

The EU and China's engagement in Africa: the dilemma of socialisation

Liu Lirong

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Summary

China's engagement in Africa has obliged the EU to re-evaluate its own relationship with that continent. Since 2008, in an attempt to resolve the conflicts of norms and interests, the EU has proposed establishing a tri-lateral dialogue and cooperation mechanism between the EU, China and Africa, which so far has not yielded any substantial results. The differences between China's and the EU's Africa policies are mainly visible in two areas: aid and security. The contradiction between their respective aid policies lies in China's 'no-strings-attached aid' versus European 'conditionality' or emphasis on 'fundamental principles'. With regard to their security approaches in Africa, China's non-interference policy and the European concept of human security are clearly not on the same wavelength. Promoting common normative values and principles is at the core of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which is important for the EU's self-construction at present. China's non-interference policy is related to its domestic security and stability and in this context it engages in its own rhetoric. In matters of principle it is difficult for both sides to make compromises or accept limitations imposed by the other.

China's attitude towards the EU initiative has been very cautious. As a rapidly growing global actor, China hopes to be more active in the formulation of multilateral international mechanisms. However, China is also concerned that its African policy and decision-making may be adversely affected and restricted by the 'common principles' advocated by the EU and the 'leading role' traditionally played by Western powers in international cooperation frameworks involving Africa. Regarding the objective of the trilateral dialogue mechanism, there is a tendency in Europe to understand the dialogue as a one-way process that will ultimately lead to the unilateral 'socialisation' of China – to recapitulate a term previously used in the context of the EU's enlargement towards Central and Eastern European countries, and referring to the process whereby candidate countries would adopt EU norms and values. But this confronts the EU with a dilemma. On the one hand, the EU tries to spread its norms and values in Africa in order to extend its real power in the world, but its efforts in this regard have been limited by the emergence of other big powers like China. On the other hand, the EU lacks sufficient leverage, i.e. hard power or real power, to persuade China to embrace European norms and values. Where Africa is concerned, China has little interest in internalising European values and norms and even less incentive to do so.

This paper seeks to analyse the evolution of the conflict of norms and the conflict of interests between the EU and China in Africa as well as the

interaction of norms and interests. In the quest for cooperation and dialogue between the EU and China in Africa, the focus should be on seeking common ground and developing a pragmatic approach. Overemphasising the norms debate at the beginning of this process can only lead to misunderstanding and mistrust, rather than enhancing mutual comprehension and trust. Socialisation is not a process that can be imposed from without. If the objective of the trilateral dialogue is expectation of the unilateral socialisation of one party, the results will inevitably be limited. In competition with other great powers – and sometimes giving rise to dissensions among the EU Member States themselves – the EU's attempt to spread European norms and values through the concept of unilateral socialisation will, from the Chinese government's point of view, only undermine China's willingness to cooperate with the EU.

Introduction

In the last decade or so China has come to play an increasingly important role in Africa's economic life. Although China is not yet ready to develop a clearly systematic strategy for global diplomacy, its engagement in Africa presents a potential alternative to the existing Western developmental model in Africa.

Since 2007 the EU has sought to build a partnership between the EU and China on African issues. The EU has gradually become aware that China's engagement in Africa has become a problem for Europe, and that China's policy choices affect the interests of the EU with regard to energy and natural resources, external trade, as well as the dissemination of its norms and values. China's attitude towards the EU initiative has been very cautious. On the one hand, as a rapidly growing global actor, China hopes to be more active in the formulation of multilateral international mechanisms. On the other hand, China is concerned that its African policy and decision-making may be adversely affected and restricted by the 'common principles' advocated by the EU and the 'leading role' traditionally played by Western powers in international cooperation frameworks involving Africa.

Regarding the aim of the trilateral dialogue and cooperation mechanism between the EU, Africa and China, as proposed by the European Commission in 2008,¹ there are different approaches within Europe. One approach is that the dialogue should be understood as a mutual learning and adjustment process both for the EU and China which does not take place only in one direction.² According to another view, the trilateral dialogue mechanism should be understood as a one-way process leading to the unilateral socialisation of China. The expectation underpinning this is that China will adapt its behaviour and embrace European norms in Africa.³ It is precisely this expectation that is a source of concern to China.

1. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', COM(2008)654 final, Brussels, 17 October 2008. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM_PDF_COM_2008_0654_F_COMMUNICATION_en.pdf.

2. Uwe Wissenbach, 'Much ado about nothing? China's quest for a place under the African sun', paper presented at the international conference on 'The EU and China: Partners or Competitors in Africa?', College of Europe, Bruges, February 2010.

3. Jonathan Hoslag and Sara van Hoeymissen (eds.), *The Limits of Socialization – The Search for EU-China Cooperation towards Security Challenges in Africa*, Policy Report, Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies, May 2010, p.10. Available online at: [http://www.vub.ac.be/biccs/site/assets/files/apapers/Policy%20papers/EU-China-Africa%20\(fin\).pdf](http://www.vub.ac.be/biccs/site/assets/files/apapers/Policy%20papers/EU-China-Africa%20(fin).pdf).

This paper seeks to analyse the evolution of the conflict of norms and the conflict of interests between the EU and China in Africa as well as the interaction of norms and interests. The main argument is that the expectation of unilateral socialisation is an important factor which adversely affects EU-China cooperation in Africa.

1. Clashing norms between the EU and China in Africa

Aid

Aid is motivated by ethical ideas and principles, but in practice, it is difficult to avoid the impact of political or strategic interests.⁴ During the Cold War era the East-West blocs used development aid as a means to purchase the loyalty of African countries.⁵ As the African countries lost their geopolitical significance after the Cold War, foreign aid to Africa declined dramatically between 1990 and 1995.⁶

Since the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 the EU has readjusted its development aid policy in Africa; during the same period, China's development assistance to Africa has increased rapidly. Nearly half of China's foreign aid in 2009 flowed to Africa (45.7 percent) rather than Asia (32.8 percent) which is closer to China from a geopolitical perspective.⁷ This section will discuss the conflict of norms between the EU and China in the field of aid and how this affects their interaction, as well as the conflict of interests that lies beneath the norm conflict.

Positive conditionality and 'no-strings-attached aid'

An important change in the Cotonou Agreement is the introduction of good governance as a fundamental element.⁸ The Cotonou Agreement can be understood as a 20-year socialisation programme for the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). In exchange for aid the ACP countries are asked to promote human rights, processes of democratisation, consolidation of the rule of law, and good governance. The so-called 'positive conditionality' is not just for the improvement of aid effectiveness, but rather uses aid as an economic incentive to uphold common

4. The findings of an empirical study showed that donor interests outweigh recipient need in the distribution of environmental aid from the United States. See Tammy L. Lewis, 'Environmental Aid: Driven by Recipient Need or Donor Interests?', *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 84, no. 1, March 2003, pp.144-61.

5. Stefan Mair, 'Schwarzafrika während des Ost-West-Konflikts', *Informationen zur Politischen Bildung* no. 264, August 1999. Available online at: http://www.bpb.de/die_bpb/09161740759183550272451597832790,2,0,Schwarzafrika_w%E4hrend_des_OstWestKonflikts.html#art2.

6. Edward Miguel, *Africa's Turn* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), p. 30.

7. Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, *White Paper on China's Foreign Aid*, Beijing, 21 April 2011. Available online at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-04/21/c_13839683.htm.

8. ACP and the EU, *The Cotonou Agreement*, Article 9: 'Essential Elements and Fundamental Element', Cotonou, 2000. Available online at: <http://www.acpsec.org/en/conventions/cotonou/accord1.htm>.

norms and values. However, the effect of positive conditionality has been weakened by the fact that China now provides an alternative source of economic and political support to Africa. In January 2006 China published its *African Policy* which proposed to provide and increase aid and loans on a 'no strings attached' basis.⁹ In terms of setting norms for global governance, the emergence of China has a constraining effect on Europe's role.

On the issue of aid, the difference between the EU and China lies mainly in how to define good governance. According to the European understanding, good governance is related to a democratic, transparent and efficient system of government.¹⁰ In the 2008 EU Commission Communication on 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', the term 'democratic governance'¹¹ was used instead of 'good governance', which is much more precise and clear. In contrast, the Chinese understanding of good governance is associated with domestic stability and maintaining sovereignty. In fact China's respect-for-sovereignty rhetoric applies rather to itself than to others.

The EU Commission Document of 2008 also contained a neutral formulation about aid which is acceptable for all parties, i.e. introducing the term 'effective aid'. The aim of proposed trilateral cooperation should be avoiding duplication of efforts, ensuring closer coordination of the EU's and China's activities at country level around African countries' development strategies, and contributing to improved aid effectiveness.¹²

A conflict of interests behind aid

Underlying the dispute on aid between the EU and China is the fact that China's engagement in Africa affects European trade interests. Another important change in the Cotonou Agreement is that the EU readjusts its unilateral trade preferences to the ACP countries to bilateral reciprocity. Since the Lomé Convention in 1975, the EU had granted non-reciprocal trade preferences to the ACP countries. Under the Cotonou Agreement, this system should be replaced by the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). According to the EPAs, not only does the EU provide duty-free access to its markets for ACP exports, but ACP countries also provide duty-free access to their own markets for EU exports. The EU hopes through the EPAs to create a free trade area (FTA) between the EU and African countries. Negotiations on the EPAs started in September 2002. According to the schedule, the new reciprocal trade agreement was de-

9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, *China's African Policy*, 12 January 2006. Available online at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm>.

