

# **China in Africa: beyond economic interests**

Perspectives from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan

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## Acronyms

ADLI	Agricultural Development-led Industrialisation
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
bpd	barrels per day
CCTV	China Central Television
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPC	Communist Party of China
CRBC	China Bridge and Road Corporation
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EEPCo	Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation
EFFORT	Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FONGO	Federation of Non Governmental Organisations
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
GIZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
GNU	Government of National Unity
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
ICBC	Industrial and Commercial Bank of China
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPSS	Institute for Peace and Security Studies
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-N	Movement for Democratic Change – Ncube
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
MIDROC	Mohammed International Development Research and Organisation Companies
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MW	Megawatt
NCP	National Congress party
Norinco	China North Industries Group Corporation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty
PRC	People's Republic of China
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SADC	Southern African Development Community

SAPC	South African Communist Party
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SDPRP	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SNNPRS	Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State
SPLM-IO	Southern Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition
SPLM/A	Southern Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army
SWAPO	South-West African People’s Organisation
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNMISS	UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZISO	Zimbabwe Informal Sector’s Organisation
ZTE	Zhongxin Telecommunication Equipment

## Executive Summary

China's ascendancy in global affairs, precipitated by its rapid economic growth, has correlated with changes in its relationship with Africa. As China's footprint has extended across the continent, it has become necessary for the country to broaden its engagement beyond a one-dimensional focus on economic cooperation, trade in resources and non-interference in internal affairs. Two factors have motivated this shift towards greater diversity, nuance and active engagement. Firstly, China has begun to find that engagement on peace and security issues is an inevitable consequence of investing in politically risky terrains. The need to protect its investments and citizens from the vagaries of African politics – especially in politically fragile countries – has become more urgent. Secondly, a more diverse engagement has been informed by a broader foreign policy vision to bolster China's positioning in world affairs. The dominance of Africa's developmental, and peace and security concerns in a variety of global governance fora, also outside the UNSC, has prompted China to reconsider its stance, role and influence in these fora. In other words, China is prompted to actively position itself as a global norms-maker with reference to Africa.

Chinese interaction with Africa is envied by many traditional donor countries for the sole reason that China appears to be better-accepted by Africa than they are. Often this is in the face of stark evidence that betrays the complexities and disproportional relationship between the two entities. The China-Africa discourse is littered with reports of crumbling infrastructure-for-resource deals; attacks on Chinese diaspora and state failure to protect Chinese assets in the face of arbitrary regime change. Despite these challenges, however, the Chinese appear to be increasing and deepening their investment in Africa. At the FOCAC VI Summit in Johannesburg last year, China announced pledges of around \$60 billion for various initiatives around the continent. Many western observers are perplexed by this apparent contradiction.

There are several reasons that distinguish China's engagement in Africa from that of traditional western engagement. Most strikingly, this is illustrated by different drivers towards global norms and values' creation. Culturally, the basic unit of Chinese society is the family, rather than the individual. This has an important impact on how global mores are propagated by China. With the interests of the individual subsumed into a broader collective, the role of the state remains the primary focus of a human rights discourse – so much so that the state is considered to be the guarantor of human rights, not a threat. The primacy of the state in Chinese political discourse translates into its foreign policy as an adherence to the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference. This does not preclude the possibility of intervention, but rather necessitates that state consent is secured before any intervention is undertaken. This in turn, opens up the space for China to be more responsive to the needs of African governments, as expressed by them.

A further distinguishing characteristic of engagement is that China chooses to channel its engagement on peace and security, human rights and human security and governance capacity building through multilateral institutions, rather than pursuing bilateral solutions. To this end, it has consistently deployed peacekeeping personnel through the UN system. Since FOCAC V, a cooperative partnership for Peace and Security was established with the aim of providing financial assistance, capacity building and other forms of institutionalised support for Africa's efforts at fostering peace and security on the

continent. The end result is an engagement in Africa that is not only multi-faceted but driven by the contexts in which China finds itself operating.

This study offers a perspective on how China balances its own priorities with the expectations of African countries, while also addressing the realpolitik challenges that it faces on the ground, through its engagement in three African countries: Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan. It seeks to understand the motivations behind China's engagement on peace and security, human rights, human security and governance challenges in these countries and the modalities that are employed to address them.

What emerges is a picture of how context drives China's responses in these countries challenging conventionally-held western expectations of China's role and modalities. Where Zimbabwe exemplifies the stereotype of resource-driven engagement that is blinkered to domestic human rights violations, the Ethiopian experience defies the presumption of the centrality of resources, while the South Sudanese example challenges the notion of Chinese reluctance to intervene.

From a reading of the Ethiopian case study, it is immediately apparent that there is a deep respect for and support of the 'developmental state' ambition of both countries. This frames the party-political relationship between them and extends to a unique association where the government of Ethiopia is able to exercise agency over China in a manner that is arguably unparalleled elsewhere on the continent. For China, Ethiopia is not only a bastion of stability in its region, warranting support; but closer ties also provide it the opportunity to keep abreast of key developments on the continent, given that there is a large concentration of international agencies (including but not limited to the AU) in Addis Ababa.

Similarly, in South Sudan the domestic political climate has framed the way in which Chinese engagement has evolved. China possesses significant interests in oil production in South Sudan. Prior to the outbreak of civil war in the country in December 2013, much of China's engagement centred on balancing its interests against its relationships with Sudan and South Sudan. However, following the deepening of the political crisis in South Sudan in 2013, Chinese priorities have increasingly shifted towards greater concerns over peace and security – evidenced by numerous attempts to play a mediating role in the resolution of the dispute. For the first time, China, through its activities in UNMISS approved the deployment of combat troops – ostensibly to protect its investments in the oil sector as well as its citizens in South Sudan. This marks a significant shift from previous deployment which has always been oriented towards services or technical assistance. South Sudan underscores for China, the importance of political stability in ensuring the pursuit of economic activity.

In the case of Zimbabwe, while Western countries sought to isolate Mugabe's regime from 2002 onwards, China's engagement began to grow. Mugabe saw China as an alternative source of financing after support from the West dried up. Mugabe elucidated his "Look East" policy which accompanied the growth of an increasing commercial, but also military relationship that saw both, military equipment being sent to Zimbabwe from China, and the involvement of Chinese companies in the Marange diamond fields where senior Zimbabwean military officials also had significant stakes. Although China's financial support was rooted in commercial pragmatism and hardly offered a carte blanche for Mugabe's requests, China nevertheless provided political cover to Zimbabwe in the UN

Security Council. China's investments in the Marange diamond fields form part of the intricate web of associations with the Zimbabwean military-security complex that is at the heart of the state and its present malaise. Yet, as with its interactions in South Sudan, China too has had to broaden its engagements, especially since 2008, to include the opposition and civil society, as the MDC joined the government of national unity. Post 2013, after the end of the GNU and the holding of peaceful (if not entirely free and fair) elections, relations between ZANU and China have continued, including in training and capacity building (especially via the National Defence College that was built by China). However, China has continued to engage with other actors, as it too becomes increasingly concerned about the consequences of an unstable political transition post-Mugabe.

The paper proposes some recommendations for Switzerland to explore cooperation with China in the future. It is important to note that China has no overarching strategy on how to deal with the specific challenges that it has come up against in diverse African settings, and that its engagement is often guided by the adage "Crossing the river by feeling the stones". Non-interference is still an underlying principle of its international relations although its continued efficacy in fragile environments is being debated inside China.

While China is unlikely to abandon its policy of non-interference, both South Sudan and Zimbabwe show that it is willing to engage behind-the-scenes (or even more publicly) to protect its interests. In this regard, therefore, western countries like Switzerland with established credentials (and shorn of the colonial baggage that other countries have) may pursue regular political coordination with China in fragile environments, working to amplify and empower regional diplomatic initiatives. Good government (as opposed to 'governance') is accepted by China as an essential dimension in countries in which it operates. One should also not underestimate the comparative advantage offered by the location of many of the humanitarian and peace and security UN bodies in Switzerland. Switzerland as host of the UN and the ICRC is in a unique position to provide support to multilateral initiatives that seek to create greater stability in fragile states. This offers a natural avenue for China-Swiss cooperation.

Other areas deserving exploration include:

- *Explore trilateral cooperation in the security and capacity building terrain.* With strategic African support, and depending on what African interest there might be, Switzerland could be well positioned to mount an authoritative trilateral initiative organised around human security and linked to Agenda 2063 and UN 2030 objectives. (This is especially so as Switzerland is more trusted than other European countries.) Human security might be explored in relation to AU standards and such concepts as 'sustainable security' mooted by Xi Jinping. Historically, the rule of thumb for China is usually that any trilateral initiatives must be proposed by Africa, Africa-agreed, and Africa-led; but if China can see that there is clear value in such an initiative it could build a compelling case.
  - One such example could be collaboration on anti-corruption, where Switzerland has much to contribute, and which has been a domestic priority for President Xi. This could include capacity building of officials in key institutions, but including the sub-national level as well.
  - Within IGAD, with which Switzerland has a MoU, and with which China has worked on South Sudan issues, could be another area of trilateral cooperation on peace and security issues, including broader Horn challenges such as combating violent extremism.

Effective governance through devolution of authority could also be a useful trilateral initiative, given that both Switzerland and China (with varying success) have experience with the role that subnational bodies can play in economics and development, while these are extremely weak in many African countries. This paper also offers country-specific recommendations related to possible cooperation between Switzerland and China on peace and security bearing in mind Swiss comparative advantage drawing on existing national and regional initiatives.

## Context & Methodology

The Directorate of Political Affairs of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation commissioned the South African Institute of International Affairs to undertake a study of “China in Africa: beyond economic interests - Positioning and strategy; possible synergies for Swiss foreign policy”.

The research assignment was aimed at filling the existing gap in China-Africa research and to provide an assessment of Chinese activities in Sub-Saharan Africa in the thematic areas of Peace and Security, Human Rights, Human Security and Governance Capacity Building. The PDA requested that a special geographical emphasis be placed on South Sudan (in the context of its surrounding countries) and Zimbabwe. A case study of a third country was to be determined by the author of the study on the basis of its importance for Chinese interests in the above-mentioned categories.

The study was intended to provide insights into the following:

- Description and evaluation of actual PRC initiatives in these areas, including local perception of projects;
- Chinese bilateral and multilateral initiatives in the identified areas;
- Embedding of these initiatives within an overall China-Africa strategy;
- Comparison, complementarities and synergies to Western approaches

The study is intended to serve as a background report.

## Case study selection

Apart from the two case studies of South Sudan and Zimbabwe proposed by the Federal Ministry, SAIIA proposed the case study of Ethiopia. In the process of selecting Ethiopia SAIIA also considered the cases of Nigeria, the DRC and Mozambique. However, we discounted them as their engagement with China was largely centred around single large projects or Chinese parastatal engagement, rather than larger political-economic linkages.

Ethiopia is an anomaly in China’s engagement in Africa; it is neither especially controversial (as are the cases of Zimbabwe and Sudan) nor is it resource rich or an economic powerhouse of the scale of Nigeria, South Africa and Angola; rather its economy is largely based on agriculture. However, in its repression of political opposition and its state-focused approach to development, the Ethiopian government shares some convergences with China. Ethiopia also occupies an important place in the EU’s and US’s foreign policies largely because of its strategic positioning in a zone of conflict from the Horn of Africa across the middle of the continent. This factor has become more important

with the rise of radical extremism. As such therefore, a central pillar of the West's relations with Ethiopia is that of state security rather than human security.

The Ethiopian case provides for an interesting exploration of the themes of peace and security and human rights against the background of Ethiopia's role as a regional power, its domestic stability coupled with a repressive regime, its important relations with the West, the host of the AU Commission and the broader regional security challenges.

## Methodology

This project made use of a mixed-methods research approach based on qualitative interviews and a process tracing method in order to understand the complexities involved under each theme and China's relations with the selected African countries.

The research was informed by desk research and field-work in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan. SAIIA undertook interviews with actors from different sectors (government, NGOs, trade unions, business) in South Africa. SAIIA used unstructured interviews and built on the previous research and interviews undertaken by its researchers and research associates on the country cases.

Primary sources (official speeches, public statements and institutional publications, like conference reports, official reports and documents) and secondary sources (literature linked to the countries and themes in question; and other qualitative and quantitative studies – namely in the form of books, journals, newspaper articles and online sources) were also utilised in this project.

However, the sensitive nature of the topic often made access to evidence difficult and interviewees were not always forthcoming or adopted a cautious approach.

## Introduction

“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” (Iyasu, 2013, quoted in Alden, 2014: 7).

## China’s new normal

As we approach the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China’s engagement with the world and Africa has changed; so too has its economic trajectory: a slowing Chinese economy, which was realising only single-digit growth in comparison with the early 2000s; significant financial volatility not only seen in its stock market earlier in 2015 but also in its housing market; ballooning corporate debt; and the concomitant policy shift to stimulating domestic consumption and services, while having to make difficult decisions about SOEs. Part of China’s changing economic landscape has been rising wages, which in turn has meant that outsourcing lower wage manufacturing plants and jobs has become a factor in its strategy.

Since assuming the Chinese presidency in 2012, President Xi Jinping has made the ‘Chinese dream’ a pillar of his vision for China: improved well-being and the rejuvenation of the nation. Rooting out corruption has also been a focus of his presidency. In 2015 alone some 336,000 officials had been punished (The Economist, 2 April 2016). There is some indication that anti-corruption is also featuring on the international agenda of China during its chairmanship of the G20. Externally, a greater emphasis on public diplomacy accompanied by a strategic diplomatic engagement with global and domestic publics has emerged.

On the political front, China has now departed from Deng Xiaoping’s maxim of ‘hide your strength, bide your time’, to advancing a ‘new type of major power relations’ with the US as the only other **major** power, as far as China is concerned. A more confident and assertive China has projected power in its immediate neighbourhood, and has developed a set of initiatives that allow it to use (development) finance to its geo-economic advantage. These include the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Fund and the New Development Bank, among others.

## China in Africa

Since the first FOCAC (Forum on China-African Cooperation) ministerial meeting in 2000, the China-Africa relationship has evolved and is now far more diverse and nuanced than the focus on economics and resources in the global debate would indicate. The deeper China has become involved in particular societies – and as greater numbers of Chinese live in Africa – the more China has been drawn into political matters. Chinese researchers and policymakers have been debating changing practices on non-interference in internal affairs in the context of highly unstable political environments, newer definitions of peace building that reflect Chinese characteristics, and contributing to the debate on responsibility to protect by reinterpreting this as ‘responsible protection’, signalling an ambition to be a norms-maker (Alden and Large, 2015). This has seen China become more engaged in peace and security matters, which was formalised through a FOCAC peace and security initiative in 2012, and is being reinforced through expanding commitments to UN peacekeeping, and more active efforts to resolve conflicts.

SAIIA's China-Africa research, spanning back to 1992 and accelerating since 2006, aims to investigate the burgeoning relationship between the premier emerging power and the continent, and the strategic implications of Beijing's broad-based co-operation. More recently, our research has moved beyond macro-trends to attempt a more nuanced understanding of aspects such as sectorial and bilateral links.

In this respect, China-Africa analysis requires careful consideration of context – that is making sense of changes at the level of individual African states as well as China's own evolving approach which is as much a product of growing experience in Africa, global dynamics, and shifting domestic forces. For instance, China is perceived to be employing a more assertive foreign policy, as noted in its leading role during the UN initiatives in Sudan and Somalia as far back as 2007, as well as deployment of peacekeepers in UN missions. This shift links up with the growing exposure of Chinese economic interests in key sectors in Africa and the complexities faced by the variety of Chinese actors operating on the continent, thereby reaffirming China's changing and multifaceted approach.

Importantly, the FOCAC process highlights the adaptive nature of China's engagement with Africa, responding dynamically to emerging developments as was highlighted in 2012. Against the backdrop of the Arab spring and regime change in Libya, the FOCAC V ministerial focused on growing risks to Chinese economic interests in Africa. Most notably, FOCAC V promoted the China Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, which seeks to provide financial assistance, capacity building and other forms of institutionalised support for Africa's efforts at fostering peace and security on the continent. These trends were reinforced by the financial and diplomatic commitments made in early December at FOCAC VI in Johannesburg.

Despite China's official 'non-interference' policy, Beijing displayed new thinking regarding the importance of engaging more deeply with stability and peace building in Africa. Significantly, the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa was admitted as a full member of the FOCAC process prior to the ministerial meeting<sup>1</sup>, paving the way for closer forms of collaboration. By early 2015, China and the AU signed an agreement to connect major capital cities through transport routes and collaboration was further expanded in May 2015, when China officially opened its permanent mission to the AU.

In order to get a more in-depth understanding of China (both as a country and through its multiplicity of actors), greater attention needs to be paid to the diverse economic, sociological and political circumstances of African countries.

In this regard, it is important to unpack Beijing's general approach to human rights, human security and governance capacity building, especially as it is manifested in its foreign policy activities, as well as the bilateral context in which these policies are manifested in specific cases. China's approach to the thematic areas identified above has changed over time, and developments in Africa have played an important role in that regard. The evolution of China's thinking on these matters can be discerned in two areas. The first is human rights and human security, which has strong domestic antecedents reflected in the way the Chinese Communist Party itself has interpreted human rights and security at home. The second is peace and security, which encompasses China's involvement in UN

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<sup>1</sup> This is mentioned in an undated document by the African Union on 'Africa's strategic Partnerships', [[http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/Partnerships\\_4.pdf](http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/Partnerships_4.pdf), accessed on 15 November 2015].

peacekeeping activities and its peace building role. Governance capacity building may be considered part of that, *i.e.*, a function of peace building, but also entails relevance to a range of other security-related issues. Underpinning both is China's principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states and respect for sovereignty. Both elements tend to emphasise state security over the more expansive notion of human security, the advancement of which may sometimes require it to 'violate' the principle of non-interference and sovereignty.

## Human rights and human security

Human rights is seen as one of the most contentious areas in China's contemporary relations with Africa<sup>2</sup>. Part of the reason is China's own poor domestic record, and its active defence of non-interference in multilateral settings and bilateral relations at a time when norms and global governance structures are advancing the importance of human security and recognising that sovereignty should not be the refuge of the rogue. Many Africans have expressed concern that China's willingness to do business and support brutal regimes such as in Sudan, help to entrench poor governance records in many African states, which may see the rolling back of progress made by domestic civil society actors and external supporters to broaden the political space and strengthen accountability regimes. Some critics have argued that China's business relations with authoritarian regimes in Africa have impacted negatively on Africa's economic development and civil-political rights (Breslin and Taylor, 2008; Koné, 2010; Shaw, 2011). One recent study has even gone so far as arguing that Chinese aid not only supports the continuity of rogue and pariah states in Africa, but even creates them by fostering political violence and use of force by the state (Kishi and Raleigh, 2015).

Chinese policymakers counter this critique, emphasising China's engagement on second-generation (socio-economic) rights in Africa, such as China's contribution to African development through education, agriculture, infrastructure and health cooperation (Webster, 2013; Monyae, 2013: 20). Indeed, China has argued consistently that socio-economic rights and the right to development should be given priority over civic and political rights, which have traditionally been emphasised by the North (Sceats and Breslin, 2012). China's 2014 White Paper on 'Progress in China's Human Rights' (*The People's Republic of China*, 2015) begins with an emphasis on the right to development (including better protected economic, social and cultural rights). Moreover it is the historical understanding that the basic unit of Chinese society is the family rather than the individual (Hsü, 1984: 69). Under communism this was focused on the collective in the form of the CPC, but in both cases the individual was subsumed into a broader collective. In this respect, China's emphasis on second-generation rights in its own domestic context also appears to reflect its approach to security issues in Africa. This perspective is not necessarily unique to China and such an approach to human rights is also maintained by other 'southern' countries, including South Africa (*ibid.*: 633). Much contestation within the UN Human Rights Council for example, has occurred over these differences in the importance ascribed to the two dimensions of human rights.

China's actions in multilateral fora and in bilateral engagements demonstrates an increasingly nuanced approach to human rights, especially against the background of the

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<sup>2</sup> This issue is debated amongst stakeholders such as: NGOs, think tanks, international media, government official and international financial institutions.

need to ensure a degree of stability in countries where it has vital economic interests. This is closely linked with China's increasing participation in multilateral UN peace and security initiatives. In addition, some in China also believe that human rights constitute a 'normative pillar of the world order exert[ing] a pervasive impact on how states are treated in the international society. Human rights cannot be simply trumped by power or bargained away' (Yong, 2008: 96).

As China emerged from the Mao era and embarked on a series of reforms, many in the West were hopeful that this would also lead to greater political liberalisation and encouraged rather than condemned China (Breslin and Taylor, 2008). This changed after Tiananmen Square in June 1989 with the imposition of arms embargos without defining the relations between China and the West on human rights in the long run. Critique of China's human rights record at home became much more muted in Europe in particular by the turn of the century as the links drawn by Chinese authorities between external private commercial interests seeking business in China and national economic considerations became more apparent (Breslin and Taylor, 2008: 7). The rise in official Western critique of the impact of Chinese engagement in Africa and its disinterest in human rights abuses (in particular expressed in the US) there emanate from fear that it provides Chinese companies with a comparative advantage that western actors do not enjoy (*ibid.*: 11).

The concept of human security was introduced in the 1994 UN Human Development Report where it was broadly defined as the 'freedom from fear, and freedom from want'. This was further broken up into seven 'essential dimensions of human security' that are: economic, health, personal, political, food, environment and community (Gómez and Gasper, 2013). Although this definition can be used to analyse a wide range of either explicit or implicit issues relating to human development, the core tenet is "the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair [...] with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential" (*United Nations General Assembly*, 2012).

Human Security is traditionally viewed as a Western concept that does not fit into China's historical and social context, and the term only entered the Chinese mainstream academic discourse in the early 2000s. The outbreak of SARS in South China in 2003, the Boxing Day tsunami in Indonesia (2004) and the bird flu outbreak in 2006 – all regarded as non-traditional security threats by Western analysts – motivated China to start taking an interest in human security, albeit with its own characteristics. An overview of Chinese academic work on Human Security reveals that China draws on both the traditionally Western and non-traditional security approaches – thus 'seven dimensions of human security with Chinese characteristics' (Breslin, 2015) have been identified as,

- Economic security
- Political and societal security
- Health security
- Food security
- Personal security
- Community and cultural security
- Ecological and environmental security

The Chinese version of human security therefore views its conception of human rights through an emphasis on the collective. As Breslin (2015: 243) states: “[...] this results in a Chinese version of the concept where the state remains a key reference point and actor – indeed, the state is the key guarantor of human security, not a threat to it”. The corollary to this approach is that in order to achieve optimum conditions for human security, all efforts must be directed towards bolstering the state.

It can be argued that China’s engagement in Africa on many fronts may contribute to human security objectives – whether it relates to its agricultural projects or health. A very recent example is China’s response to the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in December 2013. Its intervention, deploying a mobile lab team, medical experts, and supplies, won it kudos among African states. Its overarching horizontal approach to health matters, in contrast to the West’s more vertical approach which targets the disease without seeking to integrate measures into the country’s health system, has been noted by analysts as a necessary lesson for cooperation between the West and China (Penfold and Fourie, 2014).

### Peace and security

The first time China voted on a peacekeeping resolution in the UN Security Council was in 1981. Prior to that it had assiduously avoided doing so, considering UN peacekeeping as a tool of the two superpowers to exert their influence in developing countries (Hellstroem, 2009). Since the 1990s, however, its engagement has grown significantly, and it is now the largest contributor of troops among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. China’s commitment to peacekeeping was also reflected in the 2004 White Paper for National Defence. According to a Chinese analyst, China’s role in peacekeeping has allowed China to raise its international profile, improve relations with host countries and with Western governments, as well as protect Chinese interests abroad (Zhao, 2010).

In the process, China’s approach to the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference has become more nuanced, characterised by greater flexibility and pragmatism, as China also recognised the importance of being perceived as a responsible great power. A strong proponent of UN peacekeeping mandates rather than unilateral ones (or coalitions of the willing), China appreciates that UN interventions have been important tools for promoting regional stability and security (Hellstroem, 2009: 56). Yet, its official guidelines on legitimate intervention include securing an invitation from the concerned state (Wu and Taylor, 2011). This played itself out starkly in the case of Darfur where prior to 2006 China was opposed to any UNSC resolution that did not have the support of the host government, which was perpetrating the atrocities in Darfur. Its subsequent exertion of pressure on Khartoum was the first significant milestone in its African peace and security engagement.

The second was the Arab Spring in North Africa. The UN-sanctioned intervention in Libya, which China chose to abstain from voting on in the UNSC (resolution 1973), highlighted unambiguously for China the tension between the principle of non-interference and the need to ensure stability in countries where it has substantial economic interests. Sceats and Breslin argue that after the Arab Spring it emerged as a spokesperson for states seeking ‘to affirm the paramount responsibility of the state to enforce public order’ (Sceats and Breslin, 2012: 42). At the same time, Chinese commentators in the blogosphere were emphasising the government’s responsibility to protect Chinese citizens and Chinese assets in countries undergoing massive civil unrest. In this contemporary context, Alden

identifies three security drivers for China’s changing engagement on peace and security matters: reputational, firm-level and protection of citizens (Alden, 2014).

In Africa, China has deployed troops under UN command in peace support operations in Liberia, DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, and Mali. In 2012 China and the AU signed the China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, although as Alden argues this ‘aspirational commitment to a more institutionalised form of involvement’ may be more difficult to realise 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’ (Alden, 2014: 1).

Over the years China has moved into peacebuilding. In so doing, China has also made financial contributions to the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Whereas peacekeeping aims to reduce armed conflict, peacebuilding is a far more encompassing term that focuses on the longer term developmental aspects of post-conflict societies that are essential building blocks of a positive peace. However, as with human rights, there are conceptual differences between the Chinese and Western understanding of the term. A paper by Zhao Lei (2010: 92) explores these differences in tabular form:

**Table 1: Different Perspective on the Implications of Peacebuilding**

	<b>Western perspective</b>	<b>China’s perspective</b>
<b>Objective</b>	Liberal democracy priority	Development priority
<b>Focus</b>	Good governance	Good government
<b>Principle</b>	Democracy promotion	Assistance orientation
	Necessary intervention	Non-intervention
<b>Strategic culture</b>	Pre-emptive	Reactive
<b>Method</b>	Top-down & bottom-up management:	Top-down management:
	Set for new constitution; hold national election; build multiparty system; strengthen civil society etc.	Strengthen state capacity; enhance national identification and national reconciliation; promote economic recovery etc.
<b>Defect</b>	Challenge local ownership	Lack of public participation

**Governance Capacity building**

China’s government capacity building in Africa forms part of the broader contribution to peace building. China recognises that development requires substantive construction of human capacity and institutions in order to meet development aims. China’s support for capacity building is not new given that its development assistance since the 1950s has traditionally focused on technical assistance, training and other forms of capacity building. Yet until recently, the Chinese government formally disavowed being seen as a model for development. This position is nonetheless changing with the newly found assertiveness in Chinese foreign policy (Kurlantzick, 2007) and, henceforth, willingness to showcase Chinese success in development. More specifically to Africa, an overview of China’s

engagement in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe reveal that China's involvement in government capacity building is linked to the requirements of the country in question. Ironically, while there is clear China engagement on hard infrastructure that directly contributes to African government capacity, such as the construction of the AU headquarters and in the Zimbabwe case a military college, less is known about the depth and detail of inter-governmental training, exchanges and more broadly, how such initiatives are informing African policy-thinking.

