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Contrasting Rhetoric and Converging Security Interests of the European Union and China in Africa

Anna Katharina STAHL

Abstract: In recent years, both the European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have considerably stepped up their presence in Africa, including in the field of peace and security. This article discusses how the EU's and China's understanding of governance and sovereignty affects their respective security strategies in Africa. It argues that although European and Chinese rhetoric significantly differs in terms of the doctrines of sovereignty and governance, the conventional wisdom of two competing security models is inaccurate. As a matter of fact, Brussels and Beijing pursue converging security interests in Africa, a fact that can open the door for coordinated Sino-European crisis management efforts.

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Keywords: China, EU, Africa, governance, security, sovereignty, human rights, democracy

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Introduction

Recent revolutions in North Africa, a region considered relatively stable for years, have reminded the international community of the exceptionally volatile security situation of the African continent. According to SIPRI data, 19 major armed conflicts took place in Africa during the period from 1990 to 2001 (SIPRI 2002: 65). In particular, the escalation of the conflict in Libya has demonstrated that African crises are not only a regional problem, but a global challenge involving a variety of international actors. Whereas during the 1990s Africa was considered a forgotten continent, since the turn of the century the region has been attracting renewed international attention. In 2005 the European Union (EU) adopted its first common Africa Strategy (Council of the EU 2005), which was followed one year later by the Chinese White Paper on Africa (Information Office of the State Council 2006). Starting in Tunisia, the current wave of uprisings has spread at an unprecedented pace to the neighbouring countries, destabilising the whole region. Established players such as the EU as well as more "recent" ones like China have been caught off-guard by these evolutions (Parello-Plesner 2011).

Against this backdrop, the article compares Chinese and European security strategies on the African continent. Faced with the lack of an adequate theoretical foundation for analysing the security relations between the EU, China and Africa, this article develops its argument based on the framework of two competing security models that are implicit in most research. The recent literature on the EU's and China's Africa policy particularly emphasises diverging attitudes toward sovereignty and governance (Sicurelli 2010; Liu 2011). Taking into account the different natures and historical legacies of each actor, experts refer to a European model centred on the promotion of good governance and pooled sovereignty, as opposed to a Chinese model defined by respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs (Sicurelli 2010; Barton 2009; Austermann 2011; Cooper Ramo 2004).

This article challenges the notion of two rivalling security concepts, demonstrating that it does not convey the full complexity of European and Chinese activities in Africa. In contrast, the Chinese presence in Africa highlights some discrepancies between the EU's normative rhetoric and the actual implementation of its policies. At the same time, the Chinese Africa policy has undergone subtle modifications, bringing it further away from its traditional stance on sovereignty. This explains a

growing convergence between the European and the Chinese approaches toward African conflicts and hence creates space for cooperation.

Taking European efforts to promote external governance in Africa as a starting point, this article deliberately adopts a European perspective on the Chinese presence in Africa. It therefore concentrates largely on non-Chinese contributions and incorporates Chinese sources only insofar as they are available in English.[1] Moreover, this article adopts a macro-policy perspective while acknowledging the impact of the specificities and local contexts of each African country.

As regards the structure, the article starts by assessing the official European and Chinese discourse on governance and sovereignty. Following this, Section 3 suggests that the actual European and Chinese security practices in Africa to some extent contradict the conceptual views, leading to converging interests. The conclusion stresses the interdependence between European and Chinese security interests in Africa and calls for closer Sino-European cooperation in the area of crisis management.

The EU's and China's Policy Discourse on Governance and Sovereignty in Africa

Even though "governance" goes back to the creation of civilisation itself, the notion was introduced into the academic and policy debate only after the end of the Cold War (Scholte 2008: 40; Bösl 2007). The concept was mostly popularised with the creation of the United Nations Commission on Global Governance and the publication of its final report in 1995 (Delmas-Marty 2007: 71). Yet, the meaning of the term has undergone important modifications and there are still significant contestations over the exact definition of governance (Weiss 2000). This explains why international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) each rely on their own definition of governance. Initially ap-

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plied to the economic field, the concept was later extended to the political system (Bösl 2007). According to the UNDP, the concept of governance is defined as "the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels" (UNDP 1997).

