

Autonomy of African Countries in International Affairs—Based on the Consistency of the Vote between China, the United States and Africa in the General Assembly

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Abstract: The strategic autonomy of African countries is the starting point for understanding their pursuit of an autonomous development path. The great-power game is placing greater demands on African ownership. African countries' autonomy is mainly manifested in economic self-improvement, security governance and balanced diplomacy. In the United Nations General Assembly, African countries are able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy and independence in political, economic and security issues according to their own interests and merits. The reason for this is that there are certain limitations in the assistance of big powers; the types of issues and the pressure from the United States have also acted as catalysts; and the competition between the big powers of China and the United States has to a certain extent given free space to African countries. In the future, in China-Africa cooperation, China needs to respect and support the autonomy of African countries in their construction, build a community of human destiny with African countries, continuously strengthen cooperation and interoperability with countries of the South, lead in development, and strive to build a new international political and economic order.

Keywords: African National Autonomy; UN General Assembly Voting; Major Powers Competition

1. Introduction

The strategic autonomy of African countries is the starting point for understanding their pursuit of an autonomous development path^[1]. After the Second World War, African national liberation movements flourished and national independent States emerged. In the face of the unprecedented anti-colonial movement, the colonizers temporarily recovered part of their power from the African continent. Although African countries have achieved independence from the sovereign state, on the one hand, because of the relatively short period of independence, it is difficult for African countries to completely get rid of the control of the sovereign state in a short period of time, and the internal and external affairs of the country have not yet been fully autonomous; on the other hand, the modernization of African countries is difficult, and the power of international discourse is relatively weak, and often subject to constraints by the developed countries in the international affairs. At present, against the backdrop of intensified geopolitical competition among major powers, the importance of the African continent as an emerging power in the world has been highlighted. African countries seek to maintain strategic autonomy, refrain from choosing sides or taking sides, avoid involvement in the competition among the major powers, and seek to maintain balanced diplomacy and speak with one voice in the international arena. This autonomy and neutrality is also projected onto Africa's position in international affairs. This paper collects voting data on issues in the UN General Assembly between African countries and China and the United States, and analyzes the autonomy of Africa in the game between China and the United States on this basis.

2. Autonomy of the African Countries

Pan-Africanism is the spiritual root of the strategic autonomy of African countries. Pan-Africanism arose in the 19th century. As the banner of African countries seeking unity and

development, the concept of Pan-Africanism is closely related to the independence and liberation of Africa. Specifically, Pan-Africanism emphasized self-reliance and equal development, and called for “Africa to belong to the African race, and the blacks to rule Africa”^[2], which inspired the African people to fight for independence. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded under the guidance of Pan-Africanism after the upsurge of national liberation movements, and has made a significant contribution to the liberation of Africa from colonialism and the achievement of complete liberation. Having accomplished its historic mission of decolonization, the AU replaced the OAU as the organization that propelled African integration to a new level, laying a solid foundation for the resolution of internal conflicts and the maintenance of Africa's external autonomy.

Economic development provides the basic guarantee of ownership by African countries. Since Africa's independence, and especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world landscape has been reorganized and evolved, with the rapid development of emerging countries, especially developing countries, and the concomitant change in the international balance of power. Economic development has shaped the prerequisites for the continent's aspirations for autonomy. In a report by the African Development Bank (AfDB), it is clearly stated that despite the economic slowdown brought about by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Africa's economic growth in 2023-2024 will still exceed the global forecasts, with 53 out of 54 African countries maintaining a positive growth rate^[3], and that Africa's economy has demonstrated strong resilience. Indeed, only by breaking away from its economic dependence on developed countries can Africa truly move towards independence and autonomy and become an independent force on the international stage.

The great power game is placing greater demands on African ownership. African autonomy is not only a guarantee of Africa's autonomy and neutrality in the great power game, but also a new requirement for Africa in the era of great power competition. With the intensification of the Sino-American game, the interests of China and the United States in Africa are becoming more and more convergent, and the two sides are competing fiercely in the fields of African energy, support for African countries, and economic and trade relations with Africa. In other words, Africa is at the foundation of the foundation in China's diplomatic strategy, and is an indispensable part of China's diplomatic layout^[4]. U.S. policy toward Africa is an extension of its policy toward China. As an important fulcrum of U.S. competition with China, Africa has become a “handy tool” for the U.S. to contain China, and through close contact between the U.S. and Africa to reach cooperation in various aspects such as economy and security, so as to weaken China's influence in Africa and shake China's diplomatic foundation^[5]. In addition, some key countries in Africa have also become the focus of competition between China and the U.S., especially the countries in the Horn of Africa, which have become a “place of contention” because of their geostrategic importance.

