



China's Peace Efforts in Africa since the End of the Cold War

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Abstract: Africa's post-Cold War relationship with China has created a polemical binary. Its critics dismiss it as nothing but an accretion in Africa's asymmetric, neocolonialist relationship with developed countries. They give the economic aspect of it a disproportionately large amount of attention, with the result that their argument mostly terminates at the point where it tries to implicate China's appetite for raw materials and overseas markets in the so-called 'Second Scramble for Africa'. On the other hand, its proponents describe it as symbiotic and as critical to the efforts to leverage the continent's bargaining power in the international economic system. This paper seeks to cure the defects in the critics' argument by drawing attention to China's peace efforts on the continent since the end of the Cold War. It suggests the expansion of those efforts. Secondary sources and the historical method are used.

Key words: Post-Cold War Relationship, China, 'Second Scramble for Africa', China's peace efforts.

Introduction

Africa's post-Cold War relationship with China (the People's Republic of China) is one of the most widely debated issues today. It began when formally in 1956 Egypt became the first African and Arab country to establish diplomatic China. relationship with The Bandung Conference of African and Asian countries which took place the year before provided the platform for "the first Chinese diplomatic contacts with Africans" (Larskin, 1971, p.17). It also "marks the beginning of Communist Chinese in Africa" (Slawecki. activities 1963). With the establishment of diplomatic relationship with China in 1956 Egypt became the beachhead of Chinese diplomatic and political penetration of the continent. By 1960 six other Arab countries, viz. Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, and Sudan had also established diplomatic relationship with China ("Dates of establishment", n.d.). The encumbered Cold War the penetration from the Arab part of the continent. Nevertheless, by 1970 diplomatic relationship with nineteen more countries had been established ("Dates of establishment", n.d.). On 25 October 1971, the continent contributed twenty-six of the seventy-six votes by virtue of which Taiwan (the Republic of China) was sacked from the UN (United Nations) and China's UN General Assembly and Security Council seats were restored to China (Yuan, 2006). Mao Zedong thanked Africans, saying: "It is our African brothers who have carried us into the United Nations (Li, 2012). The relationship has passed through three discernible periods.

The first period (from the late 1950s to the late 1970s) was dominated by the Cold War struggles for spheres of influence on the continent. During the Cold War China gave financial and technical assistance to pro-Beijing countries and arms to some independence movements. It expected those movements to reciprocate with diplomatic recognition if they became the ruling parties in the post-independence politics. (Zimbabwe which has been ruled by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) since independence established diplomatic relationship with China on 18 April 1980, the very same day that it became independent). Penetration during that period encountered two maior obstacles both which of had something to do with communism.

The first obstacle came from Taiwan. Taiwan's relationship with those European countries that had colonies on the continent hampered the initial efforts that China made to be accepted on the continent as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. The phobia which the West created about communism during the Cold War, coupled with colonial indoctrination and tutelage, predisposed most of the continent's first-generation leaders to pursue pro-West foreign policies (Eze:2002). China rejected attempts by some of those leaders to split diplomatic recognition between it and Taiwan.

The second obstacle came from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had the upper hand in their struggle with China leadership the for of international communism. as evidenced by the delay by most of the pro-East countries on the continent and elsewhere in establishing diplomatic relations with the China. For example, Ghana established diplomatic relationship with the Soviets after six months of becoming independent, but did not establish with China until after three years. The Soviets held far greater diplomatic appeal than China because of the strategic guarantee it could offer in the treacherous terrain of the Cold War decades. By the end of the 1970s, however, China had succeeded in establishing diplomatic relationship with about forty-four countries on the continent (Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China, 2004).

