

The Challenges of China–European Union Security Cooperation in Africa

Niall Duggan and Obert Hodzi

Abstract

The EU-China cooperation on security in Africa has remained on the level of aspirations and policy formulation with insignificant tangible results. Traditionally, the EU has played a strong role in Africa's security architecture, and China's participation within this policy area will open up areas of possible cooperation and conflict. Both China and the EU share the same goals in Africa—a stable and secure Africa. To achieve that objective, Africa, China and the EU agree, in principle, that a comprehensive approach that incorporates both traditional and non-traditional security methods, as well as a greater level of development support for African nations, must be taken. However, several challenges impede such cooperation. An EU arms embargo on China, conceptual gaps between the EU and China in human rights and sovereignty, and increasing levels of competition for natural resources are all barriers to trilateral security. This paper outlines those challenges, focusing particularly on barriers to cooperation in the areas of traditional and non-traditional security and development aid projects.

Introduction

While the European Union (EU) and the People's Republic of China (China) have enjoyed a healthy economic relationship since the opening up of China's economy in the early 1980s, security cooperation has been, at best, limited. However, as outlined by Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen (2015:11), 'Since 2003 there has been increasing understanding between the EU and China that security cooperation needs to complement the economic and political dialogue' between the two actors. China has had little involvement in international security since the start of the reform era, offering few opportunities for cooperation or conflict between the EU and China. However, the presence of Chinese soldiers in Mali and South Sudan as part of the United Nations peacekeeping missions is a clear sign that China is set to increase its involvement in Africa's security architecture. Yet still, any potential partnership between the EU and China on African issues is as put by Gustaaf Geeraerts (2019) 'bound to be a difficult balancing act between diverging and converging trends' dangling on a 'spectrum that extends from pure cooperation at one end to unrestrained competition on the other.'

The EU traditionally has played a strong role in Africa's security architecture as of 2019 their where 5000 EU troops on UN Peacekeeping mission in Africa (European External Action Services 2019), and China's participation within this policy area 2000 Chinese troops on UN mission Peacekeeping in Africa (Zhou 2018) will open up areas of possible cooperation and conflict. While China a state and the EU a unique economic and political union between 27 states not fully comparable in their actions in many ways, China and the EU share the same goals in Africa in terms of security. Both actors wish to see a stable and secure Africa, and both China and the EU have outlined that to achieve this goal, a comprehensive approach that incorporates both traditional and non-traditional security methods, as well as a greater level of development support for African nations, must be taken (Duggan 2017). A comprehensive approach to peace and security in Africa is also an underlying principle of many of Africa's regional bodies. An agreement on such an approach from all actors should mean that the areas of peace and security are conducive to trilateral cooperation. Alas, several challenges impede such cooperation. An EU arms embargo on China, conceptual gaps between the EU and China in human rights and sovereignty, and increasing levels of competition for natural resources are all barriers to trilateral security. This paper outlines those challenges, focusing particularly on barriers to cooperation in the areas of traditional and non-traditional security and development aid projects.

The Challenges to China-EU Cooperation in Africa

Most scholars emphasise the position of China and the EU in the international system to explain the nature of their cooperation, or lack thereof, in Africa. The EU and its member states – particularly the traditional Western powers of Germany, France, and the former member state United Kingdom (UK) – portray themselves as normative civil powers ‘whose traditional influences and advantages enable them to retain their global position’ (Wang and Song 2016:1). On the other hand, China, a non-Western rising global power, uses its economic preponderance to offer alternative development and governance models to the developing world. Yet despite their historical diversity, China and the EU share a preference for multilateralism in resolving global challenges. Additionally, with their trade exceeding €1 billion a day and representing a third of the global economy, they symbolise ‘new’ players in global governance that ‘could possibly forge an axis in global politics’ (Shambaugh 2005:7-8). Premised on the possibility of an EU China ‘axis’ in global governance, existing literature on this cooperation in Africa falls into two distinct categories.

The first category consists of scholars who are overly optimistic regarding the unfolding of traditional and non-traditional security and development cooperation between China and the European Union in Africa. The main premise of their optimism is a string of cooperative partnership agreements signed between China and the EU. They assume these agreements prove that ‘Beijing and Brussels have expressed their willingness for cooperation through words and deeds, including political support, policy consultation, doctrinal discussion and personnel training’ (He 2013:45). Accordingly, there is an assumption that we are entering into a new era of multilateralism anchored on EU-China cooperation. However, these authors have not significantly tested empirically whether the China–European Union security cooperation in Africa, Chinese and EU policy documents and cooperation agreements or declarations have resulted in cooperation on the ground. Their optimism is, therefore, normally divorced from empirical evidence.

