

# Building Global Partnership on Preventive Diplomacy: Coordinating and Integrating Multiple Players

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As a political concept, preventive diplomacy may trace its origin back to the era of Cold War. It was first formally presented by the late UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, who opined that the aim of the preventive actions taken by the relevant agencies of the UN was to fill the power vacuum existing in the area outside the sphere of influence of the superpowers. “The United Nations enters the picture on the basis of its non-commitment to any power bloc, so as to provide to the extent possible a guarantee in relation to all parties against initiatives from others”.<sup>1</sup> Narrowly speaking, it just refers to the work on good offices, investigation, and mediation before further escalation or deterioration of the crises or conflicts, without any reference to the deployment of military troops. In contrast, preventive diplomacy in its extensive meaning not just includes the efforts made in the early period, but also covers the peacekeeping operations led or authorized by the UN. Under some circumstances it may also include the work on post-conflict peacebuilding. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali also made a broad definition in his *Agenda for Peace* as “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur”.<sup>2</sup> That said, the focus of nowadays preventive diplomacy has changed greatly from the early time. As interpreted by Mr. Hammarskjöld, the original intent is to prevent the superpowers of the Cold War from directly intervening into conflicts breaking out in the peripheral areas outside the sphere of influences of the two blocs, in case that they may lead to direct military confrontation between the superpowers. Later the preventive diplomacy advocated by western powers actually had strong sense of interference into domestic affairs of other countries, which became an instrument of legitimation for their actions to manipulate the changes in the internal political situations in small and medium countries. Contemporary preventive diplomacy mainly focuses on two targets, which

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly, “Introduction to the Report of the Secretary General on the Work of the Organization, 16 June 1959 – 15 June 1960”, General Assembly Official Records, 1960, 15<sup>th</sup> Session, Supplement No. 1A (A4390/Add.1), p.7.

<sup>2</sup> An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peacekeeping, UN Document, A/47/277-S/24111 (1992).

are the short-term goal of prevention of conflicts and resumption of order and the long-term goal of eradication of root causes for conflicts and realization of sustainable peace. This means to set up early warning mechanisms to identify major threats; use political and diplomatic measures to prevent the deterioration of situations; maintain order and security by dispatching peacekeeping operations; and then help the conflict-affected societies address the root causes deeply embedded in the economic, political, and social structure of the society. In recent years, many international organizations have been working on the capacity-enhancing for preventive diplomacy, including early warning systems, targeted financing for rapid response, specialized prevention mechanisms, and the frequent use of special envoys. These conflict prevention mechanisms have in practice made some achievements. According to the statistics from Swedish Uppsala University Conflict Data Program, the number of low-intensity conflicts during the period of 2000-2009 only accounts for a half of the number in 1990s. In the same period, the number of newly occurring or escalated high-intensity conflicts also shows a small decrease, down from 21 in the previous decade to 16.<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, with the complexity and multiplicity of the origins, evolution, and manifestations of various security threats, in order to fulfill its goal of preventing threats of violent conflicts at the early stage, preventive diplomacy needs multi-level institutional structure and multiple participating actors. A global network should be established to seek coordinated actions of various parties at global, regional, sub-regional, or state level and accommodate various actors like international organizations, national governments, sub-state entities, and transnational actors. The United Nations, with its special institutions and status deriving from international law, has gradually become the builder and dominating force in the global partnership for preventive diplomacy.

