

AN OVERVIEW OF CHINA'S EXPANDING ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN AFRICA

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Abstract. *Our globalized world is prone to complex challenges affecting its stability. Rapid integration, technological advancement, increased trade and overall social development require political stability. Thus, state contributions towards global security are essential and welcome. China's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions have expanded drastically during the last decade, especially on the African continent. China wants to provide the international community with a new global architecture, with the ultimate goal of sustainable peace and development via an active engagement in peacekeeping missions. This article will assess China's involvement in United Peacekeeping missions and, based on latest statistics, find out why most of its peacekeeping personnel are concentrated on the African soil. The article will also assess the challenges and issues faced by Chinese personnel both on African soil and the global arena. The article concludes with reflections on China as a rising power, its expanding role in peacekeeping missions and the implications on China-African relations.*

Keywords: *Peacekeeping, China, United Nations, missions, Africa.*

Introduction

Over the years, China has consistently maintained a reserved status as part of the country's foreign policy. According to Rudd¹, the country upheld non-interference and non-intervention policies in respect to the sovereignty of other countries. Unlike the United States, China exhibited little interest in the internal affairs of other countries, despite having the financial and economic muscles to influence foreign affairs². However, over the last few years, China's role in

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¹ K. Rudd, *China's impact on regional and global order*. Retrieved August 2, 2016, from IISS: www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2013-5126/december-c771/rudd-buchan-083c, 2013, December 16.

² J. B. Starr, "A guide to China's economy, history and political culture", *Understanding China*, 12 (4), 12-88, 2012.

international affairs is increasing in the light of volatile situations arising in some countries, that might threaten Chinese population and investments³. In response, China established a peacekeeping unit with over 3000 troops and pledged to increase their number to about 8000⁴. More, the country established a \$1 billion Peace and Development fund to support peacekeeping missions.

According to Agubamah⁵, peacekeeping missions entail deployment of military forces to sustain peace or to enforce truces among hostile groups or among political factions in a country. According to the 2015 United Nations Peacekeeping report, intermediation using military force has helped war-torn countries to create conditions conducive for long lasting peace. The United Nations coordinates peacekeeping efforts, particularly in unstable countries in Europe, Africa, South America, and Asia. According to Ling⁶, peacekeeping has proven to be an effective tool since it is characterized by legitimacy, unique strengths, international cooperation, burden sharing and the ability to enforce multidimensional mandates. Therefore, it is imperative that peacekeeping missions adhere to the following three principles. First, they must have consent of the parties; next, they must exercise impartiality; and third, they must not use force except in self-defense or when defending their mandates⁷. The next section narrates the history of Chinese involvement in peacekeeping missions around the world. It highlights the paradigm shift from non-intervention and non-interference policies to the current international influence on peace and human rights norms.

Historical Background

As aforementioned, China rarely intervened to calm the political storms of other countries. According to Ling⁸, China strongly believes in the principle of non-interference. This is the primary reason as to why it had shied away from UN peacekeeping missions until the 1990s. However, the paradigm changed when Chinese opening and reform processes steadily embedded its political and economic interests within the international system. As a result, its diplomatic outreach also extended and became global. Before the reforms, China perceived international peacekeeping missions as efforts to undermine national sovereignty⁹. The reasons for the paradigm shift from non-interference and non-intervention to intermediation will be discussed in later sections.

The first group of Chinese peacekeepers was dispatched in 1990 to monitor and report on ceasefire agreement violations in the Middle East. They served in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization as military observers (UNTSO).

³ M. Xia, *China threat or a peaceful rise of China*. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html, 2014, 12. 3.

⁴ L. Kuo & E. Yinyin, *China reacts to the death of two peacekeepers in South Sudan with grief and rage*. Retrieved August 2, 2016, from Quartz Africa: <http://qz.com/728566/china-reacts-to-the-death-of-two-peacekeepers-in-south-sudan-with-grief-and-rage/>, 2016, July 11.

⁵ E. Agubamah, "China and peacekeeping in Africa", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4 (11), 193-197, 2014.

⁶ B. Ling, "China's peacekeeping diplomacy", *International Relations and Institutions*, 2014.

