Seeking security in Africa: China's evolving approach to the African Peace and Security Architecture[1]

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Executive summary

China is on course to becoming more deeply involved in Africa's security landscape. While the motivation behind Chinese involvement remains primarily economic, the growing exposure of its interests to the vagaries of African politics and pressures to demonstrate greater global activism are bringing about a reconsideration of Beijing's approach to the continent. China faces threats on three fronts to its standing in Africa: reputational risks derived from its assocation with certain governments; risks to its business interests posed by mecurial leaders and weak regulatory regimes; and risks faced by its citizens operating in unstable African environments. Addressing these concerns poses challenges for Beijing, whose desire to play a larger role in security often clashes with the complexities of doing so while preserving Chinese foreign policy principles and economic interests on the continent.

The result is increasing Chinese involvement in African security through greater activism in multilateral peacekeeping operations, which received further support with the annoucement of the China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security in 2012. This aspirational commitment to a more institutionalised form of involvement remains problematic, however, because of China's uncertainty as to the implications for its established interests and an underlying ambivalence towards the normative dimensions of the African Peace and Security Architecture. These concerns reflect wider debates in China as to the implications of its role in existing regional and global governance structures.

Introduction

China's engagement in Africa, once characterised as decidely non-interventionist in its pursuit of economic interests, is on course to becoming more deeply involved in the region's security landscape. While the motivation behind Chinese involvement remains primarily economic, the growing exposure of its interests to the vagaries of African politics and, concurrently, pressures to demonstrate greater global activism are bringing about a reconsideration of Beijing's sanguine approach to the region. In particular, China faces threats on three fronts to its standing in Africa: reputational risks derived from its assocation with certain governments; risks to its business interests posed by mecurial leaders and weak regulatory regimes; and risks faced by its citizens operating in unstable African environments. Addressing these concerns poses particular

challenges for Beijing, whose desire to play a larger role in continental security often clashes with the complexities of doing so while preserving China's abiding foreign policy principles and growing economic interests on the continent.

The result is increasing involvement in African security measured in terms of greater activism in multilateral peacekeeping operations, be it through cooperation at the level of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the African Union (AU), or in terms of deploying Chinese troops to and providing greater financial assistance for peace support missions. This impulse has received further support with the announcement in 2012 of the China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, which promises the integration of security issues into the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) process. Linking this

aspirational commitment to a more institutionalised form of involvement, however, remains problematic, in part because of China's uncertainty as to the practical implications this has for its established interests, as well as an underlying ambivalence towards some of the normative dimensions of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). These concerns in turn reflect wider debates in China as to the efficacy of expanding its role in existing regional and global governance structures.

The African security environment

The seemingly enduring nature of African security problems and the various attempts to resolve them have been constant features of the post-colonial period, shaping relations among African states, their societies and the international community. At the heart of this situation is the condition of the African state and its weaknesses, variously diagnosed as rooted in the structural legacies of colonialism and neocolonial practices, and a fundamental disjuncture between an elitist state and diverse societies, or suffering from deficiencies ranging from deep-seated corruption to chronic policy mismanagement.[2] While the notion of constructing a sustainable state apparatus featured to a degree in the independence struggle and colonial rationalisations for maintaining suzerainty, this debate was largely abandoned in favour of a swift withdrawal of formal European control in most of Africa. The phenomena of "juridical sovereignty" and the rise of "shadow states" and a host of other pathologies affecting the African state diagnosed by Western academics in the wake of independence were exacerbated by clientalist practices, the appropriation of the state for personal gain and the devastating impact of structural adjustment policies aimed at resolving these dilemmas. As a result, throughout much of this period African security was conceived and addressed by independence leaders whose focus was on strategies aimed at dismantling colonial rule, engaging in post-colonial nation-building that was primarily given expression through the strengthening of authoritarian rule, and finding ways of accommodating foreign influence that were mostly framed in the terms of the exigencies of the cold war.