The second category consists of authors who are pessimistic regarding EU-China cooperation in Africa (Hooijmaaijers 2018, Wissenbach 2011). Their view is that the two actors are locked in a rivalry and scramble for influence over Africa, as well as access to its primary commodities. According to these authors, the various cooperative and strategic partnership agreements entered into by China and the EU are a mere smokescreen that hide the enmity between the two. In addition, they point out a list of other challenges including ‘differences in values, friction in economic relations, and the widening social perceptions gaps’ (Li 2016:13)

The underlying argument is that China and the EU differ fundamentally regarding ideological principles and norms, which hinder effective EU-China cooperation. The main reason for these differences as observed by Li Mingjiang, ‘has to do with the basic fact that there are many realist elements in the bilateral ties. In other words, competition, rivalry, and different interests have hindered the development of Sino-EU relations’ (Li 2016:13). The underlying argument is that China and the EU differ fundamentally regarding ideological principles and norms, which hinders any attempt toward sustainable cooperative engagement in Africa. Part of the reason as put by Zhimin Chen is that the EU approaches global governance from a ‘constitutionalism based on human rights’ approach, whereas China’s approach is ‘egalitarianism based on sovereignty’ (Chen 2016:782). It means that since they are ‘running on divergent sets of values and norms, they are predisposed to encounter points of friction, with different intensity, and in different contexts. These points of friction are reached inadvertently and somewhat inertly’ (Vangeli 2013:36). Stumbaum (2007) concludes that the EU and China agree on paper, but in practice, cooperation on, for instance, security in Africa, is hindered by diverse national interests and conflicting principles.

What is however, common for both the pessimists and the optimists is that their analyses of EU-China cooperation in Africa are premised on the perspective of either China or Europe. A case in point is a recently published edited volume, *Security Relations between China and the European Union: From Convergence to Cooperation?* which brought ‘together EU and Chinese views with a common research framework, involving threat perceptions, relevant policy responses, convergence

levels and cooperation aspects' (Kirtchner, Christiansen, and Dorussen 2016). Stumbaum (2007) analyses challenges and possibilities of cooperation between China and Europe on security in Africa from a European point of view. Similarly, Kaya argues from an EU perspective that 'while China is not working to overhaul the existing multilateral system, its influence on norms embodied in that system may revise the system away from the EU's preferences' (Kaya 2014:228). On the other hand, Luo Jianbo and Zhang Xiaomin argue 'from the perspective of Chinese scholars...that the multilateral cooperation among China, Africa and Western countries' will depend on their ability to build a multi-win model of cooperation (2011:1794).

The implication of arguing from a purely Chinese or European perspective is that there is little congruence on which concepts matter in analysing China-EU cooperation in Africa. What is apparent is that those who argue from a European perspective impute the Western understandings of concepts such as sovereignty, security and development onto the discourse, which situates the discussion within the Western liberal order paradigm. Similarly, those who argue from the Chinese perspective seem to have a different non-Western interpretation of the concepts of cooperation and strategic partnership, such that the discourse ends up being a terminology and concept discussion, raising the question of which concepts matter in the discussion of China-EU cooperation in Africa.

The second implication is that the discourse has focused on socialisation of China by the European Union – the main argument being that China needs to be socialised to European norms so that it does not undo European influence in Africa. It is common to find literature that portrays China as a spoiler of Europe's development, governance and norm-socialisation progress in Africa (Hodzi, de Jager and Hartwell 2012). For example, David Shambaugh (2005:7-8) observed that as China's global power and influence intensifies, it is increasingly being socialised by the European Union into taking more global responsibilities in global security governance. The Chinese government's shift from a passive, indifferent approach to proactive engagement in global conflicts is often cited as evidence of its socialisation into the liberal global governance order. The focus therefore shifts from a discussion of EU-China cooperation in Africa to how much the EU has managed to persuade China to take on board Western liberal order norms and values in its engagement with Africa. Invariably, it reduces the discussion to a normative analysis.

The third but most important implication is that little research considers the influence of African agency in shaping how China and the EU jointly and separately respond to development and traditional and non-traditional security issues in Africa. The exclusion of African agency is pervasive in global governance literature because Africa is considered to be a subject of great power politics rather than a consequential actor in global politics. While other authors have examined the tripartite China-EU-Africa relations, there still remains a level of ambiguity on the representation of Africa's role in the tripartite relationship, giving an impression that Africa is a peripheral and inconsequential partner to the final makeup of China-EU cooperation on matters of security and development in Africa. The wider effect is that existing literature has failed to significantly recount how the web of bilateral and multilateral relationships among African countries, the European Union, its member states, and China combine to shape the nature and implementation of EU-China cooperation in development and security in African countries. Adams Bodomo (2016), however, attempts to show how these trilateral arrangements with Africa at the centre are in fact bilateral arrangements between, for instance, the EU and China, to achieve their interests in Africa. Nonetheless, in terms of policy, the EU, especially, has in proposals for trilateral cooperation focused more on China than Africa, creating an impression among Africans that 'the foreigners were colluding without consulting them, in order to exploit them better' (Hooijnaaijers 2018:453). Existing literature, therefore, lacks the nuance brought by a critical and purposeful examination of the "African factor" in China-EU cooperation in Africa.

Challenges to Cooperation in Traditional Security

The traditional security paradigm is transitioning from state- to human-security centralism, and that transition is being partly propelled by the EU through emerging international norms such as the

Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Apart from emphasising human rather than state security, the norms are increasingly challenging the notion of the state, and its pre-eminence as the main referent object in traditional security. But that transition is facing challenges from countries in the Global South, including China and nations in Africa, which still premise their understanding of traditional security on essential values of the state – that is, its territorial integrity and political sovereignty (Attina 2016:175). Even in societies considered to be significantly ‘post-sovereignty’, Britain’s decision to exit the EU and the rise of ultra-nationalist political parties in some European countries signal the re-emergence of nationalism, as well as renewed emphasis on territorial integrity and political sovereignty, which challenges the very essence of the EU. The implication is that without agreement between the EU, EU member states, China and Africa on management of the transition from a state- to a human-security centred traditional security paradigm, the EU is unable to fully cooperate with China on the basis of human security, rather than state security, in Africa.