#### I. Preventive Diplomacy under the UN Institutional Framework

In terms of crisis and conflict prevention, the UN has been trying to transform itself from a “culture of responsiveness” to a “culture of prevention”, which means to regard preventive diplomacy as an important instrument for the UN to enforce its responsibilities. The multiple agencies of the UN have enhanced their early intervention in crises and conflicts. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document there was a requirement for the enhancement of capabilities of

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<sup>3</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset, version 4-2010, 1946-2009, available from [http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/19/19228\\_UCDP\\_PRIO\\_ArmedConflictDataset\\_V4\\_2010.xls](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/19/19228_UCDP_PRIO_ArmedConflictDataset_V4_2010.xls).

the Secretary-General in making use of good offices and mediation to settle disputes and conflicts.<sup>4</sup> In the words of former Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN Wang Guangya, “prevention of crisis is the first step in settling complex crisis, also an important step... The Security Council has critical responsibility in making a comprehensive prevention strategy based on the analysis of the features of complex crisis. The General Assembly, ECOSOC and other UN agencies should make use of their own advantages and join the common efforts of conflict prevention in the way of cooperation and division of labor”.<sup>5</sup> On 31 January 1992, the Security Council held the first Summit-level meeting attended by the Head of States or Governments of the Security Council member countries. Its communique demanded the Secretary-General to “make analyses and suggestions on how to enhance the capability and efficiency of the UN in making preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping in accordance with the structure and stipulations of the Charter of the United Nations”.<sup>6</sup> The 2005 Outcome Document also stressed the importance of a consistent and comprehensive way in preventing armed conflicts and settling disputes. The Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Secretary-General need to coordinate their respective actions under the scope of competencies mandated by the Charter.<sup>7</sup> Based on these guiding documents, the UN has advocated for preventive actions at different levels, including structural preventive actions to address origins of conflicts; operational preventive actions to ensure the effectiveness of early warning system, mediation, humanitarian access and response, protection of civilians, and targeted sanctions; and systemic preventive actions to stem the conflicts from spillover to other countries.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with the competencies granted by the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly, Security Council, and Secretariat all have certain function of preventive diplomacy. Article 34 of chapter six of the Charter concerning peaceful settlement of disputes stipulates that “the Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the

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<sup>4</sup> 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> Speech of Chinese Permanent Representative to the UN Wang Guangya in Security Council Open Debate on “Complex Crisis and UN’s Response”, May 8, 2004, <http://www.china-un.org/chn/fyywj/wn/fy04/t122889.htm>, accessed on August 1, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> See Zhou Qipeng, “An Analysis on the UN Preventive Diplomacy”, in *United Nations System and Reform*, edited by Yuan Shibin and Qian Wenrong, Beijing Language Press, 1995, p.137.

<sup>7</sup> 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, p.19.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Implementation of Resolution 1625 (2005) on Conflict Prevention, Particularly in Africa, New York: UN, 2008.

dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security”. The chapter seven granted the Security Council more enforceable competence in maintenance of international peace and security as well as a large extent of discretionary power. In contrast, the advantage of the General Assembly lies in its broad scope of competence, which makes it eligible for the discussion and making advices for any item in connection to international peace and security. According to Article 99 of the Charter, “the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security”. Actually in the UN’s daily work, the Secretary-General and the Secretariat under his leadership have played more prominent role in preventive diplomacy. The dissemination of information and analyses for all member states, the General Assembly, and Security Council has been one of the important contributions the Secretariat made in this aspect. When the Secretary-General implements its global responsibility in terms of maintenance of peace and security as per the Charter, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) will provide advices and support on all the political issues. The DPA’s work mainly focuses on the prevention, handling, and settlement of conflicts, peacemaking, electoral assistance, and supportive work to the Security Council. In 2006, a new Mediation Support Unit was set up under the DPA, which provides service to the mediation process launched by the UN or non-UN agencies.

Apart from the previous major organs of the UN, some other agencies or departments also have an ever important role in the practices of preventive diplomacy, such as the Human Rights Council (HRC), Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, and Special Representatives of Secretary-General (SRSG), etc.

