THE DRAGON WITH THE BLUE BERET: CHINA’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

by

Daniel Hayes Griffith

B.A., The University of Oregon, 2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Political Science)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

December 2010

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Abstract

Recently, academics and policy analysts alike have taken note of the People’s Republic of China’s increasing participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). Since 2003, the overall number of Chinese personnel in UNPKO has climbed dramatically: from 120 in early 2003 to over 2,000 at present. However, while it is relatively easy to determine how many Chinese personnel serve in UNPKO, it is much more difficult to accurately determine China’s motives for participation in the UN peacekeeping regime and its mission selection criteria. At present, there are three main schools of thought on this subject. Chinese officials and academics tend to argue that the PRC contributes to UNPKO because it is genuinely concerned about promoting international peace and security and alleviating human suffering. Other authors, primarily from the United States, argue that the PRC’s motives are purely instrumental in nature. China, they contend, sends personnel to missions when doing so can increase the PRC’s access to natural resources and markets or augment its overall diplomatic and military power. Finally, some authors vaguely contend that China’s concerns over its international legitimacy play a role in its peacekeeping strategy.

This thesis advances a new version of the international legitimacy explanation of Chinese peacekeeping participation. Specifically, it uses case studies from China’s past and current participation in UNPKO to demonstrate how reputational concerns have and continue to be the primary determinants of China’s peacekeeping policy. It argues that China participates in UNPKO to improve its international image in two important ways. First, China wants to show other great powers that it supports the status quo international system, thereby undermining claims that it is a dangerous “revisionist power.” Second, the PRC wants to ameliorate concerns among the international community that it is behaving in an exploitative way toward the developing world.
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Acknowledgments

First, I would like to offer my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Brian Job. Dr. Job has been an immense help over the last eight months. In addition to being a reliable source of advice and insight, he worked tirelessly to help me improve my thesis through extensive feedback and editing.

I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Katharina Coleman, for her time and effort in reading my thesis and conducting my defence. Her hard work was especially notable given that she was in Great Britain at the time.

While he did not hold an official place in my thesis committee, I nevertheless owe a debt of gratitude to my friend and comrade in arms, Matt Bordewick. I seriously doubt I could have come this far without his advice and moral support.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my parents and my wife, for their support and understanding.
To Flora
Chapter 1: Introduction

Until 2003, few observers thought that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) would ever become a prominent participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). Prior to 1981, the PRC loudly voiced its opinion that UNPKO were tools of US and Soviet imperialism that violated the international norm of Westphalian sovereignty. Its staunch anti-peacekeeping position thawed over the course of the 1980s, and in 1989 China began to contribute token contingents of twenty or fewer personnel to select UNPKO. With a few exceptions, the PRC maintained a conservative approach to contributing to the UN peacekeeping regime throughout the 1990s. To quote M. Taylor Fravel writing in 1996, most people believed that China would remain a “reactive, not proactive” participant whose minor contributions would be limited to missions that upheld the “traditional model” of UN peacekeeping for the foreseeable future.¹

At the start of 2003, China had a mere 120 peacekeepers—mostly military observers and civilian police—stretched out over eight UNPKO. By April 2003, however, this number had risen to 329, the majority of whom were non-combat military personnel such as engineers and medics. By the end of 2004, China’s contributions had risen abruptly to 1,036 mostly military personnel. Today, the PRC has a total of 2,011 personnel (troops, police, and military observers deployed in ten missions), thus making it the sixteenth largest personnel contributor of all troop-contributing states, and largest among the Permanent-5 (P-5) members of the UN Security Council (UNSC).²


A growing number of policy-oriented and academic writers have taken note of China’s increasing participation in UNPKO and have theorized about the motives underlying this shift. Some hail it as a boon for the UN’s mission to promote international peace and stability and declare that the PRC has finally become a “responsible stakeholder” in international affairs. Others, noting that the majority of China’s personnel are deployed in Sub-Saharan Africa, suspect that it is using the UN peacekeeping regime as an excuse to consolidate its power in a resource-rich continent, to militarily balance against the US, or to further isolate the disobedient “Province of Taiwan.” Finally, some writers believe that China is participating in UNPKO to build its international legitimacy, although they rarely explain what this entails.

Despite increasing interest among scholars, there is no convincing and empirically-supported explanation of the motives underlying China’s rapid increase in peacekeeping contributions. Similarly, no one has yet succeeded in producing an accurate analysis of China’s selection criteria for participation in UNPKO. Understanding the logic behind China’s UNPKO participation, however, would be useful in better comprehending Chinese foreign policy as well as gauging its implications for the rest of the world.