During the second period, i.e. the first decade of the post-Mao era, the relationship hibernated and developing countries became less strategically important in China's foreign policy calculations. That was the second time the relationship would hibernate, anyway. It had previously hibernated during the Cultural Revolution (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). The fall in China's interest in cultivating developing countries was largely due to the economic reforms Deng Xiaoping launched after Mao's death. A corollary of those reforms was the reshuffle of foreign policy goals. As the foreign policy shifted focus away from "ideological dogmatism toward eclectic pragmatism, from extreme totalitarianism toward liberalized authoritarianism, from a command economy toward "market socialism." and from autarkic isolationism toward international interdependence" (Barnett, 1986), Chinese leaders began to tone down their denunciation of capitalism and to embrace the West without whose investment capital the reforms might foundered. Developing have countries suffered the hemorrhage of strategic importance in the calculation of the new foreign policy during that decade largely because they lacked the capital which the reforms needed to get off the ground.

The third and present period began immediately after the Cold War ended. The effects of the reforms, which had begun to kick in by the time the War ended, have forced China to "return" to the continent. The loss, in 1993, of the domestic capacity to produce all the oil it needs particularly forced the "return." The effects have also opened the floodgates to more diplomatic recognition on the continent. With only three countries (Burkina Faso, Swaziland, and Sao Tome and Principe) still maintaining diplomatic relationship with it, Taiwan, which has been suffering diplomatic defections since losing her UN seats in 1971, is no longer reckoned a diplomatic rival on the continent.

Since the end of the Cold War, China has been using both economic and non-economic tools to pursue its foreign policy goals. It has not only embraced the international economic system which it once denounced as a capitalist monster but also has become active international an troubleshooter. Africa. which is grappling with one of the world's highest conflict rates, has benefitted the most from this increase in Chinese participation in international troubleshooting.

China's widening footprint on the continent has created a binary of pessimism and optimism. Pessimists accuse the Chinese of involvement in the so-called 'Second Scramble for Africa' and of friendship with some of those leaders (such as Robert Mugabe and Omar El-Bashir) who the West has labeled as notoriously corrupt and dictatorial. One such pessimist, Okpeh (2009, p.2), contended:

The Sino-African relationship has come with its associated threats to the survival of democracy and transparency, as China does not seek to impose conditions on its economic relations like the West and the

United States. This has provided a lifeline to autocratic regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe who were hitherto isolated by the international community. Sudan represents the clearest example of how China comes to Africa with money, technical expertise, and the influence in such bodies as the United Nations Security Council to protect the host country from international sanctions...in Zimbabwe, China has been supporting Mugabe's regime, which is reviled in the international community for its crushing of ruthless the opposition and the forceful [forcible] removal of hundreds of thousands of city residents to rural areas, with no respect for life, health, or satisfactory alternative arrangements).

On the other hand, optimists argue that the continent stands to benefit from deepening the relationship. For example, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, said: "China's presence in Africa is very much welcome. We respect and cherish old friends from the West, but we are eager to make new friends from the East and we appreciate what China has done and is doing in Africa in the areas of infrastructure development and enhancement of natural commodity prices"(Obasanjo, 2013). They believe that China can help to reduce the continent's dependence on the West for foreign aid (Elochukwu, 2012).

This paper draws attention to a very important, but less-discussed, aspect

of the relationship, viz. China's peace efforts on the continent. China's interest in the continent is not only about the exploitation of its abundant economic opportunities. It's also about resolving its conflicts. Still, the economic aspect of the relationship continues to receive disproportionately large amount of attention.

Issues in Sino-African Relations

The three components of China's participation in international troubleshooting on the continent are: diplomacy, peacekeeping and post-conflict recovery support.

Diplomacy

In this paper, the Zimbabwean and Darfur crises are used as a case study of the effectiveness of Chinese conflict diplomacy on the continent.

One of the remote causes of the Zimbabwean political crisis was the peripherization of the black majority in the colonial economy. Anyway, Zimbabwe's colonial economic history is not significantly different from that of any other African experienced country that also colonial rule. A leitmotif of colonial rule on the continent is that every one of the colonial powers ensured that the ethnic and racial groups that independence spearheaded the struggle colonies in its were prevented from capturing both the political and economic powers at independence. example, For in Nigeria, where southerners, by virtue of the head start they had in the acquisition of western education,

would have effortlessly captured both powers at independence, Britain rigged the last colonial elections so that the Northern People's Congress which was the most amenable of the nationalist parties could form the first indigenous government at independence in 1960 (Achebe. 2012). A similar scheme of power bifurcation took place in Zimbabwe where Ian Smith's white minority government grudgingly transferred political power to the blacks but schemed to ensure that the few whites that remained behind as settlers inherited the economic power through an egregious land ownership system.

