

QU XING

President of the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

Jean-Michel Severino, CEO, Investisseurs et Partenaires (I&P)

Before we come back to eastern Africa, I would like to turn to Mr Qu Xing, who is a very eminent international policy researcher, a specialist in both Chinese and French diplomacy. Your presence here is very important, because not everybody knows the very important and growing role that China has played in the past two decades in Africa, mostly economically, and with a very firm policy stance over the years that you would not interfere with political issues. Given your growing importance all over the continent, one wants to ask the question whether this position is sustainable, whether you are not dragged into all the dimensions of foreign and local policies anyway, whether it would not be indispensable for your presence on the continent, and how Chinese policy has changed.

Qu Xing, President of the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

I would like first of all to thank Thierry de Montbreal for inviting me to this high level policy debating forum of the World Policy Conference, to exchange ideas with the elites of the world and to enjoy the nice weather and beautiful city of Monaco.

The topic of this session is Africa. I got three questions from our moderator regarding China's policy towards Africa. The first is how I see China's traditional policy of noninterference in African domestic affairs in the background of the instability in Africa. The second is whether China fears the current instability impacts Chinese interests in Africa. The third is what role China is playing to improve the continental and regional stability. I would like to share with you my observations in responding to these three questions.

Firstly, How I see China's principle of noninterference in other countries domestic affairs. Noninterference in domestic affairs of other country is one of the principles of the charter of United Nations. China cherishes this principle very much. In 1954, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Indian Premier Nehru jointly proposed the five principles of peaceful co-existence, called in Indian language as principles of Panch Shila. Namely, mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, no aggression of each other, noninterference in each other's domestic affairs, equality and reciprocity, and peaceful co-existence. Since then, these five principles serve as the fundamental philosophy of China's foreign policy till now. In the joint statement between China and almost every foreign country marking the establishment of diplomatic ties, you can find these principles.

Why does China attaches so great importance to the principle of noninterference? From historical perspective, China suffered a lot in its modern history from foreign interference. These interferences had negative consequences upon China's society. From theoretical perspective, China believes that no one knows better the domestic affairs of a country than the people and government of the country itself, no one knows better than the people of this country how to govern the country. From practical perspective, in the whole history of international relations, it is always the big and strong countries which interfered in domestic affairs of small and weak countries. And their criteria to or not to interfere is their own interests. They don't care so much the aftermath of their military interference. It is hard to draw positive conclusion from foreign interferences in Kosovo, in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in Libya since the end of the cold war.

But the noninterference does not mean indifference. China knows that United Nations' general assembly has adopted in 2005 the concept of responsibility to protect. That means while the government of a country does not have the will or the ability to protect its own people from the genocide, crime of war, ethnic purge or crime against humanity, the international community has to react. But the key question is who should be the judge of the situation and who will be the decision maker of international interference. China holds that the UN Security Council should be the only authority to assess whether the above crimes are committed in a country, and the only decision-maker to authorize the



international interference. At the same time, China values the concept of “responsibility while protecting” or “responsible protection”. As a matter of fact, China participated in all peace keeping operations under the auspices of the UN in Africa and other continents. For instance China has sent its contingent to Mali for the peace keeping mission. Among the permanent members of the Security Council, China is the largest contributor of contingent to the peace keeping forces of UN. What China does not accept, is to overthrow the government of a country by military means without the authorization of UN Security Council. Because the problems created by such military means may be much more serious than the original problems to be solved. That’s the situation we are seeing in Iraq and Libya.

Secondly, does China fear that the current instability impacts China’s interests in Africa? The answer is “Yes”. China has important interests in Africa. China’s cooperation with Africa began in 1950s. Premier Zhou Enlai met for the first time African leaders in the first Asia-Africa summit held in Indonesia in 1955. In the three decades after that, China provided a huge amount of aid to African countries to help them to earn national independence and to consolidate their political independence through economic construction. In 1964, Premier Zhou Enlai stated the 8 principles of China’s aid for African countries. The key idea of these 8 principles is that China does not consider the aid to African countries as a favor to them, but a mutual help between China and Africa. In about 50 years, China built for African countries more than one thousand of projects of infrastructure, including hundreds of schools, dozens of hospitals, dozens of stadiums and dozens of governmental office buildings, China also built thousands of kilometers of railway and high ways in African countries. The budget of this aid reached even 7% of Chinese GDP in 1960s and 1970s. Most of these projects are fruits of non-reimbursable assistance, the others were built with governmental loans which are later exempted.

