

China's Engagement in African Security Affairs in the Post-Cold War Era*

Xiaohong Xu

China Foreign Affairs University, Beijing, China

China has become an increasingly important player across the African continent since the end of the Cold War. Given the scale and breadth of its political and economic involvement in Africa, some Western scholars claim that China's "return to Africa" has been one of the most important developments the region has witnessed in the past two decades. One phenomenon worthy of particular attention is that, other than strengthening economic ties with African states, China has been playing a more active role in helping promote peace and stability on the continent. In other words, Sino-African coordination on security-related issues has been intensified since the end of the Cold War. What kind of role has China been playing or sought to play in this area? What factors have motivated China to engage more actively in African security affairs? And are there any challenges Beijing has to face when pursuing common security interests with its African counterparts? Seeking to provide preliminary answers to these questions, this article mainly investigates China's increasing role in promoting peace and safeguarding security in Africa.

Keywords: China-Africa security affairs, Sino-African relations, post-Cold War

Sino-African Relations in Retrospect

A brief look at the history shows that, since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the late 1970s when China launched domestic reforms and opened up to the outside world, China's ties with African states concentrated on two spheres. In the economic domain, China had been offering both economic and technical assistances to Africa since the 1950s (Muekalia, 2004, pp. 6-7). Statistics show that China provided over \$2.4 billion of aid to over 36 African states from 1956 to 1977, taking up to 58% of Chinese total foreign aid in that period (Weinstein & Henriksen, 1980, pp. 117-121). On the political and ideological fronts, as the largest developing country in the world, China had been the steadfast supporter of African states' pursuit of national independence and their struggle against hegemony and power politics. According to the "Three Worlds" theory conceived by Chairman Mao Zedong and presented first by Deng Xiaoping at the United Nations (UN) in 1974, African nations were the key components of the vast "third world", which China sought to unite in opposing the superpowers.

Chinese foreign policy and Sino-African relations underwent significant changes as China modified its diplomatic objectives and strategies since the early 1980s. Giving more priority to economic recovery than to promoting revolutions against imperialism, China started emphasizing the development of normal relations

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with other states irrespective of their social systems or ideological beliefs. The end of the Cold War has further propelled China to re-steer its foreign policy “from confrontation to cooperation” and “from isolation to international engagement” (Muekalia, 2004, p. 7). Seeking to forge a positive national image in the international arena, China has been working to improve its bilateral ties with others on one hand while expanding its participation in multilateral organizations on the other hand. As a result, China's overall foreign policy has become “more dynamic, constructive, flexible and self-confident” than before (Tull, 2006, p. 460).

Developing countries have always been the cornerstone of Chinese diplomacy. As the continent with the largest number of developing countries, Africa has been of particular importance to China. The post-Cold War decades have witnessed unprecedented progress in Sino-African relations. In his visit to Africa in 1996, then Chinese President Jiang Zemin put forward a “five-point proposal” on forging a long-term and stable Sino-African relationship¹. To further strengthen Sino-African ties, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was founded in 2000 as a key mechanism of Sino-African consultation on issues of common concern. The first FOCAC ministerial meeting was held in Beijing in October 2000, in which 44 African delegations and China adopted two milestone documents—the “Beijing Declaration of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation” and the “Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development”. Since then, the Forum has been meeting every three years at the ministerial level and finished its sixth session by December 2015.

As a new step to enhance Sino-African friendship, China issued an official document—“China's African Policy” on January 12, 2006, in which China reiterated its guiding principles for forging “a new type of strategic partnership with Africa”². Against such a background, coordinative relations between China and Africa have been in rapid rise in the past two decades.

China's Increasing Engagement in African Security Affairs: Policies and Actions

China's engagement in African security affairs has been multi-level and multi-dimensional in the post-Cold War era. At the international level, China involves mainly under the framework of international regimes such as the UN, taking part in peacekeeping missions and helping tackle non-traditional security (NTS) threats. At the continental level, China broadens its participation mainly through intensifying ties with regional organizations like the African Union (AU); and in the bilateral sphere, China spares no effort to promote military cooperation with its African counterparts.

Security Engagement at the Global Level

Participating in UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa. One of the key areas China engages for peace in Africa is taking part in the UN's peacekeeping missions here. Unlike the Cold War era when China was reluctant to participate in the UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs), China started adopting a more enthusiastic attitude since the mid-1980s. After joining the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (UNSCPO) in 1988, the PRC, for the first time ever, sent 20 civilian officials to the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia in 1989 (He, 2007, p. 24). As of December 31, 2016, there were 2,630 Chinese police, troops and military experts conducting ten of the UN's ongoing operations around the world (UN, 2016). In fact, “China currently sends more peacekeeping troops abroad than any other permanent members of the UN Security Council” (Wu & Taylor, 2011, p. 137).

