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Africa between China, the European Union and the United States

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In the Bermuda Triangle:
Africa between China, the European Union and the United States

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Introduction

During the past decade, three facts have changed Africa's position in the international or global system. First, the global war on terror that followed 9/11 turned the outside world's and in particular the United States' attention to the continent stressing its new status as an important component within the new international security architecture. Secondly, the growing global demand for energy resources has turned the outside world's attention to the oil resources in Africa. In 2007, the United States imported

as much as 15% of its total oil imports from Africa expecting the level to increase to 25 % by 2015 (?). Also in 2007, China imported as much as 30% of its total oil imports from sub-Saharan Africa (Jiang 2009:593). The percentage is expected to increase in the years to come (Jiang 2009: 590ff). Thirdly, China's conspicuous entry into the African continent in the years following the turn of the millennium has led the United States as well as the European Union to realize the importance of Africa within a broader global context comprising not only the fight against terrorism and the surge for oil. The new global context places the traditional aim of promoting social-economic development in a new setting linking development very closely to security.

The new position of Africa in the global system raises a number of empirical and theoretical questions. It is an assumption of the paper that it is difficult to discuss such theoretical issues without having a minimum of empirical reference points. Therefore, the paper will scrutinize the policy initiatives of China, the European Union and the US towards Africa on the current century. The sketch of the empirical circumstances is used as basis for the theoretical discussion focussing on the question: How can Africa's position in the current global system be understood and described?

It is the argument that due to the growing international attention to the continent, Africa is increasingly becoming a participant or a member in an international 'society of states' comprising China, the EU and the US and with the African Union as representative for 'Africa'. The implicit argument is that until recently, Africa was only a member of an international 'system of states'. Thus, the specific argument of the paper is that increasingly, Africa is becoming a member of a 'society of states' because such a "group of states are conscious of certain common interests and common values and because they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another…" (Bull, 1995: ca. 13). It is worth noting that back in

2005, the veteran diplomat Zbigniew Brzezinski put forward more or less identical ideas concerning China's growing international presence as he stated "China is clearly assimilating into the international system" (Brzezinski & Mearsheimer 2005: 46).

The next section gives a brief overview of the theoretical reflections on Africa in international relations theory followed by a brief presentation of the theoretical reflections of the new English School applied in the paper. In order to put the empirical sketch into perspective, the following section gives an overview over the debate in the EU and in the US on China's new role in Africa. It is followed by two empirical sections, the first containing a sketch of the security interventions and the military operations carried out by the four actors. The second section looks into the development aid policies and the assumed strong disagreements on development cooperation among the three external actors. After the empirical presentations, the paper returns to the theoretical question.

Africa in international relations theory

Historically, there has been as striking lack of theoretical interest in Africa and its place in global politics or its place in international relations. Going back to the classical realists, it is illustrative that Hans Morgenthau states that Africa did not have a history before the First World War – "it was a politically empty space" (Morgenthau 1985: 369). A similar conception is espoused by the founding figure of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz who, in his main work on neo-realism emphasises that "it would be….ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics on Malaysia and Costa Rica…A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers" (Waltz 1979: 72-73). In short, it can be concluded that the theoretical debates within IR theory during the year of the cold war only to a very limited extent included Africa and African approaches in their reflections.

If the theoretical reflections on Africa in international relations have been limited, it has to be acknowledged that nevertheless, there has been a theoretical discussion on the nature of the African state and thus indirectly on the Africans states' international relations. For a number of years, there has been agreement describing the African state as lacking positive sovereignty. Thus, negative sovereignty reflects that statehood in Africa has been and probably still is an illusion which years ago led Robert Jackson to talk about the African states as 'quasi-states' (Jackson & Rosberg 1986; Jackson 1990; 1992).

