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China's Engagement with Africa in Peace and Security

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Abstract

The Belt and Road is expanding and the need to provide security to the Chinese infrastructure projects (railways and sea roads) and to protect the interests of Chinese companies is growing. China's growing engagement with Africa is increasing the need for a more pro-active Chinese role in African security and for further support to Africa for achieving a balance between security and development. China has increased involvement in the UN peacekeeping in Africa, peace and security cooperation has become of the most important pillars of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Africa. The Belt and Road Initiative provides opportunities for strengthening China-Africa dialogue on peace and security which is an important driver for China-Africa relations.

Keywords: China, Africa, Comprehensive, Partnership, Peace, Security

Introduction

Within the UN framework, the international society makes efforts to provide assistance for peacekeeping and peace building in various states in Africa which face problems of political instability and crisis. The paper discusses the security dimension of Belt and Road Initiative in Africa. China has assumed a more active role in global security governance. It is argued that with China's increased economic interest and the growing presence of Chinese citizens in Africa, China has adopted a more flexible non-interference policy on the continent and China-Africa peace and security cooperation is strengthening. China has to keep the momentum to advance the dialogue and to keep peace and security issues in the agenda in the China-AU Strategic Dialogue. Economic development in Africa should be the main focus of China's approach to Africa as well as support Africa in tackling regional issues.

China has been the largest contributor of UN peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the Security Council and the second largest contributor of UN peacekeeping funding. At the UN framework, during the period 2018-19, the budget represents an average of 1.47% reduction on the approved budget for 2016-17. The top 10 providers of assessed contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping operations for 2018 are: United States (28.47%) China (10.25%) Japan (9.68%) Germany (6.39%) France (6.28%) United Kingdom (5.77%) Russian Federation (3.99%) Italy (3.75%) Canada (2.92%) Spain (2.44%)

Since the early 1990s, China had become a major contributor to UN peacekeeping missions. In 2000 marked a new stage in China's participation in UN peacekeeping; when a Chinese civilian police contingent was deployed in East Timor (UNTAET), while Chinese officials supported the reforms proposed in the report of the panel on

UN peacekeeping operations calling for strengthening of peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Since then, Chinese participation in peacekeeping missions has consistently increased; Chinese police units, engineering and medical troops have been sent on some of the most important UN operations, such as Bosnia (UNMIBH), Afghanistan (UNAMA), Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), Kosovo (UNMIK), Haiti (MINUSTAH), Darfur (UNAMID), Sudan (UNMIS) and South Sudan (UNMISS & UNISFA) and Lebanon (UNIFIL).

China towards Africa's Regional Security

Chinese peacekeepers are involved in several parts of the world, but are mostly in Africa. China has played a positive role in Africa's peace and security affairs. More specifically, China provides combat troops, civilian police, military observers, engineering battalions and medical units in missions in Africa. As a major economic partner, China plays a constructive role in helping the UN to solve crises and contribute to stability in the region. China has a naval logistical facility in Djibouti, which it has used as a base for rescuing Chinese citizens in conflict zones and has increased its contributions to United Nations peacekeeping in Africa; it has sent combat troops to Mali and South Sudan; and it has sent naval vehicles to the Gulf of Aden as part of international anti-piracy missions since 2009, providing protection to 7,000 Chinese and foreign vessels in nearly 2,000 groups. China's increased activity in Africa's security architecture has led to cooperation with other international actors such as the European Union on the ground. For instance, Dutch and Chinese troops have worked together as part of the UN-led Peacekeeping Operation in Mali (MINUSMA).

On the African continent, China has a major activity in peacekeeping and has fulfilled its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Guided by the Belt and Road initiative principles for China-Africa relations, namely, sincerity, real results, amity and good faith and shared interests, China is committed to helping Africa build up its own peacekeeping capacity, addressing the root causes and pursuing win-win cooperation.

