

Beyond the Rhetoric: Noninterference in China's African Policy

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Abstract

The following paper examines the historical origins and development of China's advocacy of the principle of noninterference in its African foreign policy and suggests that in spite of its consistent rhetorical support for noninterference over the last fifty years, the relevance of the principle in shaping Beijing's foreign policy decisions has varied as its pragmatic interests have shifted. China's post-Maoist leadership, in the drive to win the African resources and markets needed to bolster its growing, export-driven economy, has utilized the practice of noninterference to win a foothold on the continent. As its level of investment in Africa and dependency on African energy resources and markets have expanded, however, Beijing has found limiting its actions vis-à-vis a policy of noninterference less tenable, and as recurrences of regional instability and anti-Chinese populism have threatened its interests, citizens, and assets on the continent, will likely take a more forceful role in its relations with partner states.

Keywords

China; Africa; foreign policy; noninterference; nonintervention

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No country has the right to impose its will on others, nor can it undermine or deny other countries' sovereignty under whatever excuse. Facts have proven that such practices as disregarding other's sovereignty, bullying the small and the weak by dint of one's size and power, and pursuing hegemony and power politics would not get anywhere. The affairs of a country should be decided by its own people, and the affairs of the world should be handled by consultation among all countries on an equal footing.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, at a speech commemorating the 50th Anniversary of The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (June 28, 2004).¹

Introduction

The recent emergence of China as a major outside player in Africa may prove to be a pivotal change in the historical course of the continent's development. As opposed to Western powers and international financial institutions, China has provided generous amounts of aid and investment without conditions attached. Rather than prodding its African partners to implement neoliberal reforms, as demanded by proponents of the Washington Consensus, Beijing instead emphasizes the principle of noninterference, mutual benefits, and 'win-win' relationships. Chinese leaders place importance on the sovereign equality of all countries and offer to meet even the weakest of states on equal footing, respecting every government's right to determine its own domestic policies.²

China and its noninterference approach has consequently received a warm embrace from African leaders and large sections of the general public, as the memory of European colonialism and the disastrous effects of prescribed neoliberal reforms, particularly the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, have generated much cynicism toward the policy prescriptions and conditional aid offered by the West. The general reception of Beijing and its developmental model in Africa and throughout much of the developing world has led some scholars, most notably, Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004), to suggest that China is creating a new "Beijing Consensus" that is "remak(ing)

¹ Wen Jiabao, "Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the Promotion of Peace and Development," (Speech by Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, at Rally Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, June 28, 2004), <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics/seminaronfiveprinciples/t140777.htm> (accessed January 30, 2009).

² *Ibid.*

the whole landscape of international development, economics, society and, by extension, politics.”³

Assertions that Beijing, the China development model, and the policy of noninterference are fundamentally reshaping the international system should, however, be viewed critically. Should noninterference be interpreted as an important defining feature of the Beijing’s foreign policy as implemented in practice or simply a useful rhetorical device? In practice, how and when, if ever, does China intervene in the domestic affairs of its African allies? In the following paper, we will examine the historical origins and development of China’s usage of the principle of noninterference in its African foreign policy and suggest that in spite of its consistent rhetorical support for noninterference over the last fifty years, the relevance of the principle in shaping Beijing’s foreign policy decisions has varied as its strategic interests have shifted. China’s post-Maoist leadership, in the drive to win the African resources and markets needed to bolster its growing, export-driven economy, has utilized the practice of noninterference to gain a foothold on the continent. As its level of investment in Africa and reliance on African energy resources and markets have expanded, Beijing has found limiting its actions vis-à-vis a policy of noninterference less tenable, and as recurrences of regional instability and anti-Chinese populism have threatened its interests, citizens, and assets on the continent, will likely take a more forceful role in its relations with partner states.

Understanding China’s Brand of Noninterference

The term ‘noninterference’ was enunciated by the “Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States” (hereafter, “the Declaration”) approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1981. Building upon the earlier 1965 Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty and the 1970 Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security, the Declaration denies states “the right to interfere or intervene in the internal and external affairs of other states”⁴ but uses language far too general in defining specific acts of

³ Joshua Cooper Ramo, “The Beijing Consensus,” *The Foreign Policy Center* (2004), 3 http://joshuaramo.com/_files/pdf/The-Beijing-Consensus.pdf (accessed February 3, 2009).

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States, approved on December 9, 1981, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r103.htm> (accessed February 3, 2009).

interference or intervention for usage in this article. It also designates the signing of treaties and creation of alliances with third-party states or military blocs as forms of interference, concerns that are outside the scope of this investigation. Drawing upon the content of the document, a good understanding of China's lack of desire to comment on the controversial issues categorized as "internal affairs" will require the simplifying and clarifying which specific state actions constitute acts of intervention or interference and therefore represent violations of the principle of noninterference:

- 1) Using armed intervention or the threat of force to disrupt the political, social or economic order of another state or change its political system.
- 2) Using direct armed intervention or subversion to undermine the stability of another state.
- 3) Allowing one's own territory to be used by rebellious or secessionist movements to indirectly subvert the stability or institutions of another state.
- 4) Arming or otherwise supporting rebellious or secessionist movements or mercenaries within another state's territory.
- 5) Employing hostile propaganda for the purpose of intervening in the internal affairs of another state or undermining its stability.
- 6) Using one's power and influence to prevent a state from freely determining its own political, social and economic development. This includes the unsanctioned (by the United Nations) use of economic blockades to interfere in a foreign state's internal affairs.

While this definition for noninterference is certainly far from perfect, it represents China's very articulation of the principles by which it has largely and consistently dealt with its South-South linkages. The five principles of noninterference, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and mutual benefit, mutual non-aggression, peaceful coexistence (hereafter, "the Five Principles"), worked out by Premier Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to reduce border tensions and improve Sino-Indian relations on June 28, 1954 was later expanded to discursively cover China's external relations with other states, particularly those in the developing world, starting with Burma on June 29, 1954.⁵ In the case of Burma, this only represented the beginning of a series of Joint Communiqués, which all emphasized friendship and cooperation based on the Five Principles. Notable among these Sino-Burmese Joint Communiqués was the one on April 17-19,

⁵ *China's Foreign Relations: A Chronology of Events (1949-1988)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989): 207.

1966, in which the Chinese President, Liu Shaoqi, indirectly referred to the activities of the U.S. and its allies in Vietnam as acts of “imperialist subversion and interference” into the internal affairs of Asia.⁶ Three decades later, and following the refusal of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) of Burma to recognize the victory of National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was put under “house arrest,” a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on December 15, 1994 that “China never interferes in any affairs which belong to the internal affairs of Burma.”⁷ The same statement was later echoed by the then Chinese Prime Minister, Li Peng, who stated in Yangon that “Aung San Suu Kyi’s affairs are Myanmar’s (Burma) internal affairs, where we do not interfere.”⁸

Burma serves as an instructive case for observing China’s advocacy of non-interference, as these rhetorical framings have defined China’s actions and narratives toward its other partners in global interactions. The challenge, according to Alden and Hughes (2009),⁹ is how China balances the often tenuous compatibility between noninterference and its aspirations to become a global stakeholder in the case of Sino-African relations.