While the above analysis would indicate a rather positive engagement of China in Africa, as it seeks to reconcile non-interference and the responsibilities of being a global power, a discussion of peace and security also necessitates assessing the impact of that very notion, such as the increasing supply of arms to Africa over the last decade. In this domain China is not necessarily different from other great powers. For example, between 2006 and 2010, China accounted for 25% of the volume of major arms supplied to Africa (Taylor and Wu, 2013: 458). Of concern in the discussion about China's contribution to peace and security is the fact that many of these small arms have been key factors in the proliferation of violence in Africa in the years since the end of the Cold War. While trying to be a more assertive and responsible player on the continent, this aforementioned aspect reveals the complexity (and flipside) of China's involvement in peace and security in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

After discussing the extent to which broader security and governance issues have evolved and analysing where they fit into China's foreign policy, the remainder of the report will examine how these thematic areas unfold in three case studies (Ethiopia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe). Given the specificity of each of the featured case studies, ranging from the economy to the 'condition' of the state, not all of the aforementioned themes are applicable to the same degree. For instance, while peace and security is considered a priority in South Sudan, given the continuation of open conflict, it currently seems less relevant to Ethiopia and even Zimbabwe (despite its advanced form of political decay), as both are much more stable. Adopting a case study approach, the first three chapters will not only unpack the key Chinese engagements in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan, but also, and foremost, assess China's influence and capacity to shape the political, governance and security landscapes in all three countries. Based on these empirical findings, the last chapter compares country findings, identifying complementarities and challenges with Western partners, and outlines a set of recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> In the 2013-2015 Beijing Action plan (related to FOCAC V), it is mentioned that "the Chinese side will continue to support African countries' effort to combat illegal trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons" (FOCAC, 2012).

## Chapter 1: Ethiopia: ‘China’s China in Africa’<sup>4</sup>

Contrary to the perception that all of China’s key partners in Africa are resource-rich, Ethiopia does not fit the profile<sup>5</sup>. While pursuing its own development path, the Ethiopian government has also been inspired by success stories in East Asia, not least by China. Its strategic position within the Horn of Africa, its stable and efficient – although coercive – state as well as the clustering of regional institutions in Addis Ababa have turned Ethiopia into one of the main entry points into Africa. Nonetheless, in terms of engaging with foreign partners, Ethiopia is far more advanced in linking its national development priorities with its foreign policy. As a result, the ruling party’s firm grip on the economy and on political power is directly impacting the areas of engagement by foreign actors, including China. The first part of this chapter unpacks the complexity of politics in Ethiopia as it provides the basis for the unfolding relationship with China and Chinese actors. The second part outlines the key areas of Chinese economic involvement while partly engaging with the idea of ‘infrastructure for diplomatic support’. The last part looks at China’s political influence, both at a domestic level through regular exchanges with the ruling party, but also, and increasingly, from a regional perspective via engagements with the African Union and other regional institutions.

### ‘Here, there’s nothing simple about politics’<sup>6</sup>

Of late, Ethiopia has increasingly been portrayed as one of the continent’s success stories in terms of development and in strong resonance with the ‘Africa rising’ narrative. This applies both to the economic and political sphere. Despite (thus far) little focus on natural resources, the country’s annual economic growth rates have been close to 10%<sup>7</sup> over a stretch of more than 10 years (compared to 3% at the beginning of the nineties) and an overall GDP of USD 54.8 billion in 2014 (compared to roughly USD 30 billion in 2010). Nonetheless, with the second-largest population on the continent, adding up to almost 100 million people<sup>8</sup>, per capita GDP is still very low with USD 550,<sup>9</sup> even in comparison to the USD 1 700 average at the scale of Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the very low starting point of the economy, several interviewed interlocutors (both Ethiopian and foreign) stressed that it makes more sense to consider the progress and achievements made over the last two decades than solely focus on the current level.<sup>10</sup>

The development narrative, at times simplistic and exaggerated (serving the glorification of the party), has nonetheless translated into very tangible results. While several parts of

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<sup>4</sup> This pantomime (or *mise en abyme*) was used by both a Senior Official at the Swedish Embassy and by an Ethiopian consultant (Addis Ababa, 21 and 23 October 2015). It speaks to the idea of a strong similarity (between China and Ethiopia) regarding the economic development ideology and, to a lesser degree, of a highly centralised authority.

<sup>5</sup> In the long run, Chinese economic engagements could also become more ‘market-seeking’ in this populous region.

<sup>6</sup> Comment by the Head of Political, Press and Information Section at the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 26 October 2015).

<sup>7</sup> According to official World Bank data [<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&country=ETH&series=&period=#>, accessed on 4 November 2015].

<sup>8</sup> 96.96 million in 2014 according to figures from the World Bank.

<sup>9</sup> While it is difficult to find official figures for inequality in Ethiopia, several interviewed interlocutors alluded to rising economic gaps between rich and poor.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews conducted with several Ethiopian researchers from various institutions, high-ranking officials at various European embassies as well as one independent consultant in Addis Ababa (October 2015).

Addis Ababa reveal a city under heavy construction and rapid transformation, the most significant improvements in the last 10-15 years have mainly occurred in the rural areas. With the latter capturing close to 80% of the overall population, the government has focused on improving agricultural inputs, building roads and investing in education and health, contributing to a significant drop of the population living below national poverty lines (from 44.2% in 1999 to 29.6% in 2010<sup>11</sup>).

### Development priorities and planning

Providing skills remains a crucial task as Ethiopia continues to face numerous development challenges (Thakur, 2009: 5). In spite of a steady decline in GDP share over the past decade, agricultural activities continue to form the backbone of the economy as one of the essential pillars for sustained growth and pro-poor development in Ethiopia (Zerihun Wondifraw, Kibret and Wakaiga, 2015: 4-5). Already in 1993, the then Ministry of Planning and Economic Development issued a policy of agricultural development-led industrialisation (ADLI) in which agricultural outputs would stimulate growth in the industrial sector (Dercon *et al.*, 2009: 2). However, due to disappointing results (Fourie, 2015: 303) and lacking agricultural modernisation, the central government has recently been pushing to increasingly promote industrial activities<sup>12</sup> (*Ministry of Finance and Economic Development*, 2010), power generation through hydro electrical dams, as well as export-led agriculture (relying on cash crops and FDI) to play a bigger role in the overall economy. At the same time, the service sector has also made a significant leap (11.9%), led by the rapid expansion in the number of hotels,<sup>13</sup> in addition to financial intermediation, wholesale and retail trade, as well as transport and communications (Ademuyiwa *et al.*, 2014: 7; Zerihun Wondifraw *et al.*, 2015: 3).

Ethiopia (alongside Rwanda) has become the epitome of the developmental state in Africa.<sup>14</sup> According to Chalmers Johnson's definition (1982) of the 'capitalist developmental state', "economic development, defined in terms of growth, productivity, and competitiveness, constitutes the foremost and singled-minded priority of state-action" in addition to "strategic industrial policy [which] forms a central component of the developmental state model" (Öniş, 1991: 111). In this setting, the interventionist state is concurrently playing the role of the implementing (at least to some extent), coordinating and regulating body (Woo-Cumings, 1999). In Ethiopia, the ruling party is "retaining control of a large proportion of available sources of rent and economic levers" (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 10). The party state justifies its central role and firm grip on the economy by "the wider socio-economic and political objectives of 'revolutionary democracy' in shaping and enhancing the outcomes of the 'developmental state' " (*ibid.*: 36). As a result, most of the economic sectors are either in the hands of state-owned

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<sup>11</sup> According to official World Bank data [<http://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia>, accessed on 5 November 2015].

<sup>12</sup> From 2013 to 2014, the industrial sector in Ethiopia grew by more than 20%, mostly driven by construction, mining and manufacturing (Zerihun Wondifraw *et al.*, 2015: 3).

<sup>13</sup> Most of them are concentrated in the capital due to the location of the African Union headquarters and Addis Ababa being the third city in the world with the highest number of diplomatic missions after New York and Geneva.

<sup>14</sup> In August this year the, 'Meles Zenawi Foundation' (late Prime Minister of Ethiopia) organised a conference in Kigali, entitled 'The African Democratic Developmental State' in partnership with the African Development Bank and the government of Rwanda [<http://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/article/meles-zenawi-foundation-holds-inaugural-symposium-on-the-african-democratic-developmental-state-14597>, accessed on 5 November 2015].

enterprises, four large regionally endowment-owned companies<sup>15</sup> or the private MIDROC<sup>16</sup> conglomerate owned by an Saudi-Ethiopian business tycoon with close connections to the political elites, revealing “that business and politics are still strongly intertwined in Ethiopia<sup>17</sup>” (Altenburg, 2010: 2). As a ‘social transformation state’, the government seeks to carefully manage the eventual transition from pre-capitalism to middle income status (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 60) by imposing the centralised management of a high proportion of the economic rent (also known as ‘developmental patrimonialism’).

In a country with a strong legacy of long-term planning (going back to the late 1950s under Emperor Haile Selassie), the ‘Growth and Transformation Plan’ (GTP) has become the main framework of the national economy. Launched in 2010, this very comprehensive, detailed and highly ambitious five-year plan (outlining very specific targets) builds on previous initiatives about sustained development and poverty eradication.<sup>18</sup> The ultimate aim is to become a middle-income country by 2025 by turning into an industrialised economy with a full supply chain. During the GTP-I period (2010/11 – 2014/15), “special emphasis [was, according to the document,] given to agricultural and rural development, industry, infrastructure, social and human development, good governance and democratization<sup>19</sup>” while taking into account two alternative economic growth scenarios (*Ministry of Finance and Economic Development*, 2010: 1). Yet, the GTP-I has been very much driven by the central state, leaving little room for the natural expansion of the private sector. Given the importance attributed to centralised rent utilisation as a means to promote structural transformation plans, the government “tends to be perceived as critical and suspicious of the political and commercial motivation of private entrepreneurs”, the latter often being “singled out as [personal] ‘rent seekers’ rather than ‘value creators’ (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 11, 26)<sup>20</sup>. While, rhetorically, the private sector is believed to be a key component in the transition towards capitalism, “the institutionalisation of trusting co-operation between Ethiopian entrepreneurs and the ‘developmental state’ in pursuit of commonly conceived goals remains very much a work in progress” (*ibid*: 27-28).

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<sup>15</sup> Out of the four, the most commonly known is EFFORT (the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray), which was established during the mid-1990s with resources accumulated and donated by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, and is closely allied with the ruling party perspectives. The other three are the ‘Amhara National Regional Rehabilitation and Development Fund’ (known as Endeavour or Tiret), the ‘Tumsa Endowment Foundation for the Development of Oromia) and the ‘Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State’ (SNNPRS). Additionally, they “are by far the largest regional taxpayer to the Government” and are portrayed as “provid[ers of] indirect resources and public goods that feed wider social, political and developmental processes” (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 12, 59). Nonetheless, some online comments point towards the “economic hegemony of the TPLF” (Tigray People’s Liberation Front, at the origin of EFFORT) and the country being “looted by EFFORT and the TPLF business empire” through its “gross mismanagement of the nation’s resources and the massive systemic corruption” (*Ethiopianimes*, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Mohammed International Development Research & Organisation Companies. Similar to the regional endowment funds, MIDROC conglomerate is constituted by a collection of different businesses.

<sup>17</sup> One interviewed Ethiopian consultant went even as far as referring to “a very pronounced indigenisation of the political economy” (Addis Ababa, October 2015).

<sup>18</sup> ‘Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme’ (SDPRP) from 2002/3 – 2004/5 followed by the ‘Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty’ (PASDEP) running from 2005/6 – 2009/10 (*Ministry of Finance and Economic Development*, 2010: vii).

<sup>19</sup> The latter two will be discussed in greater detail throughout the course of the report.

<sup>20</sup> According to one interlocutor, the government tolerates a profit margin of less than 15%. Exceeding this threshold, entrepreneurs are considered to fall into the category of personal ‘rent-seekers’ (Series of conversations in Addis Ababa, October 2015).

Increasingly aware of the limitations caused by the lack of (available) capital, the party-state has been aiming to boost economic activities while gradually opening certain sectors to foreign investment<sup>21</sup>. In areas such as agriculture, manufacturing or real estate, there is increasing involvement from Turkish, Indian, Saudi, Chinese and Brazilians players alongside a more historically embedded Italian footprint. The GTP-II (covering the period of 2015/16 – 2019/20) puts more emphasis on the private sector. Yet, with the party state retaining control of the pace and the breadth of economic opening,<sup>22</sup> leeway for foreign operators remains limited. In the 2015 ‘Doing Business’ Report, Ethiopia holds the 132<sup>nd</sup> position out of 189 listed countries,<sup>23</sup> mostly due to its “unwieldy and overbearing” regulation and bureaucracy (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 24). Nonetheless, as the manufacturing sector, both light and heavy industries, is projected to play a significant role in improving export revenue,<sup>24</sup> there is increasing room for Ethiopian-foreign joint ventures and partnerships. Another area of high potential lies in real estate with 700 000 planned condominiums (lower and middle class) within the framework of Ethiopia’s second GTP, providing significant market opportunities for property developers (both national and foreign).

### State power and revolutionary democracy

In the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is by far the most stable and cohesive country amidst a region of political unrest. Surrounded by “a failed state (Somalia), an isolated problem neighbour (Eritrea), a quasi-state (Somaliland), and a newly independent state that has yet to achieve stability (South Sudan)” (Cabestan, 2012: 53), the international community has a clear interest in maintaining political stability in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the ruling party state, has been in power since 1991 after successfully overthrowing the military *Dergue* regime (1974-1991). Formed by a coalition of four (former) rebel groups<sup>25</sup>, the EPRDF remains nonetheless dominated by the TPLF, despite Tigray only covering about 6% of the overall territory (Adem, 2012: 145). Initially rooted in Marxism-Leninism,<sup>26</sup> the EPRDF’s advent to power coincided with major ideological shifts at the global stage. Partly related to a reshuffling of international alliances, ‘revolutionary democracy’ became the new official school of thought of the ruling party (Vaughan, 2011). Vague in its definition, ‘revolutionary democracy’ is regarded as an alternative to the ‘liberal democracy’ practised by Western

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<sup>21</sup> Until 2008, FDI influx remained at a very low level partly related to high levels of perceived risk of doing business in the Horn of Africa and fewer linkages with European countries in the absence of colonial ties (Vaughan and Gebremichael, 2011: 22). The Ethiopian banking sector, theoretically protected from foreign involvement and participation, has, more recently, allowed the setting up of foreign banks. The most recent example is South Africa’s Standard Bank with the official opening of a regional branch in Addis Ababa [<http://beta.iol.co.za/business/companies/standard-bank-moves-into-ethiopia-1938215>, 30 October 2015, accessed on 5 November 2015].

<sup>22</sup> For instance, foreign nationals are not allowed to be involved in wholesale and retail activities.

<sup>23</sup> Although inopportune to attract business, Ethiopia holds a far better position than Zimbabwe (171) and South Sudan (186) (World Bank, 2015: 4) and features among the top-ten African countries (Hackenesch, 2013: 19).

<sup>24</sup> Local sources are expected to generate two-thirds of all investments [<http://hahudaily.com/ethiopia-second-growth-and-transformation-plan-gtp-ii/>, 29 September 2015, accessed on 2 November 2015].

<sup>25</sup> Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement (SEPDM) and the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).

<sup>26</sup> The TPLF, arising from a student and peasant-based guerrilla resistance to the *Dergue*, drew heavy inspiration from Enver Hozha’s Albanian version of communism. The latter “emphasised independence from both Soviet and Western imperialism” and thrived against all odds (Fourie, 2015: 297).

industrialised states and draws heavily on Mao Zedong's 'New democracy' doctrine. In this setting, authority is centralised in order to represent and safeguard the interests of all levels of society<sup>27</sup> (not only of the majority), and economically, it involves the nationalisation of banks and industry as well as the redistribution of land from wealthy landowners to poor peasants (Mao, 1964). In the early nineties, the EPRDF politburo believed that the party should be presided by a young leader, Meles Zenawi, at the time chairman of the TPLF from 1989 and head of the ruling party since its formation in 1991. As Ethiopia's Prime Minister from 1995 (at the age of 40) until his passing in 2012, Zenawi became the main architect of the developmental (democratic) state ideology.

One of the main reasons of the rebellion against the highly repressive and Stalinist *Dergue* regime was to fight for individual rights and freedom. At least in the official party rhetoric, the goal of achieving democracy remains intact given that, as repeatedly stated by Zenawi, development without democracy is not sustainable over time.<sup>28</sup> However, due to fears of national disintegration on the basis of the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in Ethiopia, the central state has remained solely in charge of defining the political trajectory. If, at the beginning, the Prime Minister Zenawi, while pragmatic, aimed to combine performance and popular legitimacy, the 2005 elections marked a turning point (Vaughan, 2011). Severely beaten by the opposition, the government quickly turned shock<sup>29</sup> and attempts to manipulate the outcome into a violent crackdown of protests during which 193 people died (Fourie, 2015: 298). Ever since, democratic reforms have come to an almost complete halt, resulting in "a substantial narrowing of spaces for the opposition, civil society and the media" (Hackenesch, 2013: 20).

Meles Zenawi tightened the party's grip on power by increasing army and intelligence force expenses. From the government's standpoint, the post-electoral violence arose from "having tried to liberalise too much and too soon", prompting the political leaders to opt for "a model that would allow the state to reap the rewards of the global market while remaining firmly in the hands of a strong and authoritarian ruling party" (Fourie, 2015: 299). Following the 2005 elections, the EPRDF started to abuse the electoral process by compartmentalising every household into groups of five individuals (over 18 years old), also known as the '1 to 5' system, 1 being the direct chain-link to each and every household<sup>30</sup>. In addition to organising citizens into different development activities (mostly in the rural areas), each head of household is required to participate in regular party discussions held at different echelons of political authority.<sup>31</sup> Besides clamping down on the media (Gagliardone, 2014), civil society and the opposition, the close monitoring of

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<sup>27</sup> For Lenin, 'democratic centralism' "rests on the principle that collective decisions made by majority vote after a full, informed, and frank discussion are more likely to reflect the interests of the working class". Once the decision by the party has been made (by majority vote), all members are expected to follow that decision unquestioningly, reflecting the aspect of centralism ['Democratic centralism', <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/nem-7/basoc/ch-5.htm>, and 'ethiopundit: Revolutionary Democracy', <http://ethiopundit.blogspot.co.za/2007/08/revolutionary-democracy.html>, both accessed on 10 November 2015].

<sup>28</sup> Series of exchanges with an Ethiopian expert on the nature of politics in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, October 2015).

<sup>29</sup> During that time, Eritrea's secession was seen as the Ethiopian government giving in too easily. Meles Zenawi in particular, additionally of Eritrean blood, was considered to have been too lenient in ordering to end the war. The opposition, led by the Coalition for Unity and Democracy, promised to retrieve Eritrea, even claim Djibouti, and managed to gain public support.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ethiopian experts (Addis Ababa, October 2015; Johannesburg, November 2015).

<sup>31</sup> The EPRDF has currently about 9 million party members in addition to several million unregistered followers.

citizens through the ‘1 to 5’ system as well as the filtering down of government decisions from the national to a very localised level (*kebele*<sup>32</sup>) have clearly shaped the outcome of the last two elections. In 2010, EPRDF secured 545 out of 547 available seats in parliament; in May 2015, all of them went to the ruling party state. In this system of political inertia, Ethiopia’s progression is closely tied to the future of the party state<sup>33</sup>.

### Ethiopia and its ‘diplomatic usefulness’

Chinese footprints in Ethiopia, both tangible and intangible, are illustrations of interactions reaching beyond purely economic interests. If diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and China were initiated in 1970 under Emperor Haile Selassie, they remained limited throughout the *Dergue* period as the latter entertained closer ties with the Soviet Union<sup>34</sup> (Adem, 2012: 144). It is only since 1991, with the coming to power of the EPRDF, that Beijing has gradually been able to build a closer partnership with the ruling government. This occurred mainly after 1995, following a debate about Ethiopia’s foreign policy direction in the context of “what was seen as unbearable pressure coming from the West” (*ibid.*: 145). For the Chinese government, Ethiopia, through its diplomatic clout throughout the continent and crucial role in the Horn of Africa, is seen as a key entry point into the region. Additionally, Addis Ababa, being the seat of both the African Union headquarters, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa as well as other regional institutions, provides a visible platform and “immediate multiplier effect throughout the continent” (Hackenesch, 2013: 24) for any engagements by foreign players. As a result, Chinese interests are motivated “as much by diplomatic, strategic, and even ideological considerations as economic ones” (Cabestan, 2012: 53).

Diplomatic and political ties have continuously expanded over the years. Following the first democratic elections in 1995, Prime Minister Zenawi visited China and received then President Jiang Zemin a year later, resulting in the signing of a trade and technical cooperation agreement in 1996 and an Investment Protection and Promotion agreement in 1998. Since the launch of the multilateral Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, the bilateral relationship with China has not only been upgraded to the level of ‘new strategic partnership’ (that same year), but Ethiopia also hosted the second Ministerial meeting of the Forum in Addis Ababa in 2003 and co-chaired the third iteration in Beijing in 2006. Out of all fifty African countries maintaining official ties with the PRC, Ethiopia is the only one that has benefitted from all eight FOCAC policy measures<sup>35</sup> announced in Beijing in 2006 (Gu, 2008, cited in Hackenesch, 2013: 22). The China-Africa Development Fund, established in 2007 and pledging to commit USD 5 billion for potential Chinese investors across the continent, opened a branch in Addis in 2010 to

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<sup>32</sup> *Kebeles* are the smallest units of local government, usually formed by peasant associations of around 500 families.

<sup>33</sup> One local analyst believed that the ruling government will only leave power either in the case of the party’s disintegration or a natural phasing out due to societal factors (such as a gradual increase of the middle class) (Interview with Ethiopian researcher at the Embassy of Sweden, Addis Ababa, October 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Close allies during the 1950s, the relationship between the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union gradually worsened leading to a split in the early 1960s. This Sino-Soviet tension also spilled over to the African continent, in addition to the respective rivalry with the US.

<sup>35</sup> These include “strengthen[ing] unity and cooperation in important international and regional issues; improv[ing] the FOCAC mechanism and explor[ing] new ways of cooperation to enhance China-Africa strategic partnership comprehensively for the welfare of both China and African people” [‘Implementing the follow-up actions of the Beijing Summit of FOCAC for the common development of China and Africa’, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceke/eng/xnyfgk/t425635.htm>, accessed on 16 November 2015].

promote activities by Chinese companies in Ethiopia and in the broader Eastern African region (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2015). High-profile visits in both directions have occurred at regular intervals. Among the most recent ones feature visits to China by Ethiopia's President Dr. Mulatu Teshome (in July 2014) and by its Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn (in June 2013), as well as Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang travelling to Ethiopia in May 2014.

Bilateral links with China are, furthermore, not only strengthened by the expansion of diplomatic representations, but also shaped, although indirectly, by the stature of specific political figures. Ethiopia not only has an embassy in Beijing, but is also represented by a consulate general in Guangzhou, Chongqing and Shanghai (Shinn, 2014). In 2010, the Ethiopian government appointed its Minister of Foreign Affairs (from 1991 to 2010), Seyoum Mesfin, as ambassador to China.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Ethiopia's President (Dr. Mulatu Teshome), in office since October 2013, studied in China and obtained his doctorate in International Law from Peking University. The Chinese are likewise heavily investing in their diplomatic relationship with Ethiopia, both through their bilateral embassy<sup>37</sup> and, since May 2015, the setting up of a large delegation to the African Union (becoming the third permanent mission next to the US and the European Union).

### From symbolism to pragmatic development

As a resource-poor country, Ethiopia's strategic position (for Beijing) is seen as an anomaly in comparison to China's other key engagements in Africa. The prevalence of diplomatic priorities, or, to borrow from Seifudein Adem, "infrastructure for diplomatic support" (2012: 143), is also, at least to some extent, mirrored in the scope of economic endeavours undertaken by Chinese actors. If bilateral trade figures have been rising exponentially, from USD 383 million in 2004 to USD 6.3 billion a decade later,<sup>38</sup> they still remain fairly low for a country with the second-largest population on the continent<sup>39</sup>.

Chinese investments in Ethiopia, although still modest, have multiplied at a rapid pace more recently. Visible and large-scale symbolic projects have become an integral part of the urban landscape in Addis. The new headquarters of the African Union, inaugurated in 2012, is emblematic in this regard. With a hundred meter tower dominating the city's skyline, this modern complex has become a prominent landmark within the Ethiopian capital (Photos 1 and 2). Built at a total cost of USD 200 million, the building has been entirely financed by Chinese money (through a grant) and implemented by China State Construction Engineering Corporation, revealing that Beijing wishes to strengthen its influence on the continent. More recently, another major Chinese infrastructure project

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<sup>36</sup> While some might consider that the Ethiopian government deliberately sent a very experienced and senior official to represent the country, others have rumoured it to be a political move to sideline a potential competitor (Conversations with several Ethiopian experts, Addis Ababa, October 2015).

<sup>37</sup> While the Chinese embassy in Addis is located in Bole, far away from the AU headquarters, there are rumours that the Ethiopian government has promised 'them' a big plot of land next to the AU to relocate their embassy (Interview with a head of political affairs at a European embassy, October 2015).

<sup>38</sup> According to UN Comtrade data [<http://comtrade.un.org/data>, 2015].

