NIDS China Security Report 2025

The Rising Global South and China

National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan

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NIDS China Security Report 2025
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Summary

Chapter 1

Since the end of World War II, China, perceiving itself as both a developing country and major power, has maintained friendly relations with many developing countries while at times leveraging that position in its relations with other major powers. China and various Global South countries loosely share views on several points: (1) dissatisfaction with Western countries due to historical reasons, (2) aspirations for economic development, and (3) the need for reform in global governance. Against this backdrop of shared interests, China has launched a variety of initiatives aimed at rallying the Global South.

As a major economic power, China exerts influence over the external actions of Global South countries through foreign aid, loans, and other such means. In addition, while China's digital technology support and security cooperation contribute to development and social stability by improving governance capabilities in these countries, this assistance is also believed to reinforce and perpetuate authoritarian regimes. Under the Xi Jinping administration, China has expanded its military engagement in the Global South, including establishing an overseas military base, increasing military exchanges, and offering military education to the military officers and soldiers of developing countries. Although China's growing military engagement raises contradictions with its long-held principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, it may strengthen its "constructive interventions" in political and military-related matters in order to protect its overseas interests.

As the only developing country among the permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, China seeks to consolidate support from developing countries as their representative, and seize discourse power in the international community by leveraging UN agencies and multilateral platforms. By strengthening its discourse power, China is intensifying its stance of challenging the international order. Moreover, amid its escalating confrontations with the United States, China is developing assertive propaganda campaigns and diplomatic offensives toward the Global South to defend its "core interests."

Chapter 2

During the Mao Zedong era, China actively supported dissidents on the Arabian Peninsula as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLA) and other national liberation movements, which caused friction with some Middle Eastern countries. Consequently, it was not until the 1990s that China established diplomatic relations with influential countries such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. The value of China's arms exports to the Middle East peaked during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, and has never returned to the same level since. Covert arms deals were a crucial tool for China in establishing diplomatic relations with certain Middle Eastern countries.

China's policies toward the Middle East have taken on distinctive characteristics with each administration, and the Middle East's response to these policies has evolved accordingly. On the other hand, there are underlying historical factors, including (1) the expansion of relations initiated by economic interactions, and (2) the destabilization of the security environment in the Middle East, along with the policies of the U.S., which have significant impact on the regional security, creating room for China's increased presence.

It is also significant that China is building relationships not only with other governments, but with non-state organizations in the Middle East. During the Mao Zedong era, support for dissident groups and national liberation movements from an ideological perspective generated friction with some Middle Eastern countries. However, the current Xi Jinping administration has adopted a more balanced policy, supporting the internationally recognized government in Yemen while simultaneously forging relations with the Houthis. The Houthis have reportedly promised not to target Chinese and Russian vessels, which could be interpreted as an outcome of the balanced policy, potentially allowing China to gain a relative advantage in the region.

China is also expanding its military and security presence in the Middle East, particularly in the areas of drones and missiles. Since the Xi Jinping administration, China has reportedly made progress in allegedly building military facilities in the the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. If China succeeds in building its first military base in a Middle Eastern country, it will mark a new stage in China's presence in the Middle East and is likely to further accelerate the competition between China and the United States in the region.

Chapter 3

China has expanded its economic relations with African countries through direct investments and loans, and has been Africa's largest trading partner since 2009. China's economic expansion has provided various economic benefits to African countries, such as improved access to infrastructure like electricity and job creation. On the other hand, African countries are already burdened with significant debt, and further debt accumulation could lead to a reduction in China's economic involvement. African countries need to make their relations with China more symmetrical and sustainable by diversifying trade goods and investment targets in line with industrial development.

In military and security fields, China has dispatched peacekeeping operations (PKO) troops to Africa, established a base in Djibouti, and increased arms exports to Africa since the 2000s. After the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China surpassed Russia to become the world's largest arms exporter to Africa. China has also been diversifying its engagement, including providing training and education to senior military and police personnel, supplying surveillance technology, and dispatching private security companies. China is also actively engaging in the field of politics, including the 2022 opening of a political school in Tanzania with support from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, there are still many uncertainties about the impact of this engagement on the democratization

of African countries as well as conflicts and disputes within the region.

Amid intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition, although African countries may gain opportunities to increase their presence in the international community, there is also a risk that this competition could be brought into Africa and lead to divisions within the region.

Conclusions

As discussed above, China is expanding its influence in the Global South by developing economic and trade relations and enhancing military and security cooperation, while maintaining contact with a wide range of actors, including non-state actors, in response to regional and state circumstances. China and many countries in the Global South loosely share a vision of a future international order transitioning from the unipolar hegemony by the United States (or Western countries) to a multipolarity brought about by the rise of the Global South. These countries tend to accept Chinese leadership if it leads to their own development and greater fairness in global governance. On the other hand, given the rising power of a group of countries in the Global South with significant growth potential, China's leadership is not guaranteed for the future.

In this context, it is likely that the strategic competition between the United States and China will continue in various areas, enmeshing the Global South. In order to maximize their national interests, countries in the Global South will seek to maintain their independence and distinctiveness from the United States and China, while at the same time taking opportunistic actions and increasing their assertiveness.

China justifies its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in East Asia as defending its core interests, and is escalating its actions backed by military force. The Global South's growing support for China's rhetoric and actions could further encourage China's attempts to change the status quo and destabilize the regional situation. In light of this, countries that aim to maintain and strengthen a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" should work to enhance public diplomacy while building stronger ties with the Global South. At the same time, they will need to deepen their understanding of the unique perspectives and policy issues of each region and country in the Global South, and to explore economic cooperation and capacity-building assistance that is rooted in the specific needs of each country, in order to develop long-term partnerships based on trust.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

APSCO	Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CASCF	China–Arab States Cooperation Forum
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DLF	Dhofar Liberation Front
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FLN	National Liberation Front (French: Front de Libération Nationale)
G77	Group of 77
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCI	Global Civilization Initiative
GDI	Global Development Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSI	Global Security Initiative
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NDU	(China's) National Defense University
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Preface

The *NIDS China Security Report* published by the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) presents the results of studies by NIDS researchers regarding China-related security issues to a wide range of domestic and international readers. The subjects covered are selected based on their medium- to long-term relevance for understanding security affairs regarding China, and the content extends beyond military matters to also encompass politics, economics, international relations, and other wide-ranging matters.

The theme of the *NIDS China Security Report 2025* is "The Rising Global South and China." "Global South" is a term used to indicate a group of emerging countries in contrast to developed countries. Particularly following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Global South has been attracting attention for its countries' stance of maintaining unique relationships with both China and Russia without aligning with the positions taken by Japan, the United States, and European countries. This report discusses the current state of relations between China and various Global South countries, which are increasing their presence in the international community amid their economic growth, as well as China's approach to the Global South and these countries' perceptions of China. Particular focus is placed on the Middle East and Africa, regions whose importance has been reaffirmed and where countries have been significantly deepening their relations with China. This report provides a comprehensive analysis on the countries in these regions, which are deepening their ties with China and must be taken into account from the perspectives of energy security and geopolitics, including on the Gaza issue which has garnered attention in the international community. We take pride in the report's presentation of unprecedented new perspectives and strategic implications.

As stated above, the selection of themes and the analysis in the *NIDS China Security Report* are carried out exclusively by NIDS researchers based on their personal academic expertise. Therefore, the content of this report reflects the individual views of the authors and does not represent the official views of the Government of Japan, the Ministry of Defense, or NIDS. Responsibility for the content lies with each individual researcher.

The lead author of the *NIDS China Security Report 2025* is YATSUZUKA Masaaki, with contributions from NISHINO Masami, YOSHIDA Tomoaki, and JINGUSHI Akira. For details on the chapters and fields of expertise of each author, please refer to the end of the report. Editing and public relations were handled by HAYASHI Koichi, KIRIDORI Ryo, TANAKA Ryosuke, IGARASHI Takayuki, KIYOOKA Katsuyoshi, GOTO Yohei, TAKEUCHI Toshimasa, and AITA Moriki.

We hope this report will stimulate discussions both in Japan and abroad on China-related security issues, and contribute to dialogue and exchanges in extensive security-related fields beyond those related to China.

December 2024
SHOJI Tomotaka, Director of the Regional Studies Department
Editor-in-Chief of the *NIDS China Security Report 2025*

Introduction

The Theme of This Report

YATSUZUKA Masaaki

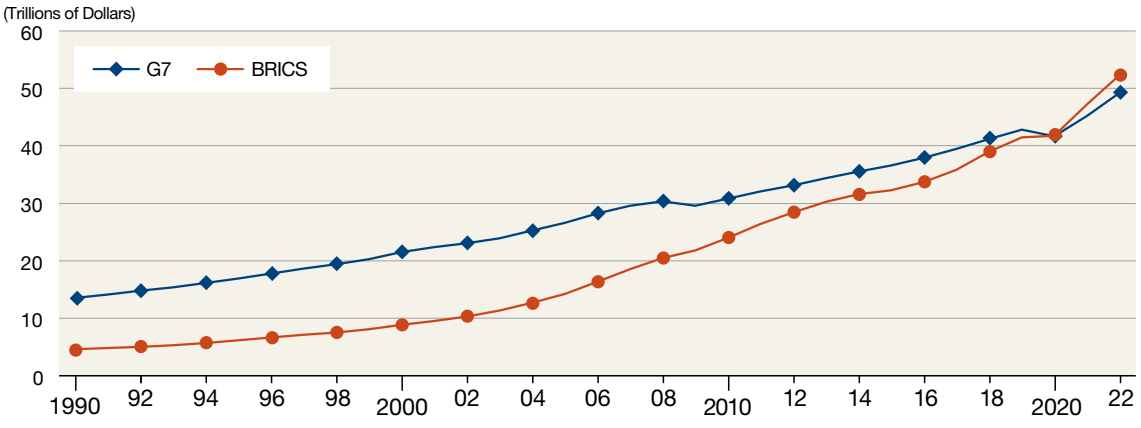
"As a developing country and a member of the Global South, China breathes the same breath as other developing countries and pursues a shared future with them, and has resolutely upheld the common interests of developing countries and worked to increase the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries in global affairs."[1]

In an address at a BRICS-related meeting in August 2023, Chinese President Xi Jinping positioned China as a member of the Global South and expressed the view that the collective rise of emerging and developing countries is fundamentally reshaping the world map. In recent years, the Xi administration has been increasingly criticizing the international order formed under Western leadership as unfair, and has proposed a variety of independent Chinese diplomatic initiatives aimed at "democratization of international relations." In challenging the existing international order, China has been actively issuing rallying cries to the so-called "Global South," comprising developing and emerging countries with a remarkably growing presence in international relations.

Although "Global South" lacks a precise definition, it is generally used as a broad concept to collectively refer to developing and emerging countries in regions such as Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. During the Cold War, newly independent states that achieved decolonization pursued a "Non-Aligned Movement," refusing to align with either the Western or Eastern sides, and were collectively referred to as the "Third World." Additionally, the term "South" was used to signify developing countries in contrast to the "North" which centered on developed nations, conceptualizing levels of economic development. Following the end of the Cold War, due to widening economic disparities across borders alongside the globalization of market economies, including poverty within developed countries, the term "Global South" came into academic use in some contexts.[2] The current concept of the Global South is subject to various interpretations regarding its implications, and some caution is apparent in its definition.[3]

This report focuses primarily on the Global South as a general term for developing and emerging countries that have gained attention in recent years in the context of international politics. The renewed focus on the term Global South can be attributed to three main background factors. The first factor is the economic rise of the Global South. Since the dawn of the 21st century, countries that have successfully adapted to a globalized market economy and achieved economic development have been increasing their power as emerging countries. China is commonly raised as the foremost example, and developing countries with demographic dividends, such as India, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico, are also noted for their future potential.[4] In contrast, the economic presence of developed countries is expected to relatively decline. For example, as shown in Figure 0.1, when comparing the economic strength of BRICS nations, considered representatives of the Global South, with that of the G7 in terms of GDP based on purchasing power parity, BRICS was only one-third the level of the G7 in 1990 but surpassed the G7 by 2020. If emerging countries continue to achieve relatively higher economic growth than developed countries, this gap is expected to widen. According to projections by

Figure 0.1 Comparison of the G7's and BRICS' Economic Power (GDP Based on Purchasing Power Parity)



Source: Compiled by the author based on UN data.

Goldman Sachs, the current ratio of developed countries to emerging countries in the top ten largest economies will become equal by 2050 and shift to a 3:7 ratio by 2075.[5] Indeed, the economic power balance between the South and the North is significantly shifting.

The second background factor is the distinct political stance of the Global South, which became apparent after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Western developed countries such as Japan, the United States, and European nations responded to Russia's unilateral military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 by imposing sanctions on Russia and requesting widespread support from the international community. In contrast, while the countries of the Global South did not explicitly express support for Russia, they also did not align with the Western sanctions against Russia. In fact, a non-negligible number of countries like India have deepened their economic relations with Russia. Many countries in the Global South hold a different perspective on the international order from Western countries, and these differences have been exposed as a barrier to broad cooperative actions by the international community in response to global crises. This political stance has often emerged as a reaction against what is perceived as the double standards of the West, caused by the history of colonialism. Currently, there is also severe scrutiny from the Global South toward the United States' response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

President Xi Jinping hosting the 14th BRICS Summit (June 2022) (Xinhua/Kyodo News Images)

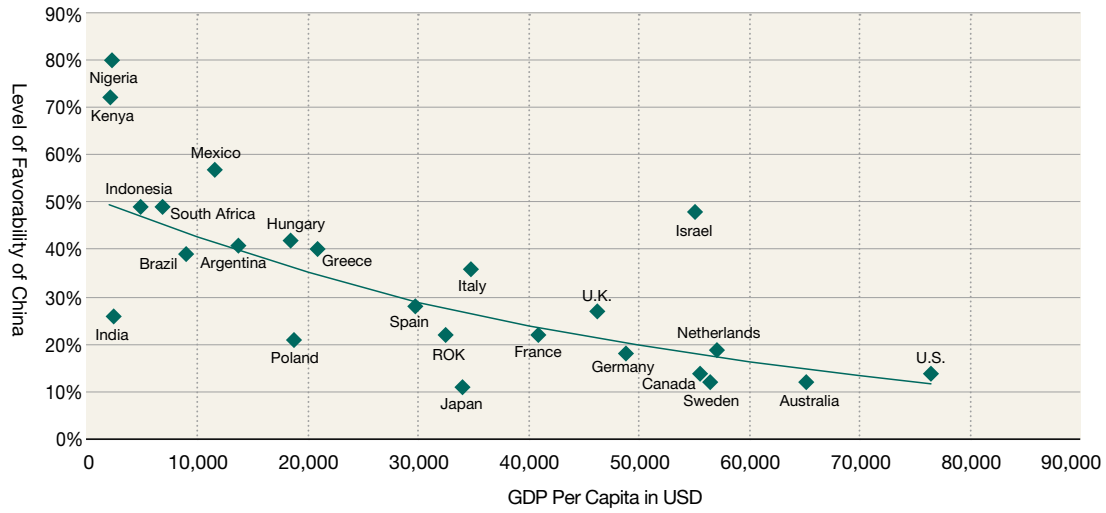
The third background factor is attempts to strengthen cooperation both within the Global South and with external parties, against the backdrop of the aforementioned economic and political rise of the Global South. In January 2023, India held the Voice of Global South Summit, inviting

as many as 125 countries of the Global South.[6] In addition, since January 2024, four countries have become new BRICS member states: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).[7] At the BRICS Summit held in Russia in October 2024, BRICS established a new status for "partner countries" following its member countries, aiming to expand its framework toward the Global South. As the Global South is a grouping of countries with diverse backgrounds, it has not yet shown unified political action. On the other hand, if the Global South strengthens political cooperation and develops common political stances and actions, it is expected to have a significant impact on the international order. In light of these developments, developed countries are also enhancing their engagement with the Global South.

The Chinese government, which has asserted its identity as a developing country through now, has recently aimed to further cement its cooperative relations with the Global South. At the Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisers and High Representatives on National Security in July 2023, Foreign Minister Wang Yi made the first explicit reference to China being a member of the Global South by a senior Chinese government official. He also promoted the implementation of China's proposed Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), with the aim of jointly building a community with a shared future for humankind.[8] Whether China should be considered a member of the Global South is a matter of debate, but it is clear that China seeks to rally these countries toward an international order it deems desirable.[9] This report, without strictly defining the Global South, takes Beijing's self-references into account and discusses countries labeled as emerging and developing in international politics, including China, as part of the Global South.[10] It examines China's perspective on the international order, and how it positions the Global South within that order.

In addition, the extent to which the Global South is receptive to China's presence also needs to be examined. Having emerged as an economic power in the 20th century, China has been apparently increasing its clout over the Global South, primarily through economic and trade relations. But to what extent does this influence shape the policy choices of Global South countries? Interestingly, there is a major divide in perceptions of China between developed countries and Global South countries. A public opinion survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in November 2023, which included 24 countries comprising both developed and developing countries, showed that favorable views of China are generally strikingly lower in developed countries and higher in developing countries.[11] When examining the correlation coefficients between this favorability toward China and two indicators, economic development (as measured by GDP per capita published by the World Bank[12]) and political system (as indicated by the Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)[13]), there is a strong correlation in both cases (economic indicator: -0.7093; political system indicator: -0.8895) (see Figures 0.2 and 0.3).[14] These results suggest that the greater the economic poverty and authoritarian political system in a country, the higher the favorable view of China. Considering that democracy has been in decline internationally in recent years, the tendency for favorable views of

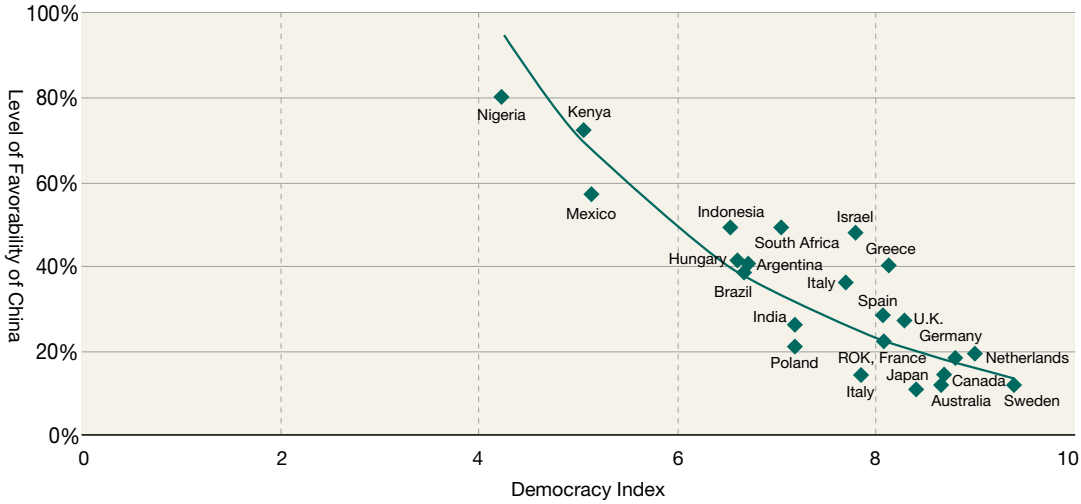
Figure 0.2 Correlation Distribution Between GDP Per Capita and Favorability Toward China



Note: Level of favorability of China (vertical axis) indicates the percentage of people who responded that they have a favorable view of China in a survey conducted via telephone or in person with a total of 30,681 adults in 24 countries from January to May 2023.

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from Pew Research Center and the World Bank.

Figure 0.3 Correlation Distribution Between Level of Democracy and Favorability Toward China



Note: Level of favorability of China (vertical axis) indicates the percentage of people who responded that they have a favorable view of China in a survey conducted via telephone or in person with a total of 30,681 adults in 24 countries from January to May 2023.

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from Pew Research Center and Economist Intelligence Unit.

China within authoritarian states may hold significant implications for international relations from a medium- to long-term perspective.[15]

If there is a growing tendency of Global South countries choosing policies reflecting favorable public opinion toward China, this could have a considerable impact in the context of the global strategic competition between the United States and China. In addition, this favorability toward China in the Global South is connected to whether these countries might accept China as a replacement for the United States, which has traditionally been the global hegemon in the field of security. How does the Global South perceive and accept China's influence? Such issues are also relevant to Japan, which holds different views from China on the international order, sovereignty, and maritime interests.

This report aims to provide a multifaceted understanding of the relationship between China and the Global South. Although excellent research has already been published on the relationship between China and the Global South, this report seeks to offer readers a new perspective by examining their relationship from the following three angles.[16] First, by having experts specializing in China and the Global South as area studies discuss their relationship from both directions, this report aims to achieve a more multi-dimensional understanding. This report raises the Middle East and Africa, two regions where China has increased its engagement in recent years, as case studies for the Global South. While these regions include numerous developing countries that continue to face tumultuous situations such as terrorism, civil wars, and regional conflicts, they also have significant potential for growth due to the number of states, population, resources, and geopolitical importance. In addition, unlike Western countries which traditionally exerted influence but now have a declining presence, China has been rapidly strengthening its engagement in these regions. Thus, the Middle East and Africa, where regional order is currently in flux, are important cases for examining the relationship between China and the Global South from a medium- to long-term perspective. The "NIDS China Security Report" series has previously covered China's relations with developing countries and regions, such as Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Pacific Island countries (2019 edition), and Central Asia (2020 edition).[17] Building on these achievements, this report examines China's diplomacy toward the Global South in more distant regions from China.

The second characteristic of this report is its focus on China's engagement with the Global South in the field of security. Regarding this aspect, China has actively participated in UN peacekeeping operations since the 2000s. At the end of 2008, China began deploying naval vessels on a rotational basis to counter piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. Furthermore, in 2017, China established its first overseas support base in Djibouti, strengthening its military commitment in the Middle East and Africa. This report also analyzes the impact of China's enhanced global military engagement on each respective regional order.

The third characteristic of this report is the incorporation of a perspective on how the strategic competition between the United States and China is unfolding in the Global South. In response to intensifying confrontations with the United States, China is enhancing its engagement with the Global

South. This report looks at how the countries and regions of the Global South are affected by the U.S.-China strategic competition, in terms of both constraints and benefits. Last year's "NIDS China Security Report 2024" focused on the theme of "China, Russia, and the United States Striving for a New International Order."[18] This report is also positioned as a sequel that re-examines the analytical perspectives of the previous series by adding the viewpoint of the Global South.

Based on the above awareness of the issues and analytical perspectives, this report is structured as follows. Chapter 1, titled "China's Efforts to Rally the Global South," endeavors to clarify China's perceptions and policies toward the Global South. It reviews the historical evolution of the relationship between China and the Global South and examines China's influence on the Global South from economic, diplomatic, and military perspectives. It also sheds light on the realities and challenges of the diplomatic offensive pursued by the Xi Jinping administration to gain support from the Global South in response to intensifying strategic competition with the United States.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide case studies that analyze China from the perspective of the Global South. Chapter 2, titled "Middle Eastern Countries and China: China Growing Its Presence in the Middle East as a Different Major Power from the United States," discusses the history and current state of China's engagement in the Middle East. By organizing the historical evolution, Chapter 2 highlights the current structure of China-Middle East relations and discusses the Middle East policy of the Xi Jinping administration from economic, diplomatic, military, and security perspectives. Furthermore, it examines the previously unexplored relationships between China and various organizations within the "Axis of Resistance."

Chapter 3, titled "Expanding Africa-China Relations and Their Challenges," examines how China is addressing the challenges facing Africa. This chapter notes that as China has emerged as a major economic power, it has become Africa's largest economic partner, capable of providing solutions to Africa's economic challenges, while issues such as debt insolvency and resource exploitation have also arisen. This chapter also examines China's role in addressing armed conflicts and the progress of democratization in Africa, as well as the impact of great power competition on Africa.

