

EDITED BY  
CHRIS ALDEN, ABIODUN ALAO, ZHANG CHUN & LAURA BARBER

# CHINA AND AFRICA

BUILDING PEACE AND SECURITY COOPERATION ON THE CONTINENT



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Chris Alden • Abiodun Alao • Zhang Chun • Laura Barber  
Editors

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Building Peace and Security Cooperation  
on the Continent

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# Introduction: Seeking Security: China's Expanding Involvement in Security Cooperation in Africa

*Chris Alden and Laura Barber*

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

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whose desire to play a larger role in continental security jostles with the complexities of doing so while preserving Chinese abiding foreign policy principles and growing economic interests on the continent.

The result is increasing involvement in African security, be it through cooperation at the level of the UN Security Council and the African Union or in terms of deploying Chinese troops and providing greater financial assistance for peace support missions. This impulse has received further support with the announcement of a China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security in 2012, promising an integration of security into the FOCAC process. Linking this aspirational commitment to a more institutionalised form of involvement, however, remains problematic in part because of Chinese uncertainty as to the practical implications this holds for its established interests, as well as an underlying ambivalence towards some of the normative dimensions integrated into the African Peace and Security Architecture. These concerns in turn reflect wider debates within China as to the efficacy of expanding its role within the existing structures of regional and global governance.

This volume investigates the expanding involvement of China in security cooperation in Africa. It focuses on two dimensions in particular: (i) the sources of Chinese engagement in security – ranging from burgeoning exposure of Chinese economic interests to unstable conditions to the targeting of Chinese citizens by hostile and criminal groups – and how they have shaped Chinese policies in this sector; and (ii) case studies of China's involvement in country-specific Africa security contexts, including the content of Chinese contributions and responses of African governments and civil society to this expanding role. Finally, it provides a critical assessment of the challenges experienced by and facing the deepening of Chinese-African cooperation in security matters.

To understand China's gradualist engagement in African security affairs, one must understand the evolving context of China-Africa relations. China's contemporary phase of intensive engagement in African countries may have been instigated by a search for vital resources and market opportunities but its sustainability as a reliable source for China was always going to be predicated on building long-term stable relations. China's openness to economic engagement in all parts of Africa launched a period of rapid growth in bilateral economic ties, including multi-billion-dollar concessional loans to energy- and mineral-rich African countries linked to provisions for development of local infrastructure, followed by a range of smaller loans, grants, and investments by individual Chinese

entrepreneurs. While traditional Western sources had shunned investment in some of the conflict-ridden, post-conflict, or fragile states like Sudan, or World Bank and donors sought to make loans conditional on domestic policy changes in countries like Angola, the opportunity that this presented to China to gain access to untapped resources in markets viewed in Beijing as closed was seized with alacrity.

But in countries operating under conditions of fragility where the very nature of regime legitimacy itself is contested as is its ability to enforce its rule over the population and territory, the security challenges are manifold as China was to discover. Under these difficult circumstances, Chinese officials were increasingly pulled into mediation efforts in places like Sudan and, through its permanent membership on the UN Security Council, involvement in peacekeeping operations and capacity building in post-conflict situations. Chinese migration, starting as a trickle in the late 1990s but growing steadily across the continent, introduced a new element of complexity as individual citizens became exposed to violence and crime.

While academic writings on the extensive role of China in Africa continue to increase, not much attention seems to have been placed on the rapidly growing security links between the country and the African continent. Due largely to the deep involvement of the country in Africa's natural resource politics and the controversial link it has developed with African leaders that have attained pariah status, attention has been placed on the politics of natural resource extraction and the alleged support China seems to be given to controversial African leaders like Presidents Bashir of Sudan and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Considerable interest has also been directed towards China's development policies and, to a lesser extent, Chinese migration. But while all these are important, the increasing role of security in the complex relationship between China and Africa is hardly examined.