Noninterference and South-South Cooperation

Shortly after Zhou and Nehru’s meeting in 1954, delegates from twenty-nine Asian and African countries met in Bandung, Indonesia, affirming the Five Principles, which would shape the agenda of the emerging Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). At the Bandung Conference in the week of April 18-24, 1955, Japan was the only First World country to attend the conference, and even though it was not part of the NAM, it supported the tenets of the organization.¹⁰ The Bandung Declaration served as a turning point in modern world history, initiating the age of the non-aligned world, which in turn revolutionized relations between China and its neighbors as well as other members of the NAM, who all adopted the Five Principles to guide their foreign relations.

⁶ “China-Burma Joint Communiqué, April 19, 1966,” *Peking Review* 9:17 (22 April 1966): 5.

⁷ See Pozeb Vang, *Five Principles of Chinese Foreign Policies* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2008): 393.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Alden C. and Hughes, “Harmony and Discord in China’s Africa Strategy: Some Implications for Foreign Policy,” *China Quarterly* (September 2009): 563-584.

¹⁰ Vang, 1-2.

In 1955, Zhou Enlai (China), Nehru (India), Sukarno (Indonesia), and Nasser (Egypt), who were key figures and decision makers in the Bandung Conference, supported the idea that a resolution on world peace should be based on the Five Principles. President Sukarno stated, "This is the first inter-continental conference of the so-called colored people in the history of mankind."¹¹ Nasser added that there were two prerequisites for world peace – noninterference in other nation's affairs and the right of all nations to choose their own political and economic system."¹² In his closing speech for the conference Nehru stated that:

We are brothers not only because we are Asians and Africans, but also because we are linked by the immeasurable wish for peace, resolute resistance to all dictates, firm determination to raise ourselves from backwardness. I am deeply convinced that we have made a great achievement here, not only to the benefit of Asia and Africa, but for the whole of mankind as well.¹³

This immense belief in noninterference guided China's efforts to reach out to other countries in the developing world by first identifying itself with the developing world, and then gradually working its way to leadership in the Global South, which Lumumba-Kasongo (2007)¹⁴ argues is a central part of Chinese political engagements in Africa. In April 1974, Deng Xiaoping, Chairman of the delegation of the PRC to the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations and Vice Premier of the State Council of the PRC, presented an address in which he identified "three worlds" in the international system, of which the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were the Third World. Referring to Russia and the U.S. as the two superpowers that threatened the independence and security of nations through control, subversion, interference or aggression, Deng Xiaoping said China was a socialist country, a developing country and also belonged to the Third World. He then categorically stated that "China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one."¹⁵

From the Bandung Conference, which represented a watershed event for initiating and strengthening South-South Cooperation, China has emphasized the noninterference clause embedded in the Five Principles in almost

¹¹ "Bandung Conference," *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (May 7-14, 1955): 14182.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14181.

¹³ "Conference in Bandung," *Review of International Affairs* 5:1222 (May 1, 1955): 11.

¹⁴ Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, "China-Africa Relations in the Post-Cold War Era: Dialectics of Rethinking South-South Dialogue," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1&2 (2007): 8-16.

¹⁵ "Chairman of the Delegation Teng Hsiao-Ping's Speech," *Peking Review* 17:16 (19 April 1974): 6-11.

every interaction with other developing states, even in the face of complex emerging realities in the global political and economic structure. After 1976, the Five Principles appeared in over 90 documents jointly released by China and other foreign states, framing the official foundation for China's diplomatic relations with over 100 countries.¹⁶ In recent years, the Five Principles have uniformly appeared in the official language of the Chinese government, such as Sino-African declarations at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC),¹⁷ China's White Paper on African Policy (2006),¹⁸ and also the preamble of the Chinese Constitution.¹⁹ On June 28, 2004, the 50th anniversary of Zhou and Nehru's meeting, Premier Wen Jiabao asserted China's half-century as "a faithful practitioner" of the Five Principles, which had "long been held as the cornerstone of China's independent foreign policy of peace."²⁰

While noninterference has been a recurrent theme in the official rhetoric of the People's Republic of China throughout its existence, the principle has had varying relevance in shaping the foreign policy practices of the state in Africa. From the 1950s to 1970s, Beijing's foreign policy outlook was viewed through the ideologically colored lens of Marxism and emphasis was placed on supporting "genuine socialist insurrection or revolution" throughout Africa and contributing to the cause of anti-imperialism.²¹ Honoring the sovereign rights of foreign states on the basis of equality and not interfering in their domestic affairs was a concern largely absent from Beijing's policy preferences, as in the campaign against imperialism, distinctions were made between colonial or white-minority governments, which it undermined by backing national liberation movements, and postcolonial states, which it recognized and supported, such as Zambia and Tanzania. Regardless of the laudable merit in aiding liberation movements in their struggle against apartheid regimes, in this discussion of China's adherence to noninterference, it should be noted that Beijing's actions were clearly not restrained by its pledge to honor the Five Principles in its relations with *every* state. Ian Taylor (2006) makes this contradiction clearly evident by noting that within only a few short years of the Zhou-Nehru *Panch Sheel* declaration and the Bandung con-

¹⁶ "The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence," *People's Daily*.

¹⁷ "Addis Ababa Action Plan," Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, September 20, 2006, <http://www.focac.org/eng/wjjh/t404123.htm> (accessed January 27, 2009).

¹⁸ "China's African Policy," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, January 12, 2006, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm> (accessed January 27, 2009).

¹⁹ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, preamble.

²⁰ Wen (2004).

²¹ Taylor (2006): 24.

ference, China shipped arms and provided training to Algerian rebels during their 1957-1962 struggle for independence from France, initiating a pattern of supporting insurrection movements in Africa throughout much of the 1960s.²² Beijing's support for liberation movements and postcolonial governments largely receded as China was engulfed in the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution.