In recent years, especially the link between governance, development and security has attracted growing attention (Duffield 2001; Collier et al. 2003). Experts have demonstrated that domestic governance – complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens articulate their interests – is a crucial element in the way a society or state handles tensions and conflicts. The African continent is a revealing example of the complex relationship between governance and conflict: Since their independences, many African states have had particularly unstable security environments. Some scholars have suggested that the instability and lack of effective governance structures in Africa are the causes of the particular nature of the post-colonial African state. Hence, the concept of governance is closely related to that of statehood (Bösl 2007). According to the literature on state capacity in Africa, the African post-colonial state is characterised by unique features, such as artificial boundaries and state bureaucracies inherited from the colonial powers. This can explain why African leaders resort to neopatrimonial schemes to hold power over the economy, rather than creating an efficiently functioning administration (Clapham 1982; Bayart 1993).

Broadly speaking, in today's globalised world, all states face an increasing variety of security challenges that transcend national boundaries (Delmas-Marty 2007: 96). As a result, while governance was interpreted for a long time as a synonym for "government", its current definition goes beyond the domestic realm and refers to a global form of collective problem-solving. This new understanding is best captured by the concept "global governance". Global governance describes the international environment not as a system of closed national authorities, but rather as a process of political interaction among transnational actors who face common challenges (Waltz 1999). Hence, countering Africa's instability is not only an African concern but also a global challenge involving a variety of different players.

The EU's Normative Power and the Promotion of Good Governance

Over the past few years, "governance" has become a buzzword in the EU's official policy discourse and its definition has undergone significant modifications. The EU with its unique nature – being neither a traditional intergovernmental organisation nor a federation – has provided the most interesting case study for the theorisation of governance. It is an entity composed of 27 member states having agreed to pool their sovereignty in some areas in favour of a European governance system (Sjursen 2006: 242). Originally the concept of governance was used to encompass the complex internal functioning of the EU (Jachtenfuchs 2001; European Commission 2003: 4). The 2001 White Paper on European Governance issued by the European Commission (European Commission 2001) and the 2009 White Paper on Multilevel Governance put forward by the EU Committee of the Regions (Committee of the Regions 2009) express this very clearly. EU policy documents establish a direct link between governance and the EU's constitutional norms such as human rights, democracy and rule of law. From the European Commission's perspective, "[the benefit] of the concept of governance is that it provides a terminology that is more pragmatic than democracy, human rights, etc." (European Commission 2003: 3). Governance is therefore the expression of a value-based European identity or what scholars describe as a "normative" or "ethical" EU power (Manners 2002; Bretherton and Vogler 1999). As a means to capture the close link between the EU's norms and governance, policymakers have started to bring the term "good governance" into play. Good governance was mentioned for the first time in an official EU policy document only in 1991 (Carbone 2010: 20).

Though, the most important modification has been the extension of governance to the EU's external relations. The 2001 White Paper indicates this clearly, stating that "the Union should seek to apply the principles of good governance to its global responsibilities" (European Commission 2011a: 5). This has also been backed by research demonstrating that the distinctive European identity is a key determinant in the EU's external relations and its attempts to export certain norms and values to other regions (Lavenex 2004; Myrjord 2003; Friis and Murphy 1999). Although the concept of external governance promotion has primarily been used to study the EU's interaction with its direct neighbourhood and the enlargement process, it has over time been taken over by the

literature on EU–Africa relations, where it is mostly referred to in terms of "good governance" (Farrell 2010; Slocum-Bradley and Bradley 2010).

The principle of good governance is strongly connected to the EU's development policy and its efforts to promote external governance (European Commission 2003). European policymakers understand "good governance" and "democratic governance" as two sides of the same coin (European Commission 2006; Slocum-Bradley and Bradley 2010: 17). One of the key documents on European development policy, the 2005 European Consensus on Development, explicitly states that good governance, democracy and respect for human rights are all integral parts of the EU's development policy (European Parliament, Council and Commission 2006). Moreover, the EU considers good governance a condition for the economic development of developing countries. The most recent Commission communication on the reform of the EU's development policy indicates that "good governance […] is vital for inclusive and sustainable development" (European Commission 2011a: 5).

The promotion of European norms and principles through foreign policy is also referred to as "soft governance" (Friis and Murphy 1999). Political conditionality is the most common tool of European external governance promotion and can take two different forms: incentives (positive conditionality) or sanctions (negative conditionality). The Cotonou Agreement well illustrates European conditionality toward Africa. Through Article 96 of the agreement, democracy, rule of law and human rights are introduced as essential elements, meaning that non-compliance by African states can lead to the suspension of European aid. Another example of the EU's positive conditionality is the Governance Incentive Tranche, which rewards third countries for governance commitments (Carbone 2010: 22).

