

30 Years of Chinese Peacekeeping

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Executive Summary

China's Current Footprint as a Peacekeeper

Over the last three decades, China has evolved from a skeptic into a champion of UN peacekeeping. At the end of 2018, China was participating in nine peacekeeping operations, including the "big five" (Mali, Sudan, Congo, Central African Republic, and Darfur). It had 2,517 peacekeepers in the field (almost twice as many as the other four permanent members of the UNSC combined), and it contributed 10.25% to the UN peacekeeping budget, making it the second largest contributor of all member states.

China recently completed the registration of its standing peacekeeping force of 8,000. Among this force are six infantry battalions, and enabling units such as three companies of engineers, two transport companies, four second-grade hospitals, four security companies, three fast-reaction companies, two medium-sized multipurpose helicopter units, two transport aircraft units, one drone unit, and one surface naval ship. The readiness and the level of equipment of these units are highly assessed by the UN. In addition, the UN welcomes the fact that China places few caveats on the troops it pledges.

China has built up training centres for police and military peacekeepers, where it trains both Chinese and international peacekeepers. Currently, around 500 foreign military peacekeepers from 69 countries have been trained, and China plans to increase that number to 2000 by 2020. International observers report that the standards and content of the training are in line with UN expectations.

China could also become a source of more female peacekeepers. So far, 800 Chinese women have served on UN peacekeeping missions, and 60 foreign female peacekeepers have been trained in China.

Other peacekeeping contributions include China committing \$100 million to the African Union to support the building of an African Standby Force and \$200 million to a United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, which funds projects in the field of peacebuilding.

Sommaire exécutif

L'empreinte actuelle de la Chine en tant que gardien de la paix

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, la Chine est passée d'un pays plutôt réfractaire à un pays fervent défenseur du maintien de la paix aux Nations Unies. À la fin de l'année 2018, la Chine aura participé à neuf opérations de maintien de la paix, dont 5 grandes au Mali, au Soudan, au Congo, en République centrafricaine et au Darfour. L'engagement chinois comptait 2517 soldats de la paix sur le terrain (presque deux fois plus que les quatre autres membres permanents du CSNU réunis) et a financé 10,25 % du budget des Nations-Unies pour les opérations de maintien de la paix. La Chine se hisse désormais au deuxième rang des plus grands contributeurs de l'ONU parmi tous ses États membres.

La Chine a récemment achevé le recensement de sa mission permanente de force du maintien de la paix, rassemblant 8000 personnes. Parmi ces forces figurent six bataillons d'infanterie et des unités de soutien tels que trois compagnies de génie civil, deux compagnies de transport, quatre hôpitaux de deuxième classe, quatre compagnies de sécurité, trois unités de réaction rapide, deux escadrons d'hélicoptère multifonctions moyens, deux unités de transport d'aéronef, une unité avec des drones et un navire militaire terrestre.

Le degré de préparation et le niveau d'équipement de ces unités sont hautement évalués par l'ONU. De plus, l'ONU se réjouit de constater que la Chine n'émet que peu de mises en garde à l'égard des troupes qu'elle s'est engagée à déployer.

La Chine a créé des centres d'entraînement pour la police et les soldats de la paix, pour former les soldats de la paix chinois et internationaux. Jusqu'à présent, environ 500 soldats de la paix étrangers ont été formés issus de 69 pays, et la Chine prévoit de former 2000 personnes d'ici 2020.

Les observateurs internationaux indiquent que les critères et le format de la formation sont conformes aux attentes et aux normes de l'ONU.

Despite this remarkable evolution, China still has some gaps in its peacekeeping repertoire. Observers point out that the People's Liberation Army may lack some of the technology and experience that other nations—among them the US and its allies—have acquired in their long counterinsurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As current peacekeeping operations function in environments similar to counterinsurgency conditions, such experience becomes more relevant. In many of today's peacekeeping operations, technologies such as combat convoys, anti-IED equipment (improvised explosive device), and technologies for camp security are important. Contemporary peacekeeping also increasingly requires the ability and willingness to do community outreach in order to better understand the complex local political economy and to generate legitimacy for the mission. Due to language and cultural barriers, and because of a generally cautious approach, China appears to have done little community outreach so far.

China's Motivation for Peacekeeping

A necessary precondition for China's evolution as a peacekeeper lies in its unprecedented economic and technological development in 1980s, which enabled the development of the capabilities required for modern peacekeeping.

China's motivations for becoming a peacekeeper are multi-layered, changing over time, and consist of "soft" reputational interests and "hard" national interests. Supporting international peacekeeping under the auspices of the UN offered an opportunity to support China's image as a responsible power interested in creating a stable environment for its peaceful rise. It also helped China portray itself as a peer of other great powers. Increasing its profile as a peacekeeper has served the purpose of breaking out of the international isolation in which China found itself in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square events of 1989.

Another motivation lies in China's interest in strengthening multilateralism and the UN system. Multilateralism has been a regular part of China's foreign policy lexicon since the mid-1990s. The UN is the only major international security institution in which China holds significant power, including veto power. In China's view, a marginalized UN would mean more unilateralism by the United States and

La Chine pourrait également devenir une source de troupes féminines de maintien de la paix. À ce jour, 800 femmes chinoises ont participé à des missions de maintien de la paix de l'ONU et 60 femmes étrangères ont été formées au maintien de la paix en Chine.

Parmi les autres pays contributeurs au maintien de la paix, la Chine s'est engagée à verser 100 millions de dollars à l'Union africaine pour le financement de la Force africaine en attente et 200 dollars pour la consolidation de la paix et le développement des Nations Unies, qui finance des projets dans le domaine de la paix.

En dépit de cette évolution remarquable, la Chine présente encore quelques lacunes dans son répertoire de maintien de la paix. Les observateurs soulignent que l'Armée populaire de libération du peuple ne dispose peut-être pas de la technologie et de l'expérience, que d'autres pays ont acquise dont les États-Unis et leurs alliés lors des longues guerres contre-insurrectionnelles en Irak et en Afghanistan. Dans la mesure où les opérations de maintien de la paix actuelles opèrent dans des environnements qui sont souvent similaires aux environnements anti-insurrectionnels, de telles expériences deviennent plus pertinentes. Dans de nombreuses opérations de maintien de la paix d'aujourd'hui, les technologies telles que les convois de combats, les équipements anti-IED (engins explosifs improvisés) et les technologies de sécurité dans les camps sont essentielles. Le maintien de la paix actuel exige aussi de plus en plus la capacité et la détermination à sensibiliser la communauté afin de mieux comprendre la complexité de l'économie politique locale et de légitimer la mission. Jusqu'à présent, en raison des barrières linguistiques et culturelles et d'une approche généralement prudente, la Chine semble faire trop peu pour atteindre les communautés.

Les motivations de la Chine pour le maintien de la paix

Une condition préalable nécessaire à l'évolution de la Chine en tant que force de maintien de la paix réside dans son développement économique et technologique sans précédent dans les années 80, qui a permis le développement de moyens requis pour des opérations modernes de maintien de la paix.

its allies. By increasing its contributions to UN peacekeeping, China hopes to help strengthen the UN as the only legitimate source of authority for international peace and security.

China is also the only permanent UN Security Council member that sees itself as both a great power and a member of the global South. A deepened engagement in peacekeeping—an activity that takes place predominantly in developing countries—helps to foster China's image as the leader of the developing world. Being perceived as a responsible, altruistic peacekeeper without an imperialist legacy garners support for China among developing countries, which in turn strengthens its influence within the UN.

Finally, participation in peacekeeping allows the People's Liberation Army to gain operational exposure and to test new equipment.

Contrary to common wisdom, China's engagement in peacekeeping is not directly linked to its rapidly growing economic interests in Africa and elsewhere. Chinese peacekeepers are deployed proportionally to the same world regions as UN peacekeepers. At the end of 2018, 80% of UN peacekeepers and 80% of Chinese peacekeepers were based in Africa. Resource-rich countries are not more likely to attract Chinese peacekeeping than resource-poor countries. As well, the trends for the numbers of deployed Chinese peacekeepers runs parallel to the trend for the numbers of deployed UN peacekeepers. China deploys its peacekeepers in line with UN requests rather than in line with particular national interests.

However, it is true that peacekeeping may serve broader Chinese interests because peace and stability in Africa will help to protect Chinese investments, promote trade, and protect the Chinese diaspora.

The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping and China's Position

The end of the Cold War and the changing global security environment led to a rapid evolution of UN peace-

Les motivations de la Chine pour devenir un gardien de la paix sont multiples, évoluent au fil du temps et se divisent en intérêts «subjectifs» pour leur réputation et «indéfectibles» pour leurs intérêts nationaux. Soutenir le maintien de la paix international sous les auspices de l'ONU offrait l'occasion de soutenir l'image de la Chine en tant que puissance responsable désireuse de créer un environnement stable pour son essor pacifique. De plus, l'engagement de la Chine lui a permis de se positionner comme modèle pour les autres grandes puissances. L'amélioration de sa réputation en tant que «gardien de la paix» a en outre œuvré à briser l'isolement international dans lequel se trouvait la Chine au lendemain des manifestations de la place Tiananmen en 1989.

Une autre motivation réside dans l'intérêt de la Chine à renforcer le multilatéralisme, et le multilatéralisme du système onusien, un élément clé du lexique de la politique chinoise étrangère depuis le milieu des années 90. L'ONU est la seule grande institution internationale de sécurité dans laquelle la Chine détient un pouvoir important, y compris le droit de veto. Du point de vue de la Chine, une ONU marginalisée signifierait davantage d'unilatéralisme des États-Unis et de leurs alliés. Ainsi, en augmentant ses contributions au maintien de la paix des Nations Unies, la Chine espère renforcer l'ONU en tant que seule source légitime d'autorité pour la paix et la sécurité internationales.

La Chine est également le seul membre permanent du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU qui se considère à la fois comme une grande puissance et comme un membre du Sud mondial. Un engagement accru dans le maintien de la paix—une activité qui se déroule principalement dans les pays en voie de développement et qui contribue à renforcer l'image de la Chine en tant que leader mondial du développement. L'image de la Chine considérée comme un gardien de la paix responsable et altruiste sans héritage impérialiste lui vaut le soutien des pays en voie de développement, ce qui lui consolide un statut important au sein de l'ONU.

Finalement, la participation au maintien de la paix permet à l'Armée populaire de libération du peuple d'être exposée aux opérations et de tester de nouveaux équipements.

keeping—both in practical terms on the ground and in doctrine. Among the most important changes are a turn to more robust, more intrusive peacekeeping (outlined in the Brahimi Report of 2000),¹ a softening of the hitherto sacrosanct principles of international legal sovereignty in order to better protect civilians from neglect or assault by their own state (outlined in the Responsibility to Protect [R2P] in 2005), an increased focus on protecting civilians on the ground (Protection of Civilians [POC], outlined in various UN reports since 2001), and an increased focus on better protecting UN personnel in the field (outlined in the 2017 Cruz Report). With these new challenges and responsibilities for UN peacekeeping also came the realization that the UN is often not well equipped to master these challenges, and that more realistic expectations about the limits of UN peacekeeping are needed (outlined in the 2014 High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations).

China, like other key players, had to react to these new challenges and new doctrinal thinking. In hindsight, we see that China, often cautiously, incorporated all of these adaptations of UN doctrine and practices in its own approach to peacekeeping. Despite its initial resistance, China even endorsed the R2P in 2005, once it was clear that the UNSC would maintain final authority over interventions and that decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis instead of following pre-set criteria. However, after the 2011 UN intervention in Libya, authorized with reference to R2P, China turned against R2P. In China's view, that intervention turned into a forced regime change. Ever since then, China has equated R2P with "regime change" and strictly opposes the concept. In the aftermath of Libya, China, together with Russia, vetoed several resolutions in the UNSC that called for sanctions against Syria.

China is more comfortable with the concept of Protection of Civilians (POC), endorsing all recent UN missions that have a strong POC mandate. Despite this, it consistently argues that national authorities, not

Contrairement à la croyance populaire, l'engagement de la Chine dans le maintien de la paix n'est pas directement lié à la croissance rapide de ses intérêts économiques en Afrique et dans le reste du monde. Les soldats de la paix chinois sont déployés proportionnellement dans les mêmes régions du monde que les soldats de la paix de l'ONU. Fin 2018, 80 % des Casques bleus de l'ONU et 80 % des Casques bleus chinois étaient basés en Afrique. Les pays riches en ressources naturelles ne sont pas plus susceptibles d'attirer le maintien de la paix chinois que les pays dépourvus de ressources naturelles. En outre, le nombre de soldats de maintien de la paix chinois déployés est comparable au nombre de soldats de maintien de la paix déployés par l'ONU. La Chine déploie ses soldats de maintien de la paix conformément aux demandes de l'ONU et non pas en fonction d'intérêts nationaux particuliers.

Toutefois, il est vrai que le maintien de la paix peut servir les intérêts plus larges de la Chine dans la mesure où la paix et la stabilité en Afrique contribueront à protéger les investissements chinois, à promouvoir le commerce et à protéger la diaspora chinoise.

L'évolution des opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU et la position de la Chine

La fin de la guerre froide et l'évolution de l'environnement de sécurité mondial ont conduit à une évolution rapide du maintien de la paix des Nations Unies tant en termes pragmatiques sur le terrain que sur le plan théorique. Parmi les changements les plus importants, figure le recours à des opérations de maintien de la paix plus ferme et plus intrusive (décrites dans le rapport Brahimi de 2000), un assouplissement des principes jusqu'alors inviolés de la souveraineté juridique internationale afin de mieux protéger les civils de la négligence ou des attaques de leurs propres États (décrites dans la responsabilité de protéger la R2P en 2005), un accent accru sur la protection des civils sur le terrain (Protection of Civilians POC, soulignée dans divers rapports des Nations Unies depuis 2001) et un objectif accru pour une meilleure protection du personnel des Nations Unies sur le terrain (souligné dans le rapport Cruz 2017). Avec ces nouveaux défis et responsabilités pour le maintien de la paix des Nations Unies, nous nous sommes également rendu compte que l'ONU est souvent peu outillée pour relever ces défis et que des anticipations

¹ United Nations, "Brahimi Report."

the UN, should assume primary protection responsibilities and that more focus should be placed on facilitating ceasefires, prompting conflict prevention, and supporting peaceful conflict resolution through political processes. China remains skeptical of robust implementation of POC mandates, which it fears may blur the boundaries between peacekeeping and counterinsurgency; for example, when civilian safe havens are pre-emptively defended by military means, or when non-state armed actors are pre-emptively attacked.

China has welcomed the 2014 HIPPO report (High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations), which pushed back against “robust mandates alone” and re-emphasized the primacy of political solutions. It is more skeptical of the 2017 Cruz report (“Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business”), which recommends that UN peacekeeping at the tactical level should become more robust, more assertive, and more proactive. China criticizes this emphasis on the proactive use of force to defend UN personnel.

Over the last three decades, in harmony with the UN, China has adapted its approach to peacekeeping. At the same time, it continues to emphasize that its commitment to peacekeeping is guided by a number of principles, which include the following: respect for sovereignty and non-interference; the importance of primacy political solutions; and respect for the original peacekeeping principles of impartiality, consent of the parties, and use of force only as a last resort.

China’s Future Footprint in UN Peacekeeping

Given China’s significant investments in its peacebuilding capabilities over the last two decades, it is clear that China will maintain or even increase its contribution to UN peacekeeping in the foreseeable future.

In addition, China’s contribution to peacekeeping will increase by default because other major powers, among them the US, are seeking to reduce spending on peacekeeping and are less inclined to pledge troops. It is unlike-

plus réalistes sur les limites de ce type de maintien sont nécessaires (décrites dans le Groupe indépendant de haut niveau de 2014 sur les opérations de paix des Nations Unies).

La Chine, comme d’autres protagonistes, a dû répondre à ces nouveaux défis et à cette nouvelle pensée doctrinale. A posteriori, nous constatons que la Chine a souvent avec précaution intégré toutes ces adaptations de la doctrine et des pratiques des Nations Unies dans sa propre approche du maintien de la paix. Malgré sa réticence initiale, la Chine a en outre approuvé la R2P (responsabilité de protéger) en 2005, une fois qu’il serait acquis que le CSNU conserverait le pouvoir final d’autoriser les interventions et que les décisions seraient prises au cas par cas sans avoir recours à des critères prédéfinis. En revanche, après l’intervention de l’ONU en Libye en 2011, qui fut autorisée en invoquant la responsabilité de protéger, la Chine s’est prononcée défavorable envers la responsabilité de protéger. Du point de vue de la Chine, l’intervention s’est traduite en un changement de régime forcé. Dès lors, la Chine assimile la responsabilité de protéger à un « changement de régime » et s’oppose fermement à ce concept. Suite aux interventions en Libye, la Chine et la Russie ont opposé leur veto à plusieurs reprises au Conseil de sécurité de l’ONU qui préconisait des sanctions contre la Syrie.

La Chine est moins hostile au concept de protection des civils et a approuvé toutes les missions récentes de l’ONU dotées d’un solide mandat de protection des civils (POC). Néanmoins, la Chine fait toujours valoir que les autorités nationales, et non l’ONU, devraient assumer la responsabilité première de la protection et qu’il faudrait s’attacher plus particulièrement à faciliter les cessez-le-feu, à encourager la prévention des conflits et à soutenir le règlement pacifique des conflits par des mesures politiques. La Chine reste sceptique quant à la mise en œuvre vigoureuse des mandats du CEP qui, selon elle, risquent de brouiller les frontières entre le maintien de la paix et la contre-insurrection, par exemple lorsque les refuges civils sont défendus de manière préventive par des moyens militaires ou lorsque des acteurs armés non étatiques sont attaqués de manière préemptive.

La Chine s’est félicitée du rapport HIPPO 2014 (High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations), qui s’est op-

ly that this trend will be reversed in the coming years.

China's growing influence in peacekeeping will also lead to China seeking more leadership positions within the UN peacekeeping architecture. One position to which China may aspire in the near future is the position of Under-Secretary General for peacekeeping operations.

Furthermore, China is expected to play a more prominent role in providing equipment and weapons systems to the UN. Every year the UN spends between \$1 and \$2 billion on renting and buying equipment and weapons systems for its peacekeeping operations. This is not an inconsiderable market. China has offered the UN a wide range of equipment and technology, including UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones), ground surveillance radar, infra-red cameras, anti-UAV systems, "access control" technologies for increased camp security, small-size weapon locating radar, communications networks, and light-armoured, transport, and medical vehicles. With an increased role for China, it is probable that UN peacekeeping will increasingly buy Chinese technology and equipment.

China's Proposed Conceptual Innovations

UN peacekeeping is constantly transforming itself in order to react to the changing security challenges. In the past, China has typically followed these adaption processes. With its increased weight in the UN, the question arises about whether, in future, China will shape the necessary adaption processes, and if so, how.

For many of the problems facing UN peacekeeping, there is no discernable Chinese (or for that matter, any other national) position. UN peacekeeping is a multilateral endeavor, and the UN must collectively find solutions to challenges such as how to best ensure the protection of civilians, how to best deal with non-state armed groups, or how to best ensure the protection of peacekeepers in dangerous missions. There are two fields, however, where an emerging Chinese approach may challenge the typically Western-dominated concepts of peace and peacebuilding.

posé à des «mandats exigeants uniquement» et a souligné une nouvelle fois la primauté de la solution politique.

Elle se montre néanmoins plus sceptique à l'égard du rapport Cruz de 2017 («Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers : Nous devons changer notre façon de gérer nos affaires»), qui recommande que les opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU au niveau tactique deviennent plus solides, plus assertives et plus proactives. L'accent mis sur le recours proactif à la force pour défendre le personnel de l'ONU est critiqué par la Chine.

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, la Chine a de pair avec l'ONU, adapté son approche du maintien de la paix. Simultanément, la Chine a réaffirmé que son attachement au maintien de la paix est subordonné à un certain nombre de principes, dont le respect de la souveraineté et la non-ingérence, l'importance des décisions politiques prioritaires, le respect du principe original de neutralité, du consentement des parties et du recours à la force unique comme ultime recours.

