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The Need for Policy Coherence
and New Partnerships



**The EU's Response to China's Africa Safari
Cooperation to Make Aid Sustainable and Matching Needs**

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Abstract:

Since 2006 China's Africa policy has become a critical issue in the China-EU political dialogue. A central objective of the EU development agenda is to achieve good governance in African states in order to eradicate poverty, reach the MDG and promote sustainable development. China's Africa strategy has been said to undermine these efforts ("unethical" support for "rogue" states; unconditional aid;"free rider" of Western debt relief efforts; starting a "new scramble for Africa's resources"; nipping African industrialisation strategies in the bud; Chinese migration into Africa threatening local employment).

However, common objectives exist in fields such as reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and achieving MDGs. China's President subscribed to this international agenda in a speech at the 2005 World Summit and made 8 pledges to African heads of state at the 2006 summit in Beijing. Indeed, China's rapid delivery of infrastructure, equity investment and trade all seem to have helped African country's economic growth.

According to the European Consensus on development, sustainable development requires aid effectiveness, local ownership, and good governance. China has come under pressure to rally to this agenda, which would require a profound adaptation of China's economic assistance which is focused on commercial strategies and imbued with China's own experience of lifting 400 million out of poverty thanks to export-driven economic growth, population control and investment.

The debate in Africa has focused on whether Africa can gain from the Chinese engagement, whatever China's intentions might be, whether African societies at large can benefit from China's engagement given that some groups lose out and whether the positive view of China by African leaders is in line with African societies' wider interests or a manifestation of "elite" politics and corruption. More broadly in the development community there is a question whether China's development model can be applied in Africa.

Africans need to formulate a strategic consensus nationally and in the AU framework in order to set the agenda. African consensus needs to be built on solid foundations, not on a temporary commodity boom. The AUC has laid groundwork by creating a task force on this topic. It recommends a systematic assessment, effective and efficient use of Africa's natural resources with a view to pursuing the continent's industrialization process and proposes initiatives in the context of the emerging partnership framework.

This study aims at conceptualising this emerging triangular relationship beyond the prevailing empirical approach to the question of China's engagement in Africa. It complements the analysis on the economics of the China-Africa relationship and which concludes that through China's trade and investment, African countries have started to seize opportunities of integration into the global economy.

The study looks for clues on questions such as what kind of actor China is in Africa and how its Africa policy has affected its foreign policy doctrine. Descriptions oscillate between a hard-nosed, neo-colonial giant pursuing its national interests and that of China as an attractive soft power actor. Which are its attractions, which are its weaknesses? Is China in Africa

because it is strong or because it is weak? And what does it imply for Africa as a player in international relations? What are the EU's strengths and weaknesses in its response to the changes in the global environment that unfold in the continent to its South? What does the South-South relationship mean for the emerging "post-post Cold War" world order?

Introduction

China's Africa policy has become a critical issue in the China-EU dialogue and G8 discussions. A central objective of the EU and G 8 development agendas is to achieve good governance in African states in order to eradicate poverty, reach the MDG and promote sustainable development. China has come under pressure to rally to this agenda as well, which would require at first sight a profound adaptation of China's economic assistance policy. Indeed, critics focus on China's "unethical" support for "pariah" states such as Sudan or Zimbabwe culminating in the "genocide Olympics" campaign. China's unconditional aid is said to counter international efforts to persuade African governments to increase transparency, public accountability and good governance in general. China has been accused of threatening debt sustainability. China stands accused of starting a "new scramble for Africa's resources". Finally, Chinese migration into Africa threatening local employment and even social cohesion in the long run has raised concerns¹. This seems hardly a promising starting point for cooperation, but common objectives exist such as reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and achieving the MDGs. The Chinese President, building on his concept of a harmonious world subscribed to this international agenda in a speech at the 2005 World Summit.