<sup>39</sup> Concomitant to the increase in volume, the trade balance, as with most non resource-rich countries, is very asymmetrical and has largely remained in China's favour. Ethiopia mainly exports sesame, coffee, cut flowers, textile and leather products, while imports from China are mostly comprised of transport equipment and electronics, consumer goods and chemical products (Shinn, 2014). In comparison, China's bilateral trade with South Africa (largest trading partner on the continent since 2009) has risen from USD 4.5 billion in 2004 to USD 24 billion in 2014 according to UN Comtrade data [<http://comtrade.un.org/data>, 2015].

leaving a very tangible imprint on the city is the newly finalised light-rail system. Stretching over a total of 32 kilometres (subdivided in a North-South and East-West axis), the project<sup>40</sup>, a symbol of new development, was completed in only three years by China's Eryuan Engineering Group (see picture 3).

Over the years, there has been increasing Chinese involvement in major infrastructure projects, ranging from transport and energy to telecommunications. According to one source (Shinn, 2014), about 70 per cent of the road network in Ethiopia, including the Ring Road around the capital, the Ethio-China Friendship Road or the Addis Ababa–Adama Expressway, have all been carried out by Chinese companies (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2015). Apart from the Addis light rail, China Railway Group signed a deal in 2011, worth USD 1.1 billion, for the construction of the first phase of the Ethio-Djibouti railway project, and the China Bridge and Road Corporation (CRBC) won the contract to expand the Bole International Airport in Addis.



View of the African Union headquarters (Addis Ababa, Photo 1, Dittgen, October 2015)

Another key area of Chinese involvement in Ethiopia is energy. However, at the current stage, most projects only exist on paper and still have to come to fruition. So far, two dams – one large, one medium scale – have recently been finalised with the participation of Chinese companies. Referred to as Africa's highest concrete arch dam (or the Three Gorges of Africa), the Tekeze Dam (300 MW) was completed in 2009 with the help of Sinohydro.<sup>41</sup> Next to the half completed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam, Gibe III, situated on the Omo river and part of the Gibe cascade dams, was inaugurated in late June 2015 and is expected to produce 1870 MW. Surrounded by major social and environmental concerns (Fourie, 2015: 307), the World Bank, AfDB as well as the European Investment Bank withdrew from the project in 2010. That same year, the Ethiopian Electric Power

<sup>40</sup> China Eximbank covered 85% of the USD 475 million project through a loan and the Ethiopian government financed the remaining 15% (*The East African*, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> The degree of financial involvement of the company in the USD 365 million project remains nonetheless unclear (*Probe International*, 2009).

Corporation (EPPCo) and Dongfang Electric Machinery Corporation (a Chinese SOE) signed a MoU to provide electrical and mechanical equipment (turbines), while the Italian building company Salini was awarded the actual construction contract for the dam (Cabestan, 2012: 58). The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) is believed to cover 85% of the USD 495 million project (through a loan), in addition to financially supporting the realisation of high voltage transmission lines to Addis Ababa (with China Eximbank), whose implementation was awarded to another Chinese company. More recently, Chinese operators have also won the contract for building the power transmission lines related to the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River.



A Chinese billboard ‘celebrating the AU’s fiftieth anniversary’ (Addis Ababa, Photo 2, Dittgen, October 2015)

Although less tangible from the outside, ZTE (Zhongxin Telecommunication Equipment) has played a vital role in upgrading and modernising Ethiopia’s telecommunications sector. By setting up a large mobile network, not only in Addis but also in at least eight other cities, the company has largely contributed to expanding national connectivity and the number of phone users, rising from one million to 15 million between 2007 and 2012 (Cabestan, 2012: 59). However, poor quality of the network and of the installations led to widespread criticism. Consequently, measures were taken to impose more rigorous quality and norm controls on ZTE, in addition to opening the market to other operators (such as France Telecom signing a deal with Ethiopian Telecom). Given its firm grip on the economy, the Ethiopian government shows its rather exceptional ability “to react and adjust to a situation perceived as too unbalanced and detrimental” (*ibid.*: 59).

Given the importance attributed to industrialisation (in particular light manufacturing) and urban development under GTP-II, there is great investment potential for Chinese economic operators. As part of a broader initiative to set up Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in parts

of Africa (Brautigam and Tang, 2011), the Chinese and Ethiopian governments decided in 2008 to create an industrial zone, known as Eastern Industrial Park, in the South-Eastern outskirts of the Addis Ababa. Funded by a consortium of public and private Chinese enterprises, the area was designed to cover five square kilometres and expected to attract factories specialising in manufacturing of textiles, shoes and electric equipment while creating about 20 000 new jobs (Adem, 2012: 146), but has, thus far, failed to meet the proclaimed expectations. However, when asked about beneficiation and localisation of products and workforce in Africa, Chinese officials consistently refer to the Huajian Shoe factory, located within this industrial zone outside the Ethiopian capital. Established in 2012, Huajian employs more than 4 000 Ethiopians (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2015) and has, at least by pro-government newspapers (both Chinese and Ethiopian), become an emblematic example for salient investment opportunities in Ethiopia's manufacturing sector<sup>42</sup>. According to the Ethiopian Investment Authority, 348 Chinese private and state-owned manufacturing companies were already operating in Ethiopia in 2010 (Adem, 2012: 151). Adem argues that these investors have partly been attracted by favourable conditions for producing and selling manufactured goods as well as by, simultaneously, gaining duty-free access to the US market for domestically-produced textiles under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (*ibid.*: 151). With plans to increase the number of SEZs across the country, the Ethiopian authorities expect further investments by Chinese companies. Despite the recent slow-down of the Chinese economy and slump in commodity prices, resulting in a significant drop of Chinese FDI into green-field projects, Ethiopian officials are optimistic that Ethiopia, more resilient than commodity-exporting countries, will continue to attract investments due to its strategic position (Klasa, 2015) and its "diplomatic usefulness" (Adem, 2012).



View of one section of the light rail passing through Meskel Square (Addis Ababa, photo 3, Dittgen, October 2015)

Additionally, the visible construction boom both within and at the margins of Addis Ababa, due to rising urbanisation rates, also creates market opportunities for Chinese

<sup>42</sup> There are nonetheless recurring rumours that the company has not only been struggling to keep afloat in Ethiopia, but also that, following the widespread media coverage, the Chinese authorities had to help out to sustain the idea of a success story.

property developers. If some of the latter are already involved in building affordable housing units to help address the country's housing shortage,<sup>43</sup> others are mainly interested in developing modern and upmarket urban complexes.<sup>44</sup> The most ambitious comprehensive project to date, combining industrialisation with housing, is the Ethiopia-China Dongguan Huajian International Light Industry Zone, implemented by the aforementioned shoe factory (also involved in real estate) at a cost of USD 400 million and to be functional by 2020.<sup>45</sup>

As mentioned before, “development [in Ethiopia] is basically a local act” (Fourie, 2015: 305) and has a direct impact on the scope of Chinese actors involved on the ground. Additionally, it “illustrates China's propensity for assisting developing countries by aligning itself with the ambitions of governments in place” (Cabestan, 2012: 58). Whereas the majority of large African cities across the continent are nowadays characterised by a tangible presence of Chinese migrant-entrepreneurs involved in trade, the strict retail and wholesale regulations in Ethiopia have prevented foreign operators from penetrating this segment of the market. As a result, it is mostly large companies, both public and private, as well as government loans and contracts that highlight Chinese involvements in the Ethiopian economy.

### **Mutual (asymmetrical) learning, regionalism and rule by law in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is among the few countries in Africa where Chinese national and regional interests not only cohabit but also increasingly intersect. This is, as already mentioned, related to its strategic positioning in the Horn of Africa and presence of a highly concentrated institutional landscape in the capital. The following section first outlines China's direct and indirect influence on governance at a national level, ranging from regular party-to-party exchanges, shared practices to the indirect spread of broader ideas, in addition to providing more specific examples about human security. Additionally, Beijing is also increasingly engaging Ethiopia through multilateral platforms with regard to South Sudan and other conflict-affected areas in Africa.

### **Control, national pride and ‘authoritarian developmentalism’**

Ethiopia is often portrayed as a paradox, combining “astonishing progress delivered by a restrictive regime” (Manson, 2015). Given the emphasis put on state-led development and the increasingly blurred line between party and state, numerous parallels have been drawn with China. Lejeune (2015) argues that, far from being limited to an exchange of infrastructure for diplomatic support or utility-maximisation, China and Ethiopia are “linked through their shared interest in learning and applying a common practice” (Adler, 2005 quoted in Lejeune, 2015: 5; de Waal, 2015). This idea of a ‘shared identity’ between Ethiopia and China is for instance connected to the existence of a joint enterprise. Despite differences between political systems and the outcome of long-term modernisation, both governments consider the need to achieve economic development before considering

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<sup>43</sup> China Eximbank agreed to provide USD 170 million as a loan for the building of condominiums in major cities across Ethiopia (Adem, 2012: 146).

<sup>44</sup> China's Tsehay Real Estate is the most blatant example, worth USD 150 million, comprising flats, offices, a commercial street and a four star hotel [‘Ethiopia (CCTV Africa): Addis Ababa's Construction Boom’, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-1jwN6qU\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-1jwN6qU_Q), accessed on 26 October 2015].

<sup>45</sup> [‘Chinese shoe company to build branch factory in Ethiopia’, <http://cctvplus.tv/NewJsp/news.jsp?fileId=292149>, accessed on 21 November 2015].

broader political reforms (Lejeune, 2015: 9-10). In this specific calculus, the state (or/and ruling party) is believed to be the key reference point and actor in maintaining lasting stability (often labelled as ‘authoritarian developmentalism’), and draws its legitimacy from the delivery of goods and services (Taddele Maru, 2013).

Determined to implement its own development path, Ethiopia’s political leadership has, from the mid-nineties onwards, increasingly been inspired by China’s example of being able to develop without following prescriptions from the outside. While playing an important role in Ethiopia’s development ideology and overall structure, “China’s model [is nonetheless nested] within a broader project of East Asian modernisation, [where China is being] viewed as a recent and prominent example of a broader regional phenomenon” (Fourie, 2015: 302). When asked about the breadth of influence, most interviewed stakeholders remarked that the Ethiopian party state is mainly interested in learning about China’s economic success story, in particular the ‘socialist market economy’, but tends to see European countries as ‘more useful’ in relation to political matters.<sup>46</sup> As many interviewees pointed out, Ethiopia “is a proud nation (claiming to be distinct and chosen) and also very turf-orientated”, a phenomenon which can be observed all the way from the top leadership to the level of citizens.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the impact of foreign actors is often diluted within national agendas and, as Fourie argues, “even where China is viewed as a model, its lessons are selectively incorporated and perpetually in competition with other influences” (Fourie, 2015: 302).

After extended periods of violence and conflict, namely under the brutal *Dergue* regime and the ensuing Eritrean-Ethiopian war (1998-2000), Ethiopia has entered a phase of stability. Nonetheless, some areas have remained uncertain. Despite being considered a resource-poor country, Chinese companies started oil explorations in the Ogaden region in the mid-2000s. This came to a sudden halt when the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), a group opposed to the central government, attacked an oil exploration field operated by Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (a subsidiary of Sinopec). 74 people, including 9 Chinese workers, were killed and 6 other Chinese kidnapped, resulting in Sinopec pulling out of the country (Thakur, 2009: 11). Despite warnings by the ONLF that it would not allow resources from the region to be exploited either by the Ethiopian government, accused of human rights violations and committing war crimes, or any other foreign firm, Beijing reasserted (at that time) that such attacks “would not deter it from continuing to invest in Ethiopia and Africa” (Thakur, 2009: 11, 12). In 2011, a Hong Kong based Chinese company, PetroTrans, was awarded a contract to develop oil and gas reserves in the Ogaden in addition to building a pipeline to Somaliland’s port of Berbera (Adem, 2012: 151). Failing to carry out its commitments, another unnamed Chinese company was awarded the concessions in 2013. Yet, tangible results still remain to be seen (Shinn, 2014).

Apart from the direct impact on human lives, human security (similar to the other case studies) can also be understood from a broader perspective. This includes providing basic needs for your population. In Ethiopia, this is particularly salient in light of the recent (and on-going) drought where hundreds of thousands of farmers are severely affected and require urgent support (*Aljazeera*, 2015). In this context, China’s ability to pull several hundred million Chinese out of poverty and to absorb young and educated people in its

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<sup>46</sup> Interviews with a number of Ethiopian experts (Addis Ababa, 19-26 October 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Interview with the head of political Affairs at the Embassy of Norway (Addis Ababa, 19 October 2015), as well as general conversations throughout the whole fieldtrip.

domestic job market is seen as a valid example for Ethiopia's own development challenges.

Next to the more easily recognizable economic interests, it remains difficult (for the outsider) to assess China's impact in shaping the governance space in Ethiopia. If it has become increasingly hard to disentangle government-to-government from party-to-party links, a more specific focus on the latter helps nonetheless unveil some of the main areas of cooperation. For the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), the EPRDF, as a zealous proponent of the developmental state, is considered a key ally.<sup>48</sup> In line with regular party member exchanges (both high level as well as from regional and national administrations)<sup>49</sup> and training, specific focus is given to party building (in particular the role of the party in the state), public mobilisation, as well as party leadership and succession strategies (Hackenesch, 2013: 25; Lejeune, 2015: 8-9). Additionally, one online comment mentions a joint workshop held in Addis in 2012 on the topic of China's experience in the areas of mass media capacity building, mass media institution management and Internet management<sup>50</sup>. The CPC even sent a delegation to the EPRDF's organisational conferences (in 2008, 2010 and 2013), in addition to signing a MoU on Exchange and Cooperation with Ethiopia's ruling party (in 2010), and the existence of close links between Ethiopia's Parliament and the China National People's Congress (Hackenesch, 2013: 25; Shinn, 2014; Lejeune, 2015: 8-9). Despite this rapprochement, one stakeholder insisted that, beyond any ideological tropes, China is unable to influence state shaping in Ethiopia due to its own cultural background and particular context.<sup>51</sup>

Different forms of control have become an integral part of Ethiopia's society. For government detractors, the country resembles a police state<sup>52</sup> "run[ning] a pervasive security apparatus and restrict[ing] free speech, despite claims to the contrary" (Manson, 2015). Increasingly perceived as the region's military and economic hegemon (Maiyo, 2012), Ethiopia is among the leading armies on the continent (*Mail and Guardian*, 2015). The more central parts of Addis Ababa not only reveal a heavy presence of armed soldiers, but hotels and big shopping centres also all enforce safety checks at the entrance. In light of the very recent assault on the *Radisson Blu* Hotel in Mali's capital Bamako (20 November 2015), during which three Chinese citizens died (*China Daily*, 2015), as well as claims that the bulk of attacks on Chinese employees overseas are taking place in Africa (*Gbtimes*, 2015), Chinese authorities will, most certainly, look favourably at the

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<sup>48</sup> Earlier this year in August, one of the authors took part in a seminar tour to China organised by the Policy Research Office of the CPC Central Committee. While this particular trip was catered to African scholars from think tanks and universities, the organisers regularly extend invitations to selective political parties, including the EPRDF, but also the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO, Namibia), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC), the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZanuPF), as well as the Chama Cha Mapinduzi – Party of the Revolution from Tanzania.

<sup>49</sup> The following Xinhua dispatch provides an example of this type of exchanges [Senior CPC official vows to boost cooperation with Ethiopia, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-06/30/c\\_13959048.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-06/30/c_13959048.htm), 30 June 2015, accessed on 16 November 2015].

<sup>50</sup> This item, posted on Facebook, is a direct translation of the EPRDF's website information feed written in Amharic, [[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=184119308384573&id=49967100821&ft\\_=fbid.184119308384573](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=184119308384573&id=49967100821&ft_=fbid.184119308384573), accessed on 25 November 2015]. Some additional commentators did not fail to question EPRDF's take on freedom of expression or sarcastically dismissed China's 'model' position in this area.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with the Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies – IPSS (Addis Ababa, 26 October 2015).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with a Professor in the Political Sciences Department at the University of Addis Ababa (Addis Ababa, 21 October 2015).

existence of these measures. Another area of expanding control, this time in conjunction with Chinese companies, can be found in the technological surveillance of the Internet and mobile technology (Gagliardone, 2014). China's leading position in Ethiopia's telecommunication industry is seen as undermining freedom of expression given the "suspected [use of] Chinese technology for jamming radios and television broadcasts critical of the government and for blocking opposition-controlled or opposition-affiliated websites" (Adem, 2012: 153).

Controlling as well as limiting corruption is another area of focus in Ethiopia, even though, in comparison to most countries in the region, it is not seen as rampant. Similar to China, but to a lesser degree, the ruling EPRDF party has enforced strict anti-corruption measures, which even extend as far as to clamping down on rent-seeking behaviour and enforcing party discipline.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, if theoretically considered as an implementation of the 'rule of law', it does not seem binding to the top political leadership, effectively transforming it into a 'rule by law' (Fukuyama, 2014: 24).

Besides interactions at a domestic level, China's presence in Ethiopia is also informed by interests that stretch beyond the latter's territorial borders.

### Seeing Ethiopia as a regional platform

As the continent's main diplomatic 'capital', Addis Ababa is at the heart of broader political discussions and proceedings. For a long time dominated by Western players, both individual European countries as well as Europe as a group, China has recently stepped up its efforts to become more actively involved in regional politics. The latter's presence amidst a myriad of foreign actors in Addis provides a condensed view, not only of China's gradually shifting foreign policy approach in African matters, but also of comparisons, challenges and possible complementarities with Western counterparts.

If Ethiopia has gradually developed into one of the most coveted cooperation partners in Africa, these ties with various countries often respond to different logics. According to Hackenesch, "the EU mainly engages Ethiopia as an aid recipient, whereas China has developed a comprehensive political and economic partnership with the East African state" (2013: 7). One European stakeholder particularly deplored that, despite being Ethiopia's main strategic partner (from his point of view), Europeans are not trying hard enough business-wise in addition to being perceived as 'failing' economies versus the 'progressive outward-looking' Chinese one.<sup>54</sup> Another difference lies in the overall approach. If discussions about political and economic reforms with China seem to respond to Ethiopian demands, Hackenesch argues that the same talks with European donors are largely driven by the European side (*ibid.*: 28).

Nonetheless, the degree of outside influence on domestic politics in Ethiopia remains very limited. When, in the aftermath of the 2005 elections disaster, European donors decided to suspend direct budgetary support,<sup>55</sup> Meles refused to give in to this form of assistance

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with an Ethiopian expert on domestic politics (Addis Ababa, 20 October 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Interview with the Head of Political, Press and Information Section, Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 26 October 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Ethiopians still believe they are being held to a different standard than other African countries. While the 2005 post-election violence (where about 200 people died) led to the (temporary) halt of donor funding, in

conditionality. Despite threats to withdraw, European funds never really left the country, but were instead increasingly rechannelled towards “programmes with stricter monitoring and earmarking procedures” in order “to continue cooperating with the government” (*ibid.*: 20). When asked about donor politics in a country with a poor human rights record, the same European stakeholder insisted that, despite the largest overall volumes of DFID, EU and probably USAID programmes, Ethiopia remained (after all) a very low per capita aid recipient, positioned even behind Somalia.<sup>56</sup> As vocal defenders of liberal democratic values, European donors in Addis sit in an uncomfortable position. Given Ethiopia’s strategic importance in East Africa, they are nonetheless ‘bound’ to maintain (if not even expand) their presence on the ground. Additionally, beyond the human rights and governance conundrum, a Western diplomat was quoted in a media analysis piece that “dollar for dollar, Ethiopia represents by far the best value for aid money in Africa” (Allison, 2015). From the outside, it remains nonetheless unclear to what extent China and other emerging economies are being used by the Ethiopian government as a “bargaining chip in negotiations with European donors” (Hackenesch, 2013: 27-28).

The co-existence of Chinese and European interests in Addis also reveals divergences in terms of focus areas and implementation. At the European delegation to the African Union, the meeting with the Head of Political, Press and Information Section took place in a room directly overlooking the AU headquarters. For him, the main difference between the Chinese and the European engagements lies in the contrast of the ‘tangibles’ versus the ‘intangibles’. First, he signalled towards the African Union edifice in the background (built by the Chinese for USD 200 million) before pointing at a much smaller building in the foreground, the Peace and Security building funded by GIZ (*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*) at a cost of about USD 15 million. From his perspective, this specific example illustrated a broader trend, namely that the Chinese are predominantly targeting large-scale and symbolic projects (such as the AU building or the light rail), whereas larger sums of European money are used for a range of smaller, less visible, endeavours.<sup>57</sup> The political head at the bilateral European delegation made a similar comment, saying that, in Ethiopia, it is easier to make a difference or have a long-term impact at the national level when keeping a low profile and investing in targeted projects<sup>58</sup>.

In parallel to engagements with the ruling party in Ethiopia on governance capacity building, China has also become more assertive in the field of regional stability. Through the expansion and growing embeddedness of economic activities, some Chinese actors and businesses have increasingly been drawn into domestic politics. As a result, China has come to understand that “peace and security dynamics are so intertwined that [often] they cannot be resolved independently of each other” (Maiyo, 2012). As detailed in length in the South Sudan example, Chinese oil companies and central authorities gradually realised that the oil conflict was not merely limited to a ‘technical issue’, forcing the Chinese to be

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the 2009 post-election outbreak of violence in Kenya (about 1000 casualties) left the donor community mostly unmoved (*supra* note 54).

<sup>56</sup> *Supra* note 54.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with the Head of Political, Press and Information Section, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union (Addis Ababa, 22 October 2015). He mentioned that, during the first summit in the new building, Chairperson Dlamini-Zuma thanked China on three occasions, even though, as he added, 90% of all external funding to the AU is coming from the West and did not receive any mentioning.

<sup>58</sup> *Supra* note 54.

more forward leaning and requiring a stronger political engagement.<sup>59</sup> In practice, Chinese actors in Africa have not always grasped the magnitude of challenges that accompany the unfolding of their activities. During a first phase, risk assessment was merely seen as a formality rather than a prerequisite serving as an investment arbitration (*Africa-Asia Confidential*, 2013: 1–3). In the South Sudanese case, the political context has led to the shutdown of the oil production and, in the long run, “fighting could cripple the oil industry for decades” (Patey, 2014). The worry of losing out on business opportunities has made Chinese actors become increasingly aware of the need to incorporate this aspect into their management practices to ensure the sustainability of their activities. One European stakeholder argued that, “in order to maintain their tangibles [in other words business interests], the Chinese need to get into the intangibles.”<sup>60</sup>

Given its increased participation in direct mediation, both between the two Sudans as well as within South Sudan itself, China has also started to engage at a more regional scale. One example relates to the signing of a MoU (in 2011) between the Chinese government and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development<sup>61</sup> (IGAD), also providing USD 100 000 for operational costs and a donation of USD 98 million (in 2012), to be partly used for peace and security purposes (Alden and Large, 2015: 9). IGAD is one of the main actors involved in the peace process in South Sudan having set up a Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in early 2014. Aware that other external partners are more experienced in this domain, the Chinese embassy in Addis Ababa has been approaching other foreign representations, such as the Norwegians or the European delegation<sup>62</sup>, on a regular basis.

The biggest, yet thus far prudent, move has nonetheless occurred at the AU level. With the setting up of its permanent mission, China is henceforth “allowed to sit on the table and play a bigger, and ideally more active, role in Africa”.<sup>63</sup> As a newcomer in this position, China is willing to be guided and learn from its more established counterparts. While Beijing has a preference to remain in the background, the European Union tries to increase China’s involvement for the following reason: “If they (the Chinese) say something, it is different than if it comes from the EU [even when opinions align]... Within a broader African context, their voice has a different connotation and is accepted more easily”<sup>64</sup>. Most outside observers mentioned that, despite pursuing their own goal, the Chinese are willing to align with Europe when ‘permitted’; yet, declarations made in Addis Ababa (at

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Minister Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy, previously Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan (Addis Ababa, 19 October 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Supra note 57.

<sup>61</sup> Established in 1996, IGAD is a regional grouping comprised of eight member countries. It superseded the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1986, and has, since then, developed a stronger focus around peace and security alongside development. While the current headquarters are located in Djibouti City, most leading positions are dominated by Ethiopians [For further information see <http://igad.int>, accessed on 25 November 2015].

<sup>62</sup> At the Norwegian embassy and at the European Delegation to the African Union, both interviewed stakeholders had a first-hand and in-depth experience of Sudan as well as South Sudan, being directly involved in conflict resolution and mediation. The aforementioned Special Envoy to Sudan, now Minister Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy, mentioned that the Norwegians had regular meetings with the Chinese counterparts regarding regional peace and security issues. However, ever since Norway awarded the Peace Nobel Prize to the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo in 2010, interactions have become more difficult. At the European Delegation to the African Union, the Head of Political, Press and Information Section previously seconded the special Italian envoy to South Sudan.

<sup>63</sup> Supra note 57.

<sup>64</sup> Supra note 57.

AU level) are not always matched at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in New York<sup>65</sup>. While having stepped up financial support<sup>66</sup> and institutional commitment, the Chinese government is currently relying on African institutional bodies (AU, IGAD) to help maintain stability<sup>67</sup> and, indirectly, business-conducive environments for Chinese activities. In the long run, following its trial period at the AU and expectations related to its assumption of the G20 chair in 2016, China is believed to become more actively involved in peace and security, both in Addis Ababa as well as globally.

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<sup>65</sup> This opinion was expressed during interviews with various European stakeholders (Addis Ababa, 19-26 October 2015).

<sup>66</sup> During his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, President Xi not only planned to set up a UN permanent peacekeeping force of 8 000 troops, but also pledged to provide USD 100 million to the African Union for a standby force, capable of responding to emergencies (Perlez, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> This is the way African states see it by giving emphasis on Chapter VIII of the UN Charter on the role of regional organisations.

## Chapter 2: Zimbabwe: Pendulum from West to East?

“Of all the countries, China has been our strongest supporter. If we get funds from China the way we expect, as per their promises, there will not be any need for us to look for balance of payments support elsewhere” (Robert Mugabe in 1999, cited in Meredith, 2002: 156-157).

At face value, China-Zimbabwe relations match concerns over the former’s broader resource engagement in Africa<sup>68</sup> (Zhang, 2014: 5) that includes support for pariah states and disregard for the local political climate. However, this narrative neglects the complexity of such links, which also emanate from Zimbabwe’s own domestic political developments and the related subsequent international reaction (Alao, 2014: 5). Moreover the literature surveyed and personal interaction with local stakeholders confirms that, while the relationship is couched in a dominant narrative, it is far more elaborate and multifaceted than meets the eye – and there is increased understanding of the costs and benefits of engaging in bilateral relations from both sides. Due to changing contexts, both countries have also had to make notable adjustments in their approach towards one another, in order to maintain their broader international and opposition associations.