Since the end of the cold war, the authority of such weak states has been undermined by two developments. Many African societies have been characterized by domestic instability, illegal transactions of different kinds and in some cases outright civil war. The central governments have been challenged by sub-state actors and other non-state actors implying that the authorities have been faced with what Hedley Bull describes as "competing and overlapping authorities" (Bull 1994). The authority and sovereignty of the African states are not only undermined from within. It can, convincingly, be argued that the room of manoeuvre of the African states has been constrained by the strong role played by international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Bilateral donors interfere in African domestic politics which has led some authors to maintain that Africa has been experiencing a kind of 're-colonization' (Dunn 2001: 51ff). It can be mentioned that TNC's and the numerous NGO's operating in Africa add to the picture of a continent facing a constant threat to its authority and sovereignty (Clapham 1996: 256; Clapham 2005:?). Against this background, a new debate has unfolded, centred on perceptions of failed states and different degrees of statehood (Clapham 1998).

The conception of African states as lacking positive sovereignty, being increasingly challenged by a number of non-state actors both national and international questions one of the basic assumptions of the Westphalian international system namely that the state is the core actor in international relations. The lack of a strong central government and the situation with overlapping authorities appears similar to what Hedley Bull described as "neo-medieval" (Bull 1995). These observations have led to a theoretical position stating that Africa represents a pre-Westphalian component in the international system comprising the traditional Westphalian states and at least one post-Westphalian component namely the European Union (Engel & Olsen 1995).

In a realist IR perspective, it can be argued that these different types of state are tied to each other forming one system because of their security dilemmas. The realist argument would be that the failed states of Africa represent a threat to the OECD countries, i.e. they represent a special security dilemma. Because of high risk of domestic turmoil and violent conflicts within African states, Africa may represent a threat not only to a post-modern states such as the EU, but also to modern states like the OECD member states (Sørensen: 2001). Georg Sørensen states that "the coexistence of qualitatively different types of states in the system is a challenge to IR theory" (Sørensen 2001: 164). The first step to address this challenge is to acknowledge that there is an intimate relationship between the domestic and the international and therefore, one should avoid analyses of purely domestic and purely international issues (Sørensen 2001: 186ff).

One possible tool to bridge the empirical gap between the 'international and the domestic' is to develop and apply the concept of an 'international policy community' and thereby argue that policy-making on Africa is integrated into the political systems of such important actors as China, the EU and the United States. By focussing on policy-making and on the institutional set-up surrounding policy-making, the state persons are brought into the focus of the discussion. According to the English School or the international society tradition, responsible states people, i.e. decision-makers are confronted with a number of moral choices which have at least three distinctive dimensions of responsibilities. One dimension of responsibility is devoted to one's own nation and the well-being of its citizens. The other concerns the respect for the legitimate interest and rights of other states and international law and finally, the third dimension is concerned with the respect for human rights (Jackson & Sørensen, 2003: 158ff).

According to Barry Buzan, the English School is in many ways ideally tailored to address questions like the one raised in the paper namely: How to think or theorize about globalization or fundamental changes in the international system such as the 'new' position of Africa (Buzan 2005: 131; Valbjørn 2009: 3). However, there is a need to develop the English School in some respects and therefore, it is suggested to distinguish between the so-called 'Classic English School' and the 'New English School'. Classic English School is critizised for being too 'global-centric'. It is also charged with being both too 'Euro-centric' and being too 'state-centrist. These shortcomings are addressed in the New English School. For the discussion here, three revisions are important.

First, the New English School disaggregates the core concept 'international society'. On the one hand, it means that 'international society' becomes a superordinate concept consisting of an inter-state society-domain referring to a social structure based on interaction between states. On the other hand, 'world society' refers to a social structure composed of non-state actors including firms and (un)civil society actors as well as individual human beings based on large-scale patterns of shared identity including religions, civilization and human kind (Valbjørn 2009: 8-9). Secondly, it is suggested to abolish another key concept namely the 'international system' and replace it with a continuum of inter-state societies ranging from power political over co-existence, cooperation to convergence being equivalent with a 'world society'. The third revision involves the introduction of a regional level as an addition to rather than a replacement of the global level. The less strong focus on the global level means that greater attention is given to the possibility that differences in the context and the timing of state formation in different parts of the world might produce regional

international societies (Valbjørn 2009: 7). In short, the three revisions suggested by the New English School imply the possibility of the development of international societies at the regional level and that these regional international societies might have very different characteristics ranging from situations where power struggles dominate the regional situation to regional international societies where the states tend to cooperate closely even tending to converge and thereby, it might be more appropriate to describe the regional situation as approaching a regional world society.