Balanced diplomacy is an important instrument of African ownership. “Balanced diplomacy” refers to the relatively balanced treatment of two or more great powers by small states, and the means of balancing include following, contacting, hedging, distancing, and checking and balancing^[6]. At present, the world political and economic pattern is constantly changing, the rapid rise of new countries and developing countries, along with the rise of the wave of “global south”, the international power pattern is also adjusted accordingly, and the status and role of African countries in the international system have been greatly emphasized. On the one hand, geographically, Africa is the most populous continent in the world, which gives it importance in the international arena and global governance; energy-wise, Africa is the continent with the richest mineral resources in the world, and resource and energy production is the foundation and soul of industry; economically, Africa's rapid economic development, labor force and market potential are huge, and it is the ideal destination for the influx of foreign capital. On the other hand, big countries strive for the support of small countries not only out of security needs, but also in order to obtain some non-material benefits such as international status or national prestige^[7]. Africa is an important geopolitical venue for competition among major powers, and in the global strategic layout of the United States, Africa is an important strategic object for its containment of China and Russia. In recent years, with the deepening of China-Africa and Russia-Africa relations, the United States has actively sought to engage with Africa in order to weaken the international influence of China and Russia, especially in Africa, and the competition among the major powers in Africa has become increasingly intense. Generally speaking, in the face of great power competition, small countries tend to seek the middle way between following and checking, or “hedging”. This is also a balancing strategy, and some small countries can even utilize their geopolitical advantages to influence the political agendas of the major Powers^[8]. In international hotspot issues and international affairs, African countries are unwilling to choose sides, but seek to maintain good relations with big powers while keeping a balance in the fierce game of big powers. In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, for example, despite being affected by the crisis brought about by the

Russian-Ukrainian conflict, African countries have maintained their autonomy in the international community and maintained a relatively neutral stance in the face of intensified rivalry between the major powers in the conflict over Africa. In addition, African countries have focused on developing diversified and balanced relations with extraterritorial Powers and maximizing their own interests through cooperation with them. The vision of African national ownership is well expressed in Agenda 2063, which states that “Africa's growing unity makes it a global force to be reckoned with and enables it to rally support around its common agenda”.^[9]

3. The UN General Assembly Vote and African National Autonomy

The United Nations is an international organization with strong normative and authoritative power, and as a general assembly attended by all Member States, the General Assembly is an important venue for collecting opinions and deciding on major international issues. Among them, voting is a necessary process for countries to express their positions and finalize the direction of events, therefore, the voting pattern in the General Assembly meeting can clearly reflect the tendencies and attitudes of countries towards an event. In order to examine African country ownership, this paper selected voting data from the UN General Assembly from 2017 to 2022 (omitting resolutions that were not passed) to focus on Africa's alignment with China and the United States on international affairs. The time period was chosen for two reasons. One is that 2017 was an important point in the opening of the U.S.-China strategic game, with great power competition returning to the public eye. The “race to win China”^[10] has become the centerpiece of the U.S. hegemonic defense, and the dissolution of China's international influence, especially in Africa, has become one of the U.S. targets. As China “is expanding its economic and military presence in Africa”^[11], the US “has to” compete with China in Africa. The “New African Strategy” signaled a shift in U.S. policy toward Africa. In addition to the competition of material strength, the United States is also using the composite alliance system and the network power game to hedge against China's concept of the community of human destiny^[12]; the United States is striving to dismantle China's identity as a developing country and intends to expand its own influence in the global South, especially in those countries with abundant resources, important geostrategic positions, and vast potential markets. Secondly, the voting situation in the UN General Assembly can to a large extent reflect the position tendency of countries. The UN General Assembly is a channel for exchanges and cooperation among sovereign states, and also a platform for deliberation and resolution of various international issues, and the voting situation in the General Assembly can to a large extent reflect a country's position. The voting data of each country in this article is obtained from the United Nations Digital Library, and the votes of UN member states can be categorized into “yes”, “no”, “abstention” and “non-participation”. The affirmative and negative votes clearly explain a country's voting position, while the abstentions represent an ambiguous position. In addition, in view of the fact that individual African countries are absent or do not have a vote in United Nations General Assembly resolutions, they have been excluded from the statistics in accordance with established practice.