This chapter will provide a brief historical context for China-Zimbabwe relations. Thereafter it will examine contemporary Zimbabwe-China relations, which have expanded over the last 15 years and can be broadly categorised into three distinct periods (with the latter two periods being more interrelated). The first period spans 2000-2008, when Zimbabwe became increasingly internationally isolated and relations with China deepened. At the same time Western criticism against China’s engagement in the country also heightened by 2008. The second period 2009-2013 involves the one-term of the Government of National Unity (GNU), when China and the main opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), came to the realisation that they would need to accommodate and engage one another. It is also at this juncture that China began to put more pressure on the ruling ZANU-PF. Finally the period between 2013 to late 2015 saw the return of the ruling ZANU-PF to power, governing on its own and the termination of the SADC mediation process. However, during this period China diversified relations and began to expand beyond the ruling party in anticipation of the competitive leadership succession process.

### Historical context

There is general consensus that the close Sino-Zimbabwean relationship derives from Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, where China aided the country’s fight for independence by supporting Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union’s (ZANU)<sup>69</sup>. During this entire period, China provided ZANU with military training and hardware, financial assistance and ideological support (Alao, 2014: 13). When the liberation movement began in the 1960s, ZANU cadres under Ndabaningi Sithole and later Robert Mugabe, were already studying Chairman Mao’s work on guerrilla strategy and political education

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<sup>68</sup> Such views include “grabbing land, extracting resources and neo-colonialism [force] in Africa” (Chen, 2013).

<sup>69</sup> As expressed in personal interviews with stakeholders in the opposition party, MDC-T, and civil society members.

techniques<sup>70</sup> (Alao, 2014: 6; Sachikonye, 2008: 125). Thus, Zimbabwe's relations with China, formally established on Zimbabwe's Independence Day on 18 April 1980, were relatively stronger than those with the Soviet Union who had supported the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU); and even though close relations were established with South Africa and United Kingdom following independence, a degree of historical discord lingered (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 2; Alao, 2014: 7).<sup>71</sup>

In addition, global forces also impacted Zimbabwe's post-independence bilateral relations and domestic environment. While active international donor support was visible following independence, it mellowed with the fall of the Soviet Union, when countries (such as the UK and US) rechannelled aid to support Eastern Europe, recovering from previously communist regimes (Chung, 2006: 323). Nevertheless, most of Zimbabwe's economic support from 1980 to 2000 came from its neighbours and the West (Zhang, 2014: 7). Although China-Zimbabwe relations were close, significant engagements remained limited due to China's weak economy and inward-focus during the 1980s.

By the late 1990s the seeds of the political tsunami that was to engulf Zimbabwe were already apparent. The war veterans – fuelled by deep resentment at their economic marginalisation – became politically active after 1997, and a growing urban opposition to the ruling party in the form of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which campaigned to overturn Mugabe's efforts to rewrite the constitution in 2000. This launched a period of heightened political contestation, land seizures and Mugabe's accelerated isolation from the West as economic sanctions were ramped up.

### Establishing the foundation of contemporary relations: 2000-2008

During the 2000s, Zimbabwe and China's interaction evolved and became more politically and economically complex. The stronger connection was largely a product of Zimbabwe's deteriorating relations with Europe and the US, following the controversial developments around its constitution and land seizures, which led to the increase in political violence, human rights violations and alleged rigging of elections in 2000 (Sachikonye, 2008: 126). Some also consider this particular juncture and shift in relations as the starting point when Zimbabwean politics became visibly authoritarian in nature (*ibid.*: 126)<sup>72</sup>. Thereafter, the US, UK and the EU who imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, increasingly treated the country as a pariah state. In 2002, Zimbabwe withdrew from the Commonwealth. Moreover, with the ill-conceived structural adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods Institutions (1991-1996) that led to unemployment and social unrest and compounded by the demands made by war veterans in the late 1990s, which saw the national budget balloon, President Robert Mugabe adopted the 'Look East' policy in 2003<sup>73</sup> (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 2). While official statements also seemed to suggest developing closer relations with Malaysia, the increasing inter-government meetings between China and Zimbabwe indicated otherwise (*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, 2004: 2).

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<sup>70</sup> For ZANU, Maoism was not only an attractive ideology for them, but China also became a practical source for training and weapon supplies (Moorcraft, 2012: 46).

<sup>71</sup> ZANU and ZAPU later merged to form the ZANU-Patriotic Front (PF), which remains the ruling party to date, though ZAPU was gradually subsumed into a position lesser of the two.

<sup>72</sup> Former program manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Sentiments expressed by various stakeholders interviewed in Harare such as former MDC-T members and Progressive Teacher's Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ).

Indeed bilateral relations were reinforced, as a result of Zimbabwe's reaching out through the 'Look East' policy as well as the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, under which Zimbabwe was able to secure credit facilities and loans as well as investment opportunities from China (Zhang, 2014: 7). Moreover China was experiencing rapid economic growth and in turn, the gradual increase of its global outreach, as it joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001 which furthered its development as a market economy.

### Summary of relations under this period (2000-2008)

During this period the bilateral relations were characterised by China's growing interest in Zimbabwe's mineral resources with the discovery of diamonds on a commercial scale, leading to the signing of several trade agreements since November 2004. At the same time China became more entrenched in the politics of mining in Zimbabwe. Thus relations became more complex as the areas of mining, defence and economy increasingly intersected – what has been described as a form of 'militarised' capitalism (Alao, 2014: 9; Chinguno, Mereki and Mutyanda, 2015). The joint venture with the China North Industries Cooperation (Norinco), a leading armaments company, bears specific mention, while another agreement gave exploration rights to Chinese experts that would produce a study on Zimbabwe's mineral resources (Alao 2014:9). China also invested heavily in diamonds in Zimbabwe. Chinese company, *Anjin*, was said to be linked to the Chinese military and invested USD 400 million in a joint venture with the Zimbabwean government (specifically the Zimbabwean Defence Force) to mine diamonds in the Marange fields<sup>74</sup> (Alao, 2014: 9). Moreover this concession was given to the Chinese in exchange for the construction of a National Defence College, worth USD 98 million. Naturally relations maintained through converging interests in the mining sector, where China acquired strategic mineral resources (such as platinum, iron, steel and chrome), while Zimbabwe was in need of both an income and partner for development.

China's economic footprint also gradually extended to include telecommunications (such as the 2004 agreement to construct a public fibre-optic data network), transportation (such as railways) and power generation (like hydroelectric power) – areas of engagement that continue up to the present (Alao, 2014:11-13). Indeed it is also important to note that trade relations with China helped lift sectors where Zimbabwe was traditionally strong, such as the tobacco industry<sup>75</sup> (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 15). This was owing to the signing of an economic and technical agreement to deepen trade relations in February 2004 (Zhao, 2014, 14). The relationship, in essence, was thus described as a 'business deal' in contrast to the concessional development assistance provided to Zimbabwe by partners such as the World Bank.

Moreover beyond economic links, there was Chinese involvement in the building of schools in Harare and Bindura and a 2006 agreement to establish a Confucius Institute (to promote Chinese language and culture) at the University of Zimbabwe. (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 7). Meanwhile, there was a degree of military cooperation during the period. Specifically, China reportedly contributed military trucks, some training of military officers (as noted in 2006-2007 under a technical cooperation agreement) and provision of military and construction equipment in this period (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 4; Alao,

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<sup>74</sup> The Marange diamond fields are in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, and their exploitation has been linked to significant allegations of human rights abuses by government security forces publicised by Global Witness.

<sup>75</sup> Economist and journalist at the *Financial Gazette*, personal interview, 20 October 2015.

2014: 13). Some estimates of China's military equipment to Zimbabwe in the mid-2000s (around 2005 onwards) are USD 240 million and included AK47 rifles, riot gear and mobile water cannons. (Dillon, 2007: 8) In 2005 there was also a military treaty signed to construct a bonded warehouse for the Zimbabwean air force (Harare 24, 2014).

China also played an important role in protecting Zimbabwe in the multilateral arena. For example, it vetoed sanctions against Zimbabwe in the UN Security Council (in 2005 and again in 2008) on the basis that the Zimbabwe issue was not a threat to international peace and security but rather an internal issue.

### Turning point in China's engagement: 2008

Contrary to the high-level government relationship, China's official engagement with Zimbabwean civil society and the private sector remained limited<sup>76</sup> (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 25). In fact some Zimbabwean stakeholders in the interviews conducted emphasised that China limited its engagement with the private sector to avoid antagonising the ruling party. Thus the relationship was largely one between China and the ruling political party rather than a broader bilateral one. At the same time, this period saw the rise of a political opposition. The MDC, which was an outgrowth of the Zimbabwean trade union movement, and which had defeated ZANU-PF in the referendum of 2000, began levelling criticism against China and its unwavering support for the Mugabe government in the midst of an exacerbated political crisis and Western sanctions (Alao, 2014: 17).

In early 2008, before the first round of presidential and parliamentary elections the case of a Chinese shipment of weapons destined for Zimbabwe's defence force hit the headlines (Zhang, 2014: 13; Fritz 2009). There was an outcry among civil society actors in South Africa and Zimbabwe. These actors succeeded in preventing the vessel, *An Yue Jiang*, from offloading weapons at South Africa's Durban port, and subsequently pushed China to limit its arms sales to Zimbabwe (Sachikonye, 2008: 134).

In spite of the fact that South Africa had not provided a clear official position on the 2008 shipment of arms matter, criticism also arose from opposition political figures and the South African trade unions within the country, against China's actions at the height of Zimbabwe's sensitive elections (Alden and Wu, 2014:9; Beresford, 2008). These criticisms were seconded publicly by other leaders from the region and proved to be an embarrassment for the Chinese.

China's growing economic involvement in Zimbabwe also gave rise to perceptions that its activities were exempted from the indigenisation and nationalisation policies adopted by the government. Zimbabwe's Indigenization and Empowerment Act required foreign companies (valued over \$500,000) to sell 51% of their shares to local shareholding (Mavhumashava, 2013). For many foreign investors this undoubtedly posed a significant impediment to their investments, but there were rumours that the Chinese companies operating in Zimbabwe were in fact not compelled to do so. These were never substantiated but were a reflection of the manner in which government-to-government

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<sup>76</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

relations were perceived.<sup>77</sup> (*New Zimbabwe*, 2011; Mandiwanzira, 2015; *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 2015).

Even though there were valid concerns over the close Chinese and Zimbabwean link, the largest schism was clearly not between Zimbabwean opposition and China but rather the polarisation *within* Zimbabwe – between the ZANU-PF ruling government and civil society (as well as the opposition). This relationship has even been described as inherently “very much a repetition of the settler-colonial past, when the Ian Smith regime brutally suppressed the liberation movements” (Chung, 2006: 328).

It does appear, however, that 2008 was a turning point for China’s approach to Zimbabwe. While South Africa’s active mediation role and pressure on ZANU to accept a government of national unity after the 2008 election is well-documented, China’s role is less well-known. China encouraged ZANU-PF to sign an agreement with the MDC and even sought to address the political impasse between the two parties that characterised both the negotiations leading up to the GNU and subsequently (SAIIA, 2014; Zhang, 2014: 8,12; Alao, 2014: 15)<sup>78</sup>. China believed that mediation and leadership should come from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This position fell in line with South Africa’s former President Mbeki, who as SADC mediator was spearheading the proposal to form a Government of National Unity (GNU) in Zimbabwe. South Africa and China had cooperated closely to bring Mugabe to the negotiating table, following the G-8 Summit in Japan during June 2008. At the same time, South Africa was publicly criticised by Britain and the US for its ‘quiet diplomacy’ at the summit. They had introduced a UN Security Council resolution to strengthen sanctions against the Zimbabwean government (Alden and Wu, 2014:9). In turn China and South Africa (a non-permanent member of the UNSC at the time) opposed the resolution; however, China made clear to Mugabe that it may not block such resolutions in future (Alden and Wu, 2014:9).

### Transitioning towards diversified China-Zimbabwe relations: 2009-2013

“Africa must open to the paradoxical matrix of international relations...where there are no enemies or friends, only interests”<sup>79</sup>.

Following the violent 2008 elections, the Global Political Agreement, the power-sharing GNU between ZANU-PF and the two factions of the main opposition – the MDC under Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and MDC under Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M) – came into being. As members of respective parties were appointed to different ministerial positions, China was by default, required to engage the opposition, who was gaining wider domestic political support and was thus a force that could not be ignored.<sup>80</sup> It was therefore the changing political context that in turn also influenced China’s engagement, as it made pragmatic and diplomatic sense for China to diversify its relations, as well as engage all political parties in government (Alao, 2014:17&18). It was on this basis that China began to foster

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<sup>77</sup> In a meeting discussion in 2012 at SAIIA with Zimbabwe’s Minister for Indigenisation at the time, he insisted that the rules applied to all.

<sup>78</sup> Chinese embassy of Liberia [‘China welcomes Zimbabwe deal on talks to end crisis’, <http://lr.china-embassy.org/eng/majorevents/t477057.htm>, accessed on 29 October 2015].

<sup>79</sup> Former manager at the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>80</sup> One example is the former finance minister, Tendai Biti, who was a member of the opposition MDC. Such a position meant he had the authority to sign agreements on behalf of the Zimbabwean government with China.

relations with the MDC. This in turn signalled to ZANU-PF that it was required to engage the MDC, in order to remain in power<sup>81</sup>.

Similarly the opposition and broader society was cognisant that China had been firmly entrenched in Zimbabwean economic and diplomatic life since 2000 (which Western partners could not match it, even if sanctions were lifted) (Alao, 2014:17). There was also general awareness that the ‘Look East’ policy had produced some initial benefits for the country, by assisting Zimbabwe to ‘hold on’ both domestically and internationally during sanctions<sup>82</sup>. In recognition of this reality in 2012, the Prime Minister and head of the MDC-T, Morgan Tsvangirai, and a 31-member delegation visited China in an attempt to get Chinese businesses to invest in Zimbabwe’s mining, agriculture and infrastructure. There was also particular mention of the Chinese embassy’s role during the GNU that “worked hard to engage the opposition”<sup>83</sup> and in turn, the opposition engaged the embassy by inviting them to diplomatic briefings. Such interaction was a marked difference to China’s engagement in the former period, where it had little communication with actors outside ZANU-PF.

Nevertheless China’s relationship with Zimbabwe remained complex under the GNU period. This was emphasised by opposition policymakers in interviews conducted for this paper, who had previous experience in negotiating with Chinese counterparts (under the GNU). They emphasised that China-Zimbabwe relations were not as straightforward as assumed<sup>84</sup>. For example despite the joint government arrangement there were still clear party divisions, as ZANU-PF sought to sign deals with China behind the back of the GNU finance minister, Tendai Biti, who was from MDC-T. Moreover the observation was made that certain Chinese firms were favoured over others, meaning that contracts related to government tenders were not obtained competitively (and cost effectively), even among Chinese firms. One of the biggest concerns over China’s engagement in Zimbabwe rose from the close military links, which not only helped Zimbabwe weather international criticism over government policies but also led to agreements with specific firms, such as *Anjin* (who ‘bull-dozed their way in’<sup>85</sup> and whose scope later expanded to other sectors beyond the initial diamond-mining venture).

At the same time China’s economic footprint remained steady under the GNU, as bilateral trade grew from \$1 billion in 2012 to \$1.1 billion in 2013 (Zhang, 2014:15)<sup>86</sup>. More prominent was the rise in economic links outside of the official ambit and **for the first time in history the clear visibility of Chinese nationals in Zimbabwe** (a relational shift compared to the presence of British or Americans).<sup>87</sup> A specific example provided by several stakeholders was the increasing Chinese migration into the local retail space (*i.e.* the availability of affordable products), noting that Zimbabwe’s economy with a low

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<sup>81</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

<sup>82</sup> As expressed by various stakeholders personally interviewed in South Africa and Zimbabwe, October 2015.

<sup>83</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Former minister under the GNU, personal interview, 22 October 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Former minister under the GNU, personal interview, 22 October 2015.

<sup>86</sup> China exports manufactured goods (such as clothing, textiles and footwear), vehicles (cars, tractors and aircrafts), electrical machinery and other equipment; while it imports cash crops (tobacco and cotton) and minerals (namely nickel and ferroalloys) from Zimbabwe.

<sup>87</sup> Former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview, Harare, 21 October 2015.

formal employment rate, is largely dominated by the informal sector<sup>88</sup>. However, balancing such criticism was also the appreciation that the country lacks technology, infrastructure and capital, all of which China is well positioned to provide<sup>89</sup>.

During this period from 2009, China also began providing humanitarian and agricultural assistance to Zimbabwe.<sup>90</sup>

The end of the GNU government with the holding of elections in 2013 signalled in some ways the ‘normalisation’ of the political context and the end of SADC mediation. Although the dire economic situation continues and ZANU leaders continue under sanctions from the US and the EU, there has been a thawing in relations between Zimbabwe and the West. Zimbabwe, for example, is seeking to access IMF loans.

### **Advancing China-Zimbabwe relations? From capacity building to opposition politics: 2013-present**

“Chinese loans are good...but the direction of the loans are not palatable.”<sup>91</sup>

Following the 31 July 2013 presidential elections, full power was restored to the ZANU-PF, when it won the majority (61%) of votes (Raftopoulos, 2013: 978). However, the opposition did not immediately accept the result, accusing ZANU of rigging the elections. There was particular surprise in the non-violent nature of the elections (that was notable in the 2008 elections) and lack of intimidation from the ruling party, who appeared overly confident.<sup>92</sup>

While China’s humanitarian and agricultural assistance had been welcomed across the board in Zimbabwe, concern was expressed by the opposition and civil society members as to the manner in which some forms of assistance were channelled to ruling party supporters leading up to the 2013 elections. There were allegations of the distribution of electronic gadgets, torches and rice donations from China to help the ZANU-PF campaign to win voters.<sup>93</sup> It was not verified whether China was aware of the political manner in which its support was being channelled.

China also sent an observer mission to the elections, at the invitation of the Zimbabwean government. After visiting 60 polling stations in five provinces, it was one of the first to announce the elections as peaceful, free and fair (albeit it noted some flaws in the process) (Zhang, 2014:13). This position and support for national stability paralleled the positions of SADC and the African Union, which was also supported by Russia (while the EU and US gave no endorsement) (Raftopoulos, 2013: 971&978). Although China proclaimed the elections free and fair, it did not return to its political approach pre-GNU focusing only on

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<sup>88</sup> Head of the Zimbabwe Informal Sector's Organisation (ZISO). Personal interview, 22 October 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>90</sup> The foundation for these engagements began in 2003 during the height of sanctions, when the Zimbabwean government reached out to China (as well as others, like Brazil). However these relations only started to take off from 2009 onwards, for example an agriculture demonstration center was commissioned in 2012 at Gwebi Agricultural College (as an outcome of pledges made at the 2006 FOCAC summit). For more see: Mukwereza (2013:116-126).

<sup>91</sup> President of the PTUZ, personal interview, 19 October 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Journalist at *The Financial Gazette*, personal interview, 20 October 2015.

<sup>93</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

engagement with the ZANU-PF government. Rather certain continuities from its GNU engagement persist.

Firstly, China has not acceded to all ZANU-PF's requests; for instance a government delegation visiting China in late 2013 was told by the Shanghai business community that their proposed projects needed to be bankable in order to receive future investments (Ncube, 2014). China, as any other investor, was unwilling to underwrite projects, which it felt were unviable, and was already worried about the fact that Zimbabwe had not paid back an outstanding US\$60 million debt.<sup>94</sup> Of course securing Chinese investment and loans is expected to remain a challenge, amid China's economic restructuring and slow-down in economic growth (Winsor, 2015).

China continues to engage the opposition and the MDC-T maintains its ties with China, as part and parcel of its interests to reach out and develop its broader foreign relations, believing that Zimbabwe should diversify its partnerships. China is on the itinerary of engagements of the MDC-T. In other words, the underlying logic expressed by the opposition is 'let's talk business and leave politics to Zimbabweans'.

A large part of China's continued approach in engaging various political parties lies in the fact that Zimbabwe's political future, particularly within the ZANU-PF, is focused on the debilitating succession struggle.<sup>95</sup> While relations between China and the ruling party have remained relatively intact, they are affected by intra-ruling party dynamics and, in particular, questions around the party's succession plans, given Mugabe's age. Who will succeed Mugabe has heightened the infighting within the party, especially since the first lady, Grace Mugabe, has also become a contender in the last two years. The other potential successor is Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Both candidates have visited China (Mnangagwa in July and Grace Mugabe in October 2015), observed as efforts to communicate their prospective future candidacy (Mananavire and Tafirenyika, 2015). It is such schisms within the ruling party that have led some to suggest that the ruling party will not lose power to a competitive opposition but from its own internal divisions.<sup>96</sup>

Zhang (2014: 22) observes that an actual 'Look East' policy did not and still currently does not exist; rather it appears to be a political slogan to ensure political party survival (noting the concept only arose as a response to Western sanctions). He states that during the GNU, China was a useful instrument in dealing with the West (particularly to negotiate the end of sanctions), and thus concludes that there exists no real Zimbabwean strategy towards China but rather a 'keep options open' approach. For instance in his state of the nation speech in 2015, Mugabe spoke of re-engagement with the West and reaching out to the IMF and World Bank (Ndaba, 2015). More recently in March 2016, President Mugabe reached out to Japan for an aid package during a state visit to the East Asian country. China similarly does not have a clear national strategy towards Zimbabwe; instead the African country is subsumed under China's broader Africa strategy (Zhang, 2014: 22).

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<sup>94</sup> China puts screws on Zim', *Mail and Guardian* 23 January 2015, [www.mg.co.za/article/2015-01-23-china-puts-screws-on-zim.htm](http://www.mg.co.za/article/2015-01-23-china-puts-screws-on-zim.htm)

<sup>95</sup> One stakeholder went as far to say that China was withholding substantial investments until they were provided Zimbabwe's succession plan.

<sup>96</sup> PTUZ, personal interview, 19 October 2015.

## The Nature of China's contemporary engagement in relation to capacity building and civil society relations (2013 to present)

While China is notably becoming progressively involved in African peace and security (due to its perceived reputational risks, in order to protect economic interests and to protect its citizens abroad), such an involvement remains limited in Zimbabwe, a country considered relatively stable in comparison to the South Sudan case<sup>97</sup>. Rather China's engagement in Zimbabwe still holds a strong degree of economic linkages. As of mid-2015, China was Zimbabwe's second largest trading partner after South Africa (at about \$800 million annually) and it was the largest investor in Zimbabwe (*Sunday News Online*, 2015; Majaka, 2015). Moreover Zimbabwe adopted the Yuan as legal tender at the end of 2015 in daily transactions from supermarkets to tourism, following China's cancelling of \$40 million in Zimbabwean debt (Ramani, 2016).

Zimbabwe faces a multitude of human security threats from health, personal, and political, to food and the environment, and no equal opportunity. Stakeholders in Zimbabwe reiterated that corruption remains a large impediment to the country's development, which has in turn provided a loophole for China in its relations with Zimbabwe.<sup>98</sup> These present dynamics, which are further discussed in the sections below, affect the overall nature of relations.

### *(Capacity) building or just building?*

Besides business and politics, capacity building seems to form an important component of China's current engagement with Zimbabwe. In this regard, there is relative continuity with the historical relationship, in the sense that China's assistance remains largely at the transfer of hardware level (as noted by the building of schools in the previous periods) with a small degree of technical training. Therefore, while China's 'soft' engagement in peace and security in Zimbabwe is limited, it plays a role in capacity building assistance to the military.

While the West has applied military embargos, China has remained present in Zimbabwe's military sector. In 2014, there were reports of China building an air base in the Marange diamond fields (Mushekwe and Kahari, 2014), which as was indicated earlier was linked in terms of financing to the construction of the NDC. It is very difficult to ascertain the extent of military linkages. However, the NDC is apparently being operated by Chinese and its foreign intelligence service together with Zimbabwe's CIO and local military intelligence.(Read, 2014) Even the college is rumoured to house equipment to monitor diplomatic, domestic, commercial and military communication. In 2013 an MoU was signed with China for the provision of military aid, with some of that intended for the college.

At the same time, China's strong engagement in infrastructure and hardware has also provided a degree of tangible gains in other areas. In the medical sector, China has for instance provided assistance through the sending of medical personnel to Zimbabwe, the building of a rural hospital in Marondera District and the donation of health equipment

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<sup>97</sup> Zimbabwe's relative stability was also noted by the South African Embassy, personal interview, Harare, 19 October 2015.

<sup>98</sup> This was expressed by the PTUZ, personal interview, 19 October 2015.

(such as eye surgery equipment) and provision of loans to hospitals (*ZBC News*, 2011; Zhang, 2014: 14; *New Zimbabwe*, 2015). A number of Zimbabweans have also been awarded scholarships to study in China, although often perceived as favouring those with government links.<sup>99</sup> China is also presently involved in other sectors (some of which date back to the mid-2000's) such as telecommunications where it is building fibre-optic networks; the transport sector (such as Chinese investment in *Air Zimbabwe*) and power generation (such as electricity generation facilities at Hwange and Kariba where Chinese firms hold majority stake) (*The Herald*, 2012; Alao, 2014: 11).

Moreover, China's engagement in the agriculture sector has expanded since the height of Western sanctions in 2003; this includes the donation of machinery, training of locals, arrangement of study tours to China and the setting-up of demonstration centres. This particular engagement has been lauded as a reason for local interest in China's economic success (which one stakeholder considered "as worth emulating". Having visited some demonstration centres, he also remarked on the high quality of China's agriculture machinery)<sup>100</sup>. It is in this particular space that there is relative consensus of China being able to assist Zimbabwe.

At the same time, concerns have been raised over the details of these engagements; namely the focus on support for the military to buttress the ruling party over investments in major priority areas of development. While China's contribution in sectors such as electricity generation is recognised, stakeholders have identified other important areas that require investment such as: transport infrastructure (the railway between Bulawayo and Harare that transports perishable goods) and in local processing to create employment (such as in agriculture and diamond mining)<sup>101</sup>. The worry over insufficient local beneficiation is connected to the fact that in 2013, Zimbabwe imported double the amount of its exports, leading to large deficits with its main trade partners like South Africa.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, there are more general concerns over the actual implementation of announced mega deals as well as belief that costs for some of the deals, such as the agreement that China would help build the road at the Beitbridge border town, are highly inflated.