10. See Hoslag and van Hoeymissen, op. cit. in note 3.

11. 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', op. cit. in note 1, p. 3.

12. Ibid, p.5.

signed to come into effect in 2008. At the EU-Africa summit held in December 2007, African countries refused to sign up to the EPAs.¹³ Instead, until July 2010, the EU signed only ‘interim agreements’ with a number of African countries. The EU’s expectation that the African countries might open their own services and investment markets to the EU countries was not included in interim agreements.¹⁴ There are many reasons why African countries reject the EPAs. The general view in Europe has been that China’s economic engagement (e.g. resource-backed infrastructure loans) in Africa has a negative effect on the EPAs negotiations, as ‘Africa’s negotiating position has been strengthened by its increasingly tight relations with China’.¹⁵ China’s ‘no-strings-attached aid’ was raised as a central question.

Less conditionality and ‘business instead of aid’

The emergence of China as a ‘non-traditional’ donor in Africa has led to rapid changes within the international aid structure. Since 2007 the EU has made a set of readjustments in its development aid policy to promote the effectiveness of aid: (i) adopting the *EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour* in order to reduce fragmentation of aid among the EU donors; (ii) transforming the *donor-recipient relationship* to the *donor-partner countries relationship*; (iii) changing the nature of conditionality. Especially noticeable is the fact that the EU introduced ‘less conditionality’ instead of ‘positive conditionality’ as a reaction against China’s respect-for-sovereignty rhetoric and ‘no-strings-attached aid’.¹⁶

It has to be pointed out that the nature of ‘positive conditionality’ has not changed substantially through the introduction of ‘less conditionality’. According to the EU Guidelines for Accra in 2008, norms and values such as human rights, democracy and rule of law were redefined as ‘funda-

13. Up until December 2009 only 14 members of the Caribbean Community had signed an EPA with the EU. Among 14 Pacific countries only Fiji and Papua New Guinea signed an interim EPA with the EU (covering trade in food only). See: European Commission, Trade, ‘Economic partnerships: Negotiations and agreements, The ACP regions’. Available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/wider-agenda/development/economic-partnerships/negotiations-and-agreements/#esa>.

14. Ibid.

15. EurActiv, *EU-Africa summit fails on trade*, 10 December 2007. Available online at: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/trade/eu-africa-summit-fails-trade/article-168988>. As recognised in the European Parliament report on China’s policy and its effects on Africa, ‘China’s aggressive trading policy is having a considerable impact on European interests on the African continent, ... and [that] the EU, while remaining Africa’s biggest donor, has not managed in the past decade to combine the aid granted with a substantial expansion in its trading relations with African countries.’ See European Parliament, *Report on China’s Policy and Its Effects on Africa (2007/2255(INI))*, Opinion of the Committee on International Trade, 28 March 2008, p. 29. Available online at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONGSML+REPORT+A6-2008-0080+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>.

16. As pointed out in the EU Guidelines for Accra in 2008, ‘The EU is convinced that conditionality must be reformed in order to give partner countries the necessary sovereignty on their development strategies ... Imposed conditions should be avoided.’ Council of the European Union, ‘EU Guidelines for Accra’, 2-4 September 2008. Available at: http://old.actionforglobalhealth.eu/media/files/eu_accra_guidelines, p. 11.

mental underlying principles'¹⁷ for each development agreement 'which should not be interpreted as conditions'.¹⁸ Political considerations such as the 'potential for promoting democracy and good governance' should constitute a criterion for the selection of priority partner countries from the EU donors. The expectation of socialisation – through aid to promote common values and norms in Africa – remains unchanged.

China has also readjusted its African policy because of the criticism from traditional donors that its African policy undermines the OECD aid consensus. In the partnership between China and Africa, China is willing to play the role of development partner or investor rather than of a donor. As Lin Songtian, the Chinese ambassador to Malawi, pointed out in an interview in February 2010, China does not regard itself as a donor, but rather a development partner of African countries.¹⁹ China's alternative development model in Africa is nothing but 'business instead of aid'. At the 4th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in November 2009, the Chinese government announced that China will implement eight new measures in the economic and trade cooperation areas between China and Africa from 2010 to 2012. One of the most important measures is to expand China's Foreign Direct Investments to Africa. Beijing decided to increase the size of the China-Africa Development Fund from USD 1 billion to USD 3 billion and encouraged more Chinese companies to invest in Chinese overseas business cooperation zones in Africa.²⁰

The emergence of China as an alternative development partner in Africa required a re-think not only within but also beyond the international aid structure. Since 2006 the issue of African development has featured in the Joint Statement of the 9th EU-China Summit, but so far, it is still difficult for both sides to surmount their conceptual differences in aid policy and work efficiently together.

Security

In the EU Commission's Document of 2008, peace and security in Africa was suggested as the first concrete objective of trilateral cooperation.²¹ Al-

17. Ibid, p. 11.

18. Commission of the European Communities, 'Aid Effectiveness after Accra', Commission Staff Working Paper SEC (2009) 443, Brussels, 8 April 2009. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COMM_NATIVE_SEC_2009_0443_4_Aid-Effectiveness-after-Accra.pdf, p. 14.

19. Interview with the Chinese ambassador to Malawi, *China.com.cn*, 12 February 2010. Available online at: http://www.china.com.cn/international/txt/2010-02/12/content_19417858.htm.

20. Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm El Sheikh Action Plan (2010-2010), 12 November 2009. Available online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/dsjbjhy/hywj/t626387.htm>.

21. 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', op. cit. in note 1, p. 5.

though both China and the EU have a consensus that peace and security are preconditions for Africa's development, the differences between the EU and China in terms of definition of security issues, the specific means of intervention and cooperation framework still remain.²²

Public good at global level or national level?

On African security issues, the EU and China each have different positions. Africa is the focus of the EU's crisis intervention management. From 2003 to July 2010 the EU carried out ten CSDP military operations, among them eight in Africa,²³ whereas China tends not to become involved in such crisis interventions. Some European commentators have voiced the criticism that China has a 'penchant for security free riding' in the field of African peace and security.²⁴ Regarding 'security free riding', the question is whether security in African countries is a public good at a global level or national level? Only if security in African countries is defined as a public good at global level, can we talk about 'security free riding'. China and the EU disagree on this point.

Based on the concept of human security, European experts and scholars tend to define the security and stability of African countries as a public good at global level.²⁵ As a neighbouring continent to Europe, Africa's security issues are also related to displaced persons and refugees, anti-terrorism and the energy security of the EU. The EU tries to promote *holistic approaches to security* in Africa including conflict prevention, long-term peace-building, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The aim is to address the deep roots of conflicts coupled with governance and sustainable development.²⁶

From China's perspective, the internal security and stability in African countries should be defined as a public good at national or regional level rather than at global level. According to China's multilateral policy in conflict resolution, any arbitrary intervention in internal affairs should be rejected.²⁷ Although China's non-interference policy has lately become

22. Africa's role in the trilateral dialogue will not be discussed in this paper.

23. Council of the European Union, 'Overview of the missions and operations of the European Union'. Available online at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=268&lang=DE>.

24. Hoslag and van Hoeymissen (eds.), op. cit. in note 3, p.1.

25. As indicated in a report published by the EUISS in 2010, 'A comprehensive and realistic concept of international peace thus extends to deterring, reducing and preventing intra-state conflict in a broad sense, whether it be a result of public disorder or of mass persecution'. See Álvaro de Vasconcelos (ed.), *A strategy for EU foreign policy*, Report no. 7, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, June 2010, p. 34.

26. Council of the European Union, 'The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership – A Joint Africa-EU Strategy', 16344/07 (Presse 291), Lisbon, December 2007. Available online at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/97496.pdf.

27. Feng Zhongping, 'China's new security perceptions and practice', in Luis Peral (ed.), 'Global Security in a multipolar world', *Chaillot Paper* no.118, EUISS, Paris, p. 34.

more moderate, it is limited to non-traditional security²⁸ challenges and humanitarian crises. So far China participates mainly in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. China stresses the importance of protection of civilians in armed conflicts as well the role of local government:²⁹ in other words, China opposes regime change imposed by external force. In terms of traditional security and state sovereignty, the Chinese government has its own specific reasons for advocating non-interference. Taking into account the existence of domestic separatism and other unstable factors (e.g. Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang etc.), China is reluctant to allow international organisations to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries.

Framework for cooperation

Considering peace and security issues in Africa, the next problem to deal with is the cooperation framework.

As a permanent member state of the UN Security Council, China is more likely to act within the UN framework. On the one hand, the UN system as it currently functions poses no particular problem for China. On the other hand, an alternative effective international forum has not been established. In terms of conflict resolution and peacekeeping operations in Africa, Beijing prefers to play an auxiliary role, i.e. (i) support the African Union and other regional organisations and relevant countries in their efforts to resolve regional conflicts and to provide assistance according to its capacity; (ii) promote attention from the UN Security Council and help resolve regional conflicts in Africa; (iii) continue to support and participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO) in Africa.³⁰ China is an important contributor to many UN PKOs. Until the end of February 2010, 2137 Chinese blue helmets served in PKOs – most of them in Africa: in Liberia (UNMIL), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Sudan (UNMIS), Darfur (UNAMID), Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the Ivory Coast (UNOCI).³¹ It is worth emphasising that up to now China's peacekeeping troops are non-combat troops but mainly engaged in engineering, medical, transportation and logistics work.³²

28. As was pointed out in *China's African Policy* in 2006, China proposes to explore effective ways and means of deepening cooperation in the area of 'non-traditional security'. The so-called 'non-traditional security' was defined as 'terrorism, small arms smuggling, drug trafficking, trans-national economic crimes'. See *China's African Policy*, op. cit. in note 9.

