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EDITORIALS

Tragic lesson from Iraq

THE WAVE OF VIOLENCE ACROSS 19 IRAQI CITIES on Monday, which left 111 people dead and at least 235 injured, has shocked the international community. The heaviest death toll in two years in Iraq highlights the after-effects of the Iraq War, and should be a message of caution for those who are still keen on forcing another regime change in the Middle East.

Monday's violence, which came after al-Qaida had warned that it would try to retake lost territory, carries the stamp of the terrorist group. But it is not enough to just condemn the cruelty of terrorists and remind the world community of the daunting task of uprooting terrorism.

In fact, Iraq has been in a quagmire of political instability, sectarian rift and violence ever since the United States pulled its troops out of it in December.

When US President Barack Obama wound up the war in haste, he hailed the withdrawal as a moment of success and "an extraordinary achievement" for the US. Touting the track record of his foreign policy success on Monday, Obama did not hesitate to enlist the troop withdrawal as one of his major achievements.

The regime in Iraq was changed. Yet what happened on Monday (and has been happening in the wake of the US withdrawal) prove that the country is far from secure and stable. Contrary to some US officials' claim — that Iraq is capable of self-governance — peace and stability remain a luxury for Iraqi people, who have more often than not become targets of violence.

To a great extent, Iraqis are victims of foreign intervention. They have paid and will continue to pay a dear price for what Obama calls a "dumb war" because nobody knows when their nightmare will end.

The cruel reality in Iraq is enough to shatter the premise of unwarranted outside intervention aimed at forced regime change, no matter what excuses there may be. Any attempt to force a similar regime change in, say, Syria may not only backfire, but also trigger undesirable chain reactions.

The international community has a responsibility to prevent tragedies like Iraq from being repeated elsewhere. The lesson in Iraq indicates forced regime change may have devastating consequences for the region, threaten global security and dampen international efforts to combat terrorism.

The reality of realty sector

THE RECENT UPTURN IN THE REAL ESTATE market has complicated policymaking.

Housing prices and transactions have picked up gradually after several months of stagnation. An official survey across 70 Chinese cities shows housing prices in 25 cities rose month-on-month in June. That contrasts with the situation in May when only six cities saw month-on-month increase and is a reversal of falling prices since October.

Apart from market demand fueled by monetary policy easing in recent months, local governments' de facto loosening of regulatory rules is responsible for the rise in transactions. In fact, a number of local governments have announced policies to facilitate house buying in recent months.

That local governments have tried to boost home sales is understandable because, together with related incomes, they account for a large part of local revenues. After all, in the first half of this year, income from transfer of land use rights across China fell by 27.5 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Finance.

In some regions such as Beijing, and Guangdong, Henan and Zhejiang provinces, fiscal revenue growth slowed down significantly in the first half. China's economic slowdown has led to fiscal difficulties in these regions. HSBC's flash manufacturing purchasing managers index for China remains below 50 — the watershed of economic activity — in July, although it rose to 49.5 from 48.2 in June. The index has been below 50 for nine consecutive months, indicating protracted economic difficulties.

Despite the general expectations of an economic recovery in the second half, local governments' fiscal conditions will not improve instantly, and they will remain motivated to facilitate home sales, which will put the central government to severe test.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences warned in a report on Monday that housing prices could rebound sharply in the second half of the year. If that happens, it will be against the spirit of the central government's regulation policies.

The central government cannot afford to see that happen and the current purchase restraining policy will continue. Also, it will not be surprising to see new policies being devised to prevent housing prices from shooting up.

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CHINA FORUM | HE WENPING

China's bond of commitment

New round of assistance to Africa will benefit its development and help promote peace and stability across the world

China's latest measures to boost ties with African countries, as outlined by President Hu Jintao at a forum in Beijing on Thursday, are expected to enrich Sino-African cooperation and open up new avenues for further development of the decades-long partnership.

The fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation that concluded on Friday appraised the implementation of the plans and measures adopted by the forum's fourth ministerial meeting two years ago, and passed a declaration and an action plan aimed at mapping out Sino-African development over the next three years.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the two-day meeting, President Hu put forward five priority areas to expand interaction with African countries and announced that China will provide \$20 billion credit loans to help them develop infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and small and medium-sized enterprises.

China will also help African countries enhance their capacity for overall development, and work to promote peace and stability in Africa to create a secure environment for the continent's development. China's assistance measures for Africa also include a program to train 30,000 personnel in various sectors, offering 18,000 government scholarships, sending more Chinese medics and health workers to the continent and taking up projects to provide safe drinking water to the African people.

