

# Behind China's Peacekeeping Missions in Africa: Interpreting Beijing's Strategic Considerations

Çin'in Afrika'daki Barışı Koruma Misyollarının  
Ardındaki Nedenler:  
Pekin'in Stratejik Düşüncelerini Yorumlama

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## **Abstract:**

*In recent decade, China has actively participated in peacekeeping missions around the world. This demarche in Beijing's foreign policy, especially in Africa, has drawn significant global attention. This paper examines the motivations and capacity of China's peacekeeping efforts in Africa as a case study inclusive of the country's strategic and diplomatic considerations. We find that China's peace-keeping on the continent is not a ploy, as Realist scholars argue, by this rising state to siphon power from the current international order to fuel the formation of a new Sino-centric one. Instead, China's African peacekeeping missions should be seen (beyond their obvious humanitarian benefit) as high-profile means of cultivating authority within the existing world-system. In other words, China's peacekeeping in Africa is a strategic move (one not without major risks) by which the country gains greater respect and influence on the world-stage without wresting the world-system from the West. Contrary to Realist prophesies of wars-of-power transition stirred by an awakening East, China in Africa sees the merits of pursuing its share of world-power through peace.*

**Key words:** China, peacekeeping, diplomacy and responsibility, power transition.

## **Özet:**

*Çin, geçtiğimiz on yıllık süre içerisinde dünya çapında gerçekleştirilen barış gücü misyonlarına aktif olarak katılmıştır. Çin dış politikasındaki değişiklikler, özellikle Afrika'da gerçekleştirilen bu diplomatik atılımlar dünya çapında bir ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Bu makale, Çin'in Afrika'da barışı koruma yolunda attığı adımların ardındaki nedenleri ve bu adımları atmaktaki yeterliliğini, ülkenin stratejik ve diplomatik anlayışına ışık tutacak bir olay incelemesi olarak ele almaktadır. Yazarlar, realist akademisyenlerin savunduğu üzere Çin'in Afrika'daki barışı koruma misyonunu günümüzün uluslararası düzeninden beslenerek Çin merkezli bir dünya oluşturmak için bir manevra olarak görmektedir. Aksine, Çin'in Afrika'daki barışı koruma mis-*

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*yonlarının (bariz insancıl yararlarının yanı sıra) günümüzde yaşanan durum içerisinde kalarak otoritenin pekiştirilmesi yolunda atılmış bir gündemde kalma/ön plana çıkma adımı olarak görülmesi gerekmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, Çin'in Afrika'daki barışı koruma adımları dünya sistemini Batı'nın elinden almadan, (tüm riskleri de hesaba katarak) ülkenin dünya çapında daha çok saygı ve etki uyandıracığı bir stratejik hamledir. Doğu'nun başı çekeceği, gücün el değiştirmesi üzerine yaşanacak savaşların gerçekleşeceğini öneren realist kehanetlerin aksine; Çin, Afrika'da küresel güçler dengesinde payına düşene barış yoluyla ulaşmanın erdemine odaklanmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çin, barışı koruma, diplomasi ve sorumluluk, güç aktarımı.

### Introduction

Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China has become much more active in United Nations peacekeeping operations across the globe. A major case in point is China's new dynamism in Africa. "Peacekeeping" has therefore become both a symbolic and real flashpoint for African, Chinese and Western interests. This enlargement of Beijing's foreign policy has roused the attention of many in the international community who express doubts regarding China's steadfast claim of a peaceful rise. Are China's recent forays into African peace-keeping further proof that China's ascension is and will continue to be on relatively friendly terms or is its peacekeeping on the continent part of wily strategy that could threaten the existing international order down the road? This paper likes to address this uncertainty by delving deeply into the diplomatic strategy and international responsibility concerns of China's active engagement with Africa.

The pursuit of answers to the above questions necessitates an analysis of at least three dimensions of China's expanding peacekeeping efforts. First, we provide an overview of the growth of peacekeeping in principle and in practice, with attention to the role China has performed. We also discuss the problems that the UN peacekeeping scheme has faced in securing troops from member states, such as the European Union, for operations within Africa. Second, we analyze the demarche of Chinese foreign policy in terms of rapid changing international milieu, one in which any state would have legitimate security priorities (China being no exception). Third, we analyze how China's proactive participation in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and its preference that the United Nations should take the lead relates to political and legal questions regarding the obligations of member states and the nature of international cooperation.

No matter in political and legal terms, we find that China's peacekeeping operations in Africa are more than symbolic and yet not sinister. The operations are better understood as part of what could be labeled as Beijing's broader "friendly intervention" strategy. This strategy's fundamental aim is clearly to demonstrate to the world that China's rise will be proactive, but within the current internatio-

nal system; that it will be peaceful in the execution of its international “responsibilities” but will do so in a manner that moves it intentionally toward “great power” status.