L'empreinte future de la Chine dans les opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU

En raison des investissements importants de la Chine depuis deux décennies dans ses aptitudes quant au maintien de la paix, il est indubitable que dans un avenir proche, la Chine maintiendra ou même accroîtra sa contribution aux activités de maintien de la paix des Nations Unies.

Par ailleurs, la contribution de la Chine au maintien de la paix augmentera par défaut, car d'autres grandes puissances, dont les États-Unis, cherchent à réduire leurs dépenses dans ce domaine et semblent moins enclines à déployer des troupes. Il est peu probable que cette situation s'infléchisse au cours des prochaines années.

L'influence croissante de la Chine dans le maintien de la paix incitera également la Chine à solliciter davantage de positions de leadership au sein de la structure des Nations Unies concernant le maintien de la paix. Le poste de sous-secrétaire général aux opérations de maintien de la paix est l'une des positions que la Chine pourrait aspirer à obtenir dans un avenir imminent.

De plus, la Chine devrait jouer un rôle plus important dans

The first concerns the place of human rights in peacekeeping missions. The issue of human rights is hotly contested between China and many Western countries, but in the past, it has not played an important role in Chinese involvement in UN peacekeeping. This is changing. Many observers at the UN have noted that China has recently made efforts to curb the number of human rights positions within UN peace operations. Most recently, such attempts were made during the negotiations for the UN's 2018/2019 budget. China also promotes its own narrative of human rights, for example by tabling resolutions in the UN Human Rights Council.

The Chinese notion of human rights centres on the rights to material subsistence and economic development. In this view, the protection of individual rights is subordinated to a notion of collective well-being, basic welfare, social equity, stability, and authoritarian legality, all of which is realized through a strong but not necessarily liberal state. Such a narrative is different from the Western human rights narrative emphasizing individualistic political rights and legal constraints on the state's arbitrariness.

The second field where an emerging Chinese approach may challenge a typically Western dominated concept regards peace and peacebuilding. Given its own historic experiences and its political regime, the Western "liberal" peace with its emphasis on democracy, good governance, strong civil society, and a strong push for fast transformation does not resonate with Chinese thinking. An emerging Chinese narrative juxtaposes the "liberal" peace with the notion of a "developmental" peace rooted in Chinese tradition. Development peace prioritizes economic development, supports gradual change, emphasizes the role of strong government, substitutes values-based good governance with results-based effective governance, and seeks to promote this model not by imposing but rather by incentivizing imitation and learning.

It is unclear how such a "peace-through-development" approach would translate into policies and practices on the ground, and to what extent such practices would be compatible with those inspired by the "liberal" peace. But while the antagonistic positions on the role of human

la livraison d'équipements et de dispositifs d'armement à l'ONU. Chaque année, l'ONU dépense entre 1 et 2 milliards de dollars pour la location et l'achat d'équipements et de dispositifs d'armes pour ses opérations de maintien de la paix. Il s'agit d'un marché non négligeable. La Chine a offert à l'ONU un large éventail d'équipements et de technologies, parmi lesquels figurent des drones, des radars de surveillance au sol, des caméras infrarouges, des systèmes anti-drones, des technologies de « contrôle des accès » pour renforcer la sécurité des camps, des radars de localisation en petit calibre, des réseaux de télécommunications, des véhicules légers blindés et des véhicules à titre médical. Avec le rôle grandissant de la Chine dans le maintien de la paix de l'ONU, il est probable que le maintien de la paix de l'ONU acquerra davantage de technologie et d'équipement chinois.

La Chine projette des innovations conceptuelles

Le maintien de la paix des Nations Unies ne cesse d'évoluer afin de mieux appréhender les enjeux de sécurité en constante mouvance. Dans le passé, la Chine a systématiquement respecté ces processus d'adaptation. Avec sa position de plus en plus forte au sein de l'ONU, la question se pose de savoir si, à l'avenir, la Chine façonnera les processus d'adaptation nécessaires et, si oui, comment.

Pour bon nombre des défis auxquels sont confrontées les opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU, il n'y a pas de position chinoise évidente (ou d'ailleurs, d'autre pays). Le maintien de la paix des Nations Unies est une organisation multilatérale, dont la mission consiste à trouver collectivement des solutions à des problèmes majeurs, par exemple d'assurer au mieux la protection des civils ou des groupes armés non étatiques ou de protéger des soldats de la paix dans des missions dangereuses.

Il y a toutefois deux domaines où une approche chinoise émergente pourrait remodeler les concepts traditionnellement occidentaux de la paix et de la consolidation de la paix.

Le premier concerne la place des droits de la personne dans les missions de maintien de la paix. La question des droits de la personne est l'une des plus controversées en-

rights in PKO will continue to create tension between China and Western countries, a debate about alternative approaches to peace may actually be productive, because it may reinvigorate our collective thinking about peacebuilding.

Implications

Western China-watchers often treat China's engagement in the field of peacekeeping as a partial proxy for China's overall foreign policy. For these observers, the way China behaves in peacekeeping predicts how China will behave in other foreign policy fields as well. But such hopes are misdirected. Peacekeeping is a specific, technical activity constrained by the mission's mandate, decided upon by the UN Security Council. Once a mission is deployed, there is hardly any room for pursuing a particular national interest. A closer look at Chinese efforts in peacekeeping will thus not help us to understand its policies in the South China Sea or in Tibet.

One implication that flows from this report is that Western observers should primarily evaluate the impressive Chinese contributions to peacekeeping in the context UN peacekeeping, and not primarily and exclusively in a geopolitical or ideological context. China should be given credit where it deserves credit, and UN peacekeeping is a case in point. That does not mean, however, that we should be unaware of the fact that China will increasingly promote its own concepts on peacebuilding, some at odds with "Western" concepts, as we have seen with human rights in peacekeeping missions.

Over the last three decades, China has been "socialized into" the mainly Western-dominated approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding and has become a responsible and important actor in the field. In future, it is likely that China will increasingly try to socialize other member states into Chinese concepts of peacebuilding. It is in the very nature of the UN as a multilateral organization to enable such processes; peacekeeping is perhaps the most important, most multilateral endeavor within the UN.

It is in the best interests of Western member states, especially middle powers such as Canada, to seriously

tre la Chine et de nombreux pays occidentaux, mais dans le passé, ce sujet n'a pas été déterminant dans la participation chinoise au maintien de la paix des Nations Unies. Mais la situation est en train de changer. De nombreux observateurs à l'ONU ont noté que la Chine a récemment déployé des efforts pour réduire le nombre de positions sur les droits de la personne dans les opérations de paix des Nations Unies. Plus récemment, de telles mesures ont été prises lors des négociations sur le budget 2018/2019 de l'ONU. De plus, la Chine promeut également son propre discours sur les droits de la personne, par exemple en soumettant des propositions au Conseil des droits de la personne des Nations Unies.

La notion chinoise des droits de la personne est axée sur le droit à la subsistance matérielle et au développement économique. De ce point de vue, la protection des droits individuels est assujettie à une notion de bien-être collectif, de bien-être fondamental, d'équité sociale, de stabilité et de légalité autoritaire, le tout étant assuré par un État fort, mais pas nécessairement libéral. Un tel discours est différent du discours occidental sur les droits de la personne qui met l'accent sur les droits individuels politiques et les contraintes juridiques sur le pouvoir discrétionnaire de l'État.

Le deuxième domaine dans lequel une approche chinoise émergente pourrait remodeler un modèle occidental est celui de la conceptualisation de la paix et de la consolidation de la paix.

La Chine n'adhère guère à la vision occidentale de la paix « libérale », qui met en relief la démocratie, la bonne gouvernance, une société civile bien présente, et une forte volonté de transformation rapide, en raison de ses vécus et de son propre régime politique. Un discours chinois émergent juxtapose la paix « libérale » avec la notion de paix « développementale », enracinée dans la tradition chinoise. La paix au service du développement accorde la priorité au développement économique, encourage le changement progressif, insiste sur le rôle d'un gouvernement fort, remplace la bonne gouvernance fondée sur les valeurs par une gouvernance efficace axée sur les résultats. Le but est de promouvoir ce modèle en l'encourageant de par les expériences et les leçons tirées et non pas en l'imposant.

engage with these emerging debates. That involves the formulation of our own positions on the most pressing issues facing UN peacekeeping—among them how to protect civilians, how to increase security for peacekeepers, how to draw boundaries between stabilization missions and counterinsurgency, and how to engage with non-state armed actors. It also involves formulating a position on China's emerging visions, and identifying compatible and not compatible positions.

Clearly conceptual thinking about issues such as peace, global governance, and development is always informed by principles rooted in one's worldview. However, it would be useful if such debates, to some extent, could also be grounded in pragmatism and experience. In a context such as Mali—for many observers a model for future UN peacekeeping—what policies work? Could results be improved by adapting policies? Should these adaptations be guided by a “liberal” peace model or by a “developmental” peace model? Is there anything the two approaches can learn from each other?

There is a place for a multitude of actors for such debates. Increased communication and learning could take place among peacekeepers on the ground, among those who train the peacekeepers, within the UN, and within the academic communities. Canada, as middle power with its experience and credentials as a peacekeeper, is in a unique position to enable such dialogues.

Pour le moment, il demeure incertain comment une telle approche de « paix par le développement » se traduirait en politiques et pratiques sur le terrain, et dans quelle mesure ces pratiques seraient compatibles avec les pratiques inspirées de la paix « libérale ». Cependant, si les divergences de position sur le rôle des droits de la personne dans l'OMP continuaient d'attiser des tensions entre la Chine et les pays occidentaux, un débat sur les approches alternatives à la paix pourrait se révéler utile, car il pourrait permettre de donner un second souffle ou de faire renaître une réflexion collective sur la consolidation de la paix.

Implications

Les observateurs de la Chine occidentale considèrent souvent l'engagement de la Chine dans le domaine du maintien de la paix comme un élément indirect de la politique étrangère de la Chine. Aux yeux des observateurs, l'implication de la Chine dans le maintien de la paix permet de prédire le comportement qu'elle adoptera dans d'autres domaines de la politique étrangère. Mais de tels espoirs sont mal orientés. Le maintien de la paix est une activité technique et très spécifique qui est limitée par le mandat des missions fixé par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Une fois qu'une mission est engagée, il n'y a guère de place pour la recherche d'un intérêt national particulier. Un regard plus attentif sur les efforts chinois en matière de maintien de la paix ne nous aidera donc pas à comprendre ses politiques dans la mer de Chine méridionale ou au Tibet.

L'une des implications qui ressort de ce rapport est que les observateurs occidentaux devraient avant tout évaluer les contributions considérables de la Chine pour le maintien de la paix des Nations Unies, et non dans un contexte géopolitique ou idéologique seulement. La Chine doit être reconnue à sa juste valeur, et sa contribution aux opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU en est un bon exemple.

Cela ne signifie pas pour autant que nous ne devons pas nier le fait que la Chine voudra promouvoir de plus en plus ses propres concepts en ce qui concerne la consolidation de la paix, dont certains sont en contradiction avec les concepts « occidentaux », comme nous l'avons vu avec le rôle des droits de la personne dans les opérations de maintien de la paix.

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, la Chine a été « sensibilisée » à une approche principalement occidentale en termes de maintien et de consolidation de la paix. Elle est devenue un acteur responsable et important dans ce domaine. À l'avenir, il est probable que la Chine tentera de plus en plus de sensibiliser d'autres États membres aux concepts chinois de consolidation de la paix. L'ONU en tant qu'organisation multilatérale devrait permettre de tels processus. Les opérations de maintien de la paix demandent peut-être le plus d'efforts et une approche plus multilatérale.

Il est dans le meilleur intérêt des États membres occidentaux, en particulier des puissances moyennes comme le Canada, de s'engager sérieusement dans ces débats émergents. Cette démarche nécessite une prise de position sur les questions les plus urgentes auxquelles les opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU sont confrontées, notamment la protection des civils, le renforcement de la sécurité des soldats de la paix, la démarcation entre missions de stabilisation et contre-insurrection, la coopération avec des acteurs armés non étatiques. Il s'agit également pouvoir se prononcer sur les nouvelles visions de la Chine et d'identifier les points de vue compatibles et incompatibles.

Il est évident que la réflexion conceptuelle sur des questions telles que la paix, la gouvernance mondiale, le développement, etc. repose toujours sur des principes enracinés dans la vision du monde de chacun. Toutefois, il serait utile que de tels débats puissent, dans une certaine mesure, être fondés sur le pragmatisme et l'expérience. Dans un contexte comme celui du Mali, qui est pour beaucoup d'observateurs un modèle pour l'avenir du maintien de la paix des Nations Unies : quelles politiques fonctionnent ? Pourrait-on améliorer la situation en adaptant les politiques ? Ces adaptations devraient-elles être guidées par un modèle de paix « libéral » ou par un modèle de paix « développemental » ? Y a-t-il quelque chose que les deux approches peuvent apprendre l'une de l'autre ?

Il y a de nombreuses places pour une multitude d'acteurs pour de tels débats. La communication et l'apprentissage pourraient s'intensifier entre les soldats de la paix sur le terrain, et ceux qui forment les soldats de la paix, au sein de l'ONU et dans les milieux universitaires. Le Canada, en tant que puissance moyenne, grâce à son expérience et à ses titres de compétence en tant que gardien de la paix, est en mesure de favoriser de tels dialogues.

Introduction

China now has 2,644 peacekeepers in the field, almost twice as many as the other four permanent members of the UN SC combined

When China became a member of the UN in 1971, it strictly opposed international peacekeeping because it saw it as a thinly veiled disguise for imperialist interventions by the great powers.² Fast forward to 2018, and we see China actively participating in nine peacekeeping operations, including such challenging places as Mali, South Sudan, and Darfur. China now has 2,644 peacekeepers in the field, almost twice as many as the other four permanent members of the UN SC combined, and it is the second-largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping.

This report traces the remarkable evolution of China from an opponent to a leader in UN peacekeeping. The first part of the report describes China's changing attitude and growing contributions to UN peacekeeping. Between 1971 and 1988, China gradually softened its stance on UN peacekeeping, and in November 1989, it sent its first contingent of civilian observers into the field to assist in Namibia's transition to independence. Since then, China has increased its contributions to peacekeeping, in step with its growing material capabilities, its role as an emerging power, and the growing UN demand for troops and

finance. It has built up its domestic capacities—including capacities for training peacekeepers, both Chinese and international—gained experience in the field, and increased its confidence as a peacekeeper.

The report then discusses the reasons and motivations for this remarkable evolution. No one single factor explains China's rise to its role as a key player in the field of peacekeeping. It is rather a combination of hard and soft factors. Factors of "hard" national interests—such as protecting overseas investments or gaining field experience for the People's Liberation Army (PLA)—work in combination with "soft" factors—such as reputational gains, strengthening the UN and multilateralism, and seeking congruence between foreign policy activities and its own identity both as a peer of Western great powers and as a leader in the developing world. Interestingly, hard factors have less traction than soft factors. Perhaps the most important motivation for China to become a peacekeeper lies in its aspiration to become, and to be seen as, a peer of other great powers, which invariably necessitates increased engagement in the world's most important international organization, the UN.

The third section of the report looks at the evolution of UN peacekeeping and how China reacted to these innovations. The doctrine and practice of UN peacekeeping have come a long way since its early days in the immediate postwar era. The last two decades saw increasingly complex missions in increasingly dangerous locations, where often

2 Gill and Huang, "China's Expanding Peacekeeping Role."

there is no peace to keep. Mandates have become more complex and more ambitious, and missions have often assumed a much more “robust” posture—a euphemism for larger, more intrusive, more assertive missions. China has, sometimes reluctantly, supported the conceptual and doctrinal evolution of UN peacekeeping, supporting even the most robust UN missions (arguably DR Congo and Mali), while emphasizing its unchanged commitment to an international order that respects the legal sovereignty of all countries, uses armed intervention only as means of last resort, and abstains from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries. Some have criticized this approach as thinly veiled support for authoritarian leaders, and, in some cases, China has adjusted its foreign relations. Most notably this occurred in 2008 in Sudan where it helped convince President al-Bashir to tolerate a UN mission to Darfur. The one conceptual innovation in UN peacekeeping about which China, together with many developing countries, remains deeply skeptical is the “Responsibility to Protect,” which, in China’s view, opens the door for powerful nations to promote regime change disguised as humanitarian intervention.

The fourth and final section of the report speculates about the future of Chinese peacekeeping. How will China’s peacekeeping footprint evolve in the future? Will it maintain its current footprint, or perhaps even increase it? What seems clear is that China’s weight in the UN will increase, and its importance in the field of peacekeeping with it, not least because other countries, among them the US, are reducing their financial, military, and idealistic support to peacekeeping. We can also expect to see China occupying more leadership positions in the UN peacekeeping architecture, to provide more military technology to UN PKO, and to increase its training capacities for military and police peacekeepers, both from China and from other countries. Until now, China has rarely promoted its own conceptual approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, but has mostly gone wherever the collective debate within the UN went. Lately, we observe that China has begun to promote more actively an approach to peacebuilding that emphasizes the role of economic development enabled by a strong but not necessary liberal state, and de-emphasize the role of a human-rights-based approach in peacebuilding. This trend is likely to remain, but it is not clear how such conceptual thinking might translate into policies and practices in the field.

Western China-watchers often treat China’s engagement in the field of peacekeeping as a proxy for China’s overall foreign policy. For these observers, the way China behaves in peacekeeping predicts how China will behave in other foreign policy fields as well. In other words, they assume that analyzing Chinese peacekeeping will help uncover China’s true intentions on the global stage. There is no shortage of predictions, exaggerated hopes, and exaggerated fears about China, and its future role in global politics. As Kerry Brown writes, “half the world feels that it is only a matter of time before China controls the whole planet... but the other half believes that China will remain a low-key, inward-looking, self-interested player who looks more like a mouse than a tiger, timid and cautious in its approach to the world around it.”³

Both camps hope to find support for their expectations about China’s future role in global politics by looking at its current peacekeeping policies. But such hopes are misdirected. Peacekeeping is, by definition, a technical, very specific activity constrained by the mission’s mandate decided upon by the UN Security Council (UNSC). Once a mission is deployed, there is hardly any room for pursuing a particular national interest. A closer look at Chinese efforts in peacekeeping will thus not help us to understand its policies in the South China Sea or in Tibet. This report, therefore, cannot shed new light on China’s foreign policy in general. But it can provide a comprehensive, balanced account of China’s contributions to UN peacekeeping over the past three decades.

3 Brown, *China’s World*.

The findings presented in this report are based on a review of the existing literature on the subject, and on numerous conversations and interviews with Chinese and Western practitioners and scholars. Between 9 and 16 June 2018, I conducted interviews in Beijing, and between 22 and 26 October, I conducted interviews at the UN in New York. I conducted many more interviews by phone, Skype, or Facetime. All interviews were not-for-attribution. I am grateful to those many individuals who agreed to talk with me.

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All omissions and errors are mine.

The Evolution of China's Contribution to Peacekeeping

China's remarkable development from critic to champion of international peacekeeping can be roughly structured into four phases.⁴ During the first phase, between 1981 and 1988, China slowly abandoned its ideological opposition to UN peacekeeping that had dominated its approach since its admission to the UN in 1971. During this phase, it endorsed some missions and opposed others, but did not veto them in the Security Council. China also formulated its first peacekeeping "doctrine," which emphasized the necessity of the consent of the host nation, and a maximum constraint on the use of force by peacekeepers. However, China did not yet deploy peacekeepers.

During the second phase, between 1989 and 1998, China voted in favour of most UN peacekeeping missions. It deployed its first-ever civilian observer contingent to Namibia in 1989 and began to deploy small contingents of military observers to six other UN peacekeeping missions. However, China continued to express its strong belief that peacekeeping should require the host nation's consent, use minimal force, and respect the sole authority of the UN for legitimizing peacekeeping missions.

⁴ Yin He, in a pathbreaking report in 2007, proposed a slightly different periodization. He structured the evolution of Chinese peacekeeping into the following phases: 1) 1971 to 1980—An Inactive Policy; 2) 1981 to 1987—A Change in Attitude; 3) 1988 to 1998—A Rising Profile... and Challenges; and 4) After 1999—A New Era of Participation. My own periodization, while different from his, owes a lot to Yin He's work; see He, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations."

