

Creative Involvement: A Suggested Doctrine for China Based on the Reality of Sino-African Relations

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Abstract: The non-intervention principle has long been one of the cornerstones of China's diplomacy. Based on new situations and new issues in the practice of diplomacy and combining the results of theoretical studies, the author presents general ideas for enriching and adapting this principle. Africa is the background of discussion and cases are drawn from recent years' development of Sino-African relationships. The author stresses that while sticking to non-interventionism, innovation needs to be promoted to meet the demands of the time and of China itself.

The first part of the paper analyses the breakthroughs and innovations made in recent Chinese diplomacy and summarizes non-interventionism and the innovations made to it which have set good precedents. The second part expounds China's aid to the security autonomy of Africa and regional organizations in Africa, the efficiency and regulation of aid to Africa, the shift from "small diplomacy" led by government to "big diplomacy" with participation of the whole society, the combination of the new thoughts in diplomacy in China with new trends in internal affairs, and the development of the new type of strategic partnership between China and Africa.

Keywords: Sino-African relationship, the United Nations, creative involvement, collective security mechanism, definition of "invasion," forced peace

Introduction: Same Principle and New Connotations

New trends in the international situation and recent changes in China both indicate that Chinese researchers in international studies need to adapt to the development of the new age. This means designing a new non-intervention principle that respects China's demands and features while at the same time suiting international trends. "Accusations"

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are often heard from western countries, and there are also various expectations held by other members of the international community, especially by many African countries.

For over fifty years in its diplomacy, China adhered to the principles of respecting national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. It has won support from many newly independent states in Asia, Africa and Latin America and also set a distinctive foundation for itself to keep a foothold in international society and play a role as a large power. The key to this, the author believes, is that China fully trusted the people and statesmen of these nations on their wisdom and capability, deeply reflected on the dire consequences of power politics and hegemony of the old era, and firmly rejected any imposition of systems on states through transplantation against their will. This successful implementation for such a long time is due to China's strategic vision and patience as well as the realities of most of these nations and their needs for China. Basically, this principle shares the same structures as the current world system centering on sovereign nation states as its main members. Without sovereignty or respect for sovereignty, the world system will be trapped in the barbaric law of the jungle where the big bullies the small and the strong oppresses the weak. Even the western powers who frequently violate this principle cannot abandon it thoroughly and entirely, for that would render the invalidation of all the theories and practices of modern international relations which uphold the supremacy of national interests in foreign relations and state actors' dominant positions in diplomacy and international relations. History since World War II has proved that China has always been a major defender of this principle and an important partner of developing countries in their struggles for political and diplomatic independence. In the same sense, China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has good reason to, and probably will, go beyond this and defend the legitimacy, justness and extensive utility of this principle in international society.

From another perspective, it is also becoming an increasingly urging task for China to enrich and update this principle to make it suitable for the new era. Firstly, rapid globalization and growing global challenges together have enabled bad news in any place to be transferred ever more rapidly and to cause more severe consequences than ever before. Without timely intervention and prevention, negative developments within a country have the potential to cross borders, jeopardizing the interests of neighboring countries and of the international community as a whole. The spillover of civil wars is a typical example: the Bosnian War, Gulf War and the recent Libyan War, to name a few. Data from a variety of sources has shown that international confrontations caused by civil wars and political upheavals account for over 60% of all the regional conflicts and hotspot local wars in the last two decades. In order to safeguard international security and stability within each country, as well as the advancement of international governance, the old principle of non-intervention needs to be revised to allow countries and the international community to participate in the resolution of crises in other countries on condition that the fundamental rights of all parties are guaranteed.

Secondly, developed countries have long realized the necessity of intervention-a

much debated topic among both the public and media in these countries. Over the past few years, academics from these countries have developed a lot of theories, policies and practices and have been trying hard to turn these into shared international standards and norms. These theories include: humanitarian intervention, human rights higher than sovereignty, responsibility to protect, regional integration and governance, global hierarchical intervention, counter-terrorism and preemptive action, the changing role of international organizations, and the new mission of the UN peacekeeping operation. It should be admitted that quite a few of the above address the common needs of the modern world, appeal to most nations, and inspire progress; but these doctrines are more often than not distorted and fragmented when applied. The interests and hegemonic demands of western countries initiating interventions are met in the first place, and for most of the time, without the discussion or consent of the international community, or the permission and understanding of the concerned states. The results, therefore, are often negligence to certain parts of the issue, or even bigger disasters and uncertainty. In this sense, as the only representative for developing countries in the UN Security Council and a socialist power that values justice and equality, China should actively involve itself in the latest discussion on international intervention. It should carefully study the new requests and opportunities arising from the new reality and make its due contribution to the formulation of a new intervention theory. This theory should meet the requirements of international security and global governance and satisfy the people of small and vulnerable countries and crisis zones at the same time.

1. Inspirations from International Relations in Practice

1.1 Evidence: Changes in Africa and the Sino-African Relationships

In the past, many Chinese believed that African countries and their academia highly appreciated China's non-intervention principle, and would definitely continue to support this position in bilateral relations with China and international affairs more generally. After all, they shared a similar historical suffering with China, have a strong demand for more autonomy in politics, economy and diplomacy, and feel a subtle pain towards western hegemony and power politics. This is correct in general; but reality has shown that it is an oversimplified opinion and could cause misjudgment. It is not hard to tell that this perception needs to be enriched and adapted, judging from the heated arguments and in-depth private talks the author has experienced during international conferences.