However, in its attempt to promote external governance in Africa, the EU often faces difficulties in respecting the principle of coherence listed in Commission's White Paper on European Governance (European Commission 2001). Since the adoption of the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) agenda in 2005, the EU has made particular efforts to formulate a more comprehensive European policy toward Africa, through synergies between the EU's activities regarding development aid, democracy promotion and peace-building. Particular attention has been paid to the so-called "security–development nexus", which underlines that good governance is an essential precondition for stability and peace. In this context it is important to recall, that since the Treaty of

Maastricht, which set the basis for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the EU has been able to launch autonomous European military operations in Africa (Bagoyoko and Gibert 2007). With the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the ESDP was rebaptised as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and the post of "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy", assisted by the newly established European External Action Service (EEAS), was created. These new mechanisms aim to further contribute to a comprehensive European foreign policy.

Moreover, since the publication of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003, the EU has vocally promoted "effective multilateralism" as a foreign policy goal (Council of the EU 2003). Through "effective multilateralism", the EU commits to support other international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), in the area of peace and security. Particularly in terms of the EU's security policy in Africa, efforts have been made since 2005 to formulate a European policy for the whole African continent, with the African Union at its core. In contrast to its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the AU has the right to intervene into a member state's affairs in cases of "grave circumstance, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity", and the organisation has become the centre of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The EU has supported the AU's efforts to implement peace and good governance on the continent to a considerable extent, for instance through the instrument of the African Peace Facility.

China's Traditional Stance on Sovereignty and Non-interference in Domestic Affairs

In the Chinese language, the concept of governance is referred to as *zhili* (治理) (Scholte 2008: 40). In contrast to European policy documents regarding Africa, Chinese documents on Africa barely refer to it. For Chinese policymakers, the concept of governance is first and foremost related to the domestic situation of a country. At a time of global power shifts, the Chinese leadership has a heightened sense of vulnerability (Zhao 2009: 21). Hence, it focuses primarily on domestic policy, giving priority to China's social stability. It is thus not surprising that "security policy in China is closely linked to regime security" (Stumbaum 2010). The legitimacy of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) today

stems primarily from two factors: 1) national unity and 2) the continuous economic growth in the context of a progressing transition from a planned economy to a market economy.

For many Chinese scholars and policymakers, governance remains a very new and vague concept, imported by the West and to which a highly normative connotation is associated (Wang and Rosenau 2009: 11; Carlson 2004: 18). They have doubts as to whether governance can be characterised by a series of universal norms. Contrary to the European definition of governance as a transparent, efficient and democratic system of administration, a core element of the Chinese understanding of governance is the sovereign state. The historical experience of the loss of territorial integrity largely explains why national unity is primarily liked to the upholding of the territorial integrity of the country and most importantly the "One China" policy (Austermann 2011). This is also reflected in China's foreign policy, which has been guided since the 1950s by the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and most importantly by the notions of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries.

It comes therefore as no surprise that also in their relations with Africa, Chinese leaders attach great importance to the respect for sovereignty and non-interference. Additionally, the One China policy has been in many cases a precondition for Beijing to engage in diplomatic relations with an African state. In general, Chinese foreign policy is strongly state-oriented. In Africa, like elsewhere, Beijing has a long-standing preference for handling its foreign relations through bilateral channels rather than through multilateral initiatives. China's policy of engagement with individual African leaders has been labelled "summit diplomacy". These regular meetings between Chinese and African leaders have proved a useful tool to establish direct communication at the highest level and create mutual trust. In 2000 an additional diplomatic mechanism was created with the establishment of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), an intergovernmental forum that aims to coordinate the interaction between China and all African leaders.

Chinese policy toward Africa is guided by the overarching domestic vision of economic development. That China strives for achievements more in the economic area than in the political realm is the main explanation for the lacking Chinese support for the concept of "good governance" (善治, *shanzhi*). According to Chinese policymakers, good governance, rule of law and most civil and political rights are correlated to levels

of wealth. Hence, the Chinese viewpoint is that "with development, more effective governance might follow, but while people are starving, it is a luxury to talk about good governance" (Kynge and Zhang 2007: 156). Chinese scholars note that "China believes that the problem of Africa is more the lack of development than the lack of better governance" (Zhang 2008: 133-134). From Beijing's perspective, China is a developing country, involved in an equal "South–South cooperation" with developing countries on the African continent. For this reason, Chinese leaders repudiate any comparison to developed European countries and their practices. Unlike European policy documents on Africa, the current Chinese official foreign policy rhetoric barely refers to good governance. Another argument put forward by Beijing against the European style of external governance promotion in Africa is that, according to China's own experience, development must be endogenous rather than exogenous.