China's involvement in the crisis became a subject for international debate when a 2008 China-Russia veto scuttled a Western-sponsored resolution that would have imposed UN sanctions against Mugabe and the hierarchy of his government. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) did not support any attempt to use sanctions in the crisis, as evidenced by its opposition Western sanctions the to (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2012) and the no vote which South Africa, its most powerful member and the recipient of the highest number of the crisis' refugees, cast on the UN sanctions resolution (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2008). China vetoed the resolution to prevent it truncating the efforts which the African Union (AU) and SADC were making to get

the crisis resolved through negotiations (UNSC, 2008).

China used а double-barreled approach to mediate the crisis. While it opposed the use of sanctions against Mugabe and supported with loans and technical assistance the efforts he was making to refloat the national economy, it pressurized him to make concessions to the Opposition. (President Hu Jintao did not visit Zimbabwe during his 2007 tour of southern Africa). That approach (support your friend in public but rebuke him in private) must have been one of the things that made Mugabe to sign, in 2008, a unity government agreement with the two factions of the Movement for Democratic Change. Less than a year after the unity government was formed, China gave the government \$950m in foreign aid (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009). While South Africa and SADC were credited with brokering the agreement, China was acknowledged as "the power behind the curtain" (Evans, 2008).

The Darfur crisis which broke out about a decade after the Rwandan genocide also tested the effectiveness of China's conflict diplomacy in Africa. It received a lot of attention possibly because it broke out when the debates over the UN's lethargic intervention in the genocide were raging. China showed an interest in its resolution from the outset (Ahmed, 2010). It supported all the solutions that were suggested except those ones that contradicted its

stance on the inviolability of sovereignty. It did not veto the 2005 resolution that imposed a UN arms sanction on Sudan; nor did it oppose the deployment of a Khartoumpeacekeeping sanctioned UN operation (UNPKO) to Darfur (Holslag, 2007). A PKO without Khartoum's consent would have exacerbated the crisis and violated the UN principle that requires the consent of "the main parties to the conflict" before a PKO is deployed (United Nations [UN], "Principles of UN Peacekeeping", n. d.).

firmed up China conflict its diplomacy with the appointment, for the first time ever, of a special envoy The envoy whose for Africa. responsibilities resemble those of America's Under-Secretary for African Affairs and the EU's African Peace Facility would be its permanent representative to the AU. Before the appointment was made in 2007, vice-foreign affairs minister, Zhai Jun coordinated its response to the conflict. The appointment not only integrated it into the crisis' multilateral peace framework, but also institutionalized its peace efforts on the continent. The envoy, Liu Guijin was an experienced head in affairs. having African been ambassador to Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, and head of African affairs in the foreign affairs ministry. He participated in most of the crisis' talks. He also held separate meetings with each of the other troubleshooters, viz. the AU, the Arab League, the EU, and the

USA. His appointment paved the way for the institutionalization of his country's peace efforts on the continent.

President El-Bashir opposed the attempt to replace the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) with another PKO, possibly because of this reason adduced by de Waal (n.d.):

Khartoum sees a UN force as a surrender of sovereignty, and believes it would have the apprehend mandate to individuals indicted by the International Criminal Court and fly them to the Hague. President Bashir worries about a Chapter VII peacekeeping operation with authority to use force being present in northern Sudan should conflict break out in the run up to the 2011 referendum on selfdetermination in southern Sudan. He resents the way in which the push for UN troops has been conducted through bluster and threat