There is a deeper layer of issues which affect the debate about the objectives of development policy in Europe's foreign relations overall – a debate which pits the pro-poor policy faction against the advocates of development as one of the tools to achieve Europe's strategic interests abroad (OECD 2007: Mayall, 2005). The European Security Strategy of 2003 and the European Consensus on Development of 2005, stress that security and development are complementary agendas and that neither is subordinate to the other. China's policy in Africa has helped to bring these issues to the fore as it promotes development without making the nexus between security, good governance, human rights and development. Thus, European conditionality, whether based on intrusion or incentives faces a dilemma. The EU needs to persuade its strategic partners that its holistic approach pays dividends and can be a key element of an effective multilateral world order. The African Union (and the African Development Bank) need to make sure that its Member States adhere and implement its own good governance and human rights agenda, as enshrined in the AU Constitutional Act. The debate in Africa has focused on whether Africa can gain from the Chinese engagement, whatever China's intentions might be, whether African societies at large can benefit from China's engagement in terms of development given that some groups lose out (textile industry, workers, small traders) and whether the overwhelmingly positive view of China by African leaders is in line with African societies' wider interests or a manifestation of "elite"

¹ While this essay is not about reviewing these points of criticism in detail, we conclude from analysis of the literature and primary sources of information, that to quite an extent this criticism is overstated and needs to be much more nuanced. For many claims there is often a lack of more than anecdotal evidence or a selection of comments or facts which fit into the desired picture. In other cases political statements are confounded with analysis. This is particularly problematic when China's "success" in Africa is extrapolated to predict the inevitable erosion of European influence or the failure of a Western development approach or the other way around, when China's problems are extrapolated to predict its imminent failure.

politics and corruption. With the renewed interest for African oil and minerals, the resource curse has become a key concern (Yates 2006). More broadly in the development community as well as in China itself there is a debate whether China's development model can be applied in Africa given its obvious success, but also its apparent shortcomings. Africans need to formulate a strategic consensus in the AU framework and of course nationally in order to be in the driving seat of the debate. A potential African consensus needs to be built on solid foundations, not on a temporary commodity boom. The AUC has laid the groundwork by creating a task force on this topic (AUC 2006). This task force recommends a systematic assessment and an effective and efficient use of Africa's natural resources with a view to pursuing the continent's industrialization process. It proposes to enhance economic cooperation, trade and improved market access for Africa's products, boost agricultural productivity, strengthen Africa's services and private sectors, develop Africa's human resources, knowledge generation, sharing and application and to accelerate the development of infrastructure.

The EU has concluded that effective cooperation between the EU and China in taking up common responsibilities is central to the shaping of international affairs and global governance in the future². Hence, the EU's and China's dialogue and cooperation on African development can be regarded as a test-case for the EU-China strategic partnership, for the EU's strategy to promote global security and governance through effective multilateralism, for China's ambition to be a responsible (great) power, but also for Africa's development and position in the world.

The challenge ahead is to build on the positive effects of the EU's and China's engagement and use their willingness to cooperate on the basis of similar objectives for growth and development in Africa in order to ultimately construct a common set of concepts and "rules of engagement" in Africa. These rules need to promote sustainable peace based on an emerging African security community and the AU/NEPAD principles for governance and development in Africa. However, changes in attitudes, path-dependent policies or conditionality will not happen overnight.

Assumptions

1) The EU – a development superpower ?

The EU's role in the world is now no longer a matter of "if" it plays a role and "if" it is a subject of international relations, but rather how it interacts with the world and with which objectives. Member States have their own diplomacy but carry it out more and more in an EU framework (Hill and Smith 2005). For instance, the "federating" role of the European Commission in development policy was recently emphasised by the OECD DAC (OECD 2007). However, the EU is not yet a unitary and effective global *power*. It can fairly be assumed that other countries often do not sufficiently understand the EU and sometimes mistake Member States' policy for that of the EU. The EU has emerged as a security actor in Africa through its support to the African Peace Facility, military and civilian ESDP missions and support to security sector reform or demobilisation efforts in several countries. The EU (and the UNSC) served as a blueprint for the institutional set-up of the AU. But perhaps more characteristic of the traditional image of Europe as a civilian power, the EU collectively provides more than half of all ODA to Africa.

² The issue was first raised by the European Commission in its 2006 policy paper on China (European Commission, 2006) and on the 9th EU-China Summit. Regular meetings have been ongoing since.