In line with the rhetoric of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, China's Africa policy follows the principle of "no strings attached", as opposed to the European policy of conditionality (Clapham 2006). Contrary to the EU's ideas, Chinese leaders do not believe in conditionality and are particularly critical of sanctions as a foreign policy instrument. This aspect of Chinese foreign policy was inspired by the country having suffered under the US embargo, imposed after the CCP seized power (Alden 2007: 20). Chinese officials are rather suspicious about European attempts to promote values of good governance in Africa, which China perceives as a tool of power politics (Wang and Rosenau 2009: 17).

The Chinese stance on governance and security in Africa has led to harsh criticism by both the international community and African representatives. There are increasing worries that the Chinese presence, despite the official Chinese discourse of neutrality, is in fact supporting so-called "pariah states" by trading with authoritarian leaders boycotted by the EU on human rights grounds (Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small 2008). Some autocratic regimes in Africa can thus sustain themselves through Chinese support, which will damage the general African security environment. European policymakers have expressed fears that the Chinese Africa policy is undermining their efforts to promote good governance on the neighbouring continent. Under the label of "Beijing Consensus", academics have argued that China is in fact promoting a competing model to that of the EU, characterised by a primary focus on economic

interests among equal partners and the absence of moral considerations (Cooper Ramo 2004). Zimbabwe is cited as an example of how Beijing has been counteracting the EU's normative foreign policy approach: Despite an international arms embargo and the opposition of members of African civil society, Chinese leaders agreed to sell military equipment to the government of President Mugabe (Taylor 2008: 75). Concerns over the Chinese arms trades with African states are growing as they often seem to ignore wider political implications and regularly bypass UN arms embargos (Curtis and Hickson 2006: 37). In this context it is worth recalling that the EU has still not lifted its arms embargo on China, imposed after the 1989 crackdown of the Tiananmen Square protests (Casarini 2007); the EU now fears that China is exporting its unacceptable human rights record to Africa (European Parliament 2008).

Despite the fact that China's engagement in Africa has been accompanied by a traditional policy discourse around the respect for sovereignty, it also demonstrates a certain paradox. In China's endeavour to guarantee itself a steady economic development and to consolidate its power at home, it has in fact been increasingly exposed to external influence.

In order to prevent social unrest linked to poverty, internal migration, the effective delivery of public goods and services and health care, the Chinese leadership has engaged in a more active foreign policy to secure the necessary resources in Africa and elsewhere. Yet, in doing so the Chinese leadership feels exposed to mounting external security threats. To counter possible harmful reactions to China's rise, Chinese leaders started in 2003 to articulate national strategies around China's "peaceful rise" (和平崛起, *heping jueqi)* within a "harmonious world" (和谐世界, *hexie shijie*). Through these foreign policy strategies, Chinese leaders not only recognise that China is intimately tied to the international community, but also demonstrate efforts to contribute to a peaceful international environment and to act as a responsible global power (Zhang 2008; Medeiros 2009).

The two policy guidelines could be viewed as a translation of the concept of global governance into the Chinese policy discourse. Indeed, similar to the process in the EU, China's concepts of sovereignty and governance have also evolved, according to Chinese scholars (Carlson 2004: 18). Since the turn of the century, there has been a growing interest on the part of these scholars in "global governance" (全球治理, *quanqiu zhili*). The work of Yu Keping has been most influential in this regard, arguing that contrary to the vision of the Chinese leadership of separat-

ing the economic realm from the political realm, economic liberalisation has produced spill-over in the political life of China and domestic governance (Yu 2008: 20). This spill-over has manifested itself in the Chinese debate over soft infrastructures, specifically about the role of transparent institutions in maintaining economic growth. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that China is not a unitary actor, but composed of a set of diverse entities. China's economic liberalisation is accompanied by a growing involvement of Chinese actors abroad, who do not necessarily act in line with the official Chinese position. For instance, the unruly behaviour of some Chinese companies in Africa has sparked an internal debate over corporate governance (公司治理, *gongsi zhili*). Yet, even those Chinese scholars who apply the concept of governance usually contrast the EU's good governance with China's "effective governance", which is more results-oriented (Zhang 2008).