Summing up, traditionally IR theory has neglected to theorise on Africa's international position. Nevertheless, it is the aim of the paper theoretically to comprehend and describe the post 2001 global position of Africa. It is suggested that the New English School can supply the general framework for such an exercise. As it is recalled, it is the argument of the paper that Africa increasingly is becoming a member in an 'international society of states'. Now, the argument can be made more precise: Due to the increasing international attention to Africa, the African states are step by step becoming members or participants in a regional international society which comprises China, the EU and the US.

It is the hypothesis that the African regional international society is characterized by increasing cooperation among the participant actors. It is characteristic that the four actors to a growing extent are becoming conscious of certain common interests. It is the assumption that these interests comprise stability and if possible peace. The group of actors are also increasingly aware that they share common values. It is assumed that these values are related to the promotion of economic and social development in Africa and also related to the understanding that there is a close link between stability and development. Finally, the four actors conceive themselves bound by some common set of rules. These rules are related to two important policy areas namely to military intervention and to how to deliver development aid. As far as the military interventions are concerned, the common rules are bound to a demand that interventions in foreign countries have to be backed by a UN Security Council resolution. Within the development assistance policy field, the common rules are contained in the Paris Declaration and in its criteria on how to promote efficient development aid.

Conflict or cooperation

China's growing involvement in Africa in the current decade has produced reactions from the actors affected, pointing in different directions. The rhetoric of the Chinese government has been that the

Chinese-African relationship is not a threat to anyone. Rather, it is a 'win-win' situation based on the principles of non-interference in domestic politics and non-conditionality in the provision of aid and investment (Alden & Hughes, 2009). In Africa and among Africans, different positions can be observed stretching from the relatively positive to a negative position towards the consequences of China's conspicuous presence on the continent. The positive………The middle position maintains that, at best, China's impact on Africa's place in global politics and in the global economy is uncertain (Tull, 2996: 475-477). The negative evaluation of the consequences of the Chinese entry into Africa can be summaries in Ian Taylors harsh statement from 2004 which is repeated by Denis Tull in 2006: "There is virtually no way around the conclusion that China's massive return to Africa represents a negative political development that 'almost certainly does not contribute to the promotion of peace, prosperity and democracy on the continent'" (Tull, 2006: 476).

The active Chinese foreign policy towards Africa has led to two different reactions among American policy-makers (Carmody & Owusu, 2007). The most critical positions are found in evaluations that warn against China's increasing influence: "China is expanding its influence in Africa to secure supplies of natural resources, to counter Western political and economic influence while expanding China's global influence…As a result, Chinese support for political and economic repression in Africa is countering the liberalizing influences of Africa's traditional European and American partners. It is the US national interest to address these developments in Africa by deftly encouraging democratic processes, economic freedom and respect for human rights across the African continent" (Brookes & Shin, 2006: 9). On a broader basis, it is argued that the rise of China presents a potential challenge to the development policies and strategies of the industrialized countries. The policies of China openly challenge the priorities concerning trade liberalization, market reforms and conditionality on good governance and human rights etc (Gu, Humphrey, Messner 2008: 285ff; Gill, Huang & Morrison, 2007).

The negative and critical view upon its advance in Africa was most pronounced in the first term of the Bush era when China in Africa was considered a 'strategic rival'. However, the critical attitude soon developed into a more constructive position increasingly calling for an American strategy which both politically and economically could 'engage China' (Campbell 2008). In early 2008, President George Bush stated that there were more areas where the two countries could cooperate to the benefit of the Africans than there were issues of disagreement and potential competition. Basically, the new position maintained that Africa was not a zero sum game neither for China nor for the US (Shinn & Eisenman 2008: 1). Applying a forward looking perspective, it is

essential that the Africans are part of any US-China dialogue aimed at collaborative policies towards Africa. The current American position is that cooperation will assure that China follows a generally constructive policy in Africa (Shinn & Eisenman 2008: 6-7).

Finally, the European Union has reacted to the entry of China into Africa. It is possible to identify two different evaluations of the Chinese involvement in Africa. It is worth noting that the negative and critical voices were much more cautious in Europe compared with the debate in the US. However, it does not imply that the European perceptions of China's engagement were less critical. On the contrary, China has been accused of economic exploitation and diminishing Africa's prospects for economic development. In political terms, the Chinese principle of non-interference has been criticised for being irresponsible tending to undermine human rights and democracy in Africa (Tull 2008: 5ff).