China, as well as the majority of African countries, is opposed to a human-security centred traditional security paradigm. For its own regime survival, China favours a strict and narrow interpretation of sovereignty, which gives pre-eminence to survival and protection of the state. Just like African countries, China considers itself to be still contending with various degrees of Western ‘interference’ in its internal affairs. In a speech delivered at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, on 1 April 2014, President Xi Jinping said: ‘the memory of foreign invasion and bullying has never been erased from the minds of the Chinese people... China is committed to non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs, and China will not allow others to interfere in its own affairs’ (Xi 2014). The foreign invasion and bullying that President Xi referred to mostly came from the United States and European powers such as Britain and France, which, in the case of Britain and France were also major colonial powers in Africa. The effect of this fundamental difference on how broadly or narrowly sovereignty should be interpreted means that China and the EU are at tangents regarding what role states should play in resolving traditional security issues that affect them, and what role external actors should play. That means that for as long as African countries such as Sudan raise the issue of sovereignty, there is little chance of the EU and China cooperating to resolve traditional security challenges in those countries.

Since both China and Africa were historically subjected to European imperialism, they share a mutual distrust for the EU’s external security policies and strategies. As noted by President Xi in Bruges, Belgium, Europe’s historical imperialism and interference in the internal affairs of China, as well as in Africa, remains the most authoritative lens through which both China and Africa view and respond to the EU’s external security policy. For instance, the South Sudan Army (SPLA) Chief of Staff, Gen. Paul Malong Awan, warned the United States and Western diplomats that ‘South Sudan as a sovereign nation has right and capacity to protect its citizens and in doing so it must deal with both internal and external aggressors’ (Sudan Tribune 2016). The tag of ‘external aggressor’ has been imputed by African countries onto the United States as well as the EU and its member states. The effect is that the involvement of any European country or the United States, whether the EU supports the involvement or not, is considered in Africa as an action by all member states of the EU. To avoid being tarred by the same brush, China has been careful to support the position of the African Union. For instance, on Libya, China abstained, arguing that it had done so at the request of the African Union. Although Germany also abstained, the involvement of NATO was interpreted in Africa, and later by China, as involvement of the European Union and the whole Western world.

Related to the above is that Africa’s separate engagements with the EU and with China are based on contradictory norms and values. EU-Africa relations are arguably due to pressure from the EU, ‘based on norms focused on the civilian population, human rights and conflict prevention’ (van der Putten and Chu 2011:199). Kaya agrees that in Africa, ‘the EU has relied on the effective institutional mechanism outlined in its preferential trade agreements, especially with its former colonies, to coerce trading partners in the case of human rights violations’ (Kaya 2014:219). The 2005 Cotonou Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) and the European Council (EC) emphasise respect for human rights, democracy and good governance as non-negotiable in the two regions’ relations. This insistence by the EC has been a source of conflict between Africa and the

EU. For instance, in 2003, the EU-Africa summit was postponed because European countries refused to allow President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to attend because of his poor human rights record and sanctions they imposed on his government, much to the chagrin of some African countries who insisted that he attend. Among other things, the incident revealed the deep-seated conflict of norms and principles between the EU and Africa. Contrary to the EU's approach, China's insistence on non-interference in the internal affairs of African states and emphasis on the right of African countries to choose their own development and governance models has made relations with China more appealing to most African leaders. Consequently, because they deal with Africa on the basis of different norms and principles, it is difficult for the EU and China to effectively cooperate on traditional security issues in Africa.

Principles of the EU are largely inimical to the interests of African leaders in countries such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Sudan. Thus, the EU is treated by those countries as an 'intruding other' in their relationship with China. Chinese officials also hold the same view concerning the EU in Africa. As noted by Ambassador Guijin (2010):

Roughly two years ago, when the EU was about to draft a document for EU-China-Africa trilateral cooperation, we asked our embassies in Africa to consult their host countries. The result was mixed. Some were enthusiastic about the idea, and some opposed it. For the majority it sounded good, but they had worries. They told us, we are working together so well, why make things so complicated, why make things more expensive. Because they know that their cooperation with China is more effective and the costs of Chinese projects are low.

For fear of complicating its relationship with Africa, China is wary of being considered by African countries as working in collusion with the EU to dominate Africa. That fear subsequently influences the degree of China's cooperation with the European Union on traditional security issues in Africa.

The EU has substantial geopolitical and strategic interests in Africa, but its influence in Africa has been waning. The rise of China and other emerging powers such as India, South Africa, Russia and Brazil that have competing strategic interests in Africa have emboldened most African countries to side-line and sometimes outright reject the EU.