First, governments, academia and the public of African countries are not in full agreement. While governments maintain the same position as before, the academia, the media and the public are obviously divided. Quite a number of people of the latter groups are concerned that non-intervention and economic aid from China will only provide more chances for "corrupt officials" in the recipient countries to exploit their power for personal gain, without really benefiting the public much.

Secondly, most African countries, with only a few exceptions, have adopted a multi-party system, an election system and common norms including freedom, democracy and human rights, in spite of their complaints and criticisms towards the impact of western democracy throughout the two decades since the Cold War. Therefore, large powers outside the region and the international community need to adopt a more responsible attitude and policies and make a distinction between different crises on the African continent (military coups, local wars, riots, etc.), and when necessary, resort to enforced intervention and moral condemnation. Some think tanks and scholars in Africa have made a “higher demand” on China publicly or privately in this respect, asking China to support the wish of the majority of African countries and their public and agree with imposing more restraints and pressure on actions that are non-democratic, disrespectful towards human rights or corrupted.

Lastly, the African Union (AU) and different sub-regional organizations have demonstrated their wish and determination to get more actively involved in local affairs, bringing new impact and inspiration to China’s traditional non-intervention principle. In the fifth ministerial conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held on July 19, 2012 in Beijing, the Chinese government drew wide attention and applause with its Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security. The initiative aims at increasing support for African countries to strengthen their capabilities in maintaining local security and stability. Strong, active echoes were also heard in the second meeting of China Africa Think Tanks Forum (CATTF) held on October 13, 2012 in Ethiopia. Quite a number of African scholars suggested that China could improve and enrich its non-intervention principle by providing assistance to more representative organizations like the AU in more flexible and practical ways. The author agrees with them. Indeed, regional integration is accelerating everywhere in the world, and Africa is not an exception. If China wishes to make more friends and win more opportunities of strategic cooperation, it has to learn how to cooperate with organizations like the AU, reinforce its appreciation for the progress or disapproval of the backwardness in Africa to an appropriate extent, and moderately participate in building Africa’s capacity to sustain peace, driving the security mediation process and establishing military autonomy. All of the above can be seen as part of a new constructive participation, creative involvement and cooperative contact; it is an improvement and enrichment of China’s long-held non-intervention principle, a better respect for African countries’ sovereignty and their position of national independence, and also an advanced understanding and support for the fundamental interests of most African countries and African people.

In fact, China’s large amount of practice in diplomatic, military and commercial affairs has already gone ahead of its academic researchers, far outside the box of traditions and provided a continuous stream of cases for academia. For example, China’s mediation in the Sudan crisis in the past decade not only helped effectively boost the country’s stability and development, but brought many clues as to how China could enact similar measures in other regions of the African continent. China’s

mediation is also accompanied by economic aid and human capital accumulation from Chinese engineers and petroleum service teams in this country with rich petroleum resources. This is essentially different from the ways and concepts of western intervention.

Another example is that China's peacekeeping troops sent to warring countries and regions in Africa under the UN Peacekeeping Framework never imposed direct military oppression on any party involved in the internal affairs of an African country. Instead, they kept helping the intervention recipients to monitor ceasefire, facilitate dialogue, conduct post-war construction and pacify the public. They earned the reputation of being the most disciplined foreign troops with the highest capability of construction and who respect the local customs the most. In the two decades after the Cold War, China has a perfect record on the African continent in this aspect as a responsible permanent member of the UN Security Council, unrivalled by any other members. Besides, whether in formal or informal settings, whenever coming across situations of conflicts, divergence or even the possibility of confrontations among African countries, Chinese diplomats always put the overall interests of all African countries in the first place, try to avoid argument or war within Africa, and stick to the principles of "negotiation comes first," "harmony is the best resolution," "harmony is the highest," and "dialogue works better than confrontation," with their best efforts to help achieve soft-landing of emergencies. A good example is the performance of China's diplomatic service and representatives at the UN in the mediation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. During the two decades, government departments including the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Commerce provided a lot of aid in infrastructure and loans to help African countries achieve economic development and alleviate their financial burden. Moreover, as required by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, they also provided financial guarantee and instructions to the Youth Volunteer Project of the Central Communist Youth League, the Medical Team Aid Project of the Ministry of Health, the Demonstration Project of the Ministry of Agriculture, and Peacekeeping troops of Chinese army.¹ There are many similar examples that reflect from different angles the fact that China is shouldering more and more responsibilities and obligations in international exchange and China's awareness as a big power. Such examples also demonstrate the creative achievements of China's diplomatic service and activists in various fields. Academic researchers should cherish and draw experiences from all the above and integrate them into teaching.

1.2 Development and Innovations of China's Diplomatic Practices

There is one thing that seems to have caused concerns from within China and some friendly nations: now that China is more actively involved in global affairs, for example it is strengthening its mediation in some hot-spot areas, will it be drawn into some maelstroms of conflicts that could have been avoided? Will it follow the trail

1 Li Anshan, "History, Scale and Impact of the Chinese Medical Team," *Foreign Affairs Review*, No.1(2009), pp. 25-45 (李安山:《中国援外医疗队的历史、规模及影响》,载《外交评论》,2009年第1期,第25-45页).

of some western countries and bring about repugnance or even resentment from the local people? Will it go against its own Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence which China has always cherished and strived to maintain, and end in the chaos of China's diplomatic theories and practices? The author deems these concerns reasonable and understandable; moreover, they deserve a response and explanation. Besides, the existence of such concerns and arguments serves as a reminder for decision makers and academic researchers in China that three things should be insisted on while participating in necessary global governance and strengthening China's intervention: we must keep in mind our guiding principles in diplomacy including cooperation and development, mutual benefit and win-win orientation; we must treat affairs involving the sovereignty, dignity and other rights and interests of other countries with caution; and we must inherit and carry forward good theories and practices that have proved to be effective.

