

# The EU and the US: Visions of China's rise and of China's growing presence in Africa

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NOTE D'ANALYSE 14

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## **Introduction**

China's astonishing economic development has naturally increased its influence and its responsibilities at the global level. Nevertheless, the actual impact of China's surge, as well as China's intentions on the long run, are still under discussion. On this subject, the EU's and the US' visions diverge. Generally speaking, Brussels considers Beijing a partner in promoting a multilateral world, while the US sees their supremacy challenged by this global power shift in the making. However, at a deeper level of analysis, alignments are more complex, since every actor shares some specific common interests and has some particular divergences with each one of the others. Moreover US and EU visions of China's surge are not fixed, but they can evolve and be influenced according to shifts of predominant paradigms.

This paper is dedicated to the evolution of the European and the American visions of China's rise during the last decade, even though we will sporadically mention China's reactions to their policy or their initiatives. Among the numerous issues involved in Sino-Euro-American relations, we decided to focus our attention on a specific question which might result overlooked, namely the US and the EU reactions to the increasing Chinese presence in Sub-Saharan Africa. If Africa seems particularly high on the Chinese agenda, especially after the FOCAC meeting in 2006 and the launch of the Beijing Action Plan 2007-2010, we have recently witnessed a renewed interest on the African continent, both in the EU and the US. The modalities of these renewed engagements, as well as their possible links with the coeval Chinese expansion in Africa, will be part of our analysis.

This paper first illustrates visions of China's rise in the US and the EU, trying to outline their points of contacts and specificities, as well as their evolution during the last decade. A paragraph is dedicated to European and Chinese ambiguities in discourses concerning multipolar and multilateral global orders. The second part of this paper is focused on the American and the European reactions to China's increasing presence on the African continent. This article is part of an ongoing research; it constitutes a first attempt to analyze these complex interactions and it

does not aim to be exhaustive. The conclusion will therefore sum up the main points of our analysis, but it will also offer several spurs for discussion and cues for further reflection.

## The US, the EU and China

### The evolving US vision of China's rise

Despite Chinese efforts to shape a reassuring image of China's tumultuous growth, through the concepts of "peaceful rise" and "peaceful development", the school of thought which sees China mainly as a threat to be contained, has long been predominant within the US. This vision, especially popular in Pentagon circles and right wing think-tanks<sup>1</sup>, stresses China strengths rather than its still existing weaknesses and, as we will see, it has sometimes led to overreactions to China's rise. Another coexisting school of thought underlines the need to engage with China. Instead of focusing on military threats, it emphasizes social and economic challenges connected to China's rise, such as foreign currency accumulation. This view started to get a foothold in 2005, when "The Washington Post" published an article by Henry Kissinger titled "China: Containment won't work".<sup>2</sup> The focus shifted then from China as a "strategic competitor", as defined by Bush's first administration, to China as a "responsible stakeholder". This concept, which became popular thanks to Under-Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, reflects a raising awareness of the increasing importance of China for the US in dealing with economic (US debt, financial crisis...), geopolitical (North Korea, Iran...) and global challenges (climate change, infectious diseases...). There is indeed a shift from exclusively bilateral relations towards a more comprehensive dialogue on global issues, which aims to create strategic reassurance.<sup>3</sup> Several of these issues have in fact been addressed in May 2010, during the US-China Economic and Strategic

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description, see SCOTT D., *China Stands Up, The PRC and the international system*, Routledge London, 2007, pp. 112-128 and HULIARAS A., MAGLIVERAS K., *In search of a policy: EU and US reactions to the growing Chinese presence in Africa*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 13, pp. 399-420, 2008

<sup>2</sup> KISSINGER H., *China: Containment Won't Work*, Monday, June 13, 2005, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/12/AR2005061201533\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/12/AR2005061201533_pf.html)

<sup>3</sup> T. Christensen, lecture at BICCS, Brussels, 9.9.2010

Dialogue, an upgraded mechanism created by president Obama in order to replace the Senior Dialogue and the Strategic Economic Dialogue, which had been started under George W. Bush's administration.

Chinese partners generally welcomed the "responsible stakeholder" concept but underlined that, on a base of reciprocity, increasing responsibilities go along with an increased status. Moreover China, defining itself a "responsible developing country", warned against an expectation-capabilities gap concerning the amount of global responsibilities that Beijing can bear. The Chinese government also argued that China should firstly act responsibly towards its own people, providing them with economic development and well-being. National interest therefore remains the bottom line of any global responsibility.

The evolution of the US' vision of China is well reflected in the National Security Strategy (US NSS) documents issued by each American president at the beginning of its mandate. We will take into consideration the two NSS documents issued by President George W. Bush in 2002 and 2006 and the president Obama's US NSS, released in 2010. The shift of the US self-vision is quite striking: from a country which "enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence"<sup>4</sup> in 2002 to a country whose "greatness is not assured" and who needs to "rebuild the foundation of its strength and influence" through a "strategy of national renewal"<sup>5</sup>. The relevance of emerging actors is fully acknowledged in US NSS 2010, while almost inexistent in the US NSS 2002 and 2006.<sup>6</sup>

The US NSS 2002, while it welcomes "the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China", with whom it wishes to build a "constructive relationship"<sup>7</sup>, strongly condemns China's pursuit of advanced military capabilities<sup>8</sup> and underlines the presence of "profound

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<sup>4</sup> US NSS 2002 p. 1

<sup>5</sup> Idem

<sup>6</sup> For example the US NSS 2002 refers to "emerging markets" only 4 times and in the US NSS 2006 we find just one reference to the "emerging economies". US NSS 2010 instead variously refers to emerging powers (7), economies (6), markets (3), centers of influence (3), nations (1), partners (1), and democracies (1).