As China emerged from the exceptional turmoil of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1970s, Beijing's policy preferences shifted significantly. Fractures in the Sino-Soviet relationship deepened into hostility, while bilateral relations between the U.S. and China improved. Beijing continued to support liberation movements in its attempt to encourage socialist revolution and fight imperialism but now also aspired to curb Soviet influence in Africa. In line with this additional policy objective, China provided training and arms to insurrectionist groups pitted against not only colonial and white minority governments but also rival Soviet-backed groups.²³ Opposing the Soviets while simultaneously supporting socialism and anti-imperialism created a complex foreign policy agenda that often proved problematic and self-defeating, demonstrated most clearly by the example of Chinese involvement in the Angolan liberation struggle and subsequent civil war. At various points in the Angolan liberation struggle and civil war, Beijing funneled arms and assistance into rival MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA factions. By 1975, in a switch of allegiances, China supported a FNLA/UNITA coalition backed by the United States and apartheid South Africa against the Soviet and Cuban-supported MPLA, only to completely retreat from the situation before an eventual MPLA victory.²⁴ In the course of its involvement, Beijing struggled to balance its competing policy objectives of fighting imperialism, supporting socialism, and opposing Soviet hegemonism. The Angolan case is particularly relevant to this discussion, as it clearly shows that China's foreign policy agenda came to be framed by a number of overarching goals, but notably absent among them was the importance of honoring the principle of noninterference and the Angolans' right to self-determination. Chinese policymakers ignored official pledge for noninterference in practice, and Beijing became another player in the violent game of Cold War politics.

²² *Ibid.*, 23-31.

²³ *Ibid.*, 42-46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 77-81.

Noninterference in the Reform and Opening up Period

Following the death of Mao Zedong, a cohort of pragmatic reformers led by Deng Xiaoping seized the reins of government, dismissed the radical ideological excesses of the Cultural Revolution, and redirected China under the Reform and Opening Up policies, emphasizing modernization and economic development. Beijing's approach to Africa mirrored the domestic changes at home, and the preceding policies of the 1950s-70s defined by Marxist ideology, supporting liberation, socialist revolution, and countering American and Soviet hegemony, were replaced by the reform era government's policy of taking a state-centered approach to Africa and emphasizing stability. The post-Maoist regime concerned itself with forging its place in the international economic system and winning access to the resources and markets needed to fuel its growing economy, not expending its resources on the project of destabilizing enemy regimes in the interest of supporting socialism. Emerging late as a player in the international community and economic system after years of relative isolation, Beijing found itself to be relatively weak and lacking the resources or international standing of its Western counterparts. Lacking the resources to project its interests far outside its borders and in need of diplomatic allies and economic partners, Beijing began to court ruling regimes with little distinction for their socialist credentials or political composition and oppose insurrections, particularly those backed by outside powers. In an ironic change of position, considering its own behavior in Angola and elsewhere, China's leadership began condemning the Soviet Union for *its* support of insurgencies, which destabilized African states, stifled their economic growth, and caused unnecessary hardship.²⁵

At this time, China resuscitated its usage of noninterference in shaping its actions, affirming the sovereign right of African states and other developing nations to determine their own internal affairs. China engaged weaker states which manifested in its extension of aid "with no political strings attached"²⁶ and its demand that the Five Principles be respected by all nations. Considering the historical shifts in the relevance of the principle of noninterference in shaping China's foreign policy practices, which was of negligible importance until after the post-Maoist era, official claims by Chinese leaders that their government has consistently honored the right of noninterference in its dealings with other states for the last fifty years or longer should be viewed critically. Beijing has embraced or ignored noninterference in dealings with

²⁵ Ibid., 50.

²⁶ Wen (2004).

foreign states in line with its perceived self-interests, and while noninterference has gained increased significance in the post-Maoist era, that importance is grounded in Beijing's current interests. As China's interests evolve with its expanding investment in Africa, increased resources for projecting its influence, and changing threats to its property and citizens, the present significance of noninterference will likely change as interventions in the domestic affairs of Beijing's African partners become viewed as necessary or desirable.

Beijing's Interests Driving Noninterference

China's current emphasis on the doctrine of noninterference is shaped by its perceived strategic self-interests. Engaging African states without prejudice to their domestic policies or political composition and honoring their right to noninterference facilitates important economic objectives, such as acquiring the raw materials and energy supplies required to fuel China's rapid economic growth, opening markets to its abundant manufactured exports and providing its companies with investment opportunities. Noninterference has also proved extremely useful in furthering Beijing's diplomatic goal of winning over a large group of allies in the developing world. It is this large cohort of numerous albeit less powerful states that can help deflect Western criticisms of China's human rights abuses, marginalize the international status of Taiwan, and limit the hegemonic power of the United States.²⁷ These weaker states have an obvious interest in China's promotion of noninterference – establishing an international norm that stronger states should not use their power to force their will on weaker states serves to support the independent decision-making of developing nations. China's advocacy of noninterference has thus helped China win the diplomatic support of weak state allies and secure access to their economic resources and domestic markets.

African states are central to China's current economic aspirations. By extending aid and investment without conditions and promising to honor the doctrine of noninterference in its partnerships, China has won increased access to African markets, energy resources and other raw materials. In recent years, securing a reliable supply of African oil has become an increasingly important objective. China was once a leading Asian oil exporter, but as the country's economy expanded in the 1980s and '90s, domestic oil consumption surged, and by 1993, China became a net oil importer. National oil

²⁷ Denis M. Tull, "China's Engagement in Africa: Scope, Significance, and Consequences," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44:3 (2006): 460-461.

demand has only continued to grow, and China has become the world's second largest oil importer, behind only the United States. To meet its increasing needs, China has turned to many of Africa's largely untapped reserves and now imports roughly one-third of its oil from Africa.²⁸ Because sustaining economic development is the central overarching goal of China's national policy agenda, acquiring access to foreign oil and meeting national energy demands has become a critical issue for national concern for China, and "energy policy (has been) elevated to the level of strategic national security."²⁹ Approaching states with a policy of noninterference has proven particularly important in China's effort to secure access to energy resources, as many oil-rich African states are particularly despotic, unstable, and/or flagrant human rights abusers. Advocating noninterference allows Beijing to ignore those shortcomings and focus on the business of energy extraction, without the trouble of demanding political or economic reforms from its partner states.

China has also courted African states as markets for its exports and investment projects. As an emerging export-driven economic powerhouse, Beijing is always exploring the globe for consumer markets to which it might export its goods. In recent years, Sino-African trade has increased dramatically, from around \$10 billion in 2000 to \$106.8 billion in 2008,³⁰ with China mostly exporting "electrical equipment and machinery (41%), textiles (18%), garments (11%), and new technology (8%), such as electronic and information facilities, software, and aviation and aerospace equipment."³¹ African states have also proven to be appealing destinations for Chinese firms to invest, particularly in securing infrastructure contracts. As latecomers into the international market, Chinese companies have often found themselves at a competitive disadvantage to Western firms with more technical expertise and experience. In Africa, however, Chinese companies have found niche markets where they can invest with limited competition from foreign firms.