Firstly, taking China's past participation and mediation in Africa as an example, over the past two decades, China has implemented several important peacekeeping missions under the UN peacekeeping framework and won excellent assessments. There are many reasons for this: Chinese troops are well disciplined, they observe the local customs as required and faithfully implement the UN mission; besides, from the very beginning, the Chinese troops were never directly involved in local armed conflicts, nor did they ever send combat forces to support or suppress any party (which is commonly seen with western powers like France). Instead, China's peacekeeping troops and military observers have always remained neutral; most troops are sent as sappers and logistic units. The Chinese government mostly chose to send peacekeeping troops during post-war reconstruction. Chinese troops had no reason to, nor will they directly exchange fire with any party of a civil war within an African country. This is the basic guarantee for China's strengthened intervention without local people's repugnance.

Secondly, China's diplomatic service and special envoys have always advocated peaceful settlement instead of violence for all complex, long-lasting disputes. Negotiation, dialogue and harmony have always been the first options for situations, no matter how hard. Chinese people hold a reputation for being patient in the world diplomatic field. This is a feature possessed by many from Zhou Enlai to the latest generations of diplomats. Even when it has to resort to economic or trade penalties, the Chinese government would make a careful decision to guarantee appropriateness; and for unavoidable sanctions (for example under the requirement of a UN Security Council resolution), it would generally provide an explanation. Such carefulness and patience make it acceptable even to the recipients of criticism and penalty.

Thirdly, unlike some western powers, China seldom links the mediation and means of intervention with its own trade benefits and strategic interest. When it comes to this, people naturally think of the connection between the tough posture of some western powers before the Iraq War and the subsequent oil contracts. Even when it has trade cooperation with the concerned country, China still treats security issues in a fair, reasonable way that is consistent with international resolutions while respecting the situation of the country and the wish of the majority of the local people. If one looks at

the consistent efforts of Chinese envoys in the peace mediation in Sudan, or Chinese diplomats' similar trials in Arab countries and in the Middle East, it is easy to see that China's measures are in line with the fundamental interests of the involved countries or region.

Finally, with the increasingly urgent trend and demand of globalization and global governance, China is also following the basic essence of its five principles of peaceful coexistence when strengthening its participation in peace mediation, security dialogue and conflict resolution. That is, with full respect for the people and the majority of political factions of the countries concerned, China will use its own voice and resources to help them build their capability to autonomously determining their own development path. China trusts that African countries and people are able to find out the best direction and way of development; China is against any change of regime in these sovereignty states caused by any external forces, especially external military oppression or attack that deprives the oppressed party its political rights and security capability.

The definition of "non-intervention" in Chinese diplomatic dictionary is: the important internal affairs of a country, especially issues concerning the overall situation of a nation, for example, its political system, security arrangement and mode of governance, should be decided by the country, the nation and the people who have lived on the land for a long time. It would not constitute an intervention in domestic affairs if the outside world respects the country and its people and helps them attain the above-said objectives. However, if another country tries to meddle in, for example chooses the regime and leaders on behalf of the people, or takes over the security services and economic power, it would be a deprivation of the sovereignty of the country and an inappropriate intervention in the country's internal affairs. In this sense, to "strengthen participation" is not against China's diplomatic traditions, especially its non-intervention principle; instead, it is a supplement, development and innovation for the latter in the new context. It is also a lever that rectifies the unreasonable, unjust order set by some dominant powers in today's world. This is an inevitable path for maintaining and elevating China's image as a responsible power that cherishes peace and upholds justice.

2. Targeted Theoretical Innovations

There are some new situations and issues to be studied² and some practices and ideas from the past to be reflected upon before we discuss China's principle of non-intervention. The author's following opinions and advice, though not very well-developed, serve as an opening for more valuable discussion.

2 Current studies in China only worked out a "rough outline" in this aspect. Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed., *China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Program—2011 Research Report*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2011 (中国外交部非洲司编:《中非联合研究交流计划——2011年课题研究报告选编》,北京:世界知识出版社2011年版).

2.1 China's Aid for Building Africa's Autonomy of Peace

In the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC held in July 2012, Chinese leaders proposed to provide necessary support to African countries in the upcoming period to help strengthen their capability in maintaining security and stability. This is a major initiative that deserves in-depth discussion. For example, what would be the major fields for China's support and aid for security capacity building? In the past two decades, there have been a lot of similar cooperation between China and African countries, for example, peacekeeping missions under the UN Peacekeeping Framework (including peacekeeping troops and military observers); China's efforts in the UN Security Council to maintain security and mitigate conflicts in Africa; China's navy and special forces fighting piracy in the waters off east Africa; China's envoys' mediation in Sudan; China's financial assistance to the AU and concerned countries for resolving the civil war in Somalia; the African Union Conference Center (AUCC) and Office Complex in Addis Ababa (capital of Ethiopia) built by the Chinese government; special training provided to some civilian police in Africa by China's public security department and its professional institutions; and regular training courses and programs for African military officers provided by the College of Defense Studies of National Defense University, PLA, China. Such cooperations have been quite effective and played an important role in enhancing peace and stability in Africa. These cooperations have also won the praise of the UN and the international community. Discussions now should be focused on what can be improved in these forms of cooperation and projects. As far as the author is concerned, some projects lack sustainability, most projects need systematic assessment and reports afterwards, and quite a number of projects can be further expanded or deepened.