In this thesis, I contend that China’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations is driven primarily by a deep-rooted desire for international legitimacy. This strategy has two objectives. First, China wants to convince other great powers such as the United States that it is not a “revisionist” state as some Western sinologists and international relations scholars have suggested, and that these states should accept it as a fellow “responsible great power.” Through supporting and strengthening the UN peacekeeping regime, China hopes to demonstrate that it is deeply committed to the promotion of international peace and security as well as the preservation of the UN system and related norms of human rights. Second, China wants to mitigate concerns
among both developed and developing states that it has a neo-imperialist or exploitative agenda. Thus, its deployment of “blue berets” to rebuild troubled countries such as Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is intended to counter claims that its sole interest in the developing world is the exploitation of natural resources or the export of cheap goods to new markets. As a whole, the PRC believes that it can achieve these objectives through increased participation in UNPKO.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction, I lay out a typology of UNPKO. Next, I assess recent scholarly and policy-oriented literature on China’s involvement in UNPKO, paying special attention to the theoretical underpinnings of each explanation and the empirical evidence used to support it. In the fourth chapter, I advance a new theory of how legitimacy concerns affect China’s participation in the UN peacekeeping regime. In chapter five, I use a series of historical case studies to demonstrate how China’s current peacekeeping policy evolved and how it has been shaped and driven by a desire for international legitimacy. Lastly, I offer predictions for the future of Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping as well as suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2: Types of UN Peacekeeping Operations

In this thesis, I use a typology of UN peace operations based on the work of Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams. Bellamy and Williams list seven categories of UNPKO: preventative deployments, traditional peacekeeping operations, wider peacekeeping operations, peace enforcement operations, assisting transition missions, transitional administrations, and peace support operations. The typology I use differs only slightly from Bellamy and Williams’ original formulation, and modified definitions will be identified as such in the footnotes. One important difference that deserves immediate mention is that my typology only applies to peacekeeping missions under direct UN control (i.e., UN peace operations). The reason for this is that the PRC only participates in UNPKO and shows no inclination of contributing personnel to alternative organizations involved in peacekeeping. Each of Bellamy and Williams’ seven mission types has important characteristics that differentiate it from other kinds of UNPKO:

- Preventative deployments are missions where UN personnel are deployed in a country or area that is at a high risk of conflict but has not yet suffered significant violence or political instability. Since there has only been one preventative deployment in the history

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3 Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010). In addition to being widely respected by scholars of peacekeeping, an earlier version of Bellamy and Williams’ system has been used successfully in previous analyses of Chinese attitudes toward UNPKO. For instance, Stefan Stähle used an earlier version of Bellamy and Williams’ typology as contained in the first edition of *Understanding Peacekeeping* for his study of China’s UNSC voting patterns on peacekeeping resolutions. See Stefan Stähle, “China’s Shifting Attitude towards United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” *The China Quarterly* 195 (May 2008): 634-6.

4 This implicitly excludes all operations—both UN-authorized and not—that are conducted by regional organizations (e.g., the African Union), sub-regional organizations (e.g., the Economic Community of West African States) or alliances (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), ad hoc coalitions (e.g., the Australian-led International Force for East Timor), or single states (e.g., India’s “Operation Cactus” in the Maldives).
of the UN peacekeeping regime—the UN Preventative Deployment Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (UNPREDEP, active from 1992 to 1999)—preventative deployments will not play a major role in this paper.\textsuperscript{5}

\textit{Traditional} UNPKO, also known as “Chapter 6” or “Cold War-Era” missions by some scholars, follow the so-called “holy trinity of traditional peacekeeping” (consent, impartiality, and the minimum use of force). They involve neutral, non-coercive tasks such as observing troop withdrawals and disarmament, patrolling demilitarized areas and buffer zones, and focus on fostering trust and goodwill between opposing parties. Traditional operations always take place during relatively stable cease-fires and are usually intended to solve interstate, as opposed to intrastate, conflict.\textsuperscript{6}

\textit{Wider} missions, in turn, share many characteristics with traditional missions in that the peacekeepers tend to be limited in number and in resources and are restricted in terms of the actions they are allowed to take vis-à-vis the conflicting parties. In general, wider UNPKO involve mandates, materiel, and personnel best suited for traditional operations, except that they are deployed in situations of ongoing (usually intrastate) conflict or severe political instability, and are also often expected to fulfil complex tasks in addition to traditional UNPKO practices (e.g., the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians, refugees/IDPs and former combatants).\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} The historical review section, however, will briefly discuss the reasons behind the PRC’s February 1999 UNSC veto that ended the UNPREDEP. See Bellamy and Williams, \textit{Understanding Peacekeeping}, 161-5.