In fact, China's growing role in African security has been quite profound to date, ranging from the extensive peacekeeping activities it has undertaken in a number of African states to ongoing mediation in conflicts like Sudan and even training of armed forces of some of countries. Security considerations have also come out in key controversial connections like resource-for development exchanges, and the expanding sale of armaments and the launching of satellite missions. All these apart, China's relationship with key regional organisations in the continent also has aspects of peace and security considerations. Indeed, it is widely assumed that the extensive military links China has established with a number of African countries have now shown other

emerging powers operating in the continent, especially Russia, Brazil, and India, of the unwinnable nature of their rivalry with Beijing on the African continent.

Against the background of all the above considerations, there is a compelling need for a detailed study that looks at all the complex security links between China and Africa and how Africans have perceived the intricate military relationship their governments are establishing with China. It is also important to see how security considerations have intertwined with economic and domestic considerations issues to explain the diverse links between China and African countries. Thus the key aims and objectives of the proposed book are as follows: to provide a detailed study to focus on the intricacies of the military relationship between Africa and China, especially those aspects that have been neglected from current studies; to interrogate how security considerations come into the equation of other complex economic and social links China has developed with African states; to analyse how China's links with Africa's continental and regional organisations, especially the African Union, also connects with security links it has developed with key African countries; and finally, to assess how Africans, especially, civil society perceive the increasing involvement of China in the continent's security affairs.

In [Chapter 2](#), 'Africa's Security Challenges and China's Evolving approach towards Africa's Peace and Security Architecture', Abiodun Alao and Chris Alden provide a comprehensive overview of the issues characterising the African security environment, the associated risks facing Chinese actors across the continent, and Beijing's emerging response to some of these challenges. This is with a view to assess whether China's role vis-à-vis Africa's peace and security architecture can be viewed as one of architect, builder, or sub-contractor.

In [Chapter 3](#), 'China's Changing Role in Peace and Security in Africa', Chris Alden and Zheng Yixiao assess China's emerging role in Africa's security sector through contextualising Beijing's changing ambitions on the international stage and specific aspects of its policies as implemented on the continent. In particular, the authors frame the discussion within an overall picture of China's evolving approach towards maintaining its national interests, goals, and means in the arena of security and shed light on the country's multilateral cooperation against transnational security concerns in Africa, namely piracy and nuclear proliferation, and investigate two case studies of its military bilateral cooperation with African partners. They find that China's enhanced role in security exposes a set of inherent tensions within the

lofty aims of a rising China and its actual operational role in Africa. For instance, while Beijing presents the need to cooperate with Western partners, those countries are the same ones that are in competition on a number of fronts with China.

In [Chapter 4](#), 'Developmental Peace: Understanding China's Africa Policy in Peace and Security', Wang Xuejun argues that through China's expanding role in African and global security more generally, the country is increasingly becoming a norm-maker rather than norm-complier. In particular, Wang asserts that China's Africa policy regarding peace and security is guided by the uniquely Chinese concept of 'developmental peace', which differs from the liberal peace thesis underpinning Western approaches towards the continent. It is suggested that whereas the latter prioritises democratisation and institution-building in post-conflict environments, 'developmental peace' places emphasis on sovereign autonomy and embedding socioeconomic development strategies into the practices of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. As such, Beijing is introducing increasing flexibility into its 'non-interference' policy to ensure that it does not equate to non-involvement, yet respect for host state sovereignty and 'African ownership' remain the bedrock of the Chinese approach to addressing security challenges in Africa.

Meanwhile, China's physical involvement in conflict prevention and resolution is mainly manifested in its participation in UN peacekeeping operations in line with its role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In [Chapter 5](#), 'China's Development-Oriented Peacekeeping Strategy in Africa', Xue Lei considers China's goals in African peace and security affairs from the particular perspective of its participation in UNPKOs. Xue maintains that Beijing upholds a preference for development-oriented and non-coercive approaches to humanitarian intervention. At the same time, however, it is found that through developing a deeper understanding of the complexity of conflict in the field, China has begun to develop a degree of flexibility and on a case-by-case basis is supportive of more robust approaches to international peacekeeping and peace interventions in the African context.