Compared with previous measures, the latest ones involve broader areas and will be a strong driving force for the development of Sino-African ties, just as Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said at the

closing ceremony of the meeting. Held against the backdrop of African countries' having endured the repercussions of the global financial crisis and the social disturbances in some North African nations, the meeting has drawn special attention of the international community.

The African economy as a whole has maintained a comparatively rapid development momentum for more than a decade after the mid-1990s, with a per capita annual growth rate of nearly 6 percent. Under the impact of the global financial crisis, African economic growth, however, fell below 2 percent in 2009. But thanks to cooperation with China and other emerging economies the African economy's growth rose to 4.6 percent in 2010.

Unfortunately, the continuous social and political turbulences that swept across North Africa have pushed the continent's economic development toward the bottom again. At a time when European countries are bogged down in a debt crisis and thus cannot offer any help to Africa and when the tendency for a neo-interventionism into African affairs keeps increasing, African countries have higher expectations from expanded cooperation with China in the fields of economics and trade as well as security.

In this context, the new cooperation measures announced by President Hu are in line with the expectations of and calls from African countries and have the potential to take Sino-African cooperation to new heights.

The \$20 billion loans promised by China to African countries — twice the amount offered by China in 2009 — will encourage more Chinese enterprises to pursue cooperation with African enterprises in infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and other development projects.

According to Ministry of Commerce figures, the number of China's enterprises with investments in Africa exceeds 2,000 and the number is expected to rise considerably in the next three years.

The launch of Africa-bound assistance projects closely related to local people's livelihood will help enhance mutual understanding between Chinese and African peoples, and refute the canards spread by some Western countries that China's expanded cooperation with Africa is mainly aimed at establishing "neo-colonialism" and plundering the continent's resources. That apart, improved livelihood of the local people because of China's help will further consolidate the foundation of Sino-African cooperation among African people.

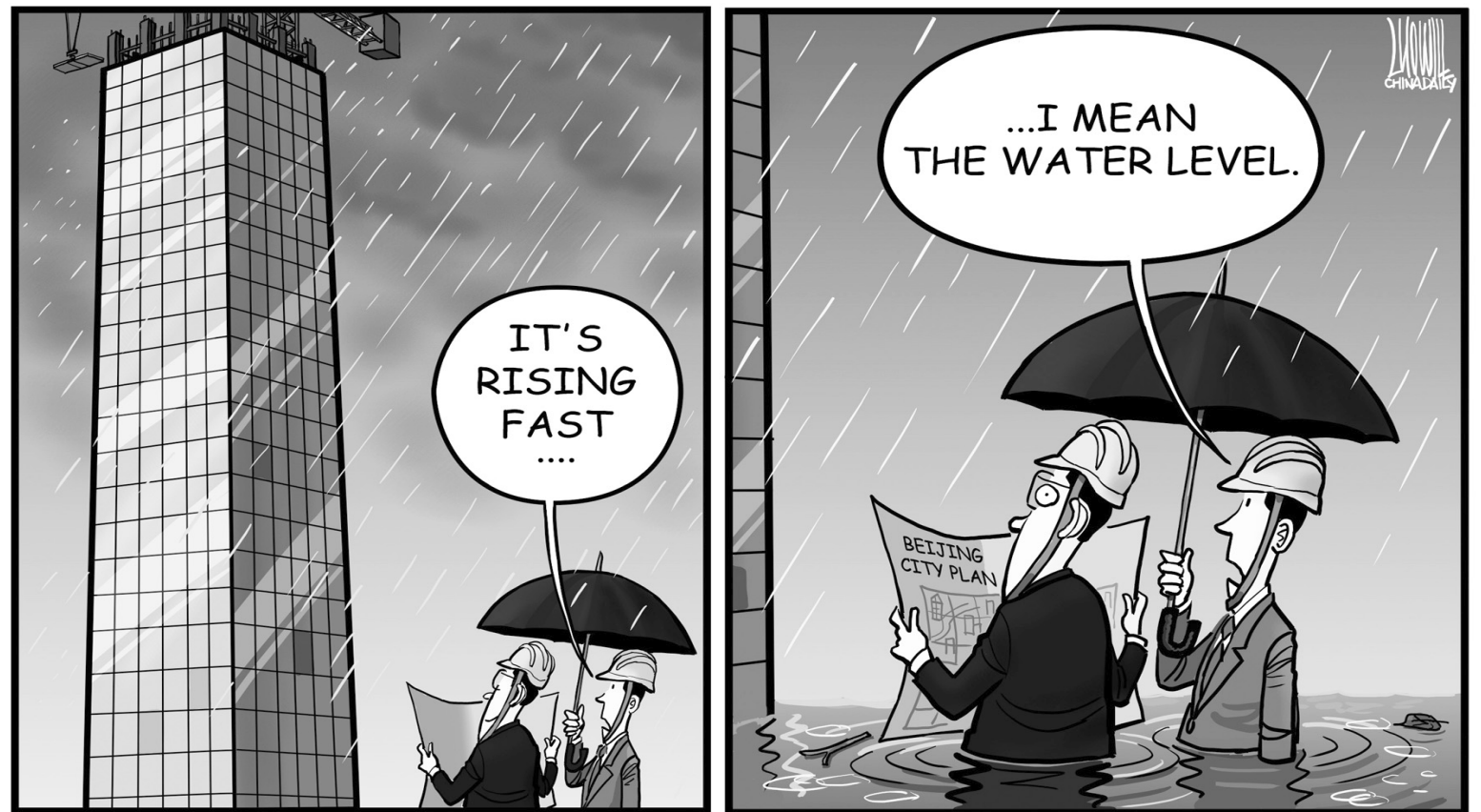
Having suffered numerous wars, internal chaos and conflicts, the African people have realized that any development effort without the guarantee of peace and security will not last long.