\textsuperscript{6} Bellamy and Williams, \textit{Understanding Peacekeeping}, 173-9.

\textsuperscript{7} Bellamy and Williams, \textit{Understanding Peacekeeping}, 193-7.
-Peace enforcement operations are authorized to use force to compel belligerents to stop fighting, end attacks on civilians, or otherwise prevent or punish aggression. These missions must be authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

-Assisting transition missions and transitional administrations are similar in that they both involve situations where UN personnel are tasked with rebuilding or taking on some of the functions of a state.

-Transitional administrations are UNPKO where a UN mission acts as the de facto or even de jure government of a country or area, while assisting transition missions usually act in support of an indigenous-run governing body.

-Peace support operations are aimed at helping consolidate peace in a post-war environment, usually with the goal of aiding in the establishment of a liberal democratic form of government. They generally involve robust military components that are capable of occasionally using force against belligerents who do not abide by the rules of a peace agreement. Unlike peace enforcement operations, however, the use of force is limited to the “impartial enforcement of a political settlement”, not the punishment of aggressors or forceful attempts to end fighting.

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8 Bellamy and Williams, Understanding Peacekeeping, 214-20.

9 This definition is slightly different from Bellamy and William’s original formulation; however, I feel it is more consistent with their typology and with the way UNPKO are run in real life. For Bellamy and Williams, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia would not count as a transitional administration because it was technically not the de jure government of Cambodia; however, UNTAC performed most of the functions of a government and held almost total authority over the Cambodian state. For this reason, I have opted to use a slightly broader definition of transitional administration than Bellamy and Williams. For Bellamy and Williams’ definition and their justification for not classifying UNTAC as a transitional administration, see Bellamy and Williams, Understanding Peacekeeping, 244-5. Both mine and Bellamy and Williams’ definition of transitional administration can be used to describe the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and the Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

10 Bellamy and Williams, Understanding Peacekeeping, 9.
Since 1989, China has contributed personnel to 23 different UNPKO. These include seven assisting transition missions, six traditional operations, three wider UNPKO, three peace support operations, three transitional administrations, and one mission that began as a wider mission and transformed into a peace support operation. Figure 1 lists every UNPKO authorized by the UN from 1989 to present with information about their mission type. Missions in which China participated are shown in bold, while those which China did not contribute are in plain text. For greater detail on UNPKO involving Chinese personnel contributions, Figure 2 contains information on the size of China’s contributions to UNPKO and related data. I use the term “token” to describe Chinese contributions involving an average of twenty or fewer personnel annually.
Table 1: UNPKO Authorized Since April 1989\textsuperscript{11}
(Missions involving Chinese contributions are listed in bold.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
<th>Mission Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNTAG</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUCA</td>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>1989-1992</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIKOM</td>
<td>Iraq and Kuwait</td>
<td>1991-2003</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAVEM II</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1991-1995</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUSAL</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1991-1995</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMIC</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPROFOR</td>
<td>Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,</td>
<td>1992-1995</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOSOM I</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>Wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUMOZ</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1992-1994</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOSOM II</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1993-1995</td>
<td>Peace Enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOMUR</td>
<td>Uganda and Rwanda</td>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOMIG</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1993-2009</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOMIL</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1993-1996</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMIR</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1993-1996</td>
<td>Wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNASOG</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMOT</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1994-2000</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAVEM III</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1995-1997</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRD</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNPREDEP</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>Preventative Deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIBH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>1995-2002</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTAES</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>1996-1998</td>
<td>Trans. Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMOP</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>1996-2002</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSMIIH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUGUA</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUA</td>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1996-1999</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIPONUH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1997-2000</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURCA</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>1998-2000</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOMISIL</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>1999-1999</td>
<td>Trans. Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMSIL</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1999-2005</td>
<td>Wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTAET</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>Trans. Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)</td>
<td>1999-2010</td>
<td>Wider/Peace Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMEE</td>
<td>Ethiopia and Eritrea</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMISET</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>2002-2005</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIL</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOCI</td>
<td>Côte d'Ivoire</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Peace Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSTAH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUB</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>2004-2006</td>
<td>Peace Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIS</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIT</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMID</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURCAT</td>
<td>Central African Republic and Chad</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Peace Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Peace Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} This figure does not include UNTSO (authorized in 1948) or UNIFIL (authorized in 1978).
Table 2: UNPKO Involving Chinese Participation
(Missions involving Chinese contingents with 200 or more military personnel are listed in bold.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participation Dates</th>
<th>Mission Type</th>
<th>Contribution Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNTAG</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>Token Civilian Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTSO</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1990- (founded 1948)</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Token Military Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>Western Sahara</td>
<td>1991-</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>Token Military Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOMIL</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Token Military Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIBH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>Token Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMISET</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>2002-2005</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>69 Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIL</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>2004-2008</td>
<td>Trans. Administration</td>
<td>Token Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSTAH</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2004-</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>Token Police (previously 142 Police)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIS</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2005-</td>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>435 Troops, 23 Military Ob., Token Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIFIL</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>2006- (founded 1978)</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>345 Troops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIT</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>2006-</td>
<td>Assisting Transition</td>
<td>24 Police, 2 Military Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMID</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2007-</td>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>322 Troops, Token Mil. Observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUSCO</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2010-</td>
<td>Peace Support</td>
<td>218 Troops, Token Mil. Observers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine existing scholarly and policy oriented analyses of China’s participation in UNPKO. For the purpose of highlighting theoretical similarities and differences among authors, I divide the literature into three broad theoretical groups: the “responsible stakeholder,” “instrumental,” and “international legitimacy” perspectives.