The most important difficulty for European political and economic elites is to accept that the hegemonic historical position they enjoyed for centuries has not only been challenged by the US since the 20th century but is now being challenged by China, a newcomer with different traditions, and potentially will be challenged further by other emerging powers like India in the course of this century. (Burnay, Defraigne and Wouters 2015:14)

Leaders of African countries have reiterated that European powers are condescending in their engagement with Africa. Accordingly, principles such as 'African solutions to African problems' are partly motivated by Africa's need to curtail Western interference in African conflicts. China has been careful to tailor its intervention in African conflicts along lines that are preferable to African countries (Hodzi 2018). As noted by China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, at the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in December 2015, China supports 'African people to solve Africa's problems in an African way, because African brothers know the best about the actual situation and are the most qualified to solve their problems' (Wang 2015). Although China is gradually shifting from its strict adherence to non-interference to 'constructive engagement', it still aligns its position regarding traditional security in Africa to that of the African Union and of regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The EU-China cooperation on traditional security in Africa is also hindered by the absence of harmony between the EU's external security policy and that of its individual member states. EU member states follow EU policy. They do so, however, with differing emphasis. Analysing the security policies of Britain, France and Germany, Wang (2015) concludes that all three countries 'support the

spirit of the ESS in their national concepts', but what he fails to show is that, in practice, these three countries deal with both traditional and non-traditional security issues in Africa differently. The relationship between China and EU member states is not uniform with each member state but varies. For instance, despite Germany's opposition to military intervention in Libya, several other EU Member States, through NATO intervened (Brockmeier 2013). Thus, Europe must:

...deal with the contradictions between the strategy of the EU proper and that of some of its member states. The least one can say is that the use of hard power by some EU member states, as in the case of Libya, Iraq or Ivory Coast, and the non-transparent diplomacies of some member states which are at odds with the principles laid down at the supranational level by the EU institutions, do not encourage China to trust the EU as a credible partner in a triangular dialogue. (Burnay, Defraigne and Wouters 2015:15)

Notably, 'the fact that the EU is not a state carries with it limitations regarding the cohesion of its security policy, with security and defence policy remaining largely the prerogative of member states' (Kirtchner, Christiansen and Dorussen 2016:1). The resulting lack of agreement among EU member states and the EU on how to resolve traditional security issues in Africa severely limits its ability to cooperate with China. The reason for the lack of harmony at the EU is that France, Britain and Belgium have maintained strong political and economic interests in their former colonies.

Challenges to Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security

The transboundary nature of non-traditional security and the spill over effect of insecurity from Africa to both Europe and China have contributed to making cooperation between the EU and China potentially possible. Both 'have a shared interest in regional and global stability facilitating economic growth' (Christiansen 2016:30). Giving the much-cited example of the influence of piracy on the EU's and China's economic interests, Fanoulis and Kirchner (2016) point out that such global crises raise the need for more global cooperation to address non-traditional security challenges. But, as the response to the piracy crisis off the coast of Somalia reveals, there was minimal cooperation between the EU and China. Far from being a strategic cooperation, the sharing of intelligence and joint patrols were more 'ad hoc'. Part of the reason for the absence of EU-China strategic cooperation on non-traditional security in Africa is their diverging interpretation of 'cooperation'.

In dealing with non-traditional security issues in Africa, China tends to take a more bilateral approach, pragmatically balancing its non-intervention principle, with its economic interests. According to China's position paper on the New Security Concept (2002), 'cooperation under the new security concept should be flexible and diversified in form and model. It could be a multilateral security mechanism of relatively strong binding force or a forum-like multi-lateral security dialogue. It could also be a confidence-building bilateral security dialogue or a non-governmental dialogue of an academic nature. The promotion of greater interaction of economic interests is another effective means of safeguarding security.' On the other hand, 'the EU tends to adopt a more multilateral/holistic approach that takes into account the impact on the neighbouring countries as well as the impact on regional integration processes' (Burnay, Defraigne and Wouters 2015:11). The fact that China is not committed to an inflexible multilateral cooperation framework makes it difficult for the EU to build a sustainable cooperation with China on non-traditional security in Africa.

China regards non-traditional security as within the domain of the affected state. It argues that the responsibility to respond and protect a country's citizens falls on the affected government first. Other states can intervene only at the invitation of the concerned government. This position is included in China's policy paper on the New Security Strategy, in which it states 'that all countries, big or small, are equal members of the international community and should respect each other, treat each other as equals, refrain from interfering in other countries' internal affairs and promote the democratization of the international relations.' Based on that approach, China does not consider most non-traditional security issues in Africa as matters of its security concern except in cases where they directly affect its economic interests or the security of overseas Chinese nationals. This explains why it responded swiftly to the piracy crisis off Somalia's coast but was hesitant to intervene in the

Darfur crises until its indifferent position threatened the success of the Beijing Olympics. In many respects, this has been a point of conflict between the EU and China, because the EU considers China's rise in Africa as 'posing a challenge on to the EU's ability to spread new sovereignty. New sovereignty holds that sovereignty is violable and interference in other states' affairs is valid, specifically when human rights issues are concerned' (Kaya 2014:216). Accordingly, 'competition and conflict have recently increased: intervention and responsibility in crisis regions such as Libya and Syria...human rights and sovereignty issues...are key areas of conflict' (Austermann and Wang 2013:4).