Furthermore, the military-economic relationship between China and Zimbabwe remains a concern. Following an investigation of the USD 98 million military college (which was announced in the early 2000s and was reported to become a fully-fledged university by the end of 2015), evidence suggests that the actual cost to build the institution was an estimated US\$20 million, which leaves question marks around the remainder of the funds provided by China.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the same company, *Anjin*, was reported to have been involved in the building of LongCheng Plaza, a retail establishment, on land that was originally reserved for a public park.<sup>104</sup> There are real concerns that China is extracting

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<sup>99</sup> Participant at the 3rd China Africa Youth Festival (2009), personal interview, Johannesburg, 14 October 2015.

<sup>100</sup> China's role in Zimbabwe's agriculture is even considered more successful than the UK's engagement, as expressed by MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

<sup>101</sup> PTUZ, personal interview, 19 October 2015; participant at the 3rd China Africa Youth Festival (2009), personal interview, 14 October 2015.

<sup>102</sup> As expressed by a World Bank representative at a SAIIA event, 'Zimbabwe on the brink: From political pariah to economic paralysis?', Johannesburg, 19 November 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Journalist at *The Financial Gazette*, personal interview, 20 October 2015.

<sup>104</sup> The company's involvement was expressed by a former minister under the GNU, personal interview, 22 October 2015. Moreover the purpose of the college is to train the Zimbabwean army, police and Central Intelligent Organization.

more than it is investing in Zimbabwe. Thus the channelling of investment towards mining projects and a military college (by the powers that be), instead of broader development projects that would ensure beneficiation – cause some to view relations as a ‘barter trade system’<sup>105</sup> – a modus operandi that has characterised China’s external engagement.

China’s engagement is not homogenous. For instance there are currently three business associations that represent different interests (Huang 2015). One represents state enterprises (which is closer to the Chinese embassy) and two represent private Chinese business interests. In particular the Zimbabwe Chinese Business Association (ZCBA), one of the private business associations, was established in 2004 as an initial response to the raised import taxes that affected Chinese businesses at the time (Huang 2015). Moreover as civil society and opposition interact with Chinese players, there is a greater understanding that China’s engagement in the country is complex. Not all Chinese contractors are ‘corrupt’ and moreover on an interpersonal level, some have commended Chinese businesses for their work ethic.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore a large source of criticism about the nature of China’s engagement in Zimbabwe originates from individual business dealings as exemplified by the businessman, Sam Pa, a former spy with strong military links described as ‘China’s trailblazer in Africa’ (Connett, 2015). Although Pa’s nationality is unknown (some report he was born in Hong Kong, others say he was raised in mainland China), he has been connected to a range of illegal activities in Africa, under the auspices of a group of Hong Kong-based companies called Queensway Group. This includes supporting the ZANU-PF during the GNU period: through leaked 2012 Zimbabwean intelligence reports, it came to light that Pa was allowed to export diamonds from the military-controlled Marange fields after he provided the Zimbabwean secret police 200 vehicles and \$100m (Yamamoto, 2015; Burgis et al, 2014). Indeed it was Pa’s assistance to Zimbabwe’s Central Intelligence Organisation that eventually caused the US to place sanctions on the businessman in 2014 (Mailey 2015).

China’s foreign policy under president Xi Jinping indicates the interest in moving China-Africa relations away from profit-driven, illegal business dealings to more ordered diplomatic relations with African states. This was illustrated when Pa was arrested in Beijing on October 2015, in connection with an illegal deal involving China’s state-owned oil company Sinopec that was involved in Angola (Burgis, et al 2014; Mailey 2015), thus also highlighting the seriousness of China’s current anti-corruption drive at home.

Indeed the change in Chinese leadership (from Hu Jintao to Xi in March 2013) did not actually impact the binational relationship significantly, except for some particular cases such as: China’s unwillingness to fund the \$27bn recovery plan promoted by President Mugabe during his visit to China in 2014 and the case of the unseating of Pa. Both instances stem from concerns about corruption, which remains a key policy issue under Xi.

Likewise Chinese business actors like the ZCBA are becoming increasingly cognisant of Zimbabwe’s political and economic environment. This is reflected by the website *Zimbabwe Chinese Network* (<http://www.zimbbs.com/>), launched by the ZCBA in 2014,

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<sup>105</sup> Former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>106</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015; Former minister under the GNU, personal interview, 22 October 2015.

which has previously warned about local policymakers cheating Chinese nationals in business deals (Huang 2015)<sup>107</sup>



*LongCheng Plaza in Harare, (Photo 4, Wu, October 2015)*

A notable yet unintentional consequence of China's increased involvement in the aforementioned sectors and in Zimbabwe more generally, is the re-engagement of other external players. The US congress has debated re-engaging Zimbabwe (though Mugabe himself was not invited to the US-Africa Summit in August 2014). The EU has lifted some of its sanctions, such as those against political figures (except the asset freeze and travel ban on Mugabe and his wife, as well as the arms embargo) in Zimbabwe (*Euractiv*, 2015; Nyoka, 2015).<sup>108</sup> The possibility of a re-engagement by traditional external players is explained as an attempt to rebuild relations, in preparation for a post-Mugabe rule. Additionally, countries like the UK, whose companies have historically been active in Zimbabwe, are also increasingly pressured by their own constituencies (*i.e.* businesses) to re-engage<sup>109</sup>. At the same time, as the Zimbabwean leadership recognizes that the days of free Chinese assistance are numbered, there are growing signs of reaching out to foreign creditors like the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>110</sup>.

### **The (subtle) civil society engagement and public concern**

While China's engagement in Zimbabwe is increasingly accepted as necessary, there remains apprehension about the details (or lack thereof) of the deals signed. The following section outlines two elements regarding (both explicit and implicit) linkages between

<sup>107</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

<sup>108</sup> As expressed by personal interviews such civil society and MDC-T, Harare, October 2015.

<sup>109</sup> Zimbabwean scholar in the UK, phone discussion, 5 November 2015.

<sup>110</sup> This has for instance been reflected by Mugabe's pronouncement in parliament in August 2015.

China and the Zimbabwean civil society. The first one relates to China's relationship with the opposition MDC (as previously elaborated) as an indirect engagement with civil society; the second one provides further elaboration on the primary concerns regarding China's engagement (as highlighted by civil society members), which is intimately linked to the actual relationship between the Zimbabwean government and the public.

China's official engagement with the Zimbabwean public (and even the private sector) is notably limited.<sup>111</sup> Instead, countries such as the US and their agencies (*i.e.* USAID) remain the dominant partners in supporting civil society organisations, in spite of the past high-level political and economic fallout. For example, the US Embassy in Harare has a greater physical, public interface through its weekly open seminars that encourage an active civil society<sup>112</sup>. Moreover the same players remain relatively vocal on the human rights issue, such as the EU Parliament's public statement of concern over the disappearance of Zimbabwean journalist and activist, Itai Dzamara, in March 2015. At the same time, there has also been criticism from the ZANU-PF supporters (but also more nuanced acknowledgement by some Zimbabweans) that engaging countries on the basis of human rights and democracy cannot necessarily ensure stability or a sense of human security, as the cases of US involvement in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate (Of course, not all civil society members agree with this logic)<sup>113</sup>.

China's official engagement with mainstream civil society is narrow. It appears that the first point of engagement for China in Zimbabwe is official channels, while partners such as the US choose to engage via civil society (given the acrimonious relations with the ruling party). Rather the organisations that interact more actively with China are government-aligned organisations like the Federation of Non Governmental Organisations (FONGO).<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, to a subtle degree, Beijing is forced to engage in and respond to wider interests through the development of relations with the opposition.

Civil society concerns over the relationship with China continue to abound. Local stakeholders understand the need to engage China in hope of positive developments such as the setting up of special economic zones (SEZ), modelled on those in China, which could increase employment, investment and trade (Mambo, 2015). Still, there are elements in the relationship, such as the 2008 arms shipment case, that continue to raise serious concern. The latter is connected to the fact that China's contemporary relations with Zimbabwe are a consequence of domestic governance issues; and remain highly characterised as a relationship between political parties rather than between governments<sup>115</sup>. While the lack of transparency in the Zimbabwean political environment makes it difficult to verify some of the grievances over China's engagement, the areas of contention do nevertheless reflect the schism within Zimbabwean society, between the ruling party and the public (focused in the urban areas) – instead of purely mainstream discontent specifically directed against China.

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<sup>111</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview, Harare, 20 October 2015.

<sup>112</sup> The content of these seminars include titles such as 'Evidence Informed Policy Making in Zimbabwe' (20 October 2015) and 'What is Civic Technology?' (6 November 2015), which also suggest the importance of human rights by specifically emphasising and informing civil-political rights in Zimbabwe.

<sup>113</sup> Views of stakeholders from the PTUZ, Harare, October 2015.

<sup>114</sup> Former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>115</sup> Former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Harare, 21 October 2015.

Even more acute are concerns that the ruling party's metamorphosis from liberation movement abiding largely by the constitution to one which, since 2000, has actively undermined rule of law and increasingly turned to the security services to run government. The military has widespread commercial interests as a result. In this respect, by working in partnership with the Zimbabwean military commercial entities, Chinese interests have served to support the deliberate militarisation of the economy. Beijing's post-2008 strategy of hedging their political bets by engaging MDC (as a partner in government but also a potential alternative power) and, most recently, trying to reach out to elements in civil society, represents a belated acknowledgement that their interests are becoming too closely associated with one faction. At the same time, mutual dissatisfaction with ties – on China's part, the concern over ZANU-PF corruption and failure to repay loans, and on Zimbabwe's part the unwillingness of China to finance more than a fraction of the US\$27 billion recovery programme (and its subsequent insistence of strict conditionalities) – have soured ties.<sup>116</sup>

It is thus vital to be aware of the existing nuances and domestic complexities. While Zimbabwe is historically a highly literate society, even according to global standards, it remains highly intimidated during elections<sup>117</sup>. Additionally, civil society is generally suspicious of the Zimbabwean government's foreign relations given the overall opaqueness of the signed deals.<sup>118</sup> However, some in civil society believe that as civil society and government have learnt to engage with each other, so too will China.<sup>119</sup> There is the need to also assess what 'Chinese engagement in Zimbabwe' means. The increased Chinese presence in the informal retail sector (and perceived competition by locals) is by no means the same as government engagement in large scale deals and projects. Instead, this is part of a broader phenomenon, where economically weaker African trading partners feel that China is dumping cheap quality goods (commonly referred to as *Zhing Zhong* in Zimbabwe) in their domestic markets (Sachikonye, 2008: 133). It is the need to also assess what 'Chinese engagement

Overall local views towards China appear to be more nuanced than simply the perception of a binary relationship. What is clear is the awareness of the degree of realism that exists in international relations today. Moreover beyond a deeply historical relationship that is commonly emphasised in formal China-Africa speeches, China is increasingly opting for the choices that make business sense. Thus Zimbabwean stakeholders, who have had prior experience in engaging China, agree that African governments need to be 'clean and clever' in their relations with China. It is only by 'doing whatever it takes' and creating situations where bribes and quick wins are avoided, that China will respect its partners.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> China puts screws on Zim', *Mail and Guardian* 23 January 2015, [www.mg.co.za/article/2015-01-23-china-puts-screws-on-zim.htm](http://www.mg.co.za/article/2015-01-23-china-puts-screws-on-zim.htm)

<sup>117</sup> Discussion during a SAIIA event, 'Zimbabwe on the brink: From political pariah to economic paralysis?', Johannesburg, 19 November 2013.

<sup>118</sup> As expressed by a participant in the 3rd China Africa Youth Festival (2009), personal interview, 14 October 2015.

<sup>119</sup> Former program manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview, Harare, 21 October 2015.

<sup>120</sup> As expressed by stakeholders, personal interviews, October 2015; similarly at a SAIIA event titled 'Zimbabwe on the brink: From political pariah to economic paralysis?' on 19 November 2013, it was identified that a substantial challenge for Zimbabwe and its foreign engagement is the relative 'economic illiteracy' that remains in negotiations.

## CHAPTER 3: South Sudan: A Crucible of new Chinese Foreign Policy?

South Sudan is a key engagement for China in Africa exemplifying, often in extreme ways, important aspects of China's changing role in relation to governance, peace and security<sup>121</sup>. South Sudan has been an unusually prominent and important site of a multifaceted Chinese role. This follows a prior history of engagement.

Today is a critical juncture in South Sudan's short history as an independent state and, in turn, China's role there. The high expectations accompanying South Sudan's independence in July 2011 were comprehensively devastated by the conflict triggered in December 2013. Precipitated by a leadership crisis, this had its deeper roots in political tensions within the ruling Southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Army (SPLA) (Nyaba, 2013: 167). Failure to resolve the political differences between the SPLM's top leaders – in particular, South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, and former vice-president, Riak Machar<sup>122</sup> – rapidly translated into a violent, inter-ethnic conflict, drawing key regional actors into both the fighting and efforts to end it. The current conflict has resulted in more than 2.2 million displaced people, including over 630 000 refugees in neighbouring countries<sup>123</sup>, and stretched the ability of the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as other international agencies and the likes of China, to respond adequately and effectively.

South Sudan has been, and continues to be, a laboratory of Chinese foreign policy experimentation: starting with oil operations from 1995, an agenda founded in economics, has, more recently, been broadening into more political terrain involving responses to security and governance challenges. These are taking China into uncharted waters in South Sudan. Following a brief statement of context, this case study examines key aspects of China's evolving engagement with governance, peace and security in South Sudan before and after December 2013.

### Background: China in Sudan, 2005-2011

China was widely seen in South Sudan as having supported the Khartoum-based government of Sudan in the civil war. CNPC entered Sudan in late 1995. Oil became central to the wartime strategy and regime survival of what became the National Congress party (NCP) under President Bashir, and CNPC operated in the context of conflict and militarised conditions to support Khartoum's interests. The start of oil exports in 1999 was a landmark event for the oil companies, including CNPC, and the NCP, which benefited tremendously from a huge injection of state revenue. China only formally dealt with Khartoum until 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of January 2005 created an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and shared oil resources

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<sup>121</sup> Zhou Hang, 'China's Emergency Relief to South Sudan', *The Diplomat* 26 October 2014; Ross Anthony and Jiang Hengkun, 'Security and engagement: the case of China and South Sudan', *African-East Asian Affairs* 4 (December 2014): 78-96.

<sup>122</sup> As this paper was being finalised Riak Machar had returned to Juba and was likely to be sworn in as vice president again (April 2016).

<sup>123</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Bulletin: South Sudan: Bi-Weekly Update", 9 October 2015.

between Juba and Khartoum, necessitated a different approach by Beijing<sup>124</sup>. This was a transitional measure; after a five-year period, the people of southern Sudan would be allowed to vote on their future, deciding whether to secede entirely or remain part of Sudan. Oil accounted for almost all (98%) GOSS income.<sup>125</sup>

In March 2005 the SPLM/A sent its first low-level semi-official outreach mission to Beijing led by Salva Kiir, then second in command to John Garang. Kiir led the second, 'breakthrough' SPLM visit to China in July 2007, this time as President of Southern Sudan. Kiir conveyed the SPLM's independence intentions and the geography of China's Sudan oil operations to President Hu Jintao, which catalysed China's engagement with the GOSS, albeit still overshadowed by Darfur. A Chinese Consulate opened in Juba in September 2008, creating a new triangular framework of relations between Beijing-Khartoum-Juba. Beijing was concerned that once South Sudan won its independence, the SPLA/M would expel CNPC.

On top of its experience during the North-South war, Chinese oil companies faced a proliferation of security challenges and risks during the CPA. CNPC faced a proliferation of threats after 2005. Between 2007 and 2009, there were around 500 security emergencies in its oilfields in Sudan. The most salient incident occurred in October 2008 when 5 Chinese oil workers were killed (Patey, 2014). It galvanised company reform measures in its security policy overseas, including the evacuation measures enacted for staff in December 2013 after South Sudan's oil fields were attacked.

For CNPC and the Chinese government, diversifying political outreach became important in the face of disputes between Khartoum and Juba and the fragmentation of armed groups. China operated inter-state relations with Sudan and the regional GOSS, complemented by party-to-party relations between the CPC, the NCP and the SPLM. CNPC's approach remained based on keeping close ties with Khartoum and Juba. However, its International Department sought to move the company beyond its government-focused approach by establishing ties with local communities, major political opposition groups, and religious leaders. The International Department urged CNPC workers abroad to engage local communities actively and not function in a state of enclave isolation<sup>126</sup>.

Beijing became more engaged with the CPA as Darfur became less of a priority following the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The Chinese government's public position contended that 'peace and stability is in the interests of all parties, domestically and internationally'<sup>127</sup>. The definitions of peace Beijing used<sup>128</sup>, and policy responses it sought to advance, took their lead from the CPA. As 2011 approached, referendum diplomacy and investment protection became a priority for China and, at the same time, the SPLM wanted

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<sup>124</sup> GOSS was entitled to 50% of revenue coming from southern oil blocks (of which 2% was deducted for the oil-producing states of Unity and Upper Nile) and by late 2010 had received somewhere in the region of between US\$5.1bn (ECOS 2010: 22) and \$6.2bn (South Sudan Development Plan, p. 27).

<sup>125</sup> This figure (based on unreliable figure and now widely repeated, without evidence, long after it was first reported) reveals the profound problem of information that surrounds oil in South Sudan. In 2010, the GOSS Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning put oil income at 97.8%. See Southern Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, *Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2010* (Juba:; The credibility of South Sudan's annual budgets was deemed to be 'low'. See World Bank, 'GoRSS Public Finance Management Assessment: South Sudan', 31 May 2012.

<sup>126</sup> See Luke Patey; ECOS Juba conference, December 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Personal interview, senior Chinese official, Khartoum, 25 January 2011.

<sup>128</sup> In the main, these approach peace in a negative sense as the politically negotiated absence of war.

to use China as a political resource in the pursuit of independence. Its engagement with Beijing was informed by a concern that China might veto independence and continue firm support to the NCP; China, in turn, made recognition of the One-China principle an essential condition for formalising relations. That the friend of the NCP might be used against the NCP and, in so doing, promote the SPLM/A's independence ambitions was another strategic political factor. China thus in effect became part of the SPLM's strategy for achieving independence (Large and Patey, 2011). Juba-Beijing relations thickened. More Southern leaders visited China, and a greater variety of Chinese businesses, bank officials, government officials and CPC leaders visited Juba. China sought to hedge its bets about the referendum outcome and, when the result was a decisive overwhelming vote in favour of secession, looked forward to, and prepared for, an independent country.

China and South Sudan established formal diplomatic relations on 9 July 2011, when China Housing and Urban-Rural Development Minister Jiang Weixin signed a Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations in Juba. Before and at independence, China was widely seen – including by many international agencies and donors - as key to South Sudan's development prospects because, beyond oil, its perceived comparative advantage was rooted in its ability to rapidly mobilise finance and efficiently deliver infrastructure on a large scale. As one UN official put it: 'China will be an incredibly important partner for South Sudan'<sup>129</sup>. This partly signalled its quiet broadening of working relations, mostly of an informal kind, with UNMIS and other agencies in Juba.

### China and South Sudan: independence to the return of civil war

Beijing positioned itself as a friend of both Sudans. Its then Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi called the two states 'inextricably interdependent' while visiting Juba in August 2011, and emphasized the need for stability, sticking 'to the peace option' and resolving issues through dialogue<sup>130</sup>. Until December 2013, China's relations with South Sudan were caught up in Juba's disputes with Khartoum, before the SPLM's political strife went critical and civil war returned to South Sudan.

China was caught in the middle of political and at times militarised disputes between Juba and Khartoum rooted in the unfinished business of the CPA. South Sudan did not replace CNPC or other oil companies in the oil industry after July 2011. Overriding hardline anti-China opponents advocating more radical options, SPLM pragmatists saw serious reputational and legal complications for the industry should these be ousted on political grounds. CNPC and others also lobbied to continue their operations. Nonetheless, Juba used its new sovereign political power to pressure CNPC and its partners to support their position in negotiations with Sudan over the pipeline transit fees. Sudan unilaterally confiscated shipments of South Sudanese oil in late 2011 as payment for undetermined pipeline fees. As a result, South Sudan pushed the oil companies to accept the inclusion of a new clause freeing South Sudan from any liability if it imposed an oil shutdown<sup>131</sup>.

China sought to bridge the differences between the two Sudans. In face of a possible oil shutdown, China's former special envoy to Africa, Liu Guijin, was dispatched to Juba and Khartoum in early December 2011 to try to find a solution to the impasse over pipeline transit fees between Khartoum and Juba, and thereby also protect CNPC's interests. CNPC

<sup>129</sup> Interview with UNDP official, Juba, 2 February 2011.

<sup>130</sup> 'Foreign Minister Yang Jiechia's Written Interview with South Sudan Press', *Al-Masier*, 9 August 2011

<sup>131</sup> See ICG, 'China's New Courtship in South Sudan', Brussels: ICG Africa Report No. 186, 4 April 2012.

and its partners also put forward a plan to offer an oil package to Sudan if it allowed the South Sudanese oil to flow freely through its pipeline. Such efforts didn't work, and in January 2012 South Sudan proceeded to shut down its oil productions. Not long after the shutdown, South Sudan's oil minister expelled the CNPC president of the Petrodar consortium, alleging complicity in Sudan's earlier confiscation of oil shipments. While the two Sudans later signed an agreement on pipeline transit fees in September 2012, oil production did not start again till after a security arrangement was also penned in March 2013.

South Sudan's Oil Industry

Block	Consortium	Main fields	Shareholders
1	Greater Pioneer  Operating Company  (GPOC)	Unity, Toma,  Munga	CNPC International (Nile): 40%  Petronas Carigali Nile: 30%  ONGC Nile Ganga: 25%  Nilepet: 5%
3&7	Dar Petroleum  Operating Company	Paloich, Adar-Yale, Gumri,  Moleeta	CNPC International (Dar): 41%  Petronas Carigali Nile: 40%  Nilepet: 8%  Sinopec International Petroleum Corp.: 6%  Tri-Ocean Exploration & Production: 5%
5a	Sudd Petroleum  Operating Company	Mala  Thar Jath	Petronas: 67.875%  ONGC: 24.125%  Nilepet: 8%

The oil shutdown created a major security and economic crisis, which China tried to engage politically. While 74% of Sudan's oil production went to South Sudan when it separated, Sudan controlled the key oil infrastructure, including export pipelines. The shutdown halted CNPC's most profitable venture overseas; production only resumed in April and May 2013, and reached about 220,000 bpd by June 2013. Beijing's failure to avoid the shutdown through diplomacy only strengthened moves in CNPC to pursue a more risk adverse approach in the Sudans. It was a further indication of the pronounced limits of externally perceived Chinese 'leverage' over Juba or Khartoum, demonstrating instead the decisive influence of a few leading figures around Salva Kiir. Even now, Chinese officials in Juba - and elsewhere in Africa - cannot fully understand why the shutdown happened.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Interview in Juba July 2015; interview in Accra September 2015.

## Governance Challenges before December 2013

As a surface indicator of the scale of governance challenges, South Sudan has ranked as the world's most fragile state for the past two years<sup>133</sup>. The nature of the GoRSS lies at the heart of almost all important aspects of China's relations with South Sudan. The reality of the politics China was engaging was of a militarised, kleptocratic petro-state (de Waal, 2014). Power lay in the hands of men with guns, and their deal-making and rivalries were financed by oil revenues, or the prospect of such revenues. Not restricted to an elite, there is a widespread militarisation predicated on the expectation that violence would be rewarded with a government position yielding its own rent. Oil revenue allowed salaries to be paid, with a large proportion going to the SPLA; it also underwrote the monetary costs of Salva Kiir's efforts to reconcile and incorporate former foes and potential rivals into a government big tent. As he acknowledged<sup>134</sup>, GOSS 'largely squandered the opportunity of oil' (Patey, 2009). Oil income did 'not flow'<sup>135</sup> or 'trickle down' to average South Sudanese but instead was captured by elites (Moro, 2013). Even after the January 2011 referendum, there was resigned pessimism about the state of the state. One official described it as a situation of 'accommodating looters' based on political necessity not competence. The slim hope then was that independence would, as it was supposed to, change this state of affairs, moving the country away from a 'looting spree' to a situation where 'real people with the right merits to deliver' might be able to make a difference.<sup>136</sup>

### Chinese capacity building

China's limited efforts to undertaking its equivalent of capacity building have to be understood as a sub-set of a broader international effort marshalled under the banner of statebuilding, which China appeared to benefit from and very deliberately sought to locate its own political and policy engagement in relation to. China's Juba embassy closely followed international engagement with UNMISS, and via other NGOs or bilateral partners. It may not have formally been part of the established coordination structures, instead taking a selective approach, but it actively cultivated and maintained informal relations with key international officials. This effectively meant that there was de facto informal coordination, with China conscious of the risks of duplicating aid projects and the need to prioritise China's comparative advantage.

Long before the violence of December 2013, China's actual engagement was continually and pragmatically adjusting to deal with the vast difference between its ideas and capabilities, and actual South Sudan politics. Before independence, Chinese officials had privately confided that it would be straightforward to develop South Sudan, and shared ideas about technocratic solutions, starting with infrastructure. South Sudan resource endowments only confirmed that, suitably managed according to a development plan, the country could progress – and thus so could commercial opportunities for Chinese companies. However, they learnt the hard way: through experience.

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<sup>133</sup> Fund for Peace, *2015 Fragile States Index* June 2015.

<sup>134</sup> 'When we got to power we forgot what we fought for and began to enrich ourselves at the expense of our people.' Letter from President Salva Kiir Mayardit to 75 former and current South Sudanese officials, 3 May 2013.

<sup>135</sup> 'South Sudan Development Plan 2011-2013', Government of the Republic of South Sudan, Juba, 2011, p.13.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with GOSS official, Juba, 2 February 2011.

China was widely regarded – by international actors as well as the GoRSS - as uniquely capable of delivering a concrete peace dividend in the face of extreme underdevelopment in South Sudan. Such faith or ascribed ability, however, was tested by actual relations between Beijing and Juba. These came to be marked by delays, frustration and mutual discontent.<sup>137</sup>

A leading point of friction concerned efforts to negotiate a substantial financial support package from China to South Sudan. First mooted prior to July 2011, this had been subject to delays and various problems, many rooted in China's concern with ensuring sufficient collateral for any major loan package extended to Juba. While in Beijing in April 2012, Salva Kiir tried to secure financial support for a new oil pipeline to free South Sudan from dependence on exports through Sudan's northern pipeline. China, however, was unwilling to support a new multi-billion dollar pipeline that would undermine Sudan's position as the only transit route for southern crude exports. South Sudan's Minister of Information (and now current Foreign Minister) announced an USD 8 billion loan from China in April 2012. No such loan had actually been agreed. The resulting fallout damaged China's popular reputation. In this, that China did not publicly deny or confirm the claim for nearly a year hardly helped clarify matters. Only in mid-March 2013 did China's special envoy confirm that Beijing had not offered the loan.