3.1. The Responsible Stakeholder Explanation

Authors who advocate the “responsible stakeholder” perspective posit that China participates in UNPKO because it sees peacekeeping as a way to provide public goods such as international peace and security and the protection of human life. For the most part, this group is composed of Chinese academics, Chinese government officials, and members of the various branches of the Chinese armed forces. Some, such as Liu Tiewa and People’s Liberation Army Senior Colonel Zhang Ping argue that China’s relatively newfound role as a contributor to UNPKO is evidence that the PRC is becoming a “responsible stakeholder” that values absolute over relative gains in its foreign policy. Liu and Zhang echo this fundamentally liberal argument in contending that China’s peacekeeping policy is influenced by a need for international peace at the base of the PRC’s national development strategy. They also cite China’s self-identification as “a peace-loving country” and a “confident and responsible great power” as motives for participation in UNPKO. In a slightly different variation on this argument, Chinese Major

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General Zhao Jingmin contends that China’s peacekeeping policy is the result of its status as a great power, which in turn conveys upon China a duty to uphold and protect the existing international system. In his opinion, the Chinese are “endeavouring to do [...] anything that we are capable and possible to do [sic] in order to maintain the regional global [sic] peace and security as a responsible P5 state.” Lastly, Jing Chen argues that China’s increasingly positive attitude toward UNPKO can be explained using constructivist norm change theory. Specifically, Chen contends that the PRC elite have internalized many international human rights norms, thus leading them to increase their support for the UN peacekeeping regime on principally humanitarian grounds.

While the responsible stakeholder perspective has its appeal, it is also the least convincing of the three theories of Chinese peacekeeping contributions. In particular, its plausibility is weakened by its reliance on an extremely idealistic view of Chinese foreign policy that is not supported by empirical evidence. For instance, if the principal motivator for Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping were the promotion of peace or human rights, then the PRC’s contributions would likely be much larger and more frequent than they are today. Despite the size of its military and armed police forces (approximately 2.3 million and 1.1 million personnel, respectively) as well as its civilian police (in the millions as well), the PRC still contributes

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15 Jing Chen, “Explaining the Change in China’s Attitude toward UN Peacekeeping: a norm change perspective,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 58 (2009): 157-73. Jing Chen is a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University. Unlike most of the authors in this category, she is not affiliated with the government of the PRC or the Chinese armed forces.

substantially fewer personnel than other developing states with smaller populations, such as Bangladesh (10,744), Pakistan (10,684), India (8,925), Nigeria (5,714), Egypt (5,470), Nepal (5,129), Jordan (3,749), Ghana (3,724), Rwanda (3,686), etc.\(^\text{17}\) Furthermore, while China may contribute to UNPKO, it also plays a major role in undermining the aims of the UN peacekeeping regime through covert arms sales and trade with combatants. The most infamous example was the PRC’s decision to sell substantial quantities of arms to the Sudanese government throughout the conflict in Darfur despite its diplomatic support of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and its own commitment of troops to both UNMIS and UNAMID. While this example does not prove that the PRC elite do not care about international peace and stability or the protection of human rights, they undercut the altruistic assumptions underlying the responsible stakeholder explanation.

3.2. The Instrumental Explanation

This explanation is based on the assumption that China participates in UNPKO for fundamentally instrumental reasons, such as securing access to natural resources or balancing against other great powers. Virtually all of the authors who advance this position focus on China’s peacekeeping contributions in Africa—a continent where the PRC has many material and strategic interests. As China’s overall presence in Africa has expanded alongside the PRC’s contributions to African UNPKO,\(^\text{18}\) they believe that there must be a direct connection between

\(^{17}\) UN, DPKO, “Ranking of Military and Police.”

Africa’s natural resources and growing markets and the PRC’s participation in the UN peacekeeping regime.