⁷ E. Agubamah, *op. cit.*

⁸ B. Ling, *op. cit.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

In the following three years, an 800-strong Chinese construction brigade was sent to Cambodia to reconstruct damaged highways and airports¹⁰. According to China Daily¹¹, China is set to be the second-largest contributor of peacekeeping funds after the United States. As such, China's share will rise from the current 6.6% to 10.3%, thereby overtaking Japan. Additionally, China has contributed over 3000 troops to over 10 global conflict zones, mostly in Africa¹². The UN stated that the country has become the second-largest economy in the world and therefore should contribute more; in response, China sends a wide range of professionals to conflict zones including engineers, transporters and medical corps who are highly trained and well-equipped¹³. Furthermore, the country has a dedicated peacekeeping personnel training academy, and the UN is seeking further cooperation with China in this regard. Besides this, China sends holistic peacekeeping teams comprising of various professionals to provide assistance in almost all situations. According to *The Telegraph*¹⁴, the United States has around 70 peacekeeping teams around the world. The country refrained from sending more troops around the world after 18 American peacekeeping soldiers were killed in Somalia in 1993. Therefore, since China is the highest contributor of troops in the group of five countries with veto power, it will be highly influential in international affairs.

The need and importance of peacekeeping missions will be discussed in the next section. Pinaud¹⁵ states that international peacekeeping is a critical arm of Chinese public diplomacy as it is intended to project an image of responsible global power.

The Need for Peacekeeping Missions

The United Nations (UN) defines peacekeeping as a way of bringing together countries that were torn apart by conflict, thus creating conditions for sustainable peace. According to Alden¹⁶, peacekeeping operations aim to create peaceful and stable relationships through military and civil means.

¹⁰ J. B. Starr, "A guide to China's economy, history and political culture", *Understanding China*, 12 (4), 12-88, 2012.

¹¹ China Daily, *China to become 2nd largest contributor to UN peacekeeping budget*. Retrieved May 1st 2016, from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2016-05/30/content_25536207.htm.

¹² Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), *Is China contributing to the United Nations' mission?* Retrieved March 15th 2017 from <http://chinapower.csis.org/china-un-mission/>.

¹³ Xinhua, *Spotlight: Chinese peacekeepers bolster security in Africa*. Retrieved from Xinhuanet: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-06/02/c_135408123.htm. 2016, 06. 02.

¹⁴ Ashley Kirk, *UN peacekeepers: How many personnel does each country contribute?* Retrieved from *The Telegraph*: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/11898603/UN-peacekeepers-How-many-personnel-does-each-country-contribute.html>. 2016, 06. 02.

¹⁵ C. Pinaud, "South Sudan: Civil war, predation and the making of a military aristocracy", *African Affairs Journal*, 113 (451), 192-211, 2016.

¹⁶ C. Alden, *Seeking security in Africa: China's evolving approach to the African Peace and Security Architecture*, Norwegian Peace building Resource Centre, March 2014.

Many countries in the world are faced with political instability, and in extreme cases civil uprisings emerge. Such situations create volatile conditions for peace and strain their countries' police and military resources. For this reason, normal economic and social processes of survival are halted and this results in humanitarian crises¹⁷. For instance, in South Sudan and Syria, conflicts have utterly destroyed their economies, and civilians have no means of survival except aid¹⁸. In such situations, the UN intervenes by sending peacekeeping troops contributed by willing countries¹⁹. Again, the UN establishes a mandate that guides the peacekeeping missions. They help by addressing humanitarian crises and preventing additional loss of lives. Having provided the basis for peacekeeping missions, the theory and practice of peacekeeping will be discussed in the next section. As such, it is important to understand the tenets that underpin intermediation missions.

China, being among the leading world powers, is exceedingly committed to ensuring peace not only in Africa but in the world as a whole. China's peacekeeping missions have been mainly concentrated in Africa, as the continent is affected mostly by security issues such as political instability and tribal wars²⁰. As a participant in United Nations peacekeeping missions, the Chinese government currently provides police, military experts, and troops in order to ensure peace and stability on the continent²¹. While Chinese soldiers patrol the streets of conflict zones, the medical corps are usually on ground, offering free medical services to victims of war as part of addressing humanitarian crises. Similarly, Chinese engineers are usually deployed to reconstruct damaged critical installations such as bridges, roads and airports, allowing the resumption of normal order²². A table will be provided at the end of this section, describing China's contribution of troops for peacekeeping missions in different countries. In September 2014, China announced the deployment of a battalion of 700 troops to reinforce the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan²³. Therefore, China's troop contribution has almost tripled when compared to the previous year – indicating China's dedication towards peace building in Africa.