¹ The proposals include “sincere friendship, treating each other equally, unity and cooperation, common development and looking into the future”.

² The full text of “China's African Policy” is available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm>

The majority of the UNPKOs China has participated are concentrated on the African continent (see Table 1). Over the past two decades, Chinese blue helmet troops have been serving in places as extensive as Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Western Sahara, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, and South Sudan, etc. Statistics show that the PRC dispatched over 3,000 peacekeepers to Africa between 1990 and 2006, taking up to 50% of its overall peacekeeping personnel in the period (Zhao, 2007). Among the 10 ongoing UNPKOs China is committed, seven are located in Africa, for which China deploys 2,202 men and women or 84% of its total UNPKO forces.

Table 1

Chinese Contributions to UNPKOs (As of December 2016)

	Mission	Experts on mission	Contingent troops	Individual police	Formed police units	Total
1	MINURSO	11				11
2	MINUSMA		401			401
3	MONUSCO	9	221			230
4	UNAMID		231			231
5	UNMIL	1	127	3	140	271
6	UNMISS	3	1050	2		1055
7	UNOCI	3				3
8	UNTSO	4				4
9	UNFICYP			6		6
10	UNIFIL		418			418
	TOTAL	31	2448	11	140	2630

China adheres to the three fundamental principles stipulated by the UN when contributing to peacekeeping missions³. Guided by these principles, China insists that the host states' sovereignty be respected when UNPKOs are enforced while unilateral actions outside of the UN framework are not accepted (Carlson, 2004; He, 2007). Moreover, to enhance the management and training of its blue helmets, China established its Peacekeeping Affairs Office and the Peacekeeping Center in the Ministry of National Defense in 2001 and 2009 respectively⁴.

Helping Combat Non-traditional Security Threats. The surge of NTS threats has been a critical issue all nations are confronted with in the post-Cold War era. For Africa in particular, maritime piracy off the Horn of Africa as well as the outbreak of virus diseases are posing mounting threats. By offering a helping hand to African states in their campaign against the NTS issues, China extends the scale and depth of its security engagement in Africa.

The Gulf of Aden and its surrounding areas are strategic sea lines, since an average of 20,000 ships pass through the Gulf annually, transporting nearly 12% the world's daily oil supply and 80% of international maritime trade with Europe (Kraska & Wilson, 2009, p. 1; Nincic, 2009). However, pirate attacks in recent years "have reached unprecedented proportions and are now influencing the perceived viability of key sea lanes of communication" (Chalk, 2010, p. 90). From 2008 to 2009, "a total of 322 actual or attempted acts of piracy were recorded off the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden and southern Red Sea", taking 46% of all incidents recorded in the world (Chalk, 2010, p. 90).

³ These rules include: seeking the consent of the main parties to the conflict before deploying PKO forces, upholding the principle of impartiality and taking the use of force as a measure of last resort with the authorization of the UN Security Council. For more, see <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/principles.shtml>

⁴ China's National Defense in 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2011/201103/t883534.htm>

To combat piracy and ensure navigation security, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted Resolution A.979 (24) in 2005 and Resolution A.1002 (25) in 2007, urging member states to cooperate fully to deter piracy and armed robbery in waters off the coast of Somalia⁵. From 2008 to 2011, the UN Security Council adopted a series of resolutions as well, condemning acts of piracy while urging all states concerned to cooperate extensively on counter-piracy missions⁶. The UN specifically called upon member states to deploy naval vessels and military aircrafts to repress acts of piracy (UN, 2008).

In line with the IMO and UN resolutions, China responded promptly to tackle the piracy threats in Africa. On December 26, 2008, the PRC dispatched three naval ships, including two destroyers DDG-171 Haikou, DDG-169 Wuhan, and a supply ship—Weishanhu, to conduct escort operations in the Gulf of Aden (Xu, 2010). China's naval deployment to Somalia was a huge breakthrough since not only was this "China's first operational deployment outside of Asia" (Christoffersen, 2009, p. 9) but it demonstrated a shift in China's perception of security from traditional security to NTS (Christoffersen, 2009, p. 2).