In accordance with the General Assembly resolution passed on 15 March 2006, the HRC was set up. Its mandate aims to promote universal respect for and protect the equal and equitable enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights and basic freedoms. It also addresses situations of human rights violations, including serious and systematic violation, and provides advices in relation to this.<sup>9</sup> A major difference between the HRC and its predecessor the Commission on Human Rights lies in the fact that it is directly subordinated to the General Assembly. It also set up new Universal Periodic Review (UPR) besides the already-existed country-specific and thematic review mechanisms, with the UPR requiring all UN member states

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<sup>9</sup> UN General Assembly, A/RES/60/251, 3 April 2006.

to provide report periodically on the status of protection of human rights and basic freedoms in their respective countries. In addition, the HRC maintains certain special procedures under the Commission on Human Rights, for instance, the so-called “1503 procedure” aimed at investigation of large scale human rights violations. These mechanisms have made the HRC more sensitive to the signs of instability or turmoil inside certain countries. Based on the existing inter-institutional connection between the HRC and the Security Council, it may play certain role in early warning and acquiring of facts and evidences.

In the wake of the 2005 World Summit, the UN Secretary-General set up the office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, which can be regarded as an innovative practice in relation to institution building for preventive diplomacy. The office of these two Special Advisers aims to prevent those serious international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, with one major function being to assist the Secretary-General in respect of information collection, dissemination, analysis, and assessment. When there are signs or trends of potential large scale human rights violations, genocide, or ethnic cleansing, the office of Special Advisers will release warning message and statement, so as to attract international attention and prompt the Security Council to review specific situations or take actions.

On the other hand, on the basis of assessments of experiences and lessons learned in the field work of peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding in 1990s, the UN has put more emphasis on the leadership of special missions to host states, which has meant the promotion of the role and responsibility of the SRSG or Deputy SRSG. As for the SRSG, this enlargement of competencies has made him/her become the leader in terms of various agencies attending to peace operations, including the commander of the peacekeeping force, chief officer of the civilian police, residential coordinator, and humanitarian affairs coordinator. Former Secretary-General Annan stressed that the SRSG has a crucial role in promoting integrated field work, which may stem the conflict parties from taking advantage of the deficiency in the consistency of various UN agencies’ work.<sup>10</sup> The SRSG is the high-level representative of the UN in the host states, and has full power over all the activities taken by the UN in the territories of relevant countries. The SRSG’s primary work is

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<sup>10</sup> Susanna P. Campbell and Anja T. Kaspersen, “The UN’s Reforms: Confronting Integration Barriers”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 15, No. 4, August 2008, pp.470-485.

to establish a comprehensive framework to provide guidance for the work of the UN mission and other agencies in the host state, and ensure that all the UN agencies in the state act in a coordinated and consistent way.<sup>11</sup>

## II. Regional Early Warning and Prevention Mechanism

In the wake of the Cold War, the resurgence of regionalism has led to the creation of many regional and sub-regional organizations. Among them, many organizations have made relevant rules on matters relating to intervention into regional affairs, which has made regional conflict prevention mechanisms a critical part of global conflict management. In Eurasia area, under the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), there are such agencies as Crisis Prevention Center, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and Forum for Security Cooperation, etc. Among them, the High Commissioner on National Minorities was one innovative creation in addressing security threats. Its work is to release early warning signals and take preventive intervention in member states when there is great risk of conflicts. In the discussion on the institutional building of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it also touched upon the issue of intervention in the case of political turmoil or civil conflicts in its member states. In 2006, the SCO adopted the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regulation on Observer Delegation Observing Presidential and (or) Parliamentary Elections and Plebiscites*, which authorized the organization to observe and monitor the process of national political elections in its member states. In its Beijing Summit held in June 2012, the SCO made some revision of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regulation on the Political and Diplomatic Measures and Mechanisms to Address Threats to Regional Peace, Security, and Stability* based on an earlier version adopted in 2009. The revised regulation included measures such as joint early warning, crisis management, and the protection and evacuation of Diasporas into the legal dimension of the SCO. The Joint Declaration released after the Beijing Summit reaffirmed such a common stance of the members, “when there is situations constituting threats to the peace, stability, and security in one member of this Organization or the entire region, the member states will take political and diplomatic measures compatible with the stipulations of relevant legal documents of this Organization with a view to addressing the situations promptly