With the ending of the cold war and the concurrent onset of a democratisation process across the continent, starting in Benin in 1991 and winding its way across much of Africa, a new security agenda for the continent began to take shape. It was primarily oriented towards managing these potentially volatile transitions away from authoritarianism and conflict and, as such, emphasised peacekeeping and the building of liberal institutions. This was formalised through the UN secretary general's Agenda for Peace (1992; amended 1995) and reflected influential initiatives of the day such as the Commonwealth's Commisson on Global Governance (CGG, 1995: 77-112). African leaders, led by Salim Salim at the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), attempted to revitalise the regional approach to security on the continent in the early 1990s, laying the basis of many of the normative changes through the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (Jeng, 2012: 157).

A turning point in the African security debate was finally reached with the massive failure of the international community and its African partners to stem the tide of instability, destruction and genocide in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These "new wars", said to be motivated by "greed and grievance", exposed the severe deficiencies of some African states in managing complex claims to legitimacy and the effective allocation of national resources – deficiencies variously rooted in ethnicity, chronic deprivation and administrative corruption or failure (Kaldor, 1999; Collier & Hoeffler, 1999). The result was to spur on an expanded discourse that diagnosed the sources of African insecurity as rooted in governance failures and aimed to address these through a range of policy prescriptions that included external intervention on humanitarian grounds and built on past precedents of the comprehensive restructuring of the continent's economic and governance institutions. Collectively characterised as "liberal peace" and given expression through processes that led to the UN Summit on the Responsibility to Protect and the establishment of the Commission on Peacebuilding in 2005, these plans were realised in UN-sanctioned interventions in the DRC and Sudan (Paris, 2004).

For Africa, these enhanced efforts at tackling security were integrated into the tranformation of the OAU into the AU, a process that culminated in 2002 with the passage of the Constitutive Act. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) that emerged from this process was a five-pronged system composed of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Early Warning System (EWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), the Panel of the Wise, the Peace Fund and the eight designated regional economic communities (RECs) – although only five presently lead in this area. The RECs – the building blocks of a possible continental union – have begun to develop regional forms of the ASF and EWS (AU, 2010: 8). Notably, the AU provisions for intervention as described in Article 4 went well beyond the OAU's defensive posture on sovereignty to one predicated on "non-indifference", calling outright for intervention in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other forms of conflict where the state had abrogated its responsibilities to its citizens (AU, 2000). Coupled to this was a more robust endorsement of peacebuilding, democratic governance and institutional development through the issuing of the Common African Defence and Security Policy in 2004 and the Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in 2009 (Vines, 2013: 90-91). The AU, unlike its predecessor, has demonstrated a willingness to be actively involved in continental security issues, having suspended nine member governments for constitutional violations,

2   For an overview of this topic, see Williams (2011).

applied sanctions against six member governments and authorised several peace support operations in the last decade (Vines, 2013: 91-93).

Nonetheless, relations between the AU and the RECs are widely seen to be "imbalanced" and unclear, with some well-developed regional organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) able to field strong peace support missions, while others are effectively disfunctional in terms of security matters (Vorrath, 2012; AU, 2010). Overall dependency on some key bilateral and multilateral partners, notably the European Union (EU) and UN, is evident: while African ownership of the APSA process is emphasised throughout, measured in financial terms this position is currently mostly rhetorical because Western governments supply the bulk of the financial requirements (98%) of the operational components of the AU (Vorrath, 2012). Particular peacekeeping operations, such as the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), have relied almost exclusively on funding support from EU sources (Engel & Porto, 2010: 4). Moreover, the promotion of formalised ties between the UN Security Council and the AU – the only such regional arrangement and one strongly driven by South Africa during its two-term tenure as a non-permenant member of the Security Council – ensures that both African security issues and AU involvement feature high on the global agenda.[3] Finally, important security issues, such as the continuing spread of arms sales – still dominated by the Western armaments industry and its Russian counterpart, although Chinese small arms are making an impact (Bromely et al., 2013: 41-47) – remain largely outside of official processes of scrutiny.

Despite these changes to formal policy and greater international activism, improvements in African security still remain distressingly episodic, with regional leadership seen in peace support operations in West African conflicts and UN involvement limited to selective involvement in peacekeeping and monitering operations in Somalia, the DRC and the Sudans. Given the low levels of development in Africa, which is characterised by states saddled with spiralling debt burdens that are incapable of providing domestic revenue and channelling investment into the public sector, and a foreign investment community that rarely looks beyond the extractive sector, the dire conditions in Africa seem fixed in a cycle of insecurity. It is a situation ripe for change, and indeed, in the late 1990s a new robust actor entered the stage whose involvement was to set in motion conditions that would transform the continent's economic fortunes: China.