The Rhetoric–Reality Gap in the EU's and China's Security Strategies in Africa

The examination of the EU's normative discourse as opposed to the Chinese rhetoric around national sovereignty in Africa has suggested that both the EU and China highly value symbolic policy as part of their foreign policy. The following section will show, however, that the stark differences in the European and Chinese policy discourse do not necessarily translate into conflicting security strategies in Africa. As a matter of fact, both Brussels and Beijing suffer from a certain discrepancy between political discourse and practices (Austermann 2011; Bi 2011). Furthermore, European and Chinese security strategies in Africa are not static, but subject to mutual influence. Changes have been noticed mostly in the Chinese handling of African conflicts, Chinese authorities having moved away from a strict interpretation of sovereignty (Bi 2011).

The EU's Policy in Africa: Torn between Values and *Realpolitik*

Confronted with the lack of empirical research on Chinese involvement in Africa, European experts and policymakers have mostly paid attention to official Chinese policy statements on Africa. This has led to the widespread assumption that the current Chinese policy is counterbalancing the EU's contribution to the settlement of conflicts and the establish-

ment of peace in Africa. Yet, more recent research has challenged this supposition and revealed that in many African countries there is no proof of the Chinese presence undermining the EU's good governance policy (Brautigam 2009; Hackenesch 2011; Zhang 2011). On the contrary, the growing Chinese engagement in Africa highlights the existing gap between the EU's normative rhetoric and the concrete implementation of its policies on the ground (Hackenesch 2011; Grauls and Stahl 2010). Although the problem of so-called "double standards" in the EU's policies toward Africa is not new, it has been further displayed by the presence of alternative partners like China.

It is well known that in many cases, the EU is "far from playing the role of an effective normative power" in Africa (Scheipers and Sicurelli 2008) and that "the rhetoric of policy statements frequently does not meet the practice on the ground" (Carbone 2010: 26; Crawford 2007: 183; Olsen 1998). Some experts go even as far as to say that the EU never applied political conditionality in a consistent manner (Wood 2009: 121), Zimbabwe being an exception rather than the rule (Youngs 2010: 5; Brummer 2009).

In general, one can distinguish two main reasons for this discrepancy between normative discourse and actual policies in the EU's relations with Africa. First, there is a lack of policy coherence and consistency (Olsen 2008: 160; Carbone 2008) among different European policies and institutions involved in the EU's external relations with Africa. Although the establishment of the EEAS laid the foundations for a more concerted European Africa policy, there are still major shortcomings. Within the European Commission, the directorate-generals (DGs) in charge of different policy sub-sectors such as trade, energy, fisheries and migration policy will most likely continue to pursue conflicting interests (Olsen 2008: 168). The promotion of good governance in Africa is regularly overshadowed, especially by issues regarding perceived threats to the EU's own security interests – such as the fight against illegal immigration, terrorism, or access to natural resources (Youngs 2004; Wood 2009; Hyde-Price 2008). In this context, scholars make evident the existence of two underlying logics behind the EU's external relations with Africa. According to these scholars, the EU's Africa policy is determined not only by a normative element, but also by self-interests and rational calculations (Youngs 2004; Liu 2011: 16). The recent explosion of violence in North Africa could be interpreted as a result of member states' own economic calculus (Joffé 2008).

Second, the predominance of national interests of single European member states also presents a major obstacle to the implementation of a coherent European approach toward Africa (Brummer 2009). This is the case for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), where decision-making is based on unanimity, and member states are the most important players. Particularly member states with a colonial heritage, such as France and the United Kingdom, have their own economic and political agendas in Africa, which they are not ready to incorporate into a more comprehensive European African policy (Olsen 1998).

Yet, while on one hand the growing Chinese presence in Africa further emphasises the EU's incoherence in Africa, it also demonstrates the urgency of the need to formulate a common European geostrategic vision vis-à-vis the neighbouring continent. Hence, China is helping reshape the EU's dialogue with Africa. With China not being afraid of expressing its economic interests in Africa, the EU is slowly moving away from a purely development aid-driven interaction and toward a more economically motivated partnership with Africa. The recent communication on the EU's development policy clearly indicates its attempt to involve the private sector (European Commission 2011a: 8). Furthermore, the EU has started being more honest about its own rational interests in Africa, such as the access to raw materials (Stahl 2011). At the same time, European policymakers are concerned that the pursuit of these interests does not collide with the implementation of good governance in resource-rich African states (European Commission 2011b: 13).