However, it did not take the EU and the Commission in particular long to state publicly that the EU and China had strong and shared interests in promoting stable and sustainable development in Africa (Ferreira, 2008). It became common to talk about trilateral cooperation and to focus on synergies of the EU's and China's contribution to the development of Africa (Wissenbach 2009). It was recognised by both parties at the 10th China-EU summit held in Beijing in November 2007. Among the important areas where the two parties ought to cooperate was emphasised 'peace & security' and 'development policy dialogue' in Africa (Commission, Communication /trilateral, 2008). The High Representative of the CFSP, Javier Solana stated that "Africa is an important focus for EU's comprehensive strategic partnership with China. The EU and China are both committed to helping deliver peace, stability, development, prosperity and good governance in Africa" (Solana 7. February 2007).

Summing up, this brief overview of the reactions to the Chinese entry into Africa reveals that at least two positions can be observed. It is particularly worth noting that both the American and the European reactions seem to have moved from initially being rather critical towards a more positive and first of all, a much more cooperative attitude. Basically, cooperation with the Chinese is considered the main tool to convince China to adopt Western approaches to addressing the challenges of Africa.

Security interventions

The focus in this section is on a number of international security interventions in Africa which have been carried out by non-African actors. Also, the security missions performed by the African Union are touched upon. One of the most remarkable of these foreign operations is the naval missions taking place off the coast of Somalia. The particularly remarkable aspect of this operation is that China since late 2008 contributed with a limited number of navel vessels, among them two destroyers to patrol the waters around the Horn of Africa. Moreover, the Chinese vessels are not only deployed to assist Chinese cargo ships and oil tankers, they are ready to protect foreign ships on request (Pham, 2009). The Chinese vessels are not part of a coordinated, international operation. They operate side by side with naval ships from other nations but they share intelligence with the nations having vessels in the region around the Horn of Africa. "The (Chinese) ships were in constant communication with other escort ships especially from NATO. They had thus gained good access to shared intelligence information and telecommunication/radar signals of advanced navies" (Ji & Kia 2009: 7).

Several circumstances explain the Chinese deployment of the navel force off the coast of Somalia. Of course, there is a narrow national interest in protecting Chinese ships and not least tankers transporting oil from Port Sudan. There is also a strong wish to improve the international image of the country and show China as a responsible rising nation. "It is a signal to many that China wishes to participate more actively in international security" (Ji & Kia, 2009: 1). The new and more proactive Chinese policy seems to have been welcomed by the international community (Ji & Kia 2009: 7).

It was not only China which deployed navel vessels in the Gulf of Aden and in the Indian Ocean. Also, the European Union was involved with a naval force. As of December 2008, it was decided to deploy an EU force to contribute to deterrence and the prevention of piracy. The 'EU NAVFOR Somalia – Operation Atalanta' had two aims. On the one hand, it should protect the vessels of the World Food Programme delivering food aid to Somalia. On the other hand, the EU force was to protect vulnerable vessels and to deter piracy. A number of EU member countries contributed to the operation where more than 20 vessels took part (EU NAVFOR, 2008/9).

Also, the United States has launched a naval force to patrol the waters around the Horn of Africa to target Somali pirates. The US naval vessels operated alongside the ships from other nations including the Chinese and those from the European Union (Guardian 2009)……

It was not only at sea, military operations with non-African troops took place. Both Chinese and European troops participated in conflict management and peacekeeping operations on the ground in Africa. Since the turn of the century, China has been increasingly involved in UN peacekeeping operations both globally and in Africa in particular. Almost 75 % of China's peacekeepers are deployed on the continent where they have been engaged in a number of high profiled conflicts. Beijing has sent peacekeepers to Darfur in Sudan, to the DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, to the Eritrea & Ethiopia border mission and to several other conflicts. It is characteristic that the Chinese troops only participate in multilateral operations which have an explicit UN mandate (Shelton 2008; Gill & Huang 2009).