29. Feng Zhongping, op. cit. in note 27, p.35.

30. *China's African Policy*, op. cit. in note 9.

31. United Nations, *Background Note – United Nations Peacekeeping*, March 2010. Available online at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/factsheet.pdf>.

32. Regarding the issue of whether to send combat troops overseas at the request of the UN, recently there has been a notable change in China: according to Senior Colonel Tao Xiangyang, deputy director of the ministry's peacekeeping affairs office, if the UN needs China's combat troops to join UN peacekeeping, China will consider such a request. See: Cheng Guangjin, 'Chinese combat troops can join UN peacekeeping', *China Daily*, 7 July 2010. Available online at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-07/07/content_10073171.htm.

The EU does not have its own seat within the existing framework of the UN Security Council. In order to become ‘a strong political actor’ on the international stage, the EU proposes to establish a more effective framework alongside the UN framework with other global actors,³³ i.e., in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter,³⁴ but not necessarily within the UN framework. Seeking to establish a new multilateral international system, the EU and China need to support each other, and compromise as well. The EU needs the support of global players like China to legitimise the new framework such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), although the formation and establishment of a new international order will not happen overnight.

Willingness for cooperation

Regarding the concept of human security, the next problem to consider is capability and capacity. On the issue of international peacekeeping and crisis management, neither the EU nor China have the capability to handle everything, or be everywhere in the world.

The EU seeks to share leadership with the US in relation to the preservation of peace and security in Africa. In order to be a normative power and a strong political actor, the EU tries to play its full role on the international stage through ‘effective EU-led crisis management’.³⁵ In terms of capacity and resources, however, the EU is not well-equipped to protect human security.³⁶ The EU’s crisis management ambitions in Africa are not backed up by political will and public support in Europe.³⁷ Among the EU Member States there is also a tendency towards ‘security free riding’. Most of the EU Member States do not have any significant geostrategic, energy or political interests in Sub-Saharan Africa. The engagement of the most neutral member states in CSDP serves to maintain the coherence of normative preferences.³⁸

China is reluctant to get drawn into the field of African peace and security. The Chinese understanding of being a ‘responsible power’ is to be a global development actor rather than a security actor. From a geopolitical and security perspective, Africa is not a priority for China at present.

33. ‘...the predominant US unilateralism has undermined the capacity of the UN system to effectively implement the principle of human security. The EU, together with existing and emerging global actors, should reverse this trend both within and alongside the UN’. See *A strategy for EU foreign policy*, op. cit. in note 25, p. 34.

34. Council of the European Union, *Presidency Conclusions – Cologne European Council*, 3 and 4 June 1999, p. 33. Available online at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/kolnen.htm.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

36. Damien Helly, ‘R2P, Africa and the EU: Towards pragmatic international subsidiarity’, *ISS Analysis*, November 2008, p. 2. See: <http://www.iss.europa.eu>.

37. Hans-Georg Ehrhart, ‘EU-Krisenmanagement in Afrika: die Operation EUFOR Tschad/RCA’, *Integration*, 2/2008, p. 157.

38. *Ibid.*

The EU pursues a value-based foreign and security policy. However, in practice, the EU cannot avoid rational calculations and acting according to its own interests.³⁹ The military operation EU NAVFOR Somalia in 2008 was regarded as 'one of the few CSDP missions born of a true political strategy'.⁴⁰ The anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden should be understood as an operation to protect the economic interests of the EU Member States, rather than promote human security in Africa. This highlights the fact that the primary reason for Chinese or EU involvement in African security matters may well be to protect the interests of Chinese or European businesses, in which case they have deviated from the concept of human security from the outset.

39. Ibid, pp. 156-7.

40. Francisco Penalva, 'Spanish Presidency of the EU, Mid-Term Review: Game Over for Rotating EU Presidencies on CSDP', *European Security Review* no. 49, ISIS Europe, April 2010.

2. The conflict of interests between the EU and China in Africa

Regarding China's engagement in Africa, EU-China-Africa trade relations have been described and discussed in many policy and research papers. Some of these papers however reflect only a partial reality. They omit to take into account the whole situation, and the ambiguity resulting from such partial analysis can lead to misunderstanding which could affect policy decisions. This section focuses on some ambiguous perceptions concerning EU-China-Africa trade relations and tries to examine the conflict of interests between the EU and China in Africa in a panoramic context rather than from such a partial or limited perspective.

Africa the focus of growing attention from China

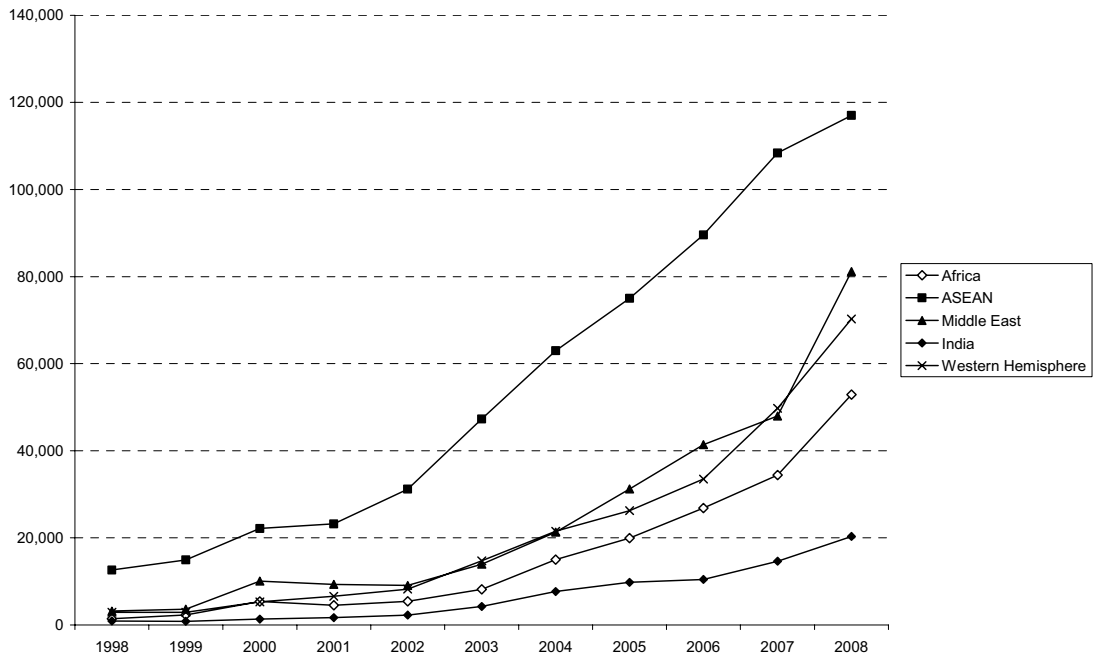
'Over the last 15 years, *Africa has been the focus of growing attention from China*, which has firmly established itself as the continent's third trading and economic partner ...'⁴¹

Although this general impression is based on fact, when the whole context of China's foreign trade is examined, it emerges that there is some discrepancy between this interpretation and the actual reality. The amount of two-way trade between China and Africa has increased dramatically in the last few years, but it should be pointed out that over the same period trade between China and other regions in the world has also increased dramatically, especially ASEAN, India, Latin America and the Middle East. From the perspective of China, China-Africa trade is not very compelling, neither in total amount, nor in terms of growth. Being the fastest growing economy in the world in the last three decades, the rapid increase of total trade between China and other regions is inevitable. So far, the share of China-Africa trade in China's foreign trade is still very low. In 2008 only 4.67 percent of Chinese imports came from Africa and Africa absorbed 3.03 percent of Chinese exports.⁴²

41. 'Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "The EU, Africa and China – Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation"', *Official Journal of the European Union*, COM(2008) 654 final, (2009/C 318/21), 23 December 2009. Available online at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:318:0106:0112:EN:PDF>.

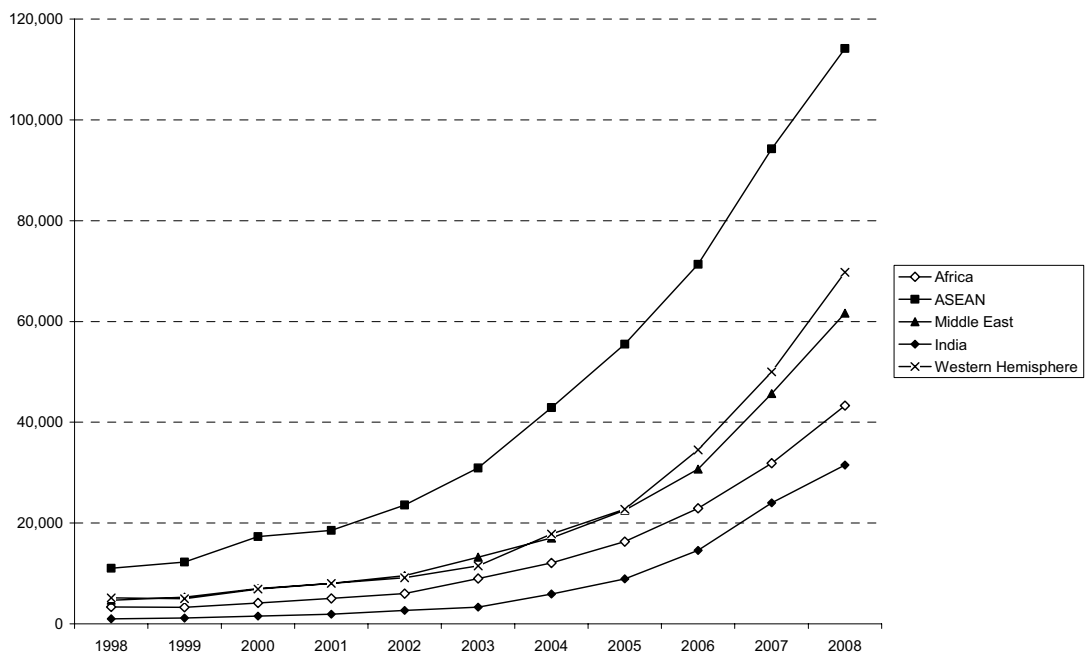
42. International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 2009* (Washington: IMF, 2009).