Table: Projections on Official Development Assistance, on the basis of EU targets

Table: Projections on ODA, on the basis of agreed targets

		2004	2005	2006	2010	Δ 2004-2010
EU ODA (EC estimate)	% GNI	0.35%*	0.44%*	0.43%**	0.57%***	
	US\$ billion	\$43	\$56	\$59**	\$96***	+\$54 (EU 27)
EU 15 ODA (OECD estimate)	% GNI	0.35%	0.44%	0.43%	0.59%	
	US\$ billion	\$43	\$56	\$59	\$87	+\$44 (EU 15)
All DAC members (OECD estimate)	% GNI	0.26%	0.33%	0.30%	0.36%	
	US\$ billion	\$80	\$106	\$104	\$135	+\$55 (all DAC)
EU share of DAC ODA (EC estimate)	% of DAC	54%	52%	57%	72%	
EU share of DAC ODA (OECD estimate)	% of DAC	54%	52%	57%	65%	

*EU 15/**EU 25/**EU 27

Source: DAC (2007); and Commission forecasts/projections for 2010 of 2007

2) China – it's the economy...

China is not a revisionist power, but it tries to blend into an international order with a modest agenda of change for the next decade or so³. Indeed, since the 1990s China has made efforts to subscribe to international conventions, to enter international regimes and organisations (most prominently the WTO) and to stabilise its neighbourhood through the settlement of border disputes, bilateral and multilateral dialogues and regional agreements. This strategy has brought enormous economic and development benefits to China. Another dividend of this effort is that China is increasingly perceived as *the* power of the future, increasing Beijing's influence.

China's primary goal is domestic development for which international relations provide the necessary conditions in terms of security, stability, predictability and economic and commercial benefits. There is a multitude of actors and constituencies that determine the international relations of China, much like those in Western countries, minus the humanitarian pressure groups and media transparency. China's emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference is rooted in its historical experience of foreign domination and its current ambitions to consolidate its territorial sovereignty.

From a Chinese point of view, Africa is a "natural" partner given historic and political ties, the common experience of foreign domination and the economic complementarity (including economic opportunities for many Chinese citizens). China has given up its earlier ideological foreign policy which was characterised by its active promotion of socialism and strong interference into political processes in Africa⁴. It now pragmatically pursues policies which it believes are in line with long standing Western demands on it: capitalism, development aid,

³ For the stated strategic foreign policy objectives, their time horizon and underlying assumptions cf. Men (2007), Yang (2007). Of course sceptics may question these official lines, but no one seriously expects a sudden change of strategy in the next ten years or so given China's limited capacities and enormous domestic challenges. Indeed looking back at the reform policy, broadly speaking China's policy makers seem to have followed and implemented the masterplan by Deng Xiao Ping. One could therefore assume that abrupt departures from it are unlikely in the absence of a major crisis.

⁴ For details Li Anshan (2007), He (2007). The diplomatic spat with Taiwan still overshadows relations with African countries and causes some prejudice to African integration efforts, as the AU cannot replace the FOCAC as long as some of its members recognise Taiwan. The issue of Morocco and Western Sahara is another sore spot on the African side this time. The only existing multilateral regional structure which does not have problems with the Taiwan issue is the Arab League which has consequently become China's key interlocutor for the Arab World.

peacekeeping and multilateral diplomacy. Mutual economic benefit is the key driver and characteristic of the China-Africa relationship which extends through global value chains (China as the world's factory) into Western markets. China was therefore surprised at the West's strong reaction, as it had observed the progressive marginalisation of Africa in the years since the Cold War ended. Rather than challenging the West, it was filling a void.

3) Africa – object of desire or subject of international relations?

The AU is certainly not yet an international actor on a par with the EU never mind a nation state. Thus Africa's diversity needs to be borne in mind, even though we need to simplify for the sake of argument. In general African countries are weak players in the world economy and world politics, although as an "object" of international relations they have become more prominent in recent years Wissenbach (2007b). The public image is associated with hunger, poverty, disease, crime and conflict, but this does not capture Africa's diverse reality. Africa's new found appeal stems from its strong market performance in recent years, driven by better regulatory regimes, structural reforms, higher growth rates, rising foreign direct investment and foreign exchange reserves, robust export performance, and lower debt levels. The origin of this new international strength is linked to the commodity boom and global value chains. Significantly, many African countries are politically stable today compared with a decade ago. There is a need for Africa to develop a strategy which allows it to convert the gains of the current commodity boom into durable economic and political currency, something it failed to achieve in earlier decades. Progress on the MDG is uneven, but generally not on track. The AU is a credible attempt at unity and integration, albeit without the pooling of sovereignty characteristic of the EU model. Some of the regional economic communities have become functional, while others are "paper elephants". Currently many resource rich African countries are in a position of strength, but this strength is at the mercy of the ups and downs of commodity prices (such situations have existed in the past and not led to durable development in Africa). A key issue for those countries would be to emulate the diversification strategies and growth trajectory of other resource rich countries such as Malaysia, Norway or Australia. This requires not only a real strategy for a country's response to globalisation, but also strong economic and political governance. Finally, the resource poor countries in Africa have little to attract international political attention if it is not their misery itself. They need to find ways out of poverty and aid dependency.