3.1. Issue Classification

This paper first categorizes all General Assembly issues into political, economic and security issues, and further subdivided each issue. First, political issues. Political issues include regional conflicts, human rights issues, racism and colonialism, judicial issues, and issues related to the United Nations itself. Second, economic issues. Economic issues include the international economic order, poverty alleviation and environmental protection, drug issues, health issues, and economic sanctions. Third, security issues. Security issues include terrorism, cyber and outer space, and arms control and nuclear weapons. In addition, a special distinction is made between Africa-related issues in the General Assembly to support the argument.

3.2. Data

By comparing the votes of African countries with those of China and the United States and calculating their voting inconsistency rates, it is possible to draw a picture of the tendencies and attitudes of African countries on different types of issues. Voting inconsistency refers to two situations: one is the stark opposite of the position of African countries to that of China and the United States, such as favorable and unfavorable; the other is abstention, which is an ambiguous position of African countries that also expresses their differences with China and the United States. In the actual

calculation, assuming that China and the United States vote in favor, the opposition and abstention of African countries are considered inconsistent.

3.2.1. Political Issues

First, the category of regional conflicts mainly includes the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as well as a very small number of unresolved regional conflicts, the first two of which are regional conflicts in which the United States intervenes and which do not have a direct impact on the African countries, and an analysis of this category of issues reveals the extent to which the African countries are following the United States. In this category, depending on the circumstances, African countries are more polarized in their votes in favor and abstentions, and their voting behavior is not very consistent with that of the United States and China. Looking at the last six years of U.S.-African voting on such issues, a simple analysis of the data reveals that the inconsistency rate of U.S.-African voting on the issue of regional conflict was 99% in 2017, 96% in 2018, 91% in 2019, 92% in 2020, 93% in 2021, and 73% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 91% for the last six years. The rate of inconsistency in Central Africa's voting on the topic of regional conflict was 9% in 2017, 5% in 2018, 13% in 2019, 26% in 2020, 20% in 2021, and 43% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 19% over the last six years.

Secondly, human rights. The international dispute between human rights and sovereignty is a long-standing one, and human rights have gradually evolved into a tool for European and American countries to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, infringe on the sovereignty of other countries, and serve their own political purposes. Human rights issues in the General Assembly include three categories: the situation of refugees in conflict areas, the basic human rights of modern citizens, and the operation of human rights institutions. The inconsistency rate of U.S.-Africa voting on human rights issues in the last six years is 80% in 2017, 90% in 2018, 86% in 2019, 84% in 2020, 96% in 2021 and 80% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 86% in the last six years. The inconsistency rate for Central African votes on human rights issues was 14% in 2017, 25% in 2018, 24% in 2019, 20% in 2020, 21% in 2021, and 26% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 22% over the last six years.

Thirdly, the issue of racism and colonialism. Colonialism and racism have long since receded with the progress of time and economic development, but their impact has not yet been completely eliminated, not only when Western countries label other countries as “neo-colonialism”, but also when racial prejudice persists in their own countries. The inconsistency rate of the U.S.-Africa vote on the issue of colonialism and racism in the past six years is 99% in 2017, 99% in 2018, 100% in 2019, 96% in 2020, 79% in 2021, and 97% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 95% in the past six years. The Central African vote on racism and colonialism was 18% in 2017, 3% in 2018, 3% in 2019, 4% in 2020, 12% in 2021, and 3% in 2022, resulting in an almost six-year inconsistency rate of 7%.

Fourth, issues related to the United Nations, primarily the role the UN plays in international affairs and cooperation between the UN and state and non-state actors. The inconsistency rates for U.S.-Africa votes on UN-related issues in the last six years were 69% in 2017, 62% in 2018, 73% in 2019, 77% in 2020, 44% in 2021, and 80% in 2022, resulting in a 68% inconsistency rate for the last six years. The inconsistency rates for Central Africa's votes on UN issues were 22% in 2017, 1% in 2018, 8% in 2019, 13% in 2020, 2% in 2021 and 24% in 2022, resulting in a 12% inconsistency rate for the last six years.

Fifth, the justice cluster. This is a special type of issue on the General Assembly ballot that includes only two issue items, “Moratorium on the use of the death penalty” and “Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions,” and has appeared in years 18, 20, and 22. Inconsistency rates for U.S.-Africa votes on justice issues over the last six years were 73% in 2018, 66% in 2020, and 63% in 2022, resulting in a 67% inconsistency rate over the last six years. The inconsistency rate for Central Africa's voting on justice issues is 64% in 2018, 68% in 2020, and 73% in 2022, resulting in a 68% inconsistency rate for the last six years. This leads to an inconsistency rate of 81% for U.S.-Africa voting from 2017 through 2022 and 21% for Central Africa voting from 2017 through 2022 in the political category. The rate of disagreement between Africa and the United States and China on political issues in the General Assembly is shown in the Figure1.