¹⁷ W. W. L. Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

¹⁸ M. Malan & C. T. Hunt, *Between a rock and a hard place*, Institute for Security Studies Papers, (275), p. 23, 2014.

¹⁹ M. Xia, *China threat or a peaceful rise of China*. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html, 2014, 12. 3.

²⁰ S. A. Asongu, "On Taxation, Political Accountability and Foreign Aid: Empirics to a Celebrated Literature", *South African Journal of Economics*, 83 (2), 180-198, 2015; S. A. Asongu, "A Good Turn Deserves Another: Political Stability, Corruption and Corruption-Control", *Economics Bulletin*, 35 (4), 2037-2048, 2015; S. A. Asongu & J. C. Nwachukwu, *Revolution Empirics: Predicting the Arab Spring. Empirical Economics*, Forthcoming. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs00181-015-1013-0>, 2016; J. A. Van Wyk, *Promoting Human Security: Ethical, Normative and Educational Frameworks in Africa*, France, and UNESCO, 2014.

²¹ M. Lanteigne & M. Hirono, *China's Evolving Approach to Peacekeeping*, Routledge, 2013.

²² Ouyang, *Chinese peacekeeping force completes Blue Helmet missions in Liberia*. Retrieved from China Military: http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-03/01/content_7509637.htm. 2017, 03. 01.

²³ M. Malan & C. T. Hunt, *Between a rock and a hard place*, Institute for Security Studies Papers, (275), p. 23, 2014.

Table 1

* UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country (China), 29 February 2016

<i>UN Mission</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Totals</i>	
MINURSO	Experts on Mission	10	0		10
				MINURSO	10
MINUSMA	Contingent Troop	387	15		402
				MINUSMA	402
MONUSCO	Experts on Mission	13	0		13
	Contingent Troop	209	12		221
				MONUSCO	234
UNAMID	Contingent Troop	234	0		234
				UNAMID	234
UNFICYP	Individual Police	3	0		3
				UNFICYP	3
UNIFIL	Contingent Troop	409	9		418
				UNIFIL	418
UNMIL	Individual Police	9	3		418
	Formed Police Units	165	5		12
	Experts on Mission	1	0		170
	Contingent Troop	499	11		1
				UNMIL	639
UNMISS	Individual Police	14	0		14
	Experts on Mission	3	0		3
	Contingent Troop	1,028	23		1051
				UNMISS	1,068
UNOCI	Experts on Mission	6	0		6
UNTSO	Experts on Mission	4	0		4
				UNTSO	4
TOTAL					3,072

Source: UN peacekeeping Website

- a) United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO): 10
- b) United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA): 402
- c) United Nations Organization Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO): 234
- d) African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur, (UNAMID): 234
- e) United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL): 693
- f) United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS): 1068
- g) United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI): 6

Data from the table above shows that out of the 10 United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in which China has a total of 3,072 personnel, 7 are based in Africa with 2,647 personnel, whereas 425 personnel are based in 3 other missions outside of Africa.

Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping

According to Bidwell²⁴, peacekeeping is overrated because the practice differs from the theory. In fact, he states that peacekeeping is both an ambitious description and the primary reason why most missions have ended in utter failure or prolonged stays. The problem-solving theories of mediation suggest that peacekeeping missions lack the military ability and the authority to keep peace²⁵. As such, they focus on peacekeeping as the most appropriate and objective answer to conflicts. Their main purpose is to restore peace. For this reason, they provide an impartial, disinterested and pacific agency, while under pressure from their sponsors²⁶. Bidwell traces the building blocks of peace intervention and peacekeeping as arising from crisis management methodologies created in Europe in the 19th century. They were developed to assist in dealing with conflicts emerging in interwar periods, during conquests and colonization. The first peacekeeping mission under the auspices of the UN was called “UNEF in Sinai”. Its founding principles were unarmed peacekeeping, monitoring, consent, non-use of force and neutrality. From a realist perspective, peacekeeping is not intended to address crises or operational frameworks. Instead, much emphasis is placed on domestic considerations, power distribution and amassing wealth among the elites, and foreign policy issues²⁷. However, problem-solving theories have some demerits, which are; instrumentalism, objectivism, and non-reflexive approaches. In instrumentalism, the role of politics in peacekeeping missions is ignored. On the other hand, in objectivism interveners define their own agendas instead of framing a common approach²⁸. In non-reflexive approaches, interveners ignore the biases and assumptions of theories, which leads to unanticipated outcomes. According to Agubamah²⁹, international peacekeeping missions are struggling with many difficulties, ranging from doctrinal confusion to lack of clarity concerning the proper use of force and the application of credibility, impartiality and consent³⁰. Details of some of the challenges facing Chinese peacekeeping troops will be discussed in the next section, as being representative of other intermediating missions.