The increasing involvement in UN peacekeeping operations is the result of political choices made by the Chinese political leadership. It is clearly the aim to build an image of the country as 'a responsible great power' which takes on its role in advancing global peace and stability (Shelton 2008; Gill & Huang 2009). "It appears that China's emerging role in peace operations is a part of a pragmatic reorientation and reassessment of Beijing's political interests by policy makers, who are now more concerned with looking like a responsible great power and less of a developing country bent on protecting state sovereignty at all costs", Ian Taylor states (Taylor 2008: 8).

In the current decade, the European Union has launched no less than three military operations aimed at managing violent conflicts on the continent. The first took place during the summer of 2003 in the Ituri province of the DRC. The next operation was also aimed at the DRC as the EU deployed 1000 troops to support the UN mission already in the country with the aim to stabilize the situation during the election process in 2006. The third EU mission took place in Chad from early 2009 till early 2009 with the aim to protect and support refugees from Darfur and internally displaced people (Olsen 2009).

There are some interesting parallels between the motives of China and the motives of the EU to deploy troops in conflict management operations in Africa. There is no doubt that the EU, like China, has an ambition to be an international actor in its own right with the capacity to deploy soldiers in potential conflict situations abroad. However, there are also domestic European reasons contributing to explain the active military policy. France and Britain and a number of other European powers have a strong political interest in developing the European Security and Defence Policy. Deployment on European troops in conflict management operations in Africa with an

explicit UN Security Council Resolution is an important policy tools for achieving this goal (Olsen 2009).

Parallel to these unilateral missions, the European Union has been engaged in multilateral operations in cooperation with the African Union. By means of the African Peace Facility, the EU handsomely supported the AU with financial and human resources. It was most clearly the case with the AMIS I and the AMIS II operations in Dafur. The EU-AU division of labour was also prominent during the conflicts in the DRC as well as in Burundi where the African Union deployed the troops and the EU supplied economic resources and advice in support of disarmament and the general elections. "In fact, without the African Peace Facility, it is unlikely that the AU would have been able to undertake any of these missions. Since implementation of the African Peace Facility, the relationship between the AU and the EU has developed quite strongly, resulting in the EU strategy for Africa and recently the extension of the joint EU-Africa strategy in December 2007", Jakkie Cilliers concludes (Cilliers 2008: 12). It appears that the establishment of the African Peace Facility can be explained by referring to the popular headline 'African solutions to African problems'. Phrased differently, the European aims with the Facility was to commit the African Union much more in peacekeeping in Africa and thereby avoid sending European soldiers to the continent (Olsen 2009).

Finally, the US has been heavily engaged in African security since September 11 2001. The Americans have launched a number of regional security initiatives sending a signal that Africa has become an important region in the global fight against terrorism. It has also been an aim to train African security forces in counter terrorism, to collect intelligence and to serve as advisors to peacekeeping operations on the continent (McFate: 2008). Compared with the Chinese and the EU security interventions in Africa, it is characteristic that the American approach to Africa and to conflict management on the continent has been influenced by traditional great power thinking combined with strong bureaucratic influence (cf. Schraeder, 1994). First, it means that American national interests have been in the forefront of the American policy reflections. Secondly, the strong bureaucratic influence, not least from the Pentagon and the CIA contribute to explain the special features of the American involvement in Africa after 2001 (Schraeder 2001 ? & Schraeder 2005(?). It is characteristic that there has been a strong reluctance to deploy troops on the ground while at the same time the Americans have used their financial strength to pursue their security agenda by means of offering training to African armies.

Laura Nathan points out that the US has been so preoccupied with its own concerns that it has tended to forget the African partner (Nathan 2009: 60). The unilateral establishment in 2007of Africom and the lack of prior consultation of African leaders repeat former American initiatives towards the continent (Burgess 2009; Berman 2009). It was considered as a "failure by the US administration not to consult the African Union about Africom" and it was not to be seen as a "communications lapse but as indicative of the superpower's arrogance, ignorance of African politics and disregard for the efforts of Africans to enhance their own security" (Nathan 2009: 60). In sum, the strengthened American engagement in Africa has been a way to pursue its national security agenda in Africa even though it has be stressed that it has been in cooperation with selected African states which apparently shared the fear of terrorism on the continent.