Based on the abovementioned discussions, the final Conclusions part reviews the relationship between China and the Global South and considers its effects on the international order. We hope that this report will contribute to a more objective understanding of China and to policy discussions based on that understanding.


Pool/ABACA/Kyodo News Images

Chapter 1

China's Efforts to Rally the Global South

YATSUZUKA Masaaki

Introduction

This chapter aims to deepen understanding of the relationship between China and the Global South, primarily from the perspective of China's views and diplomatic policies. According to the World Bank's definition, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is still a developing country with a per capita gross national income of $12,850 (upper middle-income economy).[1] On the other hand, China takes it upon itself, as a major power, to rally together developing countries. In fact, President Xi Jinping has frequently referred to China as the "world's largest developing country" with a leadership position in increasing the representation and voice of developing countries.[2] The Chinese government provides aid to developing countries, while at times leveraging them to counter major powers. This historical context continues to influence the relationship between China and the Global South. The first section of this chapter reviews the formation of China's perception of itself as a developing country and discusses the common agenda shared between China and the Global South.

China has increased its influence over the Global South as it has emerged as a major power following the end of the Cold War and its rapid economic growth. How does China's influence function in the Global South? The second section examines the sources of China's influence on the Global South and their significance from the three perspectives of economics, diplomacy, and military affairs.

Leveraging its influence on the Global South, China has taken a stronger stance on reforming the international order in recent years. The Xi administration frequently asserts its perception that the world is undergoing "major transformation unseen in a century" and that emerging and developing countries are increasingly calling for a more equitable and reasonable international order, and democratization of international relations is inevitable."[3] The report to the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) positions China as a reformer that is "actively participating in the reform and development of the global governance system."[4] The third section discusses how China positions its collaboration with the Global South amid increasing interest in the Global South in the context of international politics as well as shifts in international relations, including the intensifying strategic competition with the United States.

1. The History and Context of China's Diplomacy with the Global South

(1) The Formation of China's Perception of Itself as a Developing Country after the Founding of the PRC

An important creed underpinning China's relations with developing countries is the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," agreed upon with India and Burma (now Myanmar) in 1954. These principles

are: (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful coexistence. Initially confirmed in the context of national relations and border negotiations with the two countries, the Five Principles still serve as the political foundation for China's diplomatic relations with developing and emerging economies. The emphasis on non-interference in internal affairs is closely related to China's skeptical stance toward Western countries' criticism of political systems and human rights conditions, as well as China's position on domestic issues such as human rights violations, religion, ethnicity, and civil wars in authoritarian developing countries. At the 60th anniversary ceremony of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in 2014, President Xi stated that these principles embody the essential characteristics of a new type of international relations. He also emphasized respect for each country's core interests and the right to choose its social system and model of development, as well as opposing any attempt to oust the legitimate government of a country.[5]

In addition, since immediately after founding of PRC, China supported developing countries based on its perception of the issue of the North-South problem, in which developing countries are economically exploited by major powers, and sought to build a united front of developing countries to counter the superstates. The "Theory of Intermediate Zones," advocated by Mao Zedong in mid-1946 during the height of the Chinese Civil War, is linked to China's perception of developing countries in the context of the North-South problem. The theory was based on the idea that "U.S. imperialism," which was aggressive toward the Soviet Union, sought to invade and exploit countries and peoples in the intermediate zones between the United States and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, as the Cold War structure between the United States and the Soviet Union strengthened, China gradually adopted its (pro-Soviet) "Lean-to-One-Side" Policy, seeking monolithic unity with the Soviet Union and the communist bloc to oppose the "U.S. imperialism" and capitalist side. In other words, China simultaneously held views on East-West confrontation and North-South confrontation, and tailored its foreign policy toward developing countries based on the situation.[6] In both views, China advocated "proletarian internationalism," taking it upon itself to provide material and moral support to the revolutionary struggles of communist parties in countries around the world as well as national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which reflected its emerging perception of itself being a major power. Although China was itself a developing country suffering from poverty, it extended foreign aid disproportionate to its national strength at the time. However, most of this assistance was directed as grant aid toward "socialist brother states" like North Korea and Vietnam as military support, with most other assistance to national liberation movements in

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai giving a speech at the Asian-African Conference (April 1955) (Kyodo)

Asia and Africa in the form of loan aid, and mostly limited to "vocal support."[7]

Shortly after the founding of the PRC, China also deepened its cooperation with the "Third World" movements seeking independence from Western imperialism and autonomy from major power politics. Newly independent states such as India, Indonesia, and Burma (at the time), which had achieved decolonization from Western countries, pursued autonomy from the Cold War structure defined by the major powers through the development of the Non-Aligned Movement. China often sympathized with this movement and participated in the Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference) held in 1955. This alignment with the Non-Aligned Movement was linked to China's foreign strategy at the time. Particularly after the early 1960s, when confrontation with the Soviet Union became evident, the Chinese government aimed to expand its horizons in international relations by strengthening diplomatic ties with developing countries that maintained a distance from the two major sides, the United States and the Soviet Union, while Taiwan held representation in the United Nations (UN). Such efforts gradually bore fruit, and at the 3rd Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in 1970, many developing countries expressed their support for China's acquisition of UN representation.[8] Coupled with its establishment of diplomatic relations with many African countries during the 1960s, China was able to gain UN representation in 1971. The background for the importance of developing countries in China's current diplomacy is deeply tied to this historical reality.

Even after gaining UN representation, China continued to expand its relations with developing countries. It deepened cooperation with the Group of 77 (G77), which was formed by developing countries at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has also come to take it upon itself to represent the voices of developing countries. As discussed later in this chapter, China's involvement in the "G77 plus China" framework has played a major role in its UN diplomacy. In 1974, when the G77 spearheaded the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order at the UN General Assembly special session on raw materials and development, Deng Xiaoping proposed the "Three Worlds Theory" as China's representative. This theory inherited parts of the "Theory of Intermediate Zones," which focused on the North-South problem. It recognized three worlds: the hegemonic powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) as the First World, economically advanced countries like European countries and Japan as the Second World, and developing countries, including China, as the Third World.[9] In this context, China considered that the peoples of the Third World oppose the hegemonism of the First World while also eyeing cooperation with the Second World. Here too, China saw developing countries of the Third World as countries with which it should cooperate.

After Mao's death, Deng shifted focus toward economic development, leading China into the so-called era of reform and opening up. During this period, the political cooperation between China and developing countries weakened as China de-ideologized its diplomacy. In addition, following the adoption of the "independent foreign policy" in 1982, China, while focusing on its own economic development, sharply reduced its foreign aid to developing countries and shifted toward economic

cooperation centered on trade and investment.

As can be seen from the above, China has identified itself as a developing country and, in principle, supported national liberation and provided aid to developing countries based on internationalism. However, the backdrop for the Chinese government's raising of the Theory of Intermediate Zones and the Three Worlds Theory was its motivations for foreign strategy, which aimed to counter the superstates, namely the United States and the Soviet Union which posed a threat to China, by building a united front through rallying developing countries and expanding its diplomatic horizons. In this sense, China's Third World diplomacy could be seen as subordinate to its relations with major powers, especially concerning national security including its relations with the United States and the Soviet Union.[10]

(2) Common Agenda Between China and the Global South

There are three commonalities that can be identified between China and the Global South that underpin their progress in cooperation. First, many Global South countries, including China, share a historical experience of invasion and colonial rule by Western powers and harbor shared distrust of Western deceptiveness. With regard to this point, President Xi has pointed out in speeches at BRICS meetings that many emerging and developing countries have historically experienced the quagmire of colonialism, and voiced criticism that "some country, obsessed with maintaining its hegemony, has gone out of its way to cripple the EMDCs [emerging markets and developing countries]."[11] There has also been criticism of double standards, with assertions that while developed countries quickly imposed sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine from the perspective of international law and humanitarian concerns, they have not actively taken measures in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel's military operations in Gaza aimed at eliminating Hamas. For example, it can be said that South Africa's case brought to the International Court of Justice, which asserts that Israel's actions constitute genocide due to the large number of Palestinian civilian casualties caused by Israel's military operations, symbolizes these voices of criticism.[12] In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was dissatisfaction that despite having surplus vaccines, developed countries were not proactive in sharing them with developing countries.[13]

Second, many countries in the Global South are development-oriented and prioritize economic development to alleviate domestic poverty. The Chinese government also raises "development" as a key agenda item with Global South countries. In a 2016 speech to the Arab League, President Xi emphasized, "The key to overcoming difficulties is to accelerate development. Turmoil in the Middle East stems from the lack of development, and the ultimate solution will depend on development."[14] This shows the recognition of the Xi administration that supporting economic development in developing regions helps stabilize the regional situations.

Third, China and the Global South countries share the recognition that in terms of the economic disparities between the North and South, post-war global governance led by major powers has been

unfair and has subjugated the Global South to the capitalist system of the developed countries. Due to this, both China and the Global South share the goal of reforming the global governance system to be more equitable. This dissatisfaction is symbolized by the 1974 Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, spearheaded by the G77, which raised discontent about international governance favoring developed countries and the exploitation by their multinational corporations. Successive leaders of the CCP have expressed dissatisfaction with the international economic order, and the Xi administration has also demonstrated zeal for global governance reform. For example, during a 2015 study session of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, President Xi expressed the need to "reform the unjust and improper arrangements in the global governance system," and to "particularly boost the representation and voices of emerging economies and developing countries, promoting equality of rights, opportunities, and rules in countries' international economic cooperation."[15] Furthermore, President Xi also raised the need for global governance reform at the UN's High-Level Round Table on South-South Cooperation that same year.[16] These commonalities reflect China's reasoning for rallying the Global South countries as a member of the Global South.

2. China's Influence on the Global South as It Has Become a Major Power

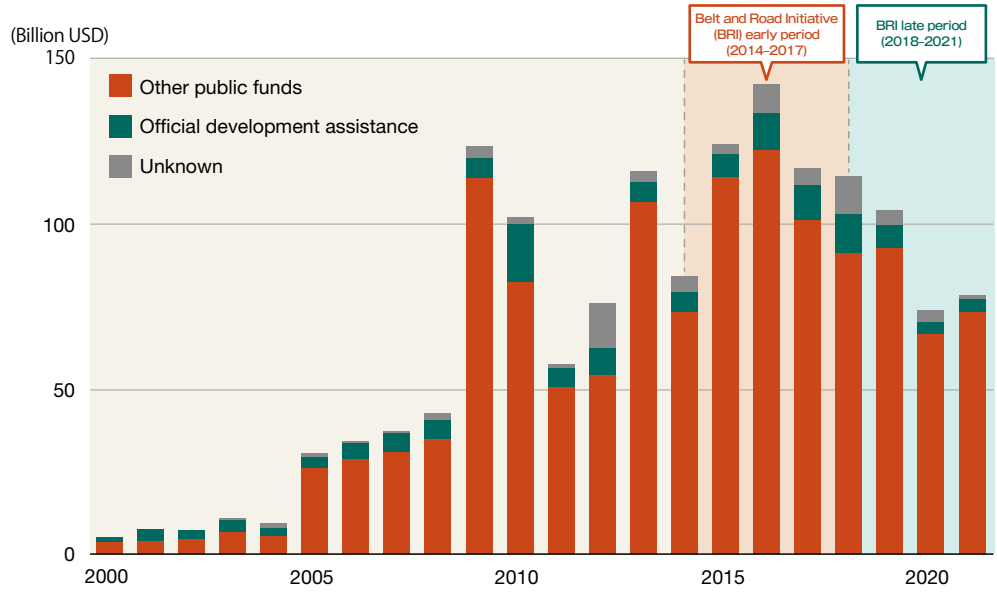
(1) China's Influence as a Major Economic Power

Since the implementation of its policy for reform and opening up as well as its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China has increased its total trade volume tenfold over the past 20 years, and its share of global trade has considerably increased. As of 2022, China is the world's largest trading nation by total trade volume (export value + import value).[17] Naturally, China has also become an important trade partner for countries in the Global South. Although this is a slightly old reference, according to the 2018 "White Paper on International Economy and Trade" from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the largest trading partners of countries around the world changed significantly from 2000 to 2017. In 2000, only a very small number of countries considered China their largest trading partner. However, by 2017, China had become the largest import partner for about 30% of the world's countries and regions (57 out of 189 countries and regions), far surpassing the second-largest import partner, the United States, which accounted for about 15% (28 countries and regions).[18] For many countries in the Global South, particularly in Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, China is the top trading partner. As the "world's factory," China supplies machinery, electrical equipment, plastics, and miscellaneous goods and other everyday goods to countries worldwide. At the same time, China is the second-largest importer in the world after the United States, increasing its presence as the "world's market."

China has also actively engaged in investment activities with countries in the Global South. As of 2022, Chinese companies' outward investment (flow) ranked second in the world.[19] Since 2013, under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Chinese government has promoted official development assistance (ODA), the provision of public funds, and investment activities by Chinese companies. According to Chinese researchers, by 2023, the Chinese government had signed more than 200 BRI cooperation documents with 151 countries and 32 international organizations.[20] Most of China's economic cooperation takes the form of loans, and it often requires the participation of Chinese companies in these projects.[21] According to a report by AidData, from 2000 to 2021, China's development aid and public funds provided for international development in developing countries amounted to $1.34 trillion over 22 years. China has now become the world's largest creditor nation, surpassing the United States.[22]

However, despite the continued high level of China's financing and lending to developing countries, these activities have been declining since their peak around 2016 (see Figure 1.1). This decline reflects domestic opinions in China regarding foreign aid. A public opinion survey conducted by Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy found that 52.7% of respondents felt that China gave "too much" foreign aid, while only 2.3% thought it was "too little" or "slightly too little."[23] In recent years, China's economic cooperation has been criticized internationally for the "debt trap" created when developing countries default on loans or struggle with repayments. For China, these issues also mean it is accumulating non-performing loans and are significant in terms of international reputation risk. Due to this, it has been pointed out that the Chinese government

Figure 1.1 Changes in China's Public Fund Flows to Developing Countries, 2000–2021



Source: AidData, *Belt and Road Reboot: Beijing's Bid to De-Risk Its Global Infrastructure Initiative*, November 2023, p. 8.

has adjusted its approach to economic cooperation since around 2018, introducing measures such as penalty interest rates for delayed repayments and responding more effectively to backlashes against problematic debtor countries and projects.[24]

In addition, through the BRI, China aims to expand its standards to the international community by developing not only hard infrastructure such as roads and ports but also promoting soft infrastructure such as international telecommunications technology, or so-called "soft connectivity." Since 2017, the Chinese government has proposed the "The Belt and Road" Digital Economy International Cooperation Initiative, which promotes international cooperation in information infrastructure, digitalization, and e-commerce with developing countries along the Belt and Road.[25] This is also part of China's mid- to long-term efforts related to standardization under the China Standards 2035 initiative.[26] Relevant government documents mention using the BRI to establish a standardization cooperation mechanism within BRICS and expand standards internationally.[27]

Amid China's development of its economic cooperation, there have been cases where it uses its economic power as leverage to exert influence. As the "world's factory," China holds an indispensable position in the global supply chain, allowing it to "weaponize" economic dependencies to influence other countries' actions abroad. President Xi himself has stated that China "must tighten international production chains' dependence on China, forming a powerful countermeasure and deterrent capability against foreigners who would artificially cut off supply (to China)."[28] In 2020, the Chinese government implemented the Export Control Law and the Unreliable Entity List. These regulatory measures were not only in response to U.S. trade and investment restrictions on China but also targeted third-country companies that comply with U.S. sanctions against China.[29] Through now, China has repeatedly engaged in economic coercion, including arbitrarily enforcing trade controls on countries with which it has intensifying confrontations (such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Australia, and Norway).

Although cases of overt economic coercion by China toward developing countries are relatively rare, its implications can still influence the external actions of developing countries. As noted, China's economic pressure is more effective on developing countries than on developed ones. Many of the former have already received substantial investments from China and may fear economic pressure, prompting them to align with China's policy directions.[30] For example, it has been pointed out that large financing for Kiribati's key fishing industry by Chinese companies with deep ties to the CCP may have influenced the Kiribati government's decision in 2019 to switch its diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China.[31]

In addition, Che Yi et al., who analyzed the causal relationship of Chinese foreign aid on its international influence, found that since the 21st century, Chinese foreign aid has contributed to improving favorable views of China and aligning voting behavior with China in the UN among 111 recipient countries.[32] Similarly, Axel Dreher et al., who analyzed voting behavior in the UN General Assembly of countries receiving Chinese foreign aid, revealed that from 2000 to 2021, low- and

middle-income country governments aligned their foreign policy positions with China 75% of the time. Their research results estimated that a 10% increase in UN voting alignment with China could result in a 276% increase in aid from China.[33]

In authoritarian regimes where policymaking authority is concentrated among elites, Chinese foreign aid can serve as a viable alternative to Western foreign aid, supporting regime continuation and strengthening resilience of the political system. Based on field research in Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Angola, and elsewhere, INADA Juichi points out that the expansion of Chinese aid under the principle of non-interference in internal affairs may reduce the effectiveness of Western "democratization pressure" that uses aid as leverage.[34] China's advocacy of non-interference in internal affairs for aid provision sets it apart from the Western approach to aid, which demands democratic procedures such as transparency and corruption-free decision-making processes in recipient countries. Thus, it cannot be denied that such opaque decision-making in aid allocation, driven by the government and ruling elites, contributes to and fosters corruption.[35] Similar dynamics may also be at work for progress in relations concerning public security and policing cooperation, which will be discussed later.

(2) China's Multilateralism and Multi-layered Diplomacy Toward the Global South

Multilateral platforms formed mainly by China also conceivably serve as sources of Chinese influence over the Global South. These platforms include multilateral frameworks within the UN, dialogue and cooperation frameworks that incorporate China into regional multilateralism, and functionalist multilateral frameworks like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). China has developed cooperative relationships with countries in the Global South through these multilateral frameworks.

One of the main hubs for Global South cooperation within the UN is the G77.[36] Comprising 134 developing countries, representing over 85% of the world's population, the G77 is the largest intergovernmental group in the UN and serves as a crucial framework for China to align itself with the Global South within the UN. According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while China is not a member of the G77, it has maintained strong relations as part of the "G77 plus China."[37] As the Global South has gained increased attention in recent years, China has also increased its diplomatic activities within this framework. During the G77 Summit held in Cuba in September 2023, Li Xi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Bureau of the CCP Central Committee, representing China, stated that China would work with the G77 to "build a Global South community with a shared future, and usher in a new era of common development."[38] In addition, at the G77's Third South Summit, held in January 2024 after a nearly 20-year hiatus, Liu Guozhong, a vice premier, mentioned China's active participation in global governance reform including through the Global Security Initiative (GSI), Global Development Initiative (GDI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).[39] The G77 serves as a forum for discussing common issues faced by developing countries, such as South-South cooperation and

climate change, and for coordinating interests before raising them to the UN. As the only developing country among the permanent members of the UN Security Council, China can act as a representative to deliver the views of these countries, and simultaneously expect to gather support votes from these countries for itself. For example, in the 2019 election for Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the G77 plus China agreed in advance to support Qu Dongyu, a Chinese national, demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between them.[40]

In addition, since the late 1990s, the Chinese government has been expanding its regional diplomacy based on multilateralism, building a network of dialogue mechanisms that incorporate China into regional multilateral frameworks. As shown in Table 1.1, China has regional frameworks centered on itself with countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Pacific Island countries. These frameworks advance "Five Links," including policy exchange, infrastructure connectivity, trade flow, financial cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges, modeled on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and South-South cooperation. At the same time, China adjusts cooperation items and other factors and flexibly develops relations according to the conditions of each region.[41]

Table 1.1 Multilateral Frameworks in Which China Participates Across Various Regions of the Global South[42]

Name	Start date	Number of member countries
China-ASEAN Summit	1996	10
Forum on China-Africa Cooperation	2000	53
China-Arab States Cooperation Forum	2004	22
China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum	2006	10

Source: Compiled by the author based on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Through such multilateral frameworks, China has deepened multi-layered and multi-domain exchanges in various regions. For example, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, which began in 2004 and has since experienced significant growth, consists of the following: (1) a ministerial meeting held every two years, (2) an annual high-level committee meeting, (3) various forums on topics such as economic cooperation, business and investment, energy, the arts, media, the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, healthcare, communications, technology, and youth exchanges, and (4) liaison agencies.[43] In December 2022, the first-ever China-Arab States Summit was held based on the Forum, underscoring China's growing influence in the Middle East.[44] As will be discussed later in this chapter, China seeks to garner broad support from the Global South using such regional frameworks,

especially when international confrontations arise related to its core interests as well as elections for positions at international organizations.

As the role of the Global South gains attention in the context of international politics, the development of BRICS and the SCO has also been notable. In the case of BRICS, each member state places importance on its role as a regional leader, and the political objectives of the member states align regarding expanding BRICS' political influence.[45] Since January 2024, four countries have become new BRICS member states: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). At the BRICS Summit held in Russia in October 2024, BRICS established a new status for "partner countries" following its member countries, becoming a multilateral platform representing a wider range of developing and emerging countries. One Chinese expert noted that more than 40 countries are currently interested in joining BRICS, indicating the view that it is a crucial platform for the Global South.[46]

The SCO, which was initially established as a cooperative framework to build trust concerning border control between China, Russia, and Central Asian countries, has since expanded its role and membership. Particularly since the 2000s, the SCO has broadened the scope of its activities beyond counterterrorism and military cooperation. In discussions about international norms for cyberspace, which were increasingly held at the UN in the late 2000s, SCO member states have made joint proposals strongly reflecting the cybersecurity perspectives of authoritarian regimes, in contrast to the international norms proposed by nations with free and democratic systems.[47] The SCO has continued to expand, with India, Pakistan, and Iran joining as members, bringing the total number of formal member states to nine, along with three observer countries and 14 dialogue partners.[48] In addition, at the SCO Summit in September 2022, 44 cooperation documents were signed in fields such as food, energy, climate change, and supply chains, highlighting the framework's increasing inclusiveness.[49]

Both BRICS and the SCO include major powers that take independent action such as India and Russia. The member states also face confrontations over regional issues, and their perceptions and interests do not necessarily align on many matters. Consensus-building and aligning interests also become more challenging as the number of diverse actors increases. Currently, these multilateral frameworks serve to confirm respect for mutual interests, promote cooperation for economic development, and propose partial reforms to international organizations. However, they are not strong frameworks that rally the entire Global South or act as alternatives to international organizations like the UN.

There are also other intergovernmental organizations that promote cooperation in specific areas with Global South countries, such as the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), whose establishment was spearheaded by China in 2008.[50] Among APSCO's space cooperation initiatives is the Asia-Pacific Ground-Based Space Object Observation System, launched in 2011. This system builds a network to observe orbital objects using optical telescopes of member countries, advancing space situational awareness cooperation to provide collision avoidance and early warning

services to member states.[51] Leveraging its space technology capabilities, China undertakes manufacturing and launching of satellites for developing countries, particularly those that are members of APSCO. However, this space cooperation is seen as asymmetrical, with some suggesting that it creates long-term subordinate relationships between China and developing countries.[52]

A notable point regarding China's diplomacy toward the Global South is that China not only fosters cooperation between states but also engages with non-state foreign actors through diplomatic authorities and organizations affiliated with the CCP. For example, even before the U.S. military withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021, China maintained contact with the Taliban authorities, ensuring continuing relations with the ruling powers during the transition of power in the country.[53] In addition, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, China has historically supported anti-government forces in the Middle East and continues to engage with groups such as the Houthis, conducting diplomatic actions that are not limited to state-to-state diplomacy.