China, risk and the African security environment

China's contemporary phase of intensive engagement in African countries may have been instigated by a search for vital resources, coupled to a belated recognition of the need to bolster diplomatic links outside the West in the aftermath of the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, but its sustainability as a reliable source of resources for China was always going to be predicated on building long-term stable relations (Taylor, 2007). China's openness to economic engagement in all parts of Africa launched a period of rapid growth in bilateral economic ties, including multi-billion dollar concessional loans to energy- and mineral-rich African countries linked to provisions for the development of local infrastructure, followed by a range of smaller loans, grants and even investments by individual Chinese entrepreneurs.[4] While traditional Western sources had shunned investment in some conflict-ridden, post-conflict or fragile states like Sudan, or World Bank and donors sought to make loans conditional on domestic policy changes in countries like Angola, the opportunity to gain access to untapped resources in markets viewed as closed to China was seized with alacrity.

But in fragile countries where the very nature of regime legitimacy itself is contested and the regime's ability to enforce its rule over the population and territory is limited at best, the security challenges are manifold. Under these difficult circumstances linking substantive investments and long-term loans to stability of resource supply was much more tenuous than Chinese officials had initially expected. Local criticism, once exclusively levelled at the cosy relationships between Western governments/firms and African elites, turned to the opaque package deals struck with Beijing. Moreover, the contracting of Chinese firms and their preference for Chinese labour in many of their projects have produced their own backlash among elements in host countries, who are quick to point to the dire need for local employment. Local and Western media have played their part in fueling negative perceptions of African exclusion from Chinese economic activities, as has the poor conduct of some Chinese firms operating outside of local laws and accepted practices, putting further pressure on Chinese economic interests. Chinese migration, starting as a trickle in the late 1990s, but growing steadily across the continent, introduced a new element of complexity into the local environment as individual Chinese citizens became exposed to crime. Three security challenges in particular confronted the Chinese government in the wake of this growing economic exposure to the African environment.

The first, *reputational security*, refers to the local and global image of the Chinese state and its implications. In the local context the lack of transparency in deals and close ties with governing elites have meant that China has been increasingly exposed to accusations of collusion with the sitting regime. In fact, as has been demonstrated in a number of African states, Chinese interests have been explicitly targeted by opposition forces for their role in

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3   Interview with South African diplomat, Pretoria, July 2013.
4   Much has been written about this; see Taylor (2007); Large and Patey (2011).

bolstering regime interests or in more benign cases as a proxy for mobilising domestic support against the regime.[5] Linked to this was the potential damage to Beijing's carefully cultivated global image as an emerging power whose intentions were attuned to African sensibilities and therefore should be viewed as benign. The uproar around Chinese support for Khartoum during the onset of the Darfur crisis in the 2000s in both African capitals and the West underscored the negative impact that Chinese engagement in one African country could have on both its African foreign policy and global manoeuvrability (Large & Patey, 2011).

The second, *firm-level security*, refers to the maintenance of China's economic interests in the local environment and, concurrently, its impact on broader perceptions of Chinese foreign policy intentions in Africa. While government attention was firmly on the concerns of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) operating in strategic areas such as energy, the growing number of Chinese small and medium-sized enterprises operating across the continent meant that Beijing found itself drawn into local disputes with limited economic consequences, but inevitably with wider ramifications. For SOEs, the reversal of their positions in local energy sectors through the denial of licences and effective nationalisation seen in cases as diverse as Angola, Nigeria, Chad and Sudan conveyed a sobering message of uncertainty to their vested interests. Similarly, the widely publicised misconduct of some Chinese firms, symbolised by Chinese Non-Ferrous Metals Mining Corporation in Zambia, where an unremitting series of fatal accidents, egregious violations of local labour laws, and acts of violence against workers and management (all of which finally brought about its closure by the Zambian government in 2013) sullied China's business reputation in the country and beyond (Kwan Lee, 2011). The conscious emphasis on and rollout of corporate social responsibility practices by the State Council after 2006 reflected the state's continuing anxieties about this sector.

