

**SPEECH BY DENNIS MUNENE MWANIKI – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHINA-AFRICA CENTER
AT THE AFRICA POLICY INSTITUTE DURING THE SYMPOSIUM ON THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE VICTORY OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE’S WAR OF RESISTANCE AGAINST JAPANESE
AGGRESSION AND THE WORLD ANTI-FASCIST WAR.**

**TITLE: Preserving the Correct Perspective on WWII and the Critical Contribution of China to
the Victory of the World Anti-Fascist War**

September 8, 2025.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Scholars,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I take this opportunity to congratulate China for its 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. This war that defined the 20th century was not a war confined to the battlefields, it was a war for preserving the human civilization, a war for peace, and a war whose consequences shaped the international order we live in today.

The victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, as part of the wider World Anti-Fascist War, represented a struggle against two interlinked forms of oppression. This is the Japanese militarist colonial aggression in Asia and the legacy of European imperial occupation since the 1884 Berlin Conference. Japan had risen as an imperial power with expansionist ambitions in Asia, while Germany under Nazi rule stood as the principal ideological and military proponent of fascism in Europe.

China’s role in the World Anti-Fascist War has often been marginalized in Western-centric narratives, leading to distortions of historical memory. The Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression lasted 14 years, (from 1931–1945), demonstrating that the second World War effectively began in Asia rather than in Europe. This challenges the conventional framing that depicts the outbreak of the World War II started in 1939 with Germany’s invasion of Poland.

To set the record straight, the Anti-Fascist War did not begin in 1939, as many Western-centered narratives suggest. It began on September 18, 1931, with the Mukden Incident, when Japan occupied northeast China, with the goal of dominating China and seeking global hegemony.

From that moment, the Chinese nation embarked on a fourteen-year struggle, making China the main Eastern battlefield of the Second World War. It remained the sole anti-fascist front in the East until Italy, under the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, invaded Abyssinia (now known as

Ethiopia) in 1935. For China, its forces and civilians eliminated more than 1.5 million Japanese troops — accounting for over 70 percent of Japan's total military losses in the war — while suffering more than 35 million casualties themselves. These sacrifices by Chinese nationals did not merely preserve China's sovereignty; they decisively contributed to the global victory over fascism and propelled the formation of the World Anti-Fascist United front.

Yet, this contribution has too often been marginalized or distorted. Western historic scholars, right-wing politicians and media often depict China as “the failed country” to be saved by the Allied forces ignoring its decisive role and immense sacrifices. Still others attempt to recast Japan as a victim, focusing narrowly on the tragedy of atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while downplaying Japan's aggression, invasion, and war crimes across Asia.

Such distortions are not mere academic debates. They shape the international memory of WWII, influence global view, and silence the sacrifices of the Global South. Correcting these narratives is therefore essential to preserving historical truth and ensuring a balanced international order.

Distinguished Scholars

China's anti-fascist war was never fought in isolation. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, China actively supported other anti-fascist struggles while also receiving support from the international community. In 1935, when Mussolini's forces invaded Ethiopia, as earlier stated the Chinese people voiced solidarity with the African people, condemning fascist aggression. This solidarity underscored a broader reality: the Anti-Fascist struggle was not only European; it was global. China and Africa alike were part of a shared front against domination and aggression.

Indeed, the Global South paid a heavy price during this period. Troops, resources, and supplies were mobilized; millions of lives were lost. Yet from this suffering emerged an irreversible force - the awakening of national liberation. The victory of the Anti-Fascist War accelerated the collapse of colonial empires and ignited independence movements across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The post-war wave of decolonization gave birth to dozens of new states, reshaping the global political landscape and laying the foundations of today's multipolar world.

Further, the post-war settlement was equally consequential. Taiwan's return to China was explicitly established in the Cairo Declaration of 1943 and reaffirmed in the Potsdam Declaration of 1945. The Chinese government's firm opposition to “Taiwan Independence” is based on its resolute defense of the history of the World Anti-Fascist War and the principles of UN Charter. To deny this fact is to deny the outcome of the Anti-Fascist War and the principles upon which the post-war order was built. Likewise, the creation of the United Nations in 1945

was the victorious achievement of the World Anti-Fascist War and the cornerstone of the world peace and stability.

Distinguished Scholars,

In reflection, the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War affirms that:

- First, the resistance to aggression and foreign domination is inseparable from the defense of global security. The Chinese experience, like the African experience, shows that peace is preserved not by submission but by unity and resilience.
- Second, the contributions of the Global South must be recognized as integral to humanity's victories. China's sacrifices, Africa's struggles, and the awakening of national liberation are part of the same narrative. To ignore them is to distort history and undermine the legitimacy of the current international order.
- Third, the post-war order, built on the sacrifices of countless millions, must be defended from distortion and unilateralism. Attempts to rewrite history, threatens to erode the very foundations of world peace.

Excellencies, Distinguished Scholars, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I am reminded of the words of President Xi Jinping during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place on September 28, 2015, *"History is a mirror, and only by drawing lessons from history can the world avoid repeating past calamities."* Indeed, by correcting the historical record, China, Africa, and the wider Global South can jointly advance a multipolar narrative that upholds their contributions to world peace, reinforcing their shared role in advancing the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) and now the Global Governance Initiative. These global public goods represent China's commitment to ensuring that the tragedy of global war does not repeat itself and that development and peace remain indivisible.

Thank You!!!