He must have reasoned that another PKO could be rigged and used to pursue the type of mission creep that toppled Muammar Gadhafi of Libya. He allowed the deployment of the hybrid UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) that was subsequently proposed by former UN secretarygeneral Kofi Annan only after a series of talks with Chinese leaders and diplomats (Kleine-Ahlbrandt & Small, 2008). It was when China was occupying the rotating **UNSC** presidency that Resolution 1769

which authorized the deployment of the hybrid AU-UNPKO was adopted 2008). (Guiiin. The AU-UN mediation efforts on the crisis received \$500,000 from China ("China Donates US\$100.000 to ECOWAS Peace Fund", 2009). Holslag (2008) noted that El-Bashir eventually consented to the hybrid PKO because China used diplomacy rather than threats of punishment.

China laced its conflict diplomacy with incentives. For example, during his 2007 trip to Sudan in February 2007 President Hu Jintao said his country would forgive \$80m of debts (Mallaby, 2007), extend a \$12.8minterest-free loan for the construction of a presidential palace (McDoom, 2007), and offer a \$5.1m grant for "an array of projects" (Edinger, 2007). Those incentives, however, were yoked to the exhortation: "Darfur is a part of Sudan and you have to resolve this problem" (McDoom, 2007).

Peacekeeping

China is still a peripheral participant in the UN peacekeeping system (UNPKS) because it currently non-combat contributes mostly troops to the UNPKOs. Nevertheless, its peripheral participation "fills a key gap and is important to the viability and success of UN peacekeeping operations" (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2009). Compliance with the UN peacekeeping principle that requires the consent of the major parties to a conflict before a PKO is deployed is a condition for its support for, or

participation in, a PKO. Securing the prior consent of the major parties is good because it "provides the UN with the necessary freedom of action, both political and physical, to carry out its mandated tasks [and prevents a PKO troops from] becoming a party to the conflict; and being drawn towards enforcement action, and away from its fundamental role of keeping the peace" (UN. "Principles of UN Peacekeeping", n.d.). China's insistence that Sudan's prior consent to the hybrid PKO be secured was one of the factors that instigated the insinuation that it was supporting President El-Bashir in the crisis.

Africa is the greatest beneficiary of China's involvement in the UNPKS in that three-quarters of Chinese blue helmets have served on the continent (Shelton, 2008). China began to contribute personnel to the UNPKOs in 1989 when it sent twenty observers to participate in UNTAG (1989-90)---the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (Shelton, 2008). Before then, its participation in the PKOs did not extend beyond financial and debating contributions. Since then, its troops have participated in the following UNPKOs on the continent: UNOMIL, UNMIL, UNOMSIL, UNAMSIL, UNIOSIL, UNMEE, ONUMOZ, UNMIS, ONUB. MONUC/MONUSCO, UNTAG, MINUSMA, UNOCI, MINURSO, UNAMID. and UNMIS (UN. "Peacekeeping", n.d.). In 2013, Mali became the first country in the world

to host its combat blue helmets (Hille, 2013). In 2014, South Sudan became the second country to host such troops (Smith, 2014).

China also has been supporting African PKOs with funds and logistics. African PKOs are generally inadequately resourced. They totter under a chronic inadequacy of personnel, funds and logistics, with the result that they rely heavily on external financial and logistic support. (AMIS was replaced with UNAMID when it became unmistakably clear that it was collapsing). China has been helping to alleviate these financial and logistic constraints. For example, AMIS has been assisted with \$1.8 million (Christensen & Swan, 2008), the African Union Mission in Somalia, (AMISON) with \$300 million (Large, 2008), and the Peace ECOWAS Fund with \$100,000 ("China Donates Money to Back Diplomatic Efforts to End Darfur Crisis", 2008).

Post-Conflict Recovery Support

Post-conflict recovery efforts are given a lot of attention because postconflict situations can be very tricky. Countries emerging from conflict recover at different rates. They are also liable to suffer a post-conflict relapse. Some of the countries that have suffered a post-conflict relapse in recent years are Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Egypt, and Libya. (The Second World War resulted from a postconflict relapse). It has been argued that about a half of all civil wars are caused by a post-conflict relapse (Collier, 2004). The state of the economy and the institutions of governance prior to the conflict largely determines the speed at which a country will recover from a conflict. Thus, post-conflict recovery is likely to be faster in Europe than in Africa and most parts of Asia.