Figure 1: Trends of China (Mainland) imports from Africa and other trade partners (1998-2008) (Millions of US dollars)



Data sources: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 2005 and 2009.*

Figure 2: Trends of China (Mainland) exports to Africa and other trade partners (1998-2008) (Millions of US dollars)



Data sources: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 2005 and 2009.*

As can be seen in figures 1 and 2, from 1998 to 2008, the growth curve of China-Africa trade is similar to China-Middle East trade. According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China's exports to Africa⁴³ increased from 3.381 billion US dollars in 1998 to 43.293 billion US dollars in 2008, whereas China's imports from Africa increased from 1.425 billion US dollars to 52.884 billion US dollars. Over the same period, China's exports to the Middle East increased from 4.71 billion US dollars in 1998 to 61.628 billion US dollars in 2008, while China's imports from the Middle East increased from 3.199 billion US dollars to 81.167 billion US dollars.⁴⁴

The import and export structure of China-Middle East trade is also similar to China-Africa trade. According to data from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, in 2008 China's exports to Africa consisted mainly of mechanical and electrical products, textiles, high-tech goods, steel and iron products, clothing, shoes, aluminium products, air rubber tyres, furniture and luggage; China's imports from Africa were mainly mineral fuels, iron ore, manganese ore, chrome ore, wood, copper ore, copper products, steel and iron products and diamonds. China's major exports to the Middle East are steel, clothing, mechanical and electrical products, textiles, metal products, electronic products and transport equipment; China's major imports from the Middle East are mineral fuels, petrochemical products, chrome ore, boron and marble.⁴⁵ In summary, China-Africa trade patterns do not differ much from China-Middle East trade patterns. But in contrast, Chinese trade with Africa is more controversial and has sometimes been branded as a form of 'neo-colonialism'⁴⁶ or 'mercantilism'.⁴⁷

European trade with Africa continues to decline

'...whereas *European trade with Africa continues to decline* although the EU remains its most important trading partner ...'⁴⁸

Although the share of EU-Africa trade in Africa's total foreign trade volume in the last few years continues to decline, the total amount of EU-

43. Excluding Egypt.

44. IMF, op. cit. in note 42.

45. Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China, *China Commerce Yearbook 2009*, Beijing, 2009, pp.410-13.

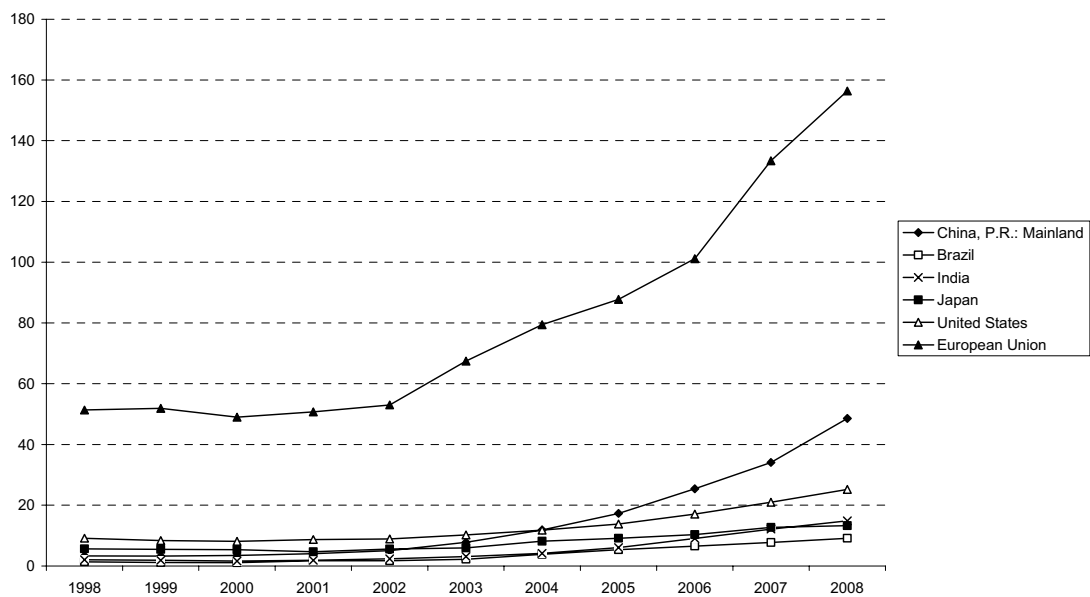
46. Margot Schüller and Helmut Asche, 'China als neue Kolonialmacht in Afrika? Umstrittene Strategien der Ressourcensicherung', *GIGA Focus* no. 1, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2007; *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p.21.

47. Jonathan Hoslag, 'China's New Mercantilism in Central Africa', *Journal of African and Asian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2006; Robert Kappel and Tina Schneidenbach, 'China in Afrika: Herausforderungen für den Westen', *GIGA Focus*, no. 12, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2006, p.1.

48. *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p.7.

Africa trade has increased in absolute terms at an unprecedented rate. According to IMF data, Africa's exports to the EU increased from 39.88 billion US dollars in 1998 to 149.96 billion US dollars in 2008 – a massive growth of 376 percent (figure 3); Africa's imports from the EU increased over the same period from 51.33 billion US dollars to 156.40 billion US dollars – a massive growth of 319 percent⁴⁹ (figure 4). In addition to rising prices, a major reason for the rapid growth of EU-Africa trade is oil. As can be seen from figure 5, the main factor spurring the growth of the EU's imports from Africa is the increased exploitation and import of oil products; while more machinery and transport equipment exportation related to this exploitation contributes to the growth of exports from the EU to the African countries.⁵⁰

Figure 3: Trends of Africa imports from major trade partners (1998-2008) (Billions of US dollars)

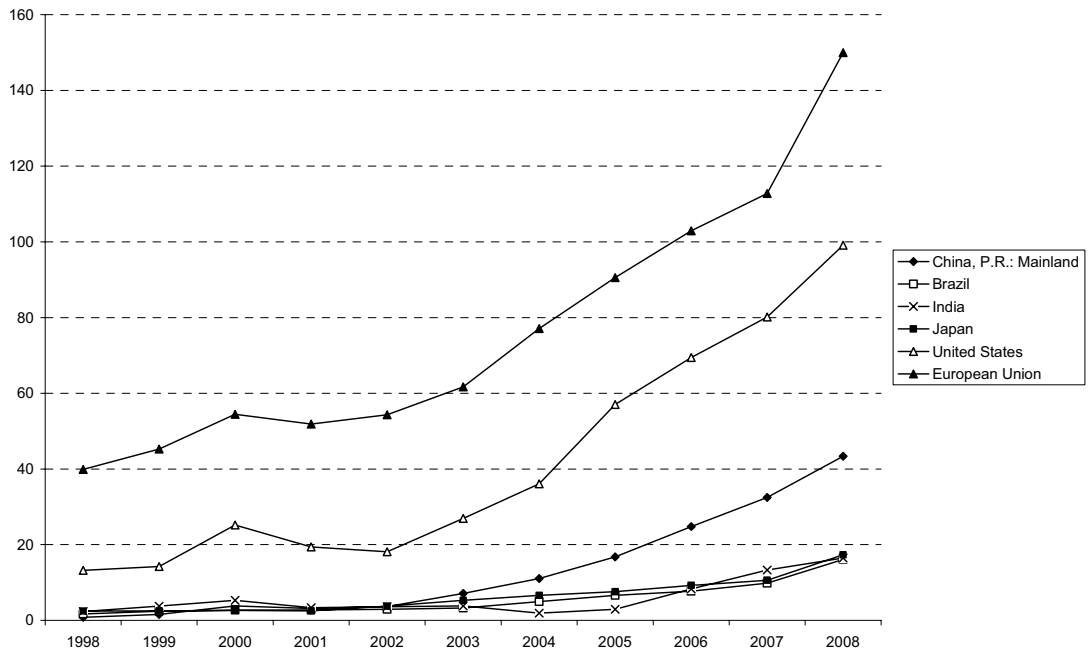


Data sources: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 2005 and 2009*.