This 'loan affair' signalled the underlying problem of state incapacity in Juba, and galvanised Chinese attempts to redress this as a means to both enhance bilateral relations and promote statebuilding. The official optimism expressed by Chinese embassy staff in Juba in 2010 and after independence became tempered by the realities and experience of implementing cooperation. In November 2012, a Chinese official in Juba said: 'South Sudanese expect Chinese support but they do not have the capacity to negotiate with the Chinese side'.<sup>138</sup> Addressing state incapacity in Juba to overcome a structural impediment to strengthening relations with South Sudan became a central preoccupation for the Chinese embassy in Juba. The inability of South Sudan to negotiate complex financial deals was the main structural barrier to deeper cooperation. Both sides sought to address this as the precondition for unlocking substantial development finance, but the Chinese took the lead. South Sudan's Ministry of Finance and the Chinese embassy in Juba created a 'China Desk' to fulfil this role. Such mechanisms were supposed to play a significant role in negotiating the financial foundations of wider China-South Sudan economic relations. In effect, any such Chinese loan would be routed to Chinese companies but the upshot would have been tangible infrastructural benefits in South Sudan.

The sudden violence from 15 December 2013 derailed a process close to achieving a loan package. Some five days before, China Exim bank and South Sudan's Ministry of Finance co-sponsored the South Sudan-China Development Cooperation Forum in Juba, attended by around 200 industrial and commercial representatives. The Chinese ambassador, Ma Qiang, planned to sign a deal for the Juba airport renovation after the SPLM's convention being held on the weekend of 15 February 2014, "Unfortunately, everything has changed...So everything is on hold"<sup>139</sup>. Since December 2013, the China desk has sought

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<sup>137</sup> Chinese officials harboured private quiet frustration about government working habits. Thus, for example, China's programme to construct hospitals in every state capital was already significantly delayed and behind schedule long before December 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with GOSS official, Juba, 2 February 2011.

<sup>139</sup> Robyn Dixon, 'Even China has second thoughts on South Sudan after violence', *LA Times*, 20 February 2014.

to function in the context of civil war when China became even more cautious and concerned to secure collateral on any loan.

Beyond relations with the government, China's engagement during this period came to also involve connections with different international actors, thus diversifying its relations to an extent beyond a narrow South Sudan bilateral setting. South Sudan is also prominent as a theatre for efforts by NGOs to engage with or, depending on how these are interpreted, attempt to socialise Chinese corporations into such notions as corporate social responsibility and conflict sensitivity.<sup>140</sup>

### SPLM-CPC Political Party Relations

The development of CPC-SPLM party relations was a further political trend, formally distinct from inter-state relations but in reality one and the same. The CPC was active in courting South Sudan and the SPLM before January and July 2011; indeed, one senior leader engaging in that, Li Yuanchao, was elevated to the Politburo and is now a Vice-President.

SPLM officials were undertaking training under CPC organisation on governance in China as part of a developing connection. In 2011, the SPLM and CPC signed an MoU covering 4 years about 'building a pragmatic relationship', as well as investment and training focused 'on sharing ideas, based on the ideas of the CPC, on how a political party can have leadership and how to build a leader who can support its members and general public'. In October, the SPLM's then Deputy Secretary General Ann Itto led an SPLM delegation to China. In November 2014, the SPLM announced it was sending 20 cadres to China 'for training to boost party leadership administrative capacity' in a delegation led by Daniel Awet Akot, a senior commander and politician.<sup>141</sup> By then, some 150 members had received training in China.

### December 2013: the return of civil war

If this applied before the current conflict, the outbreak of violence and civil war from mid-December 2013 severely compounded the challenges. A political crisis of the SPLM's high leadership led to war. South Sudan before December 2013 was experiencing a number of conflicts, including in Jonglei (Thomas, 2015). The SPLA/M's "process of transforming the institutions of the liberation struggle" essentially failed (Deng, 2013). Salva Kiir's presidency was underpinned by the South Sudanese military and national security system. The 'bush culture' of militarism, "rule of the gun" and the SPLM's "no-dialogue paradigm" meant the South Sudanese government operating with impunity<sup>142</sup>. The **report of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan**, which was created by the AU Peace and Security Council in 2014, found that there was no coup attempt against Salva Kiir, as the President had claimed, but that a gunfight within the Presidential Guard triggered violence. It concluded that 'widespread and systematic' killings occurred in Juba in

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<sup>140</sup> See 'Managing risk in unstable countries: promoting conflict-sensitive Chinese investment in South Sudan', London: Saferworld: January 2015.

<sup>141</sup> Jok P. Mayom, 'SPLM sent 20 cadres to China for training', *Upper Nile Times* 11 November 2014.

<sup>142</sup> Justice Africa and University of Juba Centre for Peace and Development Studies, *South Sudan Civil Forum I: Reflections on Peace*, Juba, South Sudan, 2014.

December 2013, later spreading to other parts of South Sudan, and that these were coordinated and ‘could have been planned’.<sup>143</sup>

CNPC mounted a rapid security response to the fighting that started in Juba on 15 December 2013 and rapidly spread, especially in Unity and Upper Nile states. The rapid, successful evacuation of Chinese oil workers and those working for other companies like Sinohydro after 15 December 2013 ensured the Chinese government – and CNPC – did and were seen to act to protect its nationals.<sup>144</sup> This triggered much debate from Chinese analysts about how best to respond<sup>145</sup>. Since then, oil has been running at minimal capacity from Upper Nile only.

It is impossible to find reliable statistics on South Sudan’s oil production. Before December 2013, its production level was often reported as running at around 245 000 bpd<sup>146</sup>. The industry was set for expansion<sup>147</sup>. In December 2013, however, the Unity oil fields were at the centre of fighting following the defection of the SPLA’s 4<sup>th</sup> division commanded by Major-General James Koang. This caused a complete if orderly shutdown of oil operations and the evacuation of most expatriate oil workers. The Unity oil blocks ceased operating completely. In Upper Nile, production was reduced but not stopped, despite intensified conflict over the oil fields. In March 2014, production was reportedly 166 458 bpd<sup>148</sup>. In 2014, production ran at an average of 165 000 bpd but the figure for 2015 is likely to have been lower due to further, intense oilfield fighting. This caused further threats to Chinese oil workers. In May 2015, **China** evacuated some 400 workers from Paloch, Upper Nile because of fighting, but production later resumed when the SPLA regained control.

Despite the civil war, South Sudan continued to try to court Chinese investment.

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<sup>143</sup> Final Report of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, Addis Ababa 15 October 2014.

<sup>144</sup> Sinohydro staff working in Malakal were also evacuated to Juba and further to Uganda on 21 December. Chinese UN peacekeeping police evacuated 3 nationals from Bor to Juba a week or so after the outbreak of violence in Juba.

<sup>145</sup> Anonymous (2014) ‘Turmoil in South Sudan impacts oil supplies’ (南苏丹动乱冲击石油供应 nansudan dongluan chongji shiyou gongying nansudan dongluan chongji shiyou gongying), *Sunset Glow* (晚霞 wanxia), 2; Tang, Shiping, Zhang, Weihua and Wang, Kai (2014) ‘Chinese overseas investment and South Sudanese ethnic politics’ (中国海外投资与南苏丹族群政治 zhongguo haiwai touzi yu nansudan zuqun zhengzhi), *Beijing Cultural Review* (文化纵横 wenhua zongheng), 5; Tao, Duanfang (2014) ‘South Sudanese civil war threatens China’s “oil presence”’ (南苏丹内战祸及中国“石油存在” nansudan neizhan huoji zhongguo shiyou cunzai), *South Reviews* (南风窗 nanfeng chuang), 2; Wang, Jie (2014) ‘Stick to South Sudan, hand down oil spirit overseas’ (坚守南苏丹 海外传承石油魂 jianshou nansudan haiwai chuancheng shiyou hun), *World Well Logging Technology* (国外测井技术 guowai cejing jishu), 2.

<sup>146</sup> Including, but not only, by Stephen Dhieu Dau in late May 2014. See ‘South Sudan admits conflict has hampered oil production’, *Sudan Tribune* 26 May 2014. In October 2013, however, the Ministry of Petroleum Management put this at 190 000 bpd. The context is that from 2006, Sudan’s national oil production ran at almost 500 000 barrels/day following the spike in production resulting from Petrodar Blocks 3 and 7 coming on-stream and flowing through the new pipeline for export. In 2010, 75% of total peak production of 490 000bpd was produced in South Sudan, a situation carried over when South Sudan became independent.

<sup>147</sup> A new licensing round centred on Block B, and further infrastructure projects were planned besides oil refineries built in Melut and Bentiu. A feasibility study was underway on a smaller pipeline for block 5. MPM, ‘The Unexplored Frontier: Investment Opportunities in South Sudan’s Natural Resources’, 17 April 2013.

<sup>148</sup> ‘South Sudan: Oil production rises despite civil conflict’, *African Energy* Issue 273, 13 March 2014.

In April 2014, South Sudan's embassy in Beijing hosted the first South Sudan-China Investment Forum to identify and make effective use of investment and trade opportunities. There appeared to be mixed responses from the some 200 Chinese businessmen present, with the large Chinese companies still being interested in investing in South Sudan whereas the medium and small ones were deterred by daunting security risks.

## Peace and security

The new civil war was seen to '...potentially accelerate[d] China's evolution from a reactive and passive actor in conflict resolution to one that is more active and positive in both conflict management and conflict prevention'<sup>149</sup>. In reality, while becoming engaged, China's approach has been ad hoc and reactive.

Bilateral ties between China and the GoRSS continued on a regular basis at the highest level<sup>150</sup>. China also maintained non-official links with the SPLM-IO. This means that its political relations are multi-stranded, and not confined to relations with the state and ruling SPLM. In September 2014, an SPLM-IO delegation visited Beijing headed by Dhieu Mathok Diing Wol, chairman of its External Relations Committee. They met with Wang Yi and the Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Ming. Chinese media reports were at pains to underscore: 'China stressed its fair and objective stance'<sup>151</sup>. Wang Yi reiterated this: 'China always adheres to a just and objective position'<sup>152</sup>. In the SPLM-IO's headquarters, there have been reports of Chinese connections with Riak and rumours of deals over oil field security but no confirmation.

China maintains regular and institutionalised engagement with Sudan, which involves the conflict in South Sudan. One consequence of conflict in South Sudan appears to have been a redirection of energy and investment in Chinese diplomacy toward Khartoum and Sudan, seen in political cooperation, new economic deals and a range of other cooperation areas. President Bashir's visit to Beijing in September 2015 only rendered such renewed relations more visible.

There has also been a regional diplomatic aspect to China's engagement of the South Sudan crisis. Beyond Sudan and China's regular connections with top NCP leaders, China has also engaged Uganda and regional states on the question of South Sudan's conflict. In April 2014, for example, Chinese special envoy Zhong Jianhua met President Museveni in Kampala as part of his multifaceted engagement.

## Humanitarian Aid

The different phases of China's humanitarian aid reflect political developments and those related to the conflict. China's aid programme preceded the December 2013 conflict. In 2012, South Sudan was listed as a FOCAC independent state partner. This mean that

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<sup>149</sup> Zhang, C and Kemple-Hardy, M. 2015. 'From conflict resolution to conflict prevention: China in South Sudan' in *Saferworld CPWG briefing*, CPWG briefing 1, p.1.

<sup>150</sup> In June 2014, for example, Vice-President James Wani Igga visited Beijing where he met Li Keqiang, Li Yuanchao, Li Ruogu, Chairman and President of Exim Bank of Chin, and Zhou Jiping, Chairman of CNPC.

<sup>151</sup> 'China confirms contact with South Sudan opposition', *Xinhua* 23 September 2014.

<sup>152</sup> Wang Yi: China sincerely Hopes for an early Comprehensive and Proper Settlement of South Sudan issue', 22 September 2014 via <http://au.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t1194118.htm>.

‘China will allocate aid’ to South Sudan<sup>153</sup>. China’s aid to the newly independent state responded to ‘increasing humanitarian assistance and requests’ from Humanitarian Affairs and Demining Commission for disaster relief in 2011, as well as the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. Since December 2013, China’s aid has responded to the renewed conflict by a changed programme of assistance<sup>154</sup>. The conflict severely interrupted China’s then existing aid programme, including construction of hospitals in all 10 of South Sudan’s state capitals.

Health and medical assistance remain central to China’s current assistance. In March 2015, the Chinese embassy in Juba and South Sudan’s Ministry of Health signed an MoU regarding the third batch of Chinese medical assistance to South Sudan, particularly for Juba Teaching Hospital. Outside of humanitarian assistance, China’s aid programme encompasses other areas, notably agriculture. In September 2014, China advanced a USD 25 million grant for ‘agro-infrastructure development’ reportedly ‘mostly in the areas hugely affected’ by the conflict.<sup>155</sup>

### **Military support to the GoRSS**

China, and the main Chinese oil companies, have a longstanding military relationship with the government of Sudan and those parts of what is now South Sudan that were opened up to oil development during the North-South conflict. These old alliances, notably the role of Riak Machar when he was allied to Khartoum following his defection from the SPLA/M mainstream in 1991, continue to have relevance today. However, one aspect of the Chinese response to renewed conflict in South Sudan appears to have involved efforts to ensure security of oil assets and operations in South Sudan concerns links attributed between oil companies and armed militias in the oil fields<sup>156</sup>. This concerns the Unity blocks of the oil consortium in which CNPC features as the main partner, which were reported as being defended by 4th Division troops, and a 700-strong militia force recruited from among the Rueng Dinka youth of Pariang county and run by South Sudan’s National Security Service.<sup>157</sup>

Beijing and Juba did not initially have a direct formal military relationship after July 2011. Part of the initial problem was China’s longstanding close links with the Sudan Armed Forces, and America’s support to the SPLA. However, military links have grown as a result of Juba’s new needs arising from the December 2013 civil war. SPLA commanders were previously dismissive of China as a military partner. More recently, however, a pragmatic ‘We buy arms from whomever we can get them from’ attitude has replaced previous antipathy toward China.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Interview at Chinese Embassy, 22 November 2012.

<sup>154</sup> Zhou Hang, ‘China’s Emergency Relief to South Sudan’, *The Diplomat* 26 October 2014.

<sup>155</sup> ‘China grant \$25 million to South Sudan for agricultural purposes’, *Upper Nile Times* 5 September 2014.

<sup>156</sup> Small Arms Survey

<sup>157</sup> In addition, new partnerships were created to undertake security activities, notably through the Hong Kong registered company Frontier Services Group, whose shareholders include CITIC (formerly China International Trust and Investment Corporation).

<sup>158</sup> Conversation with SPLA general, Juba, July 2015.

The GRSS received arms from China, something that the SPLM-IO tried to draw attention to.<sup>159</sup> The UN sanctions panel reported that the SPLA received a shipment of arms, ammunition and related materiel from China North Industries Group Corporation (Norinco) in July 2014. This weapons consignment, worth some USD 46.8 million according to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, appeared to have been ordered before December 2013<sup>160</sup>. South Sudan has not relied solely on China for arms purchases; far from it, it has a number of more significant suppliers. However, the mere appearance of Beijing seeking to concurrently promote peace and assist UN peacekeeping in a conflict zone while a Chinese company was supplying the weapons of war to Juba was a dramatic illustration of a conflicted and contradictory Chinese role. Furthermore, when China's arms transfers to Sudan are factored in, particularly the indirect impacts caused by Khartoum's secondary retransfer of arms to allied armed groups in South Sudan, Beijing's role is more significant (Leff and Lebrun, 2014: 24, 105)<sup>161</sup>. After the Norinco revelations, and facing not just a damaging political backlash but also possible blowback on its interests and peacekeepers, China declared a moratorium on arms sales to South Sudan<sup>162</sup>. It is not clear if there is evidence of a firm follow-through on this.

### UN Peacekeeping: China and UNMISS

South Sudan's civil war necessitated a departure from China's previous approach to arms supply with the Sudanese. Beijing had previously been a longstanding arms supplier and military partner in the region, but the conflict has changed China's engagement not just in terms of bilateral military links but also its support for UNMISS and at the level of UN Security Council resolutions. It is partly because of Chinese pressure that UNMISS's mandate features the aim to 'deter violence against civilians, including foreign nationals [...] in areas at high risk of conflict including, as appropriate, schools, places of worship, hospitals and the oil installations'<sup>163</sup>.

The prominence of China's support to UN peacekeeping in South Sudan is notable. China's current peacekeeping engagement in South Sudan follows on nearly a decade after its first deployment of UN peacekeepers after the CPA. Dispatched from the Jinan Military Command, these were based in Wau, and undertook multifunctional logistical, engineering, or health support roles.

Since December 2013, the nature of China's UN peacekeeping has importantly evolved. South Sudan is the first case of China deploying combat troops under a Chapter VII mandate. In April 2015, the final detachment of Chinese troops was deployed to UNMISS on this basis, making a full battalion comprising three infantry companies and a supply company. Most notably, this includes a civilian protection role for which Ellen Loej, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of UNMISS, has spoken

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<sup>159</sup> In March 2015, for example, it claimed that a Chinese flagged vessel Da Dan Xia has brought large quantity of armaments and ammunition to the RSS via Djibouti Port. 'Claims China shipping lethal weapons to Juba via Ethiopia', *Sudan Tribune* 29 March 2015.

<sup>160</sup> Interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206 (2015), 21 August 2015, p. 17 at 61.

<sup>161</sup> China accounted for some 58% of all of Khartoum's self-reported arms imports over the period 2001–12. The GOS has angered Beijing by retransferring some imported Chinese weapons and ammunition to allied groups in Darfur, a violation of the UN arms embargo on Darfur, and also to rebel groups in South Sudan.

<sup>162</sup> China Halts Arms Sales to South Sudan After Norinco Shipment', *Bloomberg* 30 September 2014.

<sup>163</sup> Luke Patey, 'Requiem for a Dream?' *Petroleum Economist*, July/August 2014; UNMISS (United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan). n.d. 'UNMISS Mandate.'

positively<sup>164</sup>. Debate around how this is - or is not - related to China's efforts to pursue investment protection by multilateral means under multilateral UN colours was in many respects a distraction: the real issue was the changed nature of what type of peacekeepers China was sending.

In early December 2015, China's infantry battalion completed its first rotation. The latest, new Chinese UN peacekeeping chapter in South Sudan is significant beyond UNMISS. It has been heavily promoted – in both English and Mandarin language news coverage – to African and international audiences on the one hand, and to domestic Chinese audience on the other. Amidst other cases of Chinese deployments – Mali, Liberia, DRC, and Sudan – South Sudan is the most salient example in media attention stressing China's positive contribution<sup>165</sup>.

### Engagement in Peace Processes

China acted in a quasi-mediation or brokering role between Khartoum and Juba before December 2013, when it refocused attention to conflict within both countries. While focused primarily on its own interests, these dovetailed with more widely held interests: oil and oil money was at the heart of Sudan-South Sudan dispute, and fundamental to paying for the state. Beijing's subsequent engagement since December 2013 has featured aspects of continuity and change.

At regular points in time, corresponding to the evolution of the fighting, Beijing has called for ceasefires and stressed the importance of political negotiation to end the conflict. A consistent refrain has been that the conflict cannot be resolved through military solutions. At times, these calls have manifestly resonated with China's core economic concerns in general and oil in particular. In May 2015, for example, a MOFA spokesperson asserted that: 'Both sides have the responsibility to protect oil infrastructure in South Sudan, as oil is a critical resource in its reconstruction and economic development during the country's peaceful transition period'<sup>166</sup>. This pattern of publicly supporting each so-called peace agreement was accompanied by more engaged diplomacy aimed at assisting a negotiated settlement<sup>167</sup>.

China's efforts to undertake a 'mediation' role since December 2013 has drawn wide attention<sup>168</sup>. China has been styled as a mediator<sup>169</sup>. However, this must be qualified and defined precisely since its actual role – and the evolution of this – is more complicated. Going beyond a more accurate understanding of mediation, analysts were too quick to latch on to Wang Yi's suggestion of this in January 2014. In reality, China's engagement

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<sup>164</sup> 'Senior UN official lauds China's 1st peacekeeping infantry battalion in South Sudan', *Xinhua* 20 November 2015.

<sup>165</sup> 'Chinese blue helmets safeguard peace in Africa', *Xinhua* 4 December 2015. Its exercises – such as a joint defensive drill in Wau on 5 December 2015 – receiving high official praise, including at the time of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's UN peacekeeping celebrated in Juba in July 2015. See China Military Online for such reports: <http://www.81.cn>.

<sup>166</sup> 'China urges immediate cease-fire in South Sudan', *Xinhua* 22 May 2015.

<sup>167</sup> 'China urges parties to ease tensions in South Sudan', *Xinhua* 16 May 2014.

<sup>168</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, 'In South Sudan Conflict, China Tests Its Mediation Skills', *The Diplomat* 6 June 2014; Zhang Chuna and Mariam Kemple-Hardy, 'From conflict resolution to conflict prevention: China in South Sudan', Saferworld CPWG briefing 1, 31 March 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, 'In South Sudan Conflict, China Tests Its Mediation Skills', *The Diplomat* 6 June 2014

has had mediation-like aspects, but essentially represents a diplomatic-political intervention to try to assist negotiated settlement.

The timing and nature of China's immediate response to the fighting of December 2013 was noteworthy: it combined concern at the fighting with a call for restraint and negotiated settlement with measures to 'protect personal and property safety' of Chinese enterprises and employees<sup>170</sup>. In January 2014, Wang Yi held talks in Addis with the protagonists. He had been scheduled to visit Addis Ababa as part of the Chinese Foreign Minister's traditional new year Africa tour. However, his talks with both main parties to the South Sudan conflict on 6 January 2014, at which he urged them to 'seek a reasonable and rational way out' were notable.

In August 2014, China advocated a 4-point solution to South Sudan's civil war. While arising out of talks between Wang Yi and his South Sudanese counterpart in Beijing (and resurrecting an earlier Chinese proposal about Darfur), these reiterated China's position by stressing: a cease-fire, political dialogue, IGAD support as the best means for 'Africa solving the issue on its own', and alleviating the humanitarian situation<sup>171</sup>. China's dialogue went beyond its Foreign Minister – and Premier – to include State Counsellor Yang Jiechi, who visited Juba when Foreign Minister in August 2011. There were multiple exchanges, including with a range of involved international figures in UNMISS and IGAD as well as informal connections with the SPLM-IO<sup>172</sup>.

Chinese diplomacy on the IGAD process has been multi-sited, connected by key individuals and coordination between embassy, ministerial and leadership levels in Beijing. Five aspects are worth noting. First, there was regular monitoring of the Addis process by Chinese diplomats based there, involving continuous communication both with members of the team and the negotiating parties<sup>173</sup>. Second, China's Special Envoy Zhong Jianhua conducted regular shuttle diplomacy between Juba, Addis, Khartoum, and Beijing. He maintained connections with his US and European counterparts, and was also active in regional diplomacy, trying to engage with Kampala and other regional parties to the conflict. Third, China's role in the mediation process assumed a new level of importance by its participation. This produced a complex mediation structure involving diplomats from China, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, US, UK and Norway<sup>174</sup>. Fourth, China supported IGAD and the AU's response as the centre point of its engagement. Finally, the Chinese

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<sup>170</sup> 'Wang Yi: Both Parties in South Sudan Should Resolve Differences through Negotiations as Soon as Possible and Effectively Protect Personal and Property Safety of the Chinese Enterprises and Employees', 26 December 2015

[http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/xybfs\\_663590/gjlb\\_663594/sousu\\_663756/ssa\\_a\\_663760/t1113182.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xybfs_663590/gjlb_663594/sousu_663756/ssa_a_663760/t1113182.shtml)

<sup>171</sup> MFA, 'Wang Yi: Ceasefire Dialogue is the Sole Way for Reconciliation in South Sudan', 20 August 2014 [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/xybfs\\_663590/gjlb\\_663594/sousu\\_663756/ssa\\_a\\_663760/t1184407.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xybfs_663590/gjlb_663594/sousu_663756/ssa_a_663760/t1184407.shtml)

<sup>172</sup> In December 2014, and accompanied by China's ambassador to South Sudan, Zhong Jianhua met Kiir, Marial, and Ellen Margrethe Loej, the Troika, the EU Envoy to South Sudan and others. Special Representative of the Chinese Government on African Affairs Zhong Jianhua Visits South Sudan (From Chinese Embassy in South Sudan) 23 December 2014: at [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/xybfs\\_663590/gjlb\\_663594/sousu\\_663756/ssa\\_a\\_663760/t1223039.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xybfs_663590/gjlb_663594/sousu_663756/ssa_a_663760/t1223039.shtml)

<sup>173</sup> Interview with former member of the IGAD mediation team, Kenya, July 2015.

<sup>174</sup> In late March 2015, the AUPSC endorsed creation of a panel of 5 African country leaders (Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa) to support the IGAD team.

Foreign Minister, as well as China's top leaders, also had a role in terms of meeting key political leaders and messaging Beijing's support for peace.

China's diplomatic engagement ebbed and flowed, mostly being confined to a support role. However, in January 2015 Beijing departed from this in what was the most notable aspect of China's attempted mediation: organising a meeting in Khartoum in January 2015 styled as a 'Special Consultation in Support of the IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process'<sup>175</sup>. This brought together Tedros Adhanom, the rotating chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of the IGAD mediation team on the South Sudanese issue, Barnaba Marial Benjamin and SPLM-IO Chief Negotiator Taban Deng Gai. It also featured a role of President Bashir. Wang Yi's message was clear: 'China is an active promoter of peace in South Sudan'<sup>176</sup>. This represented the most ambitious attempt by China to initiate and convene such a meeting under its own flag. However, in the face of continuing fighting and no breakthrough in the Addis IGAD negotiations, there was no indication that the meeting had any lasting impact. Its significance lay thus in the event itself, not in the outcomes.

The nature and extent of the challenges China confronted appear to have reduced Beijing's appetite to undertake such ventures of a bilateral kind, though the Khartoum meeting had been coordinated with and styled as part of the IGAD process; it clearly stated as intending 'to continue with the support for the mediation efforts by IGAD on the South Sudan issue, encourage conflicting parties of South Sudan to proceed with dialogue and negotiation in addressing disagreements and conflicts and restore peace and stability to South Sudan at an early date'.

A further indication of China's shifting engagement was seen in China's UNSC role in relation to the ongoing conflict. On 3 March 2015, the UNSC voted unanimously to impose sanctions on the conflict protagonist in South Sudan. The resolution endorsed the COH agreements signed and accepted by both the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM-IO [23 January 2014; 6 May 2014; 9 May 2014]. The US-drafted resolution text underscored its 'willingness to impose targeted sanctions in order to support the search for peace'.