In addition to multilateral peacekeeping efforts, China's tangible security role can also be seen in the form of growing military ties with African states, including exchanges and assistance such as training loans for equipment. In [Chapter 6](#), 'On China's Military Diplomacy in Africa', Shen Zhixiong deepens our understanding of Sino-African security cooperation by assessing the increasingly robust and diversified nature of military

diplomacy conducted by the Chinese Government and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) since the end of the Cold War. In particular, Shen highlights the concurrent challenges that China faces amid such expanding military ties, for example, the suspicion and competition this has engendered among Western countries, particularly the United States, and the issue of managing the expectations of African governments. At the forefront of the challenges that PLA diplomacy must increasingly address, however, is the issue of protecting Chinese citizens from non-traditional security threats, such as attacks by non-state actors and state collapse, whilst at the same time adhering to China's guiding foreign policy principle of non-interference in other states' internal affairs.

In the seventh and final of the overview chapters, Zhang Chun argues that peace and security cooperation is and will increasingly become one of the core pillars of China-Africa relations. Indeed, at the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in December 2015, both China and Africa promised to implement the 'Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security', in which it is pledged to build a collective security mechanism in Africa and to jointly manage non-traditional security issues. However, Zhang assesses some of the key characteristics of such regional cooperation and challenges to its implementation in practice. In particular, such cooperation remains exclusively at the governmental level, China continues to view FOCAC primarily as a collective bilateral platform rather than a multilateral one, and policy differences between China and African states persist and emanate from opposing views on the principle of 'non-interference'. Zhang argues that promoting cooperation with African organisations will help China to overcome the dilemma posed by deepening engagement in African security on the one hand and Beijing's non-interference policy on the other, whilst also counterbalancing the pressures of the European Union, the United States, and other third-party cooperation with Africa.

The five chapters that comprise the second part of the book provide case studies of China's emerging role in African peace and security. The first three of them focus on Beijing's involvement in addressing conflict issues in Sudan and South Sudan, which has widely been viewed as a test case for China in the Africa peace and security space. In [Chapter 8](#), 'China in international conflict management: Darfur issue as a case', Jian Junbo assesses Beijing's evolving conflict resolution role vis-à-vis Sudan's Darfur crisis that emerged in 2003, and how its policy of 'non-interference'



became increasingly flexible in practice. Junbo details the characteristics of China's policy as it shifted over three stages: from indifference to tentatively persuading Khartoum to accept a peacekeeping force, to finally becoming actively involved in resolving the crisis, including by engaging with the Darfur rebel groups. Finally, the author highlights how certain characteristics of China's active approach in this case has since been replicated in other conflict zones outside of Africa, including Libya in 2011 and Syria in 2012–2013.

In [Chapter 9](#), 'Sudan and South Sudan: A Testing Ground for Beijing's Peace and Security Engagement', Daniel Large offers a comprehensive survey of China's peace and security engagement with Sudan and South Sudan in terms of its North-South political axis and within South Sudan from 2011. In the case of South Sudan, Large argues that, besides offsetting accusations of a narrowly extractive role, or associations with arms supplies, what China has been attempting to do in the country could be regarded as representing an aspect of China's 'new type of big power relations' as enacted in Africa, seen in terms of its military projection, investment protection and efforts to support a political resolution of the conflict.

In [Chapter 10](#), 'Lesson Learning in the Case of China-Sudan and South Sudan Relations (2005–2013)', Laura Barber argues that many of China's key perceptions and assumptions about the nature of conflict in Africa and its impact on its own interests have been challenged within the Sudanese conflict. She exemplifies this by drawing out the lessons that have been learnt by Chinese foreign policy actors along the trajectory of change to China's foreign policy within the Sudanese context, as detailed in the previous two chapters. This is with a view to assess what Chinese foreign policy actors are learning about the African context and how such lesson learning has gradually led Beijing's foreign policy institutions to reassess the nature of China's own role in fragile contexts, such as the Sudans, particularly regarding its contribution towards peace and security initiatives.

Turning to the Sahel and West Africa, in [Chapter 11](#), 'China's New Intervention Policy: China's Peacekeeping Mission to Mali', Niall Duggan examines the nature of the conflict in Mali and Sino-Mali relations. This is with the view to assess whether the commitment of Chinese combat troops to the UN mission in Mali in July 2013 has marked the emergence of a new, more flexible interpretation of China's non-interference policy and the first step towards a more interventionist Chinese role in Africa. Duggan finds that in

the Malian case, China's new intervention policy was bound by the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Given that the conflict was driven by religious extremists and separatists who threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali, China may increasingly seek to set an international precedent that governments should be protected by the international community against religious extremists and separatists.