Since 2002, the African Union has carried out a number of conflict management missions. The biggest, most comprehensive but also the most difficult mission has been the one in Darfur, Sudan. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has stressed that the AU should play a more active role in resolving the Darfur crisis and also the organisation should work closely with among others the EU maintaining peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the AU has deployed troops under the AMIS I and the AMIS II operations in Darfur in order to protect the civilians. Moreover, the AU troops have involved themselves in peacekeeping activities. By means of the African Peace Facility, the European Union has handsomely supported the AU with financial and human resources etc. (Murithi, 2008: 76-78; Siradag 2009: 43-59; Williams 2006).

The AU has been involved in activities related to promoting peace, security and stability in the DR Congo for a number of years. The EU supplied economic resources via the APF and advice and technical advice including support of disarmament and of the general elections in 2006 (Siradag, 2009: 59-66). Between 1993 and 2005, Burundi was ravaged by a civil war between Hutu rebels and the Tutsi-dominated army. Since 2003, the AU has been engaged in maintaining peace and security in the country and in 2003, it was decided to deploy troops in the country. The AU mission consisted of more than 3.000 troops from South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique to monitor the peace process and to provide security. As mentioned, the EU has actively supported til AU in promoting peace in the Central African country (Murithi 2008: 74-76; Siradag, 2009: 66-73; Daley, 2006). "In fact without the African Peace Facility, it is unlikely that the AU would have been able to undertake any of these missions. Since the implementation of the APF, the relationship between the AU and the EU has developed quite strongly, resulting in the EU Africa Strategy and

recently the extension of the EU-Africa strategy in December 2007", Jakkie Cilliers concludes (Cilliers 2008: 12).

Summing up, it seems safe to conclude that the four actors under scrutiny clearly share common interests in promoting peace and, if possible stability. Both China and the European Union seem to prefer bilateral approaches in some instances whereas they adhere strongly to multilateralism when it comes to traditional peacekeeping missions on the ground. Both actors are unwilling to deploy armed forces in Africa unless they have the backing from a firm UN Security Council Resolution. In comparison, the United States apparently prefers bilateral approaches while Washington is very sceptical and reluctant to participate with American troops in multilateral missions. The issue of having the backing from the UN Security Council does not seem to be important to the American decision-makers. Both features have been described as reflecting a traditional great power approach to Africa. Finally, the African Union appears to be strongly interested in multilateral cooperation. Until now, this has been particularly obvious with the AU-EU cooperation based on the African Peace Facility. In brief, there is no doubt that the four actors share common interests. However, it appears that the US approach are differs from the three others as far as the criterion of having UN backing is concerned.

Development aid interventions

In recent years, China has made significant steps into Africa mainly by economic means. The Chinese development philosophy is based on the assumption that economic cooperation is to the mutual benefit of Africa as well as of China. The two partners are assumed to benefit equally from trade, foreign direct investments and from development aid. Chinese development aid is one of the policy instruments which have caused most worries and political critique among traditional aid donors.

There seems to be general agreement that Chinese assistance does not qualify as aid according to DAC criteria (European Parliament 2007, 10/12; ….). It is confirmed by Brautigam who states that the country "operates outside the global aid regime" (Brautigam, 2008: 212; Brautigam 2008b: 22). China prefers bilateral arrangements and, it is a characteristic that there is a close linkage between aid and politics. In general, its aid is tied to deliveries from China and also that is on project basis in contrast to the current Western aid philosophy which officially prefers sector wide approaches and budget support. What is interesting politically is the bilateral nature of

China's aid and the ways in which it conflicts with other donor's move towards coordination as well as with pan-African attempts to direct Africa's development (Mohan & Power, 2008: ?).

The reluctance to participate in the activities of the Development Assistance Committee within the OECD is explained by the fact that the Chinese do not consider the aid from the Western countries as very effective in reducing poverty in Africa. It is a widespread assumption among Western donors that China gives aid to Africa based only on self-interest meaning that it primarily gives aid to countries having natural resources that meet China's needs for its own economic development. However, there is not strong empirical evidence to back that the Chinese aid program is screwed in favour of countries with huge natural resources (Brautigam , 2008: 207; Rothberg, 2008b: ..).