China's escort missions to the African shores aim mainly to ensure the navigation security of its own ships and foreign vessels delivering humanitarian supplies for the World Food Program and other multilateral agencies. According to China Defense Ministry, by July 2016, the PRC had dispatched 68 ship deployments in 23 sorties on escort missions, providing protection for over 6200 ships sailing under Chinese and foreign flags.

Apart from combating piracy along the African coastline, China also took active part in the global campaign against the Ebola disease. The latest outbreak of Ebola virus, starting from Guinea in 2013 and spreading rapidly to Liberia, Sierra Leone and further to Europe and the Americas, has been unprecedented in its scale, severity and complexity (WHO, 2015, p. 1), affecting 28,616 cases and leading to 11,310 deaths by May, 2016⁷.

With the call of the World Health Organization (WHO) for help, the PRC responded in time by offering assistances to the infected countries. In the initial phase of the outbreak, Chinese medical teams dispatched to West African countries engaged immediately in the anti-Ebola campaign. Besides rendering medical treatment to patients, they also offered training to thousands of local health workers and sanitized public facilities such as schools⁸. From August to November 2014, China donated up to 750 million RMB of materials and financial assistances in four batches to the WHO, the AU and the infected countries while dispatching more than 450 public health experts and medical workers to the anti-Ebola frontline (Guo, 2014).

Sino-African Security Cooperation at the Continental Level

Except for participating in African security affairs within the framework of multilateral institutions, China also takes initiative to further its ties with key regional organizations in Africa, especially with the AU.

Ever since its founding in 2002, the AU has been the leading mechanism of regional integration in Africa. Aiming to build a more peaceful and stable Africa, the AU has been dedicated to promoting security cooperation and enhancing capacity building among its member states. For instance, the AU established its

⁵ For the two Resolutions, see [http://www.imo.org/blast/blastDataHelper.asp?data_id=25750&filename=A979\(24\).pdf](http://www.imo.org/blast/blastDataHelper.asp?data_id=25750&filename=A979(24).pdf); [http://www.imo.org/blast/blastDataHelper.asp?data_id=25332&filename=A1002\(25\).pdf](http://www.imo.org/blast/blastDataHelper.asp?data_id=25332&filename=A1002(25).pdf)

⁶ From 2008 to 2011, on the piracy of the Somalia area, the UN Security Council passed Resolutions 1814, 1816, 1838, 1844, 1846, 1851, 1897 and 2018. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/>

⁷ For more information, see <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/view.ebola-sitrep.ebola-summary-20160511?lang=en>

⁸ "Remarks by H. E. Ambassador Zhang Yue at the Ceremony of Handover of China ETU cum Groundbreaking of the Renovation of SKD Stadium", Chinese Embassy in Liberia, available at <http://lr.china-embassy.org/chn/sghdhzxxx/t1264496.htm>

Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2004 as a collective and early warning arrangement to facilitate timely and effective response to crisis situations. Article 4(g) of the AU Constitutive Act also endows the Union with the right to intervene in member states under such grave circumstances as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity⁹.

China takes various measures to consolidate its relations with the AU. In the first place, China has formalized its liaison mechanism with the AU in the past two decades. Ever since 1998, China started sending delegations to attend the OAU/AU summit meetings and Chinese ambassadors to Ethiopia were appointed as representatives to the AU since 2005 (Luo, 2013). China eventually opened its Permanent Mission to the AU in March 2015, thus becoming the second after the US to do so. Meanwhile, the China-AU Strategic Dialogue was initiated since 2008 and six talks had been held by 2015. Both initiatives have boosted Sino-African coordination in multiple areas, including security affairs.

Moreover, China seeks to enhance the AU's peace-making capacity by offering substantive assistances, since the lack of capital and human resource has seriously restrained its capacity in conflict management. To help the AU overcome such difficulties, the PRC started offering material and financial support for its peacekeeping missions in Congo (Kinshasa), Burundi, Darfur, and Somalia since 2001. According to incomplete records, China offered around \$1.9 million of financial aid to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and two million dollars to enhance AU's peacekeeping capacity from 2009 to 2011. In addition, China provided 30 million RMB of military and logistic support to AMISOM in late 2011¹⁰.

China's Promotion of Bilateral Security Coordination

Mediating in Domestic Military Conflicts. The African continent has long been plagued with military conflicts. For instance, in the Darfur region of Sudan, accusing the central government of neglecting and marginalizing Darfur economically and politically, southern-based rebel groups—the “Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the “Justice and Equality Movement” (JEM)—launched attacks against governmental forces since 2003. By early 2004, around 80,000 people had been killed while 100,000 people had taken refuge in neighboring Chad and another one million were internally displaced (Shinn, 2009, p. 86).