Signs of a More Reactive and Multilateral Chinese Security Policy in Africa

Despite China's endorsement of the doctrine of sovereignty and non-interference outlined in the previous paragraphs, Beijing has become increasingly entangled in African domestic affairs and conflicts as its economic involvement deepens. Consequently, it has come under increasing pressure not only from the EU (European Parliament 2008) but also from African representative and international civil society groups to adopt a different position on the most unpopular African regimes. In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, an international campaign condemning China's involvement in the conflict in Darfur was launched. At the same time, civil society groups and trade unions in South Africa mobilised against a Chinese ship trying to deliver weapons to the regime of Robert Mugabe, labelling the vessel "the ship of shame" (Taylor 2008:

75; Spiegel and Le Billon 2009: 324). They received so much support that they even succeeded in preventing the vessel from unloading its cargo.

Against this mounting external pressure, Chinese leaders themselves have started realising the high price they pay for choosing to operate in certain African countries (Muekalia 2004). Several incidents have been eye-opening for the Chinese authorities and state-owned oil companies: In Sudan and Ethiopia, Chinese oil facilities have been regularly subject to attacks from militia groups in conflict with the government (Hilsum 2008: 139; BBC 2008). In Nigeria, the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) signed a contract in 2006 with the government of Obasanjo; however, the contract was later reversed by the new government of President Umaru Yar'Adua (Zhao 2011: 70; Wong 2008).

Guinea is a good example of the difficult process that is forcing the Chinese government to adopt a more cautious approach to dealing with unpopular African regimes. Under President Conté, the Beijing-based China Power Investment (CPI) has been involved since 2008 in a joint venture to build an alumina processing plant. This project, financed through the China Development Bank, did not cease even when the military junta of Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, whose government is under sanctions from the international community, seized power (Holslag 2011). While expressing some concerns over the unstable political situation, Beijing adopted the position of sitting and waiting for political instability to subside (Brautigam 2010; *New York Times* 2009; Zhao 2011: 71). In September 2009 the military junta signed a joint venture deal between the China International Fund (CIF), a private fund based in Hong Kong, and Angola's state-owned oil company Sonangol. This time, the Chinese government, through both its ambassador to Guinea and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, clearly distanced itself from the deal, stressing that the CIF was not a government body.

Indeed, recent events show that the Chinese authorities face increasing difficulties in coordinating the activities of the various Chinese actors involved on the African continent. Unlike the widespread perception of China as a rising power with a "grand strategy", it seems evident that Chinese leaders lack a long-term foreign policy approach toward Africa. Instead they are pursing rather short-term interests, trying to adapt to each new situation. This explains why Beijing is increasingly engaged in a more pragmatic policy in Africa, not disciplined by values or established principles. Nowadays, Chinese policy choices related to Africa are largely

based on national interest rather than on ideological grounds (Zhao 2009: 25). At the same time, the perception of what are considered China's national interests is changing. While in the past Africa has not been identified as a key region in Chinese national security considerations – which focused primarily on the direct neighbourhood (Shinn 2008: 155) – the rising Chinese investments and presence in Africa are forcing Beijing to reconsider the importance of long-term political stability in this region. In this context, an important step was made to put peace and security on top of the agenda of the last FOCAC summit in 2009 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

These changing strategic calculations are further accompanied by a modification of some traditional Chinese foreign policy principles, most importantly the doctrine of sovereignty (Pang 2007). In making those changes, Chinese authorities have tried to accommodate their views on sovereignty toward those of the outside world (Wu 2001). There is growing evidence that although still upholding the principle of sovereignty, Chinese leaders have started to apply the concept of non-interference in domestic affairs of third countries more loosely (Austermann 2011: 44; Gao 2008: 2). This increasing retreat of China's strict interpretation of the principle of non-interference is commonly referred to by experts as a "silent" or "quiet" revolution (Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small 2008: 38; Bi 2011: 174). As a result, there is an increasing dichotomy between China's rhetorical commitments to long-lasting principles and the pragmatic adaptation of Chinese policies in Africa (Van Hoeymissen 2011).