The third phase, between 1999 and 2003, began when China deployed a contingent to UNTAET in East Timor (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor), which was a highly intrusive mission under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Chapter VII allows the Council to “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” and to take military and non-military action to “restore international peace and security.” China also actively supported large, complex Chapter VII missions in DR Congo (MONUC), Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Liberia (UNMIL), and Bosnia (UNMBIH). With the exception of its contingent in DR Congo, which consisted of 230 engineers and medical personnel, China’s contingents remained small, consisting of observers or police officers.

The fourth, current phase began in 2004. By sending a 600-strong contingent to Liberia (UNMIL), China almost tripled the number of Chinese peacekeepers in the field and made China the top troop-contributing country among the permanent members of the Security Council. During that phase, China also changed its deliberate “keep a low profile” approach and began using its economic and political influence to facilitate peace processes, notably in South Sudan and Darfur. By 2008, China had become the largest troop contributor among the five permanent members of the UNSC and was playing a more active role in international institutions. Furthermore, in 2012 China deployed an infantry platoon to Sudan to protect its engineering troops.⁵ This was the first time that China had deployed combat troops.

The next section details the remarkable evolution of Chinese contributions over the past three decades.

5 Large, “China’s Role in the Mediation and Resolution of Conflict in Africa,” p. 50.

Table I. Chinese Personnel to UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990–2017

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Troops	5	44	401	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	289	787	791	1,419	1,576	1,889	1,892	1,891	1,813	1,800	1,865	1,973	2,839	2,448	2,419
Total Police			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	75	69	21	194	197	180	177	204	191	92	71	32	174	174	169	151	156
Total Individual Police			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0										66	92	71	32	34	34	29	11	16
Total Formed Police Units			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0										125	0	0	0	140	140	140	140	140
Total MILOB/EOM			87	65	60	45	38	32	35	37	43	53	52	48	55	71	67	71	53	53	56	40	37	39	34	37	31	28
Total Staff Officers																												41
Total Chinese personnel	5	44	488	65	60	45	38	32	35	37	98	129	123	358	1,036	1,059	1,666	1,824	2,146	2,136	2,039	1,924	1,869	2,078	2,181	3,045	2,630	2,644
Total UN personnel	10,304	11,333	52,154	69,961	69,356	31,031	24,919	14,879	14,347	18,410	37,733	47,108	39,652	45,815	64,720	69,838	80,368	84,309	91,712	98,197	98,638	99,016	94,090	98,200	10,402	10,708	10,036	92,682

Note: Data come from the UN (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>). Numbers refer to troop levels on 31 December for every year, except 1990 and 1998, which refer to troop levels on 30 November. Until 1992, UN statistics only recorded troops. From 1992, statistics differentiated between troops, military observers (MILOB), and police. In 2009, MILOB was replaced by Experts on Mission (EOM) and the police were divided into individual police and formed units. In 2017, staff officers were added.

Phase I

1981–1988

1

Active PKO during this period:	7
Of which under Chapter VII:	0
Numbers of PKO in which China participated:	0
Of which under Chapter VII:	0
Peak number of total Chinese personnel during phase:	0

During the first decade since its accession to the UN in 1971, China opposed UN peacekeeping on mainly ideological grounds. China viewed UN peacekeeping missions with much skepticism—a thinly veiled disguise for imperialist interventions by the great powers. Consequently, it refrained from taking any substantive actions in Security Council debates on peacekeeping, abstaining from all votes on peacekeeping.⁶ A first sign of change came in 1981, when China cast its first vote on UN peacekeeping, supporting the extension of the UN peacekeeping forces in Cyprus UNFICYP.⁷ This marks the beginning of the first phase.

By 1984, China had developed a series of principles that would guide its policy on peacekeeping for years to come. While these principles expressed China's support for UN PKOs, they also stated that PKOs should only be launched with the consent of target states, and that the independence, sovereignty, and integrity of the state should be respected. Furthermore, every PKO mission should have specific tasks, and no country should be allowed to intervene in another's domestic affairs or seek its own interests. PKOs should remain firmly under the primary authority of UNSC.⁸ These principles continue to shape China's peacekeeping policy today. China's position as UN peacekeeper is often linked to a broader set of principles, the so-called five principles of peaceful existence. These principles—mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and co-operation for mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence—were first codified in a treaty between China and India in 1954. These principles, born out of post-colonial solidarity, are often invoked by China in order explain its vision of international relations and its emphasis on non-interventionism and respect for sovereignty.

While China has vastly expanded its practical involvement in peacekeeping since these early days and has developed a flexible approach to the challenging nature of current peacebuilding, its emphasis on respect for state sovereignty, and on the importance of the UNSC as the only authority for legitimizing PKOs, has not changed. In 1988, China became a member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and thereby laid the groundwork for becoming a key player in the field of peacekeeping.⁹

6 Huang, "Principles and Praxis of China's Peacekeeping"; Fravel, "China's Attitude toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since 1989."

7 Gill and Huang, "China's Expanding Peacekeeping Role," p. 2.

8 Tiewa, "Marching for a More Open, Confident and Responsible Great Power."

9 Choedon, "China's Stand on UN Peacekeeping Operations."

Phase 2: 1989–1998



Active PKO during this period:	41
Of which under Chapter VII:	4
Numbers of PKO in which China participated:	8
Of which under Chapter VII:	1
Peak number of total Chinese personnel during phase:	488

Between 1989 and 1999, UN peacekeeping quickly evolved in ambitions and scope, and China cautiously kept in step, albeit with certain reservations, mainly about mandates that seemed too intrusive. These reservations were usually expressed by abstaining (rather than vetoing) resolutions on peacekeeping missions.

In that decade, the number of missions dramatically increased, and missions became more complex and more intrusive, as they were increasingly deployed in civil war contexts dominated by a multitude of factions, including informal militias and quickly shifting alliances. China very rarely vetoed a PKO, but often expressed concern by abstaining. In particular, China still strongly advocated for the traditional UN peacekeeping principles—consent of the target state, respect for national sovereignty, and minimal use of force—but in practice tolerated or even supported wider peacekeeping missions with more intrusive mandates. At the same time, China remained skeptical about the role of “pivotal states” taking the lead in UN peacekeeping, strictly opposed peacekeeping missions that bypassed the UN Security Council, and did not (with the exception of UNITAF in 1993) approve missions under Chapter VII. China’s active support for PKO remained very limited. With the exception of the 400-strong engineering contingent deployed to Cambodia, Chinese peacekeeper deployments remained slight (between three and sixteen personnel) and consisted mainly of observers.

The changing international environment after the end of bipolarity in the Cold War saw a surge in the number of UN PKOs. While the UN had launched 15 missions as of 1989, this number rose to 35 new PKOs for the decade between 1989 and 1999. Most of these missions were still small observer or verification missions, which, true to the original idea of Cold War peacekeeping, sought to build confidence and facilitate political dialogue for others to resolve a conflict rather than attempting to do so themselves. They typically adhered to the “trinity” of principles of the first generation of UN peacekeeping: 1) the consent of all conflicting parties to the activities of the mission; 2) the impartiality of the peacekeepers in their relationship with all conflicting parties; and 3) the use of force only as a last resort and only in self-defence. This “trinity” was to ensure that “national sovereignty was respected in compliance with international law, which allows the use of military force only either in self-defence or under the authorization of the UN Security Council invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter”.¹⁰ Chapter VII of the Charter allows the Council to determine the existence of any threat to international peace and to take non-military or military action to restore international peace and security.

¹⁰ Stähle, “China’s Shifting Attitude,” p. 634.

In 1989, China sent for the first time personnel into the field.

This first decade of post–Cold War peacekeeping also saw a new type of PKO emerging. With the end of the Cold War, the threat of international wars, which always brought the risk of drawing the two superpowers into an escalation, waned, and civil and ethnic wars became the new dominant type of warfare. Civil wars are fought not only by government forces, but also by guerilla forces and ethnic militias. This made it increasingly challenging to uphold the traditional UN peacekeeping principles. Consent from all parties is often difficult to obtain and maintain, and impartiality becomes challenging when a multitude of factions

are fighting one another. As a result, the UN Security Council not only authorized more missions than before, but also qualitatively new types of missions, more intrusive in nature, with more complex mandates that often included the use of force.

The beginning of the decade saw some of the most stunning peacekeeping successes ever. A UN mission (UNTAC, 1992) oversaw Namibia’s successful transition to an independent, democratic, sustainable state. In Mozambique, the UN helped to negotiate an end to a long and bloody civil war and to secure the peace that still holds today (ONUMOZ 1992). In Cambodia, UNTAC assumed—for the first time in the history of UN peacekeeping—administrative control over a country and helped to steer Cambodia slowly out of the horrors of its decades-long civil war. UNTAC was by far the largest UN mission up to that time, with approximately 15,900 military, 3500 civilian police, 1150 civilians, and 465 UN volunteers from 45 participating countries.¹¹ However, the decade saw also some of the worst failures of UN peacekeeping. The PKO in Somalia ended in disaster after the world witnessed Somali militias killing US soldiers. In Rwanda, UN peacekeepers were helpless bystanders, unable to prevent a genocide. In Bosnia, UN blue helmets did nothing to prevent the massacre of 8000 Bosnians. Thus, in the short span of five years, between 1989 and 1994, the world witnessed unprecedented triumphs as well as the worst failures of UN peacekeeping.

While the unquestionable successes of peacekeeping in Namibia, Mozambique, and Cambodia highlighted the potential of peacekeeping, the failures in Sudan and Rwanda pointed to the growing risks. Missions became larger and more complex, the traditional principles of impartiality, consent of the target state, respect for sovereign statehood, and restraint in the use of force became increasingly difficult to uphold, and PKOs faced an increasing risk of being drawn into conflicts with no easy exit strategy.

During that period, China’s approach to UN peacekeeping became a balancing act between defending the principles of traditional peacekeeping while also wanting to be perceived as a responsible player who shouldered a fair share of responsibility. China exercised its veto power only twice on peacekeeping issues during that period. The first case concerned the resolution on sending UN ceasefire observers to Guatemala in 1997; the second concerned extending observers to Macedonia in 1999. China’s veto in both cases was motivated by these countries officially recognizing Taiwan.¹² In other cases, China expressed its opposition to a UN PKO by abstaining from voting altogether.¹³ For example, in April 1991, China opposed by abstention Security Council Resolution 688 (1991), which authorized

¹¹ Source: UNTAC.

¹² Chen, “Explaining the Change in China’s Attitude toward UN Peacekeeping,” p. 168.

¹³ International Crisis Group, “China’s Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping.”

establishing safe havens to protect the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq, arguing that this resolution would interfere with the internal affairs of Iraq.

Despite its reservations, China actively supported some PKOs. In 1989, it sent Chinese personnel into the field for the first time. The Chinese civilian observers headed to Namibia in support of UNTAG. The UNTAG mandate under Resolution 435 was primarily intended to create an environment suitable for free and fair elections for a constituent assembly and to draft a constitution for the nation. UNTAG started its operation in April 1989, and in November 1989, 20 Chinese civilian observers were deployed.¹⁴ The Chinese observers served with UNTAG's electoral unit. This branch of UNTAG consisted of 990 civilian personnel and was charged with planning, facilitating, and monitoring the elections. China's first deployment of personnel to a UN PKO marks the beginning of the second phase of Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping.

In December 1989, only one month after its first-ever deployment of peacekeepers, China sent five military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East, making it the second mission after UNTAG in Namibia in which China actively participated.

In 1991, China deployed 20 military observers to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to observe a ceasefire between Morocco and the Western Saharan independence movement, "Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro" (Frente POLISARIO), and to prepare a referendum on the final status of Western Sahara. In fact, in August 2007, Chinese General Zhao Jingmin was appointed as force commander for MINURSO, the first time a Chinese national had held such a position.

Also in 1991, China deployed 16 military observers to the United Nations Iraq–Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) tasked with monitoring a demilitarized zone along the border between Iraq and Kuwait.

In 1992, China participated in its fifth UN mission by sending 400 engineering troops and 49 military observers to UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia). China's active participation in UNTAC is an important development for a number of reasons. For the first time, China deployed peacekeepers in a country in its immediate neighbourhood where it had longstanding political interests. It was by far the largest contingent that China had deployed so far, and UNTAC was the first instance where the UN assumed all governmental responsibilities.

UNTAC's objective was to restore peace and civil government in a country ruined by decades of civil war, by guaranteeing free and fair elections leading to a new constitution. UNTAC opened a new chapter in the history of UN peacekeeping. It was the largest mission up to this point, involving approximately 15,900 military, 3,400 civilian police, 2,000 civilians, and 450 UN volunteers from 45 countries. The scope of UNTAC's authority was unprecedented. UNTAC was to exercise supervision over all aspects of government, including foreign affairs, national defense, finance, and public security, thus effectively taking over the administration of an independent state.

China had been deeply involved in Cambodia's international and domestic affairs for many years. During the Cambodian war and throughout the peace process, China had close ties to both the Khmer Rouge and Prince Sihanouk.¹⁵ During the peace process, China supported, against the clear preference of other UN members, the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in a transitional Cambodian government. Because of its support for the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian

¹⁴ Masuda, "China's Peacekeeping Diplomacy and Troop Dispatch."

¹⁵ Hirono, "China's Charm Offensive and Peacekeeping," p. 7.

perceptions of China were originally negative.¹⁶ One explanation for China's unprecedented large deployment to UNTAC may have been the desire to improve these negative perceptions of its close neighbour. Another explanation may be that China saw the need to improve its international standing in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which badly damaged China's international reputation.

While Chinese peacekeepers kept a low profile (in line with China's foreign policy strategy of the day in order not to antagonize Western powers, who might view China's economic rise as a threat), they greatly contributed to the reconstruction of Cambodia's infrastructure. China's contingent consisted mainly of engineers and made up approximately 20% of UNTAC's engineering capacities. According to local Cambodians, Chinese peacekeepers "fixed the road very well," "they worked effectively and diligently," "they were very friendly and smiling at us," and "they had good discipline."¹⁷

Despite this considerable engagement in Cambodia, China remained skeptical about complex and intrusive missions. This clearly showed in the case of Bosnia. In 1992, China supported the establishment of the UN Protection Force for Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR). However, later it often abstained from supporting subsequent alterations to UNPROFOR's mandate, especially those invoking Chapter VII of the Charter, authorizing the use of "all necessary measures." The Chinese representative explained, "to take all necessary means is tantamount to issuing a blank cheque. It may lead to the loss of control of the situation... Once military activities are in operation, the nature of the United Nation's involvement will change, making it difficult for UNPROFOR to carry out its original mandate."¹⁸ However, by mid-1993, when the fighting between the ethnic groups in Bosnia intensified, China softened its stance and voted in favour of missions that allowed the use of force in specified situations, such as to shield civilians from attacks in safe areas, or to protect the freedom of movement of the peacekeepers. When the 1995 Dayton agreement ended the civil war, China supported establishing a NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), authorized to use force, but made clear that this support was an exception to China's usual policy regarding the use of force in peacekeeping and only due to the "urgent wishes of the parties concerned," and the need for "extraordinary action in extraordinary circumstances."¹⁹

China's opposition towards intrusive missions with the authority to use all necessary means was greatly reinforced under the impression of the failure of UNITAF, the US-led, United Nations-sanctioned multinational force that operated in Somalia between December 1992 and May 1993. UNITAF's mission was to create a safe environment for humanitarian operations in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 794 and 837, operating under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and was authorized to use all necessary means to establish that environment. China originally supported the mission, but after US forces and Somali militias clashed, causing casualties on both sides, China increasingly expressed its reservations towards missions that appeared to ignore the traditional UN peacekeeping principles. UNITAF remained the only Chapter VII PKO that China supported during this period.

In 1994 in Rwanda, China opposed the establishment of Operation Turquoise by abstaining in the vote on Resolution 929, which established a mission led by France under Chapter VII to end hostilities. China's position was that UN missions should be carried out by the UN collectively, not by individual pivotal states with a special interest in the region. China also criticized the lack of consent from all Rwandan factions for the mission and cautioned that

¹⁶ Hirono, "China's Charm Offensive and Peacekeeping."

¹⁷ Quoted after Hirono, "China's Charm Offensive and Peacekeeping," p. 334.

¹⁸ UNSC S/PV.3106, 13 August 1992, quoted in Stähle, "China's Shifting Attitude," p. 664.

¹⁹ UNSC S/PV.3607, 15 December 1995, quoted in Stähle, "China's Shifting Attitude," p. 645.

resorting to force would only exacerbate the situation on the ground.²⁰

China also criticized the UN mission to Haiti (UNMIH), because the UNSC had authorized a US-led multinational force to provide a secure environment for UNMIH. China abstained in the vote, cautioning that the use of force by a “certain group of states” would create a “dangerous precedent” for UN PKOs.²¹ This once more showed China’s reluctance to support “pivotal states” taking the lead in an UN PKO.

In sum, the decade between 1989 and 1999 saw a quick evolution of UN peacekeeping; China was cautiously keeping in step, albeit with certain reservations. The number of missions dramatically increased, and they became more complex and more intrusive, as they were increasingly deployed in civil war contexts dominated by a multitude of factions, many of them informal militias with quickly shifting alliances. China very rarely vetoed a PKO, but often expressed concern by abstaining from a vote. In particular, China still strongly advocated for the traditional UN peacekeeping principles—consent of the target state, respect for its national sovereignty, and minimal use of force—but in practice it tolerated or even supported wider peacekeeping missions with more intrusive mandates. At the same time, China remained skeptical towards the role of “pivotal states” taking the lead in UN peacekeeping, strictly opposed peacekeeping missions that bypassed the UN Security Council, and did not (with the exception of UNITAF in 1993) approve missions under Chapter VII. China’s active support for PKOs remained very limited. With the exception of the 400-strong engineering contingent deployed to Cambodia, Chinese peacekeeper deployments remained very slight (between three and sixteen personnel), consisting mainly of observers.

Phase 3: 1999–2003

3

Active PKO during this period:	41
Of which under Chapter VII:	4
Numbers of PKO in which China participated:	11
Of which under Chapter VII:	2
Peak number of total Chinese personnel during phase:	358

The period after 1999 saw a further evolution of UN peacekeeping. In the 21st century, peacekeeping increasingly evolved into multidimensional peacebuilding operations, involving both large military and civilian capacities. The period also saw the evolving discussion about “humanitarian intervention” and the “responsibility to protect,” which can be best described as an emerging but contested norm that would prompt the international community to intervene in

20 Fravel, “China’s Attitude toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since 1989,” p. 634.

21 UNSC S/PV.3413, 31 July 1994, quoted in Stähle, “China’s Shifting Attitude,” p. 643.

the domestic affairs of states unwilling or unable to protect their own civilians.²²

During this period, China became a major contributor to UN peacekeeping, including cases where the mission involved peace enforcement or was led by a “pivotal state.” This marks a clear departure from China’s previous approach to peacekeeping. However, despite its massively expanded deployment of personnel, China still did not deploy combat troops to UN PKOs.

The year 1999 was very busy for UN peacekeeping with the UNSC authorizing four new missions in Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Congo. The first crisis to erupt was Kosovo. An armed conflict between forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army had been ongoing since February 1998. Alarmed by the high number of forcefully displaced Kosovars and by the excessive use of force by Serbian and Yugoslav security forces, the UNSC demanded on 23 September 1998 in its resolution 1199 that the warring sides end hostilities and observe a ceasefire. Under massive international pressure, the Yugoslav side agreed to an international negotiation that began on 6 February in Rambouillet. The international community—represented by the contact group formed by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia—demanded that Kosovo’s autonomy be administered and protected by a NATO force. The Yugoslav side, however, rejected the presence of NATO. When the failure of the Rambouillet talks became clear, NATO initiated military action. NATO’s bombing campaign began on 24 March 1999 and ended on 11 June 1999 when Yugoslavia’s President Milošević finally accepted the conditions and agreed to a military presence within Kosovo headed by the UN, but incorporating NATO troops.