When attending the summits commemorating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the UN in September 2015, President Xi Jinping announced China's decision to establish a 10-year, US\$1-billion China-UN peace and development fund. At China's proposal, the fund has prioritized peace and development initiatives of African countries. Among the 56 projects approved by the fund, African countries have been the major beneficiaries, with projects ranging from peacekeeping, counter-terrorism capacity-building, mediation, to sustainable development, migration and refugee affairs. Through bilateral and multilateral channels China has provided military assistance and personnel training for the AU and African countries to support their capacity-building on peace and security. Moreover, China is actively involved in mediating hotspot issues in Africa and supports African people in resolving African issues in the African way and enhances dialogue with African countries in the UN Security Council.

China- Africa Strategic Dialogue on Peace and Security

China-Africa peace and security cooperation are developing on bilateral, regional and international levels. Peace and security cooperation was included in China's first Africa policy white paper, issued in 2006. The significance of peace and security cooperation has grown thanks to the Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security (ICACPPS) launched at the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in July 2012. In 2015, China declared to deepen military cooperation, help Africa secure peace and security and support African efforts to confront non-traditional security threats. China works closely with Africa to implement country-specific programs of the peace and security initiative in light of China's capabilities and Africa's needs; hence applications from African countries and the AU Commission are necessary.

At the regional level, China cooperates with regional organizations including the African Union, the East Africa Community, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. One prominent example is China's support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development as the core platform for mediating in South Sudan's civil war. At multilateral level, China participates in various

international efforts for improving African peace and security. China participates in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and supports African countries' capacity building in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, riot prevention, customs and immigration control.

Building capacity on peace and security is an important dimension in Sino-African relations. China focuses on its priority and most urgent needs in peacekeeping capacity building, supports Africa's efforts in securing financial support from the UN on AU peacekeeping operations and delivered US\$100 million military aid to the AU and the additional US\$80 million military aid in support of the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis.

In the context of peace and security cooperation, China and the African Union have agreed to allocate funds from China's remaining military aid to the African Union for counter-terrorism operations and building joint forces in the Sahel region. As a new package arrangement, the Fund provides military and economic assistance in a whole range of areas, including military, counter-terrorism, intelligence, maintenance of law and order and law enforcement and in multiple forms such as personnel training, material assistance, and infrastructure projects. For the first time Chinese diplomat takes a role for hotspot issues in the UN, in particular, ambassador Xia Huang is appointed by Secretary-General António Guterres as Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and it is expected that there will be positive contributions to maintaining peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

China-Africa peace and security cooperation: the way forward

Despite such progress, there is room for improvement. China-Africa peace and security cooperation are mainly focused on traditional security issues, carried out principally at the governmental level and mostly bilateral. China has to offer a distinctive approach to improve the current situation in Africa. The most important challenge may be to find a way to balance the principles of non-intervention and non-indifference. □

Although China is moving forward to reactive conflict resolution, it has not engaged to the same extent structural conflict prevention, beyond implementing a general approach that prioritizes economic development as the principal tool for ensuring stability. China has shifted its focus to conflict resolution as well as post-conflict reconstruction; For instance, in the case of South Sudan conflict, China has not developed conflict early warning capacity. China's faced challenges on developing a comprehensive thinking at a strategic level about how to balance short, mid, and long-term solutions.

Thus, there is a need for China to develop a comprehensive overseas stability strategy that engages in both long-term, conflict prevention, as well as the existing approaches of reactive conflict resolution. China has to improve new approaches to facilitate the resolution of hotspot issues, to make good use of its friendly political relations with Africa, to increase communication and mediation, to promote dialogue and consultation. Therefore, a more integrated, comprehensive and sustainable approach is adopted whereby both traditional security issues and non-traditional security threats are being addressed through both bilateral channels and multilateral cooperation while mediation of conflicts and preventive diplomacy is being strengthened.