In [Chapter 12](#), 'China and Liberia: Engagement in a Post-Conflict Country (2003-2013)', Guillaume Moumouni assesses China's evolving engagement in a post-conflict West African country, namely Liberia. The chapter focuses on the ten years of Chinese-Liberian cooperation between 2003 and 2013, following the resumption of diplomatic relations. It is a multi-dimensional study of Beijing's involvement in international efforts to stabilise the country, through not only security initiatives, such as UN peacekeeping, but also aid, infrastructure, trade, investment, and governance. Of note, Moumouni's analysis reveals how Beijing is increasingly aware that for Liberia's reconstruction efforts to succeed, they must be underpinned by effective governance of international reconstruction resources and the rule of law.

In the final case study chapter, 'Security Risks facing Chinese Actors in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo', Wang Duangyong and Zhao Pei draw on a case study from Central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to survey the threat sources and subsequent security risks facing Chinese actors operating in fragile African states. In particular, the study highlights how threats facing China's interests abroad can be generated by both local dynamics and the actions of Chinese actors themselves. Indeed, the authors highlight that it is a lack of sufficient understanding of local African contexts on the Chinese side that continue to limit the mitigation of the risks facing Chinese citizens operating in fragile African environments.

The third and final part of this book seeks to situate China's evolving peace and security role in Africa in the broader context of regional and global perspectives. In [Chapter 14](#), 'China, Ethiopia and the West', Aaron Tesfaye highlights how deepening relations with Ethiopia has become increasingly central to both Chinese and Western efforts to support regional security efforts across the continent. Moreover, China's growing ties with Ethiopia has prompted increasing interaction between Beijing and Western on addressing security issues as a result of Addis Ababa's status as a political and diplomatic hub by hosting the headquarters of the African Union (AU), the United Nations Economic Commission to Africa (UNECA), and the African Standby Force (ASF).

One of the most visible symbols of China's growing commitment to supporting regional security efforts was perhaps Beijing's construction and handover of the towering Secretariat and modern Conference Centre to the African Union Commission (AUC) in Addis Ababa in January 2012. To contextualise this symbolic move, Charles Ukeje and Yonas Tariku in [Chapter 15](#), 'Beyond Symbolism: China and the African Union in African Peace and Security', trace the genealogy of China's engagements with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its 2002 reincarnation, the AU, and how its current engagement is articulated and defined within the broader framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Here, FOCAC, is viewed as an 'organisational' umbrella around which China's engagement with the AU is anchored. Finally, the chapter offers perspectives on the future of China vis-à-vis the AU in the area of peace and security; not only in terms of resourcing the Union and its activities, an area in which Beijing is playing a lead role only after the EU and the World Bank, but also on agenda setting where the potential for China to exercise stronger leverage is still limited.

In [Chapter 16](#), 'Comparing China's Approach to Security in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and in Africa: shifting approaches, practices and motivations', Rudolf du Plessis examines China's long-term security engagement with Central Asian states, specifically members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in order to provide a comparison with China's peace and security engagements in Africa. Such a comparative study provides useful insights into the trajectory of China's future engagements in the African peace and security landscape. Indeed, whereas China is a relative newcomer on the African stage and is yet to consolidate its approach towards fragile African states and safeguarding its citizens and interests, Beijing has been actively involved in forging close security and diplomatic ties with its resource rich, yet politically unstable central Asian neighbours for more than two decades.

Many of the chapters in this volume reveal how China is playing an increasingly positive role in conflict-affected and fragile environments in Africa. However, one of the areas where China is sometimes perceived to play a more ambiguous role is with regard to arms transfers. This somewhat contentious element of Beijing's engagement in fragile states has also nonetheless become subject to evolution. In the final chapter of this section, 'China and the UN Arms Trade Treaty', Bernardo Mariani and Elizabeth Kirkham chart China's growing arms trade, especially with Africa, and the evolution of Beijing's arms export controls in tandem

with its shifting position from initial suspicion to gradual acceptance of the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). They argue that greater Chinese compliance with such international standards in arms transfer control would begin to address the longer-term issue of Chinese arms transfers to conflict zones in Africa and beyond and the balance to strike between the profitability of arms sales against their potentially far-reaching negative consequences.