<sup>7</sup> US NSS 2002 p. 27

<sup>8</sup> "In pursuing advanced military capabilities that can threaten its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region, China is following an outdated path that, in the end, will hamper its own

disagreements”<sup>9</sup> concerning Taiwan, human rights and nonproliferation issues. The underlining ideas that China's transition, if limited to the economic sphere, is incomplete and that increasing economic openness cannot but lead to China's democratization, are reaffirmed in the US NSS 2006.<sup>10</sup> Strong concerns with China's energy policy and China's military expansion persist in US NSS 2006, although the Taiwan issue is downplayed, affirming that “China and Taiwan must also resolve their differences peacefully, without coercion and without unilateral action by either China or Taiwan”.<sup>11</sup> The major development of the US policy towards China in the US NSS 2006 is however the introduction of the concept of “responsible stakeholder”, which became popular in 2005, as we have seen. Being a responsible stakeholder, according to the US vision, means that China “fulfills its obligations and works with the United States and others to advance the international system that has enabled its success: enforcing the international rules that have helped China lift itself out of a century of economic deprivation, embracing the economic and political standards that go along with that system of rules, and contributing to international stability and security by working with the United States and other major powers.”<sup>12</sup> The need to adjust international rules and organizations in order to increase the involvement of emerging powers is however not mentioned.

The approach of the US NSS 2010 is rather different. The US acknowledges that “China [...] has become more engaged globally”<sup>13</sup> and it “takes on a responsible leadership role”.<sup>14</sup> Washington is then committed to pursue a “positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship with China”<sup>15</sup>. There is a clear attempt to minimize major elements of friction (the Taiwanese issue and military spending<sup>16</sup>) and to

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pursuit of national greatness. In time, China will find that social and political freedom is the only source of that greatness.” Ibidem

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem p. 28

<sup>10</sup> cf. US NSS 2002 p. 27 et ss. and US NSS 2006 p. 41 et ss.

<sup>11</sup> US NSS 2006 p. 42

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem p. 41

<sup>13</sup> US NSS 2010 p. 8

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem p. 43

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem

<sup>16</sup> “We will monitor China's military modernization program and prepare accordingly to ensure that U.S. interests and allies, regionally and globally, are not negatively affected [and we will] improve communication between our militaries in order to reduce mistrust. We will

put less emphasis on democratic developments within China, while highlighting possibilities of cooperation on global issues: “we will not agree on every issue, and we will be candid on our human rights concerns and areas where we differ. But disagreements should not prevent cooperation on issues of mutual interest, because a pragmatic and effective relationship between the United States and China is essential to address the major challenges of the 21st century”.<sup>17</sup>

The new vision of the Obama's administration had been partially anticipated by the US-China Joint Statement, released on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2009, during the visit of the US President to China. In this document, Washington and Beijing affirm that “each country and its people have the right to choose their own path and all countries should respect each other's choice of a development model”, while “both sides recognize that the United States and China have differences on the issue of human rights” which are to be addressed “in the spirit of equality and mutual respect”. The United States are “committed to working with other countries in addressing the most difficult international problems they face” and “welcomes a strong, prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in world affairs”.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the Joint Statement 2009, as well as the Concluding Joint Statements at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in 2010, seem more problematic when stating that the two sides agree to respect each other's “core interests”.<sup>19</sup> As professor Christensen from Princeton University pointed out, this formulation emphasizes indeed the mutual respect of not-well defined individual interests, rather than committing the US and China to pursue common global interests.<sup>20</sup>

The generally low profile on human right issues of the Obama's administration has been rewarded by Beijing's decisions to vote for sanctions against Iran at the UN Security Council and to reevaluate its

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encourage continued reduction in tension between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan.” Ibidem

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem

<sup>18</sup> US-China Joint Statement, Beijing, 17.11.2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>, acceded on 9.11.2010

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>, last acceded on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Lecture at BICCS, Brussels, 9.9.2010

currency in June 2010. However, sanctions are not fully enforced and currency reevaluation proved rather limited. Christensen therefore considers that the attitude of the Obama's administration, coupled with the effect of the financial and economic crisis, increased China affirmativeness in front of a supposedly weaker American partner.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, notwithstanding the attempts to minimize thorny issues, several tensions have arisen between the US and China after president Obama's election. During the Copenhagen conference in December 2009, China clearly privileged its relations with other emerging powers, while military to military relations between the US and China has been suspended following Obama's confirmation of an arms sale to Taiwan. The Dalai Lama's visit to the White House in February 2010 and several commercial skirmishes have been reasons for disagreement. The favorable results for the Republicans of the US mid-term elections are not likely to ease these tensions. The over-evaluation of the China's currency and its burgeoning trade surplus are therefore expected to stay on the top of the US-China agenda. After this brief overview of the evolving American vision of China rise, we will now analyze the EU approach to this phenomenon.

### **The specificity of the EU approach**

As Hauser<sup>22</sup> points out, over the last two decades, EU's definitions of EU-China relations have ranged variously from that of a "long term relationship"<sup>23</sup> in 1995, a "comprehensive partnership"<sup>24</sup> in 1998, a "maturing partnership"<sup>25</sup> in 2003, to the "strategic and enduring relationship" of the EU Commission communication "EU – China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities", issued in 2006.<sup>26</sup>

EU-China relations still take place in the framework of the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1985. Since then, over 50 sectorial dialogues<sup>27</sup> have been established, ranging variously from

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem

<sup>22</sup> HOUSER H. and LEVY R., Energy Security and China's UN Diplomacy, China Security, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 2008, p. 69 et ss.

<sup>23</sup> COM (1995) 279

<sup>24</sup> COM (1998) 181

<sup>25</sup> COM (2003) 533

<sup>26</sup> COM(2006) 632

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/sectoraldialogues\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/sectoraldialogues_en.pdf), last accessed on 17.1.2011

culture to customs cooperation. Unlike the US case, the broadening of the issues discussed hasn't led to the creation of a proper forum. The negotiations, started only in October 2007, haven't yet led to the signature of a new comprehensive agreement. In this context, many sectorial dialogues appear to be empty mechanisms, incapable of leading to any concrete achievement. Moreover, they are often duplicated by EU member states' bilateral dialogues with China, which are poorly coordinated and lack information sharing among member states. The creation of two additional high-level mechanisms in 2007, decoupling economic and trade issues from strategic issues<sup>28</sup>, doesn't provide for a long term solution.

The year 2008, in particular, has seen a setback in EU-China relations, even worse in the stormy context of the global financial crisis. In April, pro-Tibetan demonstrators disrupted the Olympic torch's passage through Paris and in June the Chinese leadership spurned EU demands that it negotiates with the Dalai Lama. China's stance on Darfur and human rights issues in general, as well as Beijing's repression of riots in Lhasa, led to numerous calls for the boycott of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, to be held in Beijing in August 2008. The then-EU president Sarkozy finally attended the ceremony. Nevertheless, due to the visit of the Dalai Lama to several EU countries and institutions in early December, concomitant to the 11<sup>th</sup> China-EU summit, Beijing decided to postpone the summit. In particular, French President Sarkozy was to meet the Dalai Lama during a Nobel Peace Prize event in Poland. For the first time in 11 years, Europe and China therefore failed to hold an annual summit. The 2009 summit, although being followed only by a brief press communiqué with rather general considerations, at least succeeded in putting relations back on track.