### **A Brief Overview of Peacekeeping Concept and Practice**

As conventional wisdom goes that no significant discussions are possible in the study of foreign affairs (the study of states seeking for security and legitimacy) without an awareness of history.<sup>1</sup> Given this, we need first to make an overview of peacekeeping in concept and practice. Historically speaking, the idea of peacekeeping can be traced to as early as 1625 when Hugo Grotius, the “father of [European] international law”, suggested that the “Christian powers” con-fer to “settle the disputes of others” or even “compel parties concerned to accept peace on fair terms.”<sup>2</sup> This idea struck root in the European system and took on substance with the Concert of Europe, which was set out during the Congress of Vienna in 1815, by which the agreement was made that “sovereignty over all territories lying within the common domain could be only transferred by the consent of each state, in order to make it legally binding.”<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this tenet, the Congress was followed by a set of great powers’ summits. Even the First World War (1914-1918) did not diminish the persistent philosophy of major-powers’ shared responsibility (that is, authority) that was evident in the Council of the League of Nations. The Council initially composed major powers of the day and was granted by the Covenant Article 4 to “deal with the matters within the sphere of activity of the League or affecting the peace of the world.”<sup>4</sup> This idea and practice has remained valid in the Security Council of the United Nations after the Second World War, though it has been also controversial since.

The *raison d'être* behind peacekeeping is the concept of “collective security” that is achieved in some cases. Strictly speaking, however, collective security and peacekeeping differ in nature as the latter is a more limited emergency action under the aegis of an international organization, e.g. the United Nations, to prevent fighting. Such action is intended to function as a buffer between conflicting forces while maintaining a neutral stance.<sup>5</sup> For example, this practice of peacekee-

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1 Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored-Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822*, Boston, MA: Houston Mifflin Company, 1957, p. 331.

2 Peter Malanczuk, *Modern Introduction to International Law*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 416-423.

3 Wilhelm Grewe, *The Epochs of International Law* (translated and revised by Michael Byers), Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2000, pp. 429-430.

4 Alfred E. Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law 1919-1935*, NY: Russell & Russell, 1939, p. 216.

5 Peter Malanczuk, *Modern Introduction to International Law*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 417. Professor Malanczuk argued that “UN peacekeeping force is authorized to fight only in order to defend itself, but it was not expected to resist large-scale invasion across the armistice line. Some scholars argued that the legal basis for the creation of UN peacekeeping force was even uncertain. Also see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacekeeping>, 2011/11/6.

ping is evident with the case of the UN response to the 1956 War between Israel and Egypt. Since then, UN emergency forces have been dispatched to the Congo in 1960 and then Cyprus in 1964. Peacekeeping, in main, attempts to end or at least minimize armed conflict among combatants “by observing a cease-fire line on the basis of a military mandate.”<sup>6</sup>

In the post-Cold War era, the nature of peacekeeping operations has also changed in light of the current international context. It still rests upon the consent of involved parties, but often its purpose is to implement a settlement that has already been negotiated, as was the case in former Yugoslavia. Thus, the UN peacekeeping missions are often part of an attempt to implement an agreed upon political solution of a conflict. It is estimated that since 1948, up to one million soldiers, police officers and civilians/technical personnel have served under the UN flag. As of March 2008, 113 countries contributed a total of ninety thousands military observers, police officers and logistics specialists. Hence, UN peacekeeping should not be characterized in any way as an expression of revived “western imperialism” which bludgeons aggressors into submission. Rather, UN peacekeeping missions clearly aim at inserting themselves as a buffers between combatants, putting themselves in harm’s way for the sake of others, so as to create the space and time needed to (hopefully) defuse explosive situations.<sup>7</sup>

China is a truly new actor in international peacekeeping operations both worldwide and in Africa. China dispatched its first military observers in 1990 when Beijing policy-makers realized that Africa was in the time of development that created an opportune moment for a more flexible Chinese role, a more energized one than its listless attitude towards Africa during the 1980s. This policy shift was due to concerns with diplomatic and other interests that China had in the region. Another opportunity made itself evident in the so-called “supply crunch” faced by UN peacekeeping. This shortfall in people and materiel provided a major portal for China’s inputs of manpower and resources.<sup>8</sup> Today, China has become the largest contributor to peacekeeping operations among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In principle and practice, China accepts peacekeeping operations strictly under UN Secretary-General control and by consent of the host state. Beijing still reiterates its stance on the non-intervention policy from time to time, while engaging in humanitarian assistance, land-mine clearance, weapon removal, and the monitoring of war crimes in some regions in Africa.<sup>9</sup> Yet even these widely-

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 423.