In military disputes like the Darfur crisis, China seeks to play a constructive role as a messenger and a mediator. Different from its Western counterparts which were determined to coerce the Sudanese government, China insisted on resolving the Darfur crisis through political means. For that end, the PRC communicated with all parties concerned so that differences among them could be reduced and trust be built.

China's mediation for Darfur was intense and effective. In February 2007, then Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Sudan and met with President Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, proposing four principles for addressing the Darfur crisis featuring peaceful solution and equal consultation¹¹. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister and Special Envoy to Sudan Zhai Jun paid a four-day visit to Sudan in April 2007 and urged President al-Bashir to accept the UN peacekeeping plan. One month later, Ambassador Liu Guijin was appointed as the Special Envoy to Darfur, who worked strenuously to facilitate dialogues and build consensus between all

⁹ See http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/key_oau/au_act.htm

¹⁰ See <http://et.china-embassy.org/chn/zfmgx/t890096.htm>

¹¹ These principles include: respecting Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, solving the issue by peaceful means and by sticking to dialogue and consultation based on equality, letting the AU and the UN play constructive roles in a peacekeeping mission in Darfur and improving the humanitarian conditions of local people. For more information, see <http://www.china.org.cn/english/international/198792.htm>

parties concerned. Ambassador Liu was applauded for contributing significantly to finding “pragmatic and feasible” solutions for the deployment of UN forces in Darfur (Holslag, 2008, pp. 80-81). Moreover, after the UN-AU hybrid peacekeeping force was deployed, China dispatched an engineer brigade of 315 men to assist the AU/UN hybrid operation in Darfur.

More recently, since the breakout of the civil war in South Sudan, China responded timely by sending its new Special Representative on African Affairs Ambassador Zhong Jianhua to South Sudan, whose frequent consultation with his counterparts in Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, the US, and European countries concerned helped the reaching of a peace deal. Moreover, to support the UN's peacekeeping effort in South Sudan, China deployed an infantry battalion of 700 soldiers to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in December 2014. As the “first ever deployment of a Chinese infantry battalion in a UN Peacekeeping mission”, this demonstrates China's increasing commitment to promoting peace and stability in South Sudan¹².

Promoting Military Exchanges With African States. Bilateral military exchanges between China and African states have been broadened as China seeks to build “new strategic partnerships” with Africa. On one hand, exchanges between Chinese military units and their African counterparts have increased rapidly since the end of the Cold War. For instance, in July 2000, a marine fleet of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) paid a friendly visit to Tanzania, which was the first time a PLA fleet called on an African port since 1949 (Muekalia, 2004, p. 11). In addition, China and South Africa held joint maritime exercises in 2007 and 2008 (Xu, 2010, p. 14). On the other hand, China has also been providing military aid and supplies to African states, with the primary goal of enhancing the latter's capability in peacemaking and peacebuilding. For example, Beijing started training African military personnel in mine sweeping while providing equipment needed for that purpose ever since 2007.

China's Strengthened Efforts to Build Peace in Africa: Motives and Explanations

China's deepening engagement in African security affairs has been driven by multiple factors. Firstly, China's actions serve its national interests, as China has become a crucial stakeholder on the continent. Secondly, reflecting “a forward-looking, bold and comprehensive initiative inspired by a long-term strategic vision” (Muekalia, 2004, p. 10), China's determination to upgrade its engagement is also founded on its new perceptions of national security, national interests, and China's international status, which have evolved gradually from the PRC's integration into the international arena and its continued learning in the process. Finally, the strengthening of Sino-African ties in the security domain is an inheritance of China's internationalist approach to the Third World, based on the two sides' “long-term friendship” ever since the Cold War era.

Safeguarding Chinese National Interests

With its rapid rise in the past decades, China has become an important stakeholder in Africa, since its ever increasing economic and strategic interests are closely intertwined with peace and security of Africa. In other words, China's overseas interests will not be well protected in a continent plagued with military disputes, civil wars, or terrorist threats. Therefore, China's determination to deepen security ties with Africa has been driven first by the urgent need of safeguarding its national interests.

¹² “UNMISS Chinese Infantry Peacekeepers to be Based in Juba”, January 15, 2015, see <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-chinese-infantry-peacekeepers-be-based-juba>

Economic ties between China and African states have been growing exponentially over the past three decades. In terms of trade, while China-Africa trade was only \$10.5 billion in 2000 (Adem, 2010, p. 337), the volume rose to \$107 billion by 2008 (Lagerkvist, 2009, pp. 122-123) and hit a record high of \$220 billion by 2014 (Zhou, 2016, p. 6). Since 2009, China has also been Africa's largest trade partner (China State Council, 2013).