The growing Chinese support for UN peacekeeping operations is one of the most visible examples of the greater flexibility on the issue of sovereignty and the preference for a multilateral security approach (He 2007). China has become the fourteenth-largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and second to France among the five permanent members of the Security Council (Gill and Huang 2009) – it is currently involved in six UN peacekeeping operations in Africa (UN 2010). The increasing role China wants to play in UN peacekeeping in Africa is also demonstrated by the fact that Chinese General Zhao Jingmin was appointed commander of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (Gill and Huang 2009).

In terms of diplomacy, the cases of Sudan and Libya are more recent illustrations of the subtle change in the Chinese handling of conflicts in Africa. Sudan is widely recognised as one of the first examples of a growing multilateral Chinese diplomacy with regard to crisis manage-

ment in Africa. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, in 2004 and 2005 China successfully opposed sanctions against Sudan (Van Hoeymissen 2011: 154). Over time, Chinese diplomats have however changed position regarding the resolution of the conflict in Darfur, engaging in discrete diplomatic efforts to convince Sudan's president, al-Bashir, to accept UN peacekeepers on its territory (Zhang 2011). As part of this strategy, Beijing appointed a special envoy to Darfur. Beijing finally approved Resolution 1769 adopted by the Security Council in July 2007, authorising the deployment of a hybrid UN–AU peacekeeping mission to Darfur (Van der Putten and Van der Meulen 2008). Chinese authorities have even actively contributed to the peacekeeping operations by sending an engineering battalion to Darfur (Gill and Huang 2009: 3). Furthermore, despite its strong relations with the regime of al-Bashir, Beijing recognised South Sudan following the January 2011 referendum of independence. This is even more surprising considering that this new country emerged out of a rebel movement (Zambelis 2011).

The events in Libya have demonstrated to the Chinese leadership the direct security implications arising from its business activities in Africa. In the recent conflict, the facilities of the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) were attacked, and Beijing had to evacuate approximately 30,000 Chinese citizens (*Financial Times* 2011). To do so, Chinese authorities had to dispatch a naval frigate to the Mediterranean Sea. It is therefore no surprise that China supported UN Resolution 1970, which imposed an arms embargo, a travel ban and an asset freeze on President Muammar Qaddafi and his closest collaborators. However, Beijing abstained from voting on Resolution 1973, which authorised the establishment of a "no fly zone" over Libya and the use of "all necessary measures" to prevent civilians from being attacked by forces loyal to Qaddafi (Zambelis 2011). This was framed by some experts as China pulling back to its traditional position on non-interference. In this context, however, it is important to note that unlike in the case of Sudan, China never threatened to use its veto as a tactic to water down Resolution 1973. Some experts have noted that the abstention could be seen as a tacit approval on the part of China (Parello-Plesner 2011). As a way of comparison, even within the EU the military intervention was not without controversy, with Germany abstaining from the UN Security Council vote. The example of Libya also shows that Beijing is starting to consider non-state actors in its foreign policy. It has engaged in diplomatic contacts with the Transitional National Council (TNC).

As a result of growing concerns over China's international reputation regarding its engagement in Africa, subtle changes in the official Chinese security discourse occurred. In terms of national security, Chinese scholars have started acknowledging the interdependence of national interests and the existence of non-traditional security as a new research paradigm. As opposed to traditional, geopolitical security threats to states, Chinese experts have recognised that today's security threats, such as terrorism, dependency on raw materials and ecological degradation, can also emerge from non-state actors (Wang 2005; Xia 2009). Since 1999 through a series of White Papers published by the State Council, Chinese leaders have worked on a "New Security Concept", which led to the release of China's "Position Paper on the New Security Concept" in July 2002, stating that the post-Cold War order requires a more pragmatic security policy based on mutual trust, equality and cooperation.

To sum up, like the EU, China is not immune to external pressure, and Chinese leaders have started to foster the image of China as a responsible power. In this context, Beijing has committed itself to a series of multilateral endeavours to tackle conflicts in Africa. As a consequence, the traditional Chinese security policy based on a strict interpretation of sovereignty has been gradually modified. Does this mean that China is going

> through the same learning processes that other outside powers [in Africa] have had to resort to in the past, and [that it] is likely to come up with similar responses to similar predicaments? (Clapham 2006)

Not necessarily. Recent changes in Chinese security practices and official foreign policy vocabulary do not imply that Beijing is completely abandoning its rhetorical commitment to the long-standing sovereignty doctrine (Wu 2009). It is important to bear in mind three crucial limitations to Chinese involvement in multilateral peace operations (Bi 2011: 178). Most importantly, the Chinese contribution to peacekeeping interventions continues to follow a case-by-case approach. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the case of Sudan, Chinese leaders see the approval by the host government as a decisive precondition for any international intervention (Gao 2008: 3). Finally, Beijing does not provide combat troops.