²⁴ S. Bidwell, “The theory and practice of peacekeeping”, *International Affairs*, 54 (4), 635-639, 2005.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ S. Dorman, *China's evolving foreign policy in Africa: a new direction for China's non-intervention strategy?* (Doctoral dissertation, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School), 2014.

²⁷ L. M. Herrington, *Why the rise of China will not lead to global hegemony*. Retrieved from E-International Relations Students: www.e-ir.info/2011/07/15/Why-the-precarious-Rise-of-China-Will-Not-Lead-to-Global-Hegemony, 2011, July 15.

²⁸ C. H. Huang, “From Strategic Adjustment to Normative Learning? Understanding China's Peacekeeping Efforts in Africa”, *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 17 (3-4), 248-271, 2013.

²⁹ E. Agubamah, “China and peacekeeping in Africa”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4 (11), 193-197, 2014.

³⁰ S. Bidwell, “The theory and practice of peacekeeping”, *International Affairs*, 54 (4), 635-639, 2005.

Bellamy et al.³¹ also state that contributing countries' attitudes and policies towards sovereign responsibility and non-interference define any peacekeeping approaches that such countries might adopt. Bellamy et al developed a categorization in which they grouped peacekeeping approaches. For this reason, countries were categorized as Westphalia or Post-Westphalia, as shown below.

	Westphalia	Post-Westphalia
Sovereign responsibility	Limited to relations with other countries	Relationships with other countries and for treatment of citizens
Non-interference	Absolute right of sovereignty	Depends on accomplishment of duties towards citizens
Peace operations (between countries)	Most frequent. Consensual activity designed to facilitate peaceful settlement of disputes between states	Less frequent. Usually designed to facilitate peaceful settlement of disputes between states
Peace operations (intra-state)	Less frequent. Limited engagement to assist states deployed only at request of host state	Most frequent. Extensive engagement to facilitate or sometimes impose liberal democratic politics and economies

China adopts a Westphalia approach while the United States and other Western countries use the Post-Westphalia approach.

Challenges Facing Peacekeepers

Peacekeepers are usually faced with many threats and some of them end up paying the ultimate price. According to Kuo and Yinyin³², China first sent troops to Sudan in 2006, amid a civil war in the southern parts of the country. In 2011, the Sudanese government rolled out a referendum and the South chose to secede from the rest of the country. The decision was hailed internationally but not enough measures were put in place in order to form a stable and able government³³. A failed coup plunged the country in endless chaos, and the UN intervened after the situation worsened. As in other cases, China sent about 700 troops to South Sudan, because of its commercial and political interests in the country. In fact, China has a 40% stake in the state-owned National Petroleum Company of South Sudan³⁴. The country has rich oilfields, and China has invested heavily in its oil and petroleum sector. In early July 2016, two Chinese peacekeepers were killed in a shelling attack in South Sudan, near a refugee camp³⁵. Their armored

³¹ Alex/Williams Bellamy, Paul/Grin, Stuart, 2010: *Understanding Peacekeeping*, Cambridge, UK.

³² L. Kuo & E. Yinyin, *China reacts to the death of two peacekeepers in South Sudan with grief and rage*. Retrieved August 2, 2016, from *Quartz Africa*: <http://qz.com/728566/china-reacts-to-the-death-of-two-peacekeepers-in-south-sudan-with-grief-and-rage/>, 2016, July 11.

³³ S. A. Asongu, "Sino-African relations: A review and reconciliation of dominant schools of thought", *Politics & Policy*: Forthcoming, 2016.