The doctrine of noninterference has helped China win access to these critical niche markets by allowing Chinese firms to invest in states and regions where competition from Western companies is limited. While Western firms

²⁸ Stephanie Hanson, "China, Africa and Oil," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 6, 2008, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/china_africa_and_oil.html (accessed February 5, 2009).

²⁹ J. Ndumbe Anyu and J.P. Afam Ifedi, "China's Ventures in Africa: Patterns, Prospects, and Implications for Africa's Development," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19:4 (Fall 2008): 96.

³⁰ "Chinese-African trade volume hits all time high to reach US\$106.8b," *Xinhua News Agency*, January 20, 2009, <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/counselorsreport/americaandocanreport/200901/20090106014983.html> (accessed February 5, 2009).

³¹ Li Anshan, "China's New Policy toward Africa," in *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008): 31.

have often been dissuaded by the risks associated with investing in traditionally unstable states or been inhibited by economic sanctions placed on particular regimes by Western governments, Chinese firms have distinguished themselves as being less “risk-averse” than their Western competitors, investing in traditionally volatile states such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in economic sectors, such as construction, that have been largely ignored by Western investors.³² Supported by the Chinese government, which often bundles low-interest loan and aid offers with investment projects handled by Chinese firms and woos African state leaders with goodwill projects such as hospitals and schools and the promise of noninterference, Chinese companies have entered economic sectors and states long neglected by Western investors, who are deterred by regional instability and recalcitrant governments.³³ By extending aid and investing without placing conditions on partner regimes, China has won access to markets and resources largely off limits to Western competitors and a reputation as a reliable business partner. In the eyes of many African leaders, because Chinese promises for aid and infrastructure projects are unconditional, backed up by Beijing’s promise to honor noninterference, they are more likely to be fulfilled without interruption than those made by Western states, who may delay projects to insist on reforms aimed at combating corruption or other perceived problems.³⁴ In engaging African states with promises of noninterference, China has successfully charmed many ruling regimes and won access to strategic resources important for supporting its growing economy, especially oil, secured markets for its exports and helped its companies win investment contracts.

China’s renewed focus on noninterference has also helped the country enhance its strategic geopolitical position. In his essay, “the Beijing Consensus,” a term first articulated by Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004: 40), who suggests that Chinese leaders have identified American hegemony as a major threat to their continued development, with many uncertain “about whether or not the U.S. will ‘allow’ China to rise.”³⁵ American hegemony, which has in many respects eroded since the 1970s on the global scale, has nevertheless remained prominent in the East Asian region, largely facilitated by the continued subordination of Japan, an economic power, to the United States in

³² Tull (2006): 468-469.

³³ Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, “Friends and Interests: China’s Distinctive Links with Africa,” *African Studies Review*, 50:3 (December 2007): 80.

³⁴ Tull (2006): 466-7.

³⁵ Joshua Cooper Ramo, “The Beijing Consensus,” *The Foreign Policy Center* (2004), http://joshuaramo.com/_files/pdf/The-Beijing-Consensus.pdf (accessed February 3, 2009): 40.

many critical areas of foreign and military affairs.³⁶ Beijing, furthermore, sees many international organizations, such as the UN, as instruments that sustain American or 'Western' hegemony.³⁷ Because of the continued military and economic might of the U.S., its prominent position within international organizations, and its continued influence in East Asia, both directly and through traditional allies, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, Beijing sees a need to check American power, lest it hinder Chinese development. Because China greatly lags behind the United States in terms of military might, Beijing has sought to develop "asymmetric" power that might serve as "strategic leverage" to prevent the U.S. from using its power to restrict China's growth and increasing global influence.³⁸ China has decided to place special emphasis on increasing its global soft power, actively wooing states throughout the developing world by stressing mutual benefits, "win-win" relations, and the promise of noninterference.³⁹ In this process, China has won a large number of allies in the Third World who can help China counter U.S. influence and support Beijing's assertions of noninterference, limiting the impact of Western states and IFIs' demands that developing countries (including China) implement internal reforms.⁴⁰ China's allies from Africa and elsewhere in the developing world have also helped China in pursuing its main ideological foreign policy objective, persuading states not to diplomatically recognize Taiwan⁴¹ in order to isolate it internationally and undermine any aspirations of hoping to achieve formal independence. In pursuit of these diplomatic objectives, countering American hegemony through the projection of soft power and ensuring international nonrecognition of Taiwan, the principle of noninterference has proven to be a useful diplomatic tool for China. The Chinese have found noninterference to be a powerful brand used for projecting Chinese influence into Africa – a brand that most African leaders and some populations have embraced.

China's brand of noninterference has had particularly strong currency when transposed against the painful historical experience of Western colonialism and the promotion of neoliberalism in the region. China, unlike

³⁶ Mark Beeson, "Hegemonic Transition in East Asia: The Dynamics of Chinese and American Power," *Review of International Studies* 35:1 (January 2009): 96-7.

³⁷ Piet Konings, "China and Africa in the Era of Neo-liberal Globalization," *CODESRIA Bulletin* 1&2 (2007): 17.

³⁸ Ramo, 38.

³⁹ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007): 38-39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

most Western states, is not tainted as a former imperialist power, and having overcome its own historical ‘humiliations’ at the hands of imperialists by embracing an independent developmental strategy for generating rapid economic growth, is widely viewed as an appealing model for many African states to imitate.⁴² The China model has clearly presented a challenge to the “Washington Consensus,” a set of policy instruments advocated by elites in the United States and international financial institutions (IFIs) first outlined by John Williamson (1990) as an approach for resolving the debt crisis in Latin America (and later applied globally). The ten instruments intended to serve as conditions or reforms for states receiving loans include import liberalization, privatization of state enterprises, fiscal discipline, reductions of public expenditures (particularly subsidies), tax cuts, market-determined interest rates and exchange rates, import liberalization, liberalization of foreign direct investment (FDI), and deregulation of markets.⁴³ In China and in many African states, the Washington Consensus reforms are viewed with skepticism, as they are associated with social destabilization and the substantial human suffering, most critically among women, children, and the poor, many countries endured while implementing Structural Adjustment Policies during the 1980s.⁴⁴

In recent decades, Beijing has sought to reconcile its aversion to conditionality, expressed in its advocacy of non-interference, with its desire to liberalize its trade policies and engage in the global market. In its approach to Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), China has sought to strike a careful balance between its desire to participate in IGOs, such as the IMF, WTO/GATT, and World Bank and thus reaping the benefits of increased engagement with the global market and offers of loans and technical training offered by these organization, while simultaneously seeking to avoid the conditionality, i.e. ‘interference’ in its domestic affairs and those of others, formally required them. As noted by Hempson-Jones (2005), China, regardless of its expressed reluctance to bind itself to the requirements of conditionality in its domestic affairs, has nevertheless from the 1980s won access to World Bank loans and technical resources by acquiescing to demands from the organization, such as the devaluation of its currency, the removal of import restrictions,

⁴² Sautman and Yan (2007): 80.