Using the Chinese extensive engagement with Sudan and Zimbabwe as a 'proof' that China follows dubious goals in Africa misses the point as the Chinese cooperation with these two states is not really about development aid. Rather, it is more about the country's general economic engagement with rouge regimes (Brautigam 2008b: 4). It seems as if all African states enjoying diplomatic relations with China have received grants and zero-interest loans in recent years (Brautigam 2008b: 23).

It is important to establish that China gives aid for a number of reasons and development aid is just one component of China's global economic engagement. Development aid is not of enormous proportions compared with the European Union's or with the United States' aid programmes. In many cases, it is difficult to isolate the Chinese development aid from other economic development instruments as Beijing uses a whole range of different financial instruments in combination. Deborah Brautigam stresses that China's aid and state subsidized loans are bundled into a non-transparent system that violate many of the norms in the current OECD directed aid system (Brautigam, 2008: 32).

It has to be noted that even though China has signed the OECD's 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness apparently, it does not feel committed to abide to the general principles laid down in the Declaration. "China has signed the declaration understanding that it is a recipient country and seems to be reluctant to accept obligations that derive from the fact that it is also a donor country", Tull points out (Tull 2008: 5). It is not surprising that China does not take part in the efforts of the OECD countries to achieve harmonization and neither does it provide information on the volume, focal areas and instruments of its donor programmes (Mutume, 2006).

Summing up, the Chinese care about the effectiveness of their aid and they are proud of a long record of support for useful projects that have responded to African leaders' request (Brautigam, 2008b: 30). In spite China is operating outside the global aid regime, there is evidence that Chinese officials are organizing their own aid system in ways that are clearly parallel to the norms that have been established within the OECD (Brautigam 2008: 212). A number of observers argue that China increasingly will share interests with the Western countries in promoting good governance and stability as these two assets are preconditions for China to reap the benefits from its involvement in African countries (Ferreira, Global Players in Africa?: 4; European Parliament 2007: 11/12, 12/12). Jing Gu, John Humphrey and Dirk Messner maintain that the Chinese government seems very much aware of the fact that international stability and a positive international perception of its global rise are important preconditions for a smooth domestic transformation process. "This makes China sensitive for external criticism and amenable for a constructive engagement with Western countries" (Gu et al. 2008: 289).

In 2005, the European Commission and the member states of the Union signed the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. The declaration implied that the signing countries were committed to adopt a number of common policy guidelines. The signing countries committed themselves to increase the efforts to harmonise their policies and to share information with each others. The bottom line to the European development policy in the current century is, since 2002 more 'European' aid has been challenged to Africa even though it has to be pointed out, individual EU member countries have been reluctant to channel their growing aid volumes through the EU system to individual African countries (Carbone 2008: 218f)

Ever since the adoption of the Union Treaty in 1992, development aid has officially been part of the Unions common legal basis. Since the mid 1990s, political conditionalities have been a core policy instrument of its development policy. The conditionalities have been aimed at promoting respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance (Orbie & Versluys 2009: 78). However, the signing of the Paris Declaration means that the EU has committed itself to switch from this type of policy instrument towards paying more attention to the developing country's own development objectives. The signing also means that the EU is committed to enhance the quality and the impact of its aid.

Jan Orbie and Helen Versluys point out that a 'securitization' of European development policy has taken place in recent years (Orbie & Versluys 2009: 77). There is no doubt that since the early 1990s, the decision-makers in the European Union have become increasingly

preoccupied with security issues and conflict management in Africa. At the first EU-Africa summit in Cairo in 2000, a joint communiqué established that security in Africa was a core priority of both Africa and of its African partners (Olsen 2009). The second EU-Africa summit in Lisbon in December 2007 made it clear that promoting peace and security was a key dimension of the then new EU-Africa joint strategy which described the relationship between the two regions as a 'Strategic Partnership' (EU-Africa 2007).