(3) Military Involvement in the Global South

Until the Hu Jintao administration, China refrained from proactively sending troops overseas except for UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). However, this stance has undergone significant change under the Xi administration,[54] driven in part by China's expanding overseas interests accompanying its economic development. The number of Chinese enterprises and overseas Chinese located in various regions has surged due to deeper economic ties with developing countries. The "Go Out" policy, implemented by the Chinese government to promote overseas investments, led many Chinese companies to venture abroad from the 21st century. As a result, the number of overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese increased more than twofold, from 22-24 million in the early 1980s to 58 million by around 2017.[55] A large majority of these people reside in the Global South, including 41 million in Southeast Asia, 1.5 million in Africa, 1.5 million in Latin America, and 1.15 million in Oceania.

The Xi administration refers to these overseas human and material assets as "overseas interests" and has sought to enhance their security. The operations carried out by the Chinese Navy to escort overseas Chinese nationals during the Libyan civil war following the Arab Spring in 2011 and the Yemeni civil war in 2015 were events that deeply impressed upon China's leadership the need to strengthen security capabilities to protect overseas interests.[56] As a result, there is ongoing debate in China about improving the Chinese Navy's long-range power projection capabilities, enhancing the construction of supply bases along the BRI routes, and strengthening the ability to protect

The comprehensive supply ship Luomahu resupplying to the guided-missile frigate Yueyang (left) and the guided-missile destroyer Hohhot (right) of the 40th Chinese naval escort taskforce (February 2022) (Xinhua/Kyodo News Images)

overseas interests and fulfill international responsibilities.[57] In fact, according to a public opinion poll conducted by Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, 90% of Chinese citizens believe that the military should be deployed to protect Chinese nationals threatened overseas, and about 75% support building more overseas bases to enhance China's security capabilities.[58]

A notable aspect of China's military presence abroad in recent years is China's independent implementation of port calls by Chinese Navy vessels. Since December 2008, the Chinese government has dispatched naval vessels on rotation to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, with the 46th deployment sent off as of April 2024. These anti-piracy operations involve two warships, one supply ship, and a total of about 600–800 personnel conducting long-term missions lasting four months. These Chinese naval activities not only protect sea lanes but also serve as training and exercises for the Chinese Navy's own operational capabilities on the far seas, with the aim of "speeding up the transition of its tasks from defense on the near seas to protection missions on the far seas" as stated in China's 2019 defense white paper. In addition to friendly port calls to neighboring countries, Chinese naval ships that are participating in anti-piracy operations actively conduct joint military exercises with the navies of neighboring countries, which contributes to expanding military exchanges with those countries.

Since the Djibouti naval support base began operations in August 2017, China's naval presence in the Middle East and Africa has become permanent. Although the Djibouti base remains China's only overseas naval base for now, some point out that many port development projects involving Chinese companies may serve future military purposes beyond civilian use. At a BRI-related research conference held by China's National Defense University (NDU), Luo Yongguang, head of the NDU's Research Center for Military-Civil Fusion Development, stated that 12 supply bases are necessary to ensure transportation capacity in the Indian Ocean region, and thus, research should be conducted on acquiring ports and usage rights.[59] The U.S. Department of Defense's 2023 "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China" mentions that the Chinese government is considering several locations for logistical support bases, including Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the UAE, Kenya, Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola, Nigeria, Namibia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Tajikistan.[60]

The acceptance of military officers from developing countries into Chinese military educational institutions is important from the perspective of influence over the Global South. According to the aforementioned U.S. Department of Defense report, China's NDU has accepted overseas students from over 100 partner countries, aiming to strengthen relations with Latin America and Africa.[61] Similar to its foreign aid, China does not call into question the political systems of partner countries, and provides military technical education opportunities to the forces of authoritarian developing countries, which find it difficult to send their officers to study in Western countries. This enables China to exert long-term influence over the establishment of foreign militaries. The People's Liberation Army

(PLA) Army Command College has already produced numerous alumni from African countries, including 10 chiefs of defense, eight defense ministers, and six presidents, both current and former. Such connections are also seen as an opportunity for China to promote its own model of governance and build closer ties with foreign militaries and governments.[62]

Furthermore, from the perspective of securing overseas interests, the Chinese government focuses on developing international public security and policing cooperation. Starting with international law enforcement cooperation through the SCO in 2001, China expanded joint law enforcement patrols with neighboring countries like Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand from 2011, and gradually expanded and strengthened such policing cooperation to other developing regions.[63] Such policing cooperation covers not only economic crimes, transportation, and transnational organized crime but also counterterrorism and anti-corruption efforts.[64] In addition, in recent years, China has reportedly used its overseas public security bases to crack down on anti-China activities and human rights activists.[65] In such policing cooperation, aspects that influence Global South countries may include support for public security capacity building and technical assistance. In February 2023, the Chinese government released its "Global Security Initiative Concept Paper" which showed a stance of strengthening cooperation with the statement, "Encourage more exchanges and cooperation among university-level military and police academies. China is willing to provide other developing countries with 5,000 training opportunities in the next five years to train professionals for addressing global security issues."[66] Recently, in 2021, China signed a policing cooperation agreement with Solomon Islands after protests and riots erupted there. This agreement is seen as capacity-building support, including provision of equipment, technology, and training to local police forces.[67]

While this kind of public security cooperation, which includes education, training, and technology transfers, can be expected to help improve weak public security capabilities and social stability in the Global South, it may also pressure democratic societies in authoritarian states, leading to rigidly entrenched political systems. For example, some hold the view that China's globally developed BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) is well-suited for regions like the Middle East, which has many authoritarian regimes, as it helps shield these governments from Western "peaceful evolution" (meaning an attempt at toppling a regime through peaceful means without force) via cyberspace.[68] BDS was originally developed by the Chinese government due to its keen awareness of the risks posed by dependence on U.S. space assets such as GPS.[69] Therefore, the provision of BDS offers authoritarian regimes a viable alternative to reduce reliance on the United States. Chinese technology companies also offer strong alternatives to emerging countries for other digital technologies, which might extend China's influence more than the manufacturing industry or general infrastructure construction projects.[70] On the other hand, to achieve strong societal governance like China's, it is necessary not only to introduce technology but also to establish a legal system resembling that of China. As recipient countries apply these technologies locally, various adaptations may emerge during the process. Therefore, the provision of technology and capacity-building support to developing and emerging

countries does not automatically mean that China's governance model will spread.[71]

As shown above, China's military presence in the Global South has strengthened under the Xi administration. The underlying motivation is limited to the protection of China's own overseas interests, which have spread on a global level. In addition, although China has signed various partnership agreements with a number of Global South countries, it has not concluded security agreements that would obligate it to defend those countries. If China views its military involvement abroad as being solely for the minimum purpose of protecting its own interests, then its involvement in political and security matters would likely remain subordinate to protecting economic interests, and it would be unlikely that China would become actively involved in shaping security and order in other regions. In other words, at present, it is hard to imagine China providing guarantees to the regimes of Global South countries or directly intervening militarily in conflicts in other regions.

On the other hand, principles such as China's non-interference principle and three principles of arms exports,[72] which are supposed to limit China's military involvement abroad, are merely self-imposed declaratory policies. In practice, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, the Chinese government has supported anti-government groups in other countries and even now continues to export weapons that could alter regional military balances, all while claiming that it does not interfere in internal affairs of other countries. In addition, China's non-interference principles are gradually losing substance amid accumulating realities such as the dispatch of Chinese troops to UN PKO operations and of its Navy to anti-piracy missions as well as the establishment of the Djibouti support base.[73] Within China, some people call for a review and reconsideration of the non-interference principle, proposing a more flexible implementation thereof, in which the country continues to respect the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries while properly managing the relationship between non-interference and constructive intervention.[74] In addition, as shown in the next section, China might seek deeper military involvement than before based on the logic of "major-power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" that it has been promoting since the Xi administration.[75]

3. The Global South and China During an Era of Changes in the International Order

(1) China's Perception of the International Order

To understand China's perception of the international order, it is essential to consider its views on the post-World War II order led by the West, or, to put it another way, the "existing international order." During a speech at Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs) in the United Kingdom in July 2016, Fu Ying, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of China, pointed out three pillars of the world order formed under U.S. leadership: (1) American or

Western values, (2) the U.S.-led military alignment, and (3) the UN and its institutions. Fu argued that China has not been fully embraced in this order system.[76] While she criticized (1) and (2), Fu acknowledged China's inclusion in the UN-centered international order. As pointed out by KAWASHIMA Shin, China does not wholly accept the principles and values of the current world order, but rather takes the approach of engaging with it through its unique diplomatic strategic principles.[77]

With regard to Western values, which are often the target of criticism in relation to the existing international order, the CCP is wary that "universal values" such as democracy, freedom, and human rights might permeate societies with authoritarian political systems and potentially lead to "peaceful evolution."[78] Events such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, the "color revolutions" in Eastern Europe during the 2000s, and the "Arab Spring" in 2011 are viewed as examples of peaceful evolution or attempts thereof. For this reason, the Chinese government argues that diverse political systems and development paths suited to each country should be recognized. In this regard, the Chinese government simultaneously denies both the export of the Chinese model to other countries and the universality of the Western model that promotes freedom and democracy.[79] However, there are indications of the view that China's experiences could be applicable to other developing countries, such as in President Xi's speech at the 19th National Congress of the CCP in which he stated that "the path, the theory, the system, and the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics have kept developing, blazing a new trail for other developing countries to achieve modernization." Li Junru, former vice president of the CCP Central Committee's Party School, also claimed that it is possible to share China's "experiences" in development and building of the ruling party with developing nations.[80] Especially since the global spread of COVID-19, the CCP has shown a tendency to actively promote the superiority of its governance abilities over the Western political systems of freedom and democracy.

In addition, the Chinese government criticizes U.S.-centered military alliances as an outdated "Cold War mentality" that fosters militarily hostile relationships, advocating instead for building partnerships that embody a "new type of international relations." In China's view, these partnerships are flexible rather than imposing mutual obligations, yet avoid hostility, emphasize mutual respect, and promote shared political and economic interests while adhering to non-interference in internal affairs. China's "new type of international relations" entails building win-win relations on the basis of economics, which will develop into partnerships and further into a community with a shared future.[81]

The backdrop of China's support for UN-centered international institutions is its recognition that many developing and emerging countries are politically represented in the UN (excluding the Security Council) and, more importantly, because Taiwan is excluded from most of those international institutions. However, China is dissatisfied with international economic governance led by Western countries, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as it claims that Western voices are still dominant and developing nations' representation is insufficient.[82]

Against the backdrop of these criticisms, the Xi administration aims to promote democratization of international relations, make global governance more equitable and reasonable, and advance

the multipolarity of the world. Cooperation with the Global South is seen as contributory to achieving China's vision of the international order. From China's perspective, the "major transformation unseen in a century" refers to a shift in the power balance between the "East," which includes China and developing/emerging countries, and the "West," composed mainly of Western developed countries. This transformation highlights the serious flaws in the international system under Western capitalism.[83] According to this perspective, the trend of the "rising East and declining West," driven by the relative increase in power of the Global South, promotes democratization of international relations, more equitable and reasonable global governance, and multipolarity of the world.[84]

It should be noted that the international order structure envisioned by China differs from the dichotomy between "authoritarianism" and "democracy" perceived by the United States and other countries. Instead, it incorporates a broader range of countries into the "East" alongside China. In other words, regardless of whether they are authoritarian or democratic, developing and emerging countries are seen as members to be included in China's camp. The Xi administration envisions a framework of a "majority of developing and emerging countries led by China" versus the "Western nations such as the United States and Europe." By rallying developing countries to form a majority, China aims to drive the tide toward its ideal international order.

Amidst the era of changes in the international order, the Xi administration is exploring the implementation of "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics."[85] One characteristic of this is the goal to increase China's involvement in global security issues. President Xi has proposed that in order to "contribute more Chinese wisdom, ideas, and strength, and promote the building of lasting peace for the world,"[86] China should "take an active part in efforts to seek political settlement of international hotspot issues."[87] These "hotspot issues" are "considered to be issues that, within a certain historical context, pose direct or potential threats to national, regional, or global security (peace) or economic prosperity (development), attract the attention of the international community, and lead to conflicts (or potential conflicts), or have the risk of leading thereto due to cooperation, coordination, mediation, or involvement by international organizations or major powers."[88] China believes that the countries capable of addressing these issues are true major powers. A recent example of major-country diplomacy that addresses such a hotspot issue is China's mediation in the restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.[89] In recent years, China has expanded its so-called major-power diplomacy by organizing security dialogue frameworks for international conflicts in other regions and building broad relationships, including with non-state actors.[90]

(2) Seizing Discourse Power Using the Global South

To achieve the above-mentioned ideals, the Chinese government places great importance on seizing "discourse power,"[91] which refers to the influence generated by the concepts, logic, values, and ideologies embedded in a nation's arguments and discourse.[92] China's perception of discourse power includes not only strengthening its communication abilities but also incorporating its discourse into


Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held by China (May 2017) (Kyodo)

international systems and leading the creation of rules and norms through "institutional discourse power."[93] China has increasingly recognized that strengthening its domestic and international discourse power is essential in its struggle with the West. To this end, China believes it is crucial to incorporate the Global South, which comprises the majority of the world's population and countries.

Despite the intensifying strategic competition over international discourse power since the 21st century, there is a recognition in China that Western countries still maintain a dominant position, leading to a significant imbalance.[94] A Chinese expert pointed out that the "Western dominance" was particularly evident in the Ukraine war and that the disparity of the "strong West and weak East" remains striking in the digital arena.[95]

Against the backdrop of this sense of crisis, at the 30th study session of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee in May 2021, President Xi gave instructions to relativize the values of Western countries by "significantly enhancing China's international discourse power and influence" and "fully expressing China's views on development, civilization, security, human rights, ecology, the international order, and global governance."[96] One can interpret the GSI, GDI, and GCI, which the Xi administration has proposed in recent years, as efforts to spread to the international community counter-narratives against Western perspectives on security, economic development, and values, respectively. Interestingly, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia, an Indonesian think tank, ASEAN countries were cautious about the GSI compared to their favorable view of the GDI, indicating that the Global South's acceptance of China's leadership differs depending on the field.[97]

A symbolic example of China's efforts to seize "discourse power" in the Global South is the expansion of Chinese media and companies into developing countries. President Xi has called for the use of the communication capabilities of platforms like major international conferences and foreign mainstream media, the training of international propaganda specialist groups, and increased financial investment to strengthen China's international media communication capabilities.[98] In developing regions, public diplomacy is actively promoted through the expansion of Chinese government-affiliated media and the acquisition of local media outlets.[99] According to Freedom House, China conducted seminars or training on news media and information management in 36 of the 65 countries surveyed.[100]

In addition, as part of its efforts to seize institutional discourse power, China has sought personnel selection authority in international organizations, attempting to lead the formation of international norms. Because the Global South is primarily composed of developing nations, China's "shadow agenda" in diplomacy with these countries often involves securing votes at the UN. Since the first half

of the 2000s, the Chinese government has been working behind the scenes to have Chinese nationals elected to senior posts within international organizations. In elections for the heads of UN specialized agencies, the Chinese government has advanced its position in its favor by using groups like the G77 and leveraging economic aid to pressure developing countries that field competing candidates to withdraw their candidacies.[101] As shown in Table 1.2, from July 2019 to July 2021 during Xi's second term, Chinese nationals held the top posts in four UN specialized agencies. However, growing Western concerns about China's diplomatic maneuvers for UN personnel selection have made it more difficult for Chinese candidates to win director-general positions, and as of March 2024, only the Food and Agriculture Organization remains headed by a Chinese national.

Table 1.2 Four UN Specialized Agencies Headed by Chinese Nationals During Xi Jinping's Second Term

Agency's name	Person's name	Term
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	Qu Dongyu	July 2019 – Present
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	Liu Fang	August 2015 – July 2021
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	Zhao Houlin	January 2015 – December 2022
UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)[102]	Li Yong	June 2013 – November 2021

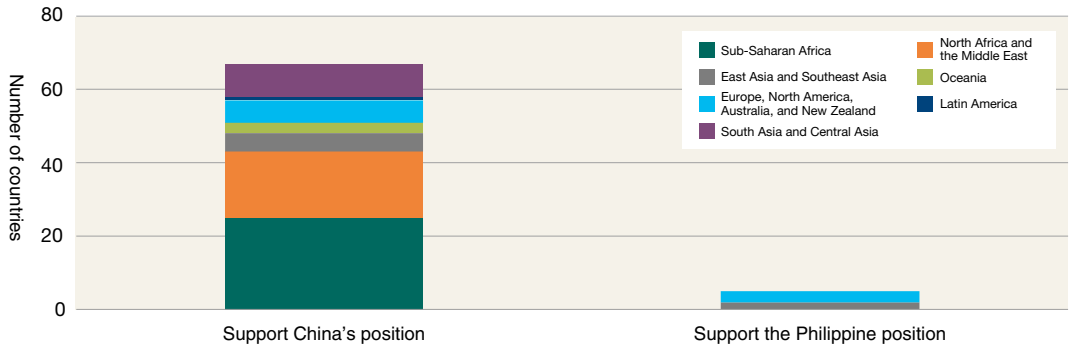
Source: Compiled by the author based on the websites of the respective agencies.

(3) The Increasing Importance of the Global South in Great Power Competition

The strategic competition between the United States and China has spread to their relations with the Global South. In this context, China mainly expects the Global South to either join its international united front, or at the very least, not to participate in U.S.-led efforts such as decoupling or anti-China policies, including criticism related to human rights.[103] The limited support that economic sanctions led by the West against Russia received from developing countries in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine likely raised China's expectations and contributed to its increased focus on the battle over narratives with the United States. In recent years, China has been focusing its efforts in the struggle for the global narrative in response to the United States' active measures concerning China's core interests, and seeking support from Global South countries. China's "core interests" mean key interests related to its sovereignty and development, specifically issues concerning Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and maritime interests.

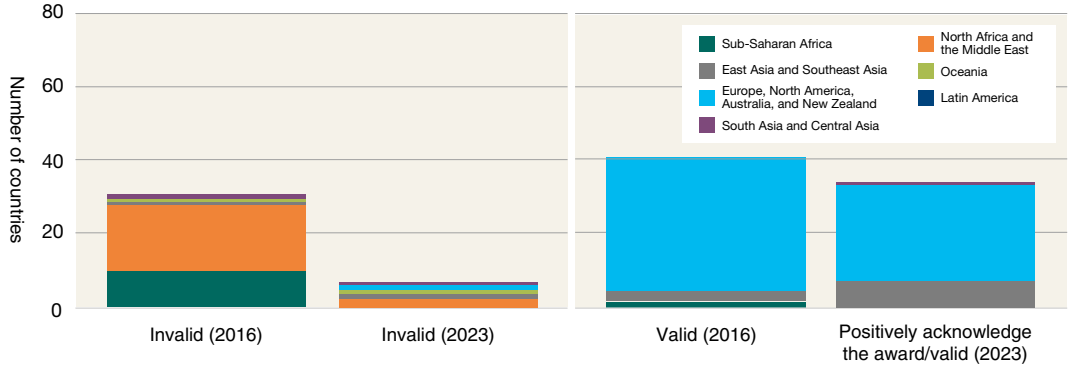
Such efforts by China were also observed during the July 2016 award by the Arbitral Tribunal regarding the China-Philippines dispute over maritime rights in the South China Sea. The Arbitral Tribunal's award largely sided with the Philippines, rejecting China's claims of jurisdiction and

Figure 1.2 (a) Various Countries' Stance Concerning China's Position on Arbitration, According to the *China Daily*



Source: Compiled by the author based on *China Daily*, July 13, 2016.

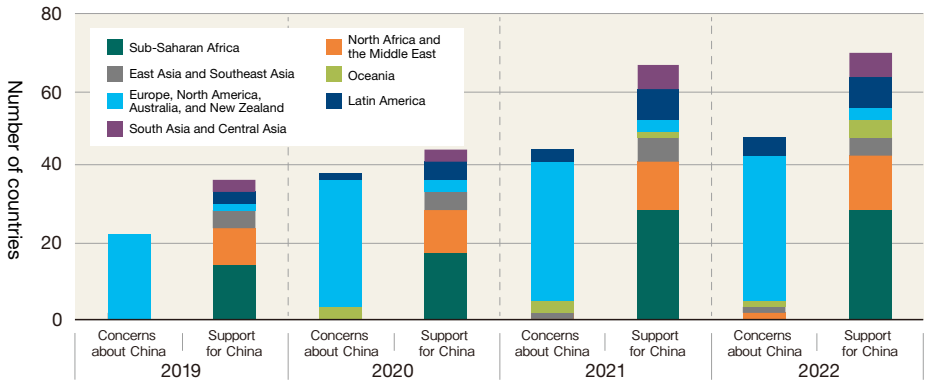
Figure 1.2 (b) Distribution of Countries Declaring the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal's Award Invalid or Valid



Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

"historic rights" based on the "nine-dash line." In response, the Chinese government dismissed the arbitration award as invalid and urged other countries to take the same stance. On the day after the award, as shown in Figure 1.2 (a), the *China Daily* announced that more than 70 countries, mostly developing countries, had expressed support for China's position (that the award is invalid).[104] A more detailed study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, based on statements from governments, found that 31 developing countries, including about 20 Arab League member states, supported China's position (that the award is invalid) (see Figure 1.2 (b)).[105] In May 2016 just before the award, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended a ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, where he sought support from the Arab League and its member states for China's position.[106] This diplomatic effort may have had an influence. In the case of the South China Sea arbitration award, although China often links the maritime issue to its core interests, it is also an international bilateral dispute rather than a domestic issue. Therefore, the countries that supported

Figure 1.3 Voting Trends on Statements to Voice Support/Concerns about China Regarding Uyghur Human Rights Issues at the UN Human Rights Council



Source: Compiled by the author based on various materials.

China's position determined their political stance that the Arbitral Tribunal's award is invalid based on the importance of their relations with both China and the Philippines.

A similar example was observed in voting behavior at the UN regarding human rights issues in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. As shown in Figure 1.3, at the UN Human Rights Council sessions on the human rights issues of the Uyghur people, which have been held recent years, between 45 and 69 countries from the Global South signed statements defending China, overwhelmingly outnumbering the countries that signed statements expressing concern about China.[107] While the countries that signed statements expressing concern about China were mainly Western countries and a few Asian countries like Japan, if China gains support from the developing and emerging countries of the Global South, it will be able to form a majority.