China strictly opposed NATO’s military intervention in Yugoslavia. China’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Shen Guofang, made it clear that China opposed NATO’s interference in the territorial integrity of a sovereign country.²³ China’s opposition was fuelled not only by its principled defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of internationally recognized states, but also by its frustration about being bypassed by powerful members of the international community. China was not a member of the OSCE contact group for the Balkans, the key player in the Kosovo crisis, and it resented that the contact group dominated the international strategy towards Yugoslavia, thereby effectively bypassing the UN. Increasingly concerned about the marginalization of the UN in this dispute, China expressed in its statements in the SC its opposition to all decisions “made unilaterally without consulting the Security Council or seeking a Council authorisation” and “using Council resolution to pressure FRY

During this period, China became a major contributor to UN peacekeeping, including cases where the mission involved peace enforcement or was led by a “pivotal state.”

²² UNOGPRP.

²³ Tiewa, “Marching for a More Open, Confident and Responsible Great Power,” p. 119.

[Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] or interfering (in) its internal affairs.”²⁴

Resentment and tension between China and NATO reached a peak on 9 May 1999 when, during NATO’s bombing campaign, the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was bombed by a US plane, killing three Chinese citizens and wounding twenty others. The US insisted that the bombing was unintentional, but Chinese public opinion strongly disagreed. An outraged China called for an emergency meeting of the SC, calling the bombing “a crime of war that should be punished.”²⁵ Chinese state media called the bombing a sign of the US “global strategy for world hegemony,” and classified the air campaign as “an aggressive war.”²⁶ Subsequently, China opposed those UN resolutions on Kosovo, which disregarded, in China’s view, the national sovereignty of Serbia and authorized inappropriate levels of violence. China did not send any peacekeepers to the UN mission in Kosovo for the first six years of the mission. Only in 2005 did China send a small contingent of 19 civilian police officers.

This experience of NATO bypassing the UNSC and therefore China may have compelled the Chinese leadership to move towards a new, more activist, more flexible Chinese position on peacekeeping affairs over the next year.²⁷ Only a few months after the Kosovo crisis had settled down, developments in East Timor prompted a new UN peacekeeping mission. After a referendum for independence, conducted under UN auspices in September 1999, ended in a clear victory for East Timor’s independence from Indonesia, violent clashes instigated by anti-independence militias sparked a humanitarian and security crisis. In order to stop the violence, the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) was deployed on 20 September 1999. INTERFET was a non-UN force operating in accordance with UN resolutions, with Australia acting as a pivotal state, leading the mission and contributing most of the personnel. INTERFET’s mission was to restore peace and security and to facilitate humanitarian assistance until a United Nations peacekeeping force could be approved and deployed in the area. On 25 October, the UN established the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which provided an interim civil administration and a peacekeeping force to maintain security and order; facilitate humanitarian aid, and assist in drafting a new constitution and organizing general elections.

By supporting the establishment of INTERFET, China, for the first time, did not dissociate itself from a peace enforcement led by a “pivotal state.” After INTERFET handed over its mandate to UNTAET, China deployed 15 civilian police officers in support of UNTAET and increased its presence to UNCIVPOL to 55 a few months later. For China, supporting the mission in East Timor was clearly easier than supporting the mission in Kosovo since the Indonesian government had consented to the mission, and the UNSC had authorized it. Yet, China’s support of INTERFET and then UNTAET signals a further development in China’s approach to peacekeeping. The mission in East Timor was led by one pivotal state, Australia. Its far-reaching mandate under Chapter VII authorized it to “take all necessary measures to fulfill its mandate” and to establish a transitional authority with legal and policing authority; it involved the secession of territory from the main state and thus a break up of sovereignty, even though the secession was sanctioned by a referendum to which the main state agreed. All of this would have provided reasons for China to object vehemently to this mission a few years before. However, in 1999 China had developed a certain flexibility towards its own principles regarding peacebuilding. The fact that Indonesia consented to the mission, albeit under immense pressure from the great powers, allowed China to participate without giving up its strong support for national sovereignty. Furthermore, China regarded its participation in UNTAET as a way to strengthen the UN’s position as the only legitimate

24 Gill and Reilly, “Sovereignty, Intervention and Peacekeeping,” p. 47.

25 UNSC S/PV.4000, 8 May 1999, Letter from China.

26 Quoted after Gill and Reilly, “Sovereignty, Intervention and Peacekeeping: The View from Beijing,” p. 48.

27 Choedon, “China’s Stand on UN Peacekeeping Operations.”

authority in international peacebuilding, a principle that NATO had undermined in Kosovo.²⁸ Finally, UNTAET was seen by China as a means to improve its standing, both internationally as a responsible country, and regionally, in its own neighbourhood, as a provider of good service in South East Asia.²⁹ As Marc Lanteigne writes, participating in UNTAET provided a timely opportunity for China to demonstrate to the world that it was no longer a somewhat obstructionist force in peacekeeping, but rather a responsible power ready to participate in complex, robust multilateral missions. At the same time, by becoming an important actor in a challenging mission, China also gained more visibility for its message that the correct method of UN multilateral intervention required consent of the parties, minimum force, and authorization by the UNSC.³⁰

Also in 1999, China actively supported the UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). UNAMSIL's mandate was to help implement the Lomé Peace Agreement, to assist in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration plan, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to support the elections. UNAMSIL was mandated to "take the necessary action" under Chapter VII, but the use of force was restricted to guaranteeing the security of the UN personnel and protecting civilians. China dispatched nine observers to UNAMSIL, which had an authorized strength of 17,500. China sent another five observers in 2000 to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), whose mandate was to monitor a ceasefire in the border war that began in 1998 between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In 2001, China deployed 10 observers to the UN mission in DR Congo (MONUC, Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo). MONUC had been launched back in 1999 to monitor the peace process of the Second Congo War, initially with an authorized maximum strength of only 90 military observers. By 2003, the UNSC had increased the maximum military strength of up to 10,800 personnel and had authorized MONUC to use all necessary means to fulfill its mandate in the Ituri district and in North and South Kivu. By that time, China had increased its deployment to 230 military personnel. China also deployed 15 observers to the UN mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in 2001, 69 peacekeepers, mainly police officers, to East Timor in 2002, and 77 observers to Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003. UNMIL was established in September 2003 to monitor a ceasefire agreement in Liberia following the resignation of President Charles Taylor and the conclusion of the Second Liberian Civil War. UNMIL was authorized up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel.

Thus, by the end of 2003, China had 335 peacekeepers in five missions the field, mainly observers and engineers, but no infantry troops. It was involved in PKOs mandated under Chapter VII, but the use of force in these missions was typically limited to protecting UN personnel and enabling its freedom of movement.

²⁸ Masuda, "China's Peacekeeping Diplomacy and Troop Dispatch."

²⁹ Lanteigne, "A Change in Perspective."

³⁰ Ibid., p. 326.

Phase 4: 2004–ongoing

4

Active PKO during this period:	32
Of which under Chapter VII:	12
Numbers of PKO in which China participated:	25
Of which under Chapter VII:	10
Peak number of total Chinese personnel during phase:	3045

In this fourth and ongoing phase, China became a major player in the field of peacekeeping. Reacting to calls by Western powers to become a more active contributor to international peace, and enabled by its unprecedented economic growth, China stepped up its peacekeeping game. By 2008, it had become the largest troop contributor of the five permanent members of the UNSC. It participated in more missions than ever before and, for the first time, deployed an infantry platoon. By the end of 2017, it contributed 10.25% of the total budget for UN peacekeeping operations (see Table 3) and was by far the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UNSC and the 11th largest troop contributing country overall.

In 2004, Chinese contributions to UN peacekeeping missions exploded. In early 2004, China increased the number of its peacekeepers serving in DR Congo within MONUC from 10 to 230, mostly engineering and medical staff. This was the largest Chinese deployment since China had sent 400 engineers to Cambodia in 1992. Next, China sent 597 peacekeepers (engineering and medical units) to UNMIL in Liberia and a 133-strong formed police unit to MINUSTAH in Haiti. This was the first time China deployed a formed police unit. Also noteworthy is that China supported the mission in Haiti, despite the fact that the country recognizes Taiwan, which was previously a reason for China not to support a mission. The international reaction to China's deployment in Haiti was mixed. Some observers applauded the decision to play a greater role in peacekeeping; others were alarmed by China getting involved in the backyard of the US.³¹ Finally, China sent three observers to ONUB (United Nations Operation in Burundi). ONUB was established to ensure the continuation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed on 28 August 2000. Furthermore, it was authorized to use "all necessary means" to ensure the respect of ceasefire agreements, carry out disarmament, and protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. Together, these deployments almost tripled the number of Chinese peacekeepers in the field, bringing the total from 358 in 2003 to 1,033 in 2004, making it a watershed year for Chinese peacekeeping.

In 2005, China sent seven observers to UNOCI, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. UNOCI was established in 2004 under Chapter VII to help implement the Ivorian peace agreement signed in January 2003. With around 8,000 authorized personnel, UNOCI was considerably smaller than the mission in Liberia and DR Congo.

That same year, China also sent 35 peacekeepers to the UN Mission in Sudan. The following year, this number increased to 469, mainly engineering and medical personnel, but also some logistical and transportation units. In the

31 Tiewa, "Marching for a More Open, Confident and Responsible Great Power."

following years, China's deployment to the UN mission in Sudan (which in 2011 became the UN mission in South Sudan) grew and reached 1,061 personnel in 2018, making it China's largest deployment in a UN mission thus far. The UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS) had been established by the SC in March 2005 under Chapter VII. The objective of UNMIS was to support the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of January 2005 between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) of South Sudan and the Government of Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was meant to end the Second Sudanese Civil War that had been ongoing since 1983. It also called for the development of democratic governance in all of Sudan, for sharing oil revenues between the central government and South Sudan and it set a timetable for a possible Southern Sudanese independence referendum. UNMIS was authorized up to 10,000 military personnel and an appropriate civilian component, including up to 715 civilian police personnel.

In a parallel development to the establishment of UNMIS, a second UN mission in Sudan was established in order to end the violence in the Darfur region. Violence in Darfur had begun in 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), both non-Arab rebel groups, began fighting the government of Sudan, which they accused of oppressing Darfur's non-Arab population. The government began a massive counter-insurgency campaign, which led to the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the indictment of Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. In 2004, the African Union deployed a peacekeeping force, called the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), that closely liaised with the UN. The UN pushed for a much larger and better-equipped UN peacekeeping force, but

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the Sudanese government rejected it. Only after intensive diplomacy by the UN Secretary General and several actors in the international community, China key among them, did Sudan accept this force in June 2007. The Security Council formally established an African Union/UN hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID) on 31 July 2007. UNAMID was authorized up to 19,555 military personnel and 6,432 police officers, making it the largest peacekeeping force so far in UN history. The 9,000-strong African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was merged into UNAMID. China supported UNAMID by sending three observers in 2007 and a much larger deployment of 321 peacekeepers, mainly engineers, in 2008.

Chinese engagement in Sudan opened a new, not uncontroversial chapter in Chinese peacekeeping. Since the mid-1990s, China had developed close political and economic ties with the government in Khartoum and had been instrumental in developing Sudan's oil industry. In 1997, the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and a consortium of mostly Asian oil companies had signed an oil development deal with the government. Most of the oil fields are located in South Sudan, which at the time was fighting for independence from Khartoum. For South Sudan, China's dealings with Khartoum were perceived as support for an autocratic regime that had fought a brutal war against its own population. Furthermore, China's close economic and political ties with Khartoum and especially its stakes in the Sudan oil industry, had led to overt Western accusations that Beijing was financing a violent and authoritarian regime. Western diplomats openly criticized Beijing, and a protest movement formed under the impression of the atrocities and mass killings committed by Sudanese forces and allied militias. Activists even called for a boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, branding them the "Genocide Olympics." In order to counter these blows to its international reputation, China decided to adapt its role in Sudan. In May 2007, China appointed Liu Guijin, a seasoned diplomat, as its special representative for African affairs and the Darfur issue. China's Ambassador to the UN, Wang Guangya, publicly stated that the Chinese president told Sudan to accept a hybrid UN–African Union mission and that "China never twists arms" but that Sudan "got the message."³² Under such pressure, Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir finally accepted UN peacekeepers in Darfur.

The fact that China exercised pressure on a political ally in Africa marks an important break with China's previous political approach in Africa. China typically followed a "non-interference-no-strings-attached" policy in its dealings with developing nations. This approach has earned it a very positive image in many who favourably compare China's approach with the Western approach, which they often see as patronizing, intrusive, and neo-colonial.³³ When his regime was increasingly isolated by Western sanctions, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir especially appreciated the Chinese approach, saying that:

[F]rom the first day, our policy was clear: To look eastward, toward China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, Russia, and even Korea and Japan, even if the Western influence upon some [of these] countries is strong. We believe that the Chinese expansion was natural because it filled the space left by Western governments, the United States, and international funding agencies. The success of the Sudanese experiment in dealing with China without political conditions or pressures encouraged other African countries to look toward China.³⁴

³² Shinn, "China and the Conflict in Darfur," p. 88.

³³ Based on a survey done in 37 African countries, African barometer finds that "despite considerable criticism in the media of China's interests and operations in Africa, Africans view China's emergence as an addition to the economic playing field. In particular, its investments in infrastructure and business development, along with its low-cost products, contribute to positive perceptions of China. Majorities value China's development assistance and see its influence as more rewarding than detrimental to their country's development prospects." See Lektorwe, Chingwete, Okuru, and Samson, "China's growing presence in Africa wins largely positive popular reviews."

³⁴ Dealey, "Omar al-Bashir Q&A."

In another unusual move, China began to develop ties with South Sudan, which at that time was not yet an independent country. Traditionally, China emphasized its deep respect for the principle of non-interference and preferred to deal only with central governments. By fostering ties with South Sudan, a region in open rebellion to the central government, China parted with this traditional approach. Once the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which China helped to negotiate, was signed, Chinese companies set up shop in the South's capital, Juba. In 2008, Beijing opened a consulate in Juba, three years before South Sudan gained its independence. No doubt China's stakes in the South Sudanese oil fields played an important role in this decision.

In 2011, South Sudan gained its independence, and UNMISS (United Nations Mission to South Sudan) was launched in order to stabilize the new state. China's contribution to UNMISS became so far its largest ever and reached a strength of 1,061 troops and police in 2017. Already in January 2012, China had deployed a small infantry platoon to UNMISS in order to protect its engineering and other staff in South Sudan.³⁵ This was another first for China, which had never before deployed a security unit. By 2016, China had three infantry companies in UNMISS, one of which was located in Juba with the mandate to secure the UN House, and with protecting a refugee camp of about 5,000 people. The Chinese army had never before participated in POC (protection of civilians) or in force protection. Thus, South Sudan became a laboratory for new experiences and challenges for the PLA.

It also brought the first crisis to PLA peacekeepers. In July 2016, intense fighting broke out in Juba between the forces of South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir, and his former first-vice president, Riek Machar. The UN base was not targeted, but found itself caught in the crossfire. In three days of fighting, 300 people were killed, among them at least 33 civilians. Two Chinese peacekeepers of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan also lost their lives, and several were injured. According to one UN report, many buildings within the UN House compound were struck by bullets, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades; thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled into UN House from nearby IDP camps.³⁶ The Chinese Battalion commander was in charge of all forces at the UN House, around 1,800 infantry troops from China, Ethiopia, India, and Nepal.³⁷ After the fighting ended, it took UN forces five days to clear the thousands of refugees from nearby refugee camps from the UN compound.³⁸ A UN investigation later concluded that a confused chain of command and lack of leadership on the ground contributed to poor performance among the military and police contingents at UN House. This included at least two instances in which the Chinese battalion abandoned some of its defensive positions at POC site I on 10 and 11 July.³⁹ An eyewitness later described the Chinese reaction to the chaos within the UN House as slow, timid, and inexperienced.⁴⁰

The most recent UN mission in which China has participated is MINUSMA to which China deployed a contingent of 157 peacekeepers, among them an infantry company.

35 Large, "China and South Sudan's Civil War, 2013–2015," p. 50; Hartnett, "China's First Deployment of Combat Forces..." pp. 1–4.

36 UNSC, "Executive summary of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba..."

37 UNSC, "Executive summary of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba..."

38 Interview with a Canadian peacekeeper who served at the time in Juba, 9 February 2018 via Facetime.

39 UNSC, "Executive summary of the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba..."

40 Interview with a Canadian peacekeeper who served at the time in Juba, 9 February 2018 via Facetime.

Security Council resolution 2100 of 25 April 2013 established MINUSMA to support the political processes and transitional authorities working to stabilize Mali. In the north of the country, Mali had suffered from a rebellion by the Tuareg and other groups. In 2013, UN peacekeepers officially took over responsibility for patrolling the country's north from France and the ECOWAS' (Economic Community of West African States) previous African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). The number of Chinese peacekeepers increased to 395 personnel and included what official Chinese statements were calling a "security force" from the People's Liberation Army (PLA).⁴¹ This force consists of three infantry platoons and armoured vehicles.

One of the objectives of the Chinese peacekeepers in Mali has been to guard and protect the UN military camp in Gao.⁴² The Chinese also operate a military hospital. While French Special Forces, operating separately from the UN mission, conduct most combat missions, it is still a high-risk environment for UN troops. Non-state armed groups have carried out dozens of mortar attacks on the Chinese base, and on 31 May 2016, one Chinese soldier was killed and five others were injured when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated. Accordingly, Chinese UN forces have adopted measures to improve camp security to protect their forces.

The experiences in Mali have amplified some of the challenges that confront UN peacekeeping. The mission operates in a highly insecure environment; non-state armed actors pose a constant threat; the central state is weak and, supported by French troops, is engaged in a counter-insurgency. It is de facto unclear how exactly to draw the boundaries between the UN PKO and the counterinsurgency. MINUSMA has no counter insurgency mandate from the UN, but it has agreed to support France and the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) logistically in their efforts to combat Al Qaeda in the Maghreb.⁴³ These challenges have triggered debate within the UN about how to best adapt the PKO to such an environment.

To sum it up, in the period since 2004, China became a major player in peacekeeping. It dramatically increased the number of field personnel and combat troops alongside medical personnel and logistical support. It also gained experience with force protection and protection of civilians in hostile environments in South Sudan and Mali. Also noteworthy is that China proved to be flexible regarding its principles of non-interference and dealing only with the central government. In Sudan, China used its political and economic leverage to force the government into accepting a UN peacekeeping force, and it engaged in political and economic relations with the breakaway South Sudan. China also learned that its "no-strings-attached" policy towards African regimes was not without risk, as widespread Western outrage over Beijing's support of the violent, authoritarian regime in Khartoum forced Beijing to adapt its position. Finally, this period also saw China assuming UN force command in 2007, when a Chinese general was appointed commander of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and in 2011 when a Chinese general assumed command of UNFICYP in Cyprus. Today, China is an important, competent peacebuilder. It has all the needed capabilities, from trained military personnel and police to military hardware, logistical and transport capability, years of experience, and the political will to play a vital part as a peacekeeper within the UN system.

Figure 1 shows the numbers of Chinese peacekeepers deployed from 1990–2017 (lower line, in blue). For comparison, the number of all UN peacekeepers is also shown (upper line, in red). Note that different scales for Chinese UN personnel are used in the graph in order to better visualize the trends, which are remarkably parallel. The Chinese trend closely follows the overall UN trend. This is in line with another observation, namely that Chinese geographical

41 Murray, "China to Deploy 'Security Force' to UN Peacekeeping Operation in Mali."

42 Cabestan, "China's Evolving Role as a UN Peacekeeper in Mali."

43 Gowan and Rappa, "Global Peace Operations Review."

deployment closely follows UN geographical deployment. At the end of 2017, 80% of all Chinese personnel as well as 80% of all UN personnel were deployed to missions in Africa.