49. IMF, op. cit. in note 42.

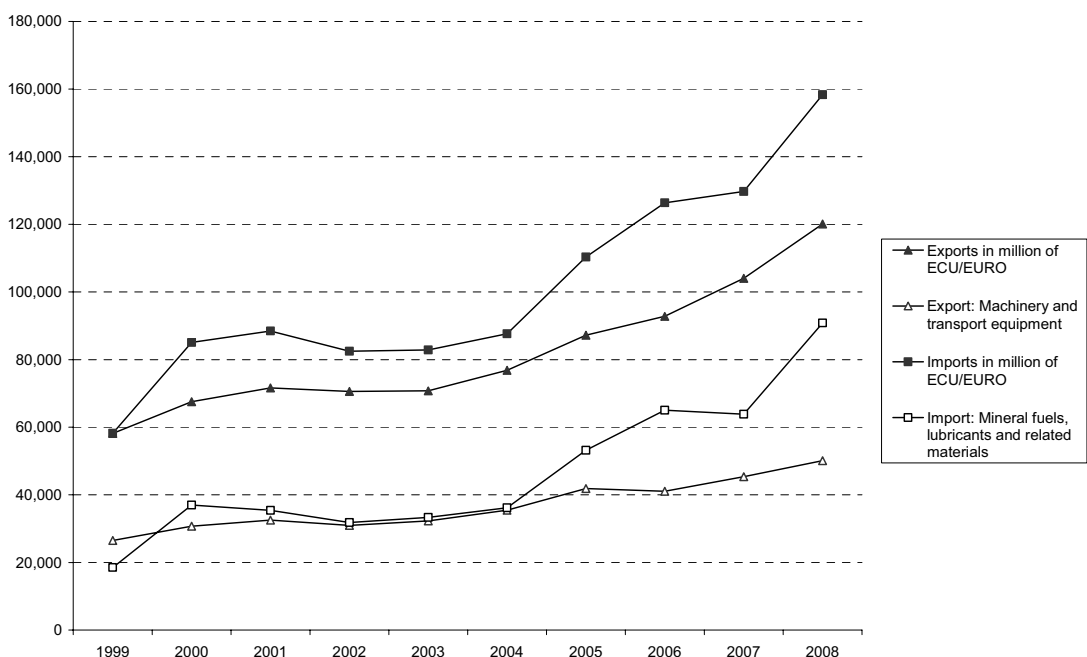
50. In this context the author acknowledges the helpful comments by Marc Maes.

Figure 4: Trends of Africa exports to major trade partners (1998-2008) (Billions of US dollars)



Data sources: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 2005 and 2009*.

Figure 5: Trends of EU imports from and exports to Africa (1999-2008)



Data sources: EUROSTAT, *External trade long-term indicators* (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>)

Oil and conflict of interests

China's energy demand has grown rapidly in recent years together with its GDP. Regarding energy security and its high dependence on imported oil, China urgently needs to increase its energy import channels worldwide. China's energy diplomacy focuses on the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. From 2004 to 2008, China's oil imports from the Middle East increased by 29.2 million tonnes – a growth of 50 percent; in the same period China's oil imports from Africa increased by 18.5 million tonnes – also a growth of 50 percent. In addition to the Middle East, Africa has become China's second-largest oil supplier in the world. Over the same period, China's oil imports from Latin America increased from 4.1 million tonnes to 16.5 million tonnes – a massive growth of 302 percent.⁵¹

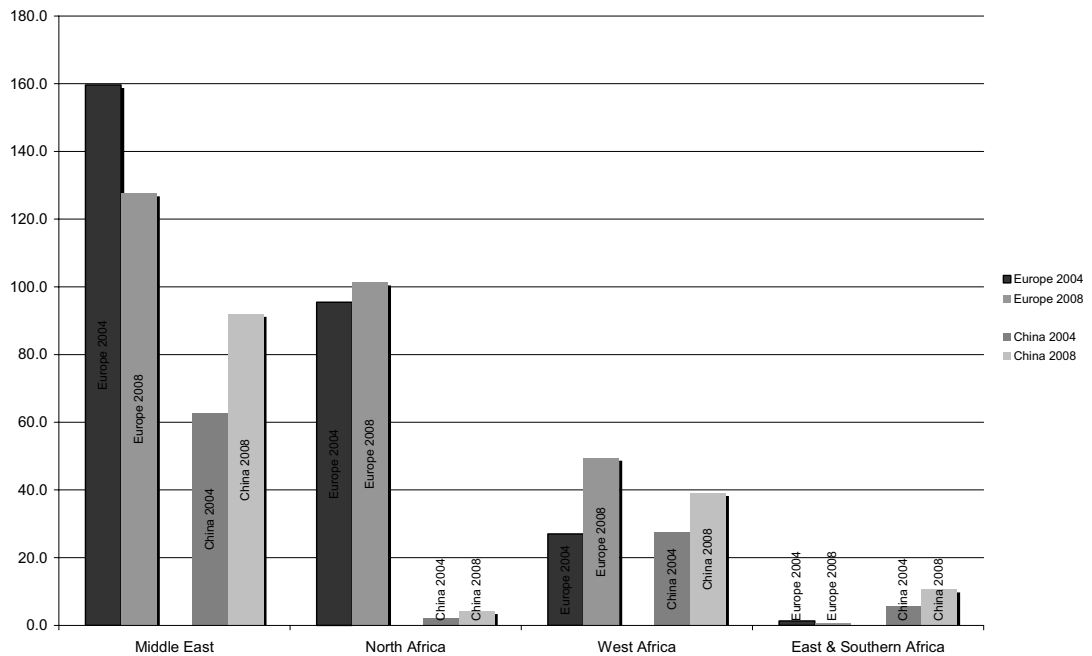
One reason why the EU's and China's conflicting oil interest plays out in Africa instead of the Middle East or other regions, is the fact that China's growing demand for energy coincides with a shift in the EU's principal source of oil supplies. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the EU feared a possible energy crisis caused by instability in the Middle East and therefore shifted the bulk of its oil imports from the Middle East to Africa. According to the *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, from 2004 to 2008, the amount of oil imported by Europe (excluding the former Soviet Union) from the Middle East was reduced by 32 million tonnes and fell to 20 percent; in sharp contrast, the amount of oil imported by Europe from Africa increased by 27.6 million tonnes and grew to 20 percent.⁵² In 2008 the imported oil from Africa to Europe amounted to 151.4 million tonnes. Africa instead of the Middle East has become Europe's second-largest oil supplier.⁵³ Thus, Africa's largest oil export destination is Europe.

51. British Petroleum (BP), *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2005*, and *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2009*. Available online at: www.bp.com/statisticalreview.

52. Over the same period, the United States also reduced its oil imports from the Middle East and increased the amount of oil it imported from Africa. See *ibid*.

53. In 2008 Europe imported oil from the former Soviet Union amounting to 318.5 million tonnes, and 127.6 million tonnes from the Middle East. See *ibid*.

Figure 6: Europe's and China's oil imports by source regions (in 2004 and 2008) (Million tonnes)



Data sources: BP, *BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2005 and 2009* (www.bp.com/statistical-review).

It is worth emphasising that there are significant regional differences between the EU's and China's oil imports from Africa. In 2008, Europe imported 151.4 million tonnes of oil from Africa:⁵⁴ of this 66.91 percent came from North Africa, whereas China imported 53.9 million tonnes of oil from Africa,⁵⁵ of which 7.79 percent came from North Africa. The main arena for the energy conflict between the EU and China is in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- (a) **East & Southern Africa:** Compared with North Africa and West Africa, the total amount of oil exported from this region has up to now been relatively low. The main export destination is China and Japan. In recent years, Sudan became the world's fastest growing country in oil production. From 1998 to 2008, Sudan's oil production increased from 0.6 million tonnes to 23.7 million tonnes – an unprecedented growth of 3,850 percent. Sudan is not a member state of OPEC. The political confrontation between the EU and China over Sudan is not

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

only related to a conflict over norms and values, but also to a conflict of oil interests.

(b) **West Africa:** From 2004 to 2008, oil exports from this region increased from 201.9 million tonnes to 228.8 million tonnes. Over the same period the output in the majority of oil-producing countries in West Africa remained flat, whereas Nigeria's oil production dropped sharply. Oil production in Angola (which joined OPEC in 2007) grew by 91.29 percent (from 48.2 million tonnes to 92.2 million tonnes), contributed to the growth in the total amount of oil exports from West Africa and balanced the impact of oil production decline in other countries. From 2004 to 2008, Europe's imported oil from this region grew by 83.3 percent (from 27 million tonnes to 49.5 million tonnes) and China's imported oil from this region grew by 42.18 percent (from 27.5 million tonnes to 39.1 million tonnes). Angola instead of South Africa has become China's most important trading partner in Africa. In May 2010 the Chinese State Construction Engineering Corporation and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation signed a memorandum of understanding to build oil refineries and other petroleum infrastructures in Nigeria at a total cost of 23 billion US dollars.⁵⁶ Next to the sensitive China-Angola cooperation model, Nigeria could become another theatre of oil conflict between the EU and China.

Oil is a political commodity. As far as energy security issues are concerned, the conflict of interests between the EU and China in Africa is becoming more problematic. This is one of the reasons why China's trade with Africa compared with other regions leads to more criticism.

The controversial investment model

Besides the conflict of interests over trade and resources, the investment model of Chinese enterprises in Africa is also controversial. In recent years, Chinese investment in Africa has shown a trend towards diversification. In addition to infrastructure construction, energy exploration and resource development, Chinese enterprises are actively engaged in some low-tech industries such as apparel, transport, fishery, food processing and telecommunications. The investment competition between the EU and China in Africa is mainly in the fields of infrastructure construction

56. Tom Burgis, 'China in \$23bn Nigeria oil deal', *The Financial Times*, 15 May 2010. Available online at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/098d91c8-5fba-11df-a670-00144feab49a.html>.

and energy exploration. According to repeatedly cited data, Chinese contractors have been winning 50 percent of all new public works projects in Africa.⁵⁷

As one part of China's 'go-out strategy', Beijing has been trying to establish Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and increase direct investment in the manufacturing sector in Africa.⁵⁸ So far, six SEZs have been established in Africa: two in Zambia, one in Mauritius, one in Egypt, and two in Nigeria. Other potential Chinese SEZs are under negotiation and could be established in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.⁵⁹ The original purpose of the establishment of overseas SEZs was to counter protectionism against Chinese products. Chinese investment in Africa is also underpinned by political motivations, in the sense that it wants to improve its international image. On the one hand, the investment in Africa's manufacturing sector can make a contribution to industrialisation and change Africa's trading patterns which up until now have mainly relied on the export of raw materials. On the other hand, Beijing hopes to counter external negative perceptions of its involvement in the region, often characterised as 'China's scramble for Africa'.