In recent years, the Chinese government has launched a diplomatic offensive toward Global South countries, seeking to narrow Taiwan's space for diplomacy and strengthen the "One-China" principle. Since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won Taiwan's presidential election in 2016, China has established diplomatic relations with Global South countries that had maintained ties with Taiwan and demanded stricter measures against Taiwan's citizens and representative organizations in these countries.[108] Even recently, China has been seeking supportive statements from Global South countries, including for its military actions around Taiwan. For example, after U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicized that at the 158th meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States in September, Arab League member states expressed their support for the "One-China" principle in a resolution on China-Arab relations.[109] The Chinese government is also stepping up its urging of individual countries. During a China-Egypt foreign ministers' meeting in September 2022, the Egyptian foreign minister expressed Egypt's "adherence to the 'One-China' policy, opposition to actions

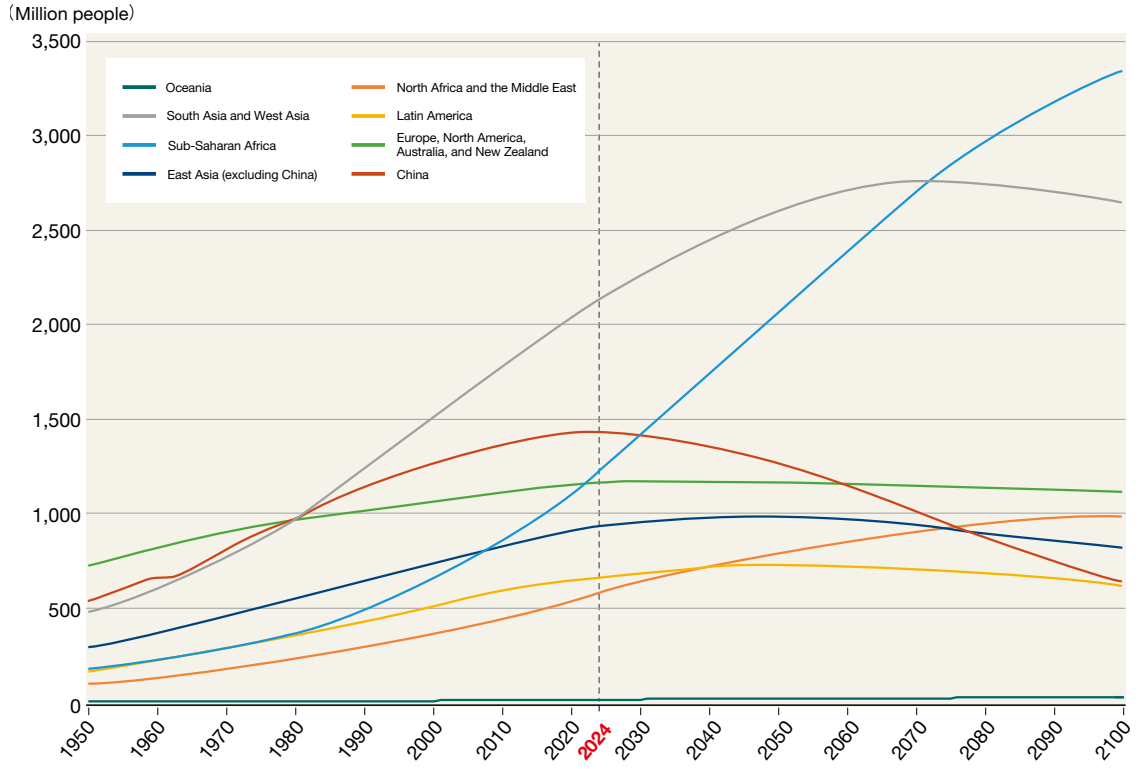
that violate the 'One-China' principle or escalate tensions, support for China's legitimate actions to safeguard its sovereignty" (emphasis added), and "opposition to the creation of anti-Chinese camps or rivalries."[110] This statement could also be interpreted as support for China's threat of force and military exercises, including a temporary naval blockade around Taiwan which the PLA conducted following Pelosi's visit. In addition, after the DPP's continued victory in Taiwan's presidential election in January 2024, a Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson listed 49 countries and three regional organizations, mainly from the Global South, that expressed their "commitment to the One-China principle, firm support for China's effort of upholding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, opposition to any form of 'Taiwan independence' and support for China's reunification."[111] While the Chinese government calls on other countries to accept the "One-China" principle, each country formulates its own "One-China" policy based on its respective stance, rather than accepting it at face value. Although various "One-China" policies exist within the international community, the Chinese government is strengthening its external communications that strongly reflect its own position in response to various discourses regarding the "One-China" principle.[112] By publicizing such declarations of support from other countries, China may seek to legitimize its military coercive moves around Taiwan and potentially escalate its actions. Given the geographical distance and limited understanding of East Asian affairs, including the Taiwan Strait, in regions outside of East Asia, China has considerable leeway to shape public opinion through its propaganda efforts.

(4) The Changing Global South and China

However, China's rallying of Global South countries is not an easy task. The first reason for this is that developed countries have begun to recognize anew the role of the Global South in international politics and have strengthened their cooperation. For example, the Munich Security Conference in February 2023 included a session titled "Recalibrating the Compass: South-North Cooperation," which discussed how developed countries can enhance cooperation with the rising Global South.[113] Similarly, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May of the same year, in addition to countries such as Australia and the Republic of Korea, invitations were extended to emerging and developing countries that headed multilateral frameworks, such as Brazil, Comoros (African Union chair country), Cook Islands (Pacific Islands Forum chair country), India (G20 presidency country), Indonesia (ASEAN chair country), and Vietnam, highlighting efforts to strengthen partnerships between developed countries and the Global South.[114]

It is clear that China has become increasingly wary of these efforts by developed countries to engage with the Global South. Ren Lin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has rung the alarm, arguing that developed countries are attempting to weaken the cohesion of the Global South and increase their influence by fomenting divisions within it.[115] Ren identifies five types of actions by Western countries in their approaches to the Global South: (1) demanding alignment, (2) weakening the formation of counterforces to the existing governance system, (3) undermining the unity and

Figure 1.4 Predicted Population Changes by Region



Source: Compiled by the author based on data from "World Population Prospects 2024," Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

cooperation of the Global South, (4) spreading the narrative of "China threat," and (5) promoting Indian leadership.[116]

As for the second reason, other emerging countries like India are also asserting leadership within the Global South, making China's leadership position far from assured. As the balance of power within the Global South shifts dramatically, China has been unable to deal with the growing multi-polarity.[117] It has been pointed out that India's exclusion of China from the invitation list to its "Voice of Global South Summit" in January 2023, in which it brought together as many as 120 developing countries, created impatience in China.[118] Along with its border issues and other disputes with China, India maintains cooperative relations with Western countries as a member of the Quad (alongside Australia, Japan, and the United States). Therefore, from China's perspective, India's demonstration of leadership in the Global South not only threatens China's leadership position but also could be used to strengthen Western engagement. In addition to India, other regional powers exist across various regions, and they may compete with China for leadership in the future. According to estimates published in 2024 by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat, China is expected to face rapid population decline throughout this century, with its population size falling below that of other regions, including regions with developed countries. In

contrast, regions such as Central and South Asia, including India, as well as Sub-Saharan Africa are predicted to experience a demographic dividend (see Figure 1.4).[119] These shifts in the relative power balance within the Global South are likely to impact the center of gravity for leadership as well.

The third reason is the diversity and independent nature of the Global South. As attention on the Global South grows in the context of international politics, both wariness and opportunism toward it are rising. The Global South includes emerging countries that have already gained political and economic prominence, as well as developing countries still grappling with poverty and internal conflict, and the disparities within the group are widening. If the term "Global South" becomes associated with the exercise of influence or exploitation by emerging powers over smaller nations or with policies that strain relations with Western countries due to their anti-Western tone, then the term may lose its appeal among developing countries. In other words, the Global South can serve as a unifying or centrifugal force depending on its connotations. Developing countries may also use the Global South as a tool in pursuing their national interests. According to an analysis by the Institute of Developing Economies, Global South countries can play both sides to reap economic benefits through trade with both camps by maintaining neutrality amid the decoupling of the global economy.[120] Amid the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China, Global South countries will avoid being seen as clearly aligned with China unless they can derive significant benefits to their national interests.

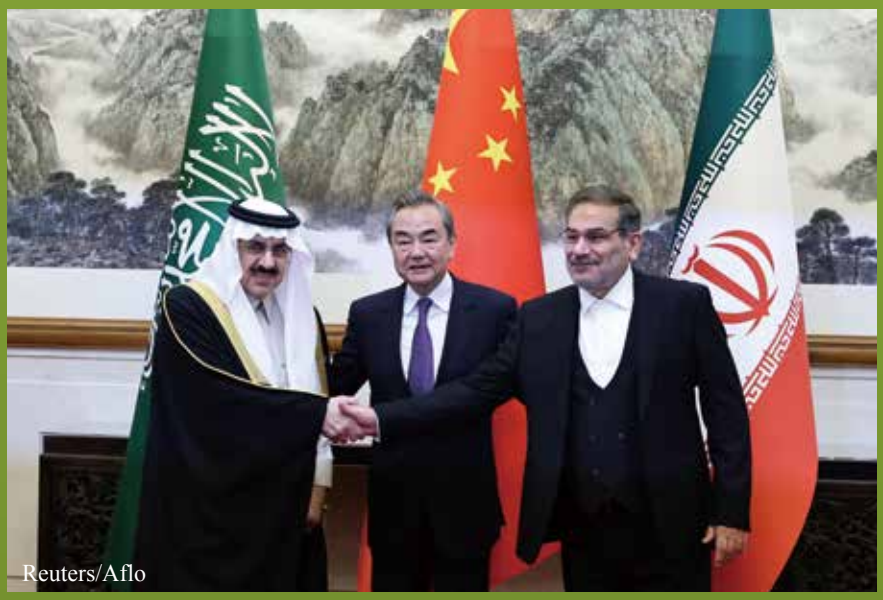
Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, China, perceiving itself both as a developing country and a major power, has deepened its cooperation with Global South countries and at times leveraged its position in its relations with other major powers. In addition, as China has risen as a major economic power, it has increased its influence over the external actions of the Global South countries while also gradually strengthening its military commitments to protect its growing overseas interests in these regions. However, these expanding engagements and interests also highlight the inconsistency with China's long-standing diplomatic principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. As China strengthens its relationships with the Global South, it is confronted with contradictions between upholding its principles and pursuing its interests as a major power.

Moreover, with an eye on the future rise of the Global South, the Xi administration is strengthening its defiant stance, seeking partial reform of the international order which has been formed primarily by the West. Moreover, as U.S.-China strategic competition intensifies, China is strategically utilizing the influence it has built over the Global South, while aiming to safeguard its core interests and seize international discourse power. On the other hand, if China lacks sufficient unifying force in the diverse Global South, the developing countries may respond to China's rallying efforts as they see

fit amid the pursuit of their own independence and national interests.

It is difficult to verify the causal relationship regarding the correlation between high favorability toward China in developing countries and authoritarian regimes, as indicated in the introduction of this report. Based on this chapter, it can be hypothesized that possible causal mechanisms for favorable sentiments toward China could include, in the case of developing countries, China's external aid as well as its proposals for reforming global governance for economic development. In the case of authoritarian regimes, causal mechanisms could hypothetically include China's counter-narratives (such as its arguments for acceptance of diverse development paths) against Western countries' criticism of political systems and human rights, as well as China's technological and capacity building support for governance capabilities. How much unifying force does China actually have over the Global South? These issues will be explored in detail from the perspectives of the Middle East and Africa in Chapters 2 and 3.


Reuters/Aflo

Chapter 2

Middle Eastern Countries and China:
China's Growing Presence in the Middle East as a Different Great Power from the United States

NISHINO Masami, YOSHIDA Tomoaki

Introduction

China's presence in the Middle East has been expanding in recent years. In December 2022, China held talks with leaders of Arab League member states at the first China-Arab States Summit, and both sides expressed a desire for greater cooperation. In March 2023, China mediated an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to normalize diplomatic relations, and in the armed conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas that has been ongoing since October 2023, it has increased its diplomatic presence by signaling a pro-Palestinian stance. The Houthis, a militant group that emerged in Yemen, have been conducting military operations in the Red Sea and other areas on the pretext of supporting Palestine, and the group is believed to have promised safe passage to ships from China and Russia.

Although China's relationship with Middle Eastern countries is a relatively new topic in the field of Middle Eastern studies, it has been actively researched in recent years in response to the above-mentioned policy trends. In other words, such research is based on "policy needs" which have arisen in as a result of China's growing presence in the Middle East, and the historical changes and background of the relationship are seldom included in the scope of the discussion. However, when analyzing the factors behind China's increasing expansion into the Middle East under the Xi Jinping administration, an important question to consider is whether the strategic value of the Middle East to China has changed or, conversely, whether Middle Eastern countries have reevaluated China's strategic value and are seeking greater cooperation. To analyze China's recent policy trends in this regard, it would be worthwhile to review successive Chinese administrations' policies toward the Middle East and how the Middle East responded to them, and to compare them with the policies and responses under the Xi Jinping administration.

While discourse on China's policy trends has deepened from the perspective of "official" state-to-state relations, China's relations with powerful non-state actors in Middle Eastern countries, or how these non-state actors perceive China, have not been adequately discussed, even in terms of policy trends. In considering the main theme of this report, "China and the Global South," we cannot ignore the influence of non-state actors on the domestic politics of countries in the Global South or on the regional order shaped by these countries, as well as China's engagement with these non-state actors. Looking only at the examples in this chapter, the Houthis, as mentioned above, have had a major impact on international politics and economy, and in the mid-20th century, non-state actors who espoused ideals such as anti-colonialism, nationalism, and communism were actively involved in activities aimed at regime overthrow.

Based on the above, this chapter discusses (1) what kinds of policies toward Middle Eastern countries successive Chinese leaders from the Mao Zedong era to the Xi Jinping administration have developed, and (2) how Middle Eastern countries have responded to China's policies toward

the Middle East. This analysis also includes non-state actors in Middle Eastern countries and is not limited to intergovernmental or state-to-state relationships between China and the Middle East. The first section examines how China's Middle East policy changed from the Mao Zedong era to the Hu Jintao era, focusing on the shift from a Mao-era policy centered on supporting national liberation struggles based on anti-colonialism to an economically-oriented Middle East policy that emerged as China became a net oil importer as a result of its economic development. The second section analyzes how China's relations with Middle Eastern countries have deepened under the Xi Jinping administration in terms of economics, diplomacy, and military/security. Furthermore, in light of the seriousness of the military activities by the Houthis in the Red Sea and elsewhere since November 2023, this chapter also analyzes China's response to the Houthis and the Houthis' response to China.

1. Changes in China's Involvement in the Middle East

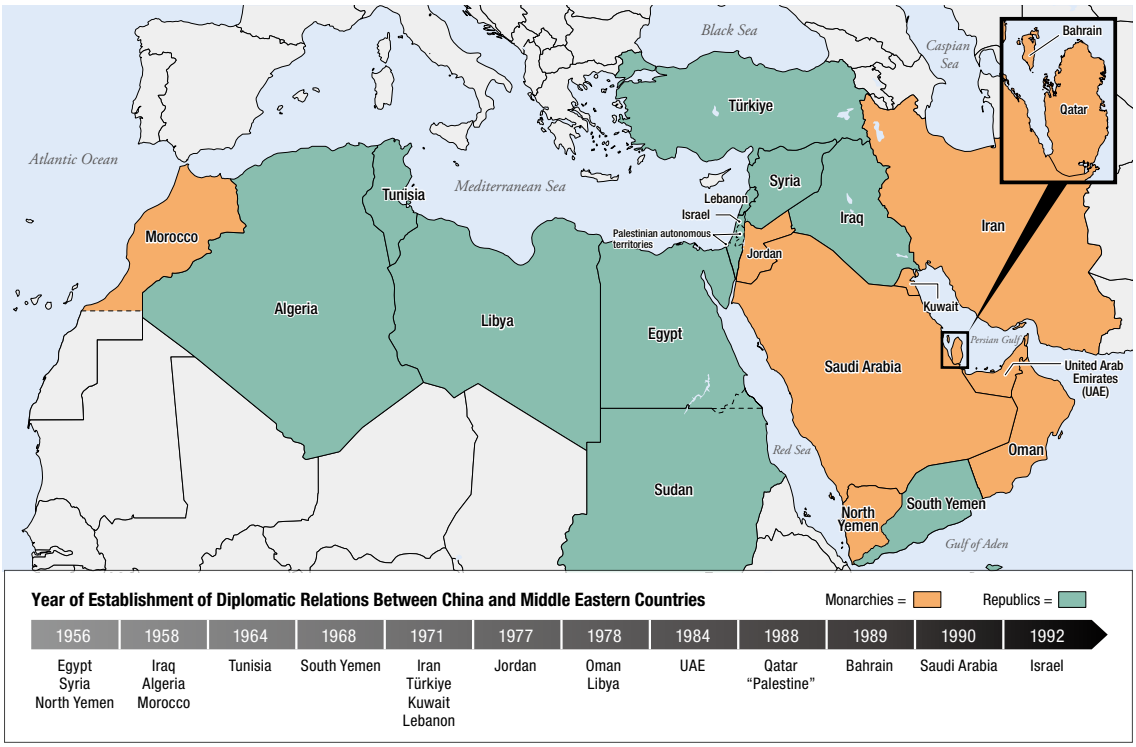
(1) Mao Zedong Era: Support for National Liberation Movements and Friction with Middle Eastern Countries

Relations between China and Middle Eastern countries have evolved along with changes in both Chinese national leadership and policy. At the time of its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China had only a tenuous relationship with the Middle East. A de-facto military engagement between China and a Middle Eastern country occurred during the Korean War of 1950–1953, when China dispatched a volunteer army to support North Korea, while the Turkish army entered the war on the South Korean side as a part of the UN forces.[1]

Later, in April 1955, China, along with Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Türkiye, and North Yemen, participated in the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia. This conference resulted in the formation of political ties between China and Middle Eastern countries, and relations between the two sides continued to develop thereafter. At the time of the conference, China was supporting national liberation movements against imperialism in various parts of the world, so it also became involved in such movements in the Middle East. While Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai built interpersonal relationships, meeting with Gamal Abdel Nasser, Chairman of Egypt's Revolutionary Command Council (later President of Egypt), and other key persons at the conference, China received information about the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria and other regions in the Middle East that had not yet achieved independence.[2]

At the conference, China proposed to Egypt that it serve as an intermediary for Egyptian arms purchases from the Soviet bloc. Egypt accepted the proposal, and in September 1955, an agreement was signed for the sale of arms from Czechoslovakia to Egypt. This move allowed China to enhance its relationship with Egypt. In April 1956, the Soviet Union indicated that it would conditionally approve

Figure 2.1 Map Showing the Years in Which Diplomatic Relations Were Established Between China and Middle Eastern Countries



Notes:

1. China established diplomatic relations with the provisional government of Algeria prior to the country's independence in 1962.
2. South and North Yemen were unified in 1990.
3. Iran was a monarchy when it established diplomatic relations with China, and is therefore indicated as such on the map.
4. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) unilaterally declared the establishment of the State of Palestine in 1988, and China recognized Palestine as a state in the same year.

Source: Compiled by the author

a UN ban on arms exports to the Middle East. China at that time was not yet represented in the United Nations and was not bound by UN resolutions. Thus, in anticipation of importing arms from China in the event of a UN ban, Egypt became the first country in the Middle East to establish diplomatic relations with China in May of that year (see Figure 2.1).[3]

Following Egypt's example, China then established diplomatic relations with Syria in August 1956 and with North Yemen[4] in September 1956. China utilized its own Muslim population in establishing diplomatic relations with these three countries. In 1956, Burhan Shahidi, Chairman of the China Islamic Association, visited the Middle East on a cultural exchange and Hajj (annual pilgrimage to Mecca), during which he met with dignitaries from North Yemen and Syria, King Husayn bin Talal of Jordan, and King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. These meetings also had a political dimension.[5]

In January 1958, Muhammad al-Badr, Crown Prince of North Yemen, became the first national

leader of an Arab country to visit China, where he signed a Treaty of Friendship with China. China provided loans to North Yemen and undertook the construction of highways and other infrastructure in the country, with Chinese engineers beginning work in North Yemen later that year. This example indicates that China's building of infrastructure in the Arabian Peninsula began in the 1950s.[6]

During this period, China began to support national liberation movements (or what China considered to be national liberation movements) in the Middle East. At the time, Oman, situated in the southern Arabian Peninsula, was divided into two states: the interior Imamate of Oman ruled by the Ibadi imam, and the coastal Sultanate of Oman[7] ruled by the sultan of the Al Busaid dynasty. Formally, the Sultanate of Oman recognized the autonomy of the interior Imamate of Oman through the Treaty of Sib signed by the two states in 1920. However, when Ghalib al-Hinai became the new imam of the Imamate of Oman in 1954, the Sultanate of Oman, backed by the British Armed Forces, launched an offensive against the Imamate of Oman. Oil fields had been discovered in the interior of Oman, and the invasion was likely motivated by interest in these fields. China interpreted this engagement as the Imamate of Oman fighting an insurrection against the Sultanate of Oman, which had colluded with the British; that is, it viewed this as a national liberation movement on the part of the Imamate. In 1957, China proposed arms supplies to the Imamate of Oman. However, the Imamate of Oman was opposed to accepting aid from a communist country and declined the proposal. The Sultanate of Oman ultimately won the war in 1959, and the Imamate of Oman collapsed, but uprisings continued in the country thereafter.[8]

China was also involved in supporting the independence movement of Algeria. At the time, Algeria's independence movement was being suppressed by France, its colonial ruler. In 1954, the independence movement created the National Liberation Front (FLN), and from 1958, fighting between the French Armed Forces and the FLN intensified. 1958 is the year that China began to provide full-scale support for the Algeria's independence movement. From 1958 to 1962, China supported the FLN through the provision of finance, weapons, and training assistance. In September 1958, the FLN established the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic in Cairo, Egypt, as a government-in-exile, and China immediately recognized its legitimacy. China also began accepting visits from various FLN delegations that month. Then, in December, China became the first non-Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. In 1959, military delegations from the provisional government visited China several times. Given the limited extent of China's economic power at the time, the degree of military assistance it could provide was likewise limited; it seems that the actual significance of China's assistance was primarily the expression of its political stance. Nevertheless, the FLN found the relationship with China, which had emerged victorious from the Chinese Civil War, attractive during its anti-colonial struggle against France.[9]

Going back in time a bit, in February 1958, Egypt and Syria merged to form the United Arab Republic. At the time, President Nasser of Egypt (and the United Arab Republic) was seeking to

unite Arab countries under Egyptian leadership to establish a megastate. China, meanwhile, was concerned that such unification would undermine the independence of other Arab countries. In July 1958, a revolution took place in Iraq that resulted in the overthrow of the kingdom and the creation of a republic, with which China established diplomatic relations in August 1958. Thereafter, confrontation continued in Iraq between the group that sought to unite Iraq with the United Arab Republic and the group that aimed to preserve Iraq as an independent state. And because the Iraqi Communist Party cooperated with the latter group, China supported it and criticized the United Arab Republic, which backed the group seeking unification. In September 1959, China invited Khalid Bakdash, Secretary General of the (banned) Syrian Communist Party, to China's 10th anniversary celebration of founding in Beijing, where he delivered a speech condemning the United Arab Republic. China's decision to invite the leader of a banned organization from a country that had ceased to exist as a result of unification to deliver a speech was indicative of its negative stance toward the United Arab Republic. The United Arab Republic viewed this move as interference in its internal affairs and condemned China. Subsequently, the United Arab Republic was dissolved in 1961, and Egypt and Syria returned to their previous status as independent states.[10]

In September 1962, Muhammad al-Badr, Crown Prince of North Yemen, who had previously visited China, ascended the throne as King of North Yemen. Shortly thereafter, however, a coup d'état led to the overthrow of the kingdom and the establishment of a republic. The former king then fought a civil war to restore the kingdom, but instead of taking his side, China promptly recognized the republic and maintained diplomatic relations with the country.[11]

Beginning in the mid-1960s, China's support for national liberation movements in the Middle East became increasingly radicalized. There were two factors behind this shift: (1) the Cultural Revolution in China, whose radical domestic policies were also reflected in foreign policy, and (2) the unfolding of the Sino-Soviet split. The main recipients of Chinese support during this period were the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which later became the parent organization of the Palestinian Authority, and Omani dissidents. Many of the Arab republics in the Middle East at the time, such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, received large-scale military aid from the Soviet Union and enjoyed close ties with the country. These two groups, however, were not receiving support from the Soviet Union. By supporting forces with weak ties to the Soviet Union, China sought to establish a presence in areas and territories not yet penetrated by the Soviet Union, thereby gaining an advantage over it.[12]

The PLO was created in 1964 at the initiative of the Arab League, a regional organization of Arab states, to represent the Palestinian people. In March 1965, a delegation led by PLO Chairman Ahmad Shuqayri visited China and met with Mao Zedong, who agreed to open a PLO office in Beijing. In 1966, China began supplying the PLO with Chinese-made light weapons and providing military training in China to PLO combatants. However, while Egypt and other Arab states superficially supported the PLO at the time, their actual objective was to maintain control over the PLO and Palestinians rather than facilitating their autonomy. Consequently, China's provision of direct

assistance to the PLO without prior consultation with the Arab states triggered backlash from those states.[13]

Meanwhile, in Oman, the Dhufar Liberation Front (DLF), a Marxist-Leninist-influenced dissident organization, was established in 1964 with the aim of creating a separatist state in the southern region of Dhufar. Dhufar shared a border with South Yemen. South Yemen, which was a British protectorate at the time, was in the midst of an independence movement. In 1967, South Yemen gained independence as a republic, and the many small emirates (i.e., a group of monarchies) that had persisted under the British protectorate were dissolved; the country then became a socialist state. While such socialist and nationalist movements were gaining strength in South Yemen, the DLF launched a rebellion against the Sultanate of Oman in the neighboring Dhufar region, and China supported this uprising.