Chinese import of crude oil has been a fast-growing part of its trade with Africa. While Chinese oil import from Africa was only \$77 million in the early 1990s, the volume already increased to \$27.1 billion by 2009. The ratio of China's oil import from Africa in its overall oil import rose from 4.5% to 30.4% in the same period (Deng & Wang, 2012, pp. 21-22). Besides providing oil resource, Africa has been an important source of raw materials such as cotton, iron ore, and log for Chinese imports.

Along with the surge of trade, the past two decades have also witnessed an acceleration of Chinese direct investment in Africa, especially since the PRC initiated the "going global" strategy for its enterprises in 1999. According to the White Paper on Sino-African economic and trade cooperation (China State Council, 2013), Chinese direct investment in Africa increased from \$1.44 billion to \$2.52 billion from 2009 to 2012, with an annual growth rate of 20.5%. Meanwhile, China's accumulative direct investment increased from \$9.33 billion to \$21.23 billion (China State Council, 2013), which grew over \$30 billion by 2014.

The operation of Chinese enterprises covers almost all African states while spanning over multiple industries and sectors. By 2005, more than 800 Chinese enterprises had invested in Africa and over 82,000 Chinese were working for various projects (Li, 2006, p. 17; Lagerkvist, 2009, p. 123). The numbers grew over 2000 and one million respectively by 2013 (Yuan, 2014). Operating from infrastructure and agriculture to manufacturing and mining, etc., these Chinese enterprises also offered up to 140,000 jobs to local residents by 2013¹³.

Sino-African economic exchanges generate win-win outcomes for both sides. On one hand, bilateral trade and Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have helped African states alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development (Brautigam & Gaye, 2007; Kopinski et al., 2011). On the other hand, closer economic ties with Africa cater to China's own needs as well. Particularly, China's fast-growing demand for oil and other raw materials has been better served with Africa becoming its crucial source of resource imports.

While Chinese economic interests are accumulating rapidly in Africa, it is faced with mounting risks due to the volatile security conditions in Africa. With the surge of extremist groups like the ISIS and the weak governance of many African governments, terrorist attacks against UN peacekeepers and foreigners have been on the rise, putting Chinese workers and Chinese interests under jeopardy. According to incomplete records, in only six years between 2007 and 2013 there were 13 cases of Chinese citizens getting robbed or kidnaped by African rebels¹⁴. For example, 29 workers from the Sinohydro Corporation were captured by rebels in Sudan's South Kordofan in January 2012 (Higgins, 2012), and one person died after days of rescue efforts. Terror attacks like these are posing increasing threats to Chinese citizens and interests in Africa, which compels the PRC to tackle effectively.

Conceptual Changes in National Interests, National Security and International Status

While China's expanding interests in Africa serve as the material motive for China to deepen its

¹³ China Commerce Yearbook 2013. The Editorial Board of China Commerce Yearbook. Beijing, China.

¹⁴ "13 Cases of Chinese Getting Attacked in Africa". Retrieved from <http://economy.caixin.com/2012-10-17/100448141.html>

involvement in African security affairs, its redefining of such key concepts as national interests, national security as well as international status have laid the ideational foundation for Chinese actions. Facilitated by the RPC's engagement with and learning from the international community since its return to the UN in the 1970s, such conceptual reforms and the subsequent readjustments of its foreign policy have contributed greatly to the country's more proactive engagement in Africa.

Renewed Understandings of China's "National Interests". Firstly, the gradual but determined re-forging of Chinese thinking of "national interests" is one crucial basis for it to involve more profoundly in African security affairs. Different from the Cold War era when China refrained from publicly addressing national interests due to ideological concerns, decision-makers and the media have become much bolder and are more willing to talk about Chinese national interests since the end of the Cold War. In fact, both the policy circle and the academia have not only recognized the necessity of conceptualizing, categorizing, and prioritizing national interests in multiple realms but also called for their protection and extension at various levels (Yan, 1997, p. 67).

A key feature of China's redefined "national interests" is reflected in its emphasis on the "overseas interests". Since its opening up and reform in the late 1970s, China accelerated its pace of returning to the international system. Besides embracing international regimes politically and opening itself up to foreign investment and trade economically, Chinese enterprises and citizens also took active part in the opening-up process by expanding business and living across the globe.