It is undoubtedly true that the lower-level management of some Chinese companies damage the image of Chinese investment in Africa. Criticisms of Chinese investment mainly focus on the following points: bad working conditions and low wages lead to labour disputes; production methods lead to environmental pollution; some Chinese enterprises employ mostly Chinese workers and do not offer local people job opportunities; the quality of construction standards in some projects has been questioned; some Chinese managers bribe local governments, thereby undermining good governance and putting other investors at a disadvantage; some enterprises ignore safety regulations which cause work accidents etc.⁶⁰ The EU criticises China for exporting a bad investment model to Africa, and tries to get Beijing to commit to improving the supervision of Chinese enterprises, urging them to respect ILO labour standards and to promote corporate social and environmental responsibility in Africa.⁶¹

57. William Wallis, 'Drawing Contours of a New World Order', *Financial Times Special Report*, 24 January 2008, p.1; Patrick J. Keenan, 'Curse or Cure? China, Africa, and the Effects of Unconditioned Wealth', *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2009, p.84; *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p.9. NB Neither the data source nor the observation period was indicated in all three citations.

58. The establishment of 50 overseas 'economic and trade cooperation zones' was originally proposed in China's eleventh Five Year Plan (2006-2010).

59. Martyn Davies, 'China's Developmental Model Comes to Africa: The Case of Special Economic Zones', *China-Africa Business Frontier*, August 2010, p. 2.

60. 'Africa and China: Rumble in the Jungle', *The Economist*, 20 April 2011. Available online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/18586678>; *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p.21.

61. *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, pp.25-6.

In response to criticisms of Chinese investment in Africa, Beijing made some adjustments in its African policy. At the sixth Senior Officials Meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in October 2008, there was a minor adjustment to China's investment policy in Africa whereby the Chinese government encourages 'credible, competent Chinese enterprises' to invest in Africa. The words 'credible' and 'competent' were new in comparison to *China's African Policy* published in 2006. Such adjustments can be understood as a positive response by Beijing to criticism regarding labour relations and standards. However, it should be pointed out that Beijing lacks sufficient control and leverage over the sub-national, semi-private or private Chinese companies which operate on the basis of cost-benefit calculations.

The current unrest in North Africa and the Middle East has led Beijing to rethink its 'go-out policy' and to ponder the risks of Chinese overseas investment. According to China's 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), released in March 2011, the Chinese Central Government will engage Chinese companies operating overseas and overseas cooperation projects to have a sense of social responsibility and bring benefits to the local population.⁶² If Chinese investment in the future cannot achieve localisation and share benefits with Africans, the accumulated contradictions are likely to affect the sustainable development of Sino-African economic relations. The negative impact on China's image will also affect China's political interests in Africa.

62. The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, *China's 12th Five-Year Plan Outline*, 16 March 2011. Available online at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2011-03/16/c_121193916.htm.

3. Trilateral dialogue, bilateral cooperation or unilateral socialisation?

China's engagement in Africa has obliged the EU to re-evaluate its own relationship with Africa.⁶³ The EU has proposed establishing a trilateral dialogue and cooperation mechanism between the EU, China and Africa, in order to coordinate the conflicts of norms and interests, which so far has not brought any substantial results. The main obstacles lie in the so-called 'common principles' and the 'leading role' played by Western countries in international cooperation schemes in Africa. In the opinion of Chinese academic commentators, the international multilateral cooperation mechanism could reduce the flexibility and effectiveness of the bilateral cooperation between China and African countries.⁶⁴ Some European scholars hope that the trilateral dialogue will facilitate the unilateral socialisation of China.⁶⁵

China's concerns

China's main concerns are the following:

Leading role: Currently international multilateral cooperation and assistance in Africa is chiefly carried out by Western or Western-dominated international institutions. Western countries have been playing a dominant role in the cooperation initiatives that they themselves have proposed. It is the view of most Chinese commentators that China's swift participation in such initiatives will lead to restriction rather than cooperation. Some Chinese scholars propose inviting more regional players to participate in the China-Africa Forum and establishing a China-led multilateral cooperation mechanism in Africa.⁶⁶

Common principles: Most of the Western-led multilateral cooperation mechanisms have already established a code of conduct, and propose and emphasise that international cooperation in Africa should follow some

63. John Kotsopoulos and Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, 'Continental shift? Redefining EU-Africa relations', European Policy Centre, November 2007. Available online at: http://www.euractiv.com/29/images/EU-Africa_tcm29-168820.pdf.

64. Zhou Yuyuan and Liu Hongwu, 'China's African Strategy: How to cope with International Multilateral cooperation', *Pacific Journal*, vol. 18, no. 7, 2010, p.37.

65. Hoslag and van Hoeymissen (eds.), op. cit. in note 3, p.10.

66. Zhou Yuyuan and Liu Hongwu, op. cit. in note 64, p.38.

'common principles', such as the OECD aid consensus, which results from the traditions and practices of Western ideas of aid. China's concerns are that the bilateral relations between China and African countries will be restricted by these principles.⁶⁷

On some principle issues, Beijing has not made any substantial concessions:

- **Aid:** In April 2011, China issued its first-ever White Paper on foreign aid. It reiterated that China insists on no-strings-attached aid and refuses to use foreign aid as a means to interfere in recipient countries' internal affairs.⁶⁸ It appears unlikely therefore that China and EU's dispute on aid will be resolved in the immediate future.
- **Security:** On security issues in Africa, China will not change its bottom line, namely, the policy of non-interference and cooperation within the UN framework.⁶⁹
- **Oil:** Concerning oil exploitation in Africa, Europe's criticism of Chinese activities and China's defence of its position create tensions that continue to erode mutual trust and political willingness towards dialogue and cooperation.
- **Bilateral instead of trilateral:** Instead of the EU's trilateral approach to Africa, China is more inclined towards the bilateral approach. In dealing with some international issues, Beijing does not like to solve bilateral problems through a multilateral approach which in its view may make the problems more complicated.⁷⁰

On the trilateral dialogue between the EU, Africa and China, the Chinese government emphasises the role and willingness of African countries to

67. Zhou Yuyuan and Liu Hongwu, op. cit. in note 64, pp.34-5. Cf. Jin Ling, 'Aid to Africa: What can the EU and China learn from each other?' *SALIA Occasional Paper* no. 56, March 2010.

68. *White Paper on China's Foreign Aid*, op. cit. in note 7.

69. When Zhang Ming, director-general of Department of African Affairs, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was asked in an interview about the China-Africa cooperation in November 2009, he reiterated that 'the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is the major content of China's independent and peaceful foreign policy; China does not take an indifferent attitude in the solution to the African hot issues, and has actively participated in the UN peacekeeping actions in Africa.' Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, 'Zhang Ming, Director-General of Department of African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accepted an interview by the journalist from the American *Washington Post*', 17 November 2009. Available online at: <http://www.focac.org/eng/mtsy/t633214.htm>.

70. On the issue of the South China Sea, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stressed during his visit to Malaysia and Indonesia in April 2011 that China prefers a bilateral instead of multilateral approach to solving the dispute.

participate in the dialogue.⁷¹ Up until now the African countries have shown little interest in this initiative which is also a reason why the trilateral dialogue has not made any substantial progress.

Beijing has adopted a relatively passive stance towards the initiative of the trilateral dialogue between the EU, China and Africa. One possible reason for this is that China's African studies lag behind the rapid development of China-African economic relations. Chinese think tanks sometimes fail to provide the government and companies with proper policy advice.⁷² On the issue of aid and security and initiating a dialogue mechanism in Africa, because of the uncertainty of alternative solutions, Beijing is more likely to prefer the *status quo* in the face of a changing situation. But resistance to change so far does not necessarily imply that Beijing's attitude will not change in the future.

Controversy within the EU

The content and purpose of the trilateral dialogue between the EU, China and Africa is a matter of controversy within the EU.

In April 2008 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on China's policy and its effects on Africa, and urged the EU to develop a coherent strategy to respond to the challenges raised by China.⁷³ According to this report, on the issue of Africa, China is not a co-operator, but rather a competitor of the EU. The report showed a clear attitude towards China's policy and revealed why Europe is unhappy with China's engagement in Africa. This report got widespread coverage in the media and led to critical responses in China.⁷⁴

In contrast to the European Parliament report, the Commission's document 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation',⁷⁵ published in October 2008, emphasised cooperation

71. Kong Quan, the Chinese ambassador to France, indicated in an interview in November 2009, that the trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China should be based on three points: (i) The trilateral cooperation should meet the wishes of African countries and be based on mutual respect without force; (ii) It should effectively meet the needs of African countries; (iii) It should result in real benefit for African people. See Chinese Embassy in France, 'KONG Quan, Chinese Ambassador to France accepted an interview by the journalist from *Europe Times*', *Europe Times*, 21 December 2009. Available online at: <http://www.amb-chine.fr/chn/txw/t691489.htm>.