The different positions and the divisions among member states, not to mention the search of national visibility in the eyes of third partners through autonomous initiatives, constitute a serious constrain for the definition of a coherent EU policy towards China. The different

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<sup>28</sup> The first EU-China High-Level Strategic Dialogue, co-chaired by the High Representative / Vice President Catherine Ashton and State Councillor Dai Bingguo, took place in Guiyang, in China, on 1-2 September 2010.

relevance of the transatlantic links and allegiances among EU member states has been another element of division when trying to formulate a coherent European position vis-à-vis China, such as in the case of the arms embargo. The ups-and-downs of Sino-American relations have therefore influenced debates and alignments within the EU. These problems are largely acknowledged by the EU Commission.<sup>29</sup>

The EU, after the cooling down of Sino-Euro relations in 2008, started to take a tougher stance on antidumping rules, the defense of intellectual property and procurement rules in China and the reevaluation of the Chinese currency. However, China's lending to several financially sick member states of Southern and Eastern EU might weaken even further Brussels' bargaining position vis-à-vis China. Moreover, in a delicate period of restructuring of the EU external action architecture, it is even more challenging to launch new far-reaching initiatives and to foster the implementation of already existing policies. All these elements translate in the EU's difficulty in being seen, if not as a great power, at least as a unitary, coherent and credible actor. Although the "China's EU Policy Paper" issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2003, affirmed that "the EU is a major force in the world [...] which will play an increasing important role in both regional and international affairs", the EU seems to be mainly considered as a trade partner, rather than as a grown-up international actor. In the same way, US National Security Strategies always prefer referring to "European allies", in particular in the framework of the NATO alliance, rather than to the EU, which mainly comes at a play as a trade actor.<sup>30</sup>

Leaving aside questions related to the EU actorness in international relations, we will try to outline the EU specific approach towards China, as compared to the US approach. Rather than military issues and geopolitical challenges, the EU tends to emphasize soft security issues, such as economic competition, illegal immigration, transnational crime, smuggling of drugs, contraband and environmental issues.<sup>31</sup> Despite the

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<sup>29</sup> cf. COM(2003) 533 final, p. 7 or COM (2006) 231 p. 5 and p. 10

<sup>30</sup> For instance, the EU is defined by the US "our ally in opening world trade" in US NSS 2002 p. 25

<sup>31</sup> BATES G., *The US and the China-EU relations* pp. 271-286 in SHAMBAUGH D. et al., *China-Europe relations*, Routledge US and Canada, 2008, p. 271 et ss.

establishment of an EU-China Partnership on Climate Change in 2005, environmental issues are likely to provoke the strongest frictions in EU-China relations. The aspiration of the EU to be a normative actor in the environmental domain, on forefront of the fight against climate change is at strain with China's defense of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions and of the right of every country to pursue its own development pattern, balancing economic growth and environmental protection. The fact that EU hard capabilities are practically inexistent and that hard security issues (such as the Taiwan) only have an indirect impact on Europe, are amongst the major factors influencing EU's approach.

The EU is then focused on the internal dimension of China's rise and on building China's capacity to deal with its domestic challenges. The EU Commission communication "A maturing partnership", underlines the EU stake "in supporting China's successful transition to a stable, prosperous and open country that fully embraces democracy, free market principles and the rule of law".<sup>32</sup> This kind of statements clearly shows the existence of a "strategic transformation agenda"<sup>33</sup> in EU circles towards China, which is confirmed by EU official documents and by several discussions with EU officials.<sup>34</sup>

### **The US, the EU and the "strategic transformation agenda": same goals, different approaches**

The "strategic transformation agenda" of the EU is largely shared by the US and it is based on two main assumptions. The first assumption states that, at the domestic level, the opening of the Chinese economy will automatically translate in a democratization process. The second core idea is that there should be "shared responsibilities"<sup>35</sup> at the global level, which largely corresponds to the US concept of "responsible stakeholder". According to this vision, China's development is incomplete, since it is limited to the economic area. Both the EU and the US therefore look for democratization and improved human rights and

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<sup>32</sup> COM (2003) 533 p. 3

<sup>33</sup> SCOTT D., China and the EU: a strategic axis for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?, International Relations, 2007 n. 21, p. 2

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews with EU officials, March-May 2010

<sup>35</sup> COM (2003) 533 p. 7

freedoms. The fact that this “spill-over” of the Chinese reform process from the economic to the political sphere is not taking place so far (or at least not at the auspicated pace) has led to a certain disillusion in EU and US circles. This has been reflected in a more pragmatic approach in dealing with China, especially on the US side, as we have already seen in the first chapter.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, in the eyes of EU diplomats, the blockage of desired domestic reforms has increased the importance of making Beijing a “responsible player”.<sup>37</sup> In fact, not only China should act as a status quo power operating within the framework of global governance institutions, but engaging Beijing in pre-existing mechanisms (such as EITI<sup>38</sup>, FLEGT<sup>39</sup>, the Kimberly process or the EU-Africa infrastructure partnership...) could lead China to adopt some of the Western “best practices” in term of transparency, responsible lending, environmental and labor standards, in order to finally “make China more similar to us”.<sup>40</sup> China's growing sensitivity to international “blaming and shaming” initiatives is also supposed to create new windows of opportunity to influence China. If the expectations of the EU and the US with regard to China largely converge, their approaches differ. The US strategy alternates appeasement and short-term, direct bargains. It is therefore highly visible, since China's compliance with American requests is easier to evaluate, as for instance with regard to RMB revaluation. On the other side, the EU is disadvantaged by its incapability to define a clear set of priorities on the top of the agenda. It is also much more difficult to assess the impact of EU persuasion efforts and EU dialogues on long term socio-economic challenges in China, as well as the result of EU attempts to engage with China's civil society.<sup>41</sup> The EU vision of EU-China relations seems indeed to be stuck in a donor-recipient dynamic, where the EU is willing to “help” China, “teaching” Beijing how to become a better international actor. When this involves for instance the transfer of green technologies, China is more

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<sup>36</sup> cf. chap. 1a

<sup>37</sup> Idem p. 15

<sup>38</sup>EITI (Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative) for transparency in revenues and taxes in the mining sector (for further information see [eti.org](http://eti.org)).