<sup>7</sup> See in details contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide in <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>, 2011/11/5.

<sup>8</sup> “What are the current challenges to successful peacekeeping?, UN website, Department of Peacekeeping home page, ([www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/faq/q4.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/faq/q4.htm)), 2011-11-7.”

<sup>9</sup> China’s growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, pp. 72-83.

applauded efforts are not risk-free and could draw China into seemingly intractable conflicts between determined African opponents, some with tensions pre-dating European colonization. Given this potential for disaster(s), why then is China so keen on serving as peacekeepers in Africa?

## China's Strategic Objectives

### 1. Diplomatic Concerns:

As a rising power, China still faces the challenges from its rival Taiwan (which has also struggled for its "legitimate place" in international society), and from the West, in particular the United States, on a series of issues such as human rights, weapon sales and intervention in domestic affairs. Due to this, there is a firm belief that China's deepening partnership and widening cooperative relations with Africa continue to be shaped by Beijing's strategic considerations, including "One China" policy with regards to Taiwan, of which the island polity has secured the recognition of only four African states (e.g. Burkina Faso, Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Swaziland).<sup>10</sup> Since first being officially recognized by Egypt in 1956, Beijing's considerable diplomatic efforts in this area culminated in official recognition from South Africa in 1998. Today, while Beijing works hard to consolidate these gains, further competition with Taiwan remains a pressing strategic dilemma.<sup>11</sup>

It is true that China has relied on diplomatic partnerships with African states in order to gather support at the UN. It is well-circulated in China that Chairman Mao, the founder of Chinese communist regime, used to say that China's official recognition by the United Nations in 1971 was "made possible" to a certain extent by the persistence of African states. Since then, African support has been critical in blocking repeated proposals from the West to allow for Taiwan to participate in the UN and other international agencies. In return, China has gone to great lengths to provide all sorts of aid to African states.<sup>12</sup>

Beijing's strategy has been to forge an international coalition with Africa based on common interests. In a study of the challenge to the Western bloc, about 11 cases where Western countries have sought to bring proposals against China concerning its internal human rights record have failed (China itself could not have defeated such proposals without the stalwart support of Africa). As British scholar-diplomat Sarah Raine put it in 2009 that "Africa is becoming one of the

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<sup>10</sup> See in details [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_relations\\_of\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_the_Republic_of_China), 2011/11/6.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel S. Kim, "China and the Third World: In Search of a Neorealist World Policy" in *China and the World – Chinese Foreign Policy in the Post-Mao Era*, London: Westview, 1991, pp. 194-204.

<sup>12</sup> Garth le Pere, "Perspectives on Contemporary China-Africa Relations" in *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Nov. 8-9, 2007, p. 95.

unspoken battlegrounds for votes in the United Nations on Security Council reform.”<sup>13</sup> She observed that Beijing also utilized the support of African states in other multilateral forums. A salient example (which is related more to Chinese national pride than to geo-strategic aims) is that African states supported Beijing in its successful bid to host the 2008 Olympics. Scholars across the world share the view that Africa is seen as integral to Beijing’s strategic ambition to “ensure China’s peaceful rise as a global power and at the same time to strengthen relations with key neighbors and regions.”<sup>14</sup> This point of view reflected Chinese influence growing in Africa, and Chinese scholars have gone on to argue that “over time China and Africa have been strategically supporting and coordinating with each other to fight against the West in terms of its colonialism and hegemony.”<sup>15</sup> As a result, it is that China’s increasing contribution to the UN peacekeeping operations in Africa that has roused Western suspicion, although its efforts are seen as responsible by most African states.

At least one western China-Africa specialist, Chris Alden, has argued that, since the Maoist period, Chinese foreign policy has in fact placed China as the leader of developing countries.<sup>16</sup> While this is a somewhat of an exaggeration, China’s strategic partnership with Africa does allow China to face a Western, and especially US, hegemony over international issues. As Alden rightly said, “Strengthened Sino-African relations will inevitably help raise China’s own international influence and probably that of developing countries as a whole.”<sup>17</sup> Given this, Africa sits squarely within China’s wider worldview and Beijing’s strategic objectives.

After striding into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with growing economic might, China is aware that the consolidation and development friendly China-Africa co-operation remains one of the main pillars of China’s foreign policy. To that end, Beijing’s 2006 Africa Policy Paper covered a wide range of issues such as political, economic, social and cultural affairs. Predictably included were bilateral peace and security relations assurances.<sup>18</sup> The policy states that these relations are guided by

13 Sarah Raine, “Introduction” in *China’s African Challenges*, Adelphi series (2009), 49:404, pp. 1-12.

14 Bates Gill, Huang Chin-hao & J. Stephen Morrison, “Assessing China’s Growing Influence in Africa” in *China Security* (2007), vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 3-21.