72. 'African Studies Lag behind Booming Sino-African Relations', *China Daily*, 28 April 2011. Available at: http://en.ce.cn/National/Politics/201104/28/t20110428_22390328.shtml.

73. See *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15.

74. Jiang Yu, the spokeswoman of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described the European Parliament resolution as confrontational and a provocation against China. See Press conference of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 April 2008, available at: http://www.gov.cn/xwfb/2008-04/24/content_953586.htm. The EU's initiative of EU-China cooperation on Africa was questioned by Chinese internet users who gave their reactions to the EU resolution on the web and criticised it as being designed to limit China's economic engagement in Africa.

75. 'The EU, Africa and China: Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation', op. cit. in note 1.

rather than competition. According to the Commission's Document, trilateral cooperation should be understood as a complement of bilateral partnership, the starting point of cooperation should be the basis of consensus and the aim should be through a cooperative three-way agenda to maximise synergies and mutual benefits. The positive significance of this document is that the EU has placed an offer on the table, which invites China to engage in a more functional and practical cooperation. This document has helped to bring a much more rational tone to the debate over China's engagement in Africa.⁷⁶ From this perspective, the trilateral dialogue could be understood as a learning and adjustment process both for the EU and China, i.e., China must readjust its Africa policy, as well as the EU. Regarding the objective of the trilateral dialogue, there are different approaches even within Europe. One approach is that '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'.⁷⁷ According to this viewpoint, the trilateral dialogue aims at China's unilateral socialisation. In this sense, the Communication issued by the Commission does not differ from the European Parliament report. Instead of understanding the dialogue as a learning process, the EU is looking for effective leverage over China to induce it to embrace its own norms. Thus, with China being expected to learn and adapt, the chance for the emergence of a mutual learning process has been lost.

The Commission's 2008 Communication advocated that dialogue and cooperation should be based on consensus and avoid becoming mired in a debate over norms. On this very point, there are also disagreements within the EU. As indicated in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee in 2009, in order to be coherent with the 2007 Lisbon Strategy and the 2000 Cotonou Agreement, 'the most controversial items' such as democratic governance, human rights and the role of civil society, should be introduced into the proposed process.⁷⁸

Scholarly debate within China

China's foreign policy posture has not kept pace with its fast-growing overseas interests. Some scholars have contended that China is too preoccupied with its own domestic issues⁷⁹ and that the public good offered by

76. Wissenbach, op. cit. in note 2.

77. Hoslag and van Hoeymissen, op. cit. in note 3, p.10.

78. 'Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "The EU, Africa and China - Towards trilateral dialogue and cooperation"', op. cit. in note 41.

79. Wu Xinbo, 'China's international orientation under the dramatic changes in international situation', *International Studies*, January 2010, pp.21-26.

China to the world is insufficient in quality and quantity.⁸⁰ Beijing's attitude towards its participation in the formulation of international regulations is criticised as passive. Recently China's non-interference policy has been questioned within academic circles. According to some scholars, in the new international political context, any blind or rigid adherence to the non-interference policy is not constructive to the realisation and maintenance of China's national interests, and in some cases could lead to the isolation of China.⁸¹ In the future 'non-interference policy' will probably be replaced by a new term – 'creative intervention',⁸² which up until now has been a slogan rather than a concept with substantial content and needs further explanation.

80. Wang Yizhou, 'Ten problems of China's foreign policy', *World Knowledge*, October 2010, pp.14-23.

81. See Wu Xinbo, op. cit. in note 79, pp.21-26; Wang Yizhou, op. cit. in note 80, pp.14-23.

82. Wang Yizhou, op. cit. in note 80, pp.14-23.



4. The dilemma of socialisation

The essential nature of the EU strategic partnership varies depending on the different partners with which it is dealing. Usually the EU strategic partnerships are based on ‘common values’ or ‘shared values’, whereas the EU-China strategic partnership is an exception.⁸³ The EU tries to establish various dialogue mechanisms to ‘further enmesh China into a web of norms and rules and socialise Beijing into the international community’.⁸⁴ But instead of understanding the dialogue as a reconstruction of norms or bilateral socialisation, there is a tendency in Europe to understand the dialogue as basically a unilateral socialisation of China.

If the aim of trilateral dialogue between the EU, Africa and China is interpreted as the unilateral socialisation process of China,⁸⁵ the EU has to face another problem: the dilemma of socialisation. On the one hand, the EU tries to spread its norms and values in Africa in order to extend its real power in the world, but its efforts in this regard have been limited by the emergence of other big powers like China.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the EU lacks sufficient leverage, i.e. hard power or real power, to persuade China to embrace European norms and values.⁸⁷ Where Africa is concerned, China has neither the interest nor the motivation to internalise European values and norms.

The expectations of unilateral socialisation

According to a popular view, the EU’s expectation of the EU-China strategic partnership was that through China’s integration into the global economic system ‘it would slowly but inexorably converge with European values and interests’.⁸⁸ This expectation can be summarised as ‘We need China to want what we want’.⁸⁹ Therefore, in terms of the trilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU, Africa and China, the interpreta-

83. As indicated in the Joint Statement of the 12th EU-China Summit in 2009, the nature of the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership is based on ‘mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit, openness and win-win cooperation’. Council of the European Union, *Joint Statement of the 12th EU-China Summit*, 30 November 2009, p.2. Available online at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/111567.pdf.

84. *A strategy for EU foreign policy*, op. cit. in note 25, p. 70.

85. Some European scholars have pointed out that the EU seeks through a trilateral dialogue to motivate China to embrace European norms and values in Africa. See Hoslag and van Hoeymissen, op. cit. in note 3, p.11.

86. Cf. Jan Zielonka, ‘Europe as a global actor: empire by example?’, *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2008, pp. 471-72.

87. Ibid, p. 481; François Godement, ‘A global China policy’, European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2010. Available online at: www.ecfr.eu, p.2.

88. Godement, op. cit. in note 87, p.2.

89. ECFR interview with senior European official, 11 June 2008. See John Fox and François Godement, ‘A power audit of EU-China relations’, European Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: www.ecfr.eu, p.1.

tion of its aim as being based on the expectation of unilateral socialisation is not an isolated view.

The interaction of values and interests

The conflicts over norms and interests between the EU and China in Africa is a complex one: looming behind the dispute over aid is the fact that the EU's trade interests have been adversely affected by China's economic engagement in Africa; the competition for energy resources has led to a negative public perception of China in Europe⁹⁰ and generated mutual accusation and a debate over norms and values.

The EU's emphasis on values and norms may be interpreted as motivated by the following reasons:

(i) In the process of European integration, it is necessary for the EU to establish a set of so-called 'common values' to deepen integration and uphold cohesion within Europe. At the level of the EU, common values are relatively easier to define than common interests. Emphasising values and norms will contribute to upholding the coherence and consistency of the EU's foreign policy. At the level of the EU Member States, it is relatively easy to define national interests. This being the case, the EU Member States are often more inclined towards a pragmatic foreign policy.

(ii) Successfully exporting its own model of governance and social standards is essential for the sustainable development of the EU, as well of its Member States. The EU's criticism of China's engagement in Africa focuses on norms that protect the environment, labour standards and social welfare. If European norms and standards are not accepted by other global competitors, European firms might find themselves at a comparative disadvantage due to higher production costs,⁹¹ not only in Africa but also within Europe itself. In such a context, Europe's normative agenda in the environmental field and regarding labour standards as well as its emphasis on a certain social welfare model would not be sustainable.⁹² From this point of view, the dissemination of European norms and standards might be interpreted as an attempt by Europe to shore up its own interests, i.e. the EU's foreign policy is an instrument to uphold the social standards

90. A series of resolutions and reports on China including the European Parliament's *Report on China's Policy and its Effects on Africa* led to a negative public perception of China in Europe. The opinion polls showed that China's popularity in Europe dropped dramatically to its lowest in 2008. See the Pew Research Centre, *Pew Global Attitudes Project*, available at: <http://pew.global.org>.

91. As indicated in the European Parliament report, 'China's trading policy approach to Africa is based on one-to-one relations between states and neglects references to human rights, corporate social responsibility, and environmental and social standards, thus giving China quite a considerable comparative advantage in Africa'. See *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p.30.

92. Zielonka, op. cit. in note 86, p. 482.

within the EU. Seen in this light, the EU's foreign policy can be seen as playing a role in maintaining internal cohesion.

Leveraging socialisation

The term 'socialisation' is normally used in the context of the EU's enlargement towards Central and Eastern European countries. The precondition for EU membership is to embrace the EU's values and norms. For the candidate state, socialisation thus means 'doing homework'.⁹³ The socialisation model of an EU candidate state is *self-socialisation*, i.e. the candidate state is incentivised to get involved in this socialisation process. However, the successful socialisation experience of the EU's new Member States does not necessarily apply to other parts of the world.

The promotion of democratic governance and human rights is regarded as a central feature of the Africa-EU dialogue and partnership.⁹⁴ Since the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 the EU has readjusted its development aid policy in Africa and tried to improve the 'socialisation' process in Sub-Saharan Africa through 'positive conditionality'. Although it is generally considered that African countries have adopted and shared the 'common values and norms' with Europe, it must be pointed out that the socialisation process of African countries often amounts only to a socialisation process involving incomplete internalisation of norms and values. Instead of the logic of appropriateness, some actors are still guided by the logic of consequences, namely, by cost-benefit calculations. Once other norms and values are introduced, the seemingly internalised norms and values could probably again be discarded. The socialisation process of Central and Eastern Europe cannot be applied to Africa, where the EU is confronted with competition from other global powers. The EU has been looking for an effective means of leverage to uphold its 'common' values and norms in Africa, but the effectiveness of any such leverage is limited by China's 'no-strings-attached' aid policy.

