

The People's Republic of China's Position on Security in Africa: Motivations and Limitations

Steven C.Y. Kuo^{1, 2}

¹University of St. Andrews, School of International Relations, St. Andrews, Scotland, UK

²University of Cape Town, Center for African Studies, Cape Town, South Africa

csk23@st-andrews.ac.uk

The People's Republic of China (PRC) stands at an excellent position to assist with the security situation in Africa. It has successfully emerged from civil wars and instability in its modern history and is currently enjoying a third decade of peace and economic growth. Further, its growing stature as a great power and increasing dependence on African oil means that it ought to bare more responsibility for African security. However, instead of partnering with the EU in existing liberal peace efforts fostering democratization and good governance, the PRC has chosen its own model of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa. Emphasizing sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs and focusing on infrastructural development, the PRC has taken a stance that is arguably in opposition to the liberal democratic peace model.

I propose to argue in this paper that the PRC is unlikely to be socialized to the norms of liberal peace model of peacebuilding in Africa, a project the EU has already expressed frustration at. First, this is due to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) analysis of the causes of African insecurity. Secondly, liberal peace model of peacebuilding is in conflict with the principle of sovereignty, fundamental to the CCP's legitimacy. I propose to develop further an argument that given the failures of externally imposed democratic reforms, the Chinese model is a welcome addition to incorporate and stimulate the debate on African peace.

Utilizing Marx's historical materialism in analysing African insecurity, Chinese Africanists view the primary cause of African insecurity to be Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. In an article titled: "*Stability comes first in a country's development*", the official mouthpiece of the CCP notes the post-election violence in Kenya "is a product of democracy bequeathed by Western hegemony; and a manifestation of values clashing when democracy is transplanted onto disagreeable land." (People's Daily, 14 January, 2008).

As an unelected regime that can no longer resort to World Revolution to justify its legitimacy, the CCP has turned to economic growth and nationalism to justify its continued rule. Central to the CCP's legitimacy is its strength against a reoccurrence of the Century of Humiliation where Chinese sovereignty was eroded by colonial aggression.

My fieldwork interviews on the question of Chinese participation in the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the generally positive responses leads me to think that a hybridization of democratic reform and infrastructure reconstruction is desired by African citizens.