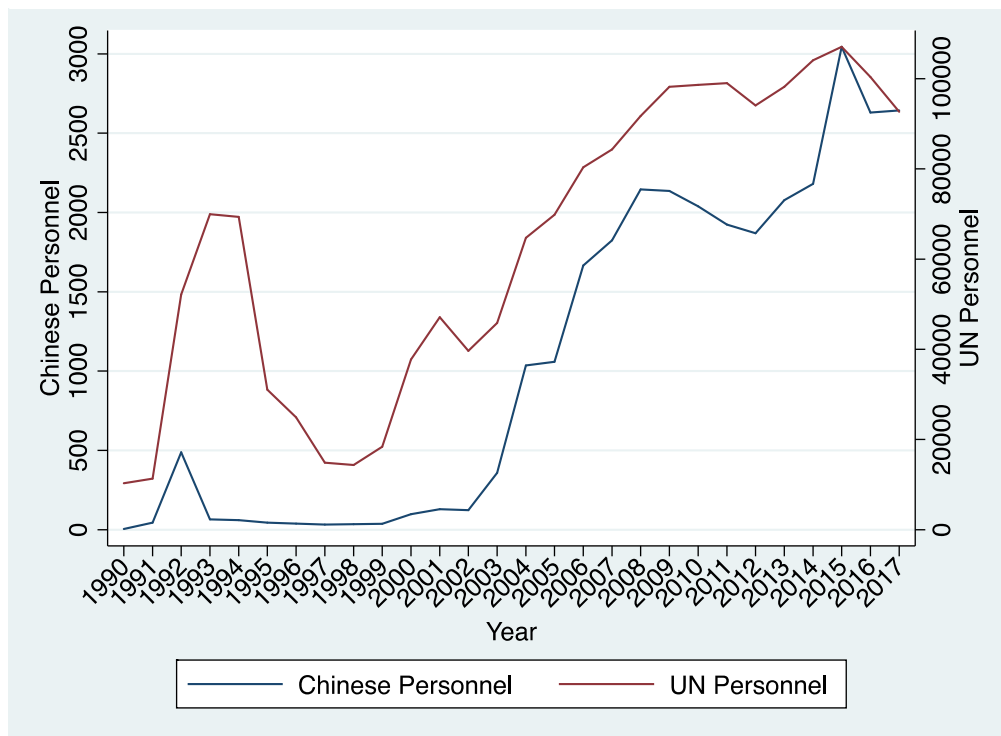


Figure I. Chinese Personnel Serving in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990–2017.

Sources: Data come from UN (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>). Numbers refer to troop levels on 31 December for every year, except 1990 and 1998, which refer to troop levels on 30 November.

Table 2: Building Capacity for Peacekeeping

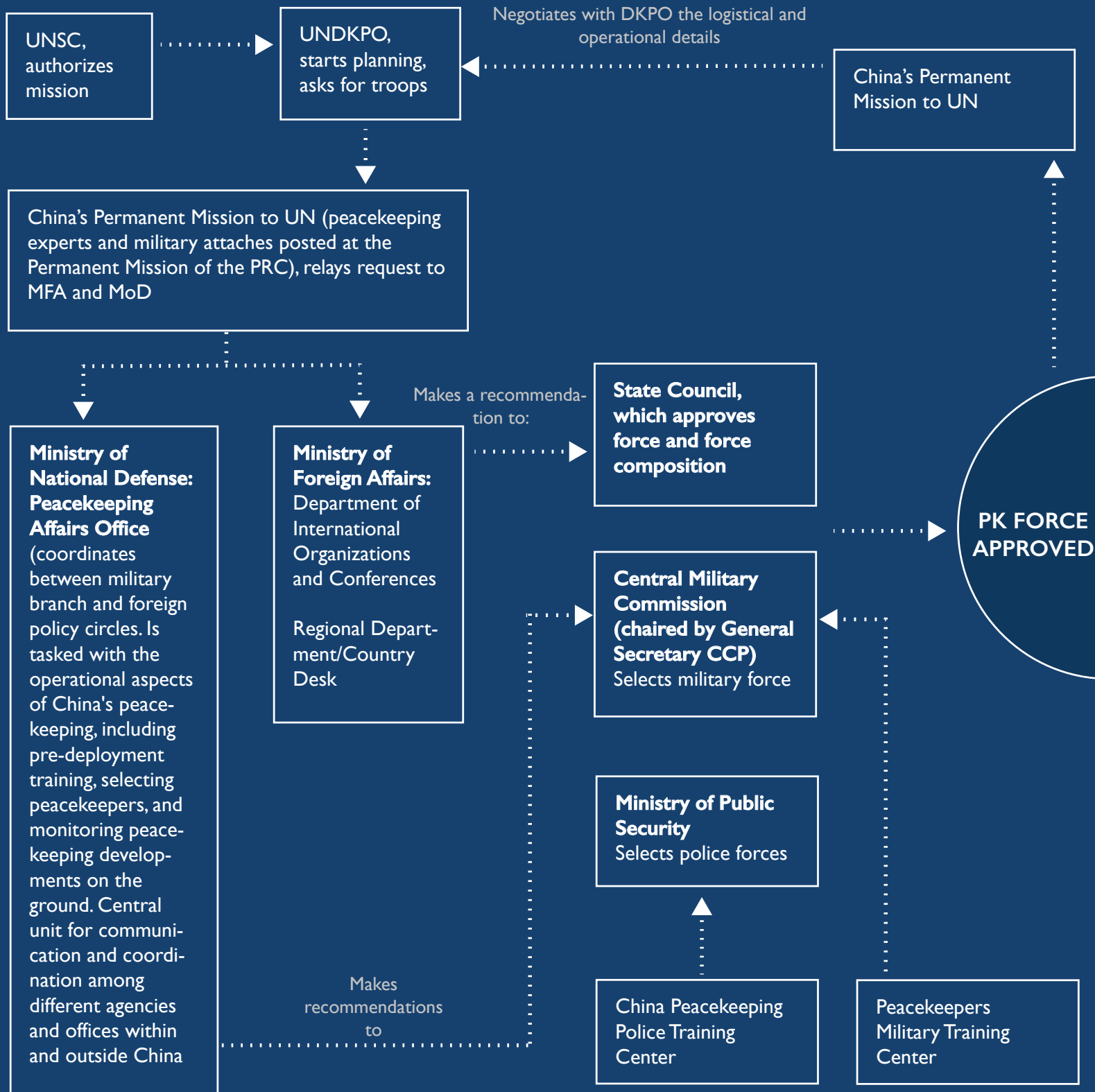
- » **1998:** Central Party formally initiates training for civilian police in peacekeeping operations.
- » **2002:** Civilian Peacekeeping Police Training Centre in Langfang established.
- » Peacekeeping Affairs Office established in the Chinese Ministry of National Defense.
- » China joins UN Standby Arrangement System, whereby the Ministry of Defense has a 525-strong engineering battalion, 25-strong medical unit, and two 160-strong transport companies on standby for deployment within 90 days.
- » **2007:** First PLA Peacekeeping Work Conference held to summarize previous participation in UN peacekeeping operations and exchange expertise accumulated in each unit.
- » **2009:** Military Peacekeeping Training Center opens in Huairou (suburban Beijing).
- » **2011:** First international training course held in Huairou for peacekeeping operation instructors from 14 countries.
- » **2015:** China establishes an 8000-person standby force for UN peacekeeping.
- » **2016:** China pledges US\$200 million to set up the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, managed by the UN secretariat. In 2016 and 2017, the fund allocates over \$11 million to projects including a rapid-response system, counter-terrorism, strengthened partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, science and technology, building African capacity to train police and soldiers for peacekeeping, and various research initiatives.
- » **2017:** Standing peacekeeping unit of 8000 troops completes its registration with the UN. Among the force are six infantry battalions, three companies of engineers, two transport companies, four second-grade hospitals, four security companies, three fast-reaction companies, two medium-sized multipurpose helicopter units, two transport aircraft units, one UAV unit, and one surface naval ship.
- » **2018:** So far, 500 non-Chinese peacekeepers from 69 troop-contributing countries trained in Huairou. China pledges to increase this number to 2000.

Once the UN Security Council has approved a PKO, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) starts to plan the mission and asks member states to contribute capabilities. The Chinese permanent mission to the UN receives a request and reports back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The MFA considers the request and discusses it with the Peacekeeping Affairs Office within the Ministry of Defence. It then makes a recommendation to the State Council and the Central Military Commission, chaired by the General Secretary and thus controlled by the party. The State Council is the executive body of the state power and consists of the premier and vice-premiers. The Central Military Commission has the authority over Chinese military forces. The State Council then consults with the Central Military Commission. Once a decision to participate in the PKO is made, the Central Military Commission will select the military capabilities. The Ministry of Public Security selects the police forces. Once the composition of the force is decided upon, the military staff of the Chinese permanent mission in New York negotiates the logistical and operational details of China's participation with the DPKO.

Figure 2. Chinese Decision-Making Process for a Peacekeeping Operation.

Sources: International Crisis Group, "China's Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping"; Huang, "Principles and Praxis of China's Peacekeeping"; Huang, "Peacekeeping Contributor Profile"; Author's interviews.

Figure 2. Chinese Decision-Making Process for a Peacekeeping Operation.



Explaining China's Rise as a Global Player in Peacekeeping

The preceding sections provided a detailed narrative of China's evolution into an important peacekeeper. But what explains such an astounding metamorphosis from skeptic to champion of UN peacekeeping? No question has attracted more interest by scholars and observers of Chinese peacekeeping. Answers range from the purely altruistic motivation to "do the right thing" to using peacekeeping as a means to promote crude national interests. Most scholars would agree that no single cause, but rather a bundle of causes, explains China's ascent as a peacekeeper. Most would also agree that altruistic motivations, "soft" national objectives (for example earning prestige on the international stage), "hard" national interest (for example protecting overseas interests), and identity-related motivations do not mutually exclude each other. Rather, different motivations, operating on different levels, overlap and reinforce one another. Finally, different motivations played out at different times. The China that engaged for the first time in peacekeeping 30 years ago is very different from today's China, which is a competent, experienced, resourceful peacekeeper. Accordingly, China's motivations have evolved over time.

Most scholars would agree that no single cause, but rather a bundle of causes, explains China's ascent as a peacekeeper.

Capabilities

A first, and often neglected factor, is that China's growing capabilities alone made its increased engagement possible. Before its ascent as an economic powerhouse, beginning in the late 1970s but only gaining traction in the 1980s, China simply lacked the resources to train, equip, and deploy peacekeepers.⁴⁴ Its unprecedented economic growth allowed China to build up the capabilities needed for PKOs, such as training facilities, military hardware, and logistical capabilities. There are obviously other important, mainly political, factors, but China's rapid evolution into an important peacekeeper, to some extent, simply reflects the fact that it transformed itself from an underdeveloped country into a large, modern economic powerhouse that sought to take its place on the world stage. Contributing to the global public good, such as peace and security, is in China's view an important and necessary obligation for every great power. Beyond economic growth, other domestic factors contributed to China's decision to step up its peacekeeping.

⁴⁴ He, *China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations*, p. 45.

Increased Confidence to become a Responsible Power

In 1999, former Premier Zhu Rongji coined the phrase “responsible power” to denote that China had not only become an economic superpower, but also intended to use its growing power to contribute to peace, security, and good global governance. This connection between China’s growing interest in peacekeeping and its self-image as a responsible power was reflected in a number of speeches and official documents of the Foreign Ministry.⁴⁵ For example, in a 2006 interview, the Deputy Chief of General Staff of the People’s Liberation Army described China’s involvement in the UN peacekeeping regime as follows: “China is a peace-loving country. In addressing grave issues involving peace and security, we are a responsible country [...] Chinese peacekeeping activities demonstrate our country’s image as a responsible superpower.”⁴⁶ This emphasis on China as a responsible power is not without legitimacy because China’s increased engagement in UN PKOs in the early 2000s came at time of rapid expansion in UN PKO activities when the demand for troops and financing grew rapidly.

The “responsible power” narrative was soon accompanied by the concept of “peaceful rise,” introduced in the early 2000s. The message was that China’s rise so far had been peaceful, and that the Chinese leadership intended to contribute to an international environment where China would be able to continue its rise in a peaceful way. A strengthened engagement in international peacekeeping fitted nicely into this narrative.

In 2005, in a speech to the UN, President Hu Jintao, added the concept of a “harmonious world” and China began to implement its “harmonious world-oriented” diplomacy with the understanding that a peaceful and harmonious world serves as the precondition for China’s peaceful development and rise. The latest in this series of such concepts is President Xi’s “community of shared future” that he first mentioned in 2013. This future would be shaped by “mutually beneficial partnership and community of shared future for mankind... A vision of a world free of war and lasting peace, [...] of development, prosperity, fairness and justice.”⁴⁷

This narrative of responsible power, peaceful rise, and a harmonious world demonstrates that China was growing into a more confident country, ready to assume international responsibilities in line with its economic power. At the same time, the narrative underlines China’s consciousness that its rise caused concern in other countries, hence its emphasis on a peaceful rise. Supporting international peacekeeping under the auspices of the UN offered a perfect opportunity to support this narrative and to secure reputational benefits.⁴⁸ Being perceived as an important and responsible contributor to UN peacebuilding was one way to earn a reputation as a peer of other great powers.⁴⁹ As a report by the International Crisis Group noted, **peacekeeping offers “a relatively low-cost way of demonstrating that China is committed to upholding international peace and security, and showing that recent growth in its military power is not inherently threatening.”**⁵⁰

45 Richardson, “The Chinese Mirror has two faces,” p. 72.

46 Quoted after Richardson, “The Chinese Mirror has two faces,” p. 72.

47 Quoting President Xi on 28 Sept. 2015, Speech at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. Source: China.org.cn, “Backgrounder: President Xi’s calls for a shared future.”

48 Li, “Norm Entrepreneur or Interest Maximiser?”

49 Gill and Huang, “The People’s Republic of China.”

50 International Crisis Group, “China’s Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping,” p. 13.

Breaking International Isolation and Countering the “China Threat”

Increasing its profile as a peacekeeper also served the purpose of breaking out of the international isolation in which China found itself in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square events in 1989. UN peacekeeping provided a platform for China to gradually rehabilitate its international image and maintain a working relationship with Western countries, especially the United States.⁵¹ Portraying China as a responsible peacekeeper has since then been seen as a strategy to counter the “China threat narrative” that had been gaining strength in the late 1990s in Western media and policy circles. The nature of the threat was rarely made clear; however, the term captured the uneasiness that China’s rise brought to the West as well as to some of China’s neighbouring countries. This Chinese narrative about the peaceful rise of China as a responsible power, and its increased engagement in peacekeeping was one strategy to counter the narrative of the China threat. Moreover, being a peacekeeper under a UN mandate underlines China’s emphasis on being an international actor who respects international legal order and institutionalized multilateralism.

Strengthening the UN/Multilateralism

Strengthening multilateralism and the UN system is another important motivation for Chinese peacekeeping.

Multilateralism has been a regular part of China’s foreign policy lexicon since the mid-1990s.⁵² In its first-ever White Paper on the UN in 2015, China’s asserted that

*The United Nations plays an indispensable role in international affairs. As the most universal, representative, authoritative inter-governmental international organization, the UN is the best venue to practice multilateralism, and an effective platform for collective actions to cope with various threats and challenges. It should continue to be a messenger for the maintenance of peace, and a forerunner for the promotion of development.*⁵³

As discussed above, China was deeply concerned about NATO bypassing the UNSC when launching its peace-enforcing mission in Serbia/Kosovo in 1999, and, similarly, when the United States assembled a “coalition of the willing” to go to war in Iraq in 2003. China sought to counteract these challenges to UN authority by strengthening the UN. Alarmed by the threat of weakened UN authority, China became more active in UN peacekeeping, both in its voting behaviour and its troop contribution. The UN is the only major international security institution in which China holds veto power, giving the country an important say on global, as well as its own, security concerns. In China’s view, a marginalized UN would mean more unilateralism by the United States and its allies. By increasing its contributions to UN peacekeeping, China hoped to help to re-establish the UN as the only legitimate source of authority for international peace and security.

51 Fang, Li, and Sun, “Changing Motivations in China’s UN Peacekeeping.”

52 International Crisis Group, “China’s Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping”; Wu and Lansdowne, China Turns to Multilateralism.

53 Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China on the United Nations Reform, Web of the Foreign Ministry of PRC, 7 June 2005, quoted in He, “China’s Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations,” p. 14.

Strengthening its Identity as a Leader of Developing Countries

A deepened engagement in peacekeeping—an activity that takes place predominantly in developing countries—also helps to foster China’s self-understanding as the leader of the developing world. Being perceived as a responsible, altruistic peacekeeper without an imperialist legacy garners support for China among developing countries, which in turn strengthens its influence within the UN.

China is the only permanent UN Security Council member that sees itself as both a great power and as a member of the global South. Its economic rise from a poor underdeveloped country to an economic superpower, as well as its past as a victim of Western colonialism lends credibility and legitimacy to its claimed roles as the leader of developing countries. The Chinese government often emphasizes that China and other developing countries share historical experience as colonized countries. This double identity as a great power and as a member of the developing world is conducive to playing a major role in international peacekeeping. In the words of one analyst,

*China is motivated to execute foreign policy activities to be consistent with its self-perceived role in world politics, where China is simultaneously a great power, and a Global South member. Therefore, China is receptive to its respective peer groups through social influence, which can stimulate China towards deployment.*⁵⁴

As a part of its identity as a leader of the developing world, China also promotes its expertise in development. In recent years, China has begun to advocate for an approach to peacebuilding that places greater emphasis on economic development as a key foundation for peace. As one analyst concludes, “China’s decision to participate more vigorously in UN peacekeeping operations stems from its interest in building an identity as a ‘peacebuilder’ that understands the connections between underdevelopment and insecurity, which are inherent in many current civil conflicts.”⁵⁵

A deepened engagement in peacekeeping also helps to foster China’s self-understanding as the leader of the developing world.

⁵⁴ Songying Fang, Xiaojun Li, and Fanglu Sun, “Changing Motivations in China’s UN Peacekeeping”, (February 3, 2018). *International Journal*, 73(3), 464-473: 469.

⁵⁵ Lanteigne, “The Role of UN Peacekeeping in China’s Expanding Strategic Interests.”

Operational Exposure for the PLA

Another motivation for China's participation in peacekeeping may be that it allows the PLA to gain operational exposure.⁵⁶

The PLA has not been involved in any large-scale military conflict after the war with Vietnam in 1979, and some scholars have argued that peacekeeping operations offer a welcome opportunity to gain operational experience.⁵⁷ Peacekeeping missions can indeed be an opportunity for live training, for equipment testing, and for improving mobility, transportation, and logistics management. Units involved in PKOs are often equipped with new technologies that they can test. In addition, as the UN increases its standards for units deployed in PKOs, participation in a PKO can help a unit to achieve higher levels of training and capabilities. Deployed units can learn from the operational procedures of unity from other militaries. For all of these reasons, peacekeeping can help to improve the PLA's MOOTW (Military Operations Other Than War) capabilities.⁵⁸ China's National Defence White Paper of 2008 refers to UN peacekeeping as MOOTW that provided "practical experience for Chinese security forces and have helped improve their responsiveness, riot-control capabilities, coordination of military emergency command systems and ability to conduct military operations other than war at home."⁵⁹ While such experience may be useful, it is likely only a welcome side-benefit of peacekeeping. Gaining operational exposure for selected units of its armed forces, while one aspect of the multilayered motivation of China's peacekeeping engagement, is not the driving force.

Protecting National Interests Overseas

The notion that China's peacekeeping engagement is mainly a tool to support its larger overseas interests has been discussed at length amongst scholars.⁶⁰ There is no doubt that over the last three decades China's overseas interests grew exponentially. Naturally, the question arises of whether China's peacekeeping activities responded to the need to protect those new interests. Specifically, China's increasing participation in peacekeeping on the African continent has led many observers to muse about whether China merely means to increase its strategic presence in Africa where it has vast trade and resource interests. A significant part of China's energy imports stem from Africa, African countries have become an important market for Chinese goods, and Chinese investments in Africa are significant (see textbox "China in Africa"). **However, there is a widely shared consensus among scholars that there is no direct causal relationship between China's economic interests overseas and its peacekeeping activities.**⁶¹

⁵⁶ Rogers, "China and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa"; Singh, "China's 'Military Diplomacy'"; Gill and Huang, "China's Expanding Peacekeeping Role."

⁵⁷ Singh, "China's 'Military Diplomacy.'"

⁵⁸ Lanteigne and Hirono, "Introduction: China and UN Peacekeeping."

⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, "China's Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping," p. 15.