Challenges for cooperation

The key challenges for EU-China-Africa relations are thus threefold: 1) Can the EU and China manage to use their partnership as a model to address the global challenge of sustainable development and progress towards the MDG in Africa despite value differences?

2) Can China handle economic and trade relations with developing countries (as it can't risk isolation from them or losing the goodwill of its resource suppliers⁵) and avoid confrontation with the US and Europe over critical differences in its approach to Africa? Can China overcome the conflicts of interest as a major exporter of manufactures and as partner of developing countries which are afraid of deindustrialisation due to Chinese competition?

3) Can Africa manage its multiple partnerships in such a way that it becomes a (unified) actor in international relations who can realise her objectives, rather than remaining an object of great power agendas?

⁵ Yuan (2007:12), He (2007) Similarly, but more critically: Alves and Draper (2007:24).

These challenges will ultimately define whether a multilateral world order in which the North-South dividing line can be overcome could function.

Europe's relations with Africa: the conditionality trap

Box: *"Africa must be a priority of our external relations. It is time to leave paternalism and go beyond the mere donor-recipient approach, breaking stereotypes about Africa in Europe, and about Europe in Africa. We need each other. This joint partnership is the best political strategy to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and to address the global challenges we both have to face." President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso on the Africa-EU summit in December 2007.*

Both the Europeans and China have in common the problem of combining their political and economic interests with the short- and long-term developmental needs on the African continent (Berger, Wissenbach 2007). At the same time some European states carry post-colonial baggage (Yates, 2006) as well as certain misconceptions in external development ranging from the lack of local ownership-support to uncoordinated aid and the dogmatic ideas of the international liberal mainstream about political transformation (Kiely, 2007). On the conceptual level the EU, driven by the European Commission to 'europeanise' development and Africa policies, has refocused on locally-owned solutions at continental, regional and national levels in Africa and launched an ambitious package to rationalise the EU aid effort commended by the international donor community (OECD DAC 2007). It has recently backtracked from "conditionality" (Mayall 2005, Linklater 2005 rated conditionality as a distinguishing feature of post-Cold War development policy) to political and financial incentives for good governance and ownership (Africa-EU strategic partnership 2007). This marks a change from both the unconditional support by neo-colonial powers in return for strategic benefits during the Cold War and the overly prescriptive approach known as the Washington Consensus.

China may have become a factor in accelerating a process of re-orientation of the EU-Africa partnership as its no-strings attached approach provides African countries with alternatives to the post-Cold War development model. Since China has increased its engagement on the African continent⁶, dealing with development on the continent has become a more complex, multi-dimensional undertaking for the EU. The EU has realised that the partnership with Africa requires new foundations and more trust. Now, China's focus on a mutual interest-based, commercially driven and politically high-level partnership with Africa has concentrated minds in Europe and in Africa on how the old donor-recipient partnership could be transformed into a modern or even post-modern partnership. This new kind of partnership is designed to respond to common global challenges and is not only focused on a one-sided, often charity-based approach to development. To be sure, this re-orientation has not been prompted by China but by the demands of a new generation of African leaders flanked by outspoken African critics of aid dependency (Shikwati (2005); Iweala (2007)) and more importantly by the realisation that globalisation, the commodity boom and the tectonic shifts in global politics in the nearly two decades since the end of the Cold War have profoundly changed the way Africa, China and Europe look at each other. At the same time the strategic review of the EU's role in the world, the European Security Strategy of 2003 and the decisions on ESDP, led to the mutation of the old 'civilian power' into a globally active security actor

⁶ Ironically the first FOCAC in 2000 passed almost unnoticed – it was in the same year that the EU and ACP countries signed the Cotonou agreement and the AU was born.

willing and able to project security beyond its immediate neighbourhood and in places as far as Aceh and central Africa (Howorth 2007).