<sup>39</sup> EU initiative for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade

<sup>40</sup> EU official, May 2010

<sup>41</sup> FOOT in ROSS R. S. et al., *US-China-EU relations: Managing the new world order*, Routledge, London, 2010, p. 225 et ss.

than happy to comply. China is in fact Europe's biggest single recipient of financial and technical assistance in the field of energy and climate change. However, when we come to the adoption of stricter standards and “best practices”, Beijing is obviously much more hesitant. The EU is nevertheless reluctant to leverage on China's dependency on EU market, which is still China's biggest export market. The recently adopted “EU timber regulation”<sup>42</sup> for example aims to pressure Chinese operators to comply with EU standards in order for their timber products to gain access to the EU market. However, this mild attempt is not likely to have a great impact on Chinese operators: amendments by both the EU Parliament and the Council have in fact watered down the original proposal, while several aspects concerning its implementation are still largely unclear. As Crossick points out then, “Beijing appears to prefer to work with Brussels but it looks to Washington for the decisions that really matter.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Multipolarity vs. Multilateralism**

If we look instead at EU-China common interests, “both the EU and China are, to some extent, still looking for their rightful place in the world”.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, China primarily desires an increasing diffuse power at the global level and a balanced distribution of power amongst the different global actors. In Beijing's multipolar world, the respect of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs remain unquestionable. Coming to the EU, the EU Commission communication “Maturing partnership” of 2003 states that the EU and China “share views on the importance of multilateral systems”<sup>45</sup> and “the EU, as a global player on the international stage, shares China's concerns for a more balanced international order based on effective multilateralism”.<sup>46</sup> However, the concept of effective multilateralism

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<sup>42</sup> Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 Of The European Parliament And Of The Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market.

<sup>43</sup> CROSSICK S., “*Whither the EU-China relationship?*”, 13.6.09, available at <http://crossick.blogactiv.eu/2009/06/13/whither-the-eu-china-relationship/>, last accessed 17.1.11

<sup>44</sup> PANGRATIS, cited in SCOTT D., *The Chinese century, The challenge to global order*, Palgrave MacMillan, UK, 2008, p. 130

<sup>45</sup> COM (2003) 533 p. 8

<sup>46</sup> *Idem* p. 23

does not derive from China but it is rather a major pillar of the EU security strategy, published in 2003, which is the first security strategy document at the European level. Although obviously less detailed and developed of its American counterpart, its first line echoes the US NSS 2002 affirming that “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure, nor so free”.<sup>47</sup> In this document, effective multilateralism is defined as a “rule-based international order”<sup>48</sup> constituted by “a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions”<sup>49</sup> which are “effective in confronting threats to international security and peace”.<sup>50</sup> Despite a certain ambiguity in the use of multipolar/multilateral concepts in official documents and declarations<sup>51</sup>, both on the European and the Chinese side, it is therefore clear that the Chinese and European supposedly common approach to global order, actually hides quite different preferences: Beijing prefers a multipolar, balanced world where the sovereignty is considered a supreme value, while Brussels promotes a multilateral world where the international institutions play a central role.

## The rise of China in Africa

### US reactions

Much has changed since the first presidential campaign of George W. Bush in 2000, when the future president of the US stated that the African continent did not “fit into the national strategic interests”<sup>52</sup> of the United States. A phase of greater engagement in Africa has since then started, both for the US and China. The increasing relevance of the African continent for the US government is once again mirrored in the US NSS documents. If we compared the strategies issued respectively in 2002 and 2006, the shift of US vision of Africa is striking. In 2002 Africa is a land where “promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease,

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<sup>47</sup> A secure Europe in a better world, European Security Strategy (ESS), Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 1

<sup>48</sup> *Idem* p. 10

<sup>49</sup> *Idem* p. 9

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>51</sup> For several examples cf. Scott, *China and the EU, 2007 op.cit.*, p. 36-37

<sup>52</sup> PLOCH L., *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, CRS Report for Congress, April 3, 2010, p. 14

war, and desperate poverty [which] threatens both a core value of the United States—preserving human dignity—and our strategic priority—combating global terror”.<sup>53</sup> In US NSS 2006, instead, Africa is a “place of promise and opportunity, linked to the United States by history, culture, commerce, and strategic significance”<sup>54</sup>, a continent that “holds growing geo-strategic importance”<sup>55</sup> and that is “a high priority”<sup>56</sup> for the Bush Administration. The US is therefore committed to promote economic development and democratic governance on the continent through “partnership, not paternalism”.<sup>57</sup> These refrains are endlessly repeated by US diplomats during official visits, meetings and press conferences.<sup>58</sup>

In July 2003 the president Bush paid the first visit of a republican president to Africa, while the US assistance for Africa tripled during its administration. President Bush also launched a 5 years, \$15 billion President's emergency plan for AIDS relief, a \$1.2 billion President's malaria initiative and a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), aiming to reward well governed states which also perform well economically with substantial new aid compacts. Humanitarian commitments have then been coupled with a renewed military engagement thanks to the creation of the US African Command, AFRICOM, announced during with Hu Jintao's tour of Africa in 2007.<sup>59</sup>

As the NEPD Group<sup>60</sup> recommended in 2001, the deepening of bilateral and multilateral engagement should aim “to promote a more receptive environment for U.S. oil and gas trade, investment, and operations [in Africa]”.<sup>61</sup> An advisory panel of Africa experts authorized by Congress to propose new policy initiatives in 2004, has identified five factors

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<sup>53</sup> US NSS 2002 p. 10

<sup>54</sup> US NSS 2006 p. 36

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>58</sup> cf. remarks by Carson J., Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs at the Harvard University Africa Focus Program, Washington, DC, April 5, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2010/139462.htm>, last accessed 13.1.2011.

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed description of AFRICOM, see PLOCH, *op.cit.*

<sup>60</sup> The National Energy Policy Development Group (NEPDG) was a group, commonly referred to as the “Cheney Energy Task Force”, created in 2001 and chaired by Vice President Richard Cheney which produced a National Energy Policy report in May 2001.