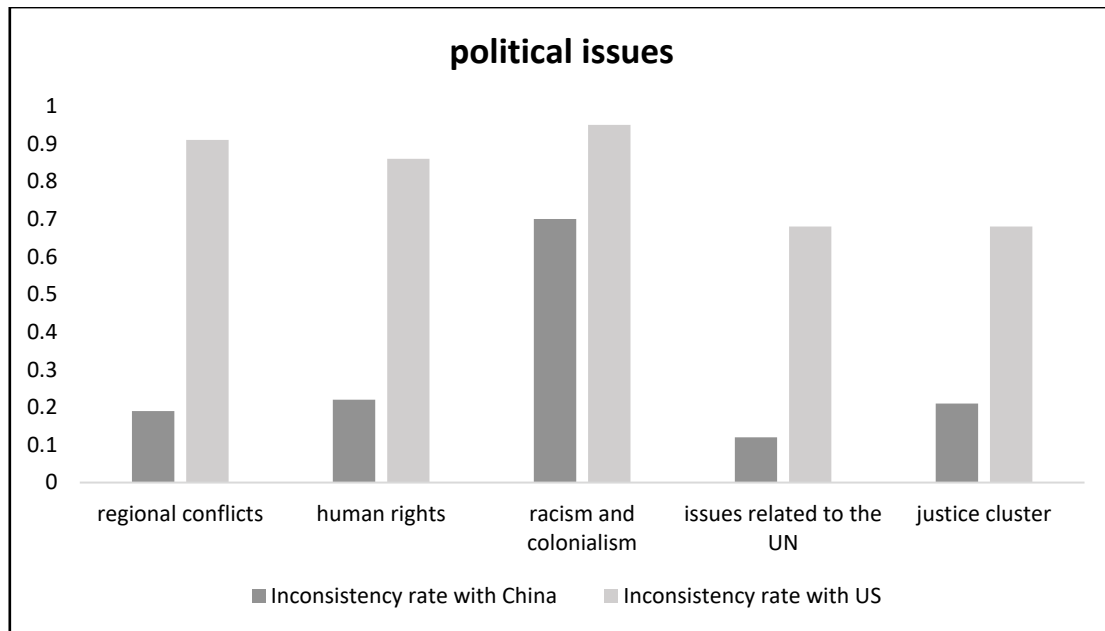


Figure 1: Inconsistency between Africa's vote and that of the United States and China on political issues at the General Assembly

3.2.2. Economic Issues

First, poverty reduction and environmental protection. The development of the new era has not benefited all countries, while the developed countries have become more developed, the economic situation of developing countries has not only not been improved, but also suffered the side effects, and environmental problems have emerged one after another, which have become a problem that has plagued the whole world in addition to development. The inconsistency rate of the U.S.-Africa votes on poverty reduction and environmental protection issues in the past six years is 89% in 2017, 83% in 2018, 87% in 2019, 85% in 2020, 81% in 2021, and 64% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 82% in the past six years. The inconsistency rate for Central Africa's votes on poverty reduction and environmental issues was 3% in 2017, 9% in 2018, 3% in 2019, 3% in 2020, 3% in 2021, and 20% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 7% over the last six years.

Secondly, the topic of the international economic order, which mainly includes the development of the international financial system and the establishment of a new international economic order. Since the establishment of the Bretton Woods system, the U.S. dollar has maintained its hegemonic position in the world, serving the U.S. to harvest the wealth of the whole world, and the U.S. has intervened and sanctioned other countries arbitrarily by virtue of its strong economic power, and this injustice has brought a huge impact on developing countries, so it is imperative to move toward cooperation in the new international economic order. The inconsistency rate of the U.S.-Africa voting on the issue of international economic order in the past six years is 100% in 2017, 98% in 2018, 100% in 2019, 99% in 2020, 100% in 2021, and 100% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 99% in the past six years. The inconsistency rates for the Central African vote on the issue of international economic order were 0% in 2017, 2% in 2018, 0% in 2019, 2% in 2020, 0% in 2021, and 0% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 1% for the last six years.