2.2 Newly-added Projects in China's Aid to Africa and New Measures

As far as the author knows, there is currently a discussion on "China building military bases in Africa" among some countries and powers. Such proposals also exist within China. One piece of evidence that has been given to support this claim is the fact that in recent years the three fleets of the PLA Navy established a rotation system: each sends their task force regularly to the waters off east Africa to carry out the mission of keeping the seaway clear and blocking pirates, just like the navies of other major countries do. Yet, unlike developed countries in Europe and the U.S., China does not have its own supply and maintenance base and port facilities in Africa, which puts a limit on the range of activities and the quality of combat readiness of navy vessels. To some extent, the Chinese army's ability to revive peace in the Horn of Africa is restrained. At the end of 2011, media reports said that The Seychelles had the intention to invite the Chinese government and its army to set up facilities like a military base in their island country; and the visit of the Chinese Defense Minister to Seychelles reinforced this issue in the mass public.³ However, according to information available

3 Response of Chinese Ministry of National Defense to Seychelles' Invitation to Establish Military Base in Seychelles, Xinhuanet, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-12/12/c-111236585.htm>.

to the author, most African countries are not “interested” in this; instead, they’re concerned that once China’s military power has landed, the competition among military machines of major powers might be escalated and cause harm to the overall interest of Africa. Most African countries only hope that China will increase its aid in finance and in helping develop African security agencies and military police. For example, China may provide necessary methods and facilities, instead of directly involving into the complex yet subtle security process of this region. Therefore, Chinese scholars and think tanks need to figure out how China could moderately intervene in the above situation and constructively develop Africa’s independence in security and at the same time build up China’s limited military presence that could maintain its trade, energy and maritime rights and interests in this area. One of the author’s proposals is to negotiate with related countries; based on enhanced trust and full respect, we can move some of the Beijing-based training programs for African officers undertaken by the National Defense University of the PLA to Africa with prudence. Also we can select some “pivotal” friendly nations and build special warehousing facilities in ports that mainly serve civil use but also provide replenishment and maintenance for fleets and ships. Some of such facilities can be used for various training programs for officers and police. These activities must not be forced, nor should they bring along the propaganda of military targets. Also, the “three don’ts” principle (with economic aid in the first place) that benefits the recipients shall be adhered to throughout the process. The author believes that, sooner or later, such cooperation between the Chinese army and African countries will be carried out and deepened. It is inevitable for both sides whether practically or historically. Therefore, it is necessary to start preparative discussions and preliminary simulation deduction.

2.3 Utilize Regional Organizations as the “Platform” and “Lever” of China’s Participation.

Above we have discussed how China could better involve itself in building Africa’s independence in peace and security in the new era. Considering the experience and lessons learned in other parts of the world, China may well think about the functions of the AU and some sub-regional organizations or mechanisms in the African continent and help them strengthen their functions in this aspect through certain procedures. The experience of Europe after World War II tells us that there is a common feature of the Warsaw Pact back then, the NATO and the Common European Security and Defense Policy now, that is, under the precondition that political trust is maintained and the will of top-level leaders is connected; they established and developed a collective security arrangement within the region. It guaranteed that countries within the region help each other in emergencies and share each other’s burdens in difficulty; it also guarded against the chaos and disorder caused by inappropriate intervention from the outside. It indeed helped maintain peace within the region for a long time. Europe’s experience in this aspect has been gradually extended after the Cold War and become a sample imitated by many regions in the world. The author believes that these collective security

mechanisms of Europe provide us two inspirations: (1) a core engine that provides the driving force is needed (the Soviet Union in the Warsaw Pact, the U.S. in NATO and the Franco-German axis in the EU); (2) agreement needs to be reached in terms of the security target and mechanism. Judging from the realities of the Sino-African relationship, what could be learned from the European inspirations is that China may start by helping some big countries in Africa (e.g. South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria and Ethiopia) to play a bigger role in safeguarding stability in the AU and develop its work on the platform of security in Africa. For example, it may fund training for security talents and provide machines and equipment to the AU for safeguarding stability. At the same time, China should also facilitate the minimum agreement among countries of the AU on the agenda and the prior target of peacekeeping and provide necessary assistance to build this consensus. Things that happened in Africa in these years have also told the world that despite the low level of security functions the AU performed and all kinds of unsatisfactory aspects (low efficiency, low credibility and lack of coordination among major countries, etc.), the AU represents a collective legitimacy and a prospect that conforms to the standards of international security organizations. Some of its practices will win wider and wider moral sympathy and support.⁴ Therefore, China's involvement in building Africa's autonomy in security and stability will win more recognition and support from most African countries if it is realized through the AU. At the present stage, China has to keep its aid to the AU for security capability targeted and adapted to each different issues, local and time conditions, avoid financial dependency⁵ and must not do the basic works for it including developing its ability to coordinate within itself, to organize, to make decisions and to cultivate talents. In a word, assistance to the AU in developing a security mechanism can be a way to realize the policy to help Africa develop talents and build human capital recently advocated by the Central Government.