<sup>61</sup> NEPDG, National Energy Strategy 2001 p. 8

lagging behind the increased U.S. interest in Africa: oil, global trade, HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts and terrorism, especially concerning failed and rough states, and violent extremism as a source of regional instability.<sup>62</sup> Global trade issues are strictly linked to maritime security and the need to fight various forms of illegal fishing, smuggling, piracy and sabotage in order to ensure the freedom of the seas and the defense of commerce. Cohen H.J., former US assistant for African Affairs, has also stressed the key geopolitical position of Sub-Saharan Africa, as a backdoor to the Persian Gulf.<sup>63</sup>

According to several analysts, the rising Chinese presence in Africa has been a “wakeup call” for the US and the text of the Hearing on “China’s influence in Africa” before the House of Representatives in July 2005 contains many statements confirming this hypothesis. Mr. Payne, a member of the subcommission, claims for example that “China’s economic and political pursuits appear to be undermining United States success in alleviating poverty and expanding US influence [in Africa]”.<sup>64</sup> Several US diplomatic cables, mainly issued between December 2009 and February 2010, show the growing attention paid to this phenomenon by US embassies in Africa and China.<sup>65</sup> Information collected is sometimes contradictory, i.e. those concerning the employment of local labor force by Chinese firms.<sup>66</sup> These cables nevertheless testify of the attempt by US diplomats to understand China’s growing presence in Africa, analyzing its drivers and goals, interests at play and local perceptions. In particular the “National human intelligence collection directive”, issued in July 2009 under Hillary Clinton's name to US missions at the UN, as

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15

<sup>63</sup> HULIARAS, *op.cit.*, p. 406

<sup>64</sup> China’s Influence In Africa, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Africa, Global Human Rights And International Operations Of The Committee On Relations House Of Representatives One Hundred Ninth Congress First Session July 28, 2005 Serial No. 109-74, p. 9-10

<sup>65</sup> China and Africa: Shanghai views on expanding trade and investment ties, 2009.4.10, 09SHANGHAI160

Chinese oil companies not so welcome in Nigeria’s oil patch, 2009.12.2, 09ABUJA2170

Chinese engagement in Kenya, 2010.2.17, 10NAIROBI181

China's Growing Presence in Cameroon, 2010.2.18, 10YAOUNDE95

Request for information on chinese engagement in Angola and potential areas for cooperation, 10LUANDA84, 2010.2.26

African embassies suspicious of US-China, 2010.2.11, 10BEIJING367

Reporting and collection needs: African Great Lakes, 2009.4.16, [09STATE37561](#)

<sup>66</sup> 09SHANGHAI160 and 10NAIROBI181

well as to 33 embassies and consulates, asks US diplomats to collect, among other elements, details concerning Chinese activities in the Great Lakes region. According to this directive, US diplomats should focus in particular on “details of Chinese trade, aid, and investment activities”, “details on mining [...] and oil extraction [and the] extent of control given to China and other foreign governments, companies or consortiums”, “details of military relations with other countries, especially China”, “details about foreign assistance (especially Chinese) for improvements to the national telecommunications grid”, “ [local] government views and perceptions about activities and intentions of non-regional nations and organizations, particularly China, Iran, France, UN, and the European Union (EU)”, details concerning “foreign alliances and activities, especially those involving China and Iran”.<sup>67</sup> Beside this diplomatic activism on the ground, numerous top level visits kept US visibility in Africa high under Obama's presidency, from Clinton's 11-day, seven-country trip across the continent in August 2009 to Vice President Biden's week-long trip to Africa in July 2010.

While the US NSS 2010 reaffirms that the African continent offers the United States “opportunities and challenges”<sup>68</sup>, it is interesting to notice that, along with traditional areas of cooperation (governance, rule of law, transparency etc.), it emphasizes the need to ensure that “infrastructure development, improving reliable access to power, and increased trade and investment remain high on our agenda”. These areas have indeed become the focus of Chinese development and economic cooperation with Africa. The US NSS 2010 therefore expresses the desire of the US administration to catch up with the Chinese in those areas which have long been neglected by traditional donors. At the Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2010, president Obama stressed that “the old myth that development is mere charity that does not serve our interests” should be put at rest<sup>69</sup> and he launched the U.S. Global Development Policy, which aims to raise the profile of the US as

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<sup>67</sup> [09STATE37561](#)

<sup>68</sup> US NSS 2010 p. 45

<sup>69</sup> Obama's Remarks at Millennium Development Goals Summit, 22.09.2010, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/September/20100922172556su0.2969934.html>, last accessed 13.1.2011

a donor, while focusing its intervention on carefully selected sectors and countries.<sup>70</sup>

In line with this perspective, during a recent speech delivered at the Miller Centre of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, Michael Battle, the current US ambassador to the AU, affirmed that US policy in Africa is shifting away from public “aid” and “assistance”, toward corporate “investment” and “partnership” in order to facilitate the efforts of US corporations to expand investments across multiple African nations. According to Battle, “if we don’t invest on the African continent now, we will find that China and India have absorbed its resources without us, and we will wake up and wonder what happened to our golden opportunity of investment”.<sup>71</sup> It is therefore of no surprise that the \$3.5 billion Food Security Initiative, Obama’s major initiative in Africa, has been questioned because it relies heavily on expensive petroleum-based fertilizers, the mechanization of agricultural production and the use of genetically-modified seeds, obviously produced by US corporations.