Chinese support played a key role in strengthening the military capabilities of the DLF and its successor organization. A DLF delegation was invited to Beijing in 1967, and that same year the DLF received its first aid package from China, which included light weapons and literature on Mao Zedong Thought. China established diplomatic relations with South Yemen in January 1968. In September 1968, the DLF held a conference to reorganize itself into the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), a dissident organization committed to Marxism-Leninism. The goal of this new organization, at least ideologically, was to overthrow the monarchies and establish a republic not only in Dhufar, but across the entire Arabian Gulf region. The conference was also attended by members of the Chinese Communist Party. In late 1968, China pledged enhanced military support to PFLOAG, including anti-aircraft missiles and machine guns. In July 1969, China opened an embassy in Aden, South Yemen, and used this foothold to bolster its support for the PFLOAG. China provided military support to PFLOAG, either directly or via South Yemen, and Chinese instructors were reportedly stationed at PFLOAG bases in South Yemen bordering Oman. From 1969, Xinhua, China's official state news agency, sent correspondents from Aden to the frontline to provide wartime coverage. While the Cultural Revolution was ongoing in China, the media portrayed the PFLOAG rebellion as an anti-imperialist struggle that put Mao Zedong Thought into practice. Meanwhile, PFLOAG was sending its members to China for political and military training in order to instill Mao Zedong Thought into the organization.[14]

Such actions by China (i.e., support for national liberation movements seeking to establish new states or overthrow existing ones) differ from China's current foreign policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. During this period, China (1) directly supported the PLO without confirming the intentions of Arab states and (2) provided military support to a dissident organization in the Arabian Peninsula that sought to overthrow monarchical rule. The Arabian Peninsula at the time was witnessing the emergence of republics in North and South Yemen, and the expansion of such republics posed a threat to monarchical countries. Under these circumstances, China's support for the Omani rebel forces ran counter to the wishes of these countries. For this reason, many monarchical

states in the peninsula viewed China in a negative light, which in turn led to delays in the establishment of diplomatic relations between these countries and China.

In 1971, however, China abruptly ended its support for PFLOAG and other dissident groups in the Middle East and shifted the stance of its foreign policy from supporting radical national liberation movements to cooperating with existing states. This shift in policy was driven by changes in the international environment surrounding China. (1) First, after the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet border conflict in 1969, the rift between the two countries escalated, with the Soviet Union becoming China's main adversary. (2) Britain had announced that it would withdraw from east of the Suez Canal, including the Arabian Peninsula, by the end of 1971. Since much of the peninsula was under British protection or influence, there was a possibility that the British withdrawal would create a power vacuum in places that had previously been in the British sphere of influence. (3) At the time, the United States was devoting its resources to the Vietnam War, and it was unclear whether it would be able to immediately step in and take over the British sphere of influence. (4) Therefore, China feared a situation in which the Soviet Union would fill the power vacuum left in the former British sphere of influence and increase its influence in the region.[15]

In light of these circumstances, China believed that an unstable Arabian Peninsula would be conducive to the expansion of Soviet influence.[16] Consequently, China decided that working with existing states to stabilize the region, rather than supporting dissident groups and fostering instability, would better serve its interests. China established diplomatic relations with Kuwait in March 1971, and then with Iran in August. Both monarchies were key countries in China's security strategy, which regarded the Soviet Union as its main adversary. Like China, Iran shared a border with the Soviet Union and saw the country as a threat. Meanwhile, Iraq, with its close ties to the Soviet Union, was seen as a potential foothold for Soviet expansion into the Arabian Peninsula, and Kuwait was geographically positioned to contain Iraq's (and the Soviet Union's) expansion into the peninsula.

Moreover, Iran and Kuwait supported the Sultanate of Oman in its fight against PFLOAG. After establishing diplomatic relations with China, both countries pressured China to end its support for PFLOAG. China then decided that its relationship with both countries was more important than its relationship with PFLOAG, and promptly withdrew its support.[17]

Furthermore, in October 1971, China formally gained recognition by the United Nations and became a permanent member of the UN Security Council. China's deeper involvement in international organizations likewise facilitated its shift toward cooperation with existing states. During this period, China continued to support the PLO outwardly, including upgrading the office of the PLO delegation in Beijing to an embassy in 1974, but it cut back on substantive support out of dislike for radical actions taken by some members of the PLO. This was another manifestation of China's shift in policy.[18]

(2) Deng Xiaoping Era: Continuation of the Sino-Soviet Conflict and Active Arms Exports

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the Deng Xiaoping regime became established in China by the early 1980s. During the Deng Xiaoping era, China continued to deal with the Sino-Soviet conflict while promoting new policies of reform and opening up. The Iran-Iraq War also took place during the Deng Xiaoping era in the 1980s, and China actively exported arms to both sides of the war.

In May 1978, China established diplomatic relations with Oman (the Sultanate of Oman). By this time, the conflict between China and Oman over the issue of China's support for PFLOAG was a thing of the past, as Oman had already suppressed an insurgency by PFLOAG and its successor organization by 1976, after China ended support for PFLOAG. And with the Soviet Union's influence growing in South Yemen, Oman's neighbor, at the time, Oman viewed the Soviet Union as a major threat and China as an effective counterbalance to Soviet power. These factors led the two countries to establish diplomatic relations. Because both countries were concerned about the expansion of Soviet influence in the Arabian Peninsula, the bilateral relationship quickly took on strategic importance. Thereafter, Oman played a role in helping other monarchical countries in the peninsula that were still distrustful of China to establish diplomatic relations with the country, which led to China establishing diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Bahrain in the 1980s.

In 1979, the security environment changed dramatically for the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. That year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan—a move which was seen as evidence of its ambition to expand into the Middle East. Iran saw the overthrow of its pro-American monarchy and the establishment of a Shia Islamic republic. Other monarchies in the peninsula feared that their own Shia populations would collude with Iran. This instability in the security environment was an opportunity for China, which had already pivoted toward cooperation with existing states, to improve its relations with the monarchies in the peninsula.[19]

Also in 1979, Egypt became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel, withdrawing itself from the composition of the Middle East war between Arabs and Israelis. While other Arab countries condemned Egypt at the time, China did not oppose Egypt's policy and took a middle-ground position between Egypt, other Arab countries, and the PLO.[20]

1979 is also the year that secret military cooperation began between China and Israel. This is the origin of China-Israel relations. When the Sino-Vietnamese War ended in 1979, China found itself in need of upgrading its Soviet-made weaponry. However, the Sino-Soviet split had made cooperation with the Soviet Union virtually impossible. Israel, meanwhile, had seized large quantities of Soviet-made weapons from the Syrian and Egyptian armies during the Third Arab-Israeli War in 1967 and the Fourth Arab-Israeli War in 1973, and had subsequently modified them for use by its own armed forces. This made it adept at handling Soviet-made weaponry and allowed it to become a supplier to China. Moreover, because diplomatic ties between the Soviet Union, which provided military assistance to

Arab countries, and Israel were severed during the Third Arab-Israeli War in 1967, Israel did not have to consider the Soviet Union when cooperating with China on Soviet-made weapons. In other words, Israel, which had no diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, and China, which was in conflict with the Soviet Union, were in a better position to cooperate. A secret deal between the two countries began in 1979, when an Israeli delegation paid a secret visit to Beijing and agreed to sell arms to China. This opportunity was the beginning of the under-the-radar development of Israeli-Chinese relations. It led to a softening of China's confrontational stance toward Israel on the Palestine issue.[21]

In 1980, Iraq launched an offensive against Iran amidst the chaos of the Iranian Revolution, sparking the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. The international relations surrounding this war are somewhat complex. Iraq sided with the pro-Soviet East. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was established the previous year, formally aligned itself with neither the East nor the West, and it was in the throes of the Iranian Hostage Crisis involving the U.S. Embassy when the war began. At the time, Iran was eager to export the Shia Islamic revolution to its Arab neighbors. As a result, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, fearing the overthrow of their own regimes, supported Iraq. The United States, which was dealing with the Iranian Hostage Crisis, and the Soviet Union, which had longstanding close ties with Iraq, also basically supported Iraq. China, on the other hand, did not take sides, but actively exported arms to both Iran and Iraq. In addition to the economic benefits of this arrangement, China's reason for selling arms to Iran is believed to be its concern that a victory by Iraq would expand the Soviet Union's sphere of influence in the Middle East, putting China at a disadvantage. As a result, China became more important to Iran than to Iraq, which had multiple arms suppliers. The export of 107mm rocket artillery in 1981 was China's first arms export to Iran. Fighter aircraft, tanks, surface-to-air missiles, and surface-to-ship missiles were also exported to Iran. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran imported about US$2 billion worth of arms from China, while Iraq imported more than twice that amount. This enabled China to focus on its arms exports and derive economic benefits from the war. The value of China's arms exports to the Middle East peaked during the Iran-Iraq War and has never returned to the same level. During a part of this war known as the "Tanker War," the Iraqi and Iranian militaries used Silkworm anti-ship missiles imported from China to attack oil tankers transporting oil from each other's ports. The Tanker War caused disruptions that affected oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.[22]

In 1981, Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on trade with China, and trade between the two countries began to increase. As business visits between the two countries became more frequent, so did human interactions between them. Then, in 1985, Saudi Arabia began under-the-radar negotiations to purchase ballistic missiles from China. Saudi Arabia had initially expressed interest in purchasing Pershing ballistic missiles from the United States as a means of deterring the Soviet-developed Scud ballistic missiles that were used by Iran and Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War. However, the United States denied Saudi Arabia's request. Washington also denied Riyadh's request to purchase arms such as F-15 fighter jets. Because it could no longer purchase arms from the United States, its main supplier,

Saudi Arabia chose to procure its arms from China. In 1988, following secret negotiations between the two countries that also involved Saudi Arabia's influential royal family members, Saudi Arabia purchased DF-3A (CSS-2) ballistic missiles from China. The value of the sale was estimated at US$1 billion to US$1.5 billion. This deal, which encompassed both trade and security, fostered trust between the two countries. It also was advantageous for Saudi Arabia in terms of diversifying its weapon procurement sources.[23]

In addition, in November 1988, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat proclaimed the establishment of the State of Palestine, and China promptly recognized Palestine as a state. This indicates that China was maintaining its customary policy of supporting Palestine in official diplomatic terms while continuing to pursue secret military cooperation with Israel.[24]

(3) Jiang Zemin/Hu Jintao Era: Expansion of Economic Relations

Building on the trust that was fostered through the sale of ballistic missiles in 1988, China established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in 1990. In conjunction with this, Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, bringing the number of Middle Eastern countries with diplomatic relations with Taiwan to zero. Premier Li Peng became the first Chinese senior official to visit Saudi Arabia in 1991.[25]

Then, in 1992, China established diplomatic relations with Israel. China had thus established diplomatic relations with all the countries of the Middle East. In addition, China now had relations with both parties to the Palestine issue and was able to take part in multilateral talks on the issue.[26]

In 1993, China became a net importer of oil as a result of its economic development and the accompanying increase in oil consumption. Since then, the Middle East has become increasingly important to China as an energy supplier, market, and investment destination.[27]

From July to August 1993, the U.S. Navy forcibly conducted inspections of the Chinese container ship *Yinhe* ("Milky Way") based on intelligence that it was carrying chemical weapons materials to Iran, but the materials were not found. The United States then rejected China's demand for an apology, which contributed to the deterioration of U.S.-China relations. It should be noted that Iran and China had signed a nuclear cooperation agreement when Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited Beijing in 1992, so China was cooperating with Iran's civilian nuclear development program at the time of the incident. Also, in January 1993, Mohsen Rezai, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, had visited Beijing to negotiate the purchase of weapons from China, including naval ships. The *Yinhe* incident occurred at a time when China-Iran cooperation in this regard was progressing. By 1997, however, China ended its cooperation with Iran's nuclear program.[28]

The establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel gave China greater public access to advanced Israeli technology. However, the United States opposed the development of military cooperation between China and Israel (i.e., further Israeli arms exports to China) out of concern that it would

tip the military balance in East Asia in China's favor. In the two decades since 1979, Israeli assistance had enabled China to upgrade its military technology, including tanks, night vision systems, electronic warfare systems, air-to-air missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology. In 1994, Israel exported the Harpy UAVs, so-called "suicide drones," to China. However, in 2000, under pressure from the United States, Israel backed out of its contract to sell the Phalcon airborne early warning and control system to China. Furthermore, in 2005, Israel was scheduled to upgrade the Harpy UAVs it had exported to China in the 1990s, but it was forced to cancel the upgrade deal with China due to pressure from the United States. As a result of these incidents, Israel and China have since sought to strengthen their relationship only to the extent that it does not involve the sensitive area of security. Even after the development of cooperation between the two countries, China continued to vote in support of Palestine and against Israel at the United Nations, with Israel's tacit approval. China maintained its symbolic support for Palestine in the form of political position statements, while simultaneously strengthening substantive relations with Israel.[29]

China also developed its relations with Saudi Arabia, including in the area of security. In 1998, Crown Prince (later King) Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia visited China and met with President Jiang Zemin. The following year, in 1999, President Jiang Zemin became China's first state president to visit Saudi Arabia and meet with King Fahd bin Abdulaziz. From late 2002 to 2003, the United States engaged in democracy promotion in the Middle East, launched the Iraq War under that situation, and ousted the Hussein regime. Both China and Saudi Arabia shared a distrust of such U.S. political universalism, which helped strengthen bilateral relations at the time. From 2006 to 2009, the heads of state of the two countries visited each other a total of three times, including a trip by King Abdullah to China—his first foreign trip since accession to the throne—demonstrating the growing importance of bilateral relations between the two countries. In 2007, China North Industries Group Corporation Limited (NORINCO Group), a state-owned defense contractor, agreed to sell 54 PLZ-45 self-propelled howitzers to Saudi Arabia. Also in 2007, China secretly sold DF-21 (CSS-5) ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia. An agreement between the two countries that year enabled Chinese companies to participate directly in bids for projects in Saudi Arabia.[30]

During this period, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, which led to a further expansion of trade with Middle Eastern countries. In 2004, during President Hu Jintao's visit to Egypt, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) was established as a framework for cooperation between China and Arab countries. Since then, the CASCF has met every two years in principle, alternating between China and an Arab state.[31]

In 2008, China signed a defense cooperation agreement with the UAE. Prior to this, in May 1990, UAE President Sheikh Zayed became the first head of state of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country to visit China and meet with General Secretary Jiang Zemin. Since the 1990s, the UAE, an influential oil-producing country, and China had rapidly expanded their trade volume, bolstering economic interdependence. Following the signing of the agreement, there was a notable increase in

contact between the countries' high-level officials in the security sector, and in 2009, China exhibited its L-15 jet trainer at the Dubai Airshow.[32]

In late 2008, the Chinese Navy launched an anti-piracy mission to patrol maritime traffic lanes in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia. This region encompasses the unstable states of Yemen and Somalia. The mission has further strengthened China's security cooperation with Oman, whose political situation is more stable. Since 2009, the port of Salalah in Oman has become a regular port of call for the Chinese Navy due to its convenient geographical location.[33]

In July 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan condemned China when violent riots broke out in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, resulting in the death of many residents. However, the impact of this condemnation on Turkish-Chinese relations was minor, as Türkiye, in deference to China, had previously denied visas to Rebiya Kadeer, a Uyghur exile leader, to enter the country in 2006 and 2007.[34]

In 2011, following the outbreak of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, a civil war erupted in Libya between the Muammar Qaddafi regime and rebel forces. A large number of Chinese citizens were working in Libya at the time, and China rescued more than 30,000 of its own citizens through means such as redeploying a missile frigate from the Chinese Navy's anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia.[35]

2. China's Expanding Involvement in the Middle East under the Xi Jinping Administration

(1) Deepening of Economic and Diplomatic Ties

The Xi Jinping administration, inaugurated in 2013, strengthened economic cooperation with the Middle East after the Jiang Zemin era while spearheading a full-fledged Middle Eastern policy, starting with the ministerial conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in 2014, the following year. In order to attract Arab countries to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) at the conference, China proposed the "1+2+3" cooperation pattern, or a three-pronged approach consisting of one core focus (energy), two "wings" (infrastructure and trade/investment facilitation), and three high-tech sectors for breakthroughs (nuclear energy, space/satellites, and renewable energy).[36] This framework has been described as strategic in nature, unlike anything China had presented to Arab countries in the past.[37] Furthermore, in the area of diplomacy, the Xi administration began

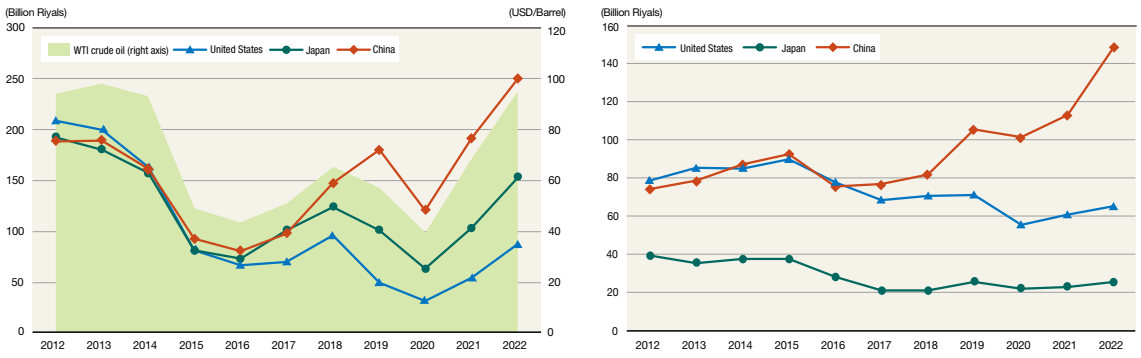
The first China-Arab States Summit (December 2022) (Xinhua/Kyodo News Images)

to deepen its relations with Middle Eastern countries through partnerships that embodied the "new type of international relations" mentioned in Chapter 1, and by providing a forum for deliberation on conflicts in the Middle East. Deepening these economic and diplomatic ties has given China a unique position in the Middle East, as exemplified by its role in mediating the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to normalize relations in March 2023.[38] By mutually affirming with Middle Eastern countries its respect for the principle of non-intervention, China has sought to safeguard its core interests in matters pertaining to Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and the South China Sea.[39]

With regard to the "1+2+3" cooperation pattern, it should be noted that, while this framework targets all Arab countries, they are geographically vast and vary drastically in terms of political stability and economic development. Prospective partners for promoting the framework inevitably centered on wealthy GCC member states with abundant natural resources such as crude oil. Iran, as a major power in the Middle East and an anti-American country, has also fostered closer ties with China in recent years, as evidenced by the signing of a 25-year comprehensive agreement with China in 2021. Such trends cannot be ignored in this chapter, given that the focus of analysis is China's relations with Middle Eastern countries (not Arab countries). In light of the fact that China's own national interests have influenced the extent of its approach to Middle Eastern countries, the first half of this section will primarily focus on China's relations with the regional powers of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (an emerging quasi-power) as the case studies for analysis, while also considering developments in the broader context of the Middle East as a whole.[40]

In response to China's expanded economic cooperation and its continued non-interventionist stance, Middle Eastern countries have sought to deepen their ties with the country beyond the confines of their intra-regional confrontational structure. Three factors appear to be driving Middle Eastern

Figure 2.2 Value of Saudi Arabia's Exports to Japan, the United States, and China (Left) and Imports from Japan, the United States, and China (Right)



Note: Oil has typically accounted for around 75% to 85% of the value of Saudi Arabia's exports. Even in 2020, when the price of crude oil plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it accounted for 68.7%. As the value of the country's exports is easily affected by the price of crude oil, the price of WTI crude oil, a typical benchmark for oil prices, is used as a reference.

Source: Compiled by the author based on statistics from the General Authority for Statistics of Saudi Arabia.

Table 2.1 Saudi Arabia's Top Five Export Partners

	1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th	
2012	United States	208,339	Japan	192,201	China	188,229	South Korea	133,585	India	120,841
2013	United States	199,060	China	188,936	Japan	179,825	South Korea	131,750	India	129,444
2014	United States	162,460	China	160,685	Japan	156,821	South Korea	123,557	India	113,829
2015	China	92,069	Japan	80,683	United States	80,525	India	72,052	South Korea	66,099
2016	China	79,916	Japan	72,342	United States	66,128	India	63,880	South Korea	57,432
2017	Japan	100,382	China	97,354	South Korea	74,027	India	73,801	United States	68,867
2018	China	146,703	Japan	123,646	India	98,689	South Korea	97,592	United States	95,622
2019	China	179,669	India	100,703	Japan	100,365	South Korea	78,155	UAE	50,609
2020	China	120,016	Japan	62,307	India	60,208	South Korea	54,379	UAE	44,349
2021	China	190,911	Japan	102,598	India	99,966	South Korea	87,342	UAE	56,481
2022	China	249,926	India	157,187	Japan	152,890	South Korea	142,159	United States	87,117

Note: The unit is 1 million Saudi riyals.
Source: Compiled by the author based on statistics from the General Authority for Statistics of Saudi Arabia.