With millions of Chinese citizens living abroad, China's national interests extend beyond its territorial borders. Recognizing such overseas interests as an integral part of its national interests while attaching great importance to their safeguarding and promotion demonstrate the PRC's renewed perception of its national interests.

In the view of Chinese scholars, China's overseas interests consist of at least two parts (Su, 2009; Liu, 2010). On the material side, they encompass the personal security of overseas Chinese and Chinese citizens living abroad, the property safety of Chinese enterprises and organizations operating abroad, the security of key sea lanes, and the secure extension of foreign markets for Chinese commodities. On the "soft power" side, such interests are embedded in China's increasing global influences and its decision-making and rule-setting power in international regimes.

China's embracing of "overseas interests" is indicative of its evolving understanding of national interests under different contexts and at multiple levels. After securing national survival, international recognition and socioeconomic growth, nations will pursue farther goals such as more prominent international status and more global influences, China is no exception. China's rising power requires it to provide more public goods for the world, particularly more regional and global security commitments. Therefore, China decided to invest more to safeguard its overseas interests in the early 2000s, serving its citizens abroad while helping shape a favorable image for itself.

New Thinking of "National Security" Forged. Secondly, China's new perceptions of "national security" also motivate it to act in seemingly remote and irrelevant places like Africa. More than 20 years of learning from the international system has enabled Chinese leaders to internalize new norms and thus reshape their thinking of national security. Consequently, China started advocating its "new concepts of security" in many multilateral forums since the mid-1990s, featuring "mutual trust, mutual benefits, equality and cooperation".

On one hand, different from the Mao era when security and interests of the country preceded those of

individual citizens, new generations of Chinese leaders have attached more importance to individual security. Through more profound integration with the international arena, Chinese leaders have realized that the connotation of national security includes but is not confined to safeguarding one's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, upholding one's regime structure, maintaining domestic stability, and pursuing growth in its preferred way. It also extends to such elements as ensuring the security of one's citizens. Such a "people-oriented" perspective of national security justifies the PRC's deeper engagement in African security affairs, since it not only caters to the demands of African people for peace but also ensures the security of Chinese in Africa.

On the other hand, in China's re-conceptualization of its national security, "cooperation for common security" has been embraced as an effective means of promoting peace and resolving international disputes. In their official rhetoric, Chinese leaders call for all states, particularly major powers, to forsake the Cold War mentality while taking security coordination as a "win-win" process instead of a zero-sum game. Meanwhile, they suggest that by enlarging common interests in all spheres, countries could build a more solid foundation for deepening cooperation in security affairs.

The PRC's advocacy of security cooperation originates from at least two sources. Firstly, the surge of global issues and NTS risks in the post-Cold War era has rendered security cooperation a sheer necessity. Facing multiple cross-border threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and financial tsunamis, Chinese policymakers become keenly aware that all states should take joint efforts to tackle them together. No single country, even like China with rapidly rising national capacities, is able to address such issues alone.

Secondly, such awareness has also been augmented by China's learning from the international system. For instance, recognizing that new security issues were reshaping the entire international system, American researchers put forward the concept of "cooperative security" in the early 1990s (Carter, Steinbruner, & Perry, 1992), arguing that global security could only be ensured through cooperation among all actors rather than confrontational methods. Though no direct linkage was proved to exist between China's reshaping of its security policies and such academic analyses, it is fair to argue that China may have been enlightened by such new ideas.

With its new thinking of national interests which embraces overseas interests as an integral part and a new perception of national security which stresses individual security and cooperative security, China's deeper engagement in Africa for peacebuilding gets "naturally" justified, since this is not only conducive to the protection of China's overseas interests and citizens but also serves to reinforce Sino-Africa cooperation in their mutually concerned areas.

"Responsible Developing Power"—A New Identity Forged. Along with the redefining of its national security and interests, China has also re-identified itself as a "responsible major power" in the global arena. Forging such an identity demonstrates China's strategic initiative under a new international context.

During the Cold War era, especially after the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations since the late 1950s, China viewed itself as the authentic leader of the International Communist Movement and a vanguard of the campaign against American imperialism, implementing a strategy of struggling against both the United States and the Soviet Union. With China's resumption of its UN membership and the China-US détente in the early 1970s, the PRC embarked on the long process of returning to the international community, in which its self-identity changed from a steadfast opponent of the West-dominated international system to an indifferent

bystander, then to an inactive participant, and eventually to an enthusiastic system participant and supporter.