³⁴ L. Kuo & E. Yinyin, *China reacts to the death of two peacekeepers in South Sudan with grief and rage*. Retrieved August 2, 2016, from *Quartz Africa*: <http://qz.com/728566/china-reacts-to-the-death-of-two-peacekeepers-in-south-sudan-with-grief-and-rage/>, 2016, July 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

car was hit with powerful missiles killing two soldiers and injuring six others. As it is the norm, the Chinese army strongly condemned the attack. However, Chinese citizens did not show empathy, but instead directed their anger toward the Chinese defense ministry for this senseless loss of lives. Millions of users condemned the normal cliché expressed by the ministry upon occurrence of such situations³⁶. Some internet users expressed outrage for the continued use of “We strongly condemn”, saying that it evoked a sense of deep powerlessness. Before the attack, other 16 peacekeepers had been killed in various peacekeeping missions around the world, and citizens demanded action from the government. Citizen reactions suggest that the country should again adopt its earlier stance of non-interference, and withdrawal all its troops from foreign countries³⁷. Since there is no other way by which to guarantee the safety of Chinese troops while in international warfronts, it is reasonable to suggest that Chinese citizens are against the deployment of peacekeeping troops in other countries. According to Xiaolin³⁸, terrorists are indifferent to any occupying force and do not enforce neutrality when launching attacks. For this reason, Xiaolin notes that China’s insistence on non-interference and its independent foreign peace policy cannot guarantee the safety and wellbeing of Chinese peacekeepers³⁹. For example, in 2015, about 130 peacekeepers died during service. Further, Xiaolin⁴⁰ urges Chinese policymakers to assess risks before sending troops to varied and complex environments.

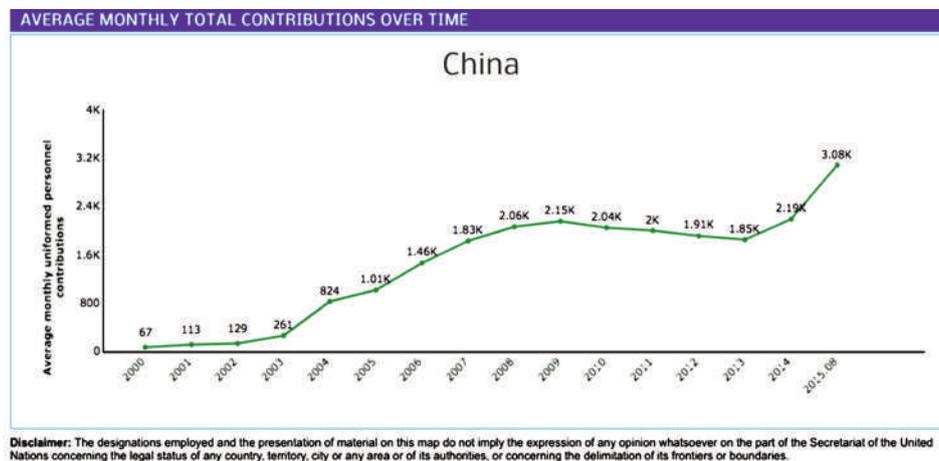


Figure 1
Average monthly total contributions
of China in Peacekeeping missions from 2000-2015

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Bayan, *Non-interference on the line*. Retrieved on March 5th 2016 from *The Economist*: <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21599035-crisis-ukraine-uncovers-hole-heart-chinese-foreign-policy-non-interference>, Mar 15th 2014.

³⁸ Ma Xiaolin, *The Human Cost of Peacekeeping*. Retrieved on June 25th 2016 from *Beijing Review*: http://www.bjreview.com/Opinion/201606/t20160614_800059353.html, June 23, 2016

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

As such, they should decide when and when not to intervene in terrorist hotspots, religious conflicts, tribal wars and the clash of civilizations. For instance, there were concerns when China deployed troops in Mali, Africa, given that the chaos was caused by religious conflicts. Rebels view occupying forces as foreign interference from Western crusaders who are actively fighting against the spread of Islam⁴¹. However, there have been wide-ranging debates over the necessity of withdrawing troops from countries where China has no strategic interests.

Chinese involvement in peacekeeping operations in Africa is a clear indication of the fact that it is acting as a responsible superpower⁴². China has come to the realization that participation in peacekeeping operations not only in Africa, but in the world as a whole can help ease tensions in areas affected by conflicts⁴³. In Africa, China uses the Westphalia peacekeeping approach.. A good example of this is South Sudan, where China is South Sudan's foreign exchange partner and the former buys 82% of the latter's oil export while at the same time providing the African country with infrastructural developments⁴⁴. Although most of Chinese peacekeeping missions are non-combative, in both Mali (in 2013) and South Sudan (in 2011), Chinese troops with full protective gear have been spotted⁴⁵. So far, there has been no major People's Liberation Army combat deployment in Africa. However, most projects in Africa, such as engineering projects, require armed protection. To be a substantial player in investment operations in Africa, China should play a security role. To handle this appropriately, the best approach to implementation is through provision and setting up large combat troops through the United Nations.