Yet, the US engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa remains dominated by military and security instruments. Besides AFRICOM, the American military engagement on the continent also includes for example a Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism initiative in the Gulf of Guinea and a Horn of Africa counterterrorism program with a Combined Task Force Horn of Africa in Djibouti.<sup>72</sup> While the Agency for International Development is systematically underfunded, the Obama administration, in its 2010 budget request for the State Department, proposed to increase foreign military funding spending for Africa by more than 300 per cent, from just over US\$ 8.2 million to more than US\$ 25.5 million.<sup>73</sup> Further increases are expected in the 2011 budget. Picardi criticized this

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<sup>70</sup> U.S. Global Development Policy, 22.09.2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/fact-sheet-us-global-development-policy>, last accessed 13.1.2011

<sup>71</sup> In HICKEL J., *The US, the AU and the new scramble for Africa, 2010-10-26, Issue 502*, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/68088>, last accessed 13.1.2011

<sup>72</sup> For a more detailed description of US military engagements on the African continent, see STRUYE DE SWIELANDE T., *Afrique: Géopolitique et géostratégie - Le retour de Washington sur le continent africain, Le Potentiel*, 17.09.2010, available at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/printable/201009170781.html>, last accessed 8.11.2010

<sup>73</sup> VOLMAN D., *Obama and U.S. Military Engagement in Africa*, Washington, Foreign Policy In Focus, May 5, 2010

approach, claiming that the US policy in Africa “doesn't address the scale of commercial opportunities or the need for active competition, if the United States is to play a role in the continent's burgeoning growth”.<sup>74</sup> Similar concerns regarding the risk of militarizing US diplomacy and development policies in Africa been expressed by Senator Feingold who claimed that AFRICOM should “contribute to, not define, the US's government overall objectives and strategies for the continent”.<sup>75</sup> In the European case instead, while security issues are of limited importance in bilateral EU-China relations, they acquire greater relevance in the framework of Euro-African relations. The African continent has in fact constituted a testing ground for EU's brand new autonomous security structures and an occasion to raise EU's international profile in the security domain. It also allowed ex colonial powers to reshape their presence on the continent, in the attempt to improve an image often much damaged by colonial and post-colonial legacies. As a consequence of the “Black Hawk trauma” in Somalia in 1993, US military engagement still avoids physical presence on the ground, focusing on training and equipments supplies and only occasionally providing advisors to peacekeeping missions on the continent. In the same way, the EU has started to prioritize support to African autonomous regional security mechanisms, especially the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). China, for his part, has proved willing to provide limited contributions to UN missions in Africa, even putting troops on the frontline. This small-scale engagement provides Beijing with the opportunity, not only to acquire military expertise, but also to make the international presence of Chinese military forces acceptable.

Generally speaking then, the different Chinese and American approaches to the African continent still mirror their comparative advantages and priorities: military capabilities and counterterrorism on the US side, financial capacity, expertise in building low-cost base infrastructures, as well as search for a high diplomatic profile for Beijing. There is however an area where US' and China's positions with regard to the African continent are not so different, that is the structure of their trade relations

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<sup>74</sup> PICARDI MARIO AND HAMISH STEWART, *Building Africa: Where's The United States?*, Washington, Foreign Policy In Focus, May 27, 2010

<sup>75</sup> PLOCH, *op.cit.*, p. 6 and p. 30

with Africa. If we compare African exports toward the US and China, we observe in fact that, in both cases, raw materials take the lion's share. According to TRALAC's estimates based on the World Trade Atlas, mineral products accounted for 88% of Africa's exports toward China in 2008.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, oil imports accounted for 79.5% of US imports from Africa in 2008, a percentage rising to 92.3%, if considering imports under the AGOA framework.<sup>77</sup> The AGOA initiative has been launched in 2000, when the US started to consider diversification of oil supplies away from Middle East. It succeeded in increasing US-Africa bilateral exchanges, from 29.3 US\$ billion in 2000 to 104.6 US\$ billion in 2008<sup>78</sup>, but it failed to ensure a diversification of the imported products. Compared to these figures, Euro-African bilateral trade structure seems slightly more balanced, since mineral fuels accounted for 58% of EU total imports from Africa in 2009.<sup>79</sup> Angola, Nigeria and South Africa are then the main African trading partners of Beijing, Washington and Brussels<sup>80</sup>, notwithstanding the relevant exception of Sudan in the Chinese case.<sup>81</sup> Although in terms of volume the US is still the first importer of Sub-Saharan oil, access to African raw materials remains a thorny issue in Euro-Sino-American relations.

It is finally worth noticing that the US NSS 2010 underlines the importance of working with "global partners"<sup>82</sup> (and not just with "European allies"<sup>83</sup>, as in US NSS 2002) in order to address African challenges. A US-China sub-dialogue on Africa had already been

<sup>76</sup> TRALAC, Africa-China trading relationship – Update 2009, p. 1, available at [http://www.tralac.org/cause\\_data/images/1694/Africa-China09.pdf](http://www.tralac.org/cause_data/images/1694/Africa-China09.pdf), last accessed 13.1.2011

<sup>77</sup> U.S.-African Trade Profile 2009, US Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, available at [www.agoa.gov](http://www.agoa.gov)

<sup>78</sup> PERDRIX P., BALLONG S., L'AGOA montre ses limites, Jeune Afrique, 11.8.2009, [http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articleimp\\_ARTJAJA2535p065-067.xml0\\_l-agoa-montre-ses-limites.html](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articleimp_ARTJAJA2535p065-067.xml0_l-agoa-montre-ses-limites.html), last accessed 13.1.2011

<sup>79</sup> EUROSTAT, Extra EU-27 trade with Africa by product category (SITC 1), 2009, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php?title=File:Extra\\_EU-27\\_trade\\_with\\_Africa\\_by\\_product\\_category\\_\(SITC\\_1\),\\_2009.PNG&filetimestamp=20110107134145](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Extra_EU-27_trade_with_Africa_by_product_category_(SITC_1),_2009.PNG&filetimestamp=20110107134145); last accessed on 17.1.2011.

However, raw materials supplies are matter of growing concern even among EU officials and member states, leading to the launch in 2008 of the "Raw Material Initiative" [SEC(2008) 2741]

<sup>80</sup> TRALAC *op.cit.*, U.S.-African Trade Profile 2009 and EUROSTAT *op.cit.* We only considered Sub-Saharan African Countries.