Therefore, it was an obvious development that the EU in 2004 launched the so-called African Peace Facility which was in line requests made by the African Union (Faria 2004: 36). The Facility is an instrument financed by the European Development Fund which was originally aimed at promoting economic development. The APF is considered as one of the EU's main tools for supporting African efforts in peace and security operations. Based on this financial mechanism, it is possible to maintain that a certain securitization of the EU's development policy has taken place. Bagolyoko and Gibert for their part argue that the new Africa policy with its emphasis on security may provide new legitimacy for the Union's development policy (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2009: 790-791). The launch of APF is yet another official recognition of a close connexion between development on the one hand and peace and stability on the other. The recognition of the link was clearly stated in the European Africa Strategy adopted in late 2005 which stated "without peace, there can be no lasting development….it is now universally recognised that there can be no sustainable development without peace and security. Peace and security are therefore the first essential prerequisites for sustainable development" (European Communities 2005: 10, 26).

Like in the case of the European Union, US development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa has been increasing in the current century. Most of the American aid has been delivered bilaterally and only a minor share has been contributed through multilateral organizations. It appears that debt relief, humanitarian assistance and HIV/AIDS programmes accounted for a considerable proportion of the increasing aid meaning that a significant proportion of the increasing American development assistance to Africa is difficult to categorise as development aid. At least around 1/3 of the total assistance has to be classified as 'military' (Dagne 2006). Moreover, it is characteristic of the American aid disbursed to Africa the since the year 2000 that a decreasing share has gone to the poorest countries (Radelet & Bazzi 2008).

In the National Security Strategy from 2002, it is clearly stated that "weak states…can pose as great a danger to our national interest as strong states…poverty, weak institutions and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their

borders" (White House, 2002, n..p.). In spite of the Strategy's recognition that poverty and weak and failing states may represent a threat to the United States, it also expressed strong reservations towards one of the traditional instruments in US Africa policy namely development aid (White House 2002: 21-23). Rather, it is argued that Washington sees development aid as a legitimate tool of enhancing US national security interests rather than as a means to promote economic and social development in the recipient countries (Hills, 2006). It is hardly a coincidence that the American aid organisation USAID has been placed under the direct control of the Department of State in pursuit of geo-political and strategic objectives (Copson, 2009). The official homepage of the USAID also stresses the impression that core US priorities in sub-Saharan Africa are related to security and good governance issue. The aim to "stimulate African's economic development and growth" is only goal number 7 out of 9 mentioned at the homepage (usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/; acc. 12-10-2009). In brief even though the US has signed the Paris declaration, the brief overview of American aid policy towards Africa leaves no doubt that the American policy has been motivated strongly by national security interests. Among other things, it is indicated by the large percentage of the aid which rightly has to be classified as 'military'.

Summing up, the three external actors share common values when it is about promoting development in Africa. Nevertheless, there are obvious differences between these three donors. Most obviously, the US and China pursue national interests by means of their development aid policies. It is less obvious as far as the European Union is concerned. Therefore, it is no surprise that both China and the US pursue bilateral strategies whereas the European Union, at least officially abides to a multilateral approach and to the provisions of the Paris Declaration. Concerning the issue of following common rules within the field of development assistance, China and the US are different as they obviously do not follow the provisions in the Paris Declaration. The bottom line is if these three actors accept that there are common rules in their relations with one another.

Concluding discussion

The paper has argued that Africa increasingly is becoming a participant in a regional international society of states comprising China, the EU and the US. The paper has 'tested' or discussed this argument based on three criteria namely is it possible to identify common interests, common values and common rules guiding the relations between the actors under scrutiny. It appears that that the

actors involved share a number of common interests and common values even though there are significant differences between the actors at the same time.

There is also a considerable agreement as to the rules governing the relationship between the actors. Having stated that there are also at this point considerable differences between the actors. These observations do not mean that we have a fullfledged regional international society of states. On the other hand, the analysis has pointed at a number of common interfaces under development. Com pared to the situation during the cold war, currently it is possible to point at the common interests in promoting peace and stability at the continent. Also, it is worth while to emphasise the commonality in promoting development and also in seeing the link between the promotion of development and stability. However, when it comes to the actual policy steps and rules guiding the relations with the other actors, the picture becomes much more mixed. However, it is important that it appears that the level of agreement is most pronounced between the European Union and the Africa Union. It may be striking that the US seems to be most isolated whereas China seems to share most interests, values and not least rules with the EU and the AU.

The bottom line is if it is possible to identify the development of a regional society of states in Africa. The EU and the AU form the core group whereas China and the US tend to be positioned in the periphery of this particular regional society.

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