Personnel Training

Chinese troops face various challenges in their peacekeeping missions in Africa, such as language barriers and unfavorable weather conditions – especially in the northern part of Africa which consists mainly of the Sahara Desert⁴⁶. These challenges are not unique to the military troops but affect both Chinese and other foreign troops. However, due to deployment of protection units, Chinese troops are forced to deal with highly dangerous and deteriorating security environments and face frequent attacks from extremist rebel groups in

⁴¹ Ma Xiaolin, *The Human Cost of Peacekeeping*. Retrieved on June 25th 2016 from *Beijing Review*: http://www.bjreview.com/Opinion/201606/t20160614_800059353.html, June 23, 2016.

⁴² S. Dorman, *China's evolving foreign policy in Africa: a new direction for China's non-intervention strategy?* (Doctoral dissertation, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School), 2014.

⁴³ I. Gambari, *Beyond its mineral/natural resource: why Africa matters to the world, RSIS Working Paper* No. 261, Singapore, 2013.

⁴⁴ E. D. Werker, K. J. Wyett & S. S. Ding, "South Sudan: The birth of an economy", *Innovations*. 7 (1), pp. 73-90, 2013.

⁴⁵ C. P. Li, "Norm Entrepreneur or Interest Maximiser? China's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 2001–2010", *China: an international Journal*, 9 (02), 313-327, 2011.

⁴⁶ H. Boshoff, D. Zounmenou & J. Garvey, *Africa Watch, African Security Review*, 17 (3), pp. 72-75, 2008.

most African countries⁴⁷. A case was cited earlier where a Chinese convoy of peacekeepers was shelled, resulting in the deaths of two soldiers, with six others sustaining serious injuries. The Chinese personnel and military staff undergo two separate tracks of training for peacekeeping operations.

Military observers and UN staff officers must meet basic selection requirements that include a high level of professional responsibility and competence, good understanding of English, and at least 5 years of experience in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Candidates that have a minimum of one year experience in peacekeeping missions in the field may be recommended for posts in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)⁴⁸.

The second track is for the military troops. The PLA is responsible for creating a unit for each mission, formed from one of the seven military regions of the armed forces, each unit consisting of specialist personnel. The units are then deployed overseas for eight months' training. Before deployment, the unit goes through a one-week final preparation course in Beijing. During this period, the unit members are briefed on the current security situation in the affected country, cultural sensitivities, rules of engagement, and the logistical support system in place⁴⁹.

Reasons for Paradigm Shift to Intervention and Interference

In recent years, the Chinese government is increasingly getting involved in joint peacekeeping exchanges and training when it comes to military-related activities. This has, as a result, led to bilateral and regional security-related dialogues⁵⁰.

China provides at least a small percentage of military assistance to countries with which it has diplomatic relations. As a matter of fact, this is the main reason for wide-ranging debates in China on the need to recall troops from countries where China has no strategic interests. In particular, China has forged strong military ties with Ghana, Egypt, Angola, Algeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Uganda⁵¹. It is therefore important to note that military support is provided not only to countries with relevant mineral resources. China also provides financial assistance by way of aid and grants; and also provides Chinese militaries with assistance and training programs. For example, in 2007, China began a de-mining assistance program in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Sudan and other African countries, with the goal of personnel training⁵². Military to

⁴⁷ Frans Paul van der Putten, "China's Evolving Role in Peacekeeping and African Security The Deployment of Chinese Troops for UN Force Protection in Mali", *Clingendael Report*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, p. 10, 2015.

⁴⁸ H. Yamashita, "Peacekeeping Corporation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations", *Review of International Studies*, 38 (1), 165-186, 2012.

⁴⁹ S. Dharmapuri, "Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Putting the Responsibility to Protect into Practice", *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 4 (2), 241-272, 2012.

⁵⁰ M. S. Tanner & P. W. Mackenzie, *China's Emerging National Security Interests and Their Impact on the People's Liberation Army*, Center For Naval Analyses Alexandria Va, 2015.

⁵¹ E. Summit, 2014. African Research Bulletin.