⁴³ John Williamson, “What Washington Means by Policy Reforms,” in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much has Happened?* ed. John Williamson (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1990).

⁴⁴ Giovanni Andrea Cornia, Richard Jolly, and Frances Stewart, ed., *Adjustment with a Human Face: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987): 1-2.

and the acceptance of competitive bidding by international firms in its domestic development contracts.⁴⁵ In its more limited relationship with the IMF, China has likewise agreed to demands that it devalue its currency (in 1985), end restrictions on international payments, and work toward establishing currency convertibility. In regards to the WTO, China has accepted the most expansive terms of conditionality: “non-discrimination through the unconditional most-favored nation (MFN) clause; a preference for the use of price-based measures, such as tariffs; . . . avoidance of unfair trade practices, such as export subsidization or dumping,” reforms aimed at establishing independent judicial institutions in China, and an acceptance of the overarching authority of the WTO dispute mechanism.⁴⁶ In its role as a foreign investor and increasingly important source of loans and aid in the Third World, China has, however, denounced the same kind of conditionality and subordination of autonomy demanded by IGOs that it has formally accepted at home, insisting that it is a different kind of outside presence – one that respects the principle of non-interference, honors the right of national sovereignty, and refuses to impose conditionality upon other developing countries in exchange for the extension of aid and investment.

Viewed in contrast to the neoliberal reforms prescribed by the Washington Consensus, China’s stated policy of noninterference has great appeal throughout much of Africa, as recently noted by scholars such as Wei Liang (2008)⁴⁷ and Chris Alden (2007).⁴⁸ As opposed to the policy prescriptions demanded by Washington and IFIs, the “Beijing Consensus” argues that there is no universal blueprint for economic development. States should instead follow a course of “groping for stones to cross the river,” taking a pragmatic, independently determined path that evolves amidst changing circumstances.⁴⁹ The Beijing Consensus involves innovation, chaos management – maintaining social and political stability by emphasizing equality and sustainability, and self-determination – the use of asymmetric power to counter hegemonic power and maintain independence in decision-making.⁵⁰ African ruling regimes can appreciate that China presents a model of development focusing

⁴⁵ Justin S. Hempson-Jones, “The Evolution of China’s Engagement with International Organizations: Towards a Liberal Policy,” *Asian Survey* 45:5, (2005): 708-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 709-710.

⁴⁷ Wei Liang, “New Africa Policy: China’s Quest for Oil and Influence,” in *Harmonious World and China’s New Foreign Policy*, ed. Sujian Guo and Jean-Marc Blanchard (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008): 162.

⁴⁸ Chris Alden, *China in Africa* (New York: Zed Books, 2007): 60-61.

⁴⁹ Ramo (2004): 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

on maintaining social stability and economic growth without necessitating rapid democratization or the reform of political or economic institutions – moves that are perceived as contributors to social and political dislocation.

Buying the Brand: Africa's Embrace of the Noninterference Doctrine

China's projection of soft power into Africa, facilitated in no small part by the promise of noninterference, has in recent years proven successful in winning the approval of most African rulers and large sections of populations. Ali Zafar (2007),⁵¹ a macroeconomist with the World Bank admits that China's pledge of noninterference in African countries' internal affairs and lack of lending conditions on governance or fiscal management have elicited positive reactions from several governments. In April 2006, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo expressed to Chinese President Hu Jintao his vision that "the twenty-first century is the century for China to lead the world. And when you (Chinese) are leading the world, we (Africans) want to be close behind you."⁵² Such sentiments have also been echoed and re-echoed by leaders like Denis Sassou N'Guesso of Congo Brazzaville, Mamadou Tandja of Niger, Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir of Sudan, and the infamous Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the country's independence, announced that "we must turn toward the East, where the sun rises." However, the sense of appreciation for noninterference, and solidarity from African leaders was summed up most succinctly by Ethiopian president, Meles Zenawi, when he addressed the China-African Summit in Beijing in November 2006. He stated, "China was always at the side of Africans, which created mutual trust between us. China also deserves credit for never interfering in the political affairs of the continent."⁵³ With most of these leaders noting that the Chinese back their words with actions as highways, railroads, hydroelectric dams, stadia and other infrastructure projects that are constructed on schedule, they readily ignore outside criticisms of China's behavior in Africa and commend Beijing for its pragmatic approach toward Africa's economic well being.

⁵¹ Ali Zafar, "The Growing Relationship Between China and Sub-Saharan Africa: Macroeconomic, Trade, Investment and Aid Links, *World Bank Research Observer* (Spring 2007).

⁵² See Serge Michel and Michel Beuret, *China Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa* (New York: Nation Books, 2009):11.

⁵³ See "Beijing Summit & Third Ministerial Conference of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation," November 3-5, 2006 <http://english.focacsummit.org> (accessed February 12, 2009).

In spite of sporadic resentment against the Chinese in certain African populations, there is a general sense of approval for Chinese engagements and for the policy of noninterference. The 2007 Pew Forum Global Attitudes Project revealed the magnitude of China's success in winning popular favor. Polling in ten countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Pew found overwhelmingly favorable views toward China and the perceived effect of its growing global power, with favorable views outnumbering negative views two-to-one in every country other than South Africa. In Mali and Ivory Coast, favorable views of China topped 90% and, in Senegal and Kenya, 80%. In Nigeria, the only African country where trend data was available, favorable views of China had jumped 16%, from 59% to 75%, in only one year.⁵⁴ The report also found that while most sub-Saharan African respondents generally considered the influence of the U.S. in their countries to be a positive factor, a substantially higher number considered China's influence to be a "good thing" for their country. Of the ten countries polled, only respondents from South Africa considered the influence of the U.S. to be more beneficial than China's.⁵⁵

On the specific issue of China's noninterference in domestic matters, the Pew Forum Global Attitude Project is mirrored by a more recent survey that breaks away from the anecdotal evidence often alluded to in the discussion of African perspectives on the issue of noninterference among a wide range of issues that define Africa's relations with China.

As depicted in table 1, Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong (2009)⁵⁶ show how more people strongly approve or approve of noninterference than strongly disapprove or disapprove in each of the ten countries surveyed.

Sudan shows the highest approval percentage, which may be reflective of China's economic participation in the country, which occurs in the midst of broad global disapproval of the government's handling of the genocide in Darfur. Again in this set of data, South Africa has a narrower approval margin with many people choosing the "don't know" category. By offering an attractive model for development, aid, investment, and infrastructure development without conditions, and emphasizing win-win relations and mutual benefits under the banner of noninterference and developing world solidarity, China has, in under a decade, projected its influence extensively through-

⁵⁴ The Global Attitudes Project included respondents from 10 sub-Saharan countries, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. "The Pew Global Attitudes Project: Global Unease with Major World Powers," *Pew Research Center* (June 27, 2007) <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/256.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2009): 41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁶ Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, "African Perspectives on China-Africa Links," *China Quarterly* 199 (September 2009): 736-738.