The EU is cautious of China's rise, as well as the possible security, economic and political consequences of that rise in Africa. The major concern is the difference in how the EU and China explain the causes of terrorism and other non-traditional issues in Africa. Initially, China did not consider non-traditional threats in Africa to be of its concern until the piracy phenomenon in the Gulf of Aden. As noted by Li Wei, director of the Anti-Terrorism Research Centre at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, 'sending troops to join the Somali anti-piracy mission signals the change in China's concept of security from the traditional to the non-traditional' (Wu and Peng 2008). This, in turn, affects the approach the EU and China take in dealing with such challenges. The EU normally considers issues of terrorism and violence by non-state actors in Africa as symptomatic of poor governance and state fragility. China, however, sees the same challenges as a result of lack of development. Accordingly, while the EU supported the imposition of sanctions on Sudan for the Darfur crisis, China invested extensively in Sudan's oil sector. This suggests that where the EU applies the 'stick', China applies the 'carrot', making cooperation between the two problematic. Thus, as noted by Wang Jianwei and Song Weiqing, the EU China distrust 'has manifested in real political problems between the two sides, with issues of security, political suspicion, trade and economic friction. The "market economy status," arms embargoes, and the human rights situation in China are often causes for concern' (2016:5). This explains why China has insisted in China's Policy Paper on the EU: *Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation*, which outlines that counter-terrorism exchanges and cooperation between China and the EU should be based on principles of mutual respect and equal-footed cooperation rather than double standards.

China's emphasis on equality and mutual respect rather than double standards is aimed at precluding the EU from interfering in its own internal issues, particularly how it responds to the 'terrorist' acts of minority Chinese such as the Uighurs and Tibetans. 'At a time when the EU is increasingly keen to promote intervention in the affairs of third states in case of severe threats against civilian populations and massive human rights violations, China – and many other non-Western countries – opposes the doctrines of human intervention and of the responsibility to protect' (Burnay, Defraigne and Wouters 2015:11). China is wary of extensive cooperation with the EU, because it fears the EU might use the cooperation to intervene in China's non-traditional security issues. Therefore, China limits its cooperation with the EU in Africa to intelligence and personnel information sharing, which has made EU diplomats argue that China uses such flexible and ad hoc exchanges as intelligence gathering opportunities rather than as genuine cooperation. This also feeds into the perception that China is a free rider, only seeking cooperation when it suits its national interests.

Challenges to Cooperation in Development Projects

In order to achieve both traditional and non-traditional security goals in Africa, all three actors – China, the EU and Africa – agree that economic development of the continent is necessary. Deliberately or not, the presence of China and other emerging donors has substantially transformed the context in which development is to occur in Africa and has changed the context for traditional donors, such as the EU (MAH 2015:48). Data on Chinese development Aid to Africa is difficult to pin down bodies such as AidData have reported that China spent \$354.3 billion over the 15-year period from 2000 to 2014 (AidData 2020). As outlined by Grimm and Hackenesch (2012), China's presence in Africa as a donor is now the biggest external challenge to European development policy in Africa –

even though the EU is still Africa's biggest official donor (European Commission 2020). Historical links that both China and the EU have with Africa have created different narratives, which have shaped their donor relationships with the continent. As outlined by Jin Ling (2010:6):

Historically, China and the EU have had very different kinds of relationships with Africa, which continue to influence contemporary conduct. The colonial past has been a heavy burden in EU–Africa relations, but has nonetheless laid a solid foundation for the so-called donor–recipient relationship model of engagement. Unlike the EU, China has a history of being colonised, like Africa, and is today facing similar development challenges to those faced by the continent, so it has been easier for China and Africa to create a relationship based on common perspectives on issues such as sovereignty and national priorities.

The varying historical relationships that each actor has had with Africa do act in some way as a barrier to trilateral cooperation. However, two key aspects that are common to both China's and the EU's models of development aid prevent cooperation in this area and create challenges for each actor's individual model.

First, China's own economic development success offers a clear alternative to the Western development model, which in part is linked to the liberal democratic model. This alternative approach challenges the European assumptions of how development is designed and provided, as well as the underlying norms and principles linked to the democracy movement and good governance (Grauls and Stahl 2012). China's economic success, which has been achieved without democratic reforms, has led the European donor community to re-evaluate the long-held link in Western development studies between democratic reforms and economic growth in transition countries. The concept of achieving rapid economic growth without democratic reforms is an appealing concept for many African elites and leaders, who have pointed to China as a contrary example when Europe has raised the link between economic growth and democratic reforms. Good governance and democracy lie at the heart of the EU's normative understanding of development and therefore is a core aspect of its donor model. The Chinese model of development is incompatible with the EU's normative understanding and therefore is a major barrier to cooperation between both actors in terms of economic development aid. Chinese economic success is also taking place during a period when Europe's economic model has shown very slow economic growth, as well as a number of economic crises, most notably the euro crisis. Slow economic growth has resulted in tighter European public budgets, reducing EU member states' ability to contribute to development aid in Africa (Siles-Brügge 2014)