Table 2.2 Saudi Arabia's Top Five Import Partners

	1st		2nd		3rd		4th		5th	
2012	United States	78,770	China	74,195	Germany	41,367	Japan	38,989	South Korea	35,467
2013	United States	85,376	China	78,488	Germany	44,812	South Korea	36,018	Japan	35,153
2014	China	87,122	United States	84,730	Germany	47,093	Japan	37,306	South Korea	32,336
2015	China	92,398	United States	89,678	Germany	46,116	Japan	37,286	South Korea	37,251
2016	United States	77,728	China	75,309	Germany	34,331	UAE	28,616	Japan	27,821
2017	China	76,971	United States	68,086	UAE	32,831	Germany	29,497	France	21,853
2018	China	81,821	United States	70,642	UAE	43,441	Germany	28,306	India	21,973
2019	China	105,571	United States	71,024	UAE	39,806	Germany	27,649	Japan	25,367
2020	China	101,562	United States	55,145	UAE	34,287	Germany	26,869	India	24,530
2021	China	113,381	United States	60,549	UAE	46,770	India	30,277	Germany	28,093
2022	China	149,252	United States	65,002	UAE	45,103	India	39,509	Germany	30,000

Note: The unit is 1 million Saudi riyals.
Source: Compiled by the author based on statistics from the General Authority for Statistics of Saudi Arabia.

countries' approach to China. These are: (1) economic pragmatism, (2) affinity with authoritarian political systems, and (3) recognition of the decline of the West (the United States and Europe) and the rise of the East (China and Russia). The first factor is important for all Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, which has been pursuing economic reform and development under "Vision 2030."[41] The volume of trade between China and Saudi Arabia is on the rise, with China becoming Saudi Arabia's most significant partner in both imports and exports. Conversely, trade with the United States is in decline (see Figure 2.2 and Tables 2.1 and 2.2). In Oman, a country that faces the Indian Ocean, China has been investing in the port city of Duqm through the China-Oman Industrial Park project, which is part of the BRI, as well as in other projects.[42] By establishing the Special Economic

Zone at Duqm, Oman is aiming to develop its non-oil industries (for economic diversification), making China a key development partner for Oman in this regard.[43] Such examples are too numerous to detail here, but in the five-year period from 2017 to 2022, the volume of trade between China and the Middle East increased sharply, from US$262.5 billion to US$507.2 billion.[44] In other words, the "1+2+3" cooperation pattern and the comprehensive economic initiatives of the Xi Jinping administration, such as BRI, have served as effective frameworks for Saudi Arabia and other countries seeking to transform their economies away from oil dependence to deepen economic ties with China. In addition, China is virtually the sole export destination for crude oil from Iran, which has been facing renewed economic sanctions from the United States since August 2018.[45] According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, China accounted for 26% of Iran's oil exports as of the first half of 2018 (prior to the resumption of sanctions). By the first half of 2023, this figure had risen to 91%.[46]

With regard to the second factor, the mutual affirmation of non-intervention can be viewed as a diplomatic policy that benefits both China and Middle Eastern countries, where human rights abuses are a frequent issue. For example, when a joint statement that expresses concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and other parts of China was released in 2019, the UAE signed a counter-statement in China's defense.[47] Furthermore, in 2022, reports emerged that there were secret detention facilities holding Uyghurs in the UAE.[48] Additionally, the United Nations Human Rights Council issued a statement on the situation in Xinjiang and other parts of China in 2021. However, the statement expressing concern to China was only endorsed by Israel, while numerous Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE, signed a separate statement defending China's policies.[49] In the wake of the anti-government movements of 2011, the UAE has also ramped up its electronic surveillance to assert domestic control,[50] emulating, as some have suggested, China's digital authoritarianism.[51] In addition to this, one analysis has presented Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation from the perspective of how it strengthens authoritarian regimes. According to this analysis, while the material benefits of membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are small, the organization enhances the legitimacy of authoritarian member states and serves as a platform for countering external criticism on human rights issues. In this way, the organization functions as a network for regime preservation.[52] As described above, it is considered that both China and Middle Eastern countries see the mutual affirmation of non-intervention as a way of fending off pressure from Western countries, which sometimes take a hard line on human rights issues, and as a means of deepening cooperation among authoritarian countries.[53]

Compared to the first and second factors, the third factor—the Middle Eastern countries' discourse on the rise of China, Russia, and others in the East—can be considered more fundamental in bringing them closer to China. Iran has been the most vocal in asserting a change in the international order, with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei[54] and the country's president, Ebrahim Raisi, and others frequently pointing to the decline of the United States and the rise of Eastern powers such as China and Russia.[55] Based on this understanding, and taking a lesson from the Donald Trump administration's

withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal during the preceding Hasan Rouhani administration, the Raisi administration has pivoted toward the "Look East" policy,[56] a strategy of diplomacy that places emphasis on relations with China, Russia, and neighboring countries.[57]

While such statements are to be expected from an anti-American country such as Iran, U.S. allies in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are also beginning to demonstrate a recognition of the shift in the international order from U.S. unipolarity to a multipolar order.[58] In June 2023, Khalid Falih, Minister of Investment of Saudia Arabia, stated that China is an important partner in the multipolar world that has already arrived, and indicated that his country's relationship with the United States and China is not mutually exclusive.[59] This worldview is backed up by the United States' withdrawal from the Middle East, as discussed below. This factor, combined with the economic and diplomatic benefits of maintaining stronger relations with China, has led to foreign policy decisions by Middle Eastern countries—previously seen as pro-American—that do not shy away from creating friction with the United States.

(2) Expansion into Military and Security Spheres

Will China replace the United States in the military and security spheres as the central actor influencing regional security in the Middle East, just as it has expanded its presence in the economic sphere? In prior studies, the answer to this question has generally been negative.[60] The reason given is that the United States still maintains a presence in the region by deploying troops to its bases in the Middle East, while China itself lacks the ability or will to project power. Some have also pointed out that China is "free riding" or "cheap riding" in terms of energy security.[61]

However, the view that China is not likely to replace the United States as a security actor does not negate China's expansion of its military and security power in the Middle East. Under the Xi Jinping administration, China is, in fact, continuing to deepen its ties with Middle Eastern countries in the military and security spheres, in which it has not been as active as it has in the economic sphere. Sun Degang, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, places emphasis on China's UN peacekeeping operations and its protection of its own citizens, rather than on geopolitical competition, and characterizes these aspects of China's military involvement in Middle Eastern countries as a "soft military presence."[62] Nevertheless, China may be making headway with the construction of military bases (which Sun himself characterizes as a "hard" military presence), thereby reinforcing its military and security relationship with Middle Eastern countries. The United States believes that it is highly likely that the Chinese military is attempting to establish a logistics base in the UAE.[63] In 2021, a report alleged that China had been building a military facility in Abu Dhabi's Khalifa port for a year.[64] Although U.S. pressure forced China to halt construction at the time, according to an April 2023 report by *The Washington Post*, the construction of military facilities in the UAE is believed to have resumed.[65] In a document purportedly leaked by the U.S. Air National Guard, the UAE was the sole Middle Eastern country explicitly identified as a potential site for the

construction of Chinese military bases and logistical support facilities under an initiative known as "Project 141."[66] In November 2023, the possibility of a plan to construct a Chinese military base in Oman was reported, and Oman was said to be in discussion to accept the plan.[67] If these facilities and bases are built, the Chinese military's power projection capability toward the Middle East and Africa, which is currently dependent on Djibouti, will be enhanced.

Although the information about the construction of military bases remains unconfirmed, one phenomenon that is being observed with greater certainty is that China is strengthening its ties with Middle Eastern countries in the areas of defense industry and equipment. As pointed out in the first section of this chapter, while China's overall arms exports to the Middle East have not increased, China has been promoting exports of drone and missile-related equipment and establishing manufacturing facilities in the Middle East.[68] In March 2023, the United States imposed sanctions on Chinese companies, claiming that they were supplying the key components of drones supplied by Iran to Russia.[69] Then, in June, investigators reported that an Iranian drone downed by Ukraine did in fact contain Chinese parts.[70] Iran also unveiled the country's first hypersonic ballistic missile, the Fattah, on June 6, 2023, the same day the U.S. Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions[71] on companies in China and Hong Kong for their involvement in Iran's ballistic missile program. Drones and missiles are an important tool for Iran, which is pursuing a "forward defense" strategy to fight Israel and the United States outside of its borders, and China is believed to be one of the suppliers of the parts and equipment involved in their manufacture.

China's expansion into areas such as drones can even be seen in countries that rely on the United States for equipment and security. In Saudi Arabia's case, it is suspected of receiving support from China for domestic ballistic missile production and has already procured the Chinese-made Wing Loong-2 (GJ-2) and Cai Hong-4 (CH-4) drones.[72] Incidentally, it is highly likely that Saudia Arabia and the UAE, which has also been procuring Chinese drones, are already using them in actual combat. Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia, leading coalition states that include the UAE and others, has intervened in the Yemeni civil war to eliminate the Houthis, conducting 25,054 airstrikes (between March 26, 2015, and March 31, 2022).[73] Meanwhile, the Houthis, who have absorbed part of the Yemeni Armed Forces, have an air defense force that is believed to have shot down GJ-2s and CH-4s, along with Saudi Arabia's Tornado multi-role combat aircraft and Morocco's F-16 fighter jets.[74] In addition to this, Saleh al-Sammad, then-president of the Houthis,[75] was killed in 2018, reportedly by a Chinese drone operated by the UAE Armed Forces.[76] In light of the above, it can be said that while China's influence on the military and security of countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE is not as great as that of the United States, it is encroaching into the realm of missiles, drones, and other key weapons of modern warfare.

As noted above, two factors are important in explaining the current situation in which even Middle Eastern countries that have traditionally been close to the United States in military and security matters are moving closer to China. First, from the perspective of these Middle Eastern countries,

cases such as the production of Chinese drones in Saudi Arabia fall within the economic sphere (promoting the defense industry), rather than the military sphere.[77] Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's plan for economic development mentioned at the beginning of this section, calls for 50 percent of military equipment spending to be allocated domestically by 2030, and policies such as the establishment of a state-owned defense company have been promoted to achieve this target. The UAE has also been promoting its aerospace and defense industry under "Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030" and has been regularly hosting an international defense exhibition in Abu Dhabi. Both Saudi Arabia[78] and the UAE[79] insist that cooperation with China on the economic front can be compatible with cooperation with the United States on the security front, and that they do not share the view of the United States, which sees the economic and military/security aspects of its strategic competition with China as inseparable.[80] In other words, at first glance, the domestic production of military equipment may appear to be a move closer to China on the military front. However, even if it is in fact an area that straddles both the economic and military/security spheres, Middle Eastern countries are likely to place more emphasis on the aspect of cooperation on the economic front. Anwar Gargash, who has had a significant influence on the UAE's foreign policy as minister of state for foreign affairs (now advisor to the president), has also stated that the "UAE has no interest in 'choosing sides' between global powers."[81] This is a rational policy for a country that abides by the aforementioned multipolar worldview. What this means is that Middle Eastern countries are not interested in decoupling from China, as the United States is trying to do, but instead are likely to pursue a policy of maximizing their national interests by forming separate relationships with both the United States and China based on their own judgment.

The Chinese-made Wing Loong-2 (GJ-2) drone exhibited at the Dubai Airshow (November 2017) (Photo: AFP-JIJI)

Regarding the inseparability of the economy from the military/security sphere, it should be mentioned that the United States has used arms exports as one means of exerting pressure on Middle Eastern countries, as in the case of Turkish air defense system upgrade.[82] Soon after taking office, President Joseph Biden demonstrated his resolve to end the civil war in Yemen by suspending arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in February 2021. In addition, during negotiations over the purchase of F-35 fighter jets (in exchange for an agreement to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel), the UAE reportedly disagreed with the United States over the introduction of Huawei's 5G network in the country, and as a result, the UAE informed the United States that it was suspending negotiations. While it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which rely on the United States for the majority of their equipment imports and receive personnel training assistance from the U.S. military, will rapidly switch to Chinese-made weaponry, it is undeniable that these countries may look

to China as a way to mitigate the "weaponization" of arms exports by the United States for political purposes.[83] In other words, the United States' use of arms exports as political leverage against Middle Eastern countries creates opportunities for China to make inroads into areas previously controlled by the United States, as in the case of the drones and missiles mentioned above.

The Middle Eastern countries' distrust of the United States, which has been shifting to Asia with the aim of confronting China, as seen in its competition with China in Taiwan and Southeast Asia, plays a significant role as the second factor. It has been well known that the GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have been apprehensive about the US rebalance to Asia pursued by the Barack Obama administration. The leaders of these countries became deeply distrustful of and frustrated with the United States when it abandoned Egypt's Hosni Mubarak administration during the 2011 anti-government uprising. Furthermore, even under the Trump administration, which took a pro-Saudi position, the United States maintained its policy of withdrawing from the Middle East. In particular, when an attack on Saudi Arabian oil facilities occurred in 2019 that was believed to have been carried out by Iran or an entity under its influence, the U.S. response was lukewarm at best and lacking in concrete retaliatory measures. This incident only served to increase Saudi Arabia's distrust of and frustration with the United States.[84] In other words, Middle Eastern countries that depend on the United States for their security are questioning whether the United States is willing to intervene militarily in the event of an emergency. The Biden administration has reiterated its intention to provide security to Middle Eastern countries and has sought to dispel the distrust of the GCC countries.[85] At the same time, however, the administration has pursued talks to restructure the Iran nuclear deal and, as described above, has used arms exports as a means of exerting political pressure, both of which are undesirable for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In light of the current situation in which the United States serves as the sole security provider in the region, the actions of these Middle Eastern countries in the military and security spheres—which could be perceived as a deliberate move toward China—can be interpreted instead as a call for greater U.S. involvement, or an attempt to play the so-called "China card" against the United States.

(3) The Houthis' Perception of China and Its Impact on the Situation in the Middle East

As noted in the introduction, the influence of non-state actors on the situation in Middle Eastern countries and on regional security cannot be ignored. This is also evident in the armed clashes between Israel and groups like Hamas in Gaza since October 2023. In addition, recent armed conflicts have weakened the United States' position in the Middle East and the Global South. As indicated by voting behavior in the UN General Assembly related to the conflict and South Africa's filing of a complaint against Israel with the International Court of Justice, the countries of the Global South do not support Israel's excessive military operations or the United States' defense of Israel. Those who have no qualms about pushing the point further, like former Turkish president Abdullah Gül, point to double

standards in the U.S. response in Ukraine and Gaza.[86]

While the United States struggles with its handling of the situation in Gaza, China has garnered support from the Global South by making its support for Palestine clear. As of October 14, 2023, Wang Yi, a member of China's Politburo and Minister of Foreign Affairs, has demonstrated a pro-Palestinian stance on the Gaza situation from the outset, such as in a telephone discussion with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in which he acknowledged that "Israel's actions have gone beyond the scope of self-defense."[87] Some have pointed out that China's pro-Palestinian stance is in part an attempt to weaken the U.S. position in the Global South and bring these countries closer to its own side.[88] China has pursued cooperation with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, including hosting the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and others in Beijing in November 2023 for a meeting, and issuing a joint statement with the Arab League in January 2024 calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

In parallel to the situation in Gaza, another important development is the maritime military operations launched by the Houthis in the Red Sea and elsewhere since November 2023. This group, a member of the Iranian-led anti-Western network "Axis of Resistance," has effectively given China and Russia special treatment in terms of safe passage through the Red Sea. What approach has China taken in the past to gain such favorable treatment from the Houthis, and how has the accumulation of such actions benefited China in the context of the current Red Sea situation? The following part will first provide an overview of the relationship between the Houthis and China, then analyze China's response to the Houthis' military activities in the Red Sea and elsewhere in the wake of escalating tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since October 2023, as well as the Houthis' response to China.

Information on the relationship between the Houthis and China is scarce prior to February 2015, when the Houthis established a government of their own and claimed to have taken over the state of Yemen. When coalition states led by Saudi Arabia launched a military intervention in Yemen in March 2015, China emphasized its relationship with Saudi Arabia and also voted in favor of UN Security Council Resolution 2216. This resolution included a demand for the Houthis' withdrawal from Sanaa, the country's capital, and other areas, and an arms embargo on the group (Russia abstained from voting). In other words, China's policy on Yemen is largely stipulated by its relationship with Saudi Arabia, and, in principle, it supports the internationally recognized government of Yemen headed by Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and his successor, Rashad al-Alimi. However, in response to the stalemate in Yemen, China began building relations with the Houthis as early as 2016,[89] and it has maintained active communication with other

A demonstration of solidarity with China held in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen controlled by the Houthis (February 2020) (Mohammed Hamoud/Getty Images)

forces as well.[90] In January 2016, Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam gave a favorable assessment of China's position, saying that it is improving.[91] He also revealed that he had received an invitation from China, and a Houthi delegation subsequently visited Beijing in December 2016.[92] In an interview conducted after this visit, former Houthi president Saleh Al-Sammad described China and Russia as "countries that influence international decisions."[93] In light of the above, it can be assumed that the Houthis view China as an exceptional country that, apart from Iran and Syria, offers them the opportunity for dialogue and has significant influence in international politics.

While the Houthis have denounced the circumstances of Chinese Muslims[94] and illegal fishing by Chinese ships in Yemen's territorial waters,[95] through one of its main media outlets, al-Masirah, the group has also advanced discourses about the end of U.S. hegemony and the transition to a multipolar world, a narrative that also underlies the discourses of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.[96] An interesting report demonstrating this worldview was published by the Research & Information Center, a think tank that operates under the state-run Yemen News Agency (SABA), which is controlled by the Houthis.[97] The center's report uses its own definition of the Iran-led anti-Western coalition, the so-called "Axis of Resistance" (Miḥwar al-Muqāwama), and then creates a separate classification called the "Axis of Defense" (Miḥwar al-Mumāna'a).[98] The former are "forces in the Eastern Arab region that prevent U.S. imperialist influence and Zionist [*sic*] plotting," while the latter are those states that support the Axis of Resistance, including not only Iran and Syria, but also China and Russia—states that have good relations with Iran and Syria and hold opposing political positions to the West.[99] Furthermore, Ali al-Quahoum, a member of the Houthis' political bureau, asserted that relations between the group and China and Russia are evolving with the goal of ending Western hegemony.[100] In other words, it seems that the Houthis are attempting to develop a discourse of cooperation, positioning China as being in the same anti-American and anti-Western camp as the Houthis in a broad sense, even if not strictly the same.

Since the outbreak of an armed conflict in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, or more precisely, since November 2023, the Houthis have transformed from their previous role as a local actor to one that exerts influence on the situation in the Middle East. This is because the group started to launch air attacks on the Israeli port city of Eilat in mid-October and maritime military operations in the Red Sea and other areas in mid-November, in support of Palestine. In particular, the operations in the Red Sea have a significant impact on the regional and global economy. In an attempt to force the group to change its behavior, the United States planned and implemented the multinational coalition Operation Prosperity Guardian. When the operation stalled, the United States, together with the United Kingdom, launched airstrikes on Houthi military bases.[101] Nevertheless, as of the time of writing (end of May 2024), the Houthis are continuing to carry out attacks against U.S. and U.K. naval vessels and civilian ships, resulting in damage to ships.

The disruption of international shipping has inevitably impacted China, a major power in global trade. According to the International Monetary Fund's "Regional Economic Outlook for the Middle

East and North Africa" (January 2024), freight costs for routes between Europe and China have increased by more than 400% since mid-November 2023 as a result of maritime military operations by the Houthis.[102] Initially, however, China adopted a largely wait-and-see stance on the Red Sea situation.[103] This is because China was not a part of the aforementioned Operation Prosperity Guardian and has long avoided criticizing the Houthis by name. In late January 2024, more than two months after the start of the Houthis' maritime military operations, the United States called upon China to leverage its influence over Iran (which supports the Houthis). China was also reported to have put pressure on Iran prior to this request, but no concrete results were achieved, such as the Houthis refraining from maritime military operations.[104] Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the supreme leader of the group, described this incident as failure on the part of the United States and said that China was aware of its own interests and would not do anything to serve U.S. interests.[105] From a broader perspective, it has also been suggested that China hopes that the turbulent situation in the Middle East will further weaken U.S. power and divert U.S. attention away from deterrence against China.[106] Yet another view is that China is using the U.S. military response to the Houthis as material for criticism of the United States.[107] In other words, China's response to the situation in the Red Sea indicates that it sees the situation as an important aspect of the U.S.-China competition rather than as a threat common to all countries, such as the disruption of international shipping, and that China derives political benefits from the situation.

Initially targeting only Israel-related ships, the Houthis have expanded the scope of their maritime military operations to include ships of any national registry bound for Israel, as well as U.S. and U.K. ships.[108] Although the group claims that it only attacks ships that fall into the above categories and that its operations do not pose a threat to international navigation, in reality, ships other than the above have also been damaged. Against this backdrop, *Bloomberg* reported that the Houthis had promised safe passage to China and Russia in March 2024.[109] In fact, despite the subsequent attack on the Chinese-owned, Chinese-operated *Huang Pu*,[110] the percentage of Chinese ships transiting the Red Sea has increased rapidly, and the presence of Chinese companies in international shipping has grown.[111] As an alternative to the sea route, demand for railroads connecting China and Europe is also reported to be soaring.[112] In light of the above, it can be said that China derives certain political and economic benefits (even taking into account the aforementioned increase in shipping costs, etc.) from the Houthis' maritime military operations. These benefits can be attributed to China's early development of relations with the Houthis based on its accurate assessment of the situation in Yemen and the Houthis' perception of China as broadly part of the anti-American camp.

Conclusion

China's policy toward the Middle East has varied from one administration to the next, and the Middle East's response has changed accordingly. On the other hand, based on the discussion so far, the common points in China's Middle East policy and how Middle Eastern countries have perceived it can be summarized as follows. First, since the Deng Xiaoping era, relations have expanded based on economic interests, including in the defense industry. In particular, China's shift to becoming a crude oil importer in the 1990s provided the impetus for the country to strengthen relations with Middle Eastern countries as suppliers of crude oil. Furthermore, through the "1+2+3" cooperation pattern and BRI, the Xi Jinping administration has also strengthened China's expansion into non-energy sectors, an approach that was likewise attractive to Middle Eastern countries seeking to become less dependent on oil. The United States has used arms export restrictions as a means of exerting political pressure on countries such as its ally Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, China has emerged as an alternative supplier of weaponry, with the Xi Jinping administration facilitating China's expansion into areas such as drone and missile technology.

Second, the destabilization of the security environment surrounding the Middle East, and U.S. policy, which has a significant impact on regional security in the Middle East, have created an opportunity for China to expand its presence in the region. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution were among the factors behind China's success in establishing diplomatic relations with Middle Eastern countries in the 1980s. China's increased presence in the military and security sectors since the beginning of the Xi Jinping administration reflects a fundamental shift in the worldview of Middle Eastern countries about the decline of the United States in international politics, that is, the transition to a multipolar world. Such perceptions have prompted pro-American states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE to pursue their interests by strengthening ties with both the United States and China, creating friction with the United States. In addition, while the Biden administration has been trying to dispel distrust of the United States that was fostered during the Obama and Trump administrations, it has simultaneously implemented policies that are undesirable to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, such as talks to restore the Iran nuclear deal and the use of political pressure through arms export restrictions. In other words, as the United States has become an entity that brings both benefits and disadvantages to countries in the region, Middle Eastern countries are beginning to see the value of playing "the China card" against the United States, and are moving closer to China in order to extract more benefits from the United States.

Overall, China's expansion into Middle Eastern countries in the political, economic, and military/security spheres is intensifying. In particular, the Xi Jinping administration's possible construction of military bases in the Middle East symbolizes the decline of U.S. prestige in the region and suggests that Middle Eastern countries today may be receptive to China's growing military presence. China's

role in the region is similar in some respects to the Cold War era, when Oman established diplomatic relations with China to counter the spread of Soviet influence. Today, Middle Eastern countries are seeking to benefit from expanded cooperation with China under the Xi Jinping administration in a wide range of areas, including the military and security sectors. On the other hand, one difference from the Cold War era is that Middle Eastern countries are trying to extract benefits from the United States, whose commitment to the Middle East is at stake, by making a show of deepening their ties with China in front of the United States. In other words, China's strategic value (although its value as a standalone country has increased dramatically with its rise to great power status) has been defined in no small part by relations between Middle Eastern countries and extra-regional powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Regardless of the logic of the Middle Eastern countries, if China succeeds in establishing its first military bases in the Middle East, it will enter a new phase of Chinese presence in the region and further accelerate the U.S.-China strategic competition in the Middle East.

Furthermore, in light of the influence of non-state actors in Middle Eastern countries and the gravity of the current situation in the Red Sea, this chapter also analyzed China's support of non-state actors during the Mao Zedong era and China's relationship with the Houthis. During the Mao era, China sided with anti-government forces from the perspectives of anti-colonialism, nationalism, and communism, which led to friction with governments in the Middle East. On the other hand, China under the Xi Jinping administration has shown a desire to strike a balance, in a sense, between the two sides. Given the situation in Yemen, it promoted early relationship building with the Houthis, while at the same time supporting the internationally recognized government, with an emphasis on its relationship with Saudi Arabia. Coupled with the fact that the Houthis broadly view China as part of the same anti-American camp, China's balanced policy is thought to benefit China by avoiding friction with Saudi Arabia and by excluding Chinese ships from attacks in the Red Sea and elsewhere.