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<sup>11</sup> “Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions”, Kofi A. Annan, UN Secretary-General, 9 February 2006.

and appropriately”.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of various regions in the world, there are more prominent and influential changes in the African continent. With the rising importance of Africa in international peace and security, various African regional organizations have been enhancing their institutional and capacity building work. In 2002, the African Union Summit held in Durban of South Africa adopted the Protocol Relating to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. This legal document established the African Peace and Security Framework with the Peace and Security Council playing a leading role. It also included the African Continental Early Warning System, African Standby Force, Peace Fund, and the Panel of Eminent Persons. The AU Peace and Security Council is a standing decision-making organ in charge of conflict prevention, management, and settlement. Its competence covers the authorization of, mobilization, and deployment of peacekeeping troops; making advice on intervention to the AU General Assembly in the case of genocide and war crimes; implementing the AU Common Defense Policy; and humanitarian actions in regions impacted by conflicts or natural disasters.<sup>13</sup> The major role of the African Peace and Security Framework includes: a leading role in political decision-making process; collecting and streamlining the information relating to the crises; providing assistance to peacekeeping operations; prevention and mediation of disputes as well as good offices in the name of the AU; and mobilizing the financial and other material resources in support of peace operations.<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the basic principles laid out in its Constitutive Act including the promotion of peace, security, democracy, good governance, and common defense, in particular the principle of non-indifference, the AU has colored itself with an increasing sense of interventionism for political crises and military issues. Correspondingly, a lot of African sub-regional organizations have also clearly laid out the provisions on enhancing institutions and capacities in terms of early warning and rapid response to violent conflicts. However, the lack of capacity and human and material resources has become a common challenge facing all the African regional or sub-regional organizations. They need to further consolidate conflict prevention and response system, and also

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<sup>12</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization Leaders of Member States Declaration on Building Sustainable Peace and Common Prosperity in the Region, 7 June 2012, Beijing.

<sup>13</sup> “Report of the African Union-United Nations panel on modalities for support to African Union peacekeeping operations”, UN Document, A/63/666-S/2008/813, 31 December 2008.

<sup>14</sup> “African Institutions in a Changing Regional and Global Security Environment”, International Peace Institute, September 2010, p.3.

promote the cooperation and coordination among various organizations and agencies. Using the Economic Community for West Africa (ECOWAS) as an example, relevant study has shown that the ECOWAS standby force needs more stable financial and logistical support, so as to ensure it is well prepared to confront emerging regional crises like that happened in Northern Mali. There needs to be certain subsequent measures to enhance its capability of response and implementation, including comprehensive capacity building; increased coordination among various organs of ECOWAS; sustainable development of existing regional framework; forging an active and robust strategy in suppressing terrorism; building necessary infrastructure for peace promotion at the national level. The ECOWAS will also launch a ten-year program in evaluating the performance of its Early Warning/Observation Monitoring Centre so as to address the deficiency of poor coordination and lagging response in conflict prevention practices.<sup>15</sup> With the multilateral organizations demonstrating more of a distribution of capabilities and competencies at various levels, the UN Security Council and Secretary-General need to redefine and identify the role of different agencies in the UN system as well as their respective responsibilities in terms of peace and security, and also enhance the strategic dialogue and coordination with the critical regional actors.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the traditional good offices and mediation, the recognition of governments of member states and their membership in relevant regional organizations has become a way for implementing preventive diplomacy. This is made through the “non-recognition doctrine” held by regional organizations when the new government of a member state acquires its authority in a way contravening the constitutional stipulations of said state. A lot of regional organizations now decide to intervene in cases of non-constitutional change of governments in their member states, which has to a certain extent stemmed the further escalation of crises or conflicts. Despite the fact that general rules of international law have not made the recognition of legitimate new governments dependent on the way the new governments are created, under some circumstances the legitimacy issue may become the critical factor in granting recognition. Such circumstances exist when the creation of the new governments has violated some basic principles of international

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<sup>15</sup> “Report of Regional Policy Forum on the Responsibility to Protect”, ECOWAS Commission and the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), 11-12 June, 2012, Abuja, Nigeria.