15 Yu Jianhu & Wang Zhen, “China-Africa Strategic Partnership Ushered in a New Era” in *China-Europe-Africa Co-operation: Chances and Challenges*, proceedings of the 6th Shanghai Workshop on Global Governance, 14-15 March 2008.

16 *China’s growing role in African peace and security*, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 76.

17 *China’s growing role in African peace and security*, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 78.

18 *China’s African Policy*: [http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content\\_156490.htm](http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content_156490.htm), 2011/11/6.

four tenets: 1. Sincerity, friendship and equality, 2. Mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity, 3. Mutual support and close coordination, 4. Learning from each other and seeking common development. Advancing this official discourse first laid-down at the Bandung Conference of 1955, China's relationship with Africa has been overwhelmingly state-centric (i.e. government-to-government). This ongoing tendency helps explain China's current diplomacy and responsibility concerns in view of today's particular world-volatility.

Rethinking of its long-standing non-interference position on sovereignty disputes, China's willingness to apply bilateral pressure on a government (e.g. the case of Sudan) in order to allow for a UN intervention is "a clear indication that Beijing government is changing the contours of its non-interference policy" in relation to UN action.<sup>19</sup> China's softening on non-intervention in fraught African issues at the UN Security Council has been directly informed by African states. For example, in the case of the Darfur crisis, China's special envoy Liu Guijin said pointedly that "Beijing plays a role of bridge; and at the UNSC, China dares to speak out to maintain justice for African nations, support African countries to independently handle their internal affairs and to equally participate in international affairs."<sup>20</sup> In practice, Chinese and African diplomats have jointly launched a political consultation mechanism at the UN headquarters in 2007 with a view of ensuring a more coordinated approach in addressing regional security issues. This means that "representing Africa" at the UNSC can help serve to balance competing interests. For example, China has championed state sovereignty and non-intervention; yet, it has also endorsed the doctrine of R2P (Responsibility to Protect), first at the 2005 World Summit and then in its 2006 endorsement of UNSC Resolution 1674 on protection of civilians. China's position paper on R2P states that "when a massive humanitarian crisis occurs, it is the legitimate concern of the international community to ease and defuse the immediate crisis."<sup>21</sup>

As it has been noted, over the past decades there has been greater flexibility around China's interpretation of the principles of non-interference, sovereignty and host-country consent, at least a consensus by the United Nations. One of the reasons for this increasing flexibility is that in some circumstances China's non-interference principle comes up against imperatives of Western-sponsored "good governance" campaigns. It is true that China's growing profits from the Continent should not provide a pretext for the abdication of social responsibility, human

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<sup>19</sup> China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> See Jonathon Holslag, "China's Diplomatic Maneuvering on the Darfur Question" in *Journal of Contemporary China*, (2008), 17:54, pp. 71-85.

<sup>21</sup> See "Responsibility to Protect in People's Republic of China. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsibility\\_to\\_protect\\_in\\_the\\_People's\\_Republic\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsibility_to_protect_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China), 2011/11/7.

rights and liberal propriety.<sup>22</sup> Beijing has interacted cautiously and respectfully with African states, though looming challenges exist. Through more proactive involvement into Africa, including China's participation in UN-sponsored peacekeeping missions, Beijing's willingness to intervene has increased. Raine points to a statement by a senior US official that captures this change: "China's diplomatic activity reflects an evolution beyond its previously strict insistence on non-interference in internal affairs of other countries' to a more pragmatic recognition of the merits and obligations working with the international community on areas of concern. In the past few years... China has adopted policies that would have been hard to imagine several years ago."<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Being a Responsible and Proactive Actor

In theory, the conventional view of China's peacekeeping activities in Africa usually focuses on bilateral relations between the two, but this seems to ignore Beijing's century-long dream of becoming a responsible stakeholder in the international arena. As a matter of fact, it is more accurate to say that China's participation in UN peacekeeping in Africa would be better understood from strategic perspective. The leadership in Beijing has pinned its hopes on worldly promoting itself as a peaceful, responsible and, proactive player in the new century, which include both conventional and non-conventional security issues.<sup>24</sup> Non-conventional security issues now under China's gaze obviously include terrorism, drug-trafficking, environmental issues, social equality and particularly the elimination of poverty. All these issues fall then under China's foreign policy imperatives of humanitarianism and the civil society building, as Beijing claims formally.<sup>25</sup>

In a legal term, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a widely endorsed yet developing norm aimed at preventing atrocities, though it is controversial in concept and practice. As Beijing had been long excluded from the UN until 1971, Chinese government insists on the principle of non-intervention which is taken as one of the cornerstones of its foreign policy and is frequently found in its diplomatic statements. However, with China's rapid growth in overall power, it also realizes that the time-honored principles could be problematic because its non-intervention creed conflicts with the common-assertion of R2P (which China ini-

22 Garth le Pere, "Perspectives on Contemporary China-Africa Relations" in *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Beijing: The Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, Nov. 8-9, 2007, p. 110.