China's changing approach to Africa: strengths and weaknesses

Is China's approach to Africa based on strength or does it reveal China's weaknesses as a global player?

China pursues a limited national project (revival, recognition and re-unification) rather than a global vision and implements it with a high degree of pragmatism embellished by rhetoric which partly caters for domestic constituencies, but mainly aims at foreign opinion. China aims at a maximum of stability and predictability abroad which allows its leaders to concentrate on the domestic agenda. China can't avoid being drawn into local conflicts or reacting to pressure regarding global challenges, but it does so reluctantly as it is aware of associated risks and its limited capacity to deal with them. China, while often perceived as strong and strategic thus acts from a position of weakness rather than strength (low per capita GDP and social indicators, widening income gap, environmental and governance problems, lack of hard power to project abroad, limited soft power). China's fundamental problem is thus conceived of as a balancing act between pursuing national interest (based on interdependent key domestic and subordinate foreign policy goals) and integrating into the international society, or to use the term Zoellick used in 2005 to call on China to behave as a stakeholder of the international community⁷. Pang (2007:14) goes so far as to describe the role of the EU in China's international socialisation process as that of a teacher. At the other end of the spectrum China refers to different international norms than Zoellick when basing its policy in Africa on the principles of the non-aligned movement during the Cold War and stressing sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. In terms of values and norms Pang (2007:24/25) bemoans the EU's tendency to expect China to take on board its norms and policies instead of treating China as an equal. He points to the positive, rather than the negative, side of this clash of values arguing that it may lead to the evolution of globally owned norms rather than imposed Western ones. Other Chinese commentators are much harsher in their rejection of Western criticism (Li Ruogu, 2007; Wang, 2006).

Thus far China's engagement in Africa while strategically conceived in its broad thrust has been less effective in practice than one might assume (Berger/Wissenbach 2007).

China adapts its strategies to each local situation with a mix of instruments. A number of studies describe those in detail⁸. Generally speaking, China has been mobilising economic resources for both economic and non-economic purposes. China assumes that business combined with solidarity rhetoric, modest development assistance and putatively win-win based cooperation will be sufficient to gain access to the neglected continent. It therefore neglected to analyse local political considerations or long-term political implications for state-society relations and social conditions inside countries in its strategies. Instead, China contents itself with keeping good relations with whatever government is in place (provided

⁷ The term "international community" has not been defined and while intuitively it should comprise all countries, it seems to refer to the US and its allies only the way Zoellick (2005) uses it. Cf the similar use in the Princeton Project (2006).

⁸ Alden (2006), Le Pere (2007) and others. Fandrych (2007) describes how cooperation with Angola is based on a package of preferential credits, investment, trade, technical support and development of infrastructure. Grión (2007) gives a detailed account of the China-Angola relationship including its risks, and also points out that political relations have been complex in the past, as China had initially backed the opposition to the current regime during the civil war. Ali (2007) gives a detailed overview of the political economy underpinning Sudan-China relations, which by many critics are reduced to the Darfur issue. For a detailed analysis of Chinese activity in the infra-structure sector see Centre for Chinese Studies (2006).

they keep faithful to the one-China policy), not realising that such a neutral position may draw criticism which can be damaging to China's long-term interests. This approach has been successful in the short-term, but there are signs that China has to prepare for more difficult times ahead. International and local criticism came unexpectedly and does not fit into China's preferred image as a soft power, nor into the approach to Africa based on equality, friendship and solidarity outlined in China's White Paper and in the FOCAC process, which still has to stand the test of results, the strengthening bargaining power of (some) African countries⁹ or reversals of fortune. Moreover, many government-backed deals may in fact present a moral hazard for the Chinese companies and banks involved.

China's external development policy is closely linked with its own development path. In view of international differences and mounting discontent in Africa itself on a relationship based on raw material exports with little added value in Africa, strained labour relations and frequent violations of environmental, labour or immigration laws by Chinese companies, China has started to quietly review its strategies. This points to a conflict of interest between the government's aim of projecting a responsible image internationally and an image of sincere friendship to Africans more particularly, and the aim of many Chinese companies of making a profit regardless of ethical or image considerations (a few big players with global ambitions are more conscious of branding, image and CSR). Competition takes place in a harsh environment and with companies from other emerging economies with similar focus.