In China's South Sudan diplomatic engagement, some analysts see evidence of a key case portending and exemplifying a shift toward a more activist role not just in South Sudan but Africa more generally. One, for example, argued that China is acting not only like a 'responsible world power' but like 'a practical great power'<sup>177</sup>. However, this has not been borne out by subsequent events. If anything, this confirms China's proclivity toward more ad hoc experimental attempted solutions that have been moderated in the face of direct experience of the sheer intractability of the conflict.

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<sup>175</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on January 12, 2015. [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/t1227486.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1227486.shtml)

<sup>176</sup> Wang Yi: China Is an Active Promoter, Steadfast Defender and Sincere Participant of Peace in South Sudan', 13 January 2015 [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjwb\\_663304/zzjg\\_663340/xybfs\\_663590/gjlb\\_663594/sousu\\_663756/ssa\\_a\\_663760/t1228073.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjwb_663304/zzjg_663340/xybfs_663590/gjlb_663594/sousu_663756/ssa_a_663760/t1228073.shtml)

<sup>177</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, 'China in South Sudan: Practical Responsibility', *The Diplomat* 13 January 2015.

## China-South Sudan: Current Engagement and Challenges

China welcomed the eventual peace accord in August 2015 between the GoRSS and the SPLM-IO, but since then any hope this engendered has been tempered by political and military developments. The politics of the deal continue to present highly contentious challenges, including the proposal by the President to divide South Sudan into 28 states, which the SPLM-IO has denounced as a violation of the agreement. The political ‘pre-transition’ the accord provides for has, so far, not proceeded smoothly, on top of new rebellions and spreading in other parts of South Sudan (including Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Northern and Western Bahr el-Ghazal). At the same time, despite the limited withdrawal of SPLA forces from Juba in November 2015 to comply with the demilitarisation provisions of the agreement, there have been regular violations of the August accord.<sup>178</sup>

China’s current business engagement reflects the state of the peace deal. A Chinese embassy official in Juba stressed in July 2015: ‘Peace is the foundation of development. Without peace no one is eager to invest here no matter on the government or the rebel side’<sup>179</sup>. On-going negotiations over a loan package worth some USD 1 billion, first announced in October 2014 and involving the China Desk, have not met with success. The upshot is a circular effect: the Chinese government won’t agree any substantial loan until there is a credible peace deal, and until there is such a loan, a significant Chinese commercial engagement that might support such a deal won’t happen. The remaining major companies, in which CNPC is by far the most important, stay in Juba for political reasons and face quotidian difficulties over inflation, exchange rate fluctuations, security and harassment by government officials. There have been small projects in parts of South Sudan not directly affected by conflict.<sup>180</sup> For now, actual business engagement is much contracted compared to pre-December 2013. The main project is Shandong Hi-speed Group’s 1 043 km-long Juba-Rumbek-Bentiu road project, with Sinohydro the main other company looking to operate.

Beijing is responding with humanitarian assistance while trying to manage relations with the government and navigate political transition. In November 2015, China announced a USD 5 million donation to the World Food Programme to assist with its efforts to address food insecurity in South Sudan. A key current issue in Juba-Beijing relations is finance and paying for peace, which reprises a core pre-December 2013 issue in a more challenging context. In November 2015, South Sudan’s information minister said that the SPLM-IO and government negotiators recommended mobilisation of funds from neighbouring countries, the UN, the Troika, China and the Arab League.<sup>181</sup> China now faces an acute dilemma of squaring bilateral interests concerning its own economic relations with South Sudan, and calls to support the broader fragile peace by investing for the wider, common good but for which, from Beijing’s perspective, there is little sense of a guaranteed return

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<sup>178</sup> IGAD reports and UNMISS reporting. See, for example, IGAD, Summary of Latest Reports of Violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement investigated and verified by the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in South Sudan’ (as of 9 September 2015).

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Chinese official, Juba, July 2015.

<sup>180</sup> In March 2015, for example, Western Bahr el Ghazal state signed a MoU with the China Road and Bridge Cooperation Company to reconstruct the Khor Hajar Bridge, 40 km of road and water systems. It is unclear how far this project has advanced.

<sup>181</sup> Sudan Tribune, ‘South Sudan appeals for funds to implement peace agreement’, 6 November 2015.

on any such investment in view of the current economic climate as well as myriad doubts that the peace agreement will actually last.

One of the most crucial aspects of China's role going forward is thus the nature of Beijing's support for establishing and rendering effective the institutions the peace deal is due to create. These include the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the main oversight body for implementation of the accord, which held its first meeting on 27 November without SPLA/M-IO representation. In this, China is one of multiple external partners, albeit with higher economic importance for South Sudan, and is heavily constrained by South Sudanese politics. Where it does have leverage, however, is in South Sudan's economy. The country is almost entirely dependent on oil, which accounts for some 71% of GDP. Even if production increases as a result of the August 2015 deal, and returns to a full export capacity of around 350 000 bpd, low international oil prices – which declined by 36% in 2015 - will undermine government income.

Overall, the absence of political stability and anything approaching policy predictability in the context of severe economic crisis signals the centrality of politics going forward. A complete, lasting peace in South Sudan is necessary for an improved legal and regulatory environment to be established. South Sudan's post-conflict priorities will feature security, infrastructure and agriculture, all areas where China's role could yet prove vital. The US and IMF have reportedly been considering a rescue package but – as with China's own protracted efforts to negotiate such an agreement – any such large-scale financial assistance is unlikely until there is a political stability that can last. Political uncertainty and on-going, expanding conflicts mean continuing doubts about the durability of the current peace deal.<sup>182</sup> The US Special Envoy summed up a widely held view in early December 2015 when he asserted: 'the signed agreement, for all the challenges of implementation, currently offers the best chance for peace in South Sudan'.<sup>183</sup> However, the agreement has failed to produce a meaningful reduction of violence. A lack of political will by both parties to advance the agreement has meant minimal progress towards establishing the Transitional Government of National Unity.

### Place within overall strategy

South Sudan has a curious status in China's overall strategy. An influential testing ground for oil companies in the latter half of the 1990s pre-dating China's 'go global' strategy, Sudan went on to assume an unusually prominent role in China's African relations prior to and after the 2008 Olympic Games. More recently, with South Sudan, there continue to be questions about the extent to which Beijing is engaged in promoting an overall strategy. Beijing's economic strategy was always clearly discernible. Its political engagement – starting with Darfur – was and continues to be ad hoc, reactive and experimental.

Some Chinese analysts see South Sudan as a 'testing ground for China's proactive diplomacy'.<sup>184</sup> Others argue 'China's more assertive approach to protecting its interests in

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<sup>182</sup> UNSC Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 20 August to 9 November 2015)', 23 November 2015 (S/2015/902).

<sup>183</sup> Testimony of Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations "Independent South Sudan: A Failure of Leadership" 10 December 2015.

<sup>184</sup> Shen Dingli, 'South Sudan is A Testing Ground for China's Proactive (Shaping) Diplomacy' (*nansudan shi zhongguo suzaoxing waijiao de shiyantian*), *Oriental Morning Post* 12 July 2012 (accessed at [http://epaper.dfdaily.com/dfzb/html/2011-07/12/content\\_504062.htm](http://epaper.dfdaily.com/dfzb/html/2011-07/12/content_504062.htm))

South Sudan will spread across the continent',<sup>185</sup> but such a teleological general argument is hard to apply in a generalised manner. While aspects might 'spread' or be selectively used in other, comparable scenarios, in effect, the ensemble of tactical responses China has been developing and deploying in South Sudan amounts to the strategy in the making: negotiating uncharted political waters, responding to security threats and changing calculus of risk, addressing external expectations of assuming greater responsibility, seeking to address reputational concerns, and moving into more active efforts to support conflict resolution.

The practical engagement in South Sudan continues to challenge China's higher order foreign policy principles: the gap between actual policy engagement on the ground and Beijing's established principles has been tested. Five issues are worth noting here. The first is the practical effort to reconcile China's evolution from oil market entry into Sudan twenty years ago to a position of established economic and associated political interests. Investment protection imperatives seen in South Sudan represent actually existing challenges for which China's traditional foreign policy principles provide little guidance in terms of practical means to address such comparatively new dilemmas. In South Sudan, however, China has demonstrably learned how to protect its oil investments and nationals despite the fighting and indeterminate actual leverage Beijing has with Juba. Given the wider evolution of China's economic and political trajectory in other African states, South Sudan may well represent a harbinger of further such challenges, albeit not all likely to occur in the context of violent conflict.

Second, and relatedly, Beijing is trying to balance foreign policy intentions with practical effects, a gap magnified by established interests for which the principle of non-interference is unable to adequately guide decision making on crisis response. South Sudan has been, notably, a case study in on-going debate in Chinese policy circles about how to respond in situations where non-interference might need to be rhetorically upheld, in order to seek to promote a continuity of China's known and popular identity, but does not provide actionable options about policy responses. Third, South Sudan is a salient case of Beijing's efforts to undertake a practical operationalization of China's 'international responsibility', understood as contributing to global security public goods. Besides offsetting accusations of a narrowly extractive role, or associations with arms supplies, what China has been attempting to do in South Sudan might be seen to represent an aspect of China's 'new type of big power relations' as enacted in Africa seen not simply in terms of its military projection but also efforts to support a political resolution of the conflict. Flowing from this, and finally, China's UNSC role continues to test its responses to the intractable conflict in South Sudan. In moving away from absolute opposition to sanctions on South Sudan, albeit reluctantly, China has departed from its previous antipathy on a selective case.

Rather than South Sudan in an overall Chinese strategy, there is a case for inverting this issue to ask how South Sudan might be contributing to an overall strategy in the making deriving from grounded, actual practical experiences. In other words, exploring the issue of bottom-up policy influences in contrast to the more standard top-down influence. The main areas of this— attempted exercise of influence (leverage); attempted mediation-like diplomacy; connected corporate-state investment projection efforts; military experience gained under UN auspices – have been importantly enabled by China's leadership but in

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<sup>185</sup> Alex Fielding, 'Could South Sudan Push Provide Blueprint for China's African Security Policy?', 24 June 2015 IPI Global Observatory at <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/06/south-sudan-china-africa/>

practice negotiated on the ground, which has most influenced the Chinese engagement. At the same time, the influence of a single, particular case should not be overstated and the broader strategic context factored in. In Africa, South Sudan has figured prominently in the FOCAC Cooperative Partnership on Peace and Security in Africa. While only announced in 2012, and very much in the process of development, the issues engaged and relationships mobilized over South Sudan – in the region, with the AU and regional – have all been conducive to the types of issues this initiative appeared to have been created to respond to.

In and beyond Africa, China's more activist engagement in South Sudan in certain respects operationalises its recent moves to enshrine a military strategy of 'active defense in the new situation' in the context of Xi Jinping-era goal of rejuvenating China. The most recent version of this doctrine in the military sphere, which has been confirmed by FOCAC 6 in terms of Africa policy, codifies a commitment to working with military relations with Africa (and other regions) and to China conducting 'military operations other than war'. Besides 'emergency rescue and disaster relief, counter-terrorism and stability maintenance', these include 'international peacekeeping'. In a global framework, such elements are presented and rationalised in terms of China doing its 'utmost to shoulder more international responsibilities and obligations, provide more public security goods, and contribute more to world peace and common development'.<sup>186</sup> In this respect, what China is undertaking in South Sudan fulfils a combination of bilateral political, economic and security interests, underpinned by concern with reputational enhancement, and interconnected with its regional and multilateral engagements. As well as being important for what, variously, China is doing in South Sudan, its importance extends into the international sphere as an active demonstration of China's official foreign policy.

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<sup>186</sup> China's Military Strategy (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, May 2015).

## Chapter 4: Towards a Maturing Relationship: Change, Resilience and Adaptation

“While the final objective remains unaltered, there are signs of change in how to achieve this”<sup>187</sup>.

When it comes to understanding Chinese engagements in Africa, both context and temporalities matter. While the influx of foreign capital across the continent has remained limited and largely concentrated in spatially segregated extractive enclaves, there is a common Western perception that the ‘useful bits’ have – for the most part – already been seized (Ferguson, 2006: 38-40). Following this view, Chinese economic ‘latecomers’ have been compelled to find or, rather to negotiate, a place among a competitive collection of other foreign players. Consequently, most Chinese activities have unfolded in less ‘attractive’ geographical areas or economic sectors. While trying to grasp missed opportunities on the continent (as well as create new ones), Chinese operators, both public and private, have (mostly) entered unknown host environments often perceived as risky or fragile. At the beginning, this scenario appeared to play in favour of Chinese actors enabling them to do business in places where Western countries would not or could not get involved (due to political or security factors). Nonetheless, following the gradual maturing of activities as well as the growing numbers of Chinese citizens in Africa, Chinese interests and people are also increasingly becoming ‘vulnerable’ and confronted with context-related challenges. As a result, the circumstances and procedures that initially appeared to have facilitated the Chinese arrival are not necessarily those that guarantee the continuation of operations (Dittgen, 2015).

If the Chinese involvement in Africa has, thus far, mostly been associated with business deals and trade exchanges, recent years have shown the limits of a purely economic approach. In light of these changes, this chapter first unpacks China’s subtle yet significant shifting perspectives and evolving foreign policy dynamics. The second part looks more specifically at the key components of Chinese engagements in each of the three case studies while drawing parallels and identifying potential areas of collaboration with Western players.

### Overall strategy and emergence of new trends

The FOCAC, held every three years since 2000, has become synonymous with grand pronouncements and, simultaneously, with raising high expectations from African leaders. Despite recent concerns about a slowing and transforming Chinese economy, the most recent FOCAC summit in Johannesburg (4-5 December 2015) has remained in line with the previous ones. One of the key announcements from the Chinese side came in form of a USD 60 billion package<sup>188</sup> geared towards supporting 10 priority development areas in Africa: industry, agriculture, infrastructure, financial services, green development, trade and investment facilitation, poverty reduction and public welfare, public health, people-to-

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with the Head of Political, Press and Information Section, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union (Addis Ababa, 22 October 2015).

<sup>188</sup> Although, presented by some media outlets as an aid package, out of the USD 60 billion, only USD 5 billion can be considered as official development assistance with USD 35 billion of export credits and concessional loans, as well as additional USD 5 billion in a credit line for SME finance (Brautigam, 2015). Furthermore, there is no timetable and it also remains unclear whether some of these projects have already been announced.

people exchanges, as well as peace and security (FOCAC, 2015). This is a reflection not only of deepening Sino-African ties, but also of China taking on a broader strategic role across Africa, going beyond economic linkages.

As already mentioned, recent security incidents in various parts of Africa have prompted China to become more assertive (and flexible), both through the protection of its investments and citizens, but also by getting more actively involved in broader peace and security issues. By extension, this raises questions about China's role in mitigating conflict and becoming more involved in the governance landscape in Africa, although that does not imply a focus on political and civic rights or democracy.

If, for a long period, China has been able to engage with all sorts of governments under the banner of 'non-interference' in domestic affairs, its foreign policy has gradually veered into a more "selective engagement in response to particular problems and external pressures" (Alden and Large, 2015: 125). Nonetheless, in "the absence of a post-conflict and fragile states policy", greater Chinese involvement across Africa "sits uneasily with Beijing's commitment to play a greater activist role in international affairs generally and in support of African interests in particular" (*ibid.*: 125).

"The Chinese government is trying to shift from non-interference to non-indifference"<sup>189</sup> through the instrument of multilateralism. At least on paper, the freshly published joint Johannesburg FOCAC declaration strongly resonates with the aforementioned quote. Drawing directly on the document (*Republic of South Africa, 2015*), most of the key points speaking to the themes of peace and security (11,12,13 and 25.4) are either coaxed in a multilateral setting or promote the idea of African ownership ("solve African problems through African solutions"). Both approaches are 'preventing' China from having to take a strong bilateral stance on these matters. Multilateralism as a focal point is both embodied in "the UN's core position and role in international affairs", but also across the continent through the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The AU's role is seen as critical "in conflict resolution, prevention and management, and commend[ing] the efforts of African countries", while both the AU and the RECs are seen as responsible "to independently resolve regional conflicts and maintain regional peace and stability". Additionally, the declaration also stresses "the significance of cooperation between the UN and the AU", which, from a Chinese perspective speaks to expectations of China playing a bigger role within the UNSC as well as an increased engagement with the AU after setting up a permanent mission in Addis Ababa. Furthermore, all involved parties (50 African countries, China as well as the AU) agreed to implement the 'Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security' and "support the building of the collective security mechanism in Africa". Apart from a strong focus on conflict resolution, peace and security, as well as joining forces to fight terrorism, China is also involved in "manag[ing] non-traditional security issues [(Anthony *et al.*, 2015)] and global challenges such as, but not limited to, food security, energy security, cyber security, climate change, biodiversity conservation, major communicable diseases and transnational crimes" (*Republic of South Africa, 2015*).

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<sup>189</sup> This comment was made by the former President of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), incidentally also the brother of the current Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi during a meeting with representatives from SAIIA (Johannesburg, 13 October 2015). Earlier at a China-Africa Think Tank meeting in Beijing in October 2013, Xu Weizhong from the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations noted that as more Chinese workers were present in unstable places in Africa, there was both a need and a growing discussion about the principle of non-interference.

The FOCAC summit also coincided with the release by the Chinese government of the second White Paper on Africa, following the first one published in 2006. Besides the strong focus on industrialisation, a term not found in the 2006 version, the updated policy paper also shows how the security dimension has evolved into a significant component of the China-Africa cooperation. As the following extract illustrates, China has not only adopted a more active role in advocating peace and security, but also in providing judicial assistance:

## **6. Promoting peace and security in Africa**

### *(1) Supporting Africa in realizing peace and security*

China supports African countries' efforts in independently resolving their continent's issues in their own way. Based on the principles of respecting the wills of African countries, not interfering in African countries' internal affairs and observing the basic norms governing international relations, China will play a constructive role in maintaining and promoting peace and security in Africa. It will explore means and ways with Chinese characteristics to constructively participate in resolving hot-button issues in Africa and exert a unique impact on and make greater contributions to African peace and security. The Special Representative of the Chinese government on African Affairs will continue to play a contributing part.

China will strengthen dialogue and consultation with African countries and regional organizations on peace and security issues, pursue the principle of securing peace through development and promoting development with peace, and implement the consensus on achieving common, cooperative, comprehensive and sustainable security. It will support the efforts by African countries, the AU and sub-regional organizations to build capabilities in safeguarding peace and stability in Africa, and other relevant efforts. It will implement the Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security and continue to provide, within its capabilities, support to Africa for its development of collective security mechanisms such as the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises.

China will uphold justice and safeguard the common interests of Africa and developing countries in multilateral organizations such as the UN. China attaches great importance to and supports the UN's important role in safeguarding peace and stability in Africa, and will continue to support and expand its participation in the UN's efforts in Africa aimed at maintaining and building peace.

### *(2) Deepening military cooperation*

China will further strengthen military exchanges and cooperation with African countries. It will deepen military-related technological cooperation and carry out joint military training and exercises. China will scale up training of African military personnel according to the needs of the African side, and innovate on the training methods. It will continue to help African countries enhance their capacity building in national defense and peacekeeping to safeguard their own security and regional peace.

### *(3) Supporting Africa in confronting non-traditional security threats*

China will strengthen cooperation with Africa in intelligence sharing and capacity building, and improve capabilities to confront non-traditional security threats together with African countries. It will support the international community's efforts to crack down on piracy, continue to send naval vessels to participate in the missions for maintaining navigation safety in the Gulf of Aden and in waters off the coast of Somalia, and assist African countries in ensuring navigation safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

China will support the efforts of African countries and regional organizations in improving counter-terrorism capabilities and fighting terrorism, and help African countries develop their economy and root out the causes of terrorism, with the aim to safeguard regional security and stability and promote long-term peace and sustainable development in Africa. It will strengthen counter-terrorism exchanges and cooperation with the AU and priority countries in the region.

## 7. Strengthening exchanges and cooperation in consular, immigration, judicial and police areas

China will support institutional arrangements for the facilitation of personnel exchanges with Africa and guarantee the expansion of friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation and orderly personnel exchanges between the two sides.

China will work with African countries to establish more consular organizations in each other's territory in a planned manner. It will strengthen consular consultation with African countries for both sides to have amicable discussions on urgent problems or issues of common interest in bilateral or multilateral consular relations. China stands for closer exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and African immigration departments to fight illegal immigration, supporting African countries to strengthen capacity building in enforcement of immigration-related laws.

China stands ready to promote exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and African judicial and police departments and the two sides may learn from each other in legal system development and judicial reform. It will support the efforts of Africa to strengthen capacity building in riot control, maintenance of stability and law enforcement. It stands for concrete and effective measures by both sides to protect the safety, rights and interests of personnel and organizations from the other side on their own soil.

China will work with African countries to enhance cooperation in judicial assistance and extradition and repatriation of criminal suspects. They will expand cooperation in signing judicial assistance treaties, cracking down on crimes, and pursuing fugitives and recovering criminal proceeds. They will work in concert to crack down on cross-border crimes and ensure the order of and the just and legal rights involved in trade and economic and personnel exchanges. It calls for the two sides to increase communication and cooperation in the areas of jail management, community correction, drug rehabilitation and transfer of convicted persons.

(Source: *China's second Africa policy paper*, 2015)

A critical reading of this policy paper underscores the centrality of bolstering the African state in China's approach to national and transnational security challenges in the region. Where rights are identified, they are associated directly with the expansion and defence of African states' rights in the context of pluralising representation of global institutions and in terms of robust support for the non-interference principles (see 6.1). The only exception is China's assertion of the rights of national citizens to be protected in their respective host countries, including measures for improvement of judicial and criminal treatment of these citizens as well as setting the terms for extradition (see 7).

Secondly, China's support for training, deepening military exchanges, provisions for peacekeeping and domestic riot control emphasises **how the Chinese government is determined to enable African states to better manage the twin problems of externally and internally generated instability**. The AU, the RECs and UN multilateral operations, and in particular the AU's standby force and its Crisis Response initiative, all are to be recipients of Chinese backing. Naval support for anti-piracy activities will continue to develop in line with other powers in the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Guinea as will efforts to combat terrorism (6.2 and 6.3).

Thirdly, expanded consular services and greater cooperation on immigration are indicative of sources of concern for the China-Africa relationship especially but not exclusively from the African side (see 7). Beijing's explicitly phrased *wish* to move into a role of providing support for capacity building at an institutional level, whether in terms of legal structures or training programmes, is a notable shift from its previous stance of strict non-involvement in this area. This acknowledgement of deeper exposure of its citizens and

their commercial interests across the continent – and outside of the capital cities – to risks as well as (reading between the lines) even their occasional participation in criminal activities seems to be behind these measures.

Assessing what the FOCAC declaration says on peace and security is only part of its significance. What is especially notable is what the declaration doesn't say, particularly when one considers that African governments and China are signatories to the UN Convention on Responsibility to Protect and that its core principles are reflected in Article 4 of the AU's Constitutive Act. While the FOCAC declaration is at pains to demonstrate fidelity to the aims of the AU, in fact it seems to avoid altogether these key and distinctive features of the AU's position on peace and security, namely 'non-indifference' and the right to intervene in explicitly defined cases of 'ethnically cleansing and genocide'. This deliberate departure from the African position suggests the stark boundaries of Chinese interests in African security, namely stabilising states, preserving economic interests and upholding its citizens' rights. (However, it is also true to say that African states themselves have been very reticent about implementation of the tenets of the AU's Constitutive Act relating to non-indifference.)

Far from being limited to the FOCAC process, these gradualist policy shifts also feed into wider continental and global foreign policy initiatives driven by China. This includes the leasing of a military logistics base in Djibouti formally announced in early December 2015, the first such arrangement for China on the continent. Already host to first French and then US military forces, Djibouti offers the Chinese a secure site to base their naval task force as well as a springboard for intervention aimed (presumably) at missions such as expediting the evacuation of Chinese citizens or perhaps conducting special operations to rescue Chinese held hostage. (If the rumours are true, the Marange Diamond fields may also be the site of an airbase, linked to the airstrip that was built a few years ago.)

At the global level, there is the integration of the China-Africa agenda into President Xi Jinping's 'one belt-one road' initiative launched in October 2013. During an address at the Indonesian parliament, the Chinese president outlined his vision of a Silk Road Economic Belt – running overland from China to Eastern Europe – and a complementary Maritime Silk Road that stretches from Southeast China across the Indian Ocean to Dar es Salaam and onward around the Horn of Africa to the Mediterranean. While this vision remains under development, the engagement is intended as a multi-prong diplomatic, economic and strategic initiative - as well as one that encourages closer cross-cultural contact – that will intensify China's relations with Africa. In this context, the necessity of building on the FOCAC security provisions seems inevitable, with the expansion of the Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean region through its active infrastructure and financial diplomacy under-written by the Silk Road Fund as a key component. While setbacks such as the sudden shutting down of Chinese port building and (apparently) basing programmes in Sri Lanka by newly elected officials will occasionally feature, the strategic development drivers of reaching eastward, coupled to China's deep financial pockets, will surely mean that Beijing will persist in realising its aims.

### **Key Findings and Potential Synergies with the West**

These broader policy shifts, targeted at the entire continent, raise questions about the actual translation of this overall strategy into specific contexts in Africa. Given the diverse spectrum of the polity between Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan, the next section

looks at the level of influence Chinese stakeholders have in all three examples. While there is a broadening and deepening of political relationships in each of the three case studies, it is nonetheless necessary to disentangle different strands of flexibility and contextualise predominant dynamics. While looking at the key areas of Chinese involvement, this section also discusses possible linkages and areas of collaboration with Western stakeholders.

### South Sudan: From peace and security to achieving stability

China once styled itself as different with respect to most Western approaches, non-interference being the obvious and key popular point of differentiation. In turn, it was seen as a genuine alternative by Khartoum and Juba. China remains formally different in so far as outward policy approaches and commitments are concerned.