<sup>16</sup> Fabienne Hara, “Preventive Diplomacy in Africa: Adapting to New Realities”, in *Preventive Diplomacy: Regions in Focus*, International Peace Institute, December 2011, p.4.



law, in particular in the case of acquiring power through a military coup. In contrast with insurgent groups or belligerent parties, the military men making the coup cannot be regarded as representing a part of the peoples in the country, so this kind of power acquisition using military violates the principles and rules concerning self-determination under international law. In practice, such recognition of a government is always closely linked to a non-recognition doctrine and made in the way of collective recognition, with the practices of the regional organizations in this respect becoming more prominent.

In recent years, the AU and some sub-regional organizations have made great efforts on this side. In February 2005, Togo President Gnassingbé Eyadéma passed away. According to President Eyadéma's will, his son Faure Gnassingbé was designated by the military as the President of Togo. However, the Togo Constitution stipulates that, under such a circumstance the Chairman of National Congress should succeed the position as acting President. And the Togo military blocked its land, air, and maritime border, making this Chairman of National Congress who was on a visit to Europe unable to get back to Togo. The AU and ECOWAS made a quick response and condemned the situation. Under pressure from international community, Faure Gnassingbé declared his resignation from the President position. On 24 April 2005, the presidential election was held in Togo. Then the Independent Election Committee declared the victory for Mr. Faure Gnassingbé as the presidential candidate representing Togo Peoples' Federation on April 26. In consideration of the new situation in Togo, the AU Peace and Security Council released a new statement, affirming that the conditions for resuming participation in activities of the AU agencies by the *de facto* Government of the Togo and its representatives have been achieved, and thus requiring the AU Committee to ensure the participation of these activities by the Togo Government. It also required that the ECOWAS and AU take joint actions to address the domestic instability in Togo so as to make it promptly resume normal social order.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, in the cases of regime change caused by military coup in Niger and Madagascar, the AU and relevant sub-regional organizations openly condemned the situations immediately, demanding that the legitimate governments created by constitutionally-stipulated elections should resume their powers in the two states. In the coup happened in the Republic of Mali, the AU and relevant

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<sup>17</sup> African Union, "Communiqué of the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Peace and Security Council", PSC/PR/Comm.(XXX), 27 May 2005.

sub-regional organizations again played an active role, demanding the creation of a government in conformity with the constitution and supported by the peoples in Mali. The consistency in the stances and actions of the international community effectively prevented the situation from further worsening in Mali.

That said, the similar institutions and practices also exist in Central and South America. On 28 June 2009, a military coup happened in Honduras and the incumbent President Zelaya was deported to Costa Rica. On the same day, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) convened an emergency ministerial meeting to consult on the response strategy on the situation in Honduras. Later the Permanent Council adopted a resolution strongly condemning the coup in Honduras. It also demanded the leaders of the military coup immediately and unconditionally resume the constitutional power of Zelaya as the President. The resolution declared that any new government arising from this military coup would not be recognized by the OAS.<sup>18</sup> Later the OAS took further action to suspend the membership of Honduras. On 1 June 2011, Honduras regained its membership after a mediated reconciliation agreement reached between the incumbent president Porfirio Lobo and the former president-in-exile Zelaya.<sup>19</sup> Considering the increasing stakes for member countries to participate relevant regional organizations, the recognition practices have actually provided regional organizations with new approaches in conflict prevention and crisis management. III. China's Persuasive Diplomacy