Authors who advocate this theory include Kent Hughes Butts and Brent Bankus, Erik Lin-Greenberg, J. Peter Pham, and Philippe D. Rogers. While each author makes a slightly different assessment of China’s interests in UN peacekeeping, all of them take the realist (in international relations theory terms) position that material and strategic gain are the primary motivating factors for China’s participation in UNPKO. For instance, Butts and Bankus argue that contributing to UN peacekeeping is one part of a three-pronged strategy for improving strategic relationships with the African Union and ensuring continued access to important mineral resources (the other prongs are arms sales to African states and training for African militaries). Lin-Greenberg offers a similar assessment of the importance of natural resources and strategic relationships in determining when and where China sends its peacekeepers, but also emphasizes other factors such as trade flows between the PRC and states hosting UNPKO as determinants of Chinese peacekeeping policy. Pham, in turn, adds first-hand training for Chinese soldiers in Africa as another motivating factor in addition to commercial interests and access to natural resources. Finally, Rogers contends that China’s primary goals in UNPKO

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19 Of these writers, all but Pham have ties to the US military, although he still writes from a strongly American defence-oriented perspective. For instance, Butts and Bankus write for the US Army War College, Lin-Greenberg is a second lieutenant in the US Air Force, and Rogers is a lieutenant colonel in the US Marine Corps and a former American peacekeeper in MINURSO who worked alongside Chinese military observers. Very few writers outside of the US argue in favour of this perspective.


participation are to achieve influence with various regional and sub-regional organizations, first-hand military overseas experience for Chinese troops, military intelligence gathering, and the diplomatic isolation of Taiwan.\textsuperscript{23}

Some supporters of this theory admit that ideational factors may impact China’s peacekeeping participation; however, they believe that this only occurs at a secondary or tertiary level. For instance, both Lin-Greenberg and Rogers mention the desire to be seen as a “responsible stakeholder” as a possible secondary motivation for Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping. In an interesting argument not heard in the rest of the instrumental literature, Lin-Greenberg suggests that its legitimacy as an international actor may have had a significant impact on China’s peacekeeping strategy in the 1990s. Today, however, he argues that ideational concerns take a backseat to China’s “desire to enhance its global diplomatic and commercial access.”\textsuperscript{24} In a slightly different vein, Rogers contends that the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989 drove the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to think of ways “to restore a congenial relationship with the broader society and the world,” which in turn led the Chinese government to consider greater levels of participation in UN peacekeeping.\textsuperscript{25} He also suggests that China currently capitalizes on its peacekeeping participation in order to build its reputation both at home and abroad, taking note of the extensive coverage of UNPKO in the Chinese state media. Nevertheless, Rogers emphasizes the “strategic,” “operational,” and “tactical” benefits

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\textsuperscript{24} Lin-Greenberg, “Blue Helmeted Dragons;” 11.

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of UN peacekeeping participation as the primary causal factors driving China’s contributions to UN peacekeeping. 26

The instrumental theory is easily the most popular among the three schools of thought on Chinese UNPKO participation. However, it is plagued by two major flaws. The first is its inability to account for the evolution of China’s engagement in UN peacekeeping. Specifically, if material and strategic gain are the primary factors driving peacekeeping participation, why did the PRC contribute predominantly small contingents of military observers to UNPKO for so many years? No matter how well trained, a small group of five observers can do very little to secure substantial benefits for the country that deployed them aside from gather basic intelligence about the operation in which they are deployed. Second, there is a marked tendency in the instrumental literature to rely on weak evidence, which is combined with a failure to control for alternative causal variables. For instance, Butts and Bankus, Pham, and Rogers all cite the presence of Chinese peacekeepers in certain UNPKO (e.g., the African Union/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the UN Mission in the Sudan) as evidence of China’s underlying instrumental motivations (e.g., continued access to Sudanese oil). Similarly, Pham argues that Chinese peacekeepers help China “secure its numerous investments across Africa by providing security and stability.” Yet, his evidence is limited to the observation that many Chinese peacekeepers are deployed in countries where China has business interests. He not only overlooks the fact that Chinese peacekeepers are deployed in countries where the PRC does not have substantial business interests, such as in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) or the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), but also fails to account for any alternative variables that might explain China’s presence in these missions.