According to the trilateral dialogue mechanism between the EU and China in Africa, if the expectation is that China 'will gradually adapt its behaviour and embrace European norms',⁹⁵ the arduous task for the EU is to convince China to implement *self-socialisation* in Africa.

93. The successful socialisation experience of the EU's new Member States derives mainly from three factors: (i) The enormous discrepancy of power between the EU and the candidate state; (ii) High economic dependence (trade and FDI) of the candidate state on the EU; (iii) A promise of EU membership. See *ibid.*

94. Council of the European Union, *The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership – A Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, 16344/07 (Presse 291), Brussels, 9 December 2007, p. 8. Available online at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/97496.pdf.

95. Hoslag and van Hoeymissen, *op. cit.* in note 3, p.11.

With regard to the EU's approach to China, some European scholars have questioned the probability of the expected convergence of values and asked the EU to readjust its dialogue policy from 'unconditional engagement' to 'reciprocal engagement', i.e. 'a shift from a foreign policy predicated on an assumption of shared values and naturally converging interests to a relationship in which bargaining and trade-offs would become the norm'.⁹⁶ If unconditional or reciprocal engagement is proposed for the unilateral socialisation of China, then the result can only be limited, because the EU lacks sufficient leverage over China, particular on the issue of Africa:

- The power discrepancy that characterises the trilateral dialogue between the EU, Africa and China differs from the power discrepancy between the EU and its candidate states. At present, the EU does not have sufficient leverage to constrain the sovereignty of other global players like China.⁹⁷ For an EU candidate state, the socialisation process is 'doing homework'; but for China, on the issue of Africa, socialisation is not an 'obligatory course'.
- China is the EU's second trading partner, the EU is China's largest trading partner (as of 2009). Given their high degree of economic interdependence, any blind confrontation will adversely affect the economic interests of both sides.
- Within Europe there is a tendency to use negative public opinion as leverage over China. It has been argued that the Chinese government relies on a positive image and international recognition to promote its legitimacy.⁹⁸ International recognition is important for a government, but in terms of priorities, sustained and stable economic development may be more important in terms of assuring domestic legitimacy for a government. Negative public opinion combined with a conflict of interests can also lead to misunderstanding and mistrust, even increased nationalism.
- Diverging views within Europe is another problem with which the EU has to contend. Within the EU there are two conflicting views on EU's approach to China: (i) free traders versus protectionists, and (ii)

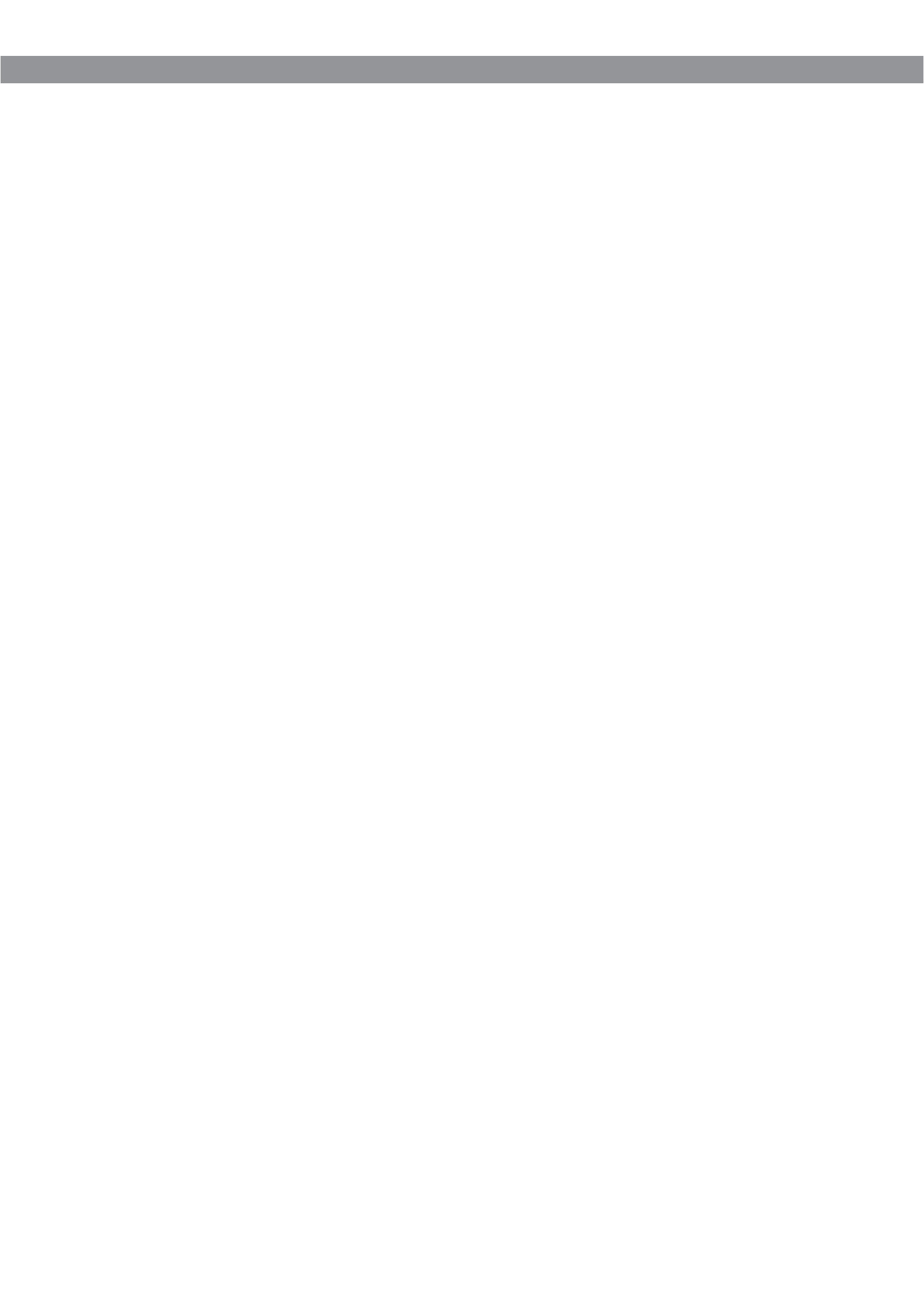
96. Godement, op. cit. in note 87, p. 2.

97. Zielonka, op. cit. in note 86, p. 481.

98. Godement, op. cit. in note 87, p.5; *Report on China's Policy and Its Effects on Africa*, op. cit. in note 15, p. 24.

‘accommodationists’ versus political conditionalists.⁹⁹ In addition, compared with the CFSP, the foreign policies of the EU Member States tend to be more pragmatic and flexible. Under the existing framework of the EU and international system, China does not have to seek cooperation with the EU on all issues. China will be more inclined to pursue cooperation with individual EU Member States, which would conversely undermine the coherency and consistency of the CFSP.

99. Godement, *op. cit.* in note 87, p. 2.



Conclusion

The rise of great powers implies a global power transition.¹⁰⁰ The emergence of the EU as a global political actor and normative power has coincided with China's economic rise. In the era of globalisation, the global power transition has necessitated the reconstruction of norms. In order to uphold their own interests, each party tries to protect the consistency of their own values and norms as much as possible. The main difference between unilateral socialisation and reconstruction of norms is that in the process of reconstruction, both sides must be open to the ideas of the other.

The reason why the trilateral dialogue and cooperation mechanism has not brought substantial constructive results lies not only in the EU's lack of effective leverage, but also in the expectation of unilateral socialisation itself. Socialisation is always 'self-socialisation'.¹⁰¹ Expectations regarding the internalisation of norms and standards need to take account of the subject's own distinctive outlook and priorities. At present China and the EU each have different priority areas. The value-based CFSP pursues autonomy, consistency and coherence, which are all essential attributes for the EU's self-construction, whereas China pursues political stability and sustainable development as its primary goals. That means that it will be a long time before the EU-China strategic partnership can be constructed on the basis of common values.

In the quest for cooperation and dialogue between the EU and China in Africa, the focus should be on seeking common ground and developing a pragmatic approach. Overemphasising the norms debate at the beginning of this process can only lead to misunderstanding and mistrust, rather than enhancing mutual understanding and trust. If the objective of the trilateral dialogue is expectation of the unilateral socialisation of one party, the results will inevitably be limited. In competition with other great powers – and sometimes maybe giving rise to dissensions among the EU Member States themselves – the attempt to spread European norms and values through the concept of unilateral socialisation will, from the Chinese government's point of view, only undermine China's willingness to cooperate with the EU.

100. As China is the world's most populous country, its recent rapid economic growth inevitably constitutes a shock to the global balance of power and interest. In the twentieth century the rise of great powers was correlated with great wars – see Erich Weede, 'The Capitalist Peace and the Rise of China: Establishing Global Harmony by Economic Interdependence', *International Interactions*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010, p. 206. Wars were followed by the reconstruction of norms and the international order. To some extent, the peaceful rise of China is due to the economic interdependence of global actors, i.e. *the capitalist peace*.

101. See Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 327.



Annex

Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FTA	Free Trade Area
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
UN	United Nations
USD	US dollars

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