23 Cited from China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 86. Also Tang Jia -xuan, "Working Together to Pursue Peaceful Development and Build Up A Harmonious World" in *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Beijing: The Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, Nov. 8-9, 2007, pp. 3-13.

24 le Pere, "Perspectives on Contemporary China-Africa Relations" in *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Nov. 8-9, 2007, p. 106.

25 Interview with Professor Mahmood Mamdani, "Africa is Correct Standing Between China and the West", PKU African Tele-Info, No. 67., 2011-11-8.

tially dismissed as a "total fallacy"); put it simply that state sovereignty cannot justify any non-action by other states in the face of genocide or mass atrocity. Therefore, force is permitted as a last resort.<sup>26</sup>

Given its rethinking of African politics, China has been surprisingly but clearly receptive towards the notion of R2P since its inception in 2001, despite its previous skepticism to the doctrine of humanitarian interventions. Equally important to the development of R2P was China's support due to its veto-wielding Security Council member position and importance as a regional power with increasing global role. This greater acceptance of an "intervention-if-absolutely-unavoidable" stance is understandable when one considers the valuable experiences that China gained in dealing with the humanitarian crises in places like Namibia, Sudan, Angola, let alone China's long determination to become a responsible power of global scope. China has become well aware of its growing influence and the commitment involved in building up international security and peace. Yet how to project China's strength globally but without arousing general alarm requires the governing elite of China to exercise superlative political calculation and diplomatic wisdom.<sup>27</sup>

And China still faces other dilemmas with R2P. On the one hand, China continues to support the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention in order to obstruct US hegemony. Politically, China is quite skeptical of a Western value-system of human rights being imposed globally and it has been quick to accuse the US of threatening a "rising China". In social-cultural terms, China believes that a state's economic development and historical background should be fundamental considerations when looking at the humanitarian situation within a country in crisis state. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin once stated that human rights should be promoted in light of cultural diversities.<sup>28</sup> Yet this entrenched view clashes with statements made by Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, that the notion of R2P must be integrated into all cultures "without hesitation or condition," to reflect its universality.<sup>29</sup> In light of this, China initially dismissed R2P as a "Western scheme". But then a new understanding of sovereignty arose in the 1990s, incorporating the element of "responsibility."<sup>30</sup> This means that no lon-

26 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsibility\\_to\\_protect\\_in\\_the\\_People's\\_Republic\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsibility_to_protect_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China), 2011/11/7.

27 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 115.

28 "Jiang Zeming's Discourse on the issue of Human Rights", [http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/20/content\\_696952.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/20/content_696952.htm), 2011, 11. 8.

29 [http://www.baidu.com/s?wd=Ban+Ki-moon+on+human+rights&rsv\\_bp=0&rsv\\_spt=3&inputT=53960](http://www.baidu.com/s?wd=Ban+Ki-moon+on+human+rights&rsv_bp=0&rsv_spt=3&inputT=53960), 2011-11-8.

30 China's African Policy: [http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content\\_156490.htm](http://www.gov.cn/misc/2006-01/12/content_156490.htm), 2011/11/6.

ger could state sovereignty be invoked to shelter governments guilty of committing massive human atrocities from international condemnation.<sup>31</sup> In view of changes in foreign and domestic politics, this development indicates that Chinese foreign policy has progressed to incorporate the belief that the international society has a responsibility to intervene in the most extreme circumstances. And possible examples of this include the issues such as a government practicing blatant racism, state failure, large-scale domestic violence or the killing of civilians en masse.<sup>32</sup>

China is aware of these changes, but it is cautious to respond to this new tendency of the international society, because it has been fashioned by the West, particularly the United States. Therefore, on the one hand, there is China's "traditional style" of dealing conservatively with changes to China's security. On the other hand, China is actively rethinking what role could take properly as an emerging great power. Prudence, justice and responsibility are powerful maxims for Chinese to deal with in foreign affairs. Therefore, China submits that R2P norm should always be conditional on the approval of the Security Council and be treated on a case-by-case basis.<sup>33</sup> This mode is perceived to prevent the creation of customary international law and thus allows China to block any action if it is viewed as "injustice". For example, China exercised its veto power in respect to the Burmese and Zimbabwean conflicts. Nevertheless, it has been the rhetoric of Chinese diplomats to reinforce national, regional and global efforts to ensure peace, and, on more than one occasion, to stress "the moral obligation" the world has to secure peace in Africa. By so doing, China has supported R2P. Since the last decade of the 20th century, China has begun to play a significant role for UN peacekeeping mission deployments in the countries alike Namibia and Darfur.<sup>34</sup>

China strengthened this commitment to peacekeeping missions after 2000, and as of August 2008 had contributed more military and police personnel than any other permanent UNSC member. Slowly but steadily China has made a long journey toward a more flexible approach to intervention and the acceptable use of force in the domestic affairs of states in crisis. On international level, it has successfully integrated into the global economy and become a significant focal point of trade, investment and production.<sup>35</sup> While Chinese society is still largely non-

31 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 77.