In China, it has not been an easy process to acknowledge and accept the political concept of preventive diplomacy. There was a turn from distrust and antagonism in the early period to advocating, supporting, and actively practicing in preventive diplomacy in recent years. In the early days, the relevant Chinese officials and scholars held a negative view of the concept, with the belief that it inherently legitimized the wanton interference in internal affairs of developing countries by the western powers via their preeminent economic, political, and military power. The approach of early involvement, inherent in the idea of conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy, required a judgment regarding the initial sign or risk of potential conflicts, and always

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<sup>18</sup> Organization of American States Press Release, "OAS Permanent Council Condemns Coup d'Etat in Honduras, Calls Meeting of Ministers and Entrusts Secretary General with Carrying Out Consultations", June 28, 2009, Reference: E-214/09.

<sup>19</sup> Organization of American States Resolution on "Participation of Honduras in the Organization of American States", June 1, 2011, AG/RES.1 (XLI-E/11).

meant a judgment on the potential risks in relation to domestic political, economic, and social situations in relevant countries. This has greatly deviated from the China's long-held adherence to the principle of non-interference. However, with post-Cold War conflicts and crises being increasingly complicated and protracted, China's national interests connected more closely with incidents and situations outside its own territory. This required a reflection on its negative attitude toward crisis and conflict prevention.

More recently, China has come to put more emphasis on its self-identity as a builder and vindicator of the existing international system. As an emerging power and one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, it has become one important factor to be considered in China's foreign policy: China needs to take the role of a major responsible power and get involved in situations that constitute threats to the stability of the international system.

In recent years, China has taken an active role in the process of peacemaking or preventive diplomacy. Its work mainly manifests in activities such as the mandate of special envoys to carry out good offices, observer delegations to monitor election process, and peacekeeping troops. In terms of special envoys to address specific regional hotspots, the Chinese government has designated several diplomats as special envoys for specific regions or countries, such as the special envoys for Korean Peninsula, Middle East, and Sudan, etc. The mandate for these special envoys fully demonstrates China's basic stance on solving crises by preventive methods, which means to promote understanding through dialogue and communication so as to mitigate tensions and crises. During the process of addressing the situations in relation to North Korea nuclear issue and situation in Sudan Darfur, Chinese Special Envoys have played an active role in promoting dialogue and the peace process. On the other hand, China has sent several observer groups to observe and monitor the elections processes in Central Asian countries, Palestine, and Sudan, including the referendum held in Southern Sudan to decide whether it sought to become an independent state. On January 25 2006, Palestine held its second parliamentary election. Around 900 international observers monitored the election process so as to ensure the transparency and effectiveness of the election. Chinese observers also joined this mission. According to the head of the Chinese delegation, their major job was to observe the election process and exchange views on the Palestine issue with observers from other countries; and to convey Chinese government's support to the Palestine peoples and seek the Palestine government's view on the regional

situation.<sup>20</sup> In January 2011, at the invitation from both the Sudan government and Southern Sudan, China sent a 15-member observer delegation composed of diplomats and scholars to observe the referendum held in Southern Sudan. During their stay, Chinese delegation also exchanged views with delegations of major international organizations, including UN Secretary-General's Panel on the Referendum in Sudan, African Union Referendum Observer Delegation, and Arab League Referendum Observer Delegation.<sup>21</sup> In accordance with the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regulation on Observer Delegation Observing Presidential and (or) Parliamentary Elections and Plebiscites*, China as a member of the SCO has often sent people to join the SCO Observer Delegation. They have completed the missions to observe and monitor the presidential elections held in several Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kirgizstan.