⁶⁰ For example, see Fang, Li, and Sun, "Changing Motivations in China's UN Peacekeeping"; Fung, "What Explains China's Deployment to UN Peacekeeping Operations?"; He, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations"; Tiewa "Marching for a More Open, Confident and Responsible Great Power"; Stähle "China's Shifting Attitude."

⁶¹ Fung, "What Explains China's Deployment to UN Peacekeeping Operations?"; Fung, "China's Troop Contributions to U.N. Peacekeeping"; Fang,

China's regional deployment of peacekeepers does not appear to be influenced by the locations of its economic interests. Rather, it is very much in line with the overall regional distribution of UN peacekeepers, which suggests that China deploys its peacekeepers in line with the requests of the UN rather than in line with particular regional interests.⁶² Of the 29 peacekeeping missions in which China has participated since 1990 (including the ones ongoing), 15 have been in Africa, roughly 52% of its total participation. This figure parallels the overall numbers of UN missions, of which 47% took place in Africa in the same period.⁶³ Further analysis of Chinese peacekeeping operations within the African continent points to the same conclusion. Notably, Chinese peacekeeping contingents are not significantly different in countries where China has economic interests from countries where it has no economic interests. By August 2017, Chinese peacekeepers constituted 8% of the total UN peacekeeping forces in South Sudan, 2% in Sudan, and 1% in Congo. In all these countries, China has significant trade and resource interests. By comparison, Chinese peacekeepers accounted for 5% of total UN peacekeepers in Western Sahara, 3% in Mali, and 20% in Liberia, where China has few economic interests compared with other countries on the continent. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how rather small troop contingents in larger multinational missions would be able to "hijack" a mission to promote economic or other interests of a member state. On average, Chinese peacekeepers amount to only 3.6% of the total number of peacekeepers in each of the ten missions in which China is currently engaged.⁶⁴ Thus, based on the overall proportion and distribution of Chinese peacekeepers, it is difficult to establish a direct link between China's economic interests and its peacekeeping activities in Africa. China's peacekeeping in Africa should be understood, therefore, as a contribution to the global public good; however, it is true that peacekeeping may, in a more general sense, serve broader Chinese interests because peace and stability in Africa will help to protect Chinese investments, promote trade, and protect the Chinese diaspora. Peacekeeping can also help to foster good relations with those governments that benefit from peacekeeping missions and therefore create a benign environment for Chinese–African relations.

China today is less politically involved in African internal politics that it was during the Cold War when it provided support for anti-colonial struggles. Today, China's engagement in Africa is not driven by a grand strategy, but rather by economic opportunities for a growing economy in need of resources and markets. Much of this economic engagement is driven by private Chinese companies that do not necessarily subscribe to a centrally organized state sponsored strategy.⁶⁵ Africa figures low on the foreign policy agenda of China—far after the US, Asia, and Europe—and its interests are predominantly economic.⁶⁶

Chinese leaders have often emphasized that China is a partner who does not lecture, and African leaders have expressed appreciation for the fact that China tends to see Africa as a business opportunity rather than an addressee of development aid and political tutelage. In its relations with Africa, China capitalizes on the fact that China has no history of colonialism in Africa and is carefully curating its image as a leader of the Third World, whose experiences with economic development can be valuable for other developing countries.⁶⁷ True to its anti-colonial credentials, China stresses the fact that its engagement in Africa is strictly based on a policy of non-interference, as manifested in the fact that Chinese loans and grants come without conditionality, in sharp contrast to Western development aid. This

Li, and Sun, "Changing Motivations in China's UN Peacekeeping"; Richardson, "The Chinese Mirror Has Two Faces?"; Sun, "A Bigger Bang for a Bigger Buck"; Mori, "China's New Absence from UN Peacekeeping."

62 Tiewa "Marching for a More Open, Confident and Responsible Great Power."

63 Fang, Li, and Sun, "Changing Motivations in China's UN Peacekeeping."

64 Data from Fang, Li, and Sun, "Changing Motivations in China's UN Peacekeeping."

65 Thrall, *China's Expanding African Relations*.

66 Brown, *China's World*; and Yun, *Africa in China's Foreign Policy*.

67 Kelly, "Seven Chinas."

China in Africa

Chinese economic activities have rapidly grown in Africa in the new millennium. Net annual flows of Chinese money reached US\$3.2 billion per annum for the decades between 1994 and 2014.¹ In 2016, Chinese FDI stock reached a volume of US\$49 billion, and trade between African states and China was worth \$188 billion, making China by far Africa's largest trading partner.² Trade with Africa is no longer a one-way street. Since 2015, the value of Chinese exports to Africa has surpassed the value of Chinese imports. In 2016, Africa had a trade balance of -36% with China.³ Imports from Africa remain mostly natural resources, whereas Chinese exports are mostly manufactured goods. Among these goods are also weapons. China became one of the biggest suppliers of small arms and light weapons to African states in general and the largest supplier to sub-Saharan Africa, which has drawn fierce international criticism when arms were sold to authoritarian regimes ostracized by other exporters.⁴

According to one source, approximately 260,000 Chinese workers were working in Africa in 2016. The total number of Chinese expatriates is probably much higher than that.⁵ There are an estimated 10,000 Chinese-owned firms in Africa, providing jobs for 300,000 Africans. Around 90% of these firms are privately owned, calling into question the notion of a monolithic, state-coordinated economic expansion of China into Africa.⁶ From 2000 to 2015, the Chinese government, banks, and contractors ex-

Popular culture in the form of the Chinese blockbuster movie *Wolf Warrior 2*, offers us a unique view on how China sees its engagement in Africa.

tended US\$94.4 billion worth of loans to African governments and state-owned enterprises.⁷ China is today by far the largest financier of infrastructure projects, with a volume of \$21 billion, seven times greater than France, the second largest financier, with \$3 billion. Chinese development assistance to Africa has also grown. Between 2000 and 2014, China gave around \$44.65 billion in aid (ODA like aid with a grant element of more than 25%) to Africa, which amounted to around 58% of China's aid. The main recipients were Cote d'Ivoire (\$4.0 billion), Ethiopia (\$3.7 billion), Zimbabwe (\$3.6 billion), Cameroon (\$3.4 billion), Nigeria (\$3.1 billion), Tanzania (\$3.0 billion), and Ghana (\$2.5 billion).⁸ Globally China is still a modest donor. It spends four times less on aid than the US, and 15 times less than the DAC countries combined.⁹ Nevertheless, in Africa, China's aid is important. In 2015 it was, with \$6 billion, the third largest donor, after the US (\$10 billion) and the UAE (\$7 billion).¹⁰ Largely, China's development assistance

1 Brown, Kerry. *China's World. What Does China Want?*

2 Sun, Jayaram, and Kassiri, "Dance of the Lions and Dragons."

3 Ibid.

4 Wezeman, Fleurant, Kuimova, Tian, and Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2017."

5 Data from China-Africa Research Initiative, "China-Africa Trade."

6 Sun, Jayaram, and Kassiri, "Dance of the Lions and Dragons."

7 Data from China-Africa Research Initiative, "China-Africa Trade."

8 Source: Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, "Aid, China, and Growth."

9 DAC refers to Development Assistance Committee, which is an international forum of many of the largest funders of aid, including 30 OECD countries.

10 Zhang, "Chinese Foreign Assistance, Explained."

has been well received by many African leaders. The unconditionality of the aid, its focus on large infrastructure projects, and a usually quick delivery gave Chinese aid a good reputation in many Africa countries, despite the occasional criticism about poor quality or about the fact that labour-intensive infrastructure projects are built with Chinese labour, rarely creating direct employment.¹¹ Finally, Africa has become China's second-largest source of crude imports after the Middle East. Since 2000, around 20% of crude oil imports to China come from Africa. Angola is by far the largest provider of African oil to China, accounting for 13% of all oil imports in 2014. (By contrast, Sudan, where Chinese companies control a majority of the oil industry, only accounted for 2%).¹² Clearly, China–Africa economic relations have been growing since 2000 at a breathtaking speed, and relations with China are a vital aspect of Africa's economy today. However, the narrative of China's economic takeover of Africa seems exaggerated. African trade with Western nations is still larger than with China, Western countries buy more resources from Africa than China, and Western aid to Africa is much larger than Chinese aid.

Popular culture in the form of the Chinese blockbuster movie *Wolf Warrior 2*, offers us a unique view on how China sees its engagement in Africa. *Wolf Warrior 2* is a 2017 Chinese action movie and the highest grossing Chinese movie of all time. The movie tells the story of Leng Feng, a former special force soldier who has to protect Chinese medical aid workers, Chinese expatriates, and African employees in a Chinese-run factory from ruthless African militias. It's a fast-paced action movie set in an unnamed African country. The plot and the various characters create a telling portrait of how China's role in Africa, and in the World, is perceived from a nationalistic, patriotic point of view.

At the beginning of the movie, we find Feng Leng on a freighter delivering relief supplies to Africa. When So-

malian pirates attack the freighter, Feng Leng defeats them in hand-to-hand combat and the freighter safely reaches its destination. Later, bloody fighting erupts in the capital when rebel forces attack the government. The Chinese navy is sailing to the rescue of the Chinese expatriates. However, some Chinese nationals are still deep in rebel territory, and the Chinese navy cannot intervene, because the UN has not authorized this. Feng Leng has to act alone. He soon teams up with a female Western aid worker, of whom he asks, "Where are the US Marines when you need them?" hinting that the Chinese do not abandon their people, but the Americans do.

Feng Leng's interactions with other characters shed additional light on what Chinese–African relations look like from a Chinese patriotic point of view. Feng Leng saves a Chinese shop owner who has lived and worked for a decade in Africa and loses everything when rebels wage war in the capital. Feng Leng also saves a little African boy and his mother along the way. When he reaches the Chinese-run factory where Chinese workers are trapped alongside African workers, he convinces the Chinese bosses of the factory to evacuate not only the Chinese workers, but also the African workers. At one point, we hear an experienced Chinese expatriate confess his love for Africa, saying how he enjoys "the good food and the beautiful women." *Wolf Warrior 2* carries a number of messages about China's role in Africa. For instance, China is helpful in fighting pirates; China does not abandon its citizens; Chinese entrepreneurs are well established in Africa, not only in the natural resource sector, but also as shopkeepers and factory owners. As well, China is a mighty protector of its African friends (symbolized by the boy and his mother, and by the African workers), and finally, the Chinese navy operates in African waters, but respects the rules set by the UN.

¹¹ Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*.

¹² Albert, "China in Africa."

policy is not without dividends for China. Many of Africa's 54 states, at important junctions, have sided with China in the UN. For example, African support has been important in blocking repeated proposals to agree on an agenda to allow Taiwan to participate in the UN, in blocking Western proposals against China concerning its internal human rights record, or even in supporting Beijing in its successful quest to host the 2008 Olympics.⁶⁸

On the other hand, China's proclaimed "non-interventionism" has been criticized domestically and internationally as a hypocritical excuse to do business with authoritarian and predatory regimes.⁶⁹ A case in point would be China's friendly relations with the government of Sudan, which led to much international criticism and accusations of being complicit with the violence when the conflict in Darfur escalated. It was only in reaction to a massive international backlash that China used its influence with Khartoum to push for an end to the conflict.⁷⁰ After Sudan, China calibrated its approach and more carefully manages its image, avoiding the perception that China is the friend of all authoritarian African regimes.

Criticism of China's support for authoritarian regimes, while morally legitimate, may actually overestimate the effect that this support has on the behaviour of such regimes. A recent study investigating the impact of Chinese economic support on so-called survival strategies of African regimes concluded that these effects may be small.⁷¹ In other words, Chinese support is probably not effective at shielding authoritarian African regimes from pressure for better governance. This is quite different, for example, from Russia's support of authoritarian regimes in its neighbourhood, which to a considerable extent protects them from foreign and domestic pressure for democratic change.⁷²

For some observers, an important new stage in China's position in Africa came in July 2017 when China opened its first-ever naval base abroad in Djibouti, on the east coast of Africa, at a strategic point between the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden. The establishment of the naval base was met with considerable interest and worry by many Western observers. The Chinese government was keen to stress, however, that the main purpose of the base was to protect and service its civilian ships bringing oil from the Middle East into the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Piracy at the Horn of Africa has long been a threat to commerce, and China has a long track record of co-operating with the UN in anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden. The base could also be used to resupply the PLA's peacekeeping contingents serving in Africa, or to help expedite evacuations of Chinese nationals in the region. Its main purpose appears to be to support China's economic interests in the region and to assist in MOOTW.⁷³

In sum, China's rise to become a key player in the field of peacekeeping is explained by a combination of factors. Interestingly, "hard" national interests—such as protecting overseas investments or gaining field experience for out-of-area missions for the PLA—have clearly much less traction than "soft" interests—such as reputational gains, strengthening the UN and multilateralism, and seeking congruence between foreign policy activities and its own identity as both a peer of Western great powers and as a leader of the developing world.

68 Saferworld. "China's Growing Role in African Peace and Security"; also Alden, "China in Africa."

69 Saferworld. "China's Growing Role in African Peace and Security."

70 Ibid.

71 Hackenesch, *The EU and China in African Authoritarian Regimes*. Similar conclusions are also reached by Aidoo and Hess, "Non-Interference 2.0"; Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*.

72 Zürcher et al. *Costly Democracy*.

73 Fei, "China's Overseas Military Base in Djibouti."

The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping and China's Response

The end of the Cold War and the changing global security environment led to a rapid evolution of UN peacekeeping—both in practical terms on the ground and in doctrine. The most important changes include more robust, intrusive peacekeeping; a softening of the hitherto sacrosanct principles of international legal sovereignty in order to better protect civilians from their own states; an increased focus on protecting civilians on the ground; and an increased focus on better protecting UN participants in the field. These new challenges and responsibilities for UN peacekeeping also bring the realization that the UN is often not well equipped to master these challenges, and that more realistic expectations about the limits of UN peacekeeping are needed. China, as other key players, must react to these challenges and new doctrinal thinking.

The Brahimi Report and the Turn to More “Robust” Peacekeeping

The first and perhaps most important doctrinal evolution came with the so-called Brahimi Report. The late 1990s had seen some of the most painful failures of UN peacekeeping. In Somalia, UN peace enforcement failed; in Rwanda, the UN was not able to prevent the genocide; in Bosnia, the UN was not able to protect civilians from egregious abuse. In reaction to these failures, in 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and tasked it with assessing the shortcomings of the existing peace operations system. The resulting report is known as the “Brahimi Report” after Lakhdar Brahimi, the chair of the panel. The panel noted that in order to be effective, UN peacekeeping operations must be properly resourced and equipped, and operate under clear, credible, achievable mandates. Most notably, the report introduced the notion of “robust” peacekeeping. Once deployed, peacekeepers should be “capable of defending themselves, other mission components, and the mission’s mandate, with robust rules of engagement, against those who renege on their commitments to a peace accord or otherwise seek to undermine it by violence.”⁷⁴

By 2009, the concept of “robust peacekeeping” was further developed and reached a doctrinal formulation in a DKPO paper that defined “robust peacekeeping” as a political and operational strategy to signal the intention of a UN mission to implement its mandate and to deter threats to an existing peace process in the face of resistance from spoilers. This meant that a UN PKO at the tactical level, with authorization of the Security Council, was supposed to defend its mandate against spoilers whose activities posed a threat to civilians or risked undermining the peace process. By making explicit reference to defending the mandate and protecting civilians by force, the UN moved away from the original doctrine that had conceptualized peacekeeping mainly as a mediating activity, based on impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defence. Subsequently, UN PKOs launched after 2000 adopted a more forceful posture with more intrusive mandates. In contrast to earlier missions, peacekeepers were also deployed to places where violent conflict was still ongoing and therefore there was no peace to keep.

The doctrinal innovation triggered by the Brahimi Report had two lasting consequences. The first was that it set UN PKOs on a course where the (often blurry) boundaries between the use of force on the tactical level (meant to protect the UN mandate and civilians) and the use of force on the operational level (meant to enforce peace) would often be crossed. The second was that it bought the protection of civilians by force to the forefront of UN practice

⁷⁴ United Nations, “Brahimi Report,” p. 54.

and doctrine. Both issues, widely discussed within the UN, remain important and controversial today.

Protection of Civilians (POC) and the Kigali Principles

Civilian protection, by “all means necessary,” became a core aspect of UN PKOs and central to many of its new mandates. For many observers, the protection of civilians as a whole-of-mission activity has become the benchmark against which today’s UN peace operations are judged. Over the last decade, the Council has explicitly mandated ten UN peacekeeping missions to take all necessary measures, including force, to “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.” In each case, China has voted in favour of the mandate, namely the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), the UN Mission in Liberia, the UN Operation in Burundi, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire, the UN Mission in Sudan, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, the African Union (AU)/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.

While there has been a growing recognition among UN members that the protection of civilians is at the core of UN peacebuilding, however, development in the field often demonstrated that UN PKOs are not always successful in protecting civilians. Experiences in South Sudan, Darfur, the CAR, Côte d’Ivoire, the DR Congo, and Mali, among others, have made it painfully clear that these missions lack the capacity to deliver on their mandates. Even relatively large peace operations with robust mandates are not always able to provide protection in fragile states where a multitude of violent actors, both state and non-state, threaten the security of civilians.

Furthermore, experiences in South Sudan showed that even when the UN is able to provide shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees, problems persist. By 2016, around 186,000 civilians sought the protection of UNMISS inside UN-protected refugee camps (so-called POC sites). However, it has been difficult to guarantee internal security within these camps, which remained vulnerable to external security threats, and tended to attract the bulk of available humanitarian aid, thereby creating more incentive for civil populations to migrate to these POCs.

These pressing challenges regarding POCs led to intense debate within the UN. In 2015, DPKO/DFS finally released a new policy on the protection of civilians in its field missions.⁷⁵ This policy provided definitions, an updated operational concept, and guidance on implementing POC mandates. The policy identified three tiers of protective action: protection through engagement and dialogue (Tier I), the provision of physical protection that includes a range of military tasks (Tier II), and supporting the creation of a protective environment (Tier III).

In a parallel process, several member states, with Rwanda in the lead, supported by the United States and the Netherlands, spearheaded a new accord on POC that came to be known as the Kigali principles, adopted in May 2016. The principles include a strong pledge to be “prepared to use force to protect civilians” and “not to hesitate to take action to protect civilians.” The principles have been endorsed by 44 member states—including some large financial contributors such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, France, and other European member states—and some of the largest troop-contributing countries, such as Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. However, China and Russia, both permanent members of the UNSC, as well as emerging power India, remain notably absent from the list of signatories, and so is Ethiopia, currently one of the largest UN troop contributors.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, “The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping.”

While China endorsed all recent UN missions with a strong POC mandate, it remains cautious and continues to emphasize that national authorities, not the UN, should assume primary protection responsibilities (and that more focus should be placed on traditional UN objectives such as facilitating ceasefires, prompting conflict prevention, and supporting peaceful conflict resolution through political processes).⁷⁶ This uneasiness with more robust implementation of POC mandates may be because protecting civilians in 21st century wars often necessitates safe havens being defended pre-emptively and engaging with armed non-state actors who threaten civilians. The boundaries between classic peacekeeping and counterinsurgency thus become fuzzy—a notion with which China is not at ease.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

While China endorsed all recent UN missions with a strong POC mandate, it remains cautious and continues to emphasize that national authorities, not the UN, should assume primary protection responsibilities

Another important doctrinal innovation that developed in parallel to “robust” peacekeeping and protection of civilians is the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P). R2P put forward two basic principles. The first is that each state has the responsibility to protect its own people. The second is that, if a state is unable or unwilling to fulfill that responsibility, other states have the responsibility to intervene. These two principles installed the protection of human rights as the core obligation of a sovereign state, and implied that lacking will or lacking capability of states to live up to this obligation could forfeit one of the key components of international legal sovereignty—the right to be free from foreign intervention. R2P was thus a rather revolutionary re-interpretation of the meanings of state sovereignty and non-interference, both fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) first formulated R2P in a controversial 2001 report that caused much debate. Most contentious was the suggestion that R2P could also be invoked in the case of a paralyzed SC. In such a situation, the General Assembly or a regional organization could act under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and seek Security Council approval after the fact.