Third, the economic sanctions issue. The U.S.-Africa vote on economic sanctions in the last six years was 100% in 2017, 100% in 2018, 100% in 2019, 98% in 2020, 98% in 2021, and 100% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 99% in the last six years. The inconsistency rate for the Central African vote on the economic sanctions issue was 5% in 2020 and 0% in the other years, resulting in a 1% inconsistency rate for the last six years.

Fourth, health and drug issues. Among them, the health issue appeared in the UNGA in 2021, with a U.S.-Africa inconsistency rate of 62 percent and a China-Africa inconsistency rate of 1 percent; the drug issue appeared in the UNGA in 22 years, with a U.S.-Africa inconsistency rate of 49 percent and a China-Africa inconsistency rate of 56 percent. Thus, the U.S.-Africa inconsistency rate for health and drugs in the last six years is 56%, and the Central Africa inconsistency rate is 29%. As a result, in economic issues, the inconsistency rate for the U.S.-Africa vote from 2017 to 2022 is 82%, and the inconsistency rate for the Central Africa vote from 2017 to 2022 is 10%.The rate of disagreement

between Africa and the United States and China on economic issues in the General Assembly is shown in the Figure2 below.

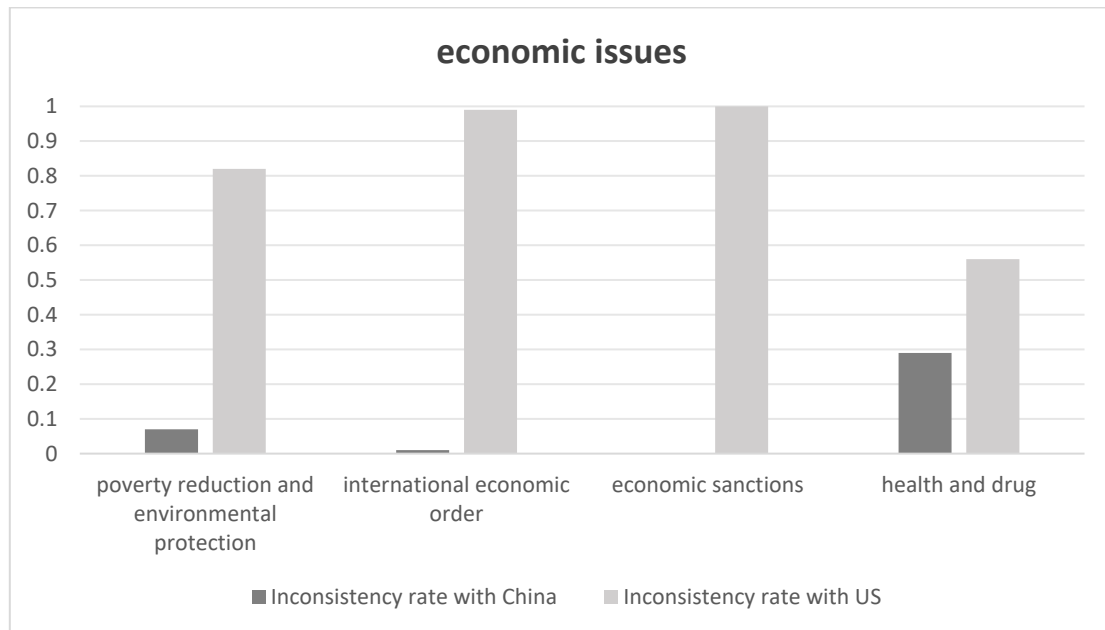


Figure 2: Inconsistency between Africa's and China's votes on economic issues in the General Assembly

3.2.3. Security Issues

First, the issue of arms control and nuclear weapons, which focuses mainly on restrictions on the development and use of nuclear weapons, with African countries being non-nuclear and the United States possessing nuclear forces. The voting behavior of African countries in this category is relatively uniform and almost opposite to that of the United States. With regard to the arms race, the issues include the conventional arms race, the nuclear arms race, and the space arms race. The U.S. was mainly opposed to this issue because it would be more restrictive for the U.S. than for African countries due to the wide disparity in national military power. On the other hand, most African countries voted in favor of these issues out of concern for their own military strength and dissatisfaction with U.S. hegemony. The inconsistency rates of the U.S.-Africa votes on the issue of arms control and nuclear weapons in the past six years are 85% in 2017, 86% in 2018, 77% in 2019, 83% in 2020, 75% in 2021, and 60% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 78% in the past six years. The Central African votes on arms control and nuclear weapons were 30% in 2017, 28% in 2018, 34% in 2019, 32% in 2020, 35% in 2021, and 24% in 2022, resulting in an almost six-year inconsistency rate of 31%.