Table 1
For Africa, China's Policy of "Non-interference" is:

Country	A good policy (%)	Basically good, but with some problems (%)	More harmful than good (%)	Quite harmful (%)	Don't know (%)	Number
Botswana	22.2	34.3	18.7	9.1	15.7	230
Egypt	34.4	23.6	19.5	7.2	15.4	195
Ethiopia	14.3	50.5	16.3	11.2	7.7	196
Ghana	24.0	32.8	13.6	19.2	10.4	250
Kenya	31.1	35.8	16.6	12.4	4.1	193
Nigeria	17.3	31.0	14.7	12.7	24.4	197
South Africa	12.2	31.0	19.8	13.2	23.9	197
Sudan	43.2	33.6	8.0	4.8	10.4	250
Zambia	29.6	36.2	18.9	8.2	7.1	196
Total (%)	25.7	34.2	16.0	10.9	13.1	100
Total number	490	652	304	208	250	1,904

Source: Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong (2009: 738)

out Africa and, at least in the short term, won the favor of an impressive number of African populations and statesmen.

Emerging Challenges, Conflicts and Complications

While China's reemergence in Africa has been generally greeted with enthusiasm, it has also faced substantial criticism and condemnation from many statesmen, intellectuals, and ordinary Africans. Scholars J. Ndumbe Anyu and J.P. Afam Ifedi (2008) have noted two distinctive viewpoints in the literature concerning China's recent engagement with Africa: "exploitation and opportunity."⁵⁷ Advocates of the latter perspective have suggested that China's ventures in Africa should be understood as distinctive from Western colonialism. China's offers of aid and investment without conditions present African states with an opportunity to develop the infrastructure and trade links needed to establish a course of sustainable development. More skeptical supporters of the exploitation perspective focus on China's self-interested motivations in Africa. China is considered similar to previous Western exploiters and interested only in enabling its own development. In this view, Beijing

⁵⁷ Anyu and Ifedi (2008): 93.

seeks to extract the natural resources of African states and flood their markets with cheap Chinese exports without contributing to lasting development or meaningful improvement of people's lives.⁵⁸ Tull (2006) has noted that China's arrival on the continent has not fundamentally changed Africa's position in the global economy. African states are still largely dependent on the export of a small number of highly unstable commodities, which China, like its Western predecessors, continues to extract and import in large numbers. Because China maintains a highly asymmetrical power relationship, Tull is skeptical of China's likelihood to encourage sustainable growth within its African partner states.⁵⁹ More serious than criticisms that its agenda in Africa is self-serving, exploitative and a detrimental influence on the economic development of regional states, Beijing has also faced frequent public condemnations that its presence has bolstered regimes of dubious reputation and contributed to eroding the human rights situation in many African states.

China's willingness to engage African regimes with a 'business-is-business' approach unconcerned with their internal affairs has led to criticisms that China's doctrine of noninterference has allowed pariah states to circumvent Western sanctions and carry out egregious human rights abuses, including genocide, within their borders. Leaders in Beijing were surprised when international condemnation of genocide in the Sudan coalesced into a highly public campaign aimed at protesting China's involvement with the Bashir regime. Actress Mia Farrow labeled the 2008 Olympics in Beijing as "the Genocide Olympics," as part of an international movement aimed at pressuring the Chinese government into "reassess(ing) its no-strings-attached backing of abusive regimes across the globe" and ending its arms sales, aid and diplomatic support for the Bashir government.⁶⁰ A 2006 report by the Council on Foreign Relations likewise emphasized China's negative impact on human rights conditions in its partner states, noting its close relationship with the Sudan and Zimbabwe. The CFR report suggested that China had "protected" these countries in the United Nations Security Council and offered an alternative source of aid and investment, thereby undermining Western efforts to sanction repressive regimes into curbing their human rights

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Tull (2006): 471.

⁶⁰ Ronan Farrow and Mia Farrow, "The 'Genocide Olympics'," *Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2007, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB117505109799351409.html>; "One Olympic Victory," *Wall Street Journal*, February 19, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120338432062875839.html> (both accessed February 22, 2009).

violations, and in the case of Sudan, halting its participation in genocide.⁶¹ In this view, China's indifference to the internal affairs of the countries has led to a decline in the overall human rights situation throughout Africa. Such perceptions have undoubtedly had a negative impact on Beijing's international reputation.

In addition to international criticisms of Beijing's contribution to the erosion of human rights conditions in many African states, some scholars have suggested that China's policy of noninterference may also be undermining political reform among its partners in the developing world. Kurlantzick (2007), noting China's close relations with pariah states, suggests that Beijing may desire to help countries such as Iran, Burma, and Zimbabwe remain authoritarian – as regimes of this kind are “more likely to remain close to China.”⁶² This suggests that China may not take an entirely indifferent view toward the institutional makeup of foreign regimes but rather favors authoritarian regimes. In this view, Beijing is worried that should more authoritarian states transition into multiparty democracies, its one-party regime will become increasingly isolated in the international community and face greater pressure to implement democratic reforms, thus threatening the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly on political power.

Aside from outside criticisms that China's emergence in Africa has led to a deterioration of human rights conditions and inhibited political reform, China, despite its warm reception from most African rulers and support in many segments of their respective states' populations, has also faced substantial, sometimes violent, resistance from African opponents. Advocating a policy of noninterference has not always shielded Beijing from perceptions that it is an active partisan in the domestic affairs of its partner states. In a number of situations, China's willingness to partner with any governing regime without concern for its internal behavior has contributed to the belief that it favors and actively supports ruling regimes in their competition with opposition parties.

Perceived collusion between Beijing and ruling regimes has made Chinese personnel and property appealing targets of violence for rebel militants, drawing China into conflicts regardless of its expressed desire not to interfere in internal conflicts. On October 18, 2008, Sudanese rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) attacked a Chinese-owned oil field in Darfur and kidnapped nine Chinese workers. Of the nine workers, five were killed

⁶¹ Anthony Lake, et al., *More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach toward Africa* (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 2006): 40-41.