Xinhua/ABACA/Kyodo News Images

Chapter 3

Expanding Africa-China Relations and Related Challenges

JINGUSHI Akira

Introduction

Relations between Africa and China have deepened dramatically over the past 20 years. In 2009, China surpassed the United States to become the largest trading partner of African countries. Similarly, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks in Africa have increased more than 80-fold over the past 20 years. In addition, in the area of security, China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017. China has also dispatched a large number of People's Liberation Army soldiers to Africa as the largest troop contributor of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (PKO) among the permanent members of the UN Security Council since 2004. Furthermore, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which has been actively operational since 2000, serves as a platform for cooperation in wide-ranging fields such as politics, economics, security, and culture. At the 2021 Forum meeting in Dakar, in addition to short-term action plans, the first long-term objective, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, was adopted. Africa-China relations are thus continuing to develop.[1]

The importance of Africa-China relations has been primarily recognized against the backdrop of China's rapid economic and military rise on a global level. Therefore, detailed analysis has been conducted on China's strategies, perceptions, and national interests with regard to its engagement in Africa. In contrast, there has not been sufficient understanding of the significance of deepening relations with China from the perspective of African countries, as well as how African political leaders and people perceive and seek to leverage relations with China.[2] This chapter examines the realities of the deepening relations between Africa and China in the respective areas of economics, politics, and security, and aims to understand the significance and challenges of these relations from African perspectives.

Obviously, there is significant asymmetry in both military and economic terms between African countries and China, and it is not easy for African countries to take the initiative in negotiations with China. Particularly for countries with weak government institutions and bureaucratic organizations, it is difficult to conduct negotiations with China with a consistent stance or strategy, making it even more challenging for African countries to demonstrate their agency.[3] However, this does not mean that African countries are entirely passive in their relations with China. Although there are differences depending on the country or field, each country adjusts its relationship with China based on its own challenges and national interests.[4] To understand the reality of Africa-China relations, it is insufficient to view them solely from China's perspective. While recognizing the asymmetry between both sides, due attention must also be paid to the choices and decisions made independently by African countries.

Africa-China relations have developed in various areas. The first section of this chapter focuses on economics, including trade as well as investment and loans, while the second section focuses on the areas of politics and security. Each section first identifies major economic, political, and security challenges in the region based on Agenda 2063, which was formulated by African countries in 2013

with political and economic goals to be achieved by 2063, as well as its progress reports. Then, the sections review the developments in Africa-China relations and consider how these developments impact the various challenges faced by African countries. The third section looks at the role China can play in Africa's peace and prosperity as well as the limits of that role. The section also assesses the positions African countries are likely to take amid the intensifying global strategic competition between the United States and China.

1. Expansion of Economic Relations

(1) Economic Challenges in Africa

Agenda 2063 comprises 20 goals based on seven major aspirations for the development of Africa by 2063. Aspiration 1 envisions "A Prosperous Africa, Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development." This aspiration includes seven goals, such as achieving a high standard of living, improving education, enhancing healthcare and nutrition, increasing agricultural productivity, and harnessing the blue/ocean economy (see Table 3.1).[5] The progress toward each of these goals is monitored based on specific indicators, and the second progress report, published in 2022, described the status of achievement up to 2021. According to the report, while there had been significant progress throughout Africa in terms of access to housing, electricity, the internet, and healthcare, GDP per capita had only slightly increased (from $2,584 to $2,618), and the percentage of people living below

Table 3.1 Agenda 2063's Aspiration 1, Its Seven Goals, and Their Progress

Aspirations and goals		Progress
Aspiration 1:	A Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development	37%
1)	A high standard of living, quality of life and well being for all citizens	31%
2)	Well educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation	44%
3)	Healthy and well-nourished citizens	77%
4)	Transformed economies and jobs	17%
5)	Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production	59%
6)	Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth	39%
7)	Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities	64%

Source: Compiled by the author based on African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency (NEPAD), "Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063," February 2022.

the poverty line had only slightly decreased (from 33.3% to 30.2%). Furthermore, the unemployment rate has worsened compared to the baseline year of 2013 (from 11% to 15.5%). Moreover, there has been little progress in the goal to shift away from an economic structure dependent on agriculture and natural resources, with the share of manufacturing and tourism in GDP showing minimal growth since 2013.[6] While progress differed significantly depending on the goal and country, poverty, unemployment, and other issues associated with macroeconomic stagnation overall remain major challenges for the African economy.

The report attributes one of the factors of this situation to the global economic stagnation caused by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic had begun to subside by February 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in that month led to rising prices of wheat, other grains, and fertilizers, which directly impacted the lives of African people.[7] In March 2022, the FAO Food Price Index reached its highest level since 1990.[8] African countries import more than 100 million tons of grain annually, paying $75 billion each year. As of 2020, 13 African countries relied on Russia and/or Ukraine for over 50% of their wheat imports. That reliance exceeded 70% for five countries: Eritrea, Benin, Sudan, Djibouti, and Tanzania.[9] Although global food prices have been on a downward trend since peaking in April 2022, 15 African countries, including South Sudan and Zimbabwe, continued to experience food price inflation exceeding 10% as of early 2024, which particularly affects low-income populations for whom food costs make up a large share of expenses.[10] Africa's economy in recent years has thus been greatly affected by a series of external shocks.

The increase in external debt has also become a major challenge for the African economy. The total external debt of African countries has approximately tripled, from about $220 billion in 2009 to $655 billion in 2022. In addition, as a result of insufficient economic growth, the ratio of external debt to GDP has also risen significantly during the same period, from 13% to 23% (see Figure 3.1). In particular, 20 countries, including the Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe, are experiencing debt distress or have a high risk of reaching such a state. Since 2020, Zambia, Ghana, and Ethiopia have all defaulted on their debt.[11] In countries burdened by excessive debt, fiscal pressure to repay the debt makes it difficult to allocate sufficient funds for essential infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and poverty reduction.

(2) Expansion of Africa-China Economic Relations

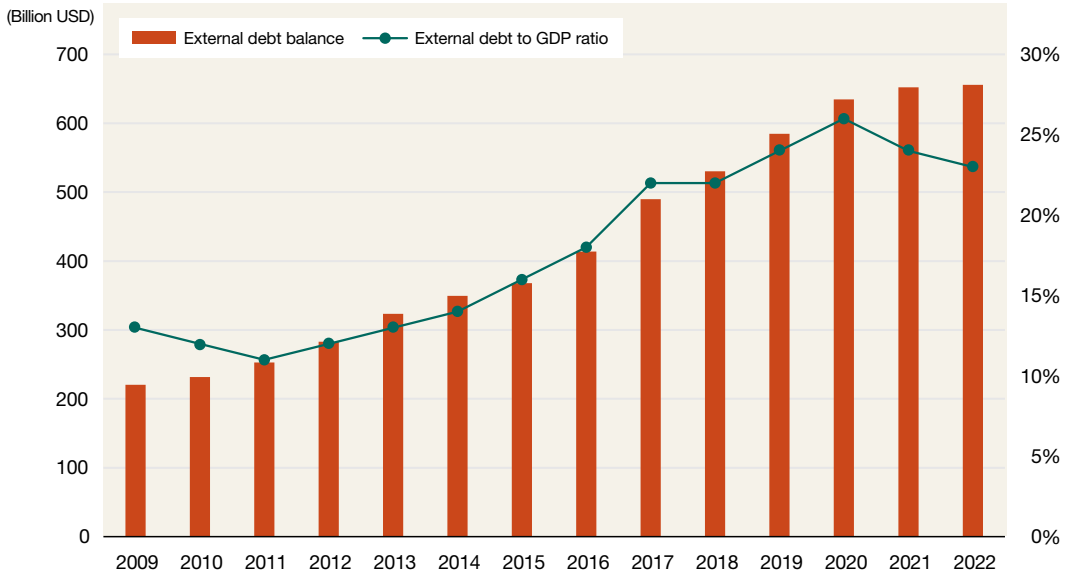
Economic relations between Africa and China have expanded significantly since the beginning of the 2000s, most notably seen in the increase in trade, investment, and loan amounts between the two sides. Firstly, the trade volume grew from $17.5 billion in 2003 to $260.8 billion in 2022 (see Figure 3.2). During this period, China overtook the United States and European countries to become the largest trading partner for 15 African countries, including Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[12] Similarly, China's FDI stocks in Africa increased more than 80-fold over 20 years, from $490 million in 2003 to $40.9 billion in 2022. Furthermore, the amount of loans from China to African

countries soared from about $1.8 billion in 2003 to $28.5 billion at its peak in 2016 (see Figure 3.3).

In addition to the expansion of the sheer scale of trade, investment, and loans between Africa and China, several characteristics can be highlighted. Firstly, with regard to trade, 89% of African countries' exports to China between 2000 and 2022 consisted of natural resources such as crude oil, iron ore, copper, and aluminum. In contrast, more than 90% of China's exports to Africa were industrial goods, such as telecommunications equipment and clothing. In addition, although Africa's trade volume with China increased in terms of both imports and exports, imports from China consistently exceeded exports, resulting in ongoing trade deficits for many African countries.[13] Next, with regard to China's FDI in Africa, it can be pointed out that a large portion is directed to specific sectors and countries. The construction sector, including infrastructure development, accounts for the largest share, followed by mining and manufacturing. These investments are concentrated mainly in countries rich in natural resources, such as South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Angola. The top six countries account for about half of China's FDI stocks in Africa.[14] Furthermore, about 72% of loans from China since the 2000s have been directed toward the energy sector including electricity, the transport sector including railways, and the telecommunications sector, with about 60% of the total loans going to 10 countries, including Angola, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Kenya.[15]

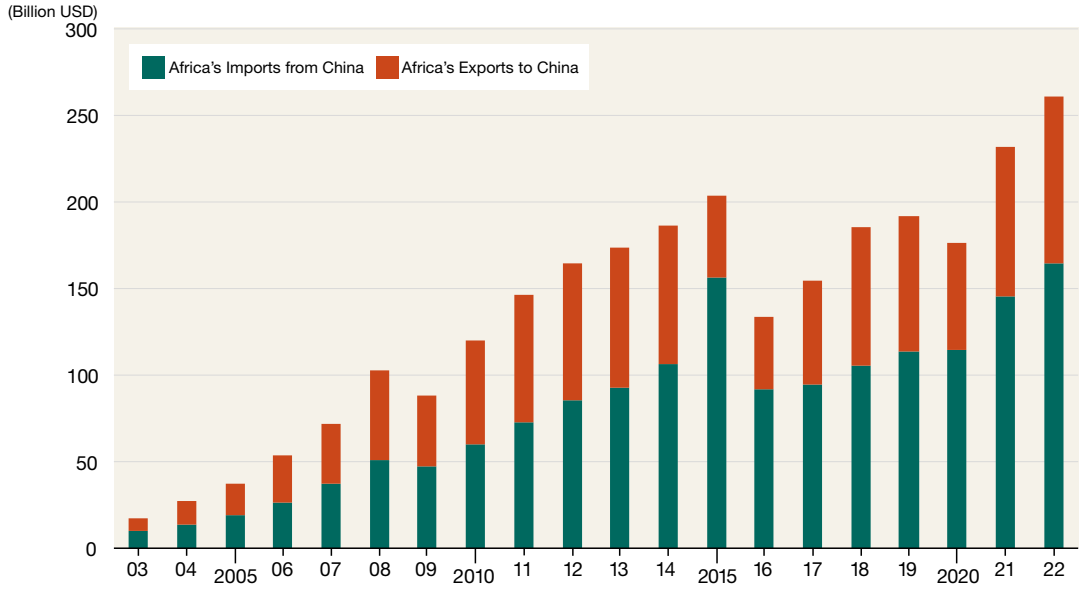
The expansion of economic relations between Africa and China has brought various economic and social benefits to African people, including job creation,[16] improved access to infrastructure such as electricity,[17] and low-priced cellphones in the region. This has certainly contributed to the achievement of African countries' Agenda 2063.[18] On the other hand, China's economic engagement is not uniformly distributed across the African region, with investments and loans concentrated in countries

Figure 3.1 Rising External Debt of African Countries



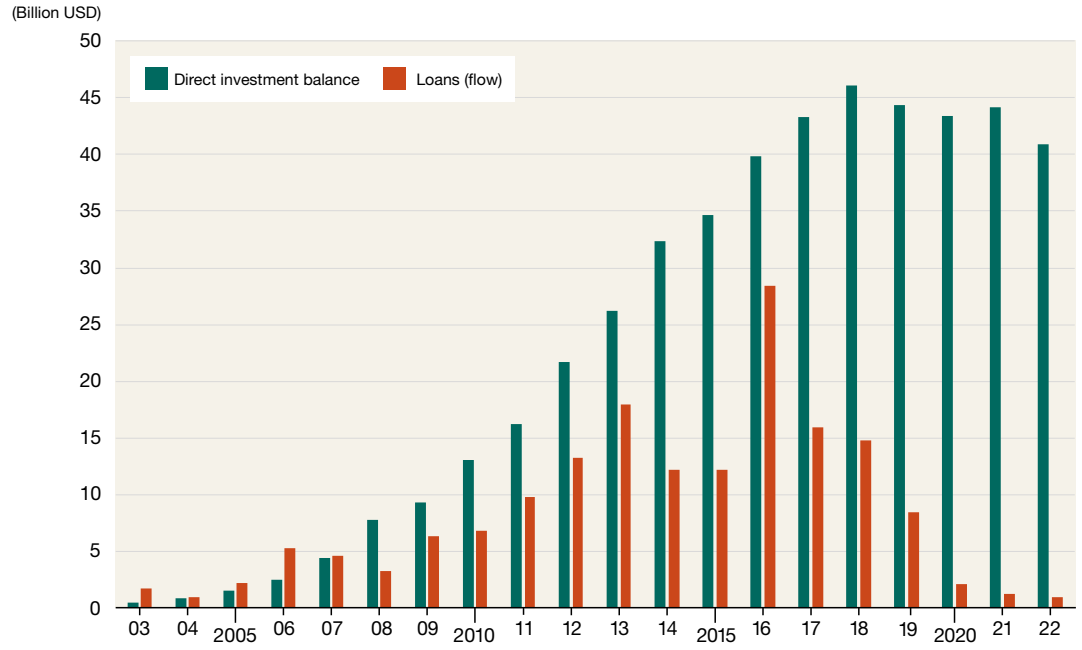
Source: Compiled by the author based on the International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2023.

Figure 3.2 Changes in Trade Volume Between Africa and China



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the China-Africa Research Initiative, https://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade, last accessed April 30, 2024.

Figure 3.3 China's Direct Investment Balance and Loan Amounts to Africa



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the China-Africa Research Initiative, https://www.sais-cari.org/chinese-investment-in-africa, last accessed April 30, 2024; Boston University Global Development Policy Center, "Chinese Loans to Africa Database," https://www.bu.edu/gdp/chinese-loans-to-africadatabase/.

with abundant natural resources. In addition, there are many unclear aspects regarding the extent to which Chinese investments have contributed to the transformation of Africa's economic structure, namely the development of manufacturing and service sectors, and macroeconomic growth, as raised in Agenda 2063.[19]

(3) Challenges in Africa-China Economic Relations

The expansion of economic relations with China could play a crucial role in addressing the economic challenges faced by African countries. As mentioned earlier, progress toward the economic goals outlined in Agenda 2063 has suffered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In the medium to long term, global issues like climate change will likely impede Africa's economic growth.[20] Overcoming economic stagnation caused by such external shocks will require a certain level of government spending, but rising external debt is making it difficult to implement flexible public spending. Therefore, for African countries, furthering investment from and trade with countries outside the region remains critical to the regional economy. Therefore, economic relations with China, which have expanded over the past 20 years, will certainly continue to be essential for many African nations.

Several challenges need be overcome to ensure that China's economic engagement leads to sustainable social and economic development in Africa. The first challenge is dealing with the debt distress of African countries. For African countries lagging in infrastructure development necessary for economic growth, such as power plants, roads, railways, and ports, loans from international organizations and external countries are essential. However, excessive borrowing based on poor planning and fiscal discipline has driven some African countries into debt distress or high risk of reaching such a state. For example, in building the Standard Gauge Railway linking the port city of Mombasa to the capital of Nairobi in Kenya, approximately 90% of the $5.3 billion cost was financed through a loan from China's Export-Import Bank. However, the railway has slipped into deficit because its freight volumes have been sluggish compared to initial anticipations. Despite this, Kenya has been forced to begin repaying its loan to China, putting pressure on its finances. Countries experiencing debt distress may need to negotiate debt restructuring and changes to repayment terms with creditor nations. However, views are not always unified on loans for African countries even within the Chinese government, and bold decisions such as debt reduction or exemption are often difficult.[21] There is no evidence to support the claim that China is engaging in "debt trap diplomacy," which deliberately pushes countries into excessive debt

A Kenyan train operator and Chinese instructor working on a railway constructed with Chinese loans (June 2023) (Xinhua/ Kyodo News Images)

to secure China's own interests in the form of ports or natural resources as collaterals. What is more likely is that rising risks of African countries defaulting on their debts could lead to a reduction in Chinese investment and lending, further exacerbating economic stagnation in Africa.[22] As shown in Figure 3.3, China's loans to Africa have actually been on a downward trend since their peak in 2016, and FDI has not increased much since 2018. As China's presence grows in African countries' external debts, how to address the risks of debt distress or default in African countries will be an inevitable challenge in ensuring that China's economic engagement leads to Africa's development.

The second challenge is diversification of Africa-China economic relations. On the one hand, China has been Africa's largest trading partner since 2009. On the other, trade with Africa accounts for only about 4% of China's total exports and imports, making the relationship asymmetric.[23] Similarly, while China's presence in Africa has been growing year by year in terms of investment and loans, Africa's share within China's overall FDI is not very large. Thus, while fluctuations in Africa-China economic relations may not significantly impact China, they could have a substantial effect on the business conditions of African countries, particularly countries where there is concentrated Chinese investment or loans and countries that rely on the export of primary products like crude oil. Amid the uncertain situation regarding whether China's economic engagement with Africa will continue, it is essential for African countries to promote the transformation of their economic structures by developing their own industries and to diversify trade goods and investment targets with China. In addition, building a more symmetrical relationship with China, through efforts such as attracting and fostering the manufacturing industry as well as taking on a role in the supply chain of Chinese companies, is key to having China's economic engagement lead to Africa's economic growth. In fact, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 states, "China will help Africa develop 'Made in Africa' brands and integrate into global industrial and supply chains by assisting Africa to develop its manufacturing sector."[24] However, it is small and medium-sized private Chinese companies that are actually shouldering such industrial development. Unlike infrastructure development projects financed by large-scale loans from government-affiliated financial institutions, those companies are strongly influenced by short-term prospects for profits. Therefore, there is much uncertainty as to whether this focus on industrial development can achieve results substantial enough to offset the decline in loans for large-scale projects in recent years.[25]

2. Africa-China Relations in Politics and Security

(1) Africa's Political and Security Challenges

In addition to economic aspirations, Agenda 2063 outlines political and security-related aspirations and goals. Firstly, Aspiration 3 addresses politics and governance, and the associated Goal 11

specifically highlights the entrenchment and practice of values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. According to the Agenda 2063 progress report, there has been overall progress toward this goal, although it varies by country. Specifically, compared to 2013, more people feel that there has been establishment of effective systems to monitor and hold accountable political leaders, press freedom, and free, fair, and transparent election systems.[26] In addition, it has been pointed out that by 2021, 85% of African Union (AU) member states had signed the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and 60% had ratified it.[27] However, there has been regression on Goal 12, which concerns effective and fair government institutions, with the percentage of people reporting that they bribed government officials over the past year rising from 9.5% in 2013 to 31.4% in 2021.[28] Secondly, Aspiration 4 addresses a peaceful and stable Africa as well as the systems necessary to achieve that. According to the progress report, although the number of armed conflicts and casualties decreased compared to 2013, the 2021 targets values for reduction were not met.[29] Moreover, as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture, 76% of the AU member states achieved the goal of establishing National Peace Councils, which aim to prevent conflicts and mediate disputes (see Table 3.2).[30]

The Agenda 2063 progress report summarizing the situation up to 2021 shows a certain amount of progress toward the above goals, with the exception of government agency corruption. However, the regional situation has become increasingly severe since then. One example is the rise in coups. Following a respite in the 2010s, between 2021 and 2023 there were 13 attempts by militaries and other forces to unlawfully seize political power, mainly in West African countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, including some that ultimately failed.[31] In addition, while multi-candidate elections have been held in most African countries, and changes of government have taken place in countries such as Liberia, trust in elections as a means of selecting national representatives has declined in

Table 3.2 Agenda 2063's Aspirations 3 and 4, Their Five Goals, and Their Progress

Aspirations and goals	Progress
Aspiration 3: An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law	42%
11) Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched	42%
12) Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place at all levels	33%
Aspiration 4: A Peaceful and Secure Africa	63%
13) Peace, security and stability is preserved	72%
14) A stable and peaceful Africa	57%
15) A fully functional and operational African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)	60%

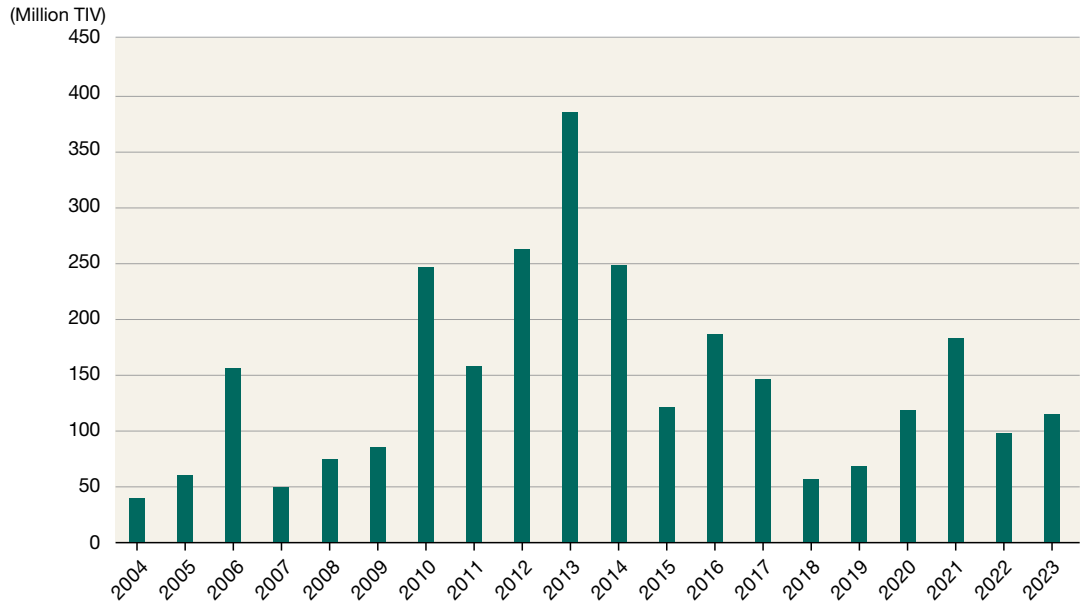
Source: Compiled by the author based on African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency (NEPAD), "Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063."

many African countries over the past decade.[32] Furthermore, with regard to the security situation, the number of casualties from attacks by Islamist armed groups in Somalia and the Sahel region reached 23,322 in 2023, nearly doubling from 2021.[33] Meanwhile, PKOs in Africa continue to be scaled back. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali withdrew by the end of 2023, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also scheduled to withdraw by the end of 2024. Furthermore, it has been decided to withdraw the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia by the end of 2024. This series of PKO withdrawals is not due to improvements in security conditions in the relevant countries, and there are concerns that the situations will deteriorate after the withdrawals.[34]

(2) Africa-China Relations in Politics and Security

While Africa-China relations have expanded primarily in the area of economics, their ties in politics and security have also been deepening since the 2000s. China's troop contributions to PKO in Africa are one element symbolic of this. As of January 2024, China had dispatched 1,425 personnel to five missions in Africa, the largest contribution among permanent members of the UN Security Council. In addition, for the first time ever, China dispatched an infantry battalion to South Sudan in 2012 and another to Mali in 2013, signaling its willingness to accept a certain level of risk for African peace and security.[35] Furthermore, in August 2017, China established its first overseas base in Djibouti, securing a strategic location not only for anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia but also as a hub

Figure 3.4 China's Arms Exports to Africa



(Note) TIV (Trend Indicator Value) is a measure defined by SIPRI that indicates the scale of arms transfers.
Source: Compiled by the author based on the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

for evacuating Chinese nationals in the event of conflicts and emergencies in Africa.[36]

China's arms exports to African countries have also increased since the 2000s (see Figure 3.4). Although export values fluctuate yearly, between 2019 and 2023, China surpassed Russia, whose arms exports had sharply declined due to its invasion of Ukraine, to become the world's largest arms exporter to Africa.[37] In particular, the five countries of Tanzania, Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, and Zambia account for 60% of China's arms exports to Africa.[38]

Alongside increasingly active arms exports, opportunities for military exchanges between China and African countries have also increased. For example, thousands of senior military personnel from almost all African countries have participated in China's military education programs.[39] Additionally, high-level meetings, such as the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, where highest-level military and defense officials from China and African countries gather to discuss African security issues, have been regularly held since 2019, along with mutual visits to military facilities.