2.4 Issues on Regulation over Aid to Africa

Regulation over aid to Africa involves the efficiency of the Chinese government's aid to Africa and the "corruption" of the government of the recipient country. It is known to all that the Chinese government has greatly increased its aid to Africa in the recent decade. For example, of all the major foreign banks, China Development Bank

4 Discussion on the AU in Chinese academia. Luo Jianbo, *The Road to Renaissance: Studies on the African Union and the African Integration*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2010 (罗建波:《通向复兴之路——非盟与非洲一体化研究》,北京:中国社会科学出版社2010年版).

5 In the 1970s, the Tanzam railway constructed by China once created the climax of the Sino-African political relationship. But actual assessment has shown that it is more and more difficult to maintain this project. There are many lessons learned in this project that can serve as a mirror for future strategic partnership between China and Africa. Early discussions can be found in George Yu, "The Tanzania-Zambia Railway: a Case Study in Chinese Economic Aid to Africa," translated by Shen Puna, in Center for African Studies of Peking University, ed., *China and Africa*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000, pp. 274-301 (〔美〕于子桥:《坦桑尼亚-赞比亚铁路——中国对非经济援助个案研究》,沈浦娜译,载北京大学非洲研究中心编:《中国与非洲》,北京:北京大学出版社2000年版,第274-301页). Latest news and data can be found in Chen Xiaochen, "China, What to Do with Tanzam Railway?" *World Affairs*, No. 21 (2012), pp. 50-59 (陈晓晨:《中国:拿坦赞铁路怎么办?》,载《世界知识》,2012年第21期,第50-59页).

granted the most loans to Africa; the amount of cooperative programs and projects launched by major Chinese companies and enterprises has surpassed that launched by western powers; the AU's headquarters built by China is the most modern building in Africa; and China's peacekeeping troops ranks top among all UN peacekeeping troops in the construction of roads, schools, hospitals and port facilities. The list is long. But according to many civil groups and reports in Africa, some of these aid projects are inappropriately utilized by privileged groups in some African countries. Some projects have become the "zone" for local officials and those corrupted to seek their own personal gain. There are indeed a few uncompleted, suspended projects with mismanagement, low efficiency and little benefit for the people of the recipient country. In these situations, the author believes that China should not try to conciliate, but refuse to become involved in the situation or even avoid necessary investigation just to maintain seemingly friendly bilateral relations. The old principle of non-meddling and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries should not be adopted without adaptation, correction and improvement; otherwise, not only Chinese people's hard-earned money and the image of the Chinese government will suffer a loss and be harmed, but African people, especially the intellectuals, will be more and more resistant to China's aid. Finally, the basis of the Sino-Africa relationship, namely friendliness, mutual benefit and mutual trust, will be impaired. Therefore, the author believes that China should carefully think about how to increase the efficiency and transparency of China's aid in the recipient country. Also, institutional arrangements for "rent-seeking" should be avoided and the feasibility and the exact process should be discussed seriously in detail with African partners. This is by no means intervention in another country's internal affairs, nor does it mean establishing a regulatory system on behalf of the other; instead, it is an important approach to boost the quality of cooperation between the two sides and enhance the credibility of China's aid among African people. A principle of politics must be kept in mind under all conditions: power without restraint and supervision brings corruption, and absolute power/benefit brings absolute corruption.

2.5 How to Effectively Implement China's Aid to Africa

The above-discussed issues remind the author of another field of study, namely how to transfer the implementation of China's aid to Africa from a single-path track led by the government to a multi-path track with continuous, extensive participation from all walks of society, and to expand the "small foreign aid" involving only the state and government to the "big foreign aid" involving social forces and even overseas Chinese.⁶ This is a way

6 It needs to be clarified that the author did not invent the term "big foreign aid," but instead learned it from Dr. Li Jinzao. He stressed that foreign aid planned and carried out by the Ministry of Commerce in the past under the instructions of the Central Government is limited to "small foreign aid." With changing trends and progress of China, "big foreign aid" should be advocated in the future, namely to include the central and the local, the government and the people and even overseas Chinese into China's foreign aid projects. The aim is to fully mobilize the activity of every one of the Chinese nation in all regions to better build China's relationship with the outside world in the new era. The author agrees strongly with him. It is wisdom gained from practice and reflects the new thoughts of some departments, quite worthwhile of learning for the academia.