China's foreign policy making and practices in recent years has shown that preventive diplomacy has actually become one important way for it to intervene into crises and conflicts. This in fact demonstrates the way in which preventive diplomacy conforms with the principles and policies that China has been adhering to. In Chinese foreign policy practice, there has been consistency and continuity in terms of basic principles in international relations, such as the principle of respecting state sovereignty and non-interference. In the meantime, during the making and implementation of specific foreign policies, China has attached more weight to the common concern of international community and the complexity of contemporary global political and security situations, which has led to more flexibility in terms of specific policies and actions. This kind of principle-based political and diplomatic intervention may be termed as preventive diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, which may better be called as "persuasive diplomacy" considering its special feature. The persuasive diplomacy manifests China's stress on initiatives of relevant parties, the "behind-the-scene" feature of diplomatic good offices, and the non-coerciveness of reactive actions. Just as Prof. Wang Yizhou has put it, "Chinese diplomacy has marked itself with the oriental style wisdom and characteristics", which means to solve the

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<sup>20</sup> "China hopes the election will lead to restart of peace talks: a special interview for the Chairman of Chinese Observer Delegation An Huihou", Xin Hua Net, January 26, 2006, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2006-01/26/content\\_4101737.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2006-01/26/content_4101737.htm), accessed on March 1, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> "Chairman of Chinese Southern Sudan Referendum Observer Delegation: Hope to promote comprehensive peace in Sudan", International Online, January 13, 2011, <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2011/01/13/2225s3122165.htm>, accessed on May 4, 2011.

crises “we need to dig out to the utmost extent the potential of diplomacy, including privately-made patient and repeated work, so as to mitigate tensions and match the basic needs of the peoples through cooperation and understanding among various forces or groups”.<sup>22</sup> In practice persuasive diplomacy has made some achievements, such as interventions in the cases of Myanmar, Sudan, and South Sudan. The guiding principle inherent in China’s persuasive diplomacy demands full respect for the informal institutional norms such as religious and cultural tradition and customs. It puts great stress on the basic tenets of “put yourself into others’ shoes” and “don’t do unto others what you don’t want others do unto you”, and also attaches great importance to the leading role of regional organizations and arrangements. Correspondingly, China disagrees with the approach of simple reproduction and imposition of western ideas, concepts and institutions into relevant countries. It also strongly objects to unilateral military interventions and overreliance on a military approach.

However, there is still a great gap between expectations and reality, with the reality greatly constrained by China’s insufficient capability in both capacity and norm building. This has been caused mainly by two aspects of deficiency: the lack of relevant human resources, and the lack of experience working on conflict prevention and international crisis management. As for the human resource aspect, it has been a regrettable fact that there are hardly any images of Chinese senior diplomats in UN-sponsored preventive diplomacy and comprehensive peace operations, whether on the side of UN good offices and mediation work, or the posts of SRSRG or DSRSRG commissioned by the Secretary-General, or the chairperson of a country configuration related to a peacebuilding process. In terms of accumulation of experience, traditional inward-looking policy orientation in past years, has meant that China involvement in global and regional affairs is limited, with the rare exceptions in a few countries having close geographic or economic connection to China, like Myanmar or North Korea,. This has caused a deficiency in the capability of initiative and agenda-setting in the face of threats of crises and conflicts. China now needs more work on capacity building for preventive diplomacy with a view to laying a solid foundation for more proactive and self-initiated diplomatic policy and agenda.

In brief, today the international community is faced with more complicated security threats and

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<sup>22</sup> Wang Yizhou, *Creative Involvement: A New Direction in China’s Diplomacy*, Peking University Press, 2011, p.36.

challenges, with multiple sources of triggers and scope that risk spilling across borders. It means there are more stakeholders sitting around the table with multiple confrontations and conflicts among them deriving from long held and accumulated grievances or feelings of marginalization. These features have made any approach that relies on one single means of conflicts settlement incongruent with the real world. Considering this, the international community needs more coordinated and integrated mechanisms and measures to address crises and conflicts. This may cause subsequent change in the nature and scope of preventive diplomacy. It seems that a global partnership for preventive diplomacy under the sponsorship of the UN has become an important precondition for the successful implementation of preventive diplomacy. China has a great role to play with its unique identity as one critical emerging power in the camp of developing countries.