

Editor's introduction

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Over the past decade, China's influence on the African continent has grown significantly. While this growth has been primarily within the economic sphere, such expansion has increasingly become bound up with issues of political involvement. There has been growing international pressure for China to play a greater role in peacekeeping efforts on the continent, a call which increasingly challenges its "non-interference" policy. As China increases its clout on the world stage, it is increasingly obliged to demonstrate traits of global leadership, not least of which is playing an instrumental role in securing regional and global security. The question of security in relation to China's "going out" policy is most pertinent to African case, where weak governance, ethnic conflict, civil and regional wars have wracked the continent. In fact, it is partially for such reasons that the Chinese have such a significant presence on the continent: Euro-American economic interests have, for many years, steered clear of various African states due to unacceptably high risks which business would have to shoulder. The African states where the most developed countries have tended to invest - particularly Europe - are states which have maintained strong ties harking

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back to the colonial period. China's drive, particularly for resources, has obliged it to enter markets where others have feared to tread. In the past decade and a half, the Chinese government and various Chinese companies have had to learn some hard and fast rules with regards to risk and security. From its initial high-risk investments, such as China National Petroleum Corporation's (CNPC) drilling for oil in the midst of the Sudanese civil war, China is becoming increasingly risk aware. Chinese companies are increasingly embracing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) models, hiring private security firms and using international political risk consultancies.

Thus the issue of security in relation to the Chinese presence in Africa is complex, ranging from the practical nuts and bolts of investment and the risk involved in such ventures but also the broader picture of China's role in regional and global security architectures. The bulk of articles in this edition (with the exclusion of Zhou Hang's piece) are a selection of extended versions of presentations given at a conference hosted by the CCS on the 25th and 26th of April 2013 entitled 'Managing Security and Risk in China Africa Relations'. The conference, which addressed issues of security ranging from business investments to the role of international organizations, attempted to grasp the topic from a number of different scales and perspectives. Despite the varying subject matter, a theme which unified the conference was that China's attitude toward security in Africa - at all levels - is one which is undergoing significant change. The arrow of this transformation points in the direction of China becoming an increasingly normative power, with greater risk awareness at the level of companies and greater participation in regional security organizations.

While China has long been reticent in this regard, signs of change now abound. Festus Aubyn's paper in this edition notes a distinct shift from the late 1980s onwards, when China began committing troops to the likes of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Sudan, Western Sahara, Cote d'Ivoire and Mozambique. Earlier this year (June 2013), China announced

that it would send combat troops to Mali – the first commitment of this kind. China has also demonstrated a more pro-active utilization of its membership on United Nations Security Council (such as its abstention –as opposed to its usual pattern of vetoing - with regards to the intervention in Libya in 2011) and a heightened commitment to the protection of Chinese citizens abroad (such as in its evacuation of 30 000 Chinese from Libya in 2011). The reasons as to why China is more assertive are discussed in some of the articles in this edition of AEAA. Zhou Hang’s paper scrutinizes which countries China sends its UN peacekeeping forces to in relation to the political and economic advantages which may be gained from deployment to that region. Using quantitative political science methods, his results are complex (and may be difficult for the non-specialist to grasp), but nonetheless suggest that China is selective as to where it sends its troops. It tends to avoid deployment in areas engaged in territorial conflict and leans toward greater deployment in regions of special economic interest. Certainly, huge capital investments are inevitably bound up with questions of securing assets and personnel, many of which belong to State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) which specialize in strategic commodities such as petroleum. In this sense, China’s growing role toward creating political stability on the continent is related to its long-term interests of creating a stable environment in which it can conduct its economic affairs.

Additionally, as this issue’s article by Xia Liping highlights, the Chinese state itself is playing a greater role in the everyday security of Chinese citizens and companies in Africa. Drawing on data from an survey carried out on Chinese companies in Africa, coupled with data gathered from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she presents an extensive list of the dangers posed to Chinese citizens and the preventative various measures taken by Chinese consulates (which include the development of registrations systems, regular safety checks, joint meetings with local police, government and business organizations and the growing role of the internet communication for safety interests). One of the reasons for this shift is that there is domestic pressure on China to protect its citizens abroad. Another reason is that as China integrates itself globally, it is increasingly adopts the western “norms” of risk and securi-

ty calculus. A current running through several of the papers suggests that China's official policy of 'non-interference' in the affairs of other countries requires some reconceptualization. A major driver for this shift is that as China increases its economic and political presence on the continent – and the world at large – adhering to such a principle becomes increasingly unrealistic (within Chinese policy circles, there are debates about re-framing the term, such as Wang Yizhou's notion of 'creative involvement'). Tom Wheeler's paper, which draws on various examples of the interface between economic and political interests, highlights China's inevitable (and in his view, healthy) path toward playing a greater role in African security issues. At the same time, he highlights some of the barriers to this engagement, such as Chinese ministries shying away from allocating funds toward security. Such reticence is in part structural: ministries' mandates and budgets often do not include provisioning for such measures; transforming these structures is no easy task, as officials are weary of being drawn into intractable conflicts they would rather not have to worry about.

This issue of AEAA goes to press as the events of a terrorist attack by al-Shabaab upon a shopping mall in Kenya unfolds. The attack has left scores dead, including Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, British, Americans, Chinese and Koreans. It has been speculated that the site was targeted precisely because of its attraction to the international community living in Nairobi. This event, in tandem with broader threats of Islamic militancy in East and West Africa, not to mention piracy off the coast of Somalia, indicates a broader threat to the international community in Africa, in which Chinese citizens are as vulnerable as a host of other nations' citizens. There have already been calls in the Chinese press for greater co-operation between various countries in the combating of such attacks. Making a break from the usual discourse which pits China and the West at economic and political odds within Africa, such events may bring China and the international community closer together in terms of security co-operation. Judging by the recent changes in China's attitude toward African se-

curity, coupled with continued economic investment in the continent, we can expect that in years to come the question of security and engagement will only increase in importance. The articles in this special edition of AEAA offer the reader some food for thought as to how this evolving process may play itself out.