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## “EU-China Peace and Security Forum”: A Brief Summary

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On September 19, 2017, the “EU-China Peace and Security Forum” was jointly held by the Institute of International and Strategic Studies of Peking University (IISS, PKU) and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) at Peking University. Experts attending the Forum have discussed important regional issues and policies of mutual concern from the perspectives of China and the EU.

### **I. Security-Development Nexus in Africa**

One European scholar suggested that five important trends of recurring patterns had been observed in the context of peacekeeping operations and conflict settlement in Africa: firstly, the way in which conflicts take place become increasingly versatile, and are characterized by simultaneity and reversibility; secondly, incidents of violence-targeted civilians become more acute while the role of police force is outstanding; thirdly, growing fragmentation of armed groups results in the porous distribution of terrorists, making it difficult to isolate the terrorists; fourthly, there is an increasing trend of transnational dimension of intrastate conflicts; and lastly, challenges emerge from the relations between peacekeeping forces and the host states.

In this respect, the scholar argued that a robust peacekeeping operation is

therefore indispensable for not only the protection of civilians but also for the establishment of a conducive and permissive environment for the development actors. Some suggestion had been pointed out including EU-China joint effort to facilitate information exchange between stakeholders and to enhance international cooperation and transparency, also appropriate management of local political dimension in development assistance.

According to one of the Chinese scholars, it is essential that both state-centric mechanism and the enormous response from the whole society are taken into consideration if the challenges of traditional security issues in Africa were to be dealt with effectively.

Delving into the unsatisfying results of previous trilateral dialogues, the scholar reckoned that while both China and the EU overlooked the importance of African engagement in the process, the fact that Chinese long-term interests were not fully in coordination with Africa's interests and a reluctant attitude to cooperate with the EU side are also responsible for such failure. However, the scholar also pointed out a new trend of increasing trilateral cooperation among China, Africa and EU countries successfully conducted on public health, security areas and agricultural technology transfer projects. Moreover, it should be clarified that China has the willingness to contribute more as long as such trilateral involvement would be African-led.

One European scholar noticed that while adopting coordinative and holistic approach of development-security nexus has resulted in significant commitments and a number of important initiatives at the national and international level, a new global agenda was set to call for promotion of peaceful and inclusive society through sustainable development, emphasizing tackling the root causes of problems in peace and security issues.

In general, as the scholar suggested, China has been playing an active role. The importance of security and the links between security and development have been increasingly acknowledged within China, evidential in the country's practical engagement with efforts in using influence as solution to conflicts under a cardinal principle of "non-interference". On one hand, successful stories of China's engagement in Africa have been witnessed in terms of philanthropic contribution in peacekeeping operation and efforts of combating piracy; on the other hand, Chinese military cooperation is rather modest compared to the country's wider engagement

in the African continent. In addition, the main interest of setting up the Djibouti base, according to the scholar, lies ultimately in the protection of Chinese citizens operating in Africa for the purpose of responding to possible future crisis rather than fulfilling ambition for geopolitical expansion.

At practical level, the scholar claimed that cooperation between the EU and China has been limited, yet strong incentives for cooperation exist. It is essential that new partnership should address the root causes of problems and long-term aspects of cooperation by means of joint personnel training, inclusion of civilian expertise, combating organized crimes and joint counter-piracy as possible areas for cooperation. In policy circle, it should be repeatedly reminded that while direct roles of external actors provide useful solution to African peace and development challenges, external views, strategies and works should not be imposed upon the African governments and civil society.

Another Chinese scholar noted that Africa's major security challenges have been changing from civil wars and interstate conflicts to phenomenal appearance of social and political unrests while the frequency of traditional conflicts (e.g. war) have decreased. In nature, such transition implies a trend of security challenges from structural violence to non-structural form. Concurrently, the engagement challenge in security and development assistance of the African region China faces has been shifted from interest-promoting to interest-protecting.

With emphasis, the scholar suggested that an "African-proposed, African-agreed and African-led" guiding principle should be reinforced for future trilateral cooperation between the EU, China and Africa. The partnership should combine the comparative advantages of the region and the needs of the African countries, starting out by policy dialogues and track II dialogues as effective instruments of African capacity building.