Finally, in the last chapter, Zhang Chun and Chris Alden reflect upon the challenges that greater engagement in African security environment, the institutional implications and the necessity of deepening substantive cooperation and understanding between Chinese and Africans at all levels.

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PART I

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*Africa's Peace and Security and China's  
Evolving Policy*

## Africa's Security Challenges and China's Evolving Approach to Africa's Peace and Security Architecture

*Abiodun Alao and Chris Alden*

Africa is a continent always in the news – most times for negative reasons. This is because the continent has always been on the receiving ends of global vicissitudes, having experienced issues like slave trade, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, among others. In the period immediately after the end of the Cold War (1990–2001), the continent accounted for 19 of the 57 total armed conflicts across the globe. Also, at about the same time, about 39% of the 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa enjoyed stable political conditions, while another 23% and 38% faced political turbulence and armed conflict, respectively. Against the background of its multiple experiences, there is the need for periodic stocktaking of the security situation in the continent. The need for this becomes all the more apparent because some of the security situations in the continent have, in the

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past, woken global consciousness, as were the cases during the Rwandan genocide, the civil wars in the DRC, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Consequently, a report of the current security situation is required for any discussion on the continent's relationship with the outside world.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the current issues currently occupying security attention in Africa and China's responses to some of these. While, of course, it is difficult to capture all the issues prevailing in the continent at any given time, a snapshot of the situation reveals at least five security issues currently dominating the continent's security outlook. These include: continued conflicts over natural resources; communal clashes and acrimonious inter-group relations within states; the problem emerging from religious radicalisation and violence; the challenges of the youth bulge; and unresolved issues surrounding democracy and democratic transitions. As a major power with an expanding global influence, all the developments taking place in Africa have impacted on China, and the country has subsequently responded to many of the security challenges identified above.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The seemingly enduring nature of African security problems and the various attempts to resolve them have been constant feature of the post-colonial period, shaping relations between African states, their societies and the international community. At the heart of this situation is the condition of the African state and its weaknesses, variously diagnosed as rooted in structural legacies of colonialism and neo-colonial practices, a fundamental disjuncture between an elitist state and diverse societies, or suffering from deficiencies ranging from deep-set corruption to chronic policy mismanagement.<sup>1</sup> While the notion of constructing a sustainable state apparatus featured to a degree in the independence struggle and colonial rationalisations for maintaining suzerainty, this debate was largely abandoned in favour of a swift withdrawal of formal European control in most of Africa. The phenomenon of 'juridical sovereignty' and the rise of 'shadow states' and host of other pathologies affecting the African state diagnosed by Western academics in the wake of independence, exacerbated by clientelist practices, appropriate the state for personal gain and the devastating impact of structural adjustment policies aimed at resolving these dilemmas.

As a result, throughout much of this period, African security was conceived and addressed by independence leaders whose focus was on strategies aimed at dismantling colonial rule, engaging in post-colonial nation-building, primarily

given expression through strengthening of authoritarian rule, and finding ways of accommodating foreign influence which was mostly framed within the terms of the exigencies of the Cold War. Bilateral defence agreements between African and selected foreign states were integral to post-colonial arrangements, with the French taking up the largest formalised role in Francophone states and engaging in military intervention invariably aimed at bolstering regime survival along with more selective support for particular African regimes by the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and Cuba. Localised African efforts at managing the problems of instability and state collapse during this period was limited, with a few notable exceptions, such as Tanzania's regime change in Amin's Uganda in 1979, OAU-sanctioned intervention into Chad in 1981, and Zimbabwe's extended military intervention into Mozambique's civil war from 1986 to 1992.

