. On the one hand, it needs to strengthen its leverage by backing its own mining companies to take an intermediary position between the African upstream and the Asian downstream industries. In return for support, European companies should strictly adhere to transparency guidelines and help developing processing industries in Africa. While this is mainly a member state authority, the capitals should understand that without coordination, their companies would be marginalized. Setting a good example is thus a better option than downscaling Europe's presence in the African mining sector. On the other hand, the EU has to share best practices with China, join forces in mineral certification and build a consensus on international revenue transparency.

In **the combat against illicit arms** trade the European Union should step up its technical assistance for developing and strengthening national legislation. Arms control best practices could become established as part of any future joint military exercises between Chinese, EU and African countries. Chinese peacekeepers, who have a growing role on the continent, could partake in more disarmament initiatives, and experienced EU member states could assist Chinese forces by providing the adequate training to be able to carry out these often complex operations. More joint EU-China support could be focused on developing African Union SALW initiatives. Such support could also have a beneficial effect on strengthening attention to the illicit trade in SALW on the bilateral agenda of China-Africa relations since this will require both strengthened African capacity in the field of controlling SALW and African agency in consistently insisting on the importance of this issue.

Several member states have cooperated with China in the field of **UN peacekeeping** and initiated training programmes. These initiatives are laudable and should be expanded. Yet, without coordination at the EU level, they will remain drops in a bucket and fall short in improving China's perceptions of the European Union as a reliable and important partner. It is therefore advised that the EEAS and the EUMS discuss options for new synergies with relevant agencies of the member states at an annual coordination meeting, help creating a division of labour and collect lessons learned. Additional options to be considered: dispatching a military advisor or attaché of the EUMS at the European Delegation in Beijing, dispatching professors in African affairs to the Chinese National Defence University, exchanging military instructors with Africa experience to Chinese training centres, organize debriefings about EU operations in Africa, etc.

The most visible recent EU activity in the security sphere is its current counterpiracy operation off the coast of Somalia. The EU can build on this mission in two ways. First, by increasing the EU's role as facilitator of international cooperation by the

many countries who are engaged in counterpiracy. The EU is particularly well-positioned to help China to become further integrated in a joint international approach that involves also actors such as the US, Japan, and NATO. And second, by applying the experience acquired in the Gulf of Aden in other areas where there is a need for a maritime approach to non-traditional security threats. **Piracy threats off the West African coasts** could be an area for further exploration, perhaps in combination with preparing for possible maritime disaster relief operations.

Africa's role in global oil markets is set to grow in importance in coming decades. Securing a safe and reliable supply of energy resources from Africa is a shared concern of Europe and China, yet considerable friction has emerged. China's approach and its preference for bilateral deals has caused concern that China does not wish to rely on the globalized energy market. Especially in Africa there are signals that competition for energy resources is shifting from the commercial to the geopolitical sphere. In order to avoid such an outcome, it is **imperative that the EU increases the dialogue on energy affairs with China** through institutions such as the International Energy Agency (IEA) and insists on more transparency regarding energy-related investments.

**The best scenario is thus to combine engagement with tacit balancing.** Both approaches are interrelated. Trying to set a constructive example in Africa will not work without setting priorities, beefing up Europe's presence and pooling the scattered policies of different member states. The aim should not be to outmanoeuvre China, but to create leverage in negotiations and to develop a convincing positive role model. Persuasion and soft power need to be founded on hard capabilities. Only a strong and unified European presence will permit to prop up promising African initiatives.

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Brussels, 30 May 2010

BICCS has been following the EU-China-Africa relations closely. For background information, please visit the publication section of our website.



Asia Papers on China-EU strategic cooperation, China's security policy towards Africa, China's diplomatic manoeuvring in Darfur, China's economic diplomacy towards Africa.

Report for the European Parliament on China's resources and energy policy in Sub-Sahara Africa.