Secondly, the topic of cyber and outer space. "The widespread application of information technology and the emergence and development of cyberspace have greatly contributed to economic and social prosperity and progress, while at the same time bringing new security risks and challenges."^[13] The prosperity of cyberspace has benefited from the rapid development of information technology, and likewise the governance of cyberspace relies on the regulation of information technology. Therefore, topics related to cyberspace security are focused on the control of information technology. In such issues, the position of African countries is relatively uniform and basically favorable. The inconsistency rates of the U.S.-Africa votes on cyber and outer space topics in the last six years are 100% in 2017, 90% in 2018, 80% in 2019, 68% in 2020, 69% in 2021, and 73% in 2022, resulting in an inconsistency rate of 80% in the last six years. The inconsistency rate for Central Africa's votes on cyber and outer space issues was 28% in 2017, 18% in 2018, 6% in 2019, 39% in 2020, 32% in 2021, and 28% in 2022, resulting in a 25% inconsistency rate for the last six years.

Thirdly, the topic of terrorism includes resolution 72/129 "Adequacy" adopted by the General Assembly in 2017, with a 100 per cent U.S.-Africa disagreement rate and a 0 per cent Central Africa disagreement rate; and resolution 77/243 "International Day for Preventing Violent Extremism that Fosters Terrorism" in 2022, with a 5 per cent U.S.-Africa disagreement rate and a 5 per cent Central Africa disagreement rate. For resolution 77/243, "International Day for Preventing Violent Extremism that Fosters Terrorism," in 2022, the U.S.-Africa disagreement rate is 5% and the Central Africa disagreement rate is 5%, resulting in a U.S.-Africa disagreement rate of 53% and a China-Africa

disagreement rate of 3% for the last six years. This results in an inconsistency rate of 70% for U.S.-Africa voting from 2017 to 2022 and 20% for China-Africa voting from 2017 to 2022 in the security category. The rate of disagreement between Africa and the United States and China on security issues in the General Assembly is shown in the Figure 3.

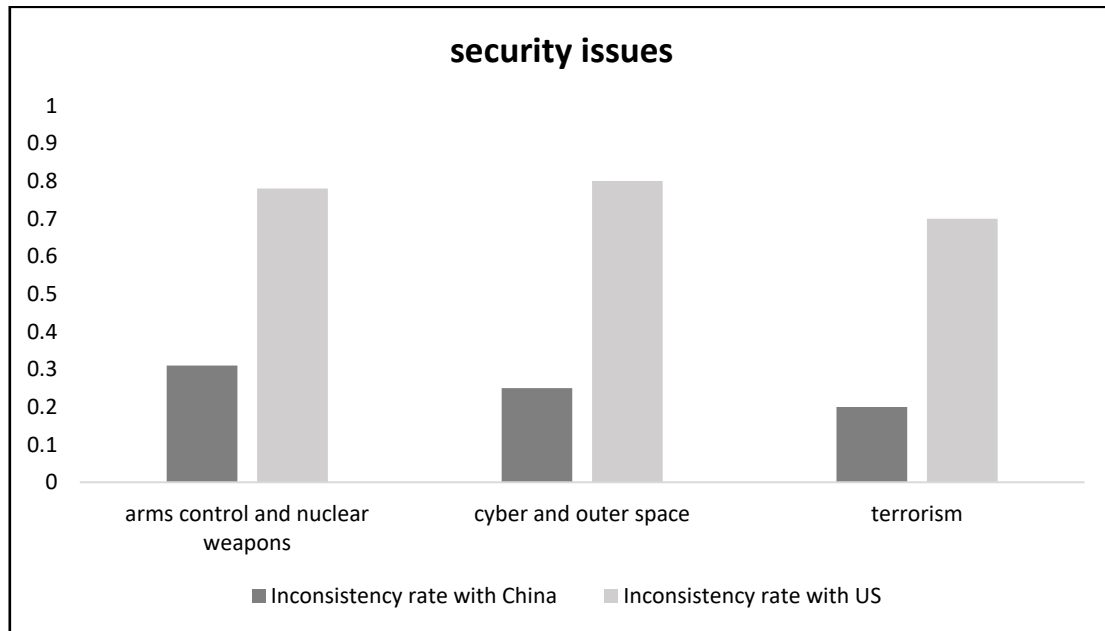


Figure 3: Inconsistency rate of voting between Africa and the United States and China in the General Assembly on security-related issues

3.2.4. Issues Directly Related to Africa

From 2017 to 2022, the General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted the following issues of direct relevance to Africa: resolution 72/292 of 2017 requesting the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965; resolution 73/310 of 2018 on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): progress in implementation and international support; and, of 2019 Resolution 74/302 on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", and resolution 74/301 of 2019 on the New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support. The United States voted against all of those resolutions, and all African countries voted in favor of them, with the exception of Libya, which abstained in resolution 74/302.