32 Peter Malanczuk, *Modern Introduction to International Law*, London: Routledge, 1997, p 418.

33 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 77.

34 James Blitz, "China's Diplomatic Effort on Darfur" *Financial Times*, February 22, 2008. <http://monkei.bokee.com/6634568.html>, 2011/11/7.

35 Interview with Professor Mahmood Mamdani, "Africa is Correct Standing Between China and the West", PKU African

transparent, Chinese leaders are becoming more and more susceptible to international criticism following its increasing level of integration. In effect, no country in the world is immune from peer pressure. China is no exception as it was party to the 2005 endorsement of R2P, and reaffirmed its support for the doctrine in the same year. Momentous headway was essentially made in the Security Council in 2006, as in November 2005, Kofi Annan petitioned the Security Council to strengthen its R2P commitments, with regard to civilians in armed conflict. Following initial reluctance to specifically include R2P in a resolution, China eventually agreed to incorporate the same phrasing used in 2005 and voted in favor of Security Council Resolution 1674.<sup>36</sup>

Yet China's support since 2005 has been "cautious" because it wants to ensure its support of Resolution 1674 is limited to the four crimes specified in the Outcome Document of 2005 and was skeptical of other states loosely interpreting it and abusing the concept by applying it to circumstances that were not intended.<sup>37</sup> This skepticism peaked in 2007, when the Chinese argued that the Security Council must avoid forcible intervention. Equally during this period, China consistently endorsed the World Summit phrasing and the primary responsibility each state has to protect their populations, and referred to Resolution 1673 as the "legal framework" within which the Security Council may work to protection of civilians in armed conflict. China has continually highlighted the key roles of "conflict prevention" and "capacity-building" in R2P development, arguing that the best form of protection is prevention.<sup>38</sup> This mirrors the work of the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General who stresses that the primary focus of R2P's implementation is to prevent atrocities in the first instance. China argues that failing this, any protective measures taken following the outbreak of conflict are virtually ineffective. Due to this concern, it is much better to provide civilians with "safe and predictable living environments."<sup>39</sup>

Despite that China was angered by the Western unilateralism in the case of NATO for its 1999 bombing of Kosovo, it has responded to the R2P norm by providing a strong regional dimension to its implementation of UNSC decisions. Here, China objected on the ground that sanctions only work to victimize civilians and therefore, it could forego any potential positive outcome of those talks. Yet, in the case of Africa, it is fair to say that China never stood opposed to interna-

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36"US Senate Body to Examine China's Role in Africa", PKU African Tele-Info, No. 67. 2011-11-8.

37 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 89.

38 Garth le Pere, "Perspectives on Contemporary China-Africa Relations" in Foreign Affairs Journal, Nov. 8-9, 2007, p. 106

39 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 89.

tional involvement, but rather it felt it necessary to hold the perpetrators to account and supported the “pivotal” role the African Union had in securing peace in the region. China supported Resolution 1706 which sought to place peacekeepers in the region and was the first reference to R2P in Resolution in relation to a specific conflict. For example, China abstained on voting on the basis that Sudan had not consented and it believed that this could derail progress at implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Nonetheless, China regarded the deployment of UN peacekeepers as a “good idea and realistic option,” so long as Sudanese consent could be obtained and in such event the deployment must take place in a timely manner.<sup>40</sup> The Chinese position purposely mirrored the African Union’s stance to ensure a lasting and peaceful result for the African region. In fact, China’s behavior on the Sudan issue was generally welcome in Africa.

Given the analysis above of China’s strategic concerns in terms of diplomacy and responsibility, we hold that it is no secret that China’s main objective in Africa is to develop and nurture its geopolitical influence on the basis of the practical instrumental imperatives that underpin its future growth through globalization. The main considerations in China’s Africa policy are numerous but the immediate ones are as follows: it wants to secure reliable support from African states in face of Western challenges, primarily the sole superpower (the United States); it wants to advance its own legitimacy and status through support for Beijing’s “one China policy”; and it wants sustained access to Africa’s natural resources and potential market of one billion people. All in all, as South African scholar Garth le Pere wrote, “as a rising power, China wants to craft a place on the global stage as a major player on its own terms.”<sup>41</sup> In view of realist doctrine, le Pere’s analysis seems to be correct. However, China’s engagement with Africa does not exactly conform to the Western expectation that like any “normal” great foreign power pursuing its own interests in Africa, China would follow past exploiters and almost certainly would “not contribute to the promotion of peace, prosperity and democracy on the continent.”<sup>42</sup> But for all its failings, China’s record in Africa does not seem to support this negative characterization.