To some extent, the non-interference doctrine may simply provide convenient cover for the lack of ability to influence other countries. Resource rich countries can take advantage of China's needs and lack of alternatives (the evolution in Angola and even China's difficulties in convincing Sudan's government to accept the UN/AU hybrid force point to this limited influence). China's only real trump card (notably compared with other emerging powers) is its seat in the UNSC, but given China's interest in not antagonising the other UNSC members, even that is of limited value.

The underlying weakness of China's generally successful approach to Africa has several reasons. China has not conceived a proper development policy. Rather it is first and foremost informed by a mechanical transposition of its own development approaches and dated Third World principles, which prioritise the needs and sovereignty of states and economic growth. Furthermore, Beijing has ignored the "collateral damage" of unintended interference in social affairs through commercial interaction and lacked contemporary concepts about aid-coordination, ownership-support and concepts of political development including practical concepts of supporting good governance. It also seems that Beijing has not sufficiently understood the contemporary African agenda and the domestic policies of many countries – not to mention that it lacks well trained staff. Instead –and quite ironically–a political neutral, capitalist 'one-size-fits-all economic model'¹⁰ dominates cooperation. In terms of poverty alleviation efforts China's aid is ad hoc, in kind and lacks project management and evaluation frameworks geared to comprehensive, participatory and sustainable development (not unlike its own domestic Western Development Strategy). Sometimes, projects can easily be

⁹ The case of Angola is telling in this regard, disproving by the way earlier Western speculation of a take-over by the Chinese: Angola used oil diplomacy to extract concessions from China while rejecting an IMF loan, then it dealt China's efforts a blow by cancelling the contract for the building of the Lobito refinery and joining OPEC, while not cutting its ties with the US, IMF, World Bank despite their outrage over the earlier failure of the structural adjustment programme negotiations. Another failure of Sinopec in Angola is described in: "La Chine a manqué de stratégie pour s'implanter dans le secteur pétrolier angolais" *Afrique-Asie* Janvier 2008 p 20-21.

¹⁰ For a summary of the conceptual development see: Leftwich (2005), critically including on China's development model Kiely 2007.

perceived as sweeteners for commercial contracts or as serving elite interests only with implications of corruption, alienating important segments of African society, thus de-facto belying the non-interference mantra. This may overshadow the fact that many Chinese projects in health or rural development for instance have been relevant for recipient populations. Besides, not many Africans trust China and few find its political system attractive.

Finally, as in many Chinese domestic policies, the ineffectiveness of a top down political structure based on vertical reporting lines in tackling complex situations which require horizontal coordination and bottom-up participation have become apparent. The multitude of agencies and actors involved with different objectives has created a messy principal-agent challenge for China's leaders¹¹.

Sovereignty and non-interference will be China's big dilemma

The question of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference will therefore become a dilemma for China as it is engaging more and more in the international field and investing abroad including in countries which are fragile or quasi-states where the concept of sovereignty has only a very limited meaning and may be at the mercy of a coup d'Etat or a heart attack. The sovereignty of governments in producer countries where it exists can be a big obstacle to sustainable exploitation of resources and increase business and political costs to investors. Hence, China's insistence in principle not to interfere in other countries' domestic affairs works only so far in its interest as these countries do not take decisions which affect vital Chinese interests, such as the security of Chinese nationals (Ethiopia killings, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Zambia, Nigeria...) or investments as well as the Taiwan issue. Beyond that point it gets counterproductive, as it creates a credibility trap if China *does* interfere to protect its interests. South Africa already faces a similar credibility gap in Africa ("subimperial agent") between its espoused foreign policy principles and the aggressive pursuit of largely economic national interests¹². Tension between mediation and peacekeeping efforts and South Africa's arms exports further erode its credibility, again mirroring the Chinese efforts to support UN and AU peacekeeping, but at the same time supplying arms to conflict zones or unstable countries¹³.

Taylor (2007 p. 22/3) argues that the notional sovereignty of quasi-states may be an appropriate terrain for China's access to resources, but in the long-run the absence of state rules and power create a dangerous vacuum for all actors in Africa, including China. In the case of the kidnappings of Chinese nationals in Nigeria, the analysis in the Chinese media was very much in line with what Western analysts are saying about corruption, rent seeking, pollution, disappointment by local groups regarding the distribution of oil revenues being key reasons for kidnappings and attacks.