Today, and going forward, a more interesting and significant debate is not the question of difference in Chinese or Western approaches as the issue of whether there is a functional convergence of approaches based on similar or shared interests, already existing and emerging complementarities. In South Sudan, this emerges from Beijing's initial weakness and vulnerability arising from political circumstances and past history of support for Khartoum, rendering it unusually in need of cultivating broad relationships including informal ones with international partners. Since then, it has moved beyond narrow bilateralism, out of need and expediency, **to engage working partnerships, such as with the IGAD process.**

The functional convergence of interests and approaches with the West can be seen in a number of areas. First, China's support – or lack of active opposition to – sanctions against South Sudanese belligerents in 2015 is telling. China had consistently blocked efforts to sanction Khartoum over Darfur. Beijing's recent engagement thus marks a departure born, essentially, of having no other policy options and the lack of applicable precedents from the past. It also faces a more exposed, prominent political role in Africa with raised expectations about what Beijing should do, with perhaps the most influential factor being the role of the AU and IGAD states that China can take its policy lead from. Second, China's stress on the need for stability within South Sudan is a fundamental position shared with many partners, amidst wide concern at the prospects for further regional destabilisation in a region already facing conflict, notably in Somalia. Third, the Chinese engagement has to all intents and purposes arrived at a point where most of its plans can only be meaningfully advanced after a peace agreement that meaningfully works and lasts, and a more effective state. Simply put, extreme dysfunctional governance is the central problem. Fourth, a shared area is recognition of the ultimate primacy of a politically negotiated solution, amidst acknowledgement that this is easier said than achieved. Finally, **there is shared recognition and support for the role of the AU, regional organisations like IGAD and such leading states as Ethiopia in responding to South Sudan, as well as engaging other important international partners including the US.**

Ten years after the CPA, today China is more actively involved in a spectrum of peace and security engagements. This opens up possibilities for further potential forms of cooperation with external partners. Beyond this, China's support for and role in future peacebuilding is hypothetically of central importance to South Sudan's economic development prospects. However, this – and the roles of other external actors – all boils down to what happens to the current formal peace deal. Only a deal that works and lasts can allow for the currently

emergency mobilisation to evolve into anything close to a post-conflict engagement. While South Sudan as a whole has not been engulfed in violent conflict, it has spread significantly. With this has come a further challenge of undertaking mixed responses that can cater for ostensibly ‘developmental’ needs, in Eastern and Western Equatoria states for example, and emergency humanitarian needs in Unity, Upper Nile and adjacent states.

An overarching evolution in China’s engagement with South Sudan might be conducive to opening up further opportunities for partnerships with other external actors. While this remains founded in economic interests, the days when Sudan – and South Sudan – genuinely could be considered strategic providers of oil for Chinese companies and China are over. Instead, **China’s political role has come to the forefront (in certain respects, this is indicative of a wider trend in China-Africa relations)**. Interruptions in oil production due to fighting, low international oil prices for those blocks in Upper Nile still producing low grade Nile blend oil, and generally bleak prospects for the foreseeable future render the oil outlook for CNPC and other companies not particularly positive. While China has recently reaffirmed support to its Sudan oil operations, in an update to its strategic partnership, its outlook on South Sudan has been less optimistic. In this context, and because of the ways in which oil became so politicised and entangled in difficult Juba-Khartoum-Beijing relations necessitating a more engaged role by Chinese government actors and CPC leaders, the trend by which China has been seeking to look for alternative ways to engage the government and other opposition groups in South Sudan is likely to continue.

China previously operated in a closed manner, privileging close Khartoum relations. In South Sudan, because of the politics of its partisan support to Khartoum during the war that ended with the CPA, it operated from a position of vulnerability, despite the pragmatism shared between Beijing and Juba, and efforts to forge close relations. As such, it necessarily had to be more open – albeit in practice mostly in private, informal ways – in relations with other international agencies and donors. Conflict since December 2013 has been a game changer in so far as China’s diplomatic playbook has become more diverse, innovative and open, underscoring its interest in pursuing alternative policy means to engage South Sudan.

The prospects for mobilising synergies with regional and international engagements are presently well placed, at least in principle. China’s core priority for South Sudan – a return to peace and resumption of oil exports – is the shared basis for most external engagements, as well as for many in South Sudan who desperately want a resolution to the civil war. **In practice, the scenarios for engagement possibilities with China all hinge on the politics of South Sudan’s formal peace agreement and whether or not it works and lasts.** There appear to be potential openings for exploring cooperation with China brought about by the recent departures into forms of policy engagement that support human security objectives, and reflect the reorientation of Chinese engagement to include more obvious, public efforts to engage questions of the human impact of conflict, not merely continue elite-based relations.

Going forward, the medium-long term scenario is more complicated when the issue of South Sudan’s post-oil future is raised. Oil revenues have been essential to managing, with varying degrees of success, disputes within and between South Sudan and Sudan but: ‘As the oil runs out, these will no longer be available as a temporary fix. Only the disputes will remain’ (James, 2015: 54). Nonetheless, since China’s engagement has gone well beyond

its previous narrow emphasis on oil, the prospects for international cooperation with China could develop more favourably precisely because of the prospective decline in the importance of oil for China and increasing interest in other forms of engagement. **The scope for cooperation in Juba is real on an ad hoc basis.**

China's official foreign policy rhetoric remains distinctive among South Sudan's external partners, even if adherence to strict non-interference has been stretched by policy departures. **However, in the face of the conflict, China has in practice been converging with the policy perspectives of other external actors in so far as its practical ways of engaging South Sudan are concerned.** Everything, going forward, depends on the issue of whether or not the current peace agreement works. Until this happens, China will continue its pared down, selective engagement focused on political party connections, aid, peacekeeping, select infrastructure projects, as well as a small community of entrepreneurs. Any substantial disbursement of funding, and a scaled up Chinese role in South Sudan, will only take place once real peace is achieved.

South Sudan is frequently cited as an example of an African proxy caught up in a US-China geo-political conflict. While overstating the importance of oil, neglecting the nature and extent of US-China cooperation on South Sudan, as well as the basic compatibility of interests (peace and stability), this is problematic because it under-states the challenges within South Sudan itself. Often viewed as the object of intervention, South Sudan remains a militarised rentier state experiencing on-going conflict and a precarious formal peace. Nonetheless, even from a vulnerable, weak position, **the country is able to mobilise and exploit external resources for its own political designs, circumventing external adversity or domestic turbulence in the process.**

China's role in South Sudan is highly constrained, in part due to the patronage system China indirectly helped establish through its role in oil. In this, CNPC is by far the most important company due to its assets, operating role, connections to the Chinese government and prominence in Chinese foreign policy. However, CNPC - like the Chinese embassy and central state ministries in Beijing - has little if any apparent direct influence on South Sudan's decision-making. The role of Chinese government diplomacy is also highly constrained. Furthermore, the SPLA/M is well practised in balancing multiple external partners and using one against the other.

### **Zimbabwe: Towards a timid broadening of political partnerships**

Given the strong historical foundation and despite changing national contexts as well as evolving international relations, ties between China and Zimbabwe have remained relatively intact. China's economic growth and more active role in international affairs has played a particular part, prompting its increased engagement in strategically important regions. Zimbabwe's reaching out to China has nonetheless mostly resulted from its sinking economy and problematic relations with Western countries.

At the same time, there are far more complexities in the detail of such links, than the mere characterisation of China's engagement in a resource-rich Africa state. In fact, there remains uncertainty when it comes to the direction of future relations.

First, there are questions surrounding the ZANU-PF's succession plan (which appears to frustrate even allies like China). This is further exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding

the elections in 2018.<sup>190</sup> Apart from the rivalry between the aforementioned Zanu-PF candidates, there is the possibility, although unlikely at this stage, of a rising opposition led by Tsvangirai, or even the alliance between the opposition and expelled ruling party members such as Joice Mujuru.<sup>191</sup> However, the greatest threat probably lies within ZANU-PF itself and the extent to which the fragmentation being witnessed now can be managed or not. In this regard, how the military, intelligence and the police engage on the succession will be a key determinant in the transition.<sup>192</sup>

The resulting political and economic uncertainty has also put China in a predicament regarding the predictability and security of its various engagements in Zimbabwe. Previous African tours by high-level Chinese officials such as Hu Jintao, Li Keqiang (2014) did not include visits to Zimbabwe (Edinger and Burke, 2008: 26). The first visit since 1996 by a Chinese leader was undertaken by President Xi in December 2015. The 10 agreements signed during his visit – ranging from energy<sup>193</sup> to aviation and telecommunications – are seen as crucial to help reboot Zimbabwe’s struggling economy (*The Guardian*, 2015). However, China will also not throw ‘good money after bad’, if there is a concern that security of investments cannot be guaranteed. This hesitation is closely related to the fact that Chinese actors want guarantees that their investments are safe in an eventual change of leadership (*Daily News*, 2015). The MDC party opposition regarded the state visit as “a public relations exercise [without] bringing any meaningful and tangible benefits to the tottering economy of Zimbabwe” (*ibid.*: 2015).

Moreover, Zimbabweans are aware that Chinese investments into neighbouring Zambia are larger in scale and provide far more domestic benefits (even though the very same projects could easily be implemented in Zimbabwe).<sup>194</sup> For an internationally isolated country like Zimbabwe, this observation is a reminder that China manoeuvres a large number of relationships on the continent, each one according to specific interests. Similarly, changes within China’s policy and economic environment could likely impact the nature of relations. For example, during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China was criticised for its tolerance for human rights violations in a number of developing countries; and in turn, China has placed emphasis on its global reputation and has thus paid closer attention to Zimbabwe’s domestic developments (Alao, 2014: 16).

However, China’s ability to influence the trajectory of political developments in Zimbabwe, especially within ZANU-PF, is limited, and hindered by the jockeying for position among the various heirs presumptive within the ruling party.

Zimbabwe’s future relations with China, while crucial, might also be influenced by the extent of involvement by other foreign players, ranging from the European Union to the possible scope of collaboration with the BRICS (Brazil, India, Russia, China and South

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<sup>190</sup> Zimbabwean journalist’s view following a meeting with the former Chinese ambassador, personal interview (Harare, 20 October 2015).

<sup>191</sup> More recently in March 2016 Mujuru launched the Zimbabwe People First party, as a direct challenge to the ruling party.

<sup>192</sup> Secretary general of the PTUZ (Harare, 19 October 2015).

<sup>193</sup> The most notable one of these announced deals is the one signed with Sinohydro Group worth USD 1.5 billion (*eNCA*, 2015) aimed at adding two-generation units at the Hwange coal-fired power plant to generate 600 MW in light of the country’s substantial electricity shortages (*Reuters*, 2014). Following a more thorough Internet research, it seems though as if this very same project was already announced in October 2014, questioning the novelty of some of these planned investments.

<sup>194</sup> Economist, personal interview (Harare, 20 October 2015).

Africa) countries. South Africa, already a relatively robust player and neighbour, recognises that the region's future is inextricably linked and has thus never divested from Zimbabwe. While Pretoria is supporting the country in multilateral and diplomatic dialogue, South African firms are involved in infrastructure, water and road projects.<sup>195</sup> Brazil is recognised to be playing a noteworthy role in the agricultural sector (such as through the donation of equipment) and India holds a niche position in pharmaceuticals and medical expertise as well as equipment. While Russia-Zimbabwe ties were lukewarm following independence, Russia has in more recent years not only provided support at the multilateral level but is also involved in a platinum mining project. As reflected by Mugabe's discussions with Putin during his visit to Moscow in May 2015, Zimbabwe appears to be seeking further possible investments from Russia (Gagare, 2015; *News24*, 2015). Yet similar to the concerns voiced about China's role in humanitarian aid and assistance, the BRICS countries are seen as lacking experience in assisting countries such as Zimbabwe. More specifically, the opposition emphasises the need for monitoring mechanisms to ensure that financial and hardware assistance is used in a non-partisan manner and that the impacts of investments on environmental degradation or on the community are duly assessed.<sup>196</sup> On this aspect, the experience of more established, third-party players is a potential area of collaboration with emerging state and non-state actors.

### **Ethiopia: A blueprint for learning and regional politics**

In a more visible manner than in South Sudan and Zimbabwe, Chinese political engagements in Ethiopia appear to be divided between approval and praise at the national level, as well as broader motivations at the scale of the continent.

Often, both Chinese and Ethiopian officials proudly not only refer to the longevity of their own history (5 000 and more than 2 000 years respectively), but also speak about the importance and ownership of their state-led developmental path. Since Xi Jinping's coming to power, domestic politics in China have been dominated by the 'four comprehensives' political theory (Ng and Zuo, 2015). Less vague than the 'Chinese dream' concept, the 'four comprehensives' encompass '(re)building a modern and prosperous society in all respects by 2020', 'strengthen the rule of law and improve the party's conduct', 'enforce party discipline' and 'strengthen reforms' with the last three being seen as strategic steps.<sup>197</sup>

Despite strong party-to-party links between the EPRDF and the CPC, it is very difficult to assess if and how much of these domestic Chinese guidelines are spilling over into an Ethiopian context. As already outlined in the course of this report, the Chinese influence in the fields of governance and politics in Ethiopia appears to be quite constrained due to the nature of Ethiopian statecraft and the strong vertical and horizontal control practised by the ruling party. Nonetheless, EPRDF's developmental rhetoric about enforcing strong limitations on personalised rent-seeking, clamping down on corruption and accelerating economic reforms, resonates very strongly with the concept of the 'four comprehensives'. This being said, China's power of persuasion is mostly limited to being perceived as an

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<sup>195</sup> South African Embassy, personal interview (Harare, 19 October 2015).

<sup>196</sup> MDC-T representative, personal interview (Harare, 20 October 2015); former programme manager of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, personal interview (Harare, 21 October 2015).

<sup>197</sup> One of the authors attended a lecture by a Professor from the Party School of the Central Committee of CPC talking about 'China's national and intra-Party conditions as well as the 'Four principles strategy blueprint' (Seminar tour, Beijing, 22 July 2015).

example of economic success, while, politically, Ethiopia is much more drawn to emulate experiences from South Korea or Japan.<sup>198</sup> For Western partners, the importance is to assess when this eventual turning point, evolving from a purely developmental approach to a broadening of the political discourse, might happen. Until then, maintaining a stable and effective government in place seems to form the basis of a tacit agreement between Western and Chinese stakeholders.

If complementarities between the ‘West’ and China in Ethiopia seem circumscribed to contributing to development priorities, the importance of the regional focus provides numerous avenues for dialogue and collaboration. The most obvious one comes in the form of China’s intensified interest in engaging the African Union alongside other Western powers. In the field of peace and security, where China is also becoming more active, it is fairly easy to provide practical inputs as the framework is already firmly entrenched. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which provides a complete overview – from prevention, management to post-conflict reconstruction and development – allows development partners to engage with selective areas. However, while the AU holds ownership at the strategic level, most of the financial support is still coming from the outside. According to the Director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) in Addis Ababa, “donors have a lot to say and are able to influence the decision-making process”.<sup>199</sup> If this setting allows Beijing to remain in the background, the European Union tries to increase China’s involvement for the following reason: “If they (the Chinese) say something, it is different than if it comes from the EU [even when opinions align]... Within a broader African context, their voice has a different connotation and is accepted more easily”.<sup>200</sup> As a newcomer in this position, China is willing to be guided and learn from its more established counterparts. At present, Beijing is more comfortable in supporting peacekeeping missions than getting too involved in conflict prevention and mediation. Yet, Beijing’s reaction to recent terrorist attacks (also directly affecting Chinese citizens) as well as the confirmation of setting up a logistics hub for military operations in Djibouti (*Mail and Guardian*, 2015b), not only signals a broader active role played by China but also provides possibilities to collaborate with Western countries, both at AU level and throughout the Horn of Africa.

## Conclusion

China’s evolving position as a key economic actor in Africa, a diplomatic force in local conflicts and a new entrant into peacekeeping, security cooperation and capacity building, demonstrate the significant policy changes with potentially profound implications for the continent. Unencumbered by Western normative agendas and a concomitant need to reconcile these with its commercial interests, the Chinese government and its enterprises have been able to pursue a mercantilist agenda that seemingly only required local elite compliance to succeed. In fact, the early blush of such successes in places like Sudan quickly devolved into circumstances of great complexity and even threat to the commercial viability of investments, the lives of Chinese citizens and the international reputation of China itself.

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<sup>198</sup> This was mentioned by several Ethiopian experts during a series of interviews (Addis Ababa, 20-26 October 2015).

<sup>199</sup> Personal Interview (Addis Ababa, 26 October 2015).

<sup>200</sup> Interview with the Head of Political, Press and Information Section, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union (Addis Ababa, 22 October 2015).

Against this increasingly volatile backdrop, the pressure on China to devise an approach that mitigates these challenges without unnecessarily exposing the country to greater risks in the process became a formidable policy imperative. Through a combination of embracing multilateralism (where Beijing's privileged position as a member of the P5 assures its interests are retained) coupled to cautious expansion of its involvement in cooperation and capacity building of African regional initiatives, Beijing hopes to have devised a winning strategy for the future.

What the Chinese have come to accept is that achieving success in certain sectors – especially security – in Africa requires building collaborative partnerships with both Africans and foreign governments. With a new openness towards activities once prohibited, specifically capacity and institution building, we believe that there are opportunities at the multilateral level and on a project-by-project basis at the bilateral level for joint cooperation between China and the Swiss government. Aligning Swiss interests in particular cooperative initiatives with established African positions on governance and those enunciated in the SDGs is the most promising strategy for bringing China on board in a manner that will foster values-based collaboration.

Furthermore, China also seeks to integrate into the global economy and polity while emphasising its role of a 'responsible' power couched in China's narrative of a peaceful rise. In Africa, the terrain appears to be much more complex and lacks the rule-bound environment of more developed states. As a result, China is forced to pragmatically engage with specific contexts and is also learning while doing. This opens up a space for a broader conversation with other external partners of the continent (both at a national and multilateral level) to explore avenues for engagement. However, the most pronounced difference of the 'European' or 'Western' approach is the primacy of the bilateral relationship which creates a space for engagement outside a predetermined and often 'Western consensus'. Swiss 'independence' in the European context, at least nominally, also creates a space for useful engagement.

### **Recommendations: "Crossing the river by feeling the stones"**

Drawing both on the broader trends and, more specifically, on all three case studies, the following section outlines areas in which Western and Chinese stakeholders could collaborate more closely. Specifically, we propose two sets of initiatives: working with the AU, and with China.

#### ***Working with the African Union:***

- *Enhance Capacity of AUC to Encourage Chinese Compliance with Donor Reporting Practices.* Work with the African Union Commission to support its efforts to encourage China to comply with AU-donor reporting practices (as is already the case with many of its Strategic Partners). This would strengthen monitoring and assessment of Chinese assistance to Africa and facilitate best practice in line with achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 16. As a key priority for the AU Commission, there is a strong foundation for mutual collaboration.
- *Promote Peer Learning Through African Exposure to Swiss and European Experience of Negotiating with China.* African countries in general also need to be able to bargain and negotiate with China in a way that ensures they get the best deal from agreements. Thus, sharing European experiences in negotiating with China

may be of particular interest. This could include the development of training sessions with experienced Swiss and European diplomats in the trade, investment and security sectors.

- *Provide Support for Africa's Regional and Sub-regional Organisations.* Due to a range of conflicting interests at country-level between Western and Chinese stakeholders, making it sometimes challenging to effectively collaborate on governance, it appears to be more fruitful to give preference to exchanges within regional platforms (such as the AU but also Regional Economic Communities). If grants are affected at a regional level, it could improve accountability and a higher capacity to deliver to citizens without threatening the sovereignty of particular nation-states.

### ***Working with China:***

As the paper shows, China's approach especially to South Sudan and Zimbabwe, which have both gone through tumultuous political and economic times has changed over time from focusing on non-interference in internal affairs (dealing only with the respective government/ruling party) to recognising that dysfunctional governance and factionalism within the ruling elites threatens their own political and economic investments in those countries. China nevertheless proceeds very carefully on these matters, as illustrated by the Chinese adage "Crossing the river by feeling the stones". Non-interference is still an underlying principle of its international relations and one that is still being debated inside China in the face of the challenges that the country is exposed to in fragile environments.

While China is unlikely to abandon non-interference, both South Sudan and Zimbabwe show that it is willing to engage behind-the-scenes (or even more publicly) to protect its interests and ensure stability. In this regard, therefore, western countries like Switzerland with established credentials (and shorn of the colonial baggage that other countries have) may pursue regular political coordination with China in fragile environments, working to amplify and empower regional diplomatic initiatives. Good government (as opposed to 'governance') is accepted by China as an essential dimension in countries in which it operates.

Other areas deserving exploration include:

- *Explore trilateral cooperation in the security and capacity building terrain.* While China's security engagement under FOCAC has advanced, an overlooked aspect – one, however, that remains hostage to political fortune because of the current climate in Xi Jinping's China – is continuing openness within part of China's policy establishment concerning trilateral cooperation with Africa. This includes security. With strategic African support, and depending on what African interest there might be, Switzerland could be well positioned to mount an authoritative trilateral initiative organised around human security and linked to Agenda 2063 and UN 2030 objectives. (This is especially so as Switzerland is more trusted than other European countries.) Human security might be explored in relation to AU standards and such concepts as 'sustainable security' mooted by Xi Jinping. Historically, the rule of thumb for China is usually that any trilateral initiatives must be proposed by Africa, Africa-agreed, and Africa-led; but if China can see that there is clear value in such an initiative it could build a compelling case.
  - One such example could be collaboration on anti-corruption, where

Switzerland has much to contribute, and which has been a domestic priority for President Xi. This could include capacity building of officials in key institutions, but including the sub-national level as well.

- Within IGAD, with which Switzerland has an MoU, and with which China has worked on South Sudan issues, could be another area of trilateral cooperation on peace and security issues, including broader Horn challenges such as combating violent extremism.
- Effective governance through devolution of authority could also be a useful trilateral initiative, given that both Switzerland and China (with varying success) have experience with the role that subnational bodies can play in economics and development, from food security to health – both areas in which Switzerland and China have engaged on the continent.

Given the nature of state affairs in **Ethiopia**, dominated by a highly centralised authority and developmentalism, it appears to be equally difficult for Chinese and other foreign players to sway domestic politics and the governance space. Consequently, most influence plays out indirectly:

- In light of Ethiopia's continuous efforts to develop and overcome numerous challenges, at this stage, it seems useful for all development partners (both China and European countries) to favour a pragmatic approach by investing into the economy. Once the country has reached a certain level of development, it might be easier (for Western countries) to effectively impact the political landscape in the long run. At present, the Ethiopian government's approach towards seeking the most efficient forms of development – *i.e.* the establishment of enabling hard infrastructure, less so of soft infrastructure – creates an important avenue for engagement. Exposure both to the Chinese and Swiss way of managing major engineering projects, and in particular Ethiopia's pursuit of green energy (which also matches China's increasing emphasis on green energy), creates an important avenue to transmit certain values around governance, community engagement, public private partnerships. This is an area for mutual learning between Swiss and Chinese experiences which could be beneficial for all three partners and essentially supports mutually beneficial trilateral cooperation. Importantly, China's anti-corruption stance under Xi creates a fruitful space for engagement and a governance debate. This can also connect to the Africa-wide and AU-led campaign against illicit financial flows.
- The recent setting up of the Chinese Permanent Mission in Addis Ababa provides possibilities for Europeans as well as the US to regularly engage with their Chinese counterparts. Indirectly, this could also lead to closer collaboration in areas such as mediation or peace and security training.

**Zimbabwe**'s unknown succession plan and the relative opaqueness of political relations with China, makes it a complex environment to engage in (even in areas where there could be external collaboration with China). In addition, the close connection of some Chinese companies to the military establishment's business ventures implies the need for careful interrogation of what sort of cooperation would be appropriate at this particular juncture for Zimbabwe.

- As a political succession that is navigated smoothly is in the interests of all in Zimbabwe, Switzerland (and other Europeans) should set up regular channels of

communication with China to exchange notes and ideas in this regard. This should also include South Africa and SADC. Some civil society actors within Zimbabwe (with historically close links to ZANU) are floating the idea of an offer of safe passage for Mugabe, his family and close associates, as a way of ending the ongoing succession debate and moving the country to the next phase of transition. China can be an important actor in such a process, the objective of which is to manage and contain the possibility of escalation into internecine ZANU-PF conflict. This should not be seen as an agenda of 'regime change' but of working with internal actors to ensure there is no imminent implosion of the ruling ZANU, which could be detrimental to the whole society.

- As the opposition (MDC) is reaching out to neighbouring and global partners (including China), it may be useful to exchange more closely with such party members.

**South Sudan's** uncertain but bleak prospects for the current so-called peace deal conditions all engagement possibilities. Recommendations for action are extremely hard to make in isolation from current or prospective Swiss engagement, the areas where China's evolving relationship might be open to trilateral cooperation, and the changing nature of international policy planning more generally.

The South Sudan draft Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 (of 27 November 2015) presents the massive scale of challenges and defines two strategic objectives for the next year: first, 'Save lives and alleviate suffering through safe access to services and resources with dignity', and second: to 'Ensure communities are protected, capable and prepared to cope with significant threats'. This underscores the centrality of humanitarian responses, and the challenges facing any attempted more 'developmental' engagement; South Sudan is not a 'post-conflict' state.

However, some key prospective and general areas might, provisionally, include the following:

- Explore options for financing the peace agreement, in which China's role could be pivotal. In this, the US, World Bank and IMF will also play a role but China's economic importance renders it key. The August agreement has provisions for resource management (Chapter IV 'Resource, Economic and Financial Management Arrangements') but its power sharing provisions are, importantly, not complemented by detail on oil revenue sharing. While this is full of dilemmas about rewarding conflict perpetrators, most analysts point to such an economic dividend as most likely to render the peace agreement viable.
- Assess the prospects for addressing the human impact of conflict in the oilfields, if fighting ceases, in conjunction with the government, CNPC and other oil companies. This could resurrect and try, in new circumstances, to advance the more progressive elements of oil legislation made before December 2013, including compensation for forced displacement.
- Support reconciliation, accountability and local conflict resolution, not only in those areas affected most by the fighting in the past two years but in other states experiencing current or at risk of new conflict.
- One justly well-known area of past Swiss engagement in Southern Sudan was the House of Nationalities project, which aimed, from 2000, at exploring options for future governance in Sudan based on ethnic diversity. Given the current levels of

inter-communal fighting and fracturing of relations among communities at local level across the country, and notwithstanding recent projects along similar lines (such as Swiss support to the Rift Valley Leadership on a project with traditional chiefs from 4 states to promote peacebuilding), this is an important area of known Swiss comparative advantage. It could provide the basis for various much needed initiatives that China (including oil companies) might become interested in due to their desire to understand conflict better. The Swiss Cooperation office in Juba could be well placed to informally explore this option, possibly in conjunction with its base in Aweil and after consultations with the NGO Saferworld, whose work on conflict sensitivity with Chinese companies in South Sudan appears to dovetail with Switzerland's own support for conflict sensitivity. More broadly, there could be possibilities for engagement around human security.

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