With the ending of the Cold War and the concurrent onset of a democratisation process across the continent, starting in Benin in 1991 and winding its way across much of Africa, a new security agenda for the continent began to take shape. It was one that was created primarily oriented towards managing these potentially volatile transitions away from authoritarianism and conflict and, as such, emphasised peacekeeping and the building of liberal institutions. This was formalised through the UN Security General's *Agenda for Peace* (1992; amended 1995) and reflected influential initiatives of the day such as the Commonwealth's Commission on Global Governance (1995).<sup>2</sup> African leaders, led by Salim Salim at the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), attempted to revitalise the regional approach to security on the continent in the early 1990s, laying the basis of many of the normative changes through the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

A turning point in the African security debate was finally reached with the massive failure of the international community and its African partners to stem the tide of instability, destruction and genocide in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These 'new wars' (to use the term applied at the time), said to be motivated by 'greed and grievance', exposed the severe deficiencies of some African states in managing complex claims to legitimacy and effective allocation of national resources variously rooted in ethnicity, chronic deprivation, and administrative corruption or failure.<sup>4</sup> The result was to spur on an expanded discourse, which diagnosed the sources of African instability as rooted in governance failures and aimed to address these through a range of policy prescriptions that included external intervention



on humanitarian grounds and built on past precedences of comprehensive restructuring of the economic and governance institutions. Collectively characterised as ‘liberal peace’, and given expression through processes which led to the UN Summit on the Responsibility to Protect and the establishment of the Commission on Peacebuilding in 2005, these steps were realised in UN-sanctioned interventions in the DRC and Sudan.<sup>5</sup>

For Africa, these enhanced efforts at tackling security were integrated into the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU), a process that culminated in 2002 with the passage of the Constitutive Act. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) that emerged from this process was a five-pronged organisation composed of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, the Panel of the Wise, the Peace Fund and the eight designated Regional Economic Communities (RECs – though only five presently lead in this area). The RECs, the building blocks of a continental union, have begun to develop regional forms of the AU’s standby force and early warning system.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the AU provisions for intervention as described in Article 4 went well-beyond the OAU’s defensive posture on sovereignty to one predicated on ‘non-indifference’, calling outright for intervention in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of conflict, where the state had abrogated its responsibilities to its citizens.<sup>7</sup> Coupled to this was a more robust endorsement of peacebuilding, democratic governance, and institutional development, through the issuing of the Common African Defence and Security Policy in 2004 and the Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in 2009.<sup>8</sup>

The AU, unlike its predecessor, has demonstrated a willingness to be actively involved in continental security issues, having gone on to suspend nine member governments for constitutional violations, applied sanctions against six member governments, and authorised several peace support operations in the last decade.<sup>9</sup> Relations between the AU and the RECs, nonetheless, are widely seen to be ‘imbalanced’ and unclear, with some well-developed regional organisations like ECOWAS able to field strong peace support missions while others effectively dysfunctional in security matters.<sup>10</sup> Overall dependency on some key bilateral and multilateral partners, notably the EU and the UN, is evident: while African ownership of the APSA process is emphasised throughout, measured in financial terms, as it stands today, the position is mostly rhetorical as Western governments supply the bulk of the financial requirements (98%) of the operational components of the AU.<sup>11</sup>

Particular peacekeeping operations, such as UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) have relied almost exclusively on funding support from EU sources.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the promotion of formalised ties between the UN Security Council and the AU – the only such regional arrangements and one strongly driven by South Africa during its two-term tenure as a non-permanent member – ensures both that African security issues and AU involvement feature highly on the global agenda.<sup>13</sup> Finally, important security issues, such as the continuing spread of arms sales – dominated by the Western armaments industry and its Russian counterparts – remain largely outside of official processes of scrutiny.

Despite these changes to formal policy and greater international activism, improvements in African security still remain distressingly episodic, with regional leadership seen in peace support operations in West African conflicts and UN involvement limited to selective involvement in peacekeeping and monitoring operations in Somalia, DRC, and the Sudans. The security-development nexus, increasingly recognised by scholars as crucial to creating the requisite conditions for sustainable security, was rarely integrated into policy initiatives that would stem long-term security problems.