It was only recently that post-conflict recovery began to receive serious attention from the UN. In 2005, the UN Security Council passed a resolution, recognising it as one of the areas where the capacity of sub-regional regional and dealing with organizations for conflict should be strengthened (UNSC, 2005). The United Nations General Assembly established the Peace building Commission that same year. The Commission is mandated to: (1) "bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peace building and recovery;" (2) "focus attention on the reconstruction and institutionbuilding efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support development of integrated the strategies in order to lay the foundation sustainable for development;" and (3) "provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, help to to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the

period of attention given by the international community to postconflict recovery" (UN, "Mandate of the Peace building Commission", n.d.).

post-conflict China supports recovery efforts on the continent in different ways. The free medical services, skills acquisition trainings, infrastructure reconstruction. etc. which its non-combat troops provide offer "the support vital to addressing the immediate needs of local populations in fragile states that have come out of conflict, or remain affected by it" (Mariani, 2011). Peacekeepers from other countries benefit from the free medical services too (Thompson, 2005).

Angola, Liberia, and Kenya are among the countries that have benefited from the support. The National Reconstruction Programme, the flagship of Angola's recovery efforts. has been mostly implemented with Chinese loans and assistance (Thompson, 2005). Liberia received 20 motorcycles for its 2011 general elections (Chinese Embassy, 2011), 171 training slots and about \$10m's worth of aid for its armed forces (Chinese Embassy, 2011), and 140 anti-riot Chinese police officers for the efforts to prevent a security vacuum that might follow the winding down of its UNPKO (Garblah, 2013). Kenya \$300.000 for received the humanitarian efforts that followed its 2007 post-election violence (Large, 2008).

Conclusion

Africa-China relationship is not only about the exploitation of the economic opportunities that abound on the continent. It is also about China's peace efforts there. Those efforts which involve mediation, peacekeeping, and support for postconflict recovery efforts have benefitted from the reputation which China has earned among most Africans as an honest broker.

China has been accused of having a close relationship with debatably corrupt and autocratic leaders like Mugabe and El-Bashir. Yet, it is the ability to do business with both 'saints' and 'sinners' that has made it "an important and potentially decisive voice on African peace and security issues" (Van Hoeymissen, 2011). It does not dictate conditions or issue ultimatums at peace talks and will veto any UNSC proposal (sanction and PKO) that does not enjoy the support of the AU or any of its sub-regional organizations. It defers to the positions of these organizations because it "considers them well placed to make certain judgements on issues that impact the sovereignty and internal affairs of their members" (Van Hoeymissen, 2011). In the Africa Policy paper it released in 2006, it pledged both moral and financial support for their peace efforts (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation [FOCAC], 2006).

China's peace efforts on the continent are deepening and mutating. The shrinkage of

America's and Europe's troop contribution has created a vacuum which the major "culprits" in the socalled 'Second Scramble for Africa'---China, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and Brazil--- are expected to fill. So far only China has shown sufficient evidence of readiness to fill that vacuum. Its troops are participating in seventy-five percent of all the current UNPKOs on the continent "Current (UN. Peacekeeping Operations, n.d.).

Suggestions

Troubleshooting in Africa generally faces a constraint of low confidence level. Most of the peace efforts there

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are hampered by reservations about the impartiality of their spearheads or sponsors. For example, the MDC does not trust South Africa to be impartial in its mediation in the Zimbabwean political conflict. Similarly, most people in the Frenchspeaking countries do not trust French-led peace efforts in their internal conflicts. As a consequence, no sooner are most ceasefire agreements signed than they are broken. Given this fact, China should be encouraged to invest its immense popularity with Africans in the efforts to bring down the continent's conflict rate.

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