of creative involvement in China's diplomacy, a breakthrough point of innovated non-intervention principle in the new circumstances, and also an effective supplementary approach to solving some recent issues in bilateral relations. We have to admit that over the past long period, China's presence (including aid and cooperation) in Africa has been basically realized by the state actors. This is reflected in the planning, guiding and participation (and taking the responsibility and consequences) of the central government and the main role played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Defense. Such a national system has considerable power and plays an important, positive and irreplaceable role in propelling negotiation and cooperation between countries on major projects, in catching up with and surpassing the influence of traditional western powers in Africa, and in guiding and integrating the efforts of local governments and different aspects in such a big country as China. Yet, on the other side of the coin, the more the state undertakes, the more limited individuals feel about their responsibilities. If the government has undertaken all matters, big or small, there would be no place for social initiative and imagination. The Sino-African relationship in the years since the 21st century has witnessed more loans, projects and contracts between China and Africa, on the one hand, and a more diverse group of actual undertakers and participators. Everyone is swarming in, good or bad, valuable or valueless: the central and the local, the government and non-government, the business field and the academia, groups and individuals, organizations of workers, youth, women, culture, education and health and even NGOs. The new situation has brought rapid expansion of the total trade volume and personnel exchanges between China and Africa, but at the same time worrisome problems and arguments such as illegal immigration, illegal employment, violation of contracts, and service disputes. These have caused troubles and unwanted strikes to the political cooperation and strategic partnership between China and Africa. China's political practice in recent years has proved that the sense of responsibility of the society and individuals is equivalent with the rights granted by the political institution. When they have more opportunities to participate and a bigger say, they naturally have a better sense of obligations and self-discipline. They also have more intensive, effective ways of self-examination and improvement. In the same sense, in its communication with Africa, China should refer to the inspirations of domestic political development and give more opportunities, rights and responsibilities to non-state and non-government actors. The situation where the government decides all and the state takes all consequences must be avoided. In fact, just like more and more countries of the international community, African countries have experienced decades of political management and social construction. their people have a more and more rational perception of corruption, political dictatorship and society's vices. They hope that law and rationality, democracy and rights of the people and social participation can be respected in their communication and cooperation with China. They also hope that China can learn and respect more such voice for progress in this aspect from African people, society and public opinions. The

author believes that China's aid to Africa and its creative involvement in Africa should transform from "small foreign aid" (single form) to "big foreign aid" (complex form involving both the state and society). There would be more comprehensive, flexible solutions to some of the above-mentioned problems. In other words, the state's role should be reduced and the society's role should be expanded, so that smarter and more diverse ways and means of aid can be realized, and a big "pyramid" of China's foreign exchange (including aid) can be established with a big base, different levels, plans and guidance of the government and extensive social participation.

2.6 The Link between China's Creative Involvement in Africa and the New Trends of its Domestic Reform

It is necessary to study the inner link between the new direction of China's diplomacy as a more positive actor and the new target of more balanced development of China's internal affairs. For some time to come, China is going to match its creative involvement in Africa with the new trends of its domestic reform. After all, diplomacy not only serves the internal affairs but is also an extension of it. The situation of internal affairs determined the situation of diplomacy. In the past six decades since the founding of People's Republic of China, the relationship between China and Africa has gone through three different phases. The two are similar and different at the same time. The first phase was the "era of Mao Zedong," or the first three decades after the founding of the country. The subject and main content of China's relationship with Africa was a quasi-political alliance based on their shared position of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism and their common pursuits. Their common purpose in such relationship was to liberate the nation, gain independence and autonomy in politics and break away from the shackles inflicted by the western powers. This relationship was in line with the prevailing "left-leaning" principles in China in the same period: to continue revolution in pursuit of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to establish the "purest" proletariat regime. China's humiliating sufferings in its modern history and its disunited politics had forged enthusiasm for revolution and demand for rebellion in the whole population, which did not wane even after the founding of People's Republic of China. The great legacy of the era of Mao Zedong was that the Chinese stood up and would never surrender to the big powers even in their most difficult period; but at the same time, they also formed the mentality of "preferring the weeds of socialism to the seeds of capitalism" — people's livelihoods were not taken good care of while gaining political independence. China's African policies in this period also had double features. The aid to the Tanzam railway was a good example of "having only economic considerations but no political ones."

The second phase was the "era of Deng Xiaoping" acknowledged by the whole world—the three decades since the 1970s. China went through the trend of commercialization and marketization. The new slogans were "towards modernization, embracing the world and future" and the guiding pragmatic philosophy of "white or

black, a cat that catches a rat is a good cat.” This new situation greatly stimulated the economic vitality and continuously turned the potential of the nation into formidable productivity and products; but on the other hand, it also aggravated polarizations and caused many new conflicts such as income inequality, regional disparity and national distinction with the principle of “capital being supreme.” There was even the saying of “a pretty face suffices to cover anything ugly.”* (Many critics believed that many tasks including political reform, social justice and the rebalancing of national relations were surrendered in lieu of economic and development strides.) China’s performance in Africa in this period was also inconsistent: on the one hand, investment and projects in the trade market and mineral resources rapidly expanded, where Chinese people displayed enormous enthusiasm, activeness and competitive advantages; on the other hand, people with all qualities, good and bad, swarmed onto the land of rich natural resources, with both good and bad deeds. All the merits and demerits at home were reflected in Africa. It has to be admitted that not only western media slander China with the term “neocolonialism,” but quite a number of Africans also have such doubts and reproach.

The third phase, namely the phase that we are currently in, came out of these complicated circumstances. The author believes that the primary objective of domestic development and reform in the new phase is to restore major balances on the basis of growing abundance of material wealth: the balance between social justice and economic vitality, the balance between political and economic development, and the balance of development among different regions and ethnic groups within the country, to name a few. The new objective demands political courage and wisdom and a new round of battle of reform and opening up. One can imagine the hardship in it. But only through this way will the Chinese nation seize the opportunity to get rid of the dragging forces of various crises and rule out the possibility of entering a new era of instability. Based on this judgment, China’s constructive effort and creative involvement in Africa in the new era is not an isolated, accidental innovation of the diplomatic system; instead, it is a major strategic measure that conforms to the time and the trend of internal changes. Basically it inherits the valuable legacies of the two previous phases and carries forward China’s political spirit of going through thick and thin with African countries on the path of liberation and progress. It aims to develop a win-win situation where China and Africa complement each other, help and benefit each other in economics and trade, and at the same time focuses on correcting the shortcomings and defects of the two previous phases. It will combine “hard aid” with “soft aid,” construction and cooperation on the material level with joint-development of human capital, and power of the states with power of the society. From the existing advantages in economy and trade, it will generate mutual learning and helping in culture, education, science and technology and art and extend handshakes and hugs between the leaders of China and African countries to in-depth contact and understanding between the billions of people of China and Africa. In this sense, the reform and progress of China itself in the new era is closely connected with the reform and progress of the Sino-African relationship.