The R2P principles were repeated in a subsequent report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled “A More Secure

⁷⁶ Teitt, “The Responsibility to Protect.”

World: Our Shared Responsibility,"⁷⁷ and the Secretary-General's 2005 report, "Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All."⁷⁸ Importantly, both documents implied that an intervention in the name of the responsibility to protect still required authorization by the SC under Chapter VII, thereby somewhat easing the concerns of critics that R2P could open the door to arbitrary interventions by powerful states in the internal affairs of weaker states, without SC authorization.

At the 2005 high-level UN World Summit meeting, UN member states finally endorsed R2P, affirming their responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, and accepting a collective responsibility to help each other uphold this commitment. Among those who endorsed R2P was Chinese President Hu Jintao.⁷⁹ The Chinese endorsement for R2P came to many observers as a surprise. During the consultation process leading up to the original 2001 "responsibility to protect" report, China's foreign policy community voiced its opposition to R2P, which was seen as a Western imposition, allowing Western powers to intervene in weaker countries on dubious moral grounds and thus directly confronting the core of China's allegiance to state sovereignty and the non-interference principle.⁸⁰ In the following years, China tempered its opposition to R2P somewhat, but kept insisting that the SC maintain final authority over interventions and that decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis instead of following pre-set criteria.⁸¹ Eventually the formulation of the R2P principles in the 2005 World Summit Closing Document respected these concerns, which made China's endorsement of R2P possible.⁸² In the end, China, with the support of like-minded states, succeeded in reinforcing the SC's authority over decisions to intervene.⁸³ China succeeded in averting the possibility that R2P would become a norm that would allow individual states or regional organizations to act without SC authorization. At the same time, lending its support to the 2005 formulation of R2P allowed China to continue to curate its image as a responsible peacekeeping power and avoid the possible reputational costs of being perceived as a country indifferent to mass atrocities.⁸⁴

Libya was the first case where the Security Council authorized a military intervention citing R2P. The Arab Spring reached Libya in 2011, triggering violent unrest. On 26 February 2011 the Security Council, making explicit reference to R2P, unanimously adopted resolution 1970, which authorized an armed intervention, led by the US, France, and Britain. The mission was intended as a humanitarian mission with the aim of protecting civilians (mainly by imposing no fly zones), but it quickly devolved, in China's view, into a military intervention with the aim of forced regime change. This view was shared by a number of other states, among them Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa. China had not vetoed the Libya mission, in part because the Arab League supported the intervention, but then subsequently felt betrayed by the three leading Western powers when the mission, in China's view, clearly went beyond its original mandate. China, like many other countries, had always been wary that powerful countries could misuse R2P in order to pursue their particular interests, and the case of Libya seemed to confirm this.⁸⁵

77 UN document A/59/565.

78 UN document A/59/2005.

79 Tiewa and Zhang, "Debates in China about the Responsibility to Protect"; Teitt, "The Responsibility to Protect."

80 Pang, "China's Non-intervention Question"; Teitt, "The Responsibility to Protect."

81 Tiewa and Zhang, "Debates in China about the Responsibility to Protect."

82 Fung, "China and the Responsibility to Protect."

83 Job and Shesterinina, "China as a Global Norm-Shaper."

84 Tiewa and Zhang, "Debates in China about the Responsibility to Protect."

85 Garwood-Gowers, "China and the Responsibility to Protect."

As one Chinese scholar put it in an interview with us, “after Libya, R2P was dead to us.”

The backlash was felt immediately when the crisis in Syria broke out. China, together with Russia, vetoed several resolutions in the UNSC that called for sanctions against Syria and declared that it would continue to oppose any Western intervention that could lead to a forced regime change in Syria. At this time, China openly equated R2P with regime change.

For the first time, China also launched a conceptual innovation in an attempt to provide an alternative to what was, in China's eyes, the delegitimized concept of Responsibility to Protect. The concept it put forward was called “Responsible Protection.” China was not alone in its attempts to push for conceptual alternatives to R2P. At roughly the same time, Brazil floated its “Responsibility While Protecting” concept that bears many similarities to China's “Responsible Protection” concept. The Brazilian concept was made public in a letter dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN Secretary-General.⁸⁶

In a 2012 article, Chinese scholar Ruan Zongze elaborated on the Chinese concept of “Responsible Protection.”⁸⁷ Zongze wrote that the notion of R2P had unfortunately “become a synonym of regime change and constituted a severe challenge to the traditional concept of state sovereignty and non-interference in others' internal affairs.”⁸⁸ Its application in Libya, wrote Zongze, was a clear misuse of the concept for the strategic purpose of the great Western powers and did not effectively protect civilians, but in fact exacerbated violence and led to large number of civilian casualties and political chaos. Zongze then presented “responsible protection” as an alternative to R2P. The core elements of responsible protection are as follows:

1. Protection should be offered to all civilians, not only to specific political parties or armed forces
2. The only legitimate actor to authorize the provision of such protection (besides the government) is the UNSC
3. The means of “protection” must be strictly limited and non-military, means like diplomatic efforts should be prioritized
4. The “protectors” should also be held responsible for the post-“intervention” and post-“protection” reconstruction of the state concerned
5. The United Nations should establish mechanisms of supervision, outcome evaluation, and accountability for the mission

In essence, “responsible protection” intended to increase the threshold for military intervention and aimed to hold accountable intervenors for the long-term effects of their intervention—an idea that seems legitimate, given the disastrous effects on civilians after the interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya.

The Chinese reaction to the Libyan and Syrian situations show that the Chinese position on sovereignty and intervention has remained essentially unchanged. China continues to be a staunch defender of the principle of non-intervention. If anything, the Western-led intervention in Libya reinforced Chinese mistrust of the notion of R2P. In reaction, China is very likely to continue to advocate for the primacy of the UNSC in all matters related to intervention.

⁸⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Agenda items 14 and 117.

⁸⁷ Ruan Zongze is associated with the China Institute of International Studies (CIS), which is the think tank of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Zongze, “Responsible Protection.”

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

From State-Building to Stabilization

Many of the most ambitious “heavy-footprint” UN missions launched around the turn of the millennium aimed to bring peace by completely rebuilding the state. In the light of the modest outcomes of some of these missions, for example Kosovo and Afghanistan, the term “stabilization” began to replace “state building.” Stabilization denoted a more modest, more pragmatic approach than the overly ambitious state building.

The UN has not yet precisely defined stabilization so it lacks clear doctrinal expression. However, discourse within the UN about stabilization suggests that such missions are typically deployed in active ongoing hostilities; they may therefore require robust force to achieve their mandate, including protecting civilians, by force if needed. Stabilization missions are also expected to counter the threats posed by many non-state armed groups, by force if needed, and to support the government, which is often problematic since governments may ally with violent non-state actors and commit violence against their own civilians.

There are currently four missions explicitly denoted as stabilization missions. These are MINUSTAH (Haiti, 2004), MONUSCO (DRC, 2010), MINUSMA (Mali, 2013), and MINUSCA (CAR, 2014). China participates in three of these missions, the exception being MINUSCA. However, China has expressed its full support for the UN mission in CAR; it has also announced plans to donate weapons to the government of CAR.⁸⁹ China has not officially expressed an opinion on the concept of “stabilization,” perhaps because the term is still so loosely defined within the UN. One could speculate that China might agree with a doctrinal shift away from the overly ambitious concept of state building, which in China’s view also entails political interference in the domestic affairs of a state. On the other hand, “stabilization” is associated with situations in which there is no peace to keep and which may require a very robust mission mandate. China has consistently cautioned against such mandates, even though it participates in stabilization missions. It remains to be seen whether the term “stabilization” will find a more concise doctrinal expression in the future, and how China would react to such an expression.

HIPPO 2014 (High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations)

All notions that we have discussed so far—“robust” peacekeeping, R2P, the more forceful protection of civilians, and stabilization—signify increased ambitions and as well as increased burdens for UN peacekeeping. The results on the ground, however, are often more limited and more modest than what was hoped for. In the early 2000s, the realization grew within the UN system that recent peacekeeping operations, despite their size and their robust mandates, were rarely able to meet their objectives. There was an increasing gap between high ambitions and high expectations on the one hand, and limited resources and increasing dangerous conditions on the ground on the other.⁹⁰ In 2014, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed the so-called High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) in order to review the changing nature of peacekeeping environments, the evolving mandates of peacekeeping operations, and the protection of civilians. HIPPO released its report in June 2015. The HIPPO report sought to contribute to better management of expectations. It noted a growth of often too optimistic expectations about the capability of UN PKOs to protect civilians in increasingly dangerous environments. The HIPPO report was perceived by many as primarily a story about the limits of the United Nations.⁹¹ The HIPPO report, however,

⁸⁹ XinhuaNet, “China Ready to Make Renewed Contributions to CAR Peace.”

⁹⁰ Andersen, “The HIPPO in the Room.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

does not diminish the importance of POC. It clearly asserts that United Nations personnel cannot stand by as civilians are threatened or killed but need to stand and deliver even in highly challenging environments. At the same time, the report also stressed that robust military strategies must be accompanied by unarmed strategies, and that protection mandates must be linked explicitly to political solutions. The report calls for four “essential shifts.”

First is the primacy of politics: “Lasting peace is achieved not through military and technical engagements, but through political solutions. Political solutions should always guide the design and deployment of UN peace operations.”⁹² Second, the report urges the UN to tailor UN PKOs better to the context and to use the full spectrum of peace operations flexibly. Third, the report advocates for a stronger, more inclusive peace and security partnership “to respond to the more challenging crises of tomorrow.”⁹³ Finally, the report urges the UN Secretariat to become more field-focused and UN peace operations to become more people-centred.

While all four shifts are important, it is “the primacy of politics,” and the pushback against “robust mandates alone,” perceived by many observers as the most important contribution of the HIPPO report. In our interviews in Beijing, we got the sense that China welcomes HIPPO’s emphasis on the primacy of political solutions, as well as HIPPO’s reservations about overly ambitious and robust mandates. These shifts appear to be in line with China’s consistently expressed support for a non-intrusive, cautious approach to peacebuilding with ample space for political negotiations and mediation.

The Cruz Report

The next contribution to doctrinal innovation comes from a report entitled “Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We Need to Change the Way We Are Doing Business,” authored by General dos Santos Cruz, usually referred to as the Cruz report.⁹⁴ The Cruz report intends to address one key question: “why the United Nations has had so many casualties caused by acts of violence in recent years, and what should be done to reduce these casualties.”⁹⁵ The report urges the UN “to adapt to a new reality: The blue helmet and the United Nations flag no longer offer ‘natural’ protection. Peacekeeping environments now feature armed groups, terrorists, organized crime, street gangs, criminal and political exploitation, and other threats. The era of ‘Chapter VI-style’ peacekeeping is over; but the United Nations and troop/police-contributing countries are still largely gripped by a ‘Chapter VI Syndrome.’ If the United Nations and T/PCCs do not change their mindset, take risks and show a willingness to face these new challenges, they will be consciously sending troops into harm’s way.”⁹⁶

The report also notes that “deficiencies in training, equipment and performance” contributed to UN fatalities and advocates for a change of attitude and mindset, for improving capacity, and for using massed, mobile, and credible forces.⁹⁷ According to the report, “hostile forces do not understand a language other than force. To deter and repel attacks and to defeat attackers, the United Nations needs to be strong and not fear to use force when necessary. Some T/PCCs and leadership remain risk-averse when it comes to using force, but they have failed to understand projecting strength is more secure for uniformed and civilian personnel.”⁹⁸ The report also advocates that troop-providing coun-

92 United Nations, “HIPPO Report,” p. viii.

93 Ibid.

94 Cruz, “Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers” (referred to as The Cruz Report).

95 Ibid., p. 2.

96 Ibid., executive summary.

97 Ibid., p. 31.

98 Ibid., executive summary.

tries should no longer be encouraged to apply their own national rules of engagement that may be more constraining than the overall mission's rule of engagement, and that the UN should retain the right not to accept poorly trained units. Both recommendations make sense from a tactical perspective, but would be difficult to implement, given that the UN is notoriously in need of troop contributors.⁹⁹

The Cruz report is relatively recent and it remains to be seen how troop-contributing countries will respond to its key recommendations. To some extent, the Cruz report contradicts HIPPO. While HIPPO argued for less ambitious, more political mandates, the Cruz report suggests that UN peacekeeping, at least on a tactical level, should become more robust, more assertive, and more proactive. Our interviews with Chinese scholars and practitioners suggest that the Cruz report is seen with skepticism in China. Especially its emphasis on the proactive use of force in order to defend UN personnel was widely criticized by our Chinese interlocutors. Such a tactical readjustment of the way UN peacekeepers should behave militarily would further undermine their impartiality and blur the boundaries between peacekeeping and counter-insurgency.

Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)

Action for Peacekeeping is a recent (2018) initiative by the Secretary-General for renewing the engagement of member states to the collective commitment for UN peacekeeping. It is an exercise in mobilizing commitment and buy-in at a time when the dangers and costs of UN PKOs such as the one in Mali have dampened members' appetite for peacekeeping. At the same time, it is also an attempt to recalibrate UN peacekeeping, which has become, in the eyes of some observers, too heavy-handed and too militarized.

In late 2018, the Secretary-General released the "Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations,"¹⁰⁰ which is the rallying document for A4P. By December 2018, 151 countries, among them China, had endorsed the Declaration, which takes up many of the themes and lessons raised by both the HIPPO report and

While China endorsed all recent UN missions with a strong POC mandate, it remains cautious and continues to emphasize that national authorities, not the UN, should assume primary protection responsibilities

⁹⁹ Williams, "Cruz Report"

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Action for Peacekeeping"

the Cruz report (see above). The Declaration reiterates the “primacy of politics in the resolution of conflict and the supporting role of peacekeeping operations therein”—one of the important themes of the HIPPO—and also reaffirms “the basic principles of peacekeeping, such as consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.” It commits members to “pursue clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable mandates”—a reaction to the often-voiced criticism (also by China) that UN PKO mandates have become overly complex, overly ambitious, and therefore not achievable. The Declaration also contains a clear commitment to the protection of civilians (POC) but places the primary responsibility for this in the hands of the host state. Peacekeeping operations are expected to contribute to POC. In a nod to the Cruz report, the Declaration stresses the need to address “the rise in peacekeeper fatalities and enhance their safety and security.” Also in line with the Cruz report, it calls on member states to honour their commitment to “provide well-trained and well-equipped uniformed personnel” and ask troop-contributing countries not to impose caveats on how their troops can operate. Finally, the Declaration commits members to “to improving strategic communications and engagement with local populations to strengthen the understanding of the peacekeeping missions and their mandates.” This last point can be read as an admission that UN PKOs often do not sufficiently engage with their environment and thus have a limited capacity to “read” and understand the situation.

Many of the points made by the Declaration are clearly in line with China's view of peacekeeping. China has always emphasized the primacy of politics, the importance of impartiality, consent, and non-use of force and has criticized the often overly ambitious mandates of PKOs. Its troops are well trained and well equipped, and China does not place caveats on its contingents. In its official endorsement letter, China welcomed the Declaration, using the opportunity to elaborate on the principles that in China's view make peacekeeping operations effective. It is worthwhile to consider these points in detail since they are programmatic for China's vision of peacekeeping.¹⁰¹

- » **First, the UN Charter. It is the cornerstone of peacekeeping operations. The principles of sovereignty equality, non-intervention in domestic matters, and peaceful settlement of disputes are enshrined in the UN Charter. These principles, together with the need to secure the consent of the parties, must be adhered to at all times.**
- » **Second, political solutions. The ultimate goal of UN peacekeeping is to facilitate the settlement of disputes by political means. The primacy of politics should be reflected in every aspect of the peacekeeping operations.**
- » **Third, mandate by the Security Council. This is what the peacekeeping operations are based on and where improvements are called for. The mandate must be achievable and focused, as sweeping and unrealistic mandates would be counterproductive. Member States must provide peacekeeping operations with adequate resources in a timely fashion to match their mandate. Efforts must also be made to monitor and improve efficiency in the use of resources.**
- » **Fourth, peacebuilding. It is the natural next step of peacekeeping. While**

¹⁰¹ Wang Yi, “Opening a New Chapter of UN Peacekeeping.”

striving to bring security and stability, peacekeepers should also contribute to local capacity-building, thus laying the foundation for poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and enduring peace in the host country.

» **Fifth, strong partnership.** This is what underpins the success of every peacekeeping operation. Greater synergy must be developed between host countries, troop and police contributors, and financial contributors. The African Union's independent peace mission is a laudable effort to seek African solutions to African issues. China supports the UN in providing sustained and predictable funding assistance to this effort.

The first three points—that PKOs must respect UN principles, adhere to the primacy of political solutions, and be mandated by the UNSC—have long been staples in China's views on peacekeeping. Interesting is the emphasis on "achievable and focused" mandates, which again reiterates China's criticism of vast and overambitious mandates. The last point, the nod to strengthening partnership with the African Union (AU), is also not entirely new. China has long supported the AU with grants and capacity-building measures. Most notable, however, is the fourth point, which clearly states that peacebuilding is the next step of peacekeeping and that "peacekeepers should also contribute to local capacity-building, thus laying the foundation for poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and enduring peace in the host country." This point is interesting because China has until now been a skeptic of peacebuilding. While it has embraced peacekeeping, which it sees as a more restricted and less political activity, it has so far not embraced the broader notion of peacebuilding, which it tends to see as political, intrusive, and interfering with the host society. China's endorsement letter signals that this may no longer be the case. It is also noteworthy how China conceptualizes peacebuilding as an activity that contributes to local capacity building. Next, local capacity then enables poverty alleviation and sustainable development, which are seen as the foundation for lasting peace. In other words, peace depends on economic development, which in turn is enabled by a strong state. Missing from this conceptualization are references to good governance, democratic values, and the rule of law, the constitutive parts of the dominant Western paradigm of liberal peace. In the final section of this report, we will return to this emerging model of Chinese peacebuilding.

China and UN Peacekeeping—What’s Next?

China’s Current and Future Footprint

China has evolved over the past 30 years into an important actor who commands the resources, the experience, and the political will to make significant contributions to UN peacekeeping. Its material contributions to peacekeeping are remarkable:

- At the end of 2018, it had over 2500 peacekeepers in the field, making it by far the largest contributor of peacekeepers among the P5 and the 10th largest contributor in total (see Table 3).
- China contributed 10.25% to the UN peacekeeping budget in 2017, which is the second largest contribution of all members (see Table 4). China is thus the only P5 member with a significant contingent in the field.
- China has completed the registration of its standing peacekeeping force of 8000. Among the force are six infantry battalions and enabling units such as three companies of engineers, two transport companies, four second-grade hospitals, four security companies, three fast-reaction companies, two medium-sized multipurpose helicopter units, two transport aircraft units, one drone unit, and one surface naval ship.
- In its training centres, China trains its own military peacekeepers, and also foreign peacekeepers. Currently, around 500 foreign military peacekeepers from 69 countries have been trained, and China plans to increase that number quickly to 2000.
- China has committed \$100 million to the African Union to support the building of an African Standby Force.
- China set up a \$200 million United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, which funds projects in the field of peacebuilding.
- China could also become a source of more female peacekeepers. So far, 800 Chinese women have served on UN peacekeeping missions, and 60 foreign female peacekeepers have been trained in China.¹⁰²

Beyond material contributions, China also is very committed to learning and improving. Respondents from the UN interviewed for this report noted China’s high dedication for improving its standards. The Office of the Force Generation Service within DKPO, which assesses the readiness of troops and the quality of equipment of the pledged military units, mentioned that Chinese units were well trained, well equipped, and ready to be deployed without many caveats.

Efforts to improve in other fields are also visible. Chinese peacekeepers try to overcome language barriers that may impede communication within missions. English speaking officers are not a rarity anymore, and in Mali, Chinese troops are learning French. The Chinese field hospital in Mali has earned a good reputation. Several respondents remarked that the police training was in line with UN standards and commended the formed police units for their professionalism.

Overall, China is clearly committed to answer the UN’s call for better-equipped, better-trained units that come with fewer caveats.

¹⁰² Zhou, “How China Can Improve UN Peacekeeping.”