Indeed, given the continuing low levels of development in Africa, characterised by states saddled with spiralling debt burdens, incapable of providing domestic revenue and channelling into investment in public sector and a foreign investment community that rarely looked beyond the extractive sector, the dire conditions in Africa seemed fixed in a cycle of misery. It is a situation ripe for change and indeed, in the late 1990s a new robust actor entered the stage whose involvement was to set in motion conditions that would transform the continent's fortunes: China. But before looking at the involvement of the country, there is the need to provide a panoramic survey of the security challenges that China met at the time of its decisive entrance into the African security arena and afterwards.

### *Controversies Over the Ownership, Management, and Control of Natural Resource*

In the last decade natural resources have been implicated in many conflicts that have brought Africa to the tribunal of international attention. From Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Angola, natural resources have been identified

as a crucial factor in the 'cause' and 'prolongation' of conflicts. Put together, these conflicts could have accounted for up to a million deaths and the displacement of several millions. The attempt to subject the causes or effects of these conflicts have led to several catch phrases, including 'Greed and Grievance', 'Tragedy of Endowment', 'Paradox of Plenty', and many others. Broadly, the nexus between natural resources and conflict would seem to exist on three broad levels, with resource endowments being linked to conflict as a cause, as a means of prolongation, and as a factor in the resolutions.

As a cause of conflict, natural resource considerations have become easily identifiable in many communal conflicts, especially over the ownership and control of land. On a wider national level, however, it is ironic that rarely have natural resources been blatantly evident as the sole cause of conflict, in spite of recent econometric and quantitative analysis suggesting the contrary. More often than not, natural resource issues form core considerations in conflicts that are attributable to other causes. Issues such as ethnicity and religion (in cases of internal conflicts) or boundary and ideological disagreements (in cases of external conflicts) are some of the subterfuges often exploited to conceal the crucial aspects of natural resource considerations. Once open conflict commences, however, the importance of natural resource considerations becomes so obvious that even warring factions no longer make pretence about them.

As a reason for the prolongation of conflicts, however, natural resources' role has been quiet profound. Indeed, the notoriety that natural resources have had in their link to conflict has come because of the role the resources have played in prolonging conflicts on the continent. It was also because of the link with prolongation of conflicts that the natural resources got into the calculation of the United Nations, especially in the civil wars in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sierra Leone. Indeed, the organisation set up a number of commissions to investigate the link between natural resources and conflicts in these countries. The first of such commissions was the Fowler Commission, set up in 1998, to investigate the sanction bursting in Angola, while two commissions – the Ba-N'Daw and Kassim commissions – were set up to investigate the role of mineral resources in the DRC conflict.

While in recent times key natural resources like oil and diamonds have been associated with conflict, there were strings of other conflicts that have been associated with other natural resources like pastoralism, land, and water. Indeed, all the countries in the continent have recorded clashes,

often communal, over the land and pastoral issues. Although the management of international river basins has not resulted in any major conflict among nations, it has remained an issue around which future concerns should be expressed.

Having provided a panoramic survey of the link between natural resources and conflict in Africa, it needs to be pointed out that the number of conflicts involving natural resources, while no longer attracting international attention, still remains high. There are several communal clashes over the ownership of land, a problem that is likely to become more profound because of the decision by many African countries to cede land to foreign countries and multinational corporations. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, land is Africa's most important natural resource, with its importance transcending economics into a breadth of social, spiritual, and political significance. Among other things, it is considered as the place of 'birth'; the place where the ancestors are laid to 'rest'; where the 'creator' has designated to be passed down to successive generations; and the final 'resting place' for every child born on its surface. Consequently, every society in Africa sees land as a natural resource that is held in trust for future generations, and the sacredness of this trust lies behind most of the conflicts over land in the continent. What further makes land vital to any discussion on conflict is that it is the 'abode' of most other natural resources – a characteristic that means that the controversies surrounding these resources often have to manifest through conflicts over the ownership, management, and control of land. It is thus likely that in the years ahead, issues surrounding land will continue to dominate attention in Africa, and the interest of Chinese in Africa's land must be viewed through this prism.