In addition to the military, China and Africa are also actively conducting cooperation and exchanges related to policing. Between 2018 and 2021, over 2,000 African police and law enforcement personnel received training in China.[40] China has also offered support through the provision of equipment and the construction of facilities, including police academies, in African countries.[41] Particularly in recent years, China has provided its surveillance technology, with at least 12 African countries believed to have adopted Huawei's digital surveillance technology for use by their police forces for law enforcement and other purposes.[42] China has also dispatched private security companies to African countries. Between 2018 and 2020, those Chinese companies provided security at ports and infrastructure projects with Chinese involvement in 14 African countries.[43]

Thus, China's engagement with Africa's security is apparently diversifying, with arms exports, in particular, raising its profile. However, the scale of military cooperation beyond arms exports remains smaller than that of the United States and other countries, and the nature of China's engagement also differs.[44] For example, in terms of forms of exchanges, while the United States often conducts meetings and trainings, China's exchanges are often ceremonial, such as mutual visits to military facilities.[45] In addition, despite establishing its overseas base in Djibouti, China's military presence in Africa remains relatively small compared to countries such as the United States and France, which has had ties to Africa dating back to the colonial era. Moreover, it is unlikely that China will open new military bases in Africa in the near future beyond its Djibouti base. Instead, China is more likely to focus on developing military-civil dual-use facilities, such as ports, in African countries.[46]

The Mwalimu Nyerere Leadership School established in Tanzania with assistance from the Chinese Communist Party (August 2022) (Asahi Shimbun)

In addition to such engagement in the

areas of military and security, China has also been proactive in strengthening its political ties with Africa. For over 30 years, the Chinese foreign minister has visited African countries for the first overseas visit of the year, demonstrating China's stance of placing diplomatic importance on Africa over many years. Beyond these state-to-state relations, the ties between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and key African political parties date back to Africa's post-colonial independence period. The National People's Congress has relationships with the legislative bodies of 35 African countries, and the CCP has ties with 110 political parties across 51 African countries.[47] Furthermore, in recent years, China has made moves to strengthen these relationships and spread its political and governance ideas in Africa. One representative example is The Mwalimu Nyerere Leadership School, which opened in Tanzania in February 2022. This political school was built with assistance from the CCP, and serves as a place where young members of political parties from six southern African countries learn about socialist ideals and realities as well as the building of strong parties.[48] In this way, China's political and security relations with Africa are expanding beyond material and technical ties to include ideology and political thought.

(3) Challenges in Africa-China Relations Concerning Politics and Security

While Africa-China relations have developed primarily in the area of economics, since the 2010s, China's engagement with African politics and security has gradually become closer and multifaceted. However, several challenges can be identified regarding the strengthening of such ties to contribute to the realization of Africa's Agenda 2063.

First, there is the issue of China's principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. Under this principle, China has avoided active involvement in the political situation of other countries or regional conflicts. This stance has been welcomed by African countries, which have a negative history of colonial rule by European countries, and it has certainly created fertile ground for African countries' understanding and support of China's position. However, as China's economic engagement deepens and it has increasing interests in Africa, along with the number of Chinese nationals residing there, it may become more difficult for China to maintain a neutral stance on political and security situations in the region.

For example, China has in principle maintained a neutral position regarding military coups in other countries, which have been frequent in recent years, particularly in West Africa. However, it is questionable whether China can continue to uphold this neutral stance if there is a possibility that the various interests and safety of Chinese companies are threatened. In fact, during the military coup in Guinea in September 2021, China changed its usual course and issued a statement opposing the coup. The background for this is believed to be China's bauxite mining interests acquired under the previous regime in Guinea.[49] If China changes its stance and degree of engagement for political and security conditions in Africa based on its own interests, rather than adhering to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, China may find it increasingly difficult to differentiate itself from Western countries

as it has done thus far. In addition, there are many interstate rivalries within Africa, and there have already been situations in which China, as a major arms exporter, has provided weapons and training to opposing states or forces.[50] A challenge for China's security engagement in Africa will be whether it can collaborate with the AU and African countries to take on a mediating role in Africa's regional conflicts and disputes, and even refrain from arms exports when necessary, or whether it will remain a bystander under its stance of neutrality and non-interference in internal affairs.

The second challenge is the impact of China's engagement in politics and security on democratization in Africa. While there is a general consensus on the importance of democracy in Africa, in reality democratization has been obstructed or reversed due to armed conflicts and coups. In this context, there are still uncertainties concerning the influence on democratization progress in African countries of China's cooperation and exchanges with Africa through training and the provision of weapons and equipment for military and police forces, as well as China's export of its political ideology through exchanges between political parties and its political schools. Beyond the fact that Chinese weapons have been used in conflicts like the one in Sudan, and that Chinese surveillance technology is being adopted by some African countries, there are currently no direct cases which suggest that China's expansion of its political and military engagement is obstructing democratization in Africa. In reality, political leaders, military forces, and the like in Africa seem to selectively adopt the various technologies, trainings, and education provided by China according to their own national situations, rather than accepting them as-is.[51] Thus, the expansion of Chinese support is unlikely to lead to the outright "Sinicization" of African countries. Nevertheless, it is also true that the various equipment, technologies, and experiences offered by China provide certain political leaders, militaries, or police forces with means that facilitate maintaining authoritarian regimes. Thus far, China's engagement in politics and security in Africa has mostly been non-interventionist, including human resources development and mutual understanding. The impact of this engagement on Africa's political and security conditions requires mid- to long-term assessment.

3. The Challenges and Prospects of Africa-China Relations

(1) China's Role and Limitations in Addressing Africa's Challenges

As discussed thus far, there are many aspects of China's deepening engagement that have contributed to addressing Africa's economic, political, and security challenges. China's approach to Africa differs from that of Europe and the United States, and thus African countries have more choices. As China, Western countries, and other countries engage with Africa from different perspectives and sometimes compete, African countries are more likely to benefit from better options and greater advantages.

However, China's role in addressing Africa's challenges also has limitations. For example, with regard to the issue of debt distress in Africa, while China and other countries and organizations outside the region bear responsibility for lending to projects with uncertain prospects, many of the problems stem from African governments themselves, such as the formulation of unprofitable projects or the misappropriation of loans, which these external countries and organizations have difficulty controlling. What is often overlooked in the "debt trap" narrative is the responsibility of African governments, the entities in charge of these projects in the first place, which could avoid such traps by considering the future prospects of the projects and their fiscal limitations.

Similarly, in the areas of politics and security, although China has been expanding its engagement in recent years, it still formally maintains the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, and its engagement in addressing African countries' political and security challenges remains limited. However, as China's interests in Africa continue to grow, it is unclear whether China can continue to uphold this non-interference position. In fact, there have already been instances where its approach deviates from this stance. It will be necessary to closely observe whether China can indicate clear guidelines on the gap between its principle and its actual actions, or if it will continue to maintain an ambiguous position going forward.

In addition, even if China maintains its position of non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries, China's increasing presence raises the likelihood that it will become entangled in political conflicts within African countries. According to a public opinion survey conducted by Afrobarometer for people in 34 African countries from 2019 to 2021, over 60% of respondents positively evaluated China's political and economic impact on Africa. On the other hand, in countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Ghana, there are some cases of local political leaders leveraging anti-China sentiment smoldering in some quarters for their own political activities.[52] While such anti-China sentiment can be mitigated to a certain extent through diplomatic means and the media, China cannot fully control the feelings of local people or the activities of local politicians to leverage those feelings. Hence, as China's engagement in Africa deepens, there is an increasing risk that China will become entangled in the political affairs of African countries, regardless of its principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

(2) Africa in the Era of U.S.-China Competition

As strategic competition between the United States and China becomes a key issue following the War on Terror, both countries are seeking to strengthen their engagement with Africa. In December 2022, U.S. President Joseph Biden held a summit with African country leaders for the first time in eight years, demonstrating the United States' stance to actively engage with Africa. The Biden administration's Africa strategy and the U.S. Africa Command's posture statement also reflect an awareness of the competition with China in Africa.[53] What will this strategic U.S.-China competition bring to Africa, and where will Africa-China relations head?

If U.S.-China competition further intensifies, African countries will face various opportunities and risks. In terms of the former, opportunities will emerge for an enhanced African presence in international organizations as well as increased investments and economic assistance. As the United States and China each work to shape the international order they respectively advocate, the voices of Africa, with its more than 50 countries, cannot be ignored. Amid the intensifying U.S.-China competition, African countries are highly likely to have more chances to express their views and ideals on the global stage, and have them reflected. Similarly, the competition between the United States and China could lead to better terms for investment, loans, and assistance from both countries. Loans and assistance under better conditions would reduce the risk of debt distress, allow funds to be directed toward addressing issues like poverty reduction, education, and healthcare, and potentially provide African countries with opportunities for further economic growth.

On the other hand, the U.S.-China competition poses certain risks for Africa. The worst-case scenario would be African countries splitting into opposing camps and becoming pawns in the U.S.-China competition. This would be a situation reminiscent of the U.S.-Soviet confrontation during the Cold War. Preventing a return to such a situation will be a critical challenge for African countries. The sense of unity in the region has increased through the AU and other regional institutions, but African countries are not always monolithic on certain political agendas. For example, in the UN vote on the resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, African nations were nearly evenly split between support and abstention, non-voting, and opposition. The differences that exist among African countries may become more pronounced amid U.S.-China competition, and there may be a growing need to prevent the region from becoming politically divided. The AU will likely become more important than ever as a regional organization in maintaining regional unity and presenting African countries as equal partners for major powers like the United States and China.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the current state of Africa-China relations, as well as their characteristics and challenges. What has become clear is that relations between Africa and China have become closer across wide-ranging fields since the 2000s. Particularly with regard to economics, during periods of economic stagnation in Africa and around the world due to external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China's presence has grown even larger. As Africa continues to pursue further economic growth, maintaining and developing its relations with China is essential. Similarly, in the areas of politics and security, the relationship between Africa and China has become multi-faceted, including China's troop contributions to PKO missions in Africa and its establishment of a base in Djibouti, as well as arms exports, exchanges at the military and police levels, the

establishment of political schools, and the introduction of surveillance technology. However, it is not necessarily clear how the expansion and strengthening of these relations will contribute to resolving political and security challenges in Africa. China's engagement in these fields is mostly indirect, and its impacts must be assessed in the medium to long term.

This chapter also highlighted various challenges and risks associated with Africa-China relations. In the area of economics, overly optimistic loans have increased the risk of debt distress in African countries. In addition, the relationship between Africa and China is asymmetric. While China's continued and strengthened economic engagement is indispensable for Africa's further economic growth and debt repayment, for China, Africa is just one of several regional options. Therefore, economic stagnation or debt distress in Africa could lead to reduced Chinese engagement. In fact, the volume of Chinese loans and investments has shrunk in recent years. Rather than the large-scale infrastructure projects thus far, China is increasingly focusing on industrial development in Africa.

In the areas of politics and security, it seems to be becoming difficult for China to continue to maintain its principle of non-interference in internal affairs when dealing with situations in Africa. It is possible that China will change its stance based on its interests. Even if China seeks to adhere to its principle of non-interference, its growing presence in African countries will unavoidably make it become entangled in local politics. It will be necessary to closely observe how China responds to the new situations emerging amid its deepening engagement in Africa. Moreover, the impact of China's deepening political and security engagement on Africa's democratization is difficult to directly assess at this point and must be considered as a mid- to long-term issue.

While there is no doubt that China can play a very significant role in Africa's economic development, peace, and stability, there are certain limitations. In some African countries, particularly where political leaders aim to maintain the status quo and where corruption, bribery, and nepotism are rampant, the influence China can exert may be limited. Ultimately, it is up to the people of Africa to decide how they utilize China's various forms of engagement and support. Understanding Africa's policies and perspectives is essential when looking at Africa-China relations. With regard to the impact of the strategic competition between the United States and China, African countries may have the opportunity to enhance their international presence or secure more favorable terms for investments and loans amid the U.S.-China rivalry. However, there is also the risk of the competition causing divisions and conflicts within the region. In any case, there is no doubt that the relations between Africa and China will become increasingly important in foreseeing the future international order. To that end, it is essential to comprehensively understand Africa-China relations as they develop in a multifaceted manner across various fields such as economics, politics, and security. In doing so, attention must be paid not only to China's perspectives and policies but also to the agency of African countries.

Conclusions

YATSUZUKA Masaaki

This report discussed China's relations with the rising Global South from multifaceted perspectives, using the Middle East and Africa as examples. Based on these discussions, several conclusions can be drawn about relations between China and the Global South.

First, China's emergence as an economic power has increased its influence over the Global South in various aspects. Through the development of economic and trade relations, this influence is affecting developing countries' perceptions of China and their foreign policy behavior. China is also employing the framework of multilateralism that it has established in each region since the 1990s to flexibly deepen cooperative matters on a region-by-region and state-by-state basis, as well as to advance specific projects under the Belt and Road initiative (BRI). Furthermore, depending on the regional and national situation, China maintains contacts with a wide range of actors, including non-state actors, as illustrated by its relations with the Houthis in Chapter 2 and its relationships with foreign political parties and legislative bodies in Chapter 3. On the other hand, as shown in Chapter 3, the deepening of such economic relations depends on the resources possessed by the partner countries and does not necessarily result in the solution of the problems of these regions.

Given that China's economic growth has already peaked, it will be difficult for the country to leverage foreign aid and economic cooperation to increase its influence as it did during its period of rapid economic expansion. Meanwhile, China's abundant human resources and technology continue to act as a unifying force for developing countries. China is also working to create soft connectivity among these countries to bring their digital infrastructure up to Chinese standards through technology licensing and training. Such technological cooperation, based on the asymmetry in technological capabilities between China and the Global South, could lead to a long-term dominant-subordinate relationship in which Global South countries rely on China for the provision of infrastructure and platforms.

Second, China is increasing its military involvement in the Global South against the backdrop of domestic pressure to enhance China's security capabilities for the sake of its foreign interests around the world. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has progressively increased its military presence overseas, sending troops to UN peacekeeping operations, deploying naval vessels on a rotational basis to anti-piracy operations, and establishing a support base in Djibouti. In addition, the country has been actively conducting a wide variety of military engagement, including senior military official exchanges in Global South countries, joint military exercises, arms exports, the provision of specialized military training, and even the dispatch of private military companies. On the other hand, China's strategy of strengthening its overseas military commitments to safeguard its foreign interests has gradually resulted in its self-imposed declaratory policies, such as the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs, being reduced to mere formalities, and this has made it difficult for the country to maintain its neutrality in fluid regional affairs and interstate conflicts. In other words, the more China expands its influence in the Global South, the more likely it is that its substantive relations will shift from non-intervention in internal affairs to "constructive intervention." Conversely, if China

adheres to the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs, this could act as a certain constraint on relations between China and the Global South.

On the other hand, assuming that China is strengthening its military involvement overseas solely for the purpose of safeguarding its own foreign interests, even if this leads to an expansion of China's military presence, including the establishment of bases to ensure its security, and an increase in military diplomacy, it is still difficult to imagine that this would lead China to take on the role of guaranteeing the security of the regime or undertake obligations to defend distant countries in the Global South, or that China would send troops to other regions and intervene directly in international conflicts. To put it another way, China is not trying to take over the role served by the United States forming global network of allies. On the contrary, Middle Eastern countries view security cooperation with China as potentially compatible with that with the United States, and welcome China's increased military commitment. Nevertheless, if the Xi Jinping administration seeks to play an active role in international hotspot issues, as suggested by its vision of "major-power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics," then it is likely to become more involved in conflicts in the Global South, albeit in a different way from the United States.

Third, China and many countries in the Global South loosely share a vision of the direction in which they believe the international order should evolve: from unipolar hegemony by the United States (or Western countries) to a multipolar order made possible by the rise of the Global South. Underlying this may be dissatisfaction with the current global governance system itself, which was formed under Western leadership, and distrust of the ethics of Western countries that stems from historical circumstances such as colonial rule. China has responded to this dissatisfaction and distrust by reinforcing its stance as a challenger to the existing international order, advocating development, security, and values initiatives that incorporate critiques of the West. To accomplish these initiatives, China has been rallying the Global South to build an international united front with the composition of "Western developed countries" versus "the Global South majority." In the early stage of the Xi Jinping administration, there was a strong opportunistic aspect, so to speak, in which relations were built by expanding economic cooperation with the Global South in various areas through initiatives such as the BRI concept. However, as the strategic competition between the United States and China heats up, the Xi Jinping administration has become more inclined to strategically exert China's influence in the Global South. The Global South's reception of efforts to establish an international anti-Western united front is naturally mixed; at the same time, many developing countries that prioritize economic development are willing to accept such efforts if they contribute to their own development or correct inequities in global governance. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, China's anti-American stance has been received favorably by anti-American forces, including Iran and other non-state actors. Considering China's relations with the United States and its position of the international community, China appears to be exploring ways to cooperate with these and other anti-American forces, depending on the targets of cooperation.

On a related point, China's leadership among countries in the Global South is not self-evident. China is committed to increasing its representation and voice of the Global South and is keen to consolidate leadership of the Global South in its own hands. However, even within the Global South, a group of states with significant growth potential has emerged, led by India, and the internal balance of power is shifting dramatically. It also goes without saying that the countries of the Global South are diverse and have a variety of intersecting interests. If China takes steps beyond the context of joint economic development with the Global South to build a dominant-subordinate relationship or an international united front with strong anti-American (or anti-Western) overtones, Global South countries are likely to reconsider their cooperation with China from the perspective of strategic autonomy and maximizing their own national interests.

What do these trends in the development of relations between China and the Global South mean for the international order? Based on the discussions in this report, several insights can be gained.

First, China's deepening involvement in various spheres, even if it does not completely impede democratization in the Global South, will facilitate regime survival in a group of authoritarian states. While the Chinese government denies the export of a "China model" to other countries, it has simultaneously criticized the universality of the values of freedom and democracy and emphasized the applicability of its own "experiences" in development and governance to developing countries. In particular, the Chinese government continues its foreign propaganda policy, emphasizing the superiority of the CCP's governance system over Western liberal and democratic political systems by justifying measures such as its zero-COVID policy during the global pandemic.

China also provides governance capacity-building assistance to developing countries through the provision of education, training, and surveillance technology under the framework of public security and policing cooperation. Authoritarian states in the Global South tend to accept such education and technology transfers. While these forms of assistance are expected to contribute to improving the public security capacity and social stability of states plagued by civil war and terrorism, they are also likely to suppress democratic political participation in authoritarian states, leading to the consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Another aspect is that China's foreign aid is carried out under the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs and in the midst of unfair governance and corruption, which effectively serves as an option for countries accepting this aid to avoid dependence on Western countries and reduces the effectiveness of "democratization pressure." In other words, China's deepening involvement does not necessarily contribute to better governance in developing countries, such as eradicating corruption and increasing transparency, but rather could serves to strengthen the governance capabilities of current regimes, accompanied by social repression. Furthermore, the fact that China is working with states with authoritarian regimes to, among other things, shape international norms of cybersecurity governance that emphasize the superiority of state authority can be seen as fostering an international environment conducive to the survival of authoritarian regimes.

Second, the strategic competition between the United States and China is likely to continue,

spanning a variety of areas and enmeshing the Global South in the competition. China is responding to the escalation of the U.S.-China confrontation by seeking to build an international united front that includes the Global South. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Global South, playing "the China card" has value as a bargaining chip for these countries to enhance their own value in their relations with the United States. The United States has, in fact, tended to reinforce its commitments in regions of the Global South where China's influence has grown. One aspect of this, pointed out in Chapter 3, is that this may also be an opportunity for the Global South to expand its options for economic development and to enjoy better benefits.

The U.S.-China strategic competition in the Global South is likely to intensify not only in the economic, political, and military spheres, but also in the cognitive domain and international norms. By advocating "major-power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics," China is taking its own approach to diplomacy, offering alternative peace proposals to those of Western countries for wars and conflicts in other regions. While such moves by China have not immediately led to cessation of fighting or resolution of conflicts, they have gained some support from countries in the Global South that have been critical of the Western response. China is also stepping up calls for global governance reform and for the formation of international norms that are more favorable to the preservation of authoritarian regimes. Given that the Global South represents the majority in the international community and its views cannot be overlooked, it is probable that the strategic competition between the United States and China over the shaping of international norms will intensify.

On the other hand, sympathizing with China's anti-American stance would mean risking confrontation with and sanctions from the United States. For most states in the Global South, with the exception of those such as Iran and North Korea, which are explicitly hostile towards the United States, the best diplomatic choice would be to use China as a bargaining chip against the United States while maintaining a non-hostile stance towards the United States. In light of the fact that the United States (or any Western country) is dealing with a Global South that maintains this kind of widely swinging neutrality, a flexible diplomatic approach that accounts for the specific circumstances of each region and country will be needed.

Third, if China, through the Global South, which forms the majority of the international community, strengthens its international discourse power, it could have a significant impact on security in East Asia. Recent Chinese attempts to win over the Global South have started to manifest strongly in narrative aspects. In recent years, in its bilateral relations with the Global South countries and in multilateral frameworks, including the United Nations, China has been seeking to shape an international public opinion in its favor by urging other countries to show "respect for core interests" through expressions and methods of support. China has also sought to legitimize its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force by spreading propaganda about an "international consensus" in favor of actions that defend its core interests. These attempts include not only human rights issues within China, but also issues related to its maritime interests and regional security.

Regions within the Global South, such as Africa and the Middle East, cannot be said to have a sufficient understanding of the situation in East Asia, including the Taiwan Strait, due to factors such as geographical distance. In light of this, countries seeking to maintain and strengthen a "free and open Indo-Pacific" will need to enhance their public diplomacy to ensure a shared, stable view of the international order based on the rule of law, while strengthening their ties with the Global South. Along with these efforts, these countries will need to develop partnerships based on long-term trust by exploring economic cooperation and capacity-building support rooted in individual needs, with an eye to solving social challenges in the countries of the Global South.

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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