The third, *citizens' security*, is linked to the previous concern, but manifested in incidents such as increasing hostage taking of Chinese nationals, crimes against the rising number of Chinese businesses and tourists in Africa and, in its most dire form, the collapse of state authority in countries like Libya. As one Chinese scholar admitted, "Chinese workers' safety faces high risk in Africa" and the accompanying firestorm of criticism that Beijing faced from its assertive "netizens" whenever it failed to protect Chinese nationals in Africa was a growing source of anxiety for Chinese officials (Xuejun, 2010).

Sometimes all three security challenges were experienced at once (Clapham, 2008: 361-69; Large, 2009). Attacks on and kidnappings of Chinese workers in Sudan, or South

Sudan's oil shutdown and expulsion of a Chinese oil executive in early 2012, despite ongoing discussions with Beijing over large financial packages aimed at developing the country's oil and agricultural sectors, are recent examples of this phenomenon. Even a carefully crafted "charm offensive" aimed at South Sudan did not spare Chinese interests there (Large, 2012: 14-18). A spate of protests by local communities supplemented by unlawful police actions starting in 2012 and carrying over into the following year targeted Chinese shopkeepers and miners in countries as disparate as Kenya, Senegal and Ghana. The beating and ultimately expulsion of Chinese miners provoked heated reaction by Chinese netizens, who declared: "When will our government wake up and rescue our fellow country men from Ghana?"[6] Indeed, crime against Chinese citizens became an increasingly problematic phenomenon as the migrant community grew, replicating the apparent targeting of Chinese businesses in South Africa, home to the largest Chinese community in Africa. As a Chinese delegation to Tanzania declared during Xi Jinping's visit in April 2013, "In the last three years, there have been a series of robbery incidents which targeted Chinese investors, including a woman who was killed last October. We think the government should consider this seriously to improve the business environment for Chinese and other investors in the country" (*The Citizen*, 2012).

But above all, it was the impact of the so-called "Arab Spring" in early 2011, which swept aside decades of authoritarian rule in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, that shook any remaining complacency that the Chinese government had about operating in a benign African environment. In particular, the loss and damages caused by the NATO-led intervenion to Chinese interests in Libya imposed huge financial costs on the 50 Chinese projects there (with a total contract value of $18.8 billion) and exposed the limited ability of China to protect either its economic interests, the firms or even its 35,850 citizens in Libya (*Global Times*, 2013). These losses occurred despite the fact that, as the minister of commerce himself noted, China had no investments in Libya (*China Wire*, 2012). Worried officials mulled over the unexpected outbreak of unrest in other parts of the continent, including Angola, where a large Chinese presence (which some Chinese estimates claim to be as high as 250,000 people) was coupled to China's largest foreign source of oil.[7] Internally, the Chinese State Council set up a parallel body to its State-owned Assets and Supervision Commission to regulate and moniter the assets and activities of SOEs operating overseas. Like U.S. analysts who sought to identify ways of safeguarding long-term U.S. interests in the wake of the Arab Spring, so too Chinese officials began a search for ways to accomodate the changes taking place while perserving their fundamental interests in the region (Larocco & Goodyear, 2013).

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5   Botswana, South Africa, Ethiopia, Sudan and Nigeria are among a number of examples.
6   Weibo post, cited in Offbeat China (2013).
7   Interview with Chinese officials, February and March 2011. The estimate is derived from Ji Dongye's report in *Rule of Law Weekly*, reposted in China Africa Project (n.d.).

China's emerging African security agenda

The difficulties increasingly experienced at all levels by China in the once-inviting African terrain, from Chinese SOEs operating in the field encountering security threats to Chinese officials charged with addressing the fallout from the conduct of Chinese business practices and the accompanying diplomatic conundrums these circumstances produced, provided the context for a reconsideration of China's involvement in some form of bilateral and multilateral intervention in Africa. The result has been a gradualist engagement in selective areas of African security, induced by problems confronting China on the ground in particular African countries, but shaped by Beijing's privileged global position in multilateral security affairs. Reconciling this escalating involvement with the maintenance of its economic position and, concurrently, its established foreign policy principles formed the core challenge for Beijing.