⁵² Africa, S. S. Chapter Nine: Sub-Saharan Africa, *The Military Balance*, 2012. 112 (1).

military cooperation between China and Africa is important in bringing about and maintaining peace and security in the frequently war-affected African continent. The following are the main reasons as to why China is actively involved in peacekeeping missions in Africa.

A Statement of Power

The past decade has seen a tremendous growth in China's economic power, which subsequently led to the increase of its military might. This power has prompted China to become more vocal on international issues. A White Paper on "China's peaceful development 2011" confirms the political line adopted in the national defense strategy paper, and states that China will assume more international responsibilities as its strength increases⁵³.

Reshaping International Image and Reaffirming Legitimacy

China has enjoyed substantive economic growth in the past decade, and this accumulated growth, coupled with increased military strength, could be seen as a threat to other states. China's unique system of governance is not necessarily accepted without scruple in a capitalistic and democratic dominated world. By being directly involved in maintaining international peace and security, Beijing hopes to reshape its international image and be seen as a peaceful and responsible stakeholder on the international scene⁵⁴. This will go a long way towards securing Beijing's domestic and international legitimacy. Chinese state media have announced China's contribution to United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan as proof of the country's new role as a responsible, international stakeholder⁵⁵.

Economic Interests

To consider China's pledge to support security and stability in Africa as an altruistic gesture is not entirely accurate. Between the years 2000 to 2015, China's trade with Africa has grown from \$6 billion to \$107 billion⁵⁶. Africa has become a fertile ground for Chinese investment, and China continues to invest more in Africa. To ensure this growth in trade value, however, China needs a stable and secure environment. South Sudan saw the first deployment of a Chinese battalion in a United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. China has 1,068

⁵³ L. Jacques, "China's role in UN peacekeeping operations". Retrieved from <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eplibrary/China-role-in-UN-peacekeeping-operations.pdf>> (accessed at 18 April 2016), 2013.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Garlick, *China is taking a leading role in solving the refugee crisis*. Retrieved on December 6th 2016 from *China Daily*: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2016-09/26/content_26900418.htm.

⁵⁵ S. Van Sant, *Analysts Weigh Role of Chinese Peacekeepers in S. Sudan*. Retrieved on December 6th 2016 from VOA: <http://www.voanews.com/a/china-peacekeepers-south-sudan-analysts/2728166.html>.

⁵⁶ Saferworld, "China's growing role in African peace and security". Retrieved from <<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/Chinas%20Growing%20Role%20in%20African%20Peace%20and%20Security.pdf>>, 2011.

contingent troops in South Sudan, under the command of the United Nations. When the United Nations Mission in South Sudan began in 2011, China only contributed about 350 personnel, ranging from engineers to medical staff. However, in September 2014, China announced that it would add an additional 700 military personnel to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. China's commitment to creating stability in South Sudan is related to its investments, and to providing a safe environment for Chinese civilians working there. Combining this knowledge with the aforementioned memorandum of understanding for refurbishing the railway line linking Dakar to Bamako, as well as the construction of a railway line linking Bamako to Conakry, shows how important Mali is to China's grand scheme of investments in Africa. Perhaps Bamako will serve as an inland hub, connecting landlocked cities in West Africa to various ports in their close proximity. These agreements, including the presence of 3000 Chinese citizens in Mali, are motivation enough for China to sign up for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

Critical Benefits to the People's Liberation Army

The People's Liberation Army, henceforth known as the PLA, has had most of its action in the Asian region. The PLA lacks first-hand experience and information in the rest of the world. By increasing Chinese military involvement in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, the PLA has the opportunity to gather information from the continent as well as subject its troops to new territory and harsh weather conditions⁵⁷. The experience and knowledge gathered by these PLA members will be utilized in the training regimes of other members of the PLA.

Challenges Faced by China in Peacekeeping Missions The Choice between National Interest and Principles

While China's policy on UN peacekeeping operations has evolved over the years, China has stuck to two core principles, one of which is respect for state sovereignty⁵⁸. However, in 2008, China pressed Darfur into accepting the presence of UN peacekeeping forces. This pressure perhaps only happened because China is well invested in Sudanese oil fields and couldn't afford to have oil production negatively impacted⁵⁹. It was also the same year China hosted the Olympic Games, thus it could not afford to add the Sudanese issues to the list of criticisms leveled against it, one of which was the Tibetan issue. Also, in 2012, China did not abstain or veto the UN sanctions enjoining South Sudan to stop the mass killings. As

⁵⁷ W. W. L. Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping*, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

⁵⁸ A. Moscoe, "Crouching Tiger, Blue Helmet: Chinese Combat Troops in UN Peace Operations". Retrieved from <<http://www.e-ir.info/2015/10/03/crouching-tiger-blue-helmet-chinese-combat-troops-in-un-peace-operations/>> (accessed at 16 April 2016), 2015.