40 Interview with Professor Mahmood Mamdani, “Africa is Correct Standing Between China and the West”, PKU African Tele-Info, No. 67., 2011-11-8.

41 Garth le Pere, “Perspectives on Contemporary China-Africa Relations” in *Foreign Affairs Journal*, Nov. 8-9, 2007, p. 108

42 See Ian Taylor, “The all-weather friend”? Sino-African interaction in the twenty-first century” in Ian Taylor & P. Williams, (eds.), *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 99.

## Conclusion

It is wrong to view China's participation in peacekeeping operations in Africa from an ideological angle or through the prism of speculation. China's position on peacekeeping has evolved dramatically over the past four decades from a state of deep skepticism to one of active engagements. This shift is mirrored by an equally dramatic increase in the amount of Chinese peace-keepers participating in missions. Peacekeeping features prominently in official co-operation agreements between China and Africa such as the 2004 Addis Ababa Action Plan and the 2009 Sharm el-Sheikh Action Plan.<sup>43</sup> Clearly peacekeeping is an important factor in assessing China's role in African peace and security and hence is the motivation of this study. However, this is by no means to say that China's participation in peacekeeping missions stems solely or even predominately from altruism. As this study has shown, behind China's peacekeeping missions in Africa and around the world lays China's century-long ambition: to become a great power equal to any of the greatest. As a member of the UN Security Council, China is playing a significant role in decisions surrounding the deployment of peacekeepers and the actions they are mandated to take." Yet the question still remains that with the rapid growing of its economic power, what does China look to from Africa in view of the current international order? Due to this, the theme of this study likes to argue that China's peacekeeping mission under the United Nations is a testament to Beijing's claim that the rise of China would be peaceful in its nature in terms of involvement into the current world system rather than a challenge to it. In essence, behind China's peacekeeping operations in Africa is due to Beijing's strategy in terms of diplomacy and responsibility concerns. This has been the central issue of this study as the concept of peaceful rise is still a controversial one, though potentially a good conceptual contribution to IR theory.

It is true that if we look at the size, dynamism and rapidity of China's economics, it is no doubt that the rise of China will be one of the great dramas of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and also unprecedented in modern history. It is argued that China's extraordinary economic growth and active diplomacy are already transforming East Asia, and future decades will see even greater increases in Chinese power and influence.<sup>44</sup> But exactly how this drama will play out is still an open question. Will China overthrow the existing order or willingly become a part of it? And what, if anything, can the United States as the sole superpower today do to maintain its position as China rises?<sup>45</sup>

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43 China's growing role in African peace and security, edited by SaferWorld, January 2011, p. 77.

44 John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West – Can the Liberal System Survive", Foreign Affairs, January-February 2008.

45 J. Stapleton Roy, (former US ambassador to China), "Prospect of China's Peaceful Development", Foreign Affairs Journal, Nov. 8-9, 2007, pp. 29-37.

The picture must be gloomy, if we take realist scholars, for instance John Mearsheimer, and their arguments seriously. They tend to see the era of America coming to an end and a Western-oriented world likely replaced by an increasingly Eastern-dominated one.” Some of them have noted "the descent of the West" as the established truth, so they fear that as China gets more powerful and the United States' position erodes, two things are likely to happen: China will try to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, including in Africa; and other states in the system (especially the declining hegemony) will suffer. According to this view, the drama of China's rise will feature an increasingly powerful China and a declining United States locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the international system. And as the world's most populous country emerges not from within but outside the established post-World War II international order, it is a drama that will end with the grand ascendance of China, though somewhat uncertain future and the onset of an Asian-centered world order.<sup>46</sup>

That course sounds thrilling but is not inevitable. The rise of China does not have to trigger a wrenching hegemonic transition. The rise of China will take time as Beijing admits that the rise of China would be probably accomplished by the year of 2049. During this 40-year time span, China needs, at least, to deal with three main issues. First, the rise of China can only be achieved within the current international order. China's involvement into Africa has benefited the country from the trade and monetary system in which the United States has been dominated. Unfair it is truly, but the Western-dominated system is relatively open, liberal and inclusive rather than exclusive; inclusive is their former domains in Africa. Taking an overview of the past decades, China has actually obtained many benefits from the current international system. Even in terms of the bilateral relations between China and Africa, a relative peaceful maritime route provides China with free route created by the West. In this sense, it is unwise for China to challenge the status quo in terms of the established rules and regulations.

