

BOOK REVIEWS

THE END OF CHINA'S NON-INTERVENTION POLICY IN AFRICA

Obert Hodzi, *The end of China's Non-Intervention Policy in Africa*, Pelgrave Macmillan 2019, pp. 273, ISBN 978-3-319-97349-4

China's presence in Africa has been a "hot topic" in African Studies for more than a decade. In this book, Obert Hodzi implements the neoclassical realist theoretical framework to explore how an increase in China's relative economic power vis-a-vis other countries and changes in perception of threat to its interests abroad combine to explain China's intervention behavior in armed conflicts in Africa. Firstly, the author believes there is a direct connection between the growth of the economic power of the state and the need for interventionism. In other words, when China's economic power grows, the need for interventionism grows as well. This book seeks to explain the temporal variance in China's intervention, with the aim of deciphering emerging trends and patterns of China's intervention in conflicts in Africa. The author considers Chinese interventions to be cyclical. He gives examples dating back to the Chinese empire when the emperor considered himself a son of heaven, which gave him the right to intervene in neighboring countries. Then, he compares that era to the present day when China is promoting a non-intervention policy. In this way, the author implicitly announces a possible change in the Chinese approach regarding (non) interventionism.

Secondly, the book analyses changes in China's perception of threat to its (business) interests abroad and its willingness to intervene. By doing so, the author states that China does not subscribe to the Western-centric world order or Western norms of intervention (such as the responsibility to protect), human rights, good governance and democracy upon which the global discourse on intervention is premised. For China, the main motives are the safety of its citizens and the security of its investments. Therefore, the author notices that the Chinese intervention policy slowly evolves from a rigid non-intervention principle to a limited intervention approach focused on protecting the Chinese nationals and Chinese business interests.

The study employs the method of structured, focused comparison and the case study method. The method is structured by using a general set of questions asked for each case study to standardize the collected data. In order to remain focused, it does not address every random aspect of the case study; instead, it focuses on a specific aspect of the case being studied. Furthermore, not only that the case study method is suitable for a theoretically based historical narrative and historical analysis method, but it is also suitable for studies that employ the neoclassical realist theoretical framework. In the book, the author focuses on three case studies, three African countries that experienced intrastate armed conflicts: 1) the armed conflict in Libya in 2011; 2) the Tuareg rebellion that culminated in a military coup in Mali. These events took place in January and March 2012, respectively ceasing in August 2012 when a government of national unity was established; 3) the intrastate armed conflict in South Sudan that began in December 2013 and is still ongoing. Unlike single case studies that are common for studies on China's intervention in African conflicts, multiple case studies increase the methodological rigor of a study by strengthening the precision, validity, and stability of the findings. Data published in this study were mainly obtained from official statements issued by international organizations, such as the United Nations and the African Union. In addition, statements of the Chinese government ministries, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Communist Party of China, were also used. Information from the PRC's official state news agencies such as Xinhua, newspapers and reports of Chinese International relations and security think tanks were used. To avoid overreliance on Chinese and African sources of information, the research also utilized publications from Western and African think tanks such as the Chatham House and the South African Institute of International Affairs.

The outline of the book is the following: This book consists of seven chapters. The background and introduction of this study have been given in this chapter. The theoretical and empirical significance of the study was discussed, and a brief introduction of the main arguments has been given in the first chapter.

The second chapter discusses the global discourse on intervention in foreign intrastate armed conflicts by non-Western rising powers. In this chapter, the author tells us there is a major gap in the existing literature, which is followed by the lack of systematic theoretical and empirical studies regarding intervention in foreign conflicts by rising powers, particularly China. The chapter advances the argument that in external intervention studies, the practice has preceded theory. In the example of China, the author shows how "situation on the field" forces the change in the narrative that has been dominant for years – the non-intervention narrative. The third chapter

describes the cyclical pattern of Chinese intervention, which we already explained above.

The fourth chapter analyses the case study of Libya. China's first reaction to the Libyan conflict was non-action and non-intervention because China's relations with African countries are based on the principle of non-intervention in their internal affairs, which includes intrastate armed conflicts. But the threat to the Chinese nationals in Libya raised domestic demands in Beijing to protect its nationals abroad, effectively bringing to question China's non-intervention principle. Furthermore, China decided not to veto the UN resolution which enforced sanctions on Gaddafi's regime for violating human rights and rights to peaceful protests. This was considered as a precedent. China justified its decision by the fact that other regional Arab and African organizations backed sanctions as well. However, China did not support any military action, including the no-fly zone. In the fifth chapter, the study analyses the situation in Mali. The author states that China completely ignored conflict in Mali up until the moment when it became obvious that the Tuareg rebellion succeeded. China avoided supporting the imposition of any sanctions or punitive actions against the new regime. Instead, China supported the ECOWAS mediation initiative. Furthermore, China took part in the MINUSMA peacekeeping operation. The author states that this was a strategic move by China to gain real-life combat experience for its army. The sixth chapter deals with South Sudan, which had been a challenge for China even before it existed as a sovereign state. The war of independence in Sudan, the subsequent split, and then the war between the president and vice president all contributed to making the South Sudan intrastate armed conflict more devastating to China's interests than any other conflict on African soil. The reason for this is that Chinese companies have significant investments in the oil sector. This is probably the reason why China resorted to direct mediation between the two opposing government factions. China also participated in a wider multilateral initiative under the patronage of the African regional committee IGAD. However, IGAD officials complained that China was sabotaging the peace process, taking into account only its own interests.

To conclude, *The End of China's Non-Intervention Policy in Africa* is a comprehensive and interesting book that gives a new look at China's intervention policy using both theory and empirical data. It states that China's non-intervention principle is gradually getting modified by tangible national and business interests.

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