<sup>81</sup> TRALAC, *op.cit.*, p. 5 and US Department of Commerce, *op.cit.*, p. 22

<sup>82</sup> US NSS 2010 p. 45

<sup>83</sup> US NSS 2002 p. 10

launched in 2005. In March 2007, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and its Chinese counterpart Zhai Jun discussed debt sustainability, peacekeeping operations, Chinese companies' reputational risks in Africa and enhanced transparency in extractive industries (notably through the EITI initiative). In June 2007, discussions between US Deputy Secretary of State Negroponte and Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo during the 4<sup>th</sup> round of US-China Senior Dialogue, led to US acknowledgement of Chinese definition of the Sudanese crisis as a "humanitarian crisis", as opposed to "genocide".<sup>84</sup> Public health and infectious diseases, peacekeeping operations, conflicts resolutions and counterterrorism initiatives have been identified as the most promising areas for cooperation. Some attempts to identify concrete projects have failed<sup>85</sup>, while it seems that "many in the African community were uncomfortable with the concept of US-China development cooperation in Africa".<sup>86</sup>

Among US diplomats on the ground, a certain pessimism concerning US-China opportunities for cooperation in Africa seems to prevail. The US embassy in Kenya considers for example that "given the possibility of a backlash by the Kenyan people against China, [...] there may be benefits to keeping our distance, at least publicly, from China".<sup>87</sup> US Diplomats in Yaoundé, despite affirming that a more collaborative relationship would in principle be positive, see little scope for improvement since American and Chinese "approaches to development, attitudes toward corruption and acceptable business practices are at the opposite ends of the spectrum".<sup>88</sup> Mutual suspicions and language barriers represent additional obstacles, also according to US diplomats in Luanda. In Angola, limited cooperation has taken place, since Chinese contractors have successfully implemented humanitarian assistance projects funded by the US Department of Defense and a Chinese national has been engaged by an implementing partner of the US malaria

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<sup>84</sup> HUANG in ROTBERG R., *China into Africa Trade, aid and influence*, Brookings institution press, Washington 2008, p. 303 et ss.

<sup>85</sup> REMY J-P., *WikiLeaks : la Chine en Afrique, une menace pour les intérêts américains*, Le Monde.fr, 08.12.10

<sup>86</sup> Cable 10BEIJING367, *AFRICAN EMBASSIES SUSPICIOUS OF US-CHINA*, US embassy in Beijing, created 11-2-2010

<sup>87</sup> 10NAIROBI181

<sup>88</sup> 10YAOUNDE95

program. US aid programs on agriculture, malaria and HIV/AIDS are considered potential areas for US-China cooperation. However, “determined efforts from US technical staff failed to identify a project consistent with our development objectives to which the Chinese could contribute meaningfully”.<sup>89</sup> The US-China sub-dialogue on Africa hasn't therefore reached any concrete achievement so far, much like the EU-China-Africa trilateral dialogue and cooperation initiative, which will be discussed shortly.<sup>90</sup>

### EU reactions

As Huliaras pointed out, EU relations with African countries “deeper, more complex, and far more institutionalized than the US dealings”.<sup>91</sup> However, during the last two decades, much of the EU's energies have been focused on the enlargement process, which moreover involved countries not ranking the African continent high on their foreign policy agendas. Nevertheless, among several EU member states recently arose a diffuse feeling that competition in Africa is hardening and that EU member states might lose their stakes, both in economic and geopolitical terms. Anticipating the statements of the US ambassador at the AU, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared in 2006 that the European policy towards Africa should not be conceived as based on “charity arguments, as it has been in the past, but on our stalwart interests” and that “the Europeans should not leave the commitment to Africa to the People's Republic of China”.<sup>92</sup> The French minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner affirmed last year during a interview that “*en Afrique, il nous faut une politique commune, certainement des Anglais et des Français. Et pourquoi pas y ajouter les Portugais et les Belges, les anciennes puissances coloniales, mais aussi les Américains*”.<sup>93</sup> The EU's ex-development commissioner, Louis Michel, despite having repeatedly called EU-China cooperation in Africa as the only way to truly support African development without losing the European foothold on the continent, stated in 2008 that

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<sup>89</sup> 10LUANDA84

<sup>90</sup> cf. Chap. 2b

<sup>91</sup> Huliaras, *op.cit.*, p. 409

<sup>92</sup> Huliaras, *op.cit.*, p. 414

<sup>93</sup> [http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20100208T185731Z/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed:+Jeune\\_Afrique\\_Economie+\(Jeune+Afrique+Economie\)](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20100208T185731Z/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+Jeune_Afrique_Economie+(Jeune+Afrique+Economie)), last accessed 14.1.2011

“Africa has become the playground of a new Great Game; it is not just a Great Game about getting access to natural resources; it is also about power politics and competing models of development, notably in relation to the more assertive Chinese foreign policy.”<sup>94</sup> The central role for the EU economy played by strategic raw materials supplies has recently been underlined once again by Chancellor Merkel, stating that “considering the raw-materials policy of a country such as China, it’s urgently necessary to make capital available among European partners in order to secure long-term supplies.”<sup>95</sup>

In order to raise its profile in Africa and to show its renewed engagement, the EU has launched in 2007 the EU-Africa Joint Strategy, which aims to “move away from a traditional relationship and forge a real partnership characterized by equality” and to “promote more accurate images of each other”. In this document, “in order to ensure coherence and complementarity with the work of other international actors, including emerging partners, Africa and the EU recognize the need to broaden their cooperation with third partners through enhanced tripartite dialogue”.<sup>96</sup> The EU Commission Communication “Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities”<sup>97</sup> also calls for improved co-ordination on international development particularly in Africa where “the EU and China should engage in a structured dialogue on Africa's sustainable development” based on “transparency on the activity and priorities of both sides” with the aim of exploring “opportunities for improving China’s integration into international efforts to improve aid efficiency, co-ordination and opportunities for practical bilateral co-operation on the ground.” The same ideas are expressed in the Non-Legislative Resolution adopted by the EU Parliament on “China’s policy and its effects on Africa” in 2008.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> LING J., Aid to Africa: What can the EU and China Learn from Each Other?, S A I I A O C C A S I O N A L P A P E R N U M B E R 5 6, 03/2010, p. 15

<sup>95</sup> DONAHUE P., “Merkel Says Europe Must Boost Mineral Investment to Respond to China Push”, Bloomberg.com, 14.10.2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2010-10-14/europe-must-secure-resources-to-counter-chinese-competition-merkel-says.html>

<sup>96</sup> EU-Africa Joint Strategy p. 12, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/EAS2007\\_joint\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/EAS2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> COM (2006) 631

<sup>98</sup> [2007/2255\(INI\)](#)