Equally, with regards to the United States, it has overall resources to curb or even damage China's interests everywhere including Africa. But the U.S.-Chinese power transition can be very different from those of the past, since the latter faces an international order that is fundamentally divergent from those that past rising states confronted, such as Nazi Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, China does not just face the United States; it faces a truly Western-centered system that is however open, integrated, and rule-based, with wide and deep political foundations. Furthermore, the nuclear technology revolution, meanwhile, has made war among great powers unlikely (eliminating

<sup>46</sup> Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of the West", *Foreign Affairs*, January – February 2008.

the major tool that rising powers have used to overturn international systems defended by declining hegemonic states). Today's Western order, in short, is hard to overturn and easy to join.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it will suit China's fundamental interests through diplomacy and taking more international responsibilities.

Here, it is necessary to be aware of that the rise of China must be a long journey since the huge size of its population and increasing social instability in the country have consumed tremendous energies of the leaders in Beijing, the whole society and the people en mass. In addition, recent study on Chinese education (in terms of its confused concepts, out-of-date method, and poor management system) unveils a very embarrassing picture of the rising China. As a consequence, Chinese people ask that how long the current economic growth can be sustained? The answer is obviously beyond this study, but it is worth thinking of the necessity of peaceful rise of China. Due to this, the analysis of China's peacekeeping operations in Africa is directed to the theme that China's engagement in the Continent is part of Beijing's grand strategy which has focused on its long-term diplomacy and responsibility considerations. In this macro context, China's peacekeeping operations in general and as the case of Africa in particular can be better understood in view of Beijing's desire to bear great-power responsibility in the world affairs. This strategic thinking comes out of both geopolitical necessity and traditional Chinese wisdom.

#### Özet:

Çin, 20. yüzyılın son çeyreğinden bu yana, Birleşmiş Milletler barış misyonlarına daha etkin bir katılım göstermeye başlamıştır. Bu yeni dış politika stratejisinin en büyük göstergesi Çin'in Afrika kıtasında gerçekleştirdiği ve katıldığı misyonlarda oynadığı roldür. Barışı koruma hareketleri bu sayede hem Afrika'nın hem Çin'in hem de Batı'nın çıkarlarının çakıştığı bir nokta haline gelmiştir. Fakat Çin'in son on yılda barış misyonlarına olan yoğun ilgisi ve buradaki rolü, uluslararası kamuoyu tarafından şüpheyle karşılanmaktadır. Akıllardaki soru, Çin'in bu yeni dinamizminin dış politikada daha dostça bir yaklaşıma gidildiğinin mi bir göstergesi olduğu; yoksa dünya sistemini köklerinden sarsıp kendine bir yer açma ve Çin merkezli yeni bir dünya düzeni amaçlaması mı olduğudur. Bu makalede bu soruya cevap aranırken, Çin'in Afrika ile stratejik ve diplomatik ilişkileri hakkında derinlemesine bir inceleme yapılmış ve Çin'in Afrika barışının istikrarlı hale gelmesindeki sorumluluğun nedenlerine değinilmiştir.

Çin'in barışın sağlanmasındaki misyonlara katılımını ideolojik bir pencereden incelemek doğru bir yaklaşım gibi görünmemektedir. Çin'in barışı korumadaki

47 This argument has been discussed since the mid-1950 when Henry Kissinger wrote in his book *Nuclear Weapon and American Foreign Policy*. Here John Ikenberry continues to hold this theme. See his "The Rise of China and the Future of the West – Can the Liberal System Survive", *Foreign Affairs*, 2008.

rolü, son 40-50 yılda hızlı bir evrimleşme geçirmiştir. Bu evrimin safhaları derin bir kuşkuculuktan aktif katılıma doğru sıralanabilir. Bu dramatik sürecin asıl kaynağı, Çin adına barış misyonlarında görev alanların sayısının artması olarak gösterilebilir. Realist paradigmanın savunduğu üzere, Çin'in özellikle Afrika'daki barışı koruma misyonları sistemle bütünleşmenin bir aracı olarak görülmektedir. Bu misyonlara Çin'in aktif katılımı ve bu doğrultuda Afrika'daki temaslarıyla sağladığı bütünleşme politikası, bugünün konjonktürü içerisinde kalarak otoritenin pekiştirilmesi yolunda atılmış bir ön plana çıkma adımı olarak kabul edilmelidir. Bu sayede Çin, Batı etkisindeki dünya düzenini alt üst etmekten ziyade, bu güçler dengesi içerisinde yerini aralar dünya sahnesinde başrollerden birine talip olma stratejisini gütmektedir.

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