Second, beyond China's historical links with Africa and its appeal as an economic development model, China's donor model itself is a challenge to the EU's role as a donor in Africa and the EU's development policy in Africa. As China is a non-OECD member, it is not held to the same conditions and standards when providing aid (Mawunou and Gabas 2012). China's trade and aid model, which claims political neutrality, offers a clear alternative to the charity-based development model, which in part is linked to Europe's colonial history in Africa. The Chinese aid model also has an emphasis on South-South Cooperation with African countries, which is based on mutual benefit or win-win cooperation. This is in direct contradiction with the EU's aid model, which is, at least in rhetoric if not in reality, based on the principle that aid should not serve a donor's interests in the first place. While the Chinese aid model does not incorporate any political conditions (other than the One China policy), it does come in the form of tied development projects, whereby China provides large-scale infrastructure projects. For example, in Angola, Chinese lines of credit have been used almost entirely for infrastructure projects and, rather than transferring money directly, the projects are completed by Chinese state-owned construction companies (Croese 2012:126). In such projects, Chinese official aid flows are not channelled through African budgets, decreasing transparency on projects and also offer rent-seeking opportunities (Bräutigam 2011). The European development community also criticises the use of Chinese companies and labour on these Chinese development projects in Africa, as well as a lack of environmental planning (Xiaofang 2014, Jing 2009). It is feared that the use of Chinese labour and Chinese companies prevents the spillover of benefits – such as

knowledge and wealth transfers – to local African communities. While the Chinese have taken steps to take environmental planning and spill over benefits into consideration when designing development projects in Africa, these factors are still not as advanced as the OECD standard. The different model of delivering development aid to Africa by both China and the EU is, in itself, a challenge to trilateral cooperation (Carbone 2011).

Third, similar to security issues, individual EU Member States are seeking bilateral cooperation with China on development issues in Africa - which alienates the EU. For example, France's president Emmanuel Macron persuaded President Xi Jinping that France and China need to cooperate and deepen their engagement in Africa. Soon after their meeting in January 2019, the French Agency for Development and the China Development Bank agreed to partner to support climate change projects in Africa. Germany, the biggest economy in continental Europe has been seeking to increase its footprint in Africa. To enhance its Africa engagement it announced its own Marshall Plan for Africa and established the Sino-German Center for Sustainable Development on 11 May 2017 - which according to its official website is premised on a shared understanding that 'during the past years, China and Germany realized the synergies between official development assistance as delivered by Germany and foreign aid and south-south cooperation as provided by China'. Based in Beijing, the Centre is a joint initiative between the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ) and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (MofCom). Part of the Centre's role is to 'identify, assess, prepare, accompany and monitor trilateral cooperation projects between Germany, China, and third countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.'

Despite these challenges and barriers to trilateral cooperation between China, Africa and the EU, the European Commission has sought to engage China and African countries in trilateral dialogue (Grimm and Hackenesch 2016). Basing on issues they converge on, China and the EU agreed to engage Africa on poverty eradication, support the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 and for Africa to actively participate in multilateral initiatives on security and UN peacekeeping. This convergence of objectives in Africa led to establishment of the EU-China-Africa Expert Working Group on Conventional Arms in 2012. However, this attempt to create trilateral dialogue has, for the most part, failed. The dialogue has remained on the level of policy formulation and strongly bilateral in its engagement between China and the EU, with African states and/or regional organisations side-lined. This has created a bilateral dialogue between China and the EU about Africa rather than a trilateral dialogue. The lack of a free and independent development community within Chinese civil society has also prevented trilateral cooperation from occurring below the state level. Without trilateral cooperation or trilateral dialogue between the three actors, direct competition will continue between China and the EU in the area of development aid. This direct competition in itself will prevent both actors from achieving their goals in Africa.

Conclusion

In terms of security, trilateral cooperation or trilateral dialogue between China, the EU and Africa faces a number of challenges. While both China and the EU have a comprehensive approach to security in Africa, which would require both traditional and non-traditional security approaches, as well as a greater level of development support for African nations, both actors have differing approaches to enacting these policies. In terms of trilateral cooperation in the traditional security, there are two main challenges. The first is a practical question that has faced the EU since its foundation – that is, a lack of coordination among member states in terms of its external security policy. The EU's security relationship with Africa is mainly led by former colonial powers such as France and Britain. This lack of coordination by European actors is a key challenge for trilateral cooperation in traditional security. Both China and leading actors in Africa can play divide and rule with the EU by pitting member states against one another. At the same time, the EU is not viewed as a credible actor due to the fact that it only intervenes when it has direct economic interests, and 'only when the security risk to European troops is low, and when the European Great Powers seek to demonstrate European power internationally' (Gegout 2010:134). The second main challenge for

trilateral cooperation in traditional security is the understanding of security held by all three actors. The EU's understanding of security has a focus on human security rather than a state-centric security, which is held by China and many African states. In terms of security cooperation, these diverging understandings of security mean that areas of cooperation are limited to where both understandings intersect – that is, where both human and state security are under threat. In terms of trilateral cooperation in non-traditional security, again the EU and China face the problem of different interpretations of 'cooperation'. In dealing with non-traditional security issues in Africa, China tends to view the promotion of greater interaction of economic interests as another effective means of safeguarding security. This is done on a bilateral level. The EU tends to adopt a more multilateral/holistic approach that takes into account the regional impact. The fact that China is not committed to a multilateral cooperation framework makes it difficult for the EU to build cooperation with China on non-traditional security in Africa. Both China and the EU agree that for traditional and non-traditional security to be achieved in Africa, economic development needs to increase on the continent and encompass a central part of any comprehensive security approach. However, both China and the EU have fundamental different understandings of development aid and of a wider concept of economic development. While the EU remain Africa's biggest investor and donor the EU's focus on good governance and China's focus on investment Aid model lead to direct competition in the area of development aid, but also in the wider understanding of the link between economic development and human rights. In terms of traditional and non-traditional security, as well as of a comprehensive security approach involving development aid, trilateral cooperation between China, the EU and Africa faces a number of challenges. At the heart of these challenges is a lack of understanding of the approach of the other actors. Overcoming these challenges requires each actor to change what is, for the most part, a fundamental concept of their normative approach of international security.