## **II. Afghanistan and Syria: Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building**

One European scholar explained the nature of the Syrian war at the very beginning. According to his opinion, the Syrian war was originally started as a civil war, but gradually developed into a regional war and finally became an international war. The current situation in the Middle East is the result of systemic failure of entire

regional order. He then talked about three reasons of foreign intervention. First, connecting Europe and Asia, this region serves as a bridge between Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean, which has geopolitical and geographical importance. The second reason for foreign intervention is abundance of energy resources in the region. Since the discovery of oil in the region, it has been the reason of major powers' presence. Finally, major powers follow different strategic normative principle. China and Russia are opponents of regime change by force, and want to make sure such principle is respected, while the strategic principles of the U.S. and European powers come in conflict with the Russian and Chinese principles. The scholar also made reflection on western countries' policy in the Middle East. He argued that what western countries definitely did wrong was invading countries including Iraq and Libya without having a proper plan for the actions. He emphasized that lessons must be drawn from such experiences.

One Chinese scholar pointed out that after several years' turmoil, the Middle East region and its people long for safety and stability. As the Syrian war is about to end, maintaining stability in the region becomes the next major task of assistance. The scholar suggested a closer coordination between China and Europe to prevent America's possible retreat from the Iran nuclear deal. While the Middle East region is at the crucial crossroad, a new regional order is taking its shape, either getting to a more stable direction or simply encountering more battles. The scholar pointed out that issues like conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran or the referendum in Iraq on Kurdish Independence could be source of instability or stimulator of larger-scale war in the region implying far more profound impact. At this historical moment, China and Europe by strengthening cooperation can contribute a lot to the peace and stability of the region.

Another European scholar analyzed how China has engaged in the rebuilding process of Afghanistan and the prospect of cooperation between China and the EU in the country. The most visible area of increasing Chinese engagement is economic and development assistance, including training and educational programs as well as infrastructure development. The second area is security. Even though China has always been conservative in engaging in security issue, it is recognized that Beijing has incrementally enhanced its security relations with Kabul around 2014. China has also drawn on regional efforts by motivating and encouraging members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other organizations to engage

more in security. Significantly, China has stepped up when it comes to counter-terrorism efforts, together with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, to tackle the effect of regional terrorism and extremism. And a four-country mechanism that shares intelligence and training has been formed consequently. Lastly, China has been diplomatically engaged in untypical way to contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan, namely the peace talks between the Afghani government and Taliban within the quadrilateral coordination group (QCG), which includes Afghanistan, the U.S., Pakistan, and China. The scholar's opinion is that China plays a very crucial role because of its close relationship with Pakistan. In summary, China has evolved into a multi-dimensional player in Afghanistan, but not a major player yet.

In contrast to China's increasing engagement in Afghanistan, a decrease of engagement by the Europeans is observed. The attacks on the European staff and facilities as well as EU's preference on an Afghan-lead safety building process explain this tendency. The scholar believed that there are many potential areas of further cooperation between the EU and China in Afghanistan. While Germany and China already started working together on disasters relief and professional training in the mining sector last year, the aspects certainly could be expanded onto a new level.

### **III. The Nuclear Non-proliferation Agenda**

One Chinese scholar provided his insight into the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, denuclearization as a strategic objective is too important for the neighboring countries and the U.S. to compromise, let alone to give it up. The scholar argued that North Korea's development of nuclear weapons will potentially lead to regional arms race and impose negative impact on the U.S.-China relations, Chinese foreign policy on the Korean peninsula as well as in the Asia-Pacific region. It also implies threat to the U.S. homeland and military deployment in the Asia, while at the same time undermining the U.S. regional and global leadership, including alliance coalitions. As a result, a nuclear-armed North Korea in the region is unacceptable for the U.S., China and other relative countries.

Second, denuclearization faces some challenges right now. Recently, Kim Jong-un's leadership is consolidated, and nuclear weapons are regarded by North Korea as part of national prestige as well as security guarantees rather than a negotiation

card. North Korea is less vulnerable and more adaptable to isolation than many other countries. In such case, relevant countries cannot analyze North Korea in a conventional way of thinking.

Third, North Korea's nuclear and missile programs rely less on external technical support. International and domestic context leaves less room of maneuver for decision makers. President Trump's bluffing and contradicted statements also failed to shock the North Korea. The heavy burden is likely to deter any reasonable decision-makers from serious commitment, leading to a place where only the North Korea leadership accepts risks while other countries try to avoid risks. During the Berlin Crisis, both the Europeans and Americans shared the risks with military obligation, at last the West stood out and finally won the crisis. The scholar held that rather than mutual mistrust, responsibilities and risks sharing among China, the U.S., Russia, Japan and South Korea will make a difference at the current stage.