* Growth trumps all other concerns—Translator’s note.

The two share the same trend and pace. Thoughts and efforts under this mentality are going to bring new impetus and space for Chinese people's presence in Africa.

2.7 Connotations of the “New Prospects” of the New Type of Strategic Partnership between China and Africa

In the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC held in Beijing in July 2012, President Hu Jintao delivered an important speech with the theme “Open up New Prospects for A New Type of China-Africa Strategic Partnership.” The author thinks that the key to understanding the theme of this speech is to correctly interpret the term “new prospects” of the new type of strategic partnership between China and Africa and enrich and inject into it more forward-looking connotations. The understanding of this major strategic partnership can be enhanced through various perspectives, for example, economics and trade, culture, society and international relations. The author sees the following several possibilities to improve the understanding from the perspective of diplomatic studies.

Firstly, the new type of strategic partnership between China and Africa is different from that between China and other major powers. It is an integral whole with the shared destiny of two places, two peoples on two continents that have both been dominated and oppressed by western powers in history before taking the same path of independence and autonomy. They developed and established this integral whole based on the direction of cooperation, mutual benefit and rising together in the new century. Whatever detours and difficulties and differences there are, there are no deeply rooted conflicting interests between China and Africa. The two will not stand on opposite sides when it comes to the target and direction of the reform of the international system. This is the top priority and the biggest picture that should never be lost or forgotten.

Secondly, the author wants to make a criticism. In the past years, especially in the six to seven years since the high-level leaders of the two sides have decided to push forward the establishment of the new type of Sino-Africa strategic partnership, Sino-Africa cooperation and communication in economy, trade and culture has developed rapidly and gained satisfactory results. But comparatively, communication and collaboration in strategy and international relations has lagged behind. The level and range of cooperation needs to be improved. According to the author's observation, for example, despite the willingness of the leadership in government and diplomacy to cooperate, no broad consensus was reached in major global issues including reforming the UN, tackling climate change, the WTO Doha Round, redefining the relationship between human rights and sovereignty, fulfilling the responsibility to protect, promoting democracy in international relations, and raising Africa's autonomous ability to maintain peace and security. There are even great divergences in some of these issues. The imbalanced development between trade and political security and the lack of connection between actual progress and strategic awareness still remain to be addressed and reflected upon.

Thirdly, some of the media, scholars and even government officials in China are

still dwelling on their imagination of African issues in the Cold War era or even before that. They still constantly revisit terms and understandings from the Mao Zedong era, talking about African countries as countries fighting against imperialism and feudalism. They still assume that African countries share the same below-average standard with China for the definitions and solutions for some negative phenomena (e.g. corruption). They have ignored that (1) Africa has made great progress in politics, democracy and anti-tyranny⁷; (2) many African countries, especially their academia, have new interpretations for concepts like freedom, democracy, human rights, good governance, non-interference, civil society, and NGO.⁸ The latter constantly generates arguments and distinctions that surprise Chinese scholars in the discussions among scholars, think tanks and media of the two sides. The author feels that to some of our scholars and government officials, these concepts are still considered as the ideological tools of the west and their excuse for imposing interference on other countries. They fail to notice that the political field and high-level leaders in China have carefully studied and reinterpreted these concepts.⁹ They missed the opportunity to make these foreign concepts work for them and simply left the moral banners to the west. These moral banners are universal values themselves and could have been creatively applied to different regions and countries. For example, according to the latest studies, for many non-western emerging powers including China, freedom and human rights are firstly indicated through (1) highly regarding and constantly satisfying the mass public's demand for life and development and (2) the rights of these emerging powers to cast off the chains of traditions and choose their own development paths, instead of falling into the early range of political rights proposed by the west. Democracy consists of both the counterbalance of various political rights at home and the balanced structure for main international powers in deciding world affairs, and also the different processes of hedging and expressing initiated by internal society and the people (China has accumulated widely-acknowledged practice and experience in this aspect since the

7 Development of non-government organizations in Africa in recent years and its impact on Sino-Africa relationship can be found in Liu Hongwu and Shen Beili, eds., *Review of African NGOs and Sino-African Relations*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2009 (刘鸿武、沈蓓莉主编:《非洲非政府组织与中非关系》,北京:世界知识出版社2009年版)。

8 Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid*, translated by Wang Tao et al., and reviewed by Liu Hongwu, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2010 ([赞比亚]丹比萨·莫约:《援助的死亡》,王涛等译、刘鸿武审校,北京:世界知识出版社2010年版)。This is a book worth reading. In it the author analyzed the limitations of various aids and praised China's different aid to Africa from that of western powers fairly objectively. The author especially discussed which kind of aid is most effective.