The second problem is a failure to adequately identify causal mechanisms. In privileging material and strategic considerations, the instrumental perspective rests on a crucial assumption; namely that Chinese leaders believe that their peacekeepers have a substantial (and identifiable) impact on Chinese interests in the countries where they are deployed. However, few proponents of this perspective explain how the chain of causation works or provide examples of such causal mechanisms in actual cases. Similar missing causal connections undermine other material and strategic based explanations, such as explanations for China’s participation in the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

3.3 The International Legitimacy Explanation

In contrast to the responsible stakeholder and instrumental perspectives, this school of thought explains China’s participation in UNPKO in terms of concerns for reputation and international legitimacy. In all of these descriptions, China is presented as a rational actor that participates in UNPKO because it believes that it can directly benefit from its participation (unlike the responsible stakeholder explanation), albeit the benefits are primarily ideational in nature (as opposed to the instrumental perspective).

Authors who argue in favour of this explanation include the International Crisis Group, Bates Gill and Chin-hao Huang, Yin He, Bonny Ling, and Ian Taylor. Their arguments

27 To cite one such example, Lin-Greenberg argues that Liberian timber played a role in China’s decision to participate in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). He finds that some of the Chinese peacekeepers among UNMIL’s 565 person contingent were deployed in areas near forests and uses this as proof of a connection between the PRC’s contributions to UNMIL and the presence of timber in Liberia. However, he does not elaborate on the implied relationship between Chinese peacekeepers and Liberian timber. See Lin-Greenberg, “Blue Helmeted Dragons,” 87.
emphasize the PRC’s deep-rooted desire to be seen as a “responsible” or “legitimate” actor in international relations; however, they do not argue that the PRC contributes to UNPKO primarily because it wants to uphold human rights or international peace (the responsible stakeholder perspective). The ICG, for instance, writes that “[p]articipation in peacekeeping serves [...] as a relatively low-cost way of demonstrating [China’s] commitment to the UN and to international peace and security,” and also a means “to counter fears of China’s growing power.”28 Gill and Huang similarly argue that the desire to “burnish its credentials as a more responsible power” is the primary driver of China’s policy toward UN peacekeeping.29 In particular, the PRC’s increasing participation in “highly sensitive and potentially dangerous missions” such as UNAMID appears to be motivated by concerns related to building China’s “international profile” and “deflecting international criticism” of its relationships with some of Africa’s less-than-savoury regimes. He attributes China’s growing participation in UNPKO to a strategy aimed at “assur[ing] the world of its goodwill and intention to become a responsible power” along with its desire to strengthen the UN and international cooperation in general.30 Ling, in turn, contends that peacekeeping participation is one part of a larger diplomatic strategy to project an “image of China as a responsible power” to the world.31 Lastly, Taylor characterizes the PRC’s


peacekeeping participation as a strategy to “project a more benign and positive impression” of itself and to “counteract the negative assessments of its foreign policies,” especially with regard to its actions and diplomatic relationships in Africa.\(^\text{32}\) While the rhetoric in these explanations may sound similar to the responsible stakeholder explanation, there is a fundamental difference that separates them: the fact that reputation factors, not concerns about peace or human rights \textit{per se}, drive China’s participation in UNPKO. The legitimacy explanation lacks the altruistic motivations put forward in the responsible stakeholder perspective.

In comparison with the instrumental and responsible stakeholder theories, this perspective can explain important nuances in China’s engagement with UN peacekeeping since 1989. For instance, while token contributions have relatively little strategic significance and have almost no impact on international peace or the promotion of human rights, they can have significant ideational implications for the contributing state. In the PRC’s case, sending small contingents of observers and civilian police to a wide variety of UNPKO appears to have been an extremely low cost means to demonstrate its commitment to the UN peacekeeping regime as well as to the individual countries in which the missions were deployed. Similarly, while the recent deployments of non-combat PLA personnel to MONUC, UNMIL, UNMIS, UNIFIL, and UNAMID cannot be satisfactorily explained by the alternate theories (as will be demonstrated more thoroughly later in this paper), all five can be shown to have had significant legitimacy-related implications for improving the PRC’s international reputation. These hypotheses are bolstered by the fact that the Chinese (state) media has always touted these token contributions as evidence of the PRC’s “responsible power” status and to improve the country’s image.

abroad, as well as the fact that Chinese officials are quick to endorse the “responsible stakeholder” theory when talking to foreign diplomats, academics, and reporters.

Despite these positive aspects, the existing international legitimacy literature fails to make a convincing case for reputational concerns driving China’s participation in UNPKO. First, few of the above authors provide any form of empirical evidence to back up their claims. For instance, the ICG, Ling, and Taylor fail to back up their assertions with empirical evidence. Gill and Huang’s as well as He’s data are limited to short examples that do not clearly illuminate the independent variables driving China’s peacekeeping policy. The international legitimacy literature would benefit from a series of case studies that showed how this explanation is superior in terms of empirical support and explanatory power to the responsible stakeholder and instrumental explanations.