Bibliography

Africa Union Commission (AUC). (2010) China and Africa: Assessing the relationship on the eve of the fourth forum on China Africa Cooperation. The Bulletin of Fridays of the Commission 3(1): 1–75.

Aiddata (2020), China's Global Development Footprint, <https://www.aiddata.org/china-official-finance>, Accessed 18 March 2020

Alden, Christopher. (2007) *China in Africa*. London/New York: Zed Books

Austermann, Frauke and Wang, Xiaoguang. (2013). 'Introduction.' In Frauke Austermann, Anastas Vangeli and Xiaoguang Wang (eds.), *China and Europe in 21st Century Global Politics: Partnership, Competition or Co-Evolution*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 1-19.

Attina, Fulvio. (2016). 'Traditional Security Issues.' In Jianwei Wang, Weiqing Song (eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 175-194.

Bodomo, Adams. (2016). Against the hypothesis of a China-EU collaboration in Africa. *M & Z* 2: 40-45.

Burnay, Jan., Defraigne, Jean-Christophe, and Wouters, Matthieu. (2015). 'Introduction: China, the European Union and the Developing World: Analysing and Comparing a Triangular Relationship Region by Region.' In Jan Wouters, Jean-Christophe Defraigne, Matthieu Burnay (eds.), *China, the European Union and the Developing World: A Triangular Relationship*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.1-18.

Bräutigam, Deborah. (2011). Aid 'With Chinese Characteristics': Chinese Foreign Aid and Development Finance Meet the OECD DAC Aid Regime. *Journal of international development*, 23(5), 752-764 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1798>

Brockmeier, Sarah. (2013). Germany and the Intervention in Libya. *Survival* 55(6): 63-90.

Carbone, Maurizio (2011) The European Union and China's rise in Africa: Competing visions, external coherence and trilateral cooperation, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29:2, 203-221 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2011.555195>

Chen, Zhimin (2016). China, the European Union and the fragile world order. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54:4, 775-792. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12383>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2018) 'China's position paper on the New Security Concept' <http://www.china-un.org/eng/xw/t27742.htm> Accessed 26 June 2018

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2014) 'China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation' April, 2 2014. http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/t1143406.shtml Accessed 26 June 2018

Christiansen, Thomas. (2016). 'A Liberal Institutional Perspective on China-EU Relations.' In Jianwei Wang, Weiqing Song (eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 29-50.

European Commission, (2020) Top donors in the world, https://euaidexplorer.ec.europa.eu/content/overview_en, Accessed 18 March 2020

European External Action Services (2019), Military and civilian missions and operations, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations_en Accessed 18 March 2020

Fanoulis, Evangelos and Kirchner, Emil. (2016). 'Nontraditional Security Issues.' In Jianwei Wang, Weiqing Song (eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 195-212.

Geeraerts, Gustaaf. (2019) The EU-China partnership: balancing between divergence and convergence. *Asia Europe Journal*. *Asia Europe Journal* 17:281–294 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00554-2>

Gegout, Catherine. (2010). EU conflict management in Africa: The limits of an international actor. In James Hughes (ed.), *EU Conflict Management*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 125-137.

Guijin, L. (2010). About China-Africa cooperation, 30 August. www.focac.org.

Grauls Sarah & Stahl Anna, (2010), "European development policy towards sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges of the growing Chinese presence", *Émulations*, n°7. mise en ligne 9 novembre Hackenesch Christine (2011), Competing for development? The European Union and China in Ethiopia Stellenbosch | November 2011 http://www.ccs.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/DP3_Hackenesch_Chinaand-EU-in-Ethiopia-for-CCS_final1.pdf Accessed 26 June 2018

He, Yin. (2013). 'China-EU Cooperation on UN Peacekeeping: Opportunities and Challenges: A Chinese View.' In Frauke Austermann, Anastas Vangeli and Xiaoguang Wang (eds.), *China and Europe in 21st Century Global Politics: Partnership, Competition or Co-Evolution*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 43-61

Hodzi, Obert. (2018). *The end of China's non-intervention policy in Africa*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hodzi, Obert., De Jager, Nicola., and Hartwell, Leon. (2012). 'Unconditional Aid': Assessing the Impact of China's Development Assistance in Zimbabwe. *South Africa Journal of International Affairs* 19(1): 79-103.