9 Zhao Kejin, *Global Civil Society and Nation State*, Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing, 2008 (赵可金:《全球公民社会与民族国家》,上海:上海三联书店2008年版); Li Jingpeng, "Several Issues Concerning Research into the Chinese Civil Society," *Social Sciences*, No.1(2012), pp. 13-22 (李景鹏:《中国公民社会成长中的若干问题》,载《社会科学》,2012年第1期,第13-22页); Gao Bingzhong, "The Concept of 'Civil Society' and China's Reality," *Thinking*, No.1(2012) pp. 30-38 (高丙中:《“公民社会”概念与中国现实》,载《思想战线》,2012年第1期,第30-38页); Sun Pinghua, "On the National Human Rights Action Plan which Represents a Landmark," *Human Rights*, No.3 (2012), pp. 29-35 (孙平华:《论具有里程碑意义的〈国家人权行动计划〉》,载《人权》,2012年第3期,第29-35页); Ying Qi, She Tianze, "From National Identification to Citizenship—Social Integration and All-round Stability of Modern Nation States," *The Journal of Jiangsu Administration Institute*, No.2(2012), pp. 98-101 (应奇、余天泽:《从民族认同到公民身份——现代民族国家的社会整合与多元稳定》,载《江苏行政学院学报》,2012年第2期,第98-101页); Cheng Tongshun and Zhang Guojun, "Return of Democracy—from Electoral Democracy to the Democracy of Process," *Probe*, No.1(2012), pp. 53-59 (程同顺、张国军:《民主的回归——从选举民主到过程民主》,载《探索》,2012年第1期,第53-59页)。

Reform and Opening-up). The term “good governance” did not become a frequently-used term in international politics until the late 20th century. It has a multilayered definition, which is favorable for the developing countries and developed countries to govern regional and global affairs together and to solve international crises and difficulties together. Therefore, the author wants to stress that, in front of this great demand and opportunity to develop new prospects of the new type of strategic partnership between China and Africa, scholars and think tanks in China should go beyond the dogmatic interpretations in old textbooks and ideologies. They should open up their minds and make serious reflections. Combining this and the new thinking and layout of the tough battle of deepening reform proposed by the 18th National Congress of the CPC, they can more actively cope with the latest trends and thoughts in the world, especially on the African continent, and provide forward-looking analysis and advice for related diplomatic and political strategies.¹⁰

Conclusion

As the author has mentioned in his previous book *Creative Involvement: New Direction of China's Diplomacy*:

“Creative involvement” refers to a new positive attitude, namely that China needs to have more awareness and measures to participate in international affairs in the second decade of the 21st century. It requires departments concerning foreign affairs and the Chinese people in general to, while sticking to Deng Xiaoping’s basic line of Reform and Opening-up, be more enterprising and take more initiatives. It requires more active participation in regional and global affairs as well as more plans and more public goods and aids, so that there are more marks, works and contribution from China in the future evolution of the international system and progress of the human community. It also serves as an alert for us as planners and designers of foreign policies that China must not take the western powers’ old road of hegemony or impose our will and plans on others.

While actively participating in international affairs, we also need to explore and stick to the essence of the oriental culture and civilization like “seeking common ground while shelving difference,” “harmony in diversity,” “conflict without breaking peace,” “golden mean,” and “the greatest unity.” It also requires cautious and appropriate treatment of the relationships with other countries and the international community, good observations and judgments of the situation, and overall plans to improve the image and voice of China on the world stage.

10 Liu Haifang, “Culture Comes First—Cultural Dynamics of Sino-African Cooperation,” in Li Anshan, An Chunying and Li Zhongren, eds., *Sino-African Relations and the Modern World*, Taiyuan: Chinese Society of African Historical Studies, 2008, pp. 322-349 (刘海方:《文化先行——关于中国与非洲发展合作的文化思考》,载李安山、安春英、李忠人主编:《中非关系与当代世界》,太原:中国非洲史研究会 2008 年出版,第 322-349 页)。

The concept of “creative involvement” is the sublation of the past attitude and practices of “hiding capacities and biding time” (in the philosophical sense), but it is in no way equal to the interventionism and power politics of the west. Instead, it is a new choice that suits the new position of China as a great power, its national conditions and strengths, and cultural traditions. This stance is going to be carried out throughout the whole process of China’s peaceful rise and help shape China’s style in international politics and on the diplomatic stage gradually.¹¹

The author firmly believes that whether it is possible to enrich and further develop non-interventionism is a key standard of testing creative involvement. The African continent has long been an important region for China to expand international cooperation and its influence. It is also a proper entrance point for realizing creative involvement and strengthening global governance in the new era. We have reasons to draw samples and experience from the Sino-African interactions that are becoming closer and closer and drive the establishment of new diplomatic theories that suit both our national conditions and the demands of other parties.¹²

Translator: Wan Jiahui

Reviewers: Patrick Burton, Wang Wenhua

11 Wang Yizhou, *Creative Involvement: New Direction of China’s Diplomacy*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011, pp. 21-22 (王逸舟:《创造性介入——中国外交新取向》,北京:北京大学出版社2011年版,第21-22页).

12 The author agrees with Prof. Liu Hongwu in that African studies are the new frontier of China’s academia. African studies have drawn attention from China’s academia; it reflects that the modern rejuvenation of Chinese culture in entering a new historical stage. Related remarks can be found in the foreword written by Prof. Liu Hongwu for Series of African Studies—Africa Development Studies in Zhang Yonghong, *Indigenous Knowledge in Africa’s Development Perspective*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2010, pp. 10-12 (张永宏:《非洲发展视域中的本土知识》,北京:中国社会科学出版社2010年版,第10-12页).