Fourth, the most urgent task right now is developing and implementing a tailored strategy against the North Korean nuclear development, because traditional deterrence including deployment of strategic weapons and missile defensive system works well against nuclear attack but has a poor record in undermining nuclear development. Likewise, economic sanction is an indirect and long-term approach against nuclear and missile development. Therefore, international community, in particular those countries which are heavily threatened by the nuclear program, have to work out a direct approach, such as applying a "no-test" policy towards North Korea. The Chinese scholar also suggested that the relevant parties need to close the windows of opportunities for the North Korean missile and nuclear test, while at the same time clearly carry out a broad range of inducement for the North Korea through the conduct. For instance, it should be determined on what conditions economic aid should be offered and on what conditions peace treaty should be negotiated.

One European scholar claimed that it is crucial for the EU and China to present a united front with regard to the Iran nuclear deal. The two parties should coordinate their actions at the highest level. The role of China is unique in the issue because of the long history of mistrust between Iran and the U.S., UN, Russia. Hence, China is the only party which Iran has normal relations with. In addition, actions can be taken by the EU and China to prevent the U.S. from unilaterally withdrawing from



the Iran nuclear agreement.

Another Chinese scholar shared his observations on the North Korean nuclear issue. First, North Korea is already a de facto nuclear power regardless of the level of recognition by other countries. After several nuclear tests, North Korea has made a big progress in its nuclear and long range ICBM technology, and it will be capable of hitting the mainland of the U.S. sooner or later. Kim Jong-un is gambling his life and national destiny, for the nuclear weapons can be considered as the passport for becoming a nuclear power.

Second, respective parties have lost the best opportunity to solve the problem peacefully. Nowadays possibilities of peace and war increase dramatically. Right now, the time is on the North Korean side. As time goes on, the U.S. will have to make a choice between peace and war, and this is exactly what Kim Jong-un wants to see. The peace option possibly implies that when North Korea finishes another round of test and successfully reaches the mainland of the U.S., a scene of North Korea stopping tests and waiting for negotiation is likely. If North Korea succeeds, the U.S. will have to make a decision regarding whether accepting it as a nuclear power or not. If the answer is yes, peace will come, while in the other way, the U.S. would not accept North Korea as a nuclear state, and do nothing, like India and Pakistan's model in 1990s. As long as it can survive for more than 10 years from economic sanctions as a nuclear power, the strategy of North Korea will be proven effective. It will be easy for the U.S. to negotiate with North Korea in such scenario.

Another scenario is that the U.S. will not accept North Korea as a nuclear power and start military strike, because the U.S. official said military strike is still on the table, though they have done nothing until now.

Third, it is time for all the countries around this region to prepare for the worst scenario, which is the war. Many things for the exchange of interests, such as territorial treaties with North and South Korea, the future U.S. deployment in the peninsula need to be put on the table at this moment. What makes the matter even worse, is the Trump administration, especially president Trump himself, who keeps changing his mind, making it difficult for China to understand the true intentions of the U.S.

Another Chinese scholar shared his understanding of Chinese government

standing, i.e. “No nuclear weapons, No war and No chaos”. However, it is hard to accomplish all three “Nos” simultaneously. He emphasized that the top priority in China is securing the successful opening of the 19th CPC national congress. Compared with domestic issues such as domestic stability, economic increase, social welfare and international cooperation such as OBOR Initiative, North Korean nuclear issue is currently not the top priority in China’s domestic and foreign policy.

During the discussion session, some scholars stressed that the major difference between North Korean and the Iran nuclear issue is that except from Iran itself, the participating parties of Iran nuclear negotiation are not from the Middle East region, while the majority of participating parties in the North Korean nuclear negotiations are countries neighboring the Korean Peninsula. In addition, one Chinese scholar believed that decisive parties in the Iranian nuclear issue are the U.S. and Iran. Therefore, calling it “P2+5” (the U.S., Iran, plus other five parties) instead of “P5+1” (the five permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany) and Iran would be more reasonable.

One European scholar was interested in China’s possible response under the circumstances when the U.S. President would quit the Iran nuclear agreement and re-impose sanctions on Iran. One Chinese scholar responded that the U.S. would be isolating itself if it takes such action. The scholar further explained that China and Europe are not decisive factors in making the Iran nuclear deal, yet can make a huge contribution to safeguarding it.

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