China's re-identification as a "responsible power" is founded on its unprecedented rise on the first hand and its integration into the international system as a result of learning on the other. With its GDP growing from 455.1 billion RMB in 1980 to 9.98 trillion RMB in 2000 and as a member of 273 multilateral organizations by 2003¹⁵, Chinese leaders realized that China could no longer act as a challenger or revolutionary against the existing system. On the contrary, it needed to endorse and integrate fully into it to better protect its own interests and further the overall interests of the "Third World".

For China, being a responsible power means it should be ready to take more regional and global responsibilities both as a system stabilizer and as an engine of economic growth. Particularly, it should be able and willing to offer more public goods to the international community and play a more constructive role in managing conflicts, resolving disputes, and boosting development. Moreover, it requires China to integrate more profoundly into the world as a system builder instead of a saboteur.

Meanwhile, even as the world's second largest economy, China still identifies itself as a developing country. This reflects a rather objective self-evaluation of China's national capabilities, since it lags far behind Western nations in terms of GDP per capita, overall competitiveness, and other dimensions of socioeconomic development. Founded on such awareness, China is ready to take responsibilities selectively and cautiously.

China's "Internationalist" Principles Inherited

Besides material motives and ideational changes, China tightening its security ties with Africa has also been motivated by its internationalist tradition to other developing countries. Combining liberal views which stress cooperation among states and communist ideologies which emphasize the unification of the oppressed for self-improvement, internationalism was manifested mainly in China's support of African states' struggle for national independence during the Cold War years. In the post-Cold War era, the PRC adheres to this principle by assisting Africa in socioeconomic development as well as conflict resolution.

China's internationalist stance towards Africa is embedded in their common identity resulting from a shared history of Western colonization. Both China and most African states were either colonized or dominated by Western powers and they struggled hard before gaining national independence, hence uniting against hegemonism and foreign impingement on their sovereignty was their common objective in the Cold War era. To help African states fight against colonialism, China started offering both economic and military aid since the 1950s.

China did not forsake its internationalist strategy even after the end of the Cold War. China is willing to offer a helping hand to Africa since, as the largest developing country, it feels obliged to help its African brothers alleviate chronic poverty and military turmoil. Owing to its opening-up and reforms, China "has emerged from colonial encroachment, internal chaos and economic destitution to achieve spectacular economic growth and infrastructure development" in the past decades (Zhu, 2010, p. 29). The African continent, however, has long been plagued with poverty, political instability, and military confrontation. Africa has been further marginalized strategically and economically since the end of the Cold War due to Western disengagement and rapid globalization. To consolidate Sino-African brotherhood forged decades ago and to increase the leverage of the developing world in the international arena, China chooses to stick to its internationalist principle by offering both economic and security assistances to Africa.

¹⁵ For GDP data, see <http://data.stats.gov.cn/search.htm?s=GDP>

Challenges Ahead

Although China and African states have been stepping up their coordination for peace and security, China is faced with multiple challenges ahead. As China's influences grow rapidly, Western powers are increasingly viewing it as a potential challenger able and willing to overtake or replace them in Africa. Specifically, since China and the West differ on issues like what should be the proper modes of peacebuilding and the effective models of growth for Africa, and since they hold divergent views in debates like "state sovereignty vs. human rights" and "intervention vs. non-intervention", competitions between them may sharpen in the long run as Western powers become more skeptical of "China threats" in Africa.

Firstly, questioning the motives of China, some critics argue that China's "re-entry" into Africa in the post-Cold War era has been driven mostly by its urgent quest for natural resources, raw material, and potential markets (Brooks & Shin, 2006; Taylor, 2007). In the words of Gaye (2007), "China is not in Africa for philanthropic reasons" but "another imperial power pursuing its national interest" (p. 5).

Meanwhile, quite some analysts contend that Sino-African economic interaction could not be equal or mutually beneficial since it is asymmetrical in nature (Kopinski et al., 2011). Some even depict Sino-African partnership as a typical "core-periphery relationship", in which Africa is exploited and trapped in a fragile situation of exporting only primary products to meet China's demands (Taylor, 2007). Therefore, they keep warning African states against China's "creeping neo-imperialism" and "neocolonialism" (Edoho, 2011, p. 108).