Table 3: Top Financial Contributors to Peacekeeping and Number of Contributed Troops

Member States (P5 in bold)	Financial Contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, % of total budget	Number of contributed troops
United States	28.47%	49
China	10.25%	2506
Japan	9.68%	4
Germany	6.39%	587
France	6.28%	739
United Kingdom	5.77%	662
Russian Federation	3.99%	77
Italy	3.75%	1055
Canada	2.92%	178
Spain	2.44%	648

Notes: Numbers are for October 2018. Source for Financing: UN, "How we are funded," <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>. Source for troop contribution: UN, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

Table 4: Top Troop Contributing Countries and Financial Contributions to Peacekeeping

Member States (P5 in bold)	Number of contributed troops	Financial Contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, in % of total budget
Ethiopia	8332	0.001
Rwanda	7084	0.002
Bangladesh	7060	0.001
India	6608	0.1474
Nepal	5699	0.0006
Pakistan	5387	0.0186
Egypt	3169	0.0304
Ghana	2777	0.0032
Indonesia	2694	0.1008
China	2517	10.2377

Notes: Numbers are for October 2018. Source for Financing: UN, "How we are funded," <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>. Source for troop contribution: UN, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

Despite this significant evolution, China still has gaps in its peacekeeping repertoire. Many of them are linked to the fact that the PLA has had no war experience for 40 years. It has also not gained any experience in fighting asymmetrical wars and counterinsurgencies and lacks some of the military technology that countries with recent experience in counterinsurgency have.

Peacekeeping missions like the one in Mali share many similarities with counterinsurgency operations. In both contexts, threats stem from a multitude of highly mobile, lightly armed non-state armed groups who often use IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and other low-tech tactics. These situations require that troops be equipped with technologies such as combat convoys, anti-IED equipment, or technologies for camp security. While China has the latter, it lacks the former.

Furthermore, success in these contexts also depends on gaining legitimacy among the local population. This requires the ability to do community outreach in order to gain a better understanding of the complex local political economy. Without this, it is difficult to foster reliable and trusted relations with the local population and thereby slowly gain legitimacy. This is a challenge for all actors, but China appears to face even more challenges, because of language barriers, cultural differences, its typically cautious posture limiting interaction with local societies, and its traditional preference for engaging predominately with state actors rather than civil society. Whether or not China will decide to close these gaps in the future remains open.

What about China's future footprint in peacekeeping? Will China maintain or even increase its contributions, or will we see a reduction in China's engagement to peacebuilding? The answer to this question is relatively clear. China is not likely to reduce its commitment to peacekeeping anytime soon. Virtually all experts consulted for this report were of the opinion that China would at least maintain or even increase its contributions. The many commitments to peacekeeping made by high-level Chinese officials strongly suggest so. China's very significant investments in peacebuilding capabilities over the last two decades point in the same direction. Most experts also think that China is unlikely to significantly reduce its commitments even if Chinese peacekeepers suffer more casualties (as of now, 18 Chinese peacekeepers have lost their lives). Chinese public perceptions are generally very favourable of peacekeeping, which is a matter of national pride and strongly supported. Obviously, no one can predict what level of casualties would change that positive public opinion, but most of our respondents thought that the positive attitudes were relatively stable and secure.

China is also expected to play a more prominent role in providing equipment and weapons systems to the UN. Every year the UN spends between \$1 and \$2 billion on renting and buying equipment and weapons systems for its peacekeeping operations—a considerable market. China has offered the UN a wide range of impressive equipment and technology, among them UAV (unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones), ground surveillance radars, infra-red cameras, anti-UAV systems, "access control" technologies for increased camp security, small-size weapon locating radar, communications networks, and light-armoured, transport, and medical vehicles. With an increased role for China in UN peacekeeping, it is probable that the UN will increasingly buy Chinese technology and equipment.¹⁰³

Finally, China's relative contribution to peacekeeping is also very likely to increase by default because other major pow-

¹⁰³ Walter Dorn, telephone communication, 7 September 2018.

ers, among them the US, are seeking to reduce spending on peacekeeping and are less inclined to pledge troops. It is unlikely that this trend will reverse in the coming years.

In general, given its increasing weight in global affairs, and its increasing political will to use this weight to shape global governance, it is very likely that China's influence within the UN, and its influence on peacekeeping, will increase. Many observers expect that China will soon seek more leadership roles within in the UN peacekeeping architecture. One possible position that China may aspire to is the position of Under-Secretary General for peacekeeping operations. China's role will also increase because its growing financial contributions allow it to exercise considerable influence via the UN budgetary process. Furthermore, China's growing economic role in parts of the developing world will help to secure allies and votes in the General Assembly. There can be little doubt that China will increase its influence in peacekeeping. The key question then is this: Will a growing Chinese influence affect the practice and doctrine of peacekeeping?

It is clear that peacekeeping will change its characteristics. The UN is in the process of adapting its approaches to the new realities of peacekeeping, and China, which has become a key player, is naturally a part of that adaptation process. The question is to what extent—and how—China will shape that adaptation.

Over the last three decades, China has always emphasized the importance of respecting sovereignty and non-interference; it has repeatedly reiterated the trinity of the original peacekeeping principles—impartiality, the consent of the parties, and use of force only as a last resort and only in self-defence; and it has insisted on the primacy of political solutions. China will undoubtedly continue to emphasize that it values these principles.

However, upholding these principles does not automatically translate into policies and practices that are distinct from other member states. There is, for example, no discernable Chinese position on how best to ensure the protection of civilians, on how best to deal with non-state armed groups or on how best to ensure the protection of peacekeepers in dangerous missions. UN PKOs, as a whole, struggle with these challenges. What can be said is that China has consistently argued that the protection of civilians should not be used as a pretext to make missions more intrusive and militarized; that mandates should be clear and achievable; that mandates that could cross the boundary into counterinsurgency should be avoided. Much of this language, found in the above-mentioned Declaration of Action for Peace (A4P), is shared by other member states. Two fields, however, show fissures between an emerging Chinese approach and the traditional, Western dominated UN approach to peace. The first involves the place of human rights in peacekeeping missions; the second involves an emerging Chinese understanding of how to build peace.

China is not likely to reduce its commitment to peacekeeping anytime soon

China's influence within the UN, and its influence on peacekeeping, will increase.

China and Human Rights in the Context of PKO

Human rights are one of the three pillars of the United Nations. Since 2011, it is standard procedure to include a human rights component in UN peace operations. Typically, the work of the human rights advisor within a mission includes monitoring and reporting on the situation in the host country, advocating with local and national authorities, engaging civil society and national governments in order to prevent violations of human rights, building human rights capacities and institutions, and mainstreaming human rights in the work of the UN peace mission. The Head of the Human Rights Component within a PKO reports simultaneously to the head of the peace mission and to the

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The issue of human rights is one of the most contested between China and many Western countries, but in the past, it has not played an important role in Chinese involvement in UN peacekeeping. This is changing. Many observers at the UN have noted that China has made consistent efforts to curb the number of human rights positions within UN peace operations. Most recently, such attempts were made during the negotiations for the 2018–2019 UN budget. These negotiations took place at a time when the UN was under considerable pressure to reduce its annual operating budget. For 2018, the US decreased its contribution to the UN regular budget by \$285 million (a 23% reduction from its 2016–2017 contribution of \$1.2 billion) and announced that they intended to drop their annual contributions to UN peacekeeping by 3% of the overall peacekeeping budget (about \$240 million) in the future. During the budget negotiation for the 2018–2019 budget, the Secretary-General proposed a total of 471 human rights posts. Against the backdrop of reduced financial contributions to the UN budget, China proposed to abolish or not establish 35 posts. China is not alone in the attempt to weaken the human rights component for UN PKOs. Russia, which is more vocal than China on this, even proposed a 50% cut to the human rights budget.¹⁰⁴ These attempts of Russia and China may have partly been a bargaining chip in the complex budgetary negotiations, meant to extract concessions in other fields. In the end, only six human rights positions were not approved. However, there is little doubt among many experts interviewed for this report that China is attempting to reduce human rights related spending within UN PKOs, using mainly the budgetary process.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the US, the UK, and France (the P3 in the Security Council) are willing to give human rights a more prominent role in UN PKO mandates. These tensions between China and Russia on the one hand, and the P3 on the other, may intensify in future as China becomes increasingly important in peace operations.¹⁰⁶

Interestingly these attempts to reduce human rights components within PKOs go hand in hand with China's attempts to promote a conceptual alternative to the rights-based, individualistic conception of human rights. Within China, human rights have long been understood as a threat to the regime, hence requiring containment and rejection. The dominant Chinese narrative portrays liberal, "Western human rights" as a threat to sovereignty and national security.

¹⁰⁴ Sherman, "With Peacekeeping Budget Approved..."

¹⁰⁵ Piccone, "China's Long Game on Human Rights!"

¹⁰⁶ Gowan and Rappa, "Global Peace Operations Review."

China has made consistent efforts to curb the number of human rights positions within UN peace operations

By contrast, the Chinese notion of human rights centres on the rights to material subsistence and economic development. In this view, the protection of individual rights is subordinated to a notion of collective well-being. Over the last decade or so, an additional layer of meaning has been added to this Chinese narrative on human rights.¹⁰⁷ According to this updated narrative, the realization of human rights is intrinsically linked to the governing capabilities of the Chinese state. In this view, rights are extended and protected by a strong state that can provide basic welfare, social equity, stability, and legal authority to its population.¹⁰⁸

This framing of human rights as mainly collective rights to economic welfare realized through a strong state can now also be observed within the UN. In June 2017, China proposed its first-ever resolution in the UN Human Rights Council (China has been a member of the HRC since its inception in 2006). China's resolution, entitled "The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights," emphasizes the importance of state-to-state co-operation in the context of sustainable development, maintains that development is an essential step toward human rights, and calls for "all countries to realize people-centered development of the people, by the people and for the people (...) as it is conducive to the overall enjoyment of human rights."¹⁰⁹ China's second resolution in the Human Rights Council, entitled "Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights," of March 2018 calls for constructive dialogue, technical assistance, and capacity-building as the primary tools for promoting Human Rights. These measures all require the consent of the country and thus reflect China's aversion to promoting human rights in a politicized way, which it sees, together with a range of other countries, as interfering with sovereignty. The framing of human rights as mainly economic rights realized through "capacity building" echoes the domestic discourse described above.¹¹⁰

Human rights have always been a source of massive disagreement between China, Russia, and other like-minded countries on the one hand and many Western countries on the other. However, what is new is that this disagreement has found its way into peacekeeping. For now, China (and Russia) mainly uses the budgetary process for reducing the human rights content in PKOs, but it is possible that the rift will also be visible in the discussion among the P5 on future mandates.

A Chinese Approach to Peace?

A second source of tension may be competing concepts of peace and peacebuilding. Whereas the tensions between China and Western countries about the role of human rights in PKOs are by nature antagonistic, the tensions about competing concepts of peace and peacebuilding may also create opportunities.

¹⁰⁷ Chen and Hsu, "Double-Speaking Human Rights."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Council, "Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights..."

¹¹⁰ Gladstone, "China and Russia Move to Cut Human Rights Jobs in U.N. Peacekeeping."

As this report has shown, China has become an accomplished peacekeeper over the past three decades. Until now, it has not ventured into the broader field of peacebuilding, either in practice or by contributing to theoretical or conceptual innovations. What's more, it has almost never openly challenged the conceptual validity of the UN's current approach to peacebuilding (with the notable exception of R2P). This is despite a widespread sentiment among Chinese officials and researchers that the main concepts, innovations, and fashions in peacebuilding, such as R2P, humanitarian intervention, a focus on child soldiers, a focus on good governance and the election process, and most recently an increased role for women in peacebuilding, are all Western ideas.

The above-mentioned endorsement letter for the A4P declaration signals that China may advocate in future for a reconceptualizing of peace and peacebuilding.¹¹¹ This then begs the question of whether there is something like a proprietary Chinese way of thinking about peace and peacebuilding. Few Chinese scholars would argue that China has a fully formulated theory on peacebuilding. However, most would point out that Chinese thinking about peace is linked intrinsically to economic development. As Zhao Lei argues, "measures such as reducing poverty and resolving unemployment problems are usually the most important tasks. Therefore, in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding, development should always be the main line running through the whole process."¹¹² Likewise, Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi stated, "We [Chinese policy makers] believe that development is the foundation for peace in Africa. Conflict and poverty often come hand in hand and form a vicious cycle. If Africa is to achieve durable peace and stability, it needs to speed up economic and social development and let all the people share the benefits of development."¹¹³ According to such a logic, the ultimate resolution to conflict lies in economic development, and mutually beneficial economic relations are thus a key to peacebuilding. China's relations with Africa, which are predominantly of an economic nature, are already by this logic a viable contribution to peace.

Economic development obviously also plays an important role in Western thinking about peacebuilding. Jeffrey Sachs, a leading development economist, declared in 2006, "the best way to end conflict is to end poverty."¹¹⁴ Western thinking about peace, however, also emphasizes the pivotal role of democratic political institutions and with that elections, multi-party systems, rule of law, civil liberties, a strong civil society, and a solid social contract between the government and the people. In such a model, often referred to as the "liberal peace," democracy is both a means to and an end of peace.

Given its own historic experiences and its political regime, the "liberal" peace is a concept that does not resonate with Chinese thinking. In contrast to the liberal peace, economic development and a strong government take centre stage in Chinese thinking about how to build foundations for peace. Chinese scholar Zhao Lei outlined the differences between Western and Chinese thinking about peacebuilding,¹¹⁵ arguing that in Western thinking, the goal of peacebuilding was liberal democracy with a market economy, whereas in Chinese thinking economic development was the priority. He further suggested that the Chinese approach entailed "good government" (as opposed to "good governance" in Western thinking) and non-interference (as opposed to democracy promotion and interference). "Good government" in this context denotes a strong and effective government that can act as an enabler of development. It also hints at the widespread Chinese notion that "good governance" and democratic openings are a destabilizing factor, especially in poor post-conflict societies. Such an approach gives little space for civil society and sees democracy as not only

¹¹¹ Wang Yi, "Opening a New Chapter of UN Peacekeeping."

¹¹² Lei, "Two Pillars of China's Global Peace Engagement Strategy."

¹¹³ Benabdallah, "China's Peace and Security Strategies in Africa."

¹¹⁴ Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, fn. 47.

¹¹⁵ Lei, "Two Pillars of China's Global Peace Engagement Strategy."

non-essential for peacebuilding, but as a possible threat to stability in countries emerging from war. A report by Saferworld notes that “while at the official level China states its support for the development of democracy, few in Beijing share prominent Western beliefs that link stability, democracy and long-term development. Many instead, at least unofficially, see democratization as an often-destabilizing force. This is unsurprising coming from a country that has a strictly enforced one-party political system.”¹¹⁶

Yin He, a prominent Chinese scholar on peacekeeping and peacebuilding at the China Peacekeeping Police Training Center, recently also proposed a dichotomy between Chinese and Western norms of peacebuilding.¹¹⁷ The Western norm of the “liberal peace,” in his view, originates in Western civilization and focuses on a radical, often imposed transformation of existing social and political institutions towards democratic institutions. By contrast, development peace would be the Chinese norm, which originates in Chinese civilization, prioritizes economic development, supports gradual change, emphasizes the role of a strong government, substitutes value-based good governance with result-based effective governance, and seeks to promote this model not by imposing but rather by incentivizing imitation and learning. This last point is important. Chinese scholars emphasize that Chinese thinking places great importance on learning by doing. This entails that societies have to find their own way towards modernity, by experimenting with different approaches and by learning from mistakes and successes. This again reflects China’s own recent experience. The Chinese leadership encourages experimentation, from the factory level up to the provincial level, in order to identify development practices that prove to be successful and that can then be scaled up. Embracing experimentation, promoting local solutions for local problems and avoiding easy prescriptions and uniform solutions are all key aspects of Chinese thinking.¹¹⁸ Back in 2004, Joshua Cooper Ramo coined the term “Beijing consensus” in order to capture this peculiar mix of idealism, pragmatism, and experimentation in approach to development, which contrasts to Western approaches that are often seen in China as dogmatic and theory driven.¹¹⁹ When discussing differences between Western and Chinese approaches to social change, Chinese scholars often refer to Chun Yen, one of the architects of the economic reforms of the 1980s, who famously urged the country to abandon dogmatic thinking and to experiment: “Find your way across the river, by feeling the stones.” This metaphor neatly highlights the importance placed on learning by doing and doing it in your own way.

A final element of Chinese thinking about peace might be that China places importance on the responsibility of

According to such a logic, the ultimate resolution to conflict lies in economic development, and mutually beneficial economic relations are thus a key to peacebuilding.

¹¹⁶ Saferworld, “China’s Growing Role in African Peace and Security.”

¹¹⁷ He, “Developmental Peace.”

¹¹⁸ Suzuki, “Why Does China Participate in Intrusive Peacekeeping?”

¹¹⁹ Ramo, The Beijing Consensus.

the peacebuilders for the outcome of their efforts. As we have discussed above, China briefly floated the notion of “responsible protection” in order to counter the concept of “responsible to protect,” which in China’s view became a euphemism for regime change. One important element of “responsible protection” is to hold the UN and other actors more accountable for the long-term results of their interventions—an idea that clearly contains criticism of the international interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, which all significantly failed to reduce human suffering.

Taken together, these are interesting ideas and concepts, but they are not yet condensed into an elaborated and formulated comprehensive Chinese theory of peacebuilding. This may be partly so because China, while being a competent peacekeeper, has not yet ventured into the territory of peacebuilding.¹²⁰ Being not yet a practitioner, its thinking on peace is driven mostly by a search for still rather abstract alternatives to Western practice and Western doctrine. While juxtaposing Western and Chinese approaches to peacebuilding and highlighting its differences is intellectually interesting, we should also bear in mind that the “liberal peace” approach is perhaps not as theoretically coherent and uncontested as some scholars think. There is no shortage of scholarly work in the West that is highly critical of the theoretical underpinning, the prescriptions, and the outcome of “liberal peace.” This includes even criticism of democratic procedures for steering a country out of war. Few Western scholars would argue that early elections are always a recipe for bringing peace to a war-torn country. However, it is still true that democracy remains the end-goal of peacebuilding for Western scholars and Western practitioners. There is clearly a strong consensus to think of democratic institutions as inseparably linked to peace, and as superior and more desirable than any other political regime. Few Western scholars and no Western practitioner would deviate from this norm.

The Chinese “peace-through-development” approach is still rather a trope than an elaborated and coherent model. It is also unclear what policies and practices such a model would inspire. For example, how could economic development take root in a county where state capacities are low or absent, where elites are fragmented and predatory, where societies are divided and ethnically heterogeneous, and where violence is still rampant? How can we build viable state structures under such conditions, even if those structures were authoritarian and illiberal? It is also far from clear how Chinese peacebuilding could be compatible with China’s long-held tenet of non-interference. Peacebuilding is, by necessity, an interference in the political, economic, and social structures of a conflict, with the ultimate goal of building institutions and creating incentives that will make it less likely that actors resort to violence. It will be interesting to observe how the conceptual Chinese thinking on peace and peacebuilding will crystallize into policies and practices once the concepts “hit the ground,” in Mali, DR Congo, or Sudan.

At the same time, few would claim that Western-led peace and state building in the poorest and most fragile countries has been an unqualified success. Challenging old paradigms by putting forward new approaches is thus a welcome development. While the antagonistic positions on the role of human rights in PKOs will continue to create tension, the debate about alternative approaches to peace may actually be productive, because it may reinvigorate our collective thinking about peacebuilding. At the very least, it offers a platform where Chinese and Western practitioners and scholars can engage with each other in discussion.

The debate about alternative approaches to peace may actually be productive, because it may reinvigorate our collective thinking about peacebuilding.

¹²⁰ Large, “China’s Role in the Mediation and Resolution of Conflict in Africa,” p. 50.

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The Review Process

In order to ensure the quality of this report, the China Policy Forum asked four specialists to review this report and provide comments to the author. The China Policy Forum would like to express its gratitude to Songying Fang, Liu Tiewa, Lance Nobel, and Michael Kovrig for providing their valuable comments. All opinions expressed in the report are those of the author.

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30 Years of Chinese Peacekeeping

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