⁶² Kurlantzick (2007): 41-42.

and four were eventually rescued.⁶³ The October 2008 kidnapping followed attacks on Chinese fields that took place in October and December 2007. In addition to JEM, another rebel group, the Liberation Movement-Unity faction, has suggested that the arriving Chinese companies will be considered "military targets."⁶⁴ According to journalist Mohamed Osman, "Darfur rebels... accuse China of indirectly funding the Sudanese government's war effort in Darfur by massively investing in Sudan's oil industry."⁶⁵ In the case of Sudan, China's doctrine of noninterference has not prevented rebels and outside activists from believing that Beijing and Chinese firms have become active players in Sudanese domestic politics. Since China is widely considered an important backer of the Bashir regime, Chinese workers and property have become targets of violence for rebels opposed to the government. The trend has been mirrored in other areas of Africa, with anti-government militants leading high profile attacks on Chinese targets in Nigeria and Ethiopia in recent years.⁶⁶

A 2008 *Foreign Affairs* article identified a visible change in China's policy of noninterference in response to the growing risks associated with supporting unpopular regimes. While China's rhetorical advocacy of noninterference has continued, in practice, Beijing has become concerned with the negative effect of supporting pariah regimes on China's international reputation and the threats it can generate for its citizens and property abroad. As a result, Beijing has quietly reduced its unconditional support for pariah regimes, tried to influence their partners into conforming to international norms and contributed to international peacekeeping missions, most notably in the UN mission to the Sudan.⁶⁷ Recent developments have thus supported the view that China's strategy of noninterference should be viewed as evolving rather than static, and Beijing may be backing away from extending unconditional support to the most unstable and unpopular regimes, putting quiet pressure

⁶³ "Rescued workers in Sudan to return home," *Xinhua*, November 5, 2008, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-11/05/content_7175495.htm (accessed February 17, 2009).

⁶⁴ "9 Chinese oil workers kidnapped in Sudan," *International Herald Tribune*, October 19, 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/10/19/news/ML-Sudan-China-Kidnap.php> (accessed February 17, 2009).

⁶⁵ "Darfur Rebels Attack Oil Field, Warn Chinese to Leave Sudan," *The Washington Post*, October 25, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/25/AR2007102502510_pf.html (accessed February 17, 2009).

⁶⁶ Jeffrey Gettleman, "Ethiopian Rebels Kill 70 at Chinese-Run Oil Field," *New York Times*, April 25, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/25/world/africa/25ethiopia.html?_r=1&sc=7&sq=nigeria%20attack%20chinese&st=cse (accessed February 18, 2009).

⁶⁷ Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Andrew Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 87:1 (January/February 2008).

on its allies to curb their human rights abuses and contributing to peacekeeping forces in the interest of maintaining regional stability.

In addition to the threat of having its citizens and property targeted by rebel groups opposed to Chinese-supported regimes, Beijing has also faced increasing anti-Chinese sentiment in some African states, most clearly evident in the electoral politics of transitional democracies. Attempting to implement a policy of noninterference has created a recurrent problem for Chinese operations in Africa – by generously supporting ruling regimes without concern for how its partners use that support in furthering their own interests, Beijing can be seen, in the eyes of some segments of African societies, as taking sides in internal politics – on behalf of ruling parties and at the expense of opposition parties. These sentiments have allowed opportunistic populist leaders to make the claim that ruling parties are puppets of the Chinese government, threatening their state's independence by taking marching orders from Beijing, not the general public. The clearest example of anti-Chinese populism playing a part in African electoral politics has taken place in Zambia, where Patriotic Front (PF) presidential candidate, Michael Sata, has emerged as a major political player by running on an “explicit anti-China platform.”⁶⁸

Zambia is a country intimately economically tied to China based on its heavy investment in Zambian copper mining, an industry that by 2006, made up over three fourths of national exports.⁶⁹ Having nationalized formerly British-owned mines following independence in 1964, Zambian leaders, facing an economic crisis amidst a worldwide economic downturn and a corresponding drop in copper prices, elected to privatize the mines under a structural adjustment program backed by international financial institutions. Because copper prices remained low, privatization did not result in initial success, and the mines, if purchased at all, were sold off extremely cheaply and usually associated with major concessions granted by the Zambian government. In the 1990s, despite the structural adjustments and privatization reforms encouraged by IFIs, the Zambian copper industry and the country's overall economy remained insolvent until finally buoyed by rising global copper prices propelled by the demand of the rapidly growing Chinese economy.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Rohit Negi, “Beyond the “Chinese Scramble”: The Political Economy of Anti-China Sentiment in Zambia,” *African Geographical Review* 27 (2008): 48.

⁶⁹ World Bank, “The International Development Association Country Assistance Strategy for the Republic of Zambia,” April 8, 2008, 5 http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/04/30/000310607_20080430135453/Rendered/PDF/43352mainoptmzd0CASOIDA1R200810097.pdf (accessed February 24, 2009).

⁷⁰ Negi (2008): 49-51.

In 1998, hoping to secure greater access to Zambian copper, the Chinese Non-Ferrous Metal Mining Group purchased the effectively abandoned Chambishi mine in the Copperbelt region, renovated the mine and constructed new surrounding facilities. After \$100 million was invested in the mine, it was put into operation in 2001, joining a major wave of Chinese investment throughout much of Zambia.⁷¹ After experiencing sluggish growth in the 1990s, when real GDP fell by an average of 0.2% per year from 1991 to 1998, Zambia's economy, driven by its rejuvenated mining sector and rising world copper prices, quickly rebounded and posted 5% annual growth between 2000 and 2006.⁷²

Despite its central role in Zambia's economic recovery, China has faced growing popular resentment throughout much of the country. As early as 2004, many Zambians, particularly miners and their union representatives, complained that wages, working conditions, and safety standards at Chinese-owned mines were far below national standards. The situation was exacerbated by the Zambian government's refusal to allow union representatives to organize workers in the Chinese-owned mines in Chambishi.⁷³ Tensions became particularly high in 2005, when an explosion at a munitions factory that killed at least 46 Zambian workers was blamed on the lax safety standards of its Chinese owners.⁷⁴ The Chambishi explosion initiated a recurrent pattern of strikes, riots and acts of violence in the Copperbelt that has persisted up to today.⁷⁵

China's policy of noninterference became particularly problematic when PF leader Michael Sata launched his 2006 presidential campaign on an anti-Chinese platform. Condemning the Chinese as exploiters and profiteers and accusing the ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) of collusion with Beijing, Sata declared that once elected president, he would recognize Taiwanese independence and expel "bogus" Chinese investors from Zambia.⁷⁶ Clearly troubled by Sata's threat to its interests in the country, China's official representative to Zambia, Li Baodong, openly abandoned the official commitment to noninterference, and in the run up to the 2006

⁷¹ Alden (2007): 73-74.

⁷² World Bank (2008): 4.

⁷³ Alden (2007): 74.

⁷⁴ Michael Wines, "China's Influence in Africa Arouses Some Resistance," *New York Times*, February 10, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/10/world/africa/10assess.html?_r=1&scp=9&sq=zambia%20mine%20explosion&st=cse (accessed February 25, 2008).