This is the situation in the years before 1980s. Since then, China and Africa both entered in a new period. China began its reform and opening up period. Africa has fulfilled its task of decolonization. The economic relationship between China and Africa entered also in a new period. While continuing to provide non reimbursable assistance, China attaches more importance to create a win-win situation for common development. In 1984, Chinese Premier stated during his visit to Africa 4 principles of “international economic cooperation”, namely equality and mutual benefice, efficiency, variety and common development. The main difference between these 4 principles and the 8 principles of 1964 is the focus on reciprocity and common development.

This policy of mutual benefice and win-win solution gives a new momentum to economic cooperation between China and Africa. In terms of trade, for instance, the trade volume between China and Africa in 1988 was 1 billion US dollars, today the trade reached 200 billion dollars. Hundreds of thousand of Africans work and live in China today and about the same number of Chinese work and live in Africa. China begins to import oil and resources from Africa. Chinese companies begin to participate in competition with western companies in African market. Chinese competition brings the price of oil and resources up and bid for infrastructure construction down in African market. It is perhaps not good news for European and American companies, but it is definitely beneficial for African countries. With the same quantity of oil and resources, they can get more money. And with the same budget they can build more infrastructures.

The stability of Africa is important for China. Politically, Africa is the continent with most of developing countries. China considers itself as a developing country for still long time. China believes that without the development of developing countries, the development of the world will not be sustainable. The imbalance of the world economy is as a matter of fact the imbalance of development. China is doing efforts to help African countries to realize a fast economic development through political stability. Diplomatically, the developing countries form the basis of China’s foreign policy. Every time when international organizations discuss a problem related to China, the strong support and sympathy to China come always from developing countries, especially from Africa. China considers African countries as true friends. Economically, since recent years, China imports oil and resources from Africa, China exports its products to Africa, Chinese companies begin to largely invest in Africa, large number of Chinese labors work in construction site in Africa. In this circumstance, the instability impacts negatively China’s exports, imports, investments and the security of China’s workers in Africa. We still remember that before the military intervention of NATO in Libya, China had to evacuate 36 thousand Chinese workers from Libya in 10 days. If the stability is broken in some other countries in Africa, I can’t imaging how to evacuate the Chinese citizens from a country even farther away from China than Libya, or from a country with a large number of Chinese citizens.



Thirdly, what role China is playing or can China play to improve the continental and regional stability in Africa? As I mentioned earlier, China believes that the key of social stability of a country exists in the economic development. Poverty and inequality are the origin of instability. So China's approach to improve stability in Africa is first of all to improve social and economic development, to improve the livelihood of the people. In 1960s, Chinese aid to Africa was not necessarily focused on the field of high-tech industries, but in the SME closely linked to the livelihood of ordinary people and villagers. Recent years, with bigger capabilities to foreign aid, China focuses more on the big projects of industrialization of Africa. In 2006, China set up a mechanism of China-Africa cooperation forum. A series of new measures of aid to Africa have been put into practice: a special fund of 5 billion dollars was created to encourage Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa; the debts were exempted, China built the Convention Center of African Union as a support for the African integration process. China opens more its market for African products. More than 400 categories of African products may enter in Chinese market with zero customs duty. Today Africa is in favorite balance in its trade with China. China created a model called "resources for infrastructures". That means Chinese companies build infrastructures as railways, highways, harbors, power stations, public housings, etc, for African countries with Chinese governmental loans. The countries concerned reimburse these loans with their resources. In that way, African countries get their infrastructures improved, and China get the resources it needs for its modernization. It is a win-win situation. Even though, the oil imported by China is less than one third of the oil imported by US and by EU. And China is also helping African countries to build their oil refinery industries, In Sudan and Angola, for instance.

Concerning the improvement of governance, China's approach is to provide training for African civil servants and technicians. Chinese government has set up a special fund for training programs for African countries. Since 2006, dozens of thousand Africans have been trained in China. China also sent medical teams to Africa. Since 1960s, dozens of thousand of Chinese doctors having been working in rotation in African countryside not only for treatment of patients but also for basic training of local medical personnel.

The improvement of stability is a long process. In this regard, there is perhaps a difference between China and western countries. Western countries tell Africans how their country should be governed. China tells Africans how China resolves its own problems in similar circumstances. When stability is broken by local conflicts, Western countries believe that a regime change will be the best way to end the instability. China thinks that everything has its time and conditions, an external interference may easily change the regime but hardly restores the stability. We are seeing what happened in Iraq, in Afghanistan and in Libya.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that China's noninterference policy does not mean indifference, that China needs the stability of Africa and that China is proceeding to improve the stability in promoting social and economic development instead of imposing its social model, let alone by military means.

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History is proving you right, and it is very important to remind us that China is as large a contributor to peacekeeping operations, including in Africa, as others, which is something that is often overlooked by the general public.