Second, this literature suffers from the use of poorly defined terms and under-theorized concepts. With the exception of He, the majority of the authors employ statements such as “China wishes to project itself as a responsible power” with little qualification as to what they mean or their significance vis-à-vis Chinese foreign policy. This lack of specification and clarity seriously undermines the analytical usefulness of the international legitimacy explanation.

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34 He’s piece is especially laudable in that it both defines the term “responsible power” and provides a theoretical underpinning for his international legitimacy-based explanation of Chinese UNPKO participation.
Chapter 4: A New International Legitimacy Explanation

I begin my effort to improve upon the existing international legitimacy theory of Chinese peacekeeping participation by examining the concept of “international legitimacy.” As Ian Clark notes, international legitimacy is not a single principle or force, but rather an interrelated “family” of different concepts that are often at odds with each other.\(^{35}\) For instance, Ian Hurd defines international legitimacy as “the belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed.”\(^{36}\) For Katharina P. Coleman, however, it is a “social status that can adhere to an actor or an action: it involves being recognised as good, proper, or commendable by a group of others.” While both Hurd’s and Coleman’s definitions are useful in analyzing China’s peacekeeping contributions, the latter definition is better suited to the approach I am taking here. Specifically, Coleman’s definition has three components that can be applied to China’s UNPKO participation: a referent object (in this case a state), audience, and relevant standards of judgement.\(^{37}\) This definition of legitimacy is especially useful as it explains China’s two principal motives for participating in UNPKO.

The first is China’s desire to be seen as a full, legitimate member of the international community. Here, China is the referent of legitimacy, the international community (with an


emphasis on the existing great powers) is the audience, and the standard of judgement is the audience’s conception of “responsibility.” This conception of Chinese participation in UNPKO is influenced in part by Yong Deng’s and Rosemary Foot’s respective assessments of “China’s struggle for status” over the past two decades. According to Deng, the PRC is a “status-conscious” country that is deeply concerned about how its growing power is interpreted by the rest of the world. In particular, it does not want other great powers to view it as a “revisionist” state and exclude it from full standing as a member of the international community. Again, this concern is best explained by the legitimacy explanation, not the responsible stakeholder perspective, as it does not assume that China is altruistic or is actually a status quo power; rather, it simply shows how these reputational concerns affect the interests of the CCP elite. For instance, Deng contends that China is actively trying to improve its reputation by increasing its participation in multilateral fora and international organizations, as such activities tend to defuse foreign concerns and make China appear to be a “responsible great power,” even if it might not be one in reality. Similarly, Foot argues that when China first attempted to “rejoin international society” in the 1970s, its leaders quickly realized that they faced a legitimacy problem, as the PRC did not fit the definition of a “responsible state” as determined by the existing powers. In response to this barrier to entry, China reacted by actively promoting its international image.

38 While this audience includes multiple countries, the most important one is the United States, whose trade representative first coined the term “responsible stakeholder” when urging the PRC to bring its foreign policy in line with those of Western liberal powers.

39 Yong Deng, China’s Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97-127.

40 Deng, China’s Struggle for Status, 235. Deng mainly discusses security implications of China’s status (the “revisionist” label invites the possibility of aggressive containment policies by the US); however, he also notes that deeply ingrained memories of Imperial China’s “premodern historical greatness” may play a role in the PRC’s current desire for recognition and inclusion.
through signing a bevy of arms control treaties and human rights covenants. While neither Deng nor Foot address the issue of China’s participation in UNPKO in their discussions of the effects of status on Chinese foreign policy, the implications are clear. For one, active participation in the UN peacekeeping regime is an effective and relatively low-cost means for China to demonstrate its commitment to upholding the international status-quo as embodied by the UN system. By sending personnel to UNPKO, the PRC can demonstrate its commitment to the UN as an institution as well as related norms and international law pertaining to human rights and the promotion of peace and security.

The second motivation is that the PRC does not want to be seen as an exploiter by the developing world. It views participation in UNPKO as a means to improve its reputation in the eyes of developing states, and perhaps as a way to secure its position as the leader of the developing world. China’s oft-discussed “thirst for oil” and other resources has sparked fear in parts of the developing world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, that the PRC has neo-imperialist ambitions or is willing to give support to abusive governments in return for access to natural resources and commercial opportunities. By sending “blue berets” to troubled regions, China can emphasize the benign and well meaning aspects of its engagement with developing countries, thereby undermining claims that it is just another exploiter interested in raw materials to fuel its own economic growth. Using Coleman’s framework, one can say that China wishes to be seen as a “legitimate” friend of the developing world (audience), with the standards of

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42 Deng briefly mentions Chinese participation in UNPKO when discussing the effect of China’s “status drive” on its involvement in IGOs and suggests that the reputational concept of “international responsibility” might be driving China’s participation in UNPKO; however, he downplays the significance of UN peacekeeping in China’s overall foreign policy throughout his book. See Deng, China’s Struggle for Status, 47-8.
judgement being China’s perceived level of commitment to their development projects and the perceived threat of Chinese exploitation.