Besides the deaths of innumerable local people and rampant destruction in Libya, lingering social disturbances also forced the withdrawal of 35,000 Chinese personnel from that country in 2011. And the conflicts between various factions in Sudan led to the killing or kidnapping of some Chinese employees. These developments prove that Africa's security is closely related not only to local development, but also to the fate of Africa-based Chinese enterprises and their employees.

Helping African countries create a peaceful and secure environment will benefit the continent's development. It will also serve the interests of China and be beneficial to peace and stability across the world.

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LUO JIE



YANG HONGXI

Make foreign aid more effective and balanced

Despite being a developing country, China has been sending aid to other developing countries over the past decades.

From Asia to Africa, from the eastern parts of Europe to the Caribbean islands, many countries have benefited from China's selfless gesture. By the end of 2009, China had sent aid to 161 countries and regions, and more than 30 international and regional organizations. Among them, 123 countries and regions have been long-term recipients of such aid.

According to the White Paper on China's Foreign Aid, released in April 2011, by the end of 2009, the country had given 256.29 billion yuan (\$38.83 billion) in aid to foreign countries and regions, including 106.2 billion yuan in grants, 76.54 billion yuan in interest-free loans and 73.55 billion yuan in concessional loans.

By 2011, China had completed 2,200 programs, greatly improving the infrastructure of many countries. Every year, more than 10,000 personnel from developing countries receive training in China and go back to serve their native lands.

Such selfless, wide-ranging foreign aid has helped promote bilateral relations. China's aid to the developing regions in Asia, Africa and Latin America has not only raised local people's living

standards, but also stimulated their long-term development. China's foreign aid demonstrates its role as a responsible world power and manifests its influence in wider regions.

Besides, foreign aid is also conducive to maintaining peace and stability, and helps overseas operations of China-based enterprises.

In recent years, certain Western powers have alleged that China's aid to Africa and other regions is nothing but a form of "neo-colonialism". But people who listen to what the African people say about China would know how ridiculous such allegations are.

The allegations, however, emphasize the need for China to publicize its foreign aid among the international community more widely to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

The government should optimize the structure and raise the quality of foreign aid, and help the recipients develop their own abilities. It also needs to conduct deeper research on the actual forms of foreign aid to make them more effective. For example, decisions on reducing debts should be made only after careful considerations to prevent certain countries from over-relying on China's aid. As the Chinese saying goes, give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. China should follow the same principle when it comes to foreign aid.

The government also has to be innovative with its general strategy. It can make foreign aid more transparent by enhancing cooperation with other countries and becoming part of multilateral donors, and learn from other donor countries how to make foreign aid more effective.

In Africa, for example, instead of giving aid to local governments or building infrastructure at huge costs, China could send food, medicines and other necessities (marked with the country's emblem) to non-governmental organizations and churches for distribution so that more people would benefit from them and know who helped them. Many NGOs have opened schools and/or clinics in Africa where people need them most. This is a cost-saving but more efficient way of reaching out to the local people.

Of course, as a developing country with more than 1.3 billion people, China needs to develop further to better help others. While selflessly helping people across the world, China should take measures to reduce poverty, promote social security and raise the education levels of its citizens.

China has been fulfilling its responsibility as a global power by selflessly sending foreign aid, and we expect it to do the job better.

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