3.3. Brief Summary

From the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that the U.S.-Africa voting inconsistency rate from 2017 to 2022 shows 82%, 80%, and 70% for political, economic, and security issues, respectively, and 77% for both if no distinction is made between issue types. However, U.S. aid to Africa reached at least \$10 billion per year during these six years^[14], and African countries' expected voting should be synchronized with that of the U.S. However, the data results show that the U.S.-Africa voting inconsistency rate is extremely high, which is very different from the argument of exchanging economic aid for political support in the established research^[15]. In addition, the Sino-African voting inconsistency rate from 2017 to 2022 shows 16%, 5%, and 25% for the political, economic, and security issue categories respectively, and if no distinction is made between the issue categories, the inconsistency rate for both reaches 77%. , 5% and 25%, and 15% for both if no distinction is made between issue types. In the same issues, the voting inconsistency rate of African countries with China is significantly lower compared to that with the United States, but still remains around 20%, indicating that African countries have maintained a certain degree of autonomy in international affairs by not choosing sides or taking sides. The following table1 is a summary of the inconsistency between China and the United States and Africa on the three issues of the UN General Assembly.

Table 1: Inconsistency rate of voting between African countries and CUPE

Topic country	Political issues	Economic issues	Security issues
With China	16%	5%	25%
With US	82%	80%	70%

4. Discussion and Thinking

Exploring the strategic autonomy of African countries in the context of great power rivalries is the starting point for understanding their quest for an autonomous path of development. In a volatile international situation, African countries are united in their efforts to remain neutral in the international arena. By examining the data on Africa's voting with China and the United States in the General Assembly from 2017 to 2022, it can be seen that African countries have strong autonomy in political, economic and security issues, and are able to maintain a greater self-selection between China and the United States, and maintain a certain degree of autonomy and independence in international affairs.

First, the relationship between the assistance of the major Powers and the ownership of African countries. There are limitations to the aid of large countries in gaining the support of recipient countries. Since the end of the Cold War, foreign aid has become an important tool for large countries to influence small countries. Some studies have pointed out that countries do not vote in the UN General Assembly solely on the basis of their own will, and their real preferences may be hidden, especially when small countries change their votes more frequently due to the threat of big powers^[16]. Foreign aid, on the other hand, is an important means of influencing and changing the voting positions of small countries in the General Assembly and gaining political support from recipient countries. Small recipient countries (groups) with significant influence in the United Nations are more likely to be favored by large countries for aid because of the relatively low cost of purchasing influence from them^[17]. As the least developed continent and at the same time the largest voting bloc in the General Assembly meetings, Africa's voting power has received attention from the major powers. The United States usually regards foreign aid as an important means of realizing its foreign policy objectives^[18], and has long exchanged aid for political support from other countries. Some scholars have pointed out that at key moments in recent world history, the United States has subtly and indirectly "bought" votes in exchange for support for its position in the United Nations General Assembly^[19], while others have argued that U.S. influence in the United Nations General Assembly stems from forcing one or several countries to vote in the General Assembly in a certain way^[20]. However, the above data on voting in the UN General Assembly and the data on US aid to African countries during the same period show that there are limitations in exchanging economic aid of large countries for political support of small countries, which to a certain extent also indicates that the autonomy of small countries in international affairs has increased^[21].

Secondly, the type of issues and the presentation of African national autonomy. The type of issue is also an important factor that influences the difference in voting between Africa and the major countries in the General Assembly. Each year, the General Assembly adopts issues that cover political, economic, and security issues, but there are different categories, and these different categories contribute to the differences in voting results. First, among the five categories of political issues, African countries as a whole are less aligned with the United States and closer to China's international position. Regional conflict is a key area in which the major powers compete to win support from other countries, and it is also a key issue in which the major powers exert their influence on Africa; human rights and justice are tools and pretexts often used by the U.S. and the West to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries; and racism and colonialism is a problem that has plagued the continent to this day. In these categories, African countries have demonstrated a great deal of autonomy. Secondly, in economic issues, African countries as a whole are less aligned with the United States and have close international cooperation with China. In the area of health, African countries have been actively promoting international cooperation on health issues because of the economic downturn and the inadequate construction of basic health facilities, which have led to the rampant spread of various disease epidemics. In the area of drugs, the Sahel region has always been a key area for drug trafficking, and African people have suffered greatly from it, so most African countries have a positive attitude towards this issue. In the international economic order, poverty reduction and environmental protection and economic sanctions, African countries and China's position is basically the same, while the United States almost always voted against. The reason for this is that these issues are favorable to the majority of developing countries, such as the establishment of a fairer international economic order, but obviously harms the interests of the United States, so the voting situation between African countries,