In the security domain, particularly regarding Sino-African military exchanges, some Western observers accuse China of complicating Africa's prospect of democratic consolidation and good governance due to its support of authoritarian rulers and its indifference to human rights violations (Taylor, 2007). Since the 1980s, traditional aid donors have been imposing stricter economic and political conditions when delivering aid to their recipients, such as conducting structural adjustments and promoting democratic reforms, etc. Different from the West, China has followed the principle of not attaching any conditions in its aiding of Africa. This has made China a constant target of Western criticism which stresses that Chinese economic aid has supported dictatorial elites in Africa, helping them legitimize and consolidate their corrupt rule while augmenting their personal wealth at the costs of good governance and human rights protection (Kopinski et al., 2011; Tull, 2006, p. 463). Meanwhile, as Sino-African military exchanges intensify, some Western scholars blame China for supplying military equipment to "troubled states" like Sudan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Angola (Brooks & Shin, 2006; Adem, 2010, p. 343).

Moreover, as China endeavors to play a constructive role in conflict management in Africa, some critics stipulate that China's "indifference" to the internal affairs of its African partners has been exacerbating existing conflicts by supporting corrupt and predatory dictators (Adem, 2010; Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006). When promoting Sino-African strategic partnerships and engaging in peacebuilding in Africa, China emphasizes that respecting for each other's sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs should be the cornerstone. However, this has incurred plenty of Western critiques, which highlight that China's stubborn adherence to the dogmas of "national sovereignty" and "non-interference" undermines Western efforts to intervene for democracy and human rights protection. As some observers have suggested, "China often looks away when African dictators violate the human rights of their compatriots" (Adem, 2010, p. 344). In the case of Sudan, for instance, China was accused of blocking the UN Security Council's efforts to "address genocide in Darfur" (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006, p. 220).

Ironically, when China does play a more proactive role in restoring peace and security in conflict-ridden areas in Africa, some Westerners blame China again for deliberately overlooking the non-interference doctrine in nations where its own interests are in stake. Taking Darfur as an example again, quite some Western scholars contend that Beijing gradually modified its stance from “no interference” in Darfur to “active engagement” mainly because of its economic concerns and particularly its oil demands from Sudan.

Besides criticisms from the West, China also has to tackle issues like inhospitality from some African states. On one hand, there are still a few African countries which have no diplomatic relations with China. On the other hand, Chinese engagements are not universally well received by all forces in Africa since they do not always share the same views or take the same positions with China on all issues. For example, opposition leaders in Africa like Zambia have voiced their discontent with Chinese economic and political involvement in their country (Adem, 2010, p. 342).

Conclusion

China's engagement in Africa faces both opportunities and challenges in the future since it is an indispensable partner for African nations in their quest for peace and security whereas the U.S. and its allies suspect that China's rising presence threatens their national interests and their vision of a prosperous Africa (Brooks & Shin, 2006). As for China, to play a more positive role in Africa, it should channel its diplomatic resources and efforts more to the African public rather than focusing only on the ruling elites. Almost all domestic or regional conflicts in Africa involve multiple actors—state or non-state—which make them more complicated and difficult to tackle. Without reaching out to non-state actors, including those opposition parties, NGOs, and even influential individuals, it is hard for China to mediate so as to ease tension and forge mutual trust among all parties. Therefore, China's “elite diplomacy” should be complemented by “public diplomacy” to achieve security goals.

While continuing to enhance its bilateral ties with African states, China should also work more closely with regional and sub-regional organizations to safeguard peace and security. In other words, “bilateralism” should function jointly with “multilateralism” in Chinese diplomacy to help address different forms of security threats.

To help build a peaceful Africa, China also needs to employ both its hard power and soft power in an effective manner. In today's world, any state seeking to coerce or induce others to follow its will does not work well, thus the effective usage of soft power has become a crucial tool. As a developing country ever victimized by Western colonialism, China shares similar roots with Africa. Since the lack of economic growth has been the root cause of long-term turmoil in many African states, China could serve as a model of socioeconomic development and contribute more vigorously to poverty alleviation, thus laying the foundation for peace here.

Moreover, there is no doubt that China should coordinate with Western states, especially the U.S. and other multilateral institutions like the UN to facilitate peacemaking and peacebuilding in Africa. Without cooperation with the UN and major Western powers, China is incapable of responding effectively to threats such as maritime piracy and terrorism. Meanwhile, the legitimacy of China's engagement will be ensured when it acts within the UN framework or in conjunction with other states.

Last but not least, Africa is African people's continent. Without their active participation and contribution, security and peace will not be restored or sustained on the continent. Therefore, African nations should be encouraged to play the leading role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. What China should do is to be

attentive to African states' demands and offer a helping hand when needed, so that a new strategic partnership based on mutual trust, mutual benefits, equality and coordination could be forged.

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