⁵⁹ B. Ling, "China's peacekeeping diplomacy", *International Relations and Institutions*, 2014.

China's national and economic interest increases in Africa, it will be torn between protecting its national interest and respecting the sovereignty of other states, thereby abstaining from interfering in the domestic matters of African states.

Language Barriers

According to Wu and Taylor⁶⁰, China's commitment to United Nations Peacekeeping efforts is not a smooth ride for the Chinese troops involved in the missions. Most of their Chinese counterparts speak English and French, and the nations in which these missions take place are French or English speaking countries. The Chinese troops thus have the challenge of communicating both with those they work with, and with those they hope to protect. Chinese troops – combat, non-combat, and civilian personnel – “tend to keep to themselves and do not interact much with other peacekeeping contingents or with local populations” due to their lack of proficiency in English or French, the primary languages used in UN peace missions⁶¹.

Dealing with Public Opinion

In this age of enlightenment, it is very difficult for regimes to sweep the dirt under the carpet. Unlike the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Russia, which provide financial resources to other groups that help in peace building and peacekeeping⁶², China contributes money and is also the largest contributor with troops in the 5-member UNSC with veto power. According to Godement⁶³, “Chinese ‘public opinion’ is the only frequently cited counterweight to Xi's policy decisions”. While China aims to redeem its image as a responsible power, it has come under some criticism from the citizens. Experts fear Chinese public opinion would only accept interventions by China if the reason is explicitly based on China's immediate interests, as opposed to any idea of contributing to global governance⁶⁴. This year alone, about 20 Chinese peacekeepers have been killed in international warfronts, while the other four countries have suffered insignificant casualties. More often than not, the UK and US have been known to send mercenaries to deal with potential threats to security⁶⁵. Many Chinese citizens have also suggested such actions in order to reduce mass casualties inflicted upon their troops. The Chinese are also worried that their

⁶⁰ Z. Wu & I. Taylor, “From refusal to engagement: Chinese contributions to peacekeeping in Africa”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29: 2, p. 138, 2011.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² M. Xia, *China threat or a peaceful rise of China*. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html, 2014, 12. 3.

⁶³ F. Godement, *Will China Cooperate with the West in Resolving Global Crises?* Retrieved on March 6th 2016 from *Boulevard Exterieur*: <https://www.boulevard-exterieur.com/Will-China-cooperate-with-the-West-in-resolving-global-crises.html>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ M. Gebrehiwot & L. Hongwu, *China-Africa relations, governance, peace and security*, Addis: Institute of African Studies, 2013.

goodwill will pull their country into trans-regional and trans-national conflicts, which may not be good for their international outlook.

Additionally, the Chinese also criticize their government for the deployment of troops to countries with no strategic interest, such as Kosovo and other small countries in Northern Europe. They suggest that the government should fund other organizations for such missions⁶⁶. Activists and pundits have been calling for policymakers to put in more measures in order to enhance the peacekeepers' abilities to cope with numerous threats in their regions of deployment.

In conclusion, China's peacekeeping missions in Africa are tied to strategic interests and redemption of international image. However, the Chinese government has come under heavy denunciation from the country's citizens and some opinion leaders, because it has failed to take stern actions to contain mass killings of Chinese troops. The killing of two peacekeepers in a refugee camp in South Sudan in July 2016 angered many citizens, because the government applies the same rhetoric of strongly condemning such actions. As such, most Chinese are of the opinion that the country should follow the trend set by the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Russia. These countries usually send private soldiers to eliminate the most potent threats and enforce peace. Additionally, they also fund groups and organizations that play critical roles in steering towards the achievement of peace. As China continues to increase its presence in Africa through massive investments, it will remain a challenge as well as a dilemma to maintain peace and maintain the principle of non-interference.

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⁶⁶ C. P. Li, "Norm Entrepreneur or Interest Maximiser? China's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 2001-2010", *China: an international Journal*, 9 (02), 313-327, 2011.

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