- Hooijmaaijers, Bas. (2018) China's rise in Africa and the response of the EU: a theoretical analysis of the EU-China-Africa trilateral cooperation policy initiative, *Journal of European Integration*, 40:4, 443-460 <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018.1465418>
- Jing Gu, (2009) China's Private Enterprises in Africa and the Implications for African Development The *European Journal of Development Research* 21(4): 570–587 <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2009.21>
- Kamerling Susanne and van der Putten, Frans-Paul. (2011). 'Europe Sails East, China Sails West.' In Frans-Paul van der Putten and Chu Shulong (eds.), *China, Europe and International Security: Interests, Roles and Prospects*. London: Routledge, pp 178-194
- Kaya, Ayse. (2014). 'The EU's China Problem: A Battle over Norms.' *International Politics* 51(2): 214–233. Doi:10.1057/ip.2014.4
- Kirtchner, Emil., Christiansen, Thomas and Dorussen, Han. (2016). 'EU-China Security Cooperation in Context.' In Emil J. Kirchner, Thomas Christiansen, Han Dorussen (eds.), *Security Relations between China and the European Union: From Convergence to Cooperation?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-18.
- Liu Lirong (2011), The EU and China's engagement in Africa: the dilemma of socialisation Occasional paper August 93 http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/The_EU_and_Chinas_engagement_in_Africa.pdf Accessed 26 June 2018
- Li, Mingjiang. (2016). 'China-EU relations: Rivalry impedes Strategic Partnership.' In Jianwei Wang, Weiqing Song (eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-28.
- Mah Luis (2015) Reshaping European Union development policy: collective choices and the new global order *Rev. Bras. Polit. Int.* 58 (2): 44-64 .doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201500203.
- Shambaugh, D. (2005) The new strategic triangle: US and European reactions to China's rise. *Washington Quarterly* 28(3): 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1162/0163660054026470>
- Sudan Tribune (2016) 'South Sudan Army Chief of Staff Cautions Foreign Diplomats', 11 December 2016. Available at: <https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article61073> Accessed 26 June 2018
- Stumbaum, May-Britt (2007) Opportunities and Limits of EU-China Security Cooperation, *The International Spectator*, 42:3, 351-370 DOI: 10.1080/03932720701567570
- Siles-Brügge Gabriel (2014) EU trade and development policy beyond the ACP: subordinating developmental to commercial imperatives in the reform of GSP *Contemporary Politics* 20: 49-62 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2014.881604>
- van der Putten, Frans-Paul and Chu, Shulong. (2011). 'Conclusion.' In Frans-Paul van der Putten and Chu Shulong (eds.), *China, Europe and International Security: Interests, Roles and Prospects*. London: Routledge, pp 195- 201
- Vangeli, Anastas. (2013). 'On the Obstacles to Greater Commitment in Sino-European Relations: A European View.' In Frauke Austermann, Anastas Vangeli and Xiaoguang Wang (eds.), *China and Europe in 21st Century Global Politics: Partnership, Competition or Co-Evolution*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 20- 42.
- Wang, Jianwei and Song, Weiqing. (2016). 'New Players and New Order of Global Governance.' In Jianwei Wang, Weiqing Song (eds.), *China, the European Union, and the International Politics of Global Governance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-12.
- Wang Yi (2015) Explore Effective Solutions with Chinese Characteristics to Hotspot Issues in Africa', 6. http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1322225.shtml Accessed 26 June 2018

Wissenbach, Uwe. (2007). 'The EU's effective multilateralism – but with whom? Functional multilateralism and the rise of China.' International Policy Analysis, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, May 2007. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/04469.pdf> Accessed 26 June 2018

Wissenbach, Uwe. (2008) The Renaissance or the end of geopolitics? Towards trilateral cooperation in Africa. In: Proceedings of the 6th Shanghai Workshop on Global Governance, March 14–15.

Wissenbach, Uwe. (2011). "The EU, China and Africa: Working for Functional Cooperation?" In *China and the European Union in Africa. Partners or Competitors?* edited by Jing Men and Benjamin Barton, Farnham: Ashgate 245– 268.

Wu, Jiao and Peng, Kuang. (2008). 'Sailing to strengthen global security' *China Daily*, 26 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/26/content_7342612.htm Accessed 26 June 2018

Yunguo, S. (2008) Comparison of China-Africa and Europe-Africa relations. In: China-Europe-Africa Cooperation: Chances and Challenges, Proceedings of the 6th Shanghai Workshop on Global Governance; March 14–15. Shanghai, China: Shanghai Institute for International Studies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Zhang, Tuosheng. (2010). 'On China's Concept of the International Security Order.' In Robert Ross, Øystein Tunsjø, Zhang Tuosheng (eds.), *US-China-EU Relations: Managing the New World Order*. London Routledge, pp. 26-47.

Zhu, Y. (2011) China and international 'human rights diplomacy'. *China: An International Journal* 9(2): 217–245. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S0219747211000148>

Zhou Laura (2018) What to know about China's ties with Africa, from aid to infrastructure, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2156279/what-know-about-chinas-ties-africa-aid-infrastructure> Accessed 18 March 202

Xi, Jinping. (2014) 'EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue: Speech of President Xi Jinping.' European Commission, 1 April, Bruges, Belgium. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/international-cooperation/documents/china/xijinping-speech_en.pdf Accessed 26 June 2018

Xiaofang Shen (2014) Private Chinese Investment in Africa: Myths and Realities *Development Policy Review* 33(1): 83-106 <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12093>