Conclusion: Converging Sino-European Security Interests in Africa

This article has demonstrated that, underneath the surface of official rhetoric, the EU's and China's engagements in multilateral initiatives of crisis management in Africa do not differ from one another to the extent usually assumed. The prevailing argument of a competition between a European and a Chinese security model in Africa, based on diverging understandings of sovereignty and governance, should therefore be refuted. More specifically, the contraposition of a "European consensus" (European Parliament, Council and Commission 2006) versus a "Chinese consensus" (Cooper Ramo 2004) ignores the complex dynamics arising from a growing number of diverse European and Chinese actors involved in Africa. European and Chinese policymakers face similar challenges in implementing a coherent policy approach toward Africa and in ensuring that different entities (e.g. member states, regions, companies) are acting in line with the proclaimed policy principles. While the EU struggles to align its strategic interests with its value-driven foreign policy discourse, China has been encountering increasing difficulties in striking a balance between the doctrine of non-interference and the necessity to protect its economic interests in Africa. In light of the constant evolution of European and Chinese Africa policies, this paper has suggested that they mutually influence each other, leading to converging security motives.

From a European perspective, a crucial question is that of how to deal with China's growing influence over the African security landscape. Based on the subtle reframing of the Chinese stance on sovereignty and multilateral interventions and the recognition that it needs to adapt to an increasingly multipolar world order, the EU has started to identify China as a possible partner in the field of crisis management in Africa (Parello-Plesner 2011). In February 2007, Javier Solana, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, proposed cooperation between the EU and China in Africa. He noted that "China's place in the [UN] Security Council gives it significant influence as well as responsibilities" and welcomed the role Beijing is playing in the resolution of crisis situations in Africa (Solana 2007). Along the same lines, Alvaro de Vasconcelos, director of the EU Institute for Security Studies, called on the EU to integrate China into the formulation of its security strategy regarding the management of conflicts in Africa (De Vasconcelos 2007).

The various calls translated in 2008 into the proposal of the European Commission of a "trilateral EU, Africa and China cooperation" (European Commission 2008), which lists peace and security as the first of four possible areas of cooperation. Parallel to this EU policy initiative, there have been significant modifications in the institutional framework of EU–China cooperation, providing for further opportunities for joint Sino-European responses to African security challenges. Most importantly, the newly created EU–China High-Level Strategic Dialogue serves as a platform for discussion – at the level of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Chinese State Councillor Dai Bingguo – on global issues of key strategic importance for both the EU and China (*EU-China News* 2010).

Yet, the debate over the exact form of Sino-European cooperation on peace and security in Africa is still ongoing. While Chinese officials have been increasingly open to the EU's trilateral proposition, it has been stressed that the EU should not expect cooperation with China based on European terms. Instead, only a pragmatic interaction beyond the existing rhetorical differences appears feasible in the long term (Jian 2011). One step in this direction could be the intensification of communication between EU and Chinese officials responsible for Africa, in order to allow for better coordination of the respective Africa policies and to avoid duplication of projects (Zhang 2008). Second, focus should be given to complementarity of the EU's and China's contributions to crisis management in Africa. For instance, while China has an advantage in manpower, contributing more peacekeepers, the EU has more experience in multilateral peacekeeping in Africa. An interesting example of a project bringing together the added value of China and the EU is a programme by the British Department for International Development (DFID) that finances English-language training for Chinese peacekeepers (DFID 2008). This type of project could be further developed by also including technical expertise.

The EU and China should concentrate on joining forces on the most pressing African security challenges, examples of which are the Arab Spring and the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia. It is in the interest of the energy security of both actors to contribute to a peaceful, long-term, democratic transition in the countries of North Africa, most importantly in Libya. Therefore, it is not surprising that the evolution of the situation in the Southern Mediterranean is a key topic of the agenda of the upcoming 14th EU–China summit (Council of the EU

2011). The fight against piracy in the Gulf of Aden, on the other hand, is probably currently the best example of concrete shared Sino-European security motivations in Africa (Larik and Weiler 2011). Both the EU's operation Atalanta/ EU NAVFOR and China's anti-piracy operation seek to protect economic interests (Liu 2011: 16). Yet, since piracy is by definition a transnational security threat, neither the EU nor China can deal with it alone.

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