The need for a cooperative agenda

The dilemmas described briefly above show that there is a pressing need to reform the multilateral governance based on functional multilateralism (Wissenbach 2007, 2007c). For

¹¹ Bates and Reilly (2007); Altenburg and Weikert (2006) pp 27-30, and the author's own findings. The structure of the Africa Fund of the CDB seems tailored to remedy such problems at least partly as it has been given a political steering committee composed of MOFCOM, MFA and NDRC officials alongside the Supervisory and Executive Boards Zhang (2007).

¹²Landsberg and Monyae (2006) p 143

¹³ Control Arms Campaign (2006)

example: The governance of energy markets which play a crucial role in the renewed interest for Africa (Fryngas 2007) has proven inadequate and reform should focus less on trying to influence the supply, but rather the factors which influence the market such as crisis situations (reserves, shipping lanes), rules for investment and their protection, reducing negative impacts on development (EITI).

To address the resource curse question at the heart of the resources, environment and development nexus in Africa, a division of labour is necessary between the UN Security Council and regional organisations (such as the AU), but the US, the EU and China need to improve cooperation on approaches and tools to use in order to address the situations in various countries effectively. Initiatives such as the EITI, FLEGT (forestry), the Kimberley process and similar tools are useful complements to government-led processes which could be enhanced and expanded. These initiatives also started with core groups and actors willing to move forward and are good examples of functional multilateralism. This issue is perhaps politically the most sensitive one, as sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs and national interests stand in the way of increased cooperation. So far, both the US and the EU have contented themselves in a piecemeal fashion (to some extent reflecting the divisions between the US and the EU on the general line on China) with inviting China to join existing initiatives or to subscribe to rules which have not been co-authored by China. It is not surprising that such moves have largely fallen on deaf ears as they are perceived as attempts to undermine China's economic cooperation with third countries or to deny China access to energy and other resources. Instead when developing rules (regulations or voluntary standards) China should be associated. This increases cooperation to minimise negative developments in source countries, for the local and global environment, joint crisis management in fragile states and, through a functional approach to multilateralism, also strengthen the UN framework (Wissenbach 2007c).

The EU's and China's dilemmas and Africa's choices

The complex picture of the EU's and China's relations with Africa reveals dilemmas on both sides, linked to non-avowed failures in their respective Africa policies. They carry substantial baggage from colonial and Cold War history and still need adjustments to the realities of globalisation and in Africa itself. To some extent Chinese Africa policy has taken an almost exclusively economic twist, despite its political rhetoric and with unexpected negative impacts on some social groups in Africa. This raises questions about the durability of China's engagement beyond the current economic opportunities. The EU has struggled more to adapt its policy. It has found it difficult to re-define its interests in a credible way and to move away from a charity approach to Africa, long a key feature of public pressure¹⁴. This is also because its economic interest in Africa is quite limited. Chinese "competition" provides Europe's policy makers with an opportunity also to address interests which were more difficult to articulate as long as poverty was the sole reference in the discourse about Africa.

In order to overcome these dilemmas it is important to pursue EU-China cooperation on the basis of an African agenda. In a sense this should be facilitated by the ongoing process of putting responsibility for Africa's development where it belongs: into African hands. This is what Africans have long claimed, but such an approach is also associated with risk for Africa's leaders: they have to be able to exercise these responsibilities and obtain the outcomes, in terms of development, which the people of Africa and the international community expect. Otherwise African responsibility may just become a convenient excuse for disengagement and further marginalisation of Africa (Wissenbach 2007b). Africa needs to

¹⁴ such as the Make Poverty History campaign and the moralistic overtones of the British G8 Presidency, when it termed Africa a scar on the world's conscience.

decide whether it wants its partners to cooperate on this agenda or to compete for influence, thus continuing the post-colonial pattern of African policy-making being driven by outside actors and consequent divisions among and within African countries.¹⁵ Africa may enhance its global role by actively making South-South partnerships compatible with North-South relations. This would, however, require choices between the values of the Western donors and the Asian partners or a real convergence of values around those of the AU Constitutional Act.

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