China and the United States shows a very big difference. Finally, in security issues, African countries, China and the United States have formed a cooperation and game because of the different areas of issues. At present, the international community has reached a certain degree of consensus and cooperation on terrorism-related issues, and the United States and Africa share relatively common goals and interests in this regard; China actively supports African countries in leading African security affairs and supports African countries in dealing with internal terrorism-related issues. On the other hand, nuclear weapons and outer space exploration are basically the exclusive domain of developed countries, and such issues are closely related to the interests of the United States, but not closely related to those of African countries, which is why there is a big difference between the votes of African countries and the United States. China supports the construction of a nuclear-weapon-free zone on the African continent and actively strives for and safeguards the rights and interests of Africa and other developing countries in the global commons, such as outer space exploration, and therefore the positions of the two sides on such issues are more consistent.

Thirdly, China-Africa cooperation and the development of African ownership. Since their independence, African countries have not stopped pursuing autonomy. In the treacherous pattern of world development, Africa's autonomy has continued to grow, and it is playing a more important role in the international arena. Firstly, Africa is rich in energy and minerals, which gives it a unique resource advantage; secondly, the rapid development of economic integration in Africa and the good momentum of economic growth provide the basis for autonomous development; thirdly, as an important strategic fulcrum of the great power game, Africa can maneuver in the competition between China and the United States, and there is huge room for its autonomy to be enhanced. But equally, Africa's importance and vulnerability also give it the complexity of autonomous development. Changes in the international environment have had a profound impact on China-Africa cooperation. First, China-Africa cooperation has a long history. China and Africa share a common interest in traditional security issues; it is the common aspiration of both sides to eliminate the development problems plaguing developing countries and to uphold genuine multilateralism. China and Africa are united and collaborative in opposing hegemony and power politics, and have become the backbone of maintaining fairness and justice in the world. With the deepening of China-Africa cooperation, it is necessary for China to further adjust and improve its policy toward Africa, thus promoting strategic cooperation between the two sides as well as shaping China's positive national image in Africa. In the future, the uncertainty of the international situation has put forward higher requirements for China-Africa cooperation, which requires China and Africa to deepen the consensus on cooperation, strengthen the concept of cooperation, improve the cooperation mechanism, and continuously promote China-Africa cooperation with great achievements. Secondly, the intervention of Western powers is the main obstacle to the autonomous development of African countries. The United States has forcibly incorporated African countries into the vision of competition among big powers, and has forcibly intervened in and pressurized China-Africa cooperation in order to suppress China's influence in Africa. The U.S. does not treat Africa as a real equal partner, and even dictates and intervenes in Africa's internal affairs, which seriously undermines the autonomous development process of African countries^[22]. Finally, the “global South” has become a symbol of solidarity among developing countries and an affirmation of their place in international affairs. The rise of the concept of the “global South” in recent years is a response to the rapid changes in the international order as the world rises and falls and the international situation evolves and reorganizes. The “global South” is not an international organization or international mechanism with clear membership and boundaries, but is used to refer to the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, most of which have had a history of poverty and weakness in recent times, but which have been empowered to move forward by the development of the times. China was not only the world's largest developing country, but also an active leader and staunch defender of the “global South”, with which it shared similar interests and rich experience in cooperation.

5. Conclusion

Exploring the strategic autonomy of African countries in the context of great power rivalries is the starting point for understanding their quest for an autonomous path of development. In the midst of a volatile international situation, African countries are united in their efforts to maintain neutrality in the international arena. This paper attempts to analyze the autonomy and independence of African countries in international affairs by comparing their unanimity of vote in the United Nations General Assembly with that of the United States and China. The conclusion is that Africa is able to make more independent choices between China and the United States according to its own interests in political, economic and security issues, and its strategic autonomy has greatly increased. In the future, in

China-Africa cooperation, China needs to build a community of human destiny with African countries, continuously strengthen cooperation and interoperability and development leadership with countries in the South, and strive to build a new international political and economic order.

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