

Doubts about the Article China's Military Presence in Africa: Implications for Africa's Wobbling Peace

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In the article *China's Military Presence in Africa: Implications for Africa's Wobbling Peace* (hereinafter referred to as the Article), Dr. Chuka Enuka traced back to the history of the peacekeeping operations in and the arms sales to Africa by China, and proposed that the arms sales from China to Africa are a major cause of the domestic conflicts, dictatorship, human rights suppression, and economic underdevelopment in many African nations, and also the cause of the acceleration of arms races between a number of African countries. Though his view may appear to somebody to be innovative, his reasoning could not stand close examination and should be questioned in following aspects.

First of all, the title itself is misleading and improper. As is generally acknowledged by the circle of international relations studies, the term "military presence" typically refers to the establishment of military bases in and the direct involvement in the domestic military conflicts of one sovereign state by another sovereign state. However, the so-called "military presence" misused in the Article only referred to China's participation in the peacekeeping operations authorized by the United Nations and the arms sales to Africa, neither of which are defined in

the category of military presence. Therefore, the title should be corrected.

Secondly, comparisons are missing in this article, without which the accusation toward China for disturbance in Africa could not be justified. According to the author's logic, whoever sells weapons to Africa shall be held responsible for the wobbling peace in Africa, and the more one sells, the more faults one should take. Thus, the trade volumes of all arms-providing countries (western countries included) should be compared and the proportion of China's sales in the Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria, etc. should be calculated so as to nail down the "culprit". In the Article, the author wrote, here I quote, "...China delivered about 13% of all arms to sub-Saharan Africa, the second highest provider after Russia." (p.5) According to the author's logic, should not Russia be held more responsible than China for disturbance in Africa? On the other hand, it should have been crucial to exam whether all problems have been existed in Africa long before China's arms sales to Africa. If so, then China should not be the main cause. Absence of the comparisons mentioned above in the article demeans this article's credibility.

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Thirdly, the conclusions are one-sided. The author magnified the accusation of the arms sales by purposely ignoring the positive effects of the peace-making operations even though he admitted that, "in as much as the peacekeeping efforts many have engaged China in a positive way in Africa's conflict zones..." (pp. 7-8, p.16). Therefore, it is biased to define China's so-called "military presence" which composed of peace-making operations and arms sales as a mere threat to Africa's peace.

Fourthly, in the article the sanctions imposed on Africa by some western countries are unlawfully employed as the ground on which China's arms sales are accused as illegal. The western countries mentioned in the Article are nothing but interest groups allied by some countries of similar culture and political agendas. The sanctions imposed by them are not as legally binding as resolutions passed by the United Nations, the most recognized and represented inter-governmental international organization and authority. Only these resolutions should be respected and executed by all member states. Since western countries can adopt and adjust their policies toward Africa at will for the sole purpose of safeguarding their national interests, China, too, should be free to adopt foreign policies different from those of western countries according to its own principles, so long as the resolutions of the United Nations are respected and abided by.

Fifthly, China's arms sales to Africa were denounced as illegal in the name of assisting so-called rouge states. "Rouge state" is a coined political term by some western politicians and intelligentsia to alienate and isolate the countries that are hostile to western countries. The author should have used this term colored by political interests and political discourse to refer to some African countries without justification.

If the so-called rouge states in the Article are permanent members in the United Nations and are recognized by the majorities of countries in the international community, how could these states with legality be "rouge states"? In that case, China has the right to conduct military cooperation with these states. Unless the United Nations explicitly banned certain arms sales, the arms providers including China shall not bear the responsibility of monitoring how and where the arms are used, neither should they be blamed for the consequences caused, once the transaction is completed.

Sixthly, China's arms sales to Africa shares no similarity with the USA's arms sales to Taiwan. For the former, it is legal arms trade between two sovereign states and governments, which does not contradict with China's approach to foreign relations, namely, "noninterference in domestic affairs". It is widely recognized by the international community, including the USA that the People's Republic of China, rather than Taiwan, is the only legal representative of China in the United Nations. Therefore, U.S.'s arms sales to Taiwan, which is a part of China, intervene in China's domestic affairs.

Lastly, causality does not necessarily exist between China's arms sales to Africa and existence of all the problems described above. Assume that China had never sold arms to Africa, African countries might have imported arms from other sources. Besides, while pointing fingers, the author seems to deny the African people's capability and wisdom to creatively solve their problems.

To sum up, both analysis and conclusions in the article *China's Military Presence in Africa: Implications for Africa's Wobbling Peace* cannot stand close examination. Take Federal Republic of Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa, as example. Since its independence, Nigeria has been inflicted by domestic military

conflicts, but it has not imported any arms from China. Thus, it is false to conclude that China's arms sales to Africa is a major cause to Africa's wobbling peace.

Participants of the discussion are welcome to join its continuation. Editors' Office.