⁷⁵ Negi (2008): 55-56.

⁷⁶ Joseph J. Schatz, "Zambian Hopeful Takes a Swing at China," *Washington Post*, September 25, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/24/AR2006092400915.html> (accessed February 25, 2009).

election, threatened to pull China's investments from the country should the PF win the elections.⁷⁷ Li's interference, however, only fueled the fire of anti-Chinese sentiments, and Sata surged in the polls, receiving nearly 30% of votes, a marked improvement over his dismal 4% share in his earlier 2001 campaign.⁷⁸ Despite his strong turnout, MMD candidate, Levy Mwanawasa, defeated Sata. As the results were announced, Sata accused Mwanawasa of stealing the election and violent riots among PF supporters broke out, in which Chinese-owned shops were attacked and looted.⁷⁹ Sata's anti-Chinese populism has in recent years maintained its strength. In 2008, following the sudden death of Mwanawasa, impromptu elections were held, and MMD successor, Rupiah Banda, only narrowly edged Sata in a slim 40 to 38% victory.⁸⁰ From the experience of recent electoral politics in Zambia, it has become evident that rising anti-Chinese sentiments have made adhering to a doctrine of noninterference increasingly difficult. China's representative, Li Baodong, was tempted into becoming publicly involved in the 2006 election but his threat of withdrawing Chinese investment in the event of a PF victory only fueled public perceptions that Beijing was trying to manipulate, bolstering Sata's campaign. In the 2008 election, Beijing took a lower profile, suggesting that Chinese leaders had learned from Li's 2006 experience, although the PF nevertheless made substantial electoral gains, only narrowly missing victory. The Zambian example thus demonstrates that while noninterference clearly helped China win access to African markets and resources and in many respects, clearly benefited its African partners, it has not alleviated local fears of Chinese domination and exploitation or prevented popular anti-Chinese backlashes.

An emerging and growing complication of China's economic advances in Africa is the charge against Chinese businesses by international observers and most particularly, African populations, over poor working conditions, low worker pay standards, and de-industrialization – the displacement of local infant industries in these countries as a result of flooding the markets with cheap Chinese products.⁸¹ In 2005, a study by the International Labour

⁷⁷ Alden (2007): 75.

⁷⁸ Electoral Commission of Zambia, "Election Results Index" (2008), http://www.elections.org.zm/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=16&Itemid=78 (accessed February 25, 2009).

⁷⁹ David Blair, "Rioters Attack Chinese after Zambian Poll," *Telegraph*, October 3, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1530464/Rioters-attack-Chinese-after-Zambian-poll.html> (accessed February 25, 2009).

⁸⁰ "Zambia Swears in a New President," *New York Times*, November 2, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/03/world/africa/03zambia.html> (accessed February 25, 2009).

⁸¹ For more on de-industrialization, see Sachikonye L. 2008. "Crouching Tiger, Hidden

Organization (ILO) of 11 construction sites in Tanzania found that four of the sites surveyed displayed “exceptionally low standards, with long working hours, low pay, low-standard occupational safety and health and a poor record on workers’ rights’. Three of the four sites were operated by Chinese contractors.⁸² African workers at the Chambishi copper mine and smelter in Zambia have also revolted several times against the Chinese management for similar conditions. With regards to de-industrialization, Ogunsanwo (2008) refers to instances of accusations of Chinese companies dumping cheap goods, produced through cheap labor in China, on the Nigerian market, thus displacing infant industries in Nigeria.

Also, in spite of the attractiveness of the noninterference doctrine, agreements between Chinese institutions and African governments have however favored labor from China over both trained and untrained African labor. Tied to China’s Export and Import (EXIM) Bank loan to Angola in 2004 is the agreement that 70 percent of the public tenders for the construction and civil engineering contracts tabled for Angola’s reconstruction will be awarded to Chinese enterprises approved by Beijing. The remaining 30 percent has been allocated to the Angolan private sector to encourage domestic participation in the reconstruction efforts (Corkin, 2008).⁸³ Such arrangements have sometimes fueled anti-Chinese sentiments among certain African populations. Beijing may well reconsider the long-term practicality of noninterference as it emerges as an established outside player in Africa.

Concluding Remarks

This examination of China’s advocacy of the policy of noninterference in Africa reveals that, in opposition to Beijing’s official pronouncement and many scholarly writings, noninterference has not historically been a consistent defining principle of China’s African foreign policy. Up to the late 1970s, noninterference, while advocated in Beijing’s official rhetoric and situated within South-South discourse, was often rejected in China’s practical relations with the global South, subsumed in preference to the goals of support-

Agenda? Zimbabwe-China Relations” in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon? Africa and China*, ed. Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu (Scottville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 124.

⁸² “Baseline Study of Labour Practices on Large Construction Sites in the Republic of Tanzania”, *International Labour Organization, Sectoral Activities Programme, Working Paper 225*, January 2005, 10.

⁸³ Corkin L. 2008. “All’s Fair in Loans and War: The Development of China-Angola Relations” in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon? Africa and China*, ed. Kweku Ampiah and Sanusha Naidu (Scottville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press): 108.

ing the cause of anti-imperialism, fostering socialist revolution, and later containing Soviet hegemony in Africa. During the Reform and Opening Up period, initiated in the early 1980s, noninterference gained salience in Beijing's African policy, primarily because it served the country's interests of acquiring access to much needed raw materials and energy resources, and forging bilateral trade links to establish foreign markets for Chinese manufactured goods. Noninterference has thus served as a mechanism that Beijing has used to gain entry into niche markets where it can effectively compete with more established Western rivals. However, as China has quickly transformed from a new emerging player forging a foothold in Africa to an established power with substantial investments, assets, and citizens in residence, it is now much more intimately bound to the internal affairs of its African partners. One interesting dimension is the sustainability of noninterference given the pace of democratization in Africa. With most African countries building democratic structures that are fast approaching consolidation, China may be forced to share the stage in Africa with Western countries and institutions who have been advocates of democratic ideals. Thus noninterference may have to adapt or hold little relevance in this case.

China will now have to address the issue of meeting security and political threats to its assets and citizens on the African continent and thus be motivated to increasingly use its power to press its partners into protecting its interests. For this reason, African scholars and statesmen alike should not accept Chinese proclamations of noninterference at face value but should pay careful attention to when and how Beijing will seek to ensure that its substantial investments in Africa are not threatened. While China's arrival in Africa as an alternative source of investment presents regional states with a unique opportunity to secure the capital and infrastructure needed to achieve sustainable development and escape the hegemonic dominance of the Washington Consensus, it will be up to African leaders themselves to assert their sovereign right to determine their own national development. They should not assume that China, a state with its own national agenda, will act benevolently and limit itself to the policy of noninterference under any and all circumstances.

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