Perhaps the most influential driver of its gradualist shift away from a studied distance from African security issues has been China's role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. What this has meant in practical terms is that, with African issues representing over 60% of all issues coming before the Security Council, Beijing is unable to maintain a position of studied abstention without incurring either Western or African criticism. This is exacerbated by the UN-AU institutional relationship involving an annual consultation between the Security Council and the AU's PSC, reinforcing the focus on Beijing's position on issues that matter to African governments, and concurrently the number and size of UN peacekeeping operations on the continent.[8] One response seen since 1998 has been a gradualist involvement in multilateral peacekeeping.[9] China's approach has evolved from disengagement to sponsorship of UN Security Council resolutions establishing peacekeeping missions, the founding of three Chinese peacekeeping training centres, and direct particiation in peacekeeping missions in Liberia, the DRC, Darfur and South Sudan (Zhongying, 2005). Chinese engagement in peacekeeping, which has involved an expansion of the number of troops and acting as force commanders of two missions, has been limited to non-combatant roles. This changed with the deployment of a People's Liberation Army mechanised infantry brigade to Darfur followed by the deployment of 395 elite troops with a mandate to protect peacekeeping headquarters and ground forces in Mali. The professionalism displayed by Chinese peacekeepers in Mali caused the UN's special representative to declare that "China's important work has exceeded expectations" (*The Diplomat*, 2013; *People's Daily Online*, 2013).

Experiences in Sudan and the anti-piracy campaign in the Gulf of Aden produced similar expressions of international support for Chinese multilateralism. The reputational damage that ties with Khartoum produced in the build-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics was a harbinger of the challenges to come, as was the commensurate difficulties to ring fence that experience as a once-off form of Chinese intervention. China's incremental approach to intervention in Sudan has taken it from being absent from the seminal Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 to acting as the key mediator between Khartoum and Juba in 2013. Concurrently, China's involvement in the multinational naval task force off the coast of Somalia from 2009, itself the product of a shift in Chinese maritime strategy away from regional focus to one of "distance sea defence" and dealing with non-traditional security issues, also won it praise abroad and at home (Dehong, 2013; Christofferson, 2009: 3-4). Those in the Chinese military favouring a wider security presence in Africa even envisage, albeit in the distance future, a permanent base on the continent.[10]

All of this fits within the broader parameters of a more activist Chinese foreign policy, accentuated under the new presidency of Xi Jinping and aiming to pursue an agenda for responsible change. The belief that China's rising great-power status requires a revision of international institutions to reflect changing systemic dynamics and a commensurate commitment on the part of China to the greater provision of global public goods has become an article of faith in the Chinese policymaking community. In this context, according to Breslin (2013), a key Chinese goal is to "empower the United Nations as the only legitimate decision making body when it comes to finding global solutions to either transnational problems or cases of domestic state failure". The elevation of the UN, where China's privileged status as a veto-wielding member of the Security Council acts as an ultimate guarantee of its interests, is increasingly framed in terms of the principle of subsidiarity, which sees regional organisations as gatekeepers of legitimate multilateral actions. The intellectual foundations for this evolving approach have received further support from the Chinese research and academic community. Liberal internationalists like Wang Yizhou have argued for a movement towards a foreign policy of "creative involvement" that introduces flexibility to Beijing's approach to security questions, while Pang Zhongying offers a more cautionary interpretation of "conditional intervention".[11] An effort to articulate common Chinese and African values through joint academic work speaks to a mutual desire for a shift in the norms agenda that mirrors the shifting economic relationship away from the West.[12]

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8   According to one report, 75% of all UN peacekeepers were operating in Africa in 2013 (Paterson & Virk, 2013).
9   This was cemented formally through the Chinese response to the Brahimi report and its subsequent inclusion in the Chinese Defence White Paper in 2000 (Zhongying, 2005; Lanteigne & Hirono, 2013: 48).
10 Discussions with People's Liberation Army officials, October 2012 and May 2013.
11 Interview with Wang Yizhou, Beijing, May 9th 2013. Also see Yizhou (2012); Zhongying (2013).
12 Discussions at FOCAC Academic Forum meetings, October 2012, Addis Ababa and October 2013, Beijing.