It is hard to avoid the dichotomy between intervention and non-intervention. Because the resolutions and actions of the United Nations Security Council have collective legitimacy, they should not be regarded as intervention. China should participate in more collective actions taken by the UNSC while insisting on non-intervention bilaterally. Through sticking to the core role of the UNSC, China can also take part in regional and sub-regional solutions as it did in South Sudan. It is important to maintain political dialogue and seek diplomatic solutions to conflicts, keeping military options as a last resort.

To secure long-term solutions, the root causes of insecurity must be addressed by pursuing transformation and sustainable development both before conflicts and post-conflict. There is the need for an updated set of principles for Sino-Africa peace and security cooperation based on six principles: African lead, African way, African peace, China focus, hot issues focus, multilateral focus. □

China has to develop a more detailed approach to early warning and to assist Africa to improve its early warning and response mechanisms, its capacity in anti-terrorism and peacekeeping. Africa also needs help to establish the African Human Security Index proposed in the first 10-year implementation plan of the African Union's Agenda 2063. In January and June 2015, AU Member States agreed to contribute up to 25% of the costs of AU peace and security efforts, including peace support operations, by the year 2020, as part of the AU's commitment to "Silence the Guns" by 2020 within the larger Agenda 2063 for Development. China may align its cooperation with the construction of African peace and security architecture. That should include support for the building and operation of regional and sub-regional security structures; support and funding for the establishment of an early response system in Africa; support and funding for the setting up of an African peacekeeping force; and promoting cooperation mechanisms among African countries in regional and sub-regional institutions.

China puts Africa's development at the epicenter of peace and security cooperation. Development is the first priority and the key to addressing security problems. Sustainable development helps to improve the balance between development, stability, and reform, as well as to promote sustainable post-conflict transformation. □

Also, China has to help Africa build a peaceful culture by supporting and investing in peace and security education. This will help to achieve the Agenda 2063 goal of silencing guns by 2020. Another important objective is to improve the operational mechanisms for peace and security cooperation. China and Africa should align their strategies, taking into account Africa's increased strategic planning awareness. China should combine plans for promoting African development, including initiatives like the 'Three Networks' program for developing highways, high-speed trains and aviation; the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development; and Agenda 2063.

Shared experience and shared insight are very important for China-Africa peace and security cooperation. At the governmental level, both parties should enhance experience sharing in areas such as ethnic-relations management, cross-border security governance, early warning and response mechanisms and social-security monitoring. At business level, China should improve the social responsibility performance of its entrepreneurs through education to develop their sense of impending crises, consciousness of environmental protection, integration and respect for local societies. Finally, China and Africa should encourage think tanks to contribute more to decision-making and implementation, to participate in the building of early warning systems and in follow-up evaluation mechanisms.

Conclusions

Greater cooperation between China and the African Union would provide an opportunity for reflecting on peace and security. Through ongoing dialogue, the AU-China Conflict Prevention Working Group should continue to explore and develop a greater understanding of how China and the AU can better cooperate in the field of conflict prevention.

In order to achieve such a comprehensive overseas stability strategy, China has the potential to build early warning systems in the conflict-affected states and to participate in existing local and international early warning and response systems, such as IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism. Moreover,

Regarding Belt and Road Initiative and Africa's security, it is true that without permanent institutions and legal commitments, it is difficult for Belt and Road Initiative to become successful. Therefore, the institutionalization of Belt and Road Initiative is necessary. Conflicts in Africa are driven by a complex mixture of factors, including armed conflict, terrorism, bidding for resources, and external intervention. Africa is characterized by many conflicts and these conflicts have a negative impact on Africa's socio-economic and political development. Thus, conflict resolution and peacebuilding are essential to solving the problems in Africa. Most notably, UN and regional peacekeeping have been a common tool for resolving conflicts and establishing conditions for a stable peace in Africa. Indeed, countries with high levels of unemployment among young men and where male educational levels are low face a high risk of conflicts. Therefore, economic development and education may contribute to conflict resolution.

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