Two other natural resources whose management is crucial to understanding Africa's relationship with China are diamond and oil. As is well known the discovery of diamond in Zimbabwe, the country widely known as one of China's closest allies in the continent, has come with considerable controversies. Allegations of human rights violations have been rife, and the clash between the local claims of the diamond-producing communities and the desire of the central government to control the resource is almost certainly going to be at the centre of conflict in the country for quite some time to come. Consequently, any foreign country that has to navigate between the muddled waters of diamond politics in Zimbabwe will have to factor this into consideration. The other natural resource is oil, and the country that is most likely to be at the centre of attention here is

Nigeria. While there had historically been tension in the country's oil-producing region of Niger Delta, considerable peace was attained through some of the policies of the late President Umoru Yar'Adua. In recent times, however, there has been a resurgence of violence, and the government of President Mohamadu Buhari is facing a major security challenge that is likely to impact on all the countries with interest in Nigeria's oil endowment.

In concluding this discussion on the future of natural resources, it is important to point out that there is now a changing attitude to the management of these resources. While in the past Africa's natural resources were massively exploited without the people being able to question their leaders, today, these leaders are expected to be accountable. Again, while foreign multinational corporations have been able to milk the continent with impunity, there are now several court cases by African countries suing foreign multinational companies and even governments. For example, the government of Niger has sued French companies over the sharing formulae from uranium extraction. Nigeria's civil society groups in the oil-producing Niger Delta have successfully sued Shell as far as in American courts over pollution. Examples of this abound. Now many African countries have begun to say: 'So far, No further', to the disproportionate extraction of their natural resource endowment. Although as would be explained later there are still a number of challenges in the politics of resource extraction in the continent, remarkable progress has been made in giving voice to the people's concern about their natural resources. The African Union also came up with a Declaration on Illicit financial flow from Africa. But while there seems to be a reduction in the major conflicts surrounding natural resource management, the same cannot be said of the issues surrounding religious radicalisation and political violence.

### *Religious Radicalisation and Violence*

One of the most disturbing features of the last decade is the extent to which religious radicalisation has created security challenges that have stunted development, destroyed advances made in the global search for democracy and good governance, and threatened harmonious relations within and among states. In the course of the decade, virtually all the continents of the world recorded one case or the other of extreme violence emanating from the expression of radical religious beliefs. What has made this category of violence particularly worrisome is the 'borderless' nature

of its theatres, the indiscriminate extent of its victims, the spectacular forms of its targets, and the relative weakness of most of the affected countries to cope with the consequences of its aftermath. Against the background of the above, academic and policy responses to the phenomenon of radicalisation have dominated global discourses, with international organisations, especially the United Nations and its agencies, leading the way in the global search for a solution to a challenge that has become somewhat recalcitrant.

In a way, radicalisation is as much a 'cause' as it is a 'consequence' of insecurity. Key issues like youth vulnerability and exclusion, sharp disparities of wealth and aspiration, poor delivery of social services, governmental neglect, weak structures of governance, disenchantment with, and at times rejection of, the West, and quest for identity and greater authenticity are some of the causes and consequences that are relevant to radicalisation and violence. But inextricably tied with the phenomenon of violent radicalisation is its association with the stunting of development. Across the continent, consequences of radical religious views have reversed advances made in the area of political stability and economic development.

The manifestations of radicalisation in Sub-Saharan Africa are complex, as they often bring together different variables that may, on the surface, appear unconnected. For example, issues like ethnicity, political governance, and socioeconomic factors have come to underline the phenomenon in the region. Going briefly into specific, perhaps the first noticeable thing about radicalisation in Sub-Saharan Africa is that it is largely linked to the Islamic religion. Indeed, with the exception of the activities of the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda, there are no known cases of Christian radicalisation. Secondly, they are often targeted against the state, specifically determined to weaken internal stability within the state. The objective here is to give the population the impression that the state is 'incapable' of providing protection. The targeted outcome of this is to swerve the loyalty of the population from the government, thereby further weakening its structure and legitimacy.

Thirdly, more often than not they go for spectacular targets, especially those that would give them the publicity they so much crave for. Previous attacks of these groups have included major Malls, Embassies, United Nations Offices, Police Headquarters, Oil installations, and other similarly soft targets. It is also now being believed that the groups may want to make a template out of this pattern. For example, the Nairobi Mall bombing is fashioned against the Mumbai attack of November 2008.