Even with these gradualist changes to Chinese foreign policy practices towards African security, promoting greater multilateralism still introduces troubling dilemmas for Beijing. According to Dongyan (2012), the actual trajectory of peacekeeping and even more so peacebuilding into more substantive external involvement in African countries' domestic affairs is "undermining the basic principles of the UN Charter and the fundamental rules of peacekeeping, and have already moved beyond those traditional peacekeeping agenda and tasks China is familiar with, i.e. peace and development". The problem for Beijing is that, even if liberal peace is itself coming under criticism in Western circles, as Dongyan readily admits, it has already become institutionalised as "prevailing norms across the United Nations". Efforts to address the matter of such liberal biases have inspired a Chinese formulation of the Responsibility to Protect, articulated by Ruan Zhonghe with his notion of "responsible protection", which may offer one way out of this dilemma over the longer term, but this is still subject to the reception and support of African and the BRICS[13] countries (Zongze, 2012). Further-more, as the overlapping claims of regional authority by the AU and the Arab League demonstrated in the case of Libya, as well as the slow and divisive response of the AU to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, seeking legitimarcy for intervention from regional organisations poses its own set of problems.

FOCAC, the AU and RECs

It was at the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) process, a tri-annual meeting that serves as the diplomatic cornerstone of official ties between China and the conti-nent and the site for joint declarations of intent, that China's new security policy towards Africa was officially unveiled in July 2012. Reflecting this "new thinking" on security, Hu Jintao launched the China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, a much expanded spectrum of peace- and security-related engagement.[14] Specifically, the partnership entails:

> within the realm of its [China's] capabilities, financial and technical support to the African Union for its peace-support operations, the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture, personnel exchanges and training in the field of peace and security and Africa's conflict prevention, management and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and development (FOCAC, 2012b).

China's ties with the AU are linked to the FOCAC process, where the obstacles to a formal diplomatic relationship (which involved the Western Sahara issue) were only resolved in 2012.[15] While much publicity has been given

over to the recent Chinese funding of a new AU headquar-ters, several visits to Chinese peacekeeping centres and ongoing Chinese language training of AU employees, of greater significance is the direct and indirect support for African peace and security missions.[16] Specifically, the Chinese government has provided the AU Mission in Somalia with a contribution of $4.5 million worth of equipment and materials for use in combatting al-Shabaab. This builds on earlier support of $1.8 million provided in 2007 to the African Mission in Sudan, the predecessor of UNAMID. More recently, Chinese interest in cooperation with the AU has extended further to a call for greater involvement in its EWS. According to Xia Liping, this would assist Beijing in providing a higher level of consular protection to its tourists and businesspeople in Africa, who are said to be affected by 30% of all early warnings (Debay, 2012). Within the AU bureaucracy itself, however, there is lingering mistrust of Chinese intentions that needs to be overcome if Beijing is to achieve a truly cooperative relationship with the AU.[17]

As the AU accords importance to RECs, so too Chinese scholars like Wang Xuejun acknowledge their important position in APSA. Nevertheless, to date actual Chinese engagement in peace and security issues is limited to support for disaster management and trumpeting the development implications of China's involvement as being its contribution to conflict prevention. In fact, China's relationships with the RECs are still fundamentally commercial and developmental rather than security oriented. Chinese diplomats operating in the respective subregions have been given official roles as representa-tives to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and ECOWAS in 2007 and established the ECOWAS-China Business Forum in 2008 and the SADC-China Business Forum in 2011 (Alden & Chigumera, forthcom-ing). Similar arrangements have been put in place with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the East African Community. The latter in particular, although relatively new, has accelerated ties through a framework agreement signed in 2012 to promote greater trade, investment and infrastructure development.

More generally, the financial support provided by China to APSA has been either channelled through UN sources or otherwise on a more ad hoc or even bilateral basis. In 2012 Beijing announced that it would be providing RMB 600 million worth of "free assistance" to the AU over a three-year period for, among other things, peace and security (Qinglin, 2012). This ad hoc form of financial support is echoed at the REC level, where, for instance, the Chinese government signed a momorandum of understanding with

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13 Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
14 See FOCAC (2012a, paras 2.6.1, 2.6.3), which states that China and Africa will "strengthen cooperation in policy coordination, capacity building, preventive diplomacy, peace keeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation on the basis of equality and mutual respect to jointly maintain peace and stability in Africa".
15 Interview with a South African diplomat, Pretoria, July 2013.
16 Interview with senior AU researcher, Addis Ababa, May 2013.
17 Interview with senior AU researcher, Addis Ababa, May 2013.