The creation of a dialogue on Africa's peace, stability and sustainable development during the 9<sup>th</sup> EU-China summit in September 2006, anticipated the launch of the EU-China-Africa trilateral dialogue and cooperation in 2008. According to the EU Commission communication, the areas considered the most promising for establishment of joint-projects, are peace and security, infrastructure, environment and sustainable management of resources, food security and agricultural production. Nevertheless, until present time the dialogue has not lead to any concrete initiative and it is therefore not clear in which forms the cooperation might actually take place.<sup>99</sup> The main Chinese criticism about this initiative is that it is nothing but trilateral. This can be viewed as a pretext to slow down a dialogue considered of secondary importance. However, even European officials acknowledge that the trilateral dimension has been ignored, in favor of a bilateral approach, with a strong emphasis on EU-China relations, while "the subject has been hardly discussed with Africans".<sup>100</sup> The attitude of the latter ones has consequently been one of little interest and skepticism, towards an initiative seen as an attempt to interfere in their relations with China or, at worst, as a demonstration of unacceptable paternalism. As an EU official stated "a cooperative logic has been established even though real cooperation has not yet taken roots".<sup>101</sup> However, individual member states, in some cases, have been more successful. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has for example conducted few joint projects with China in Africa, while offering its expertise for environmental impact assessments in the framework of the famous Sino-Congolese SICOMINE deal.<sup>102</sup> It is however clear that EU member states do not have all the same collaborative stance, if it true that French development officials in Cameroon told the US embassy that they saw "no prospect for cooperation with China".<sup>103</sup>

Attempts to engage China in preexisting EU mechanisms, such as the FLEGT Initiative (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) or in dialogues within the OECD-DAC working group have led to

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<sup>99</sup> Interviews with Chinese and EU officials, March-May 2010

<sup>100</sup> Interview with EU official, 03/2010

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>102</sup> Personal communication with Congolese expert, December 2010

<sup>103</sup> 10YAOUNDE95

unsatisfactory results. According to the already cited US cable from Yaoundé, the departed EU chief of mission privately discouraged engaging the Chinese as they were not “like minded”.<sup>104</sup> However, the official EU position, expressed in a recent Communication of the EU Commission<sup>105</sup>, is that emerging global players are a “healthy challenge” for Africa-EU relations. The same document states that “joint cooperation could be fostered and extended to the private sector” in order to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation, leading to “sustainable development [of African countries] and supply of raw materials [for the EU]”<sup>106</sup>, thus giving further evidence of the growing relevance of raw materials supplies in EU-African relations.

Other recent dynamics might head in the direction of a progressive rapprochement of some EU and Chinese practices. The Infrastructure Trust Fund (ITF) has been created in 2007. It is managed by the EIB and funded by the EDF, as well as by individual EU member states. It is a blending mechanism aiming to combine soft money with long term financing from international financial investors, providing grant-support for interest rate subsidies, feasibility studies or the payment of early-stage or risk-mitigation insurance premiums. This mechanism is for example not so dissimilar from certain blending instruments of the Chinese economic cooperation with African countries.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, there is a growing consensus within the DG Enterprise and Industry on prioritizing the use of the ITF for the creation of mining development corridors, with the aim of ensuring raw materials exports to the EU.<sup>108</sup> Chinese barter deals combining the building of infrastructures with raw materials exports respond to the same rationale, namely guaranteeing reliable raw materials supplies, although they obviously link the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibidem

<sup>105</sup> Communication from the EU Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the consolidation of EU-Africa relations, Brussels, 10.11.10, COM(2010)634 final, p. 3

<sup>106</sup> Idem p. 7

<sup>107</sup> For a detailed description of various instruments of Chinese economic cooperation with African countries, cf. BELLIGOLI S., China's aid and economic cooperation system as reflecting the drivers of China's increasing presence on the African continent, Note d'Analyse 12 du programme « Union européenne – Chine », Chaire InBev Baillet-Latour, Novembre 2010

<sup>108</sup> Interviews with EU officials, October-November 2010

construction and the extractive sectors in a more direct way. It is still too early to fully assess the extent of these developments, but it is however interesting to notice that, if on one side the EU tries to engage China in preexisting EU mechanisms and to spread its so-called best practices, on the other side, EU engagement in Africa seems to be somehow influenced by Chinese practices.

## Conclusion

In this paper we analyzed the EU and the US evolving visions of China's rise, especially with regard to China's presence on the African continent. We enlightened European and Chinese mutual ambiguities concerning multilateral and multipolar global orders, meaning that EU-China alignments can only be tactical and temporary. In fact, even if both Brussels and Beijing support the strengthening of a multipolar global order, they are not equally committed to the promotion of a multilateral world. We clarified main differences in US and EU approaches and we illustrated EU and US common strategic transformational agenda towards China, aiming to engage Beijing in already existing initiatives concerning, for example, transparency, human rights and debt sustainability.

However, in order to achieve their aim, namely China's inclusion in global order as a responsible power, the EU and the US should consider more attentively how the global institutions, which they lead, can be adjusted in order to be more inclusive. This would reflect a long term view, since China is just the first one of several emerging powers which are doomed to play a growing role on the global scene, and which, sooner or later, will knock with more and more insistence at the door of the "Western shaped" global institutions. During coming years, the so-called BRICS are likely to demand an always larger room for maneuver and an increased weight in international institutions. This need to readjust global governance structures in order to reflect a new balance of power and the emergence of new actors highlights the shortcomings of a strategy mainly focused on engaging China in a pre-established order, with the hope of shaping its domestic and international behaviors.

Recent adjustments of IMF members' quotas and voting power are a (still limited) step in this direction.

China is in Africa to stay for the foreseeable future and nor the US neither the EU can invert this trend. The best option seems to avoid overreactions and to start considering China as any other actor on the African continent. As Ernest Wilson stated: “we will now have to treat China in the same way that we treat the European powers which have been very active in Africa. That is, when we act in Africa, we have to figure out, well, how will the French react? And how will the British react? What will the Japanese do? What will the EU do? Well, now [we will have to] add to that mix, what will the Chinese do?”<sup>109</sup>

One of the main results of China's surge in Africa is probably that it shifted the focus away from charity and aid towards investments and interests. The paradigm has changed: from Africa as a hopelessly poor continent to an area rich of opportunities and strategically relevant, especially with regard to counterterrorism operations and raw materials supplies. The actual impact on the development of the African continent of these policy shifts, as well as of possible rivalries and/or new forms of cooperation, largely depends on the capacity of African leaders to shape their relations with old and new partners in a way that offers positive outcomes for their people.

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<sup>109</sup> Ernest Wilson in China's influence in Africa hearing before the House of Representatives, *op.cit.*, p. 53