IGAD in November 2011 that included $100,000 for operational costs (IGAD, 2011a). Contrast this with the German government's comprehensive financial and technical support for IGAD announced at the same time, involving long-term bilateral commitments of EUR 3 million and EUR 20 million, and further embossed through multilateralist cooperation by the EU (IGAD, 2011b). Humanitarian assistance features in China's multilateral and bilateral overseas engagement, including in post-conflict settings, especially in Sudan.[18] Chinese financial support for the work of UN entities such as the World Food Programme gives meaning to its "peace through development" approach, seen in a range of humanitarian and recovery projects implemented by Chinese companies in Darfur.[19] Even the UN Peacebuilding Fund, in spite of the internal Chinese debates on the underlying liberal norms that inform peacebuilding, has received $5 million from Beijing.[20]

Conclusion: China and the African Peace and Security Architecture: architects, builders or subcontractors?

China's gradualist approach to engagement in African security matters aims to address the complexities of an expansive role in international institutions and a significant economic presence on the continent. It remains, however, poised between what is at this stage a rhetorical commitment to deeper involvement in APSA and the realities of actually engaging these structures in a long-term sustainable manner. In this context, three speculative scenarios for China's future involvement in African security are possible, i.e. the Chinese as architects, builders or subcontractors.

The Chinese can be seen as potential *architects* of African security in the sense of introducing new norms of conduct or revising existing norms aimed at diluting (if not replacing) the policy prescriptions of liberal peace, which are seen to be at odds with Chinese global perceptions and narrower economic interests. The *sine qua non* of such a process will be, of course, an ability to tap into African concerns surrounding these norms, especially pronounced after decades of Western-led military missions and structural adjustment programmes under the rubric, respectively, of humanitarian intervention and economic development.

The Chinese can be seen as potential *builders* in the sense of co-ownership of a process led by Africans and influenced by the seminal liberal ideas on intervention found in Article 4 of the AU's Constitutive Act. Here Chinese engagement will be decidely multilateralist and oriented towards capacity-building, and would be similar to the efforts of other external powers in extending the ability of African governments and civil society to act on security, while the operating assumption will be that this is the most realistic way of ensuring the safety of China's own economic interests in Africa.

Finally, the Chinese can be seen as potential *subcontractors* in the sense of providing practical solutions to specific security problems facing China's interests in Africa. Here the involvement in African security would be technical in content and selective in engagement, and would be aimed at supporting and fulfilling the narrowest form of obligations without incurring the costs of deeper involvement. The focus would be on securing Chinese economic interests and attending to the diplomatic needs of China's global reputation.

China is still in the formative stages of participation in global governance structures and, as such, needs to develop its capacity to provide the requisite international public goods expected of a major power. With this in mind, it is not surprising that Beijing's policymaking towards African security diplays aspects of all three scenarios for engagement. For instance, its research and policymaking community is theorising new norms on a host of foreign and security policies, reflecting the impulse towards becoming an architect of African security. At the same time, Chinese participation in multilateral security and peacekeeping operations is indicative of its role as a builder of African security. And although it has expressed a desire to play a greater role in African security affairs, in line with the subcontractor scenario, as it stands today its interests are still largely defined by its economic concerns and the impact of African issues on its global reputation.

As Iyasu (2013) points out: "Whether China likes it or not, it plays a significant role in peace and security in Africa; negatively, through its absence, and positively, through an increased partnership with African states and institutions working for peace and security". The pressures to expand its role will continue to grow in line with its ever-increasing economic involvement on the continent. That being said, in the final analysis one can expect Beijing to demonstrate caution and adaptability as its policymakers balance the costs and necessities of becoming more involved in African security.

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18 "When African countries are hit by natural disasters or war, China always promptly offers humanitarian aid to them." See China (2010).
19 See Large (2012). In January 2011, for example, Beijing supported the G77 draft UN General Assembly resolution on International Cooperation on Humanitarian Assistance in the Field of Natural Disasters, from Relief to Development, which stresses that "Emergency assistance must be provided in ways supportive of recovery and long-term development".
20 UN Peacebuilding Fund (n.d.).

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