This application of international legitimacy theory has a great deal of explanatory potential for both examining China’s current participation in UNPKO as well as the history of its contributions. Specifically, China contributes personnel to UNPKO when it believes that doing so can help it improve its international legitimacy. During the third phase of Chinese peacekeeping participation (1989-2002), Beijing decided that the best course of action was to contribute predominantly small contingents of military observers and police to missions where UN personnel were not likely to have to use force. These included traditional missions as well as several assisting transitions and two transitional administrations. By sending many small contingents to missions all over the world, the PRC felt that it would be viewed as being an active, yet non-threatening and non-imperialistic, supporter of the UN system.

By the early 21st century, however, the PRC leadership realized that their 10+ years of participation in UN peace operations had done relatively little to counter international criticism. Token contributions did not outweigh support for a brutal regime in Sudan, a questionable human rights record at home, and concerns sparked by its own rapidly increasing economic and military power. Thus, shortly after Hu Jintao took power in 2002, the PRC decided to change its strategy. In comparison with his more conservative predecessor, Hu has demonstrated a strong sense of enthusiasm for UN peacekeeping and has actively lobbied for increased PLA participation in UNPKO. Furthermore, Hu’s rhetoric of creating a “harmonious world” is

43 Gill and Huang, “China’s Expanding Role,” 10-1.

intended to emphasize China’s commitment to improving, rather than destabilizing, the status quo order. While maintaining token contributions in some missions, Beijing decided that more substantial participation in key UNPKO could have greater legitimacy-related benefits than its previous strategy. Contributions of non-combat PLA personnel provided an excellent solution to this dilemma. As military personnel are arguably more “high profile” than civilian police, the Chinese elite felt that its contributions to UN peacekeeping would be more likely to be noticed and appreciated by the international community. However, by sending non-combat troops such as engineers and medics, they also believed that its participation would not be seen as threatening. Thus, the decision to send non-combat units can be interpreted as a compromise between the need to increase China’s international profile of involvement in UNPKO, one the one hand, as well as the knowledge that the presence of substantial numbers of Chinese combat troops in predominantly African host states could alarm the developing world and other great powers, on the other. It is interesting to note that China has publically considered sending combat units to UNIFIL in select missions “if requested” to do so by other UN member states. In this way, China could send combat troops in the future without running the risk of being seen as threatening by other the international community. Similarly, China has also continued to send token contingents to low-profile UNPKO and police contingents to missions where the presence of Chinese troops might be considered inappropriate.

In sum, the version of the international legitimacy explanation advanced here posits that reputational and image-related concerns—as opposed to altruism or materialist power

45 Gill and Huang, “China’s Expanding Role,” 28.

46 One such example is MINUSTAH in Haiti, where the PRC contributed civilian police instead of military personnel. As Haiti is located within the US’s general sphere of influence, a contribution of Chinese soldiers could have alarmed both the American public and members of the US Congress. Chinese police, however, were less likely to be viewed as threatening by Americans.
considerations—are the primary determinants of Chinese participation in UNPKO. This is not a new development, as ideational considerations have played a role in China’s UNPKO calculus since it first contributed to the UN peacekeeping regime. China’s increased participation in UNPKO is not the result of a change in interests, but rather a new strategy based on old concerns. In the next chapter, I test my theory against the predictions of the responsible stakeholder and instrumental perspectives using case studies that highlight the motives underlying China’s participation in UNPKO. Ultimately, it is not possible at this time to prove conclusively that every one of China’s contributions to a UN peace mission was the result of legitimacy-related considerations. Rather, the following two chapters will show that this theory is more logical and empirically supported than alternative explanations.
Chapter 5: Case Analysis

5.1 Methodology

Determining how the PRC decides its participation in UNPKO is neither a simple nor straightforward task. Prior to Gill and Reilly’s publication of “Sovereignty, Intervention, and Peacekeeping: The View from Beijing” in 2000, few people outside of the Chinese government even knew which officials were responsible for China’s peacekeeping policy, not to mention their calculus for determining when and how to contribute to peace missions. Gill and Reilly discovered that Chinese peacekeeping decision-making involves a number of different actors within the Chinese state, including the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the PLA, the Central Military Commission, and the Standing Committee of the Politburo. Unfortunately for researchers, these bodies tend to be very secretive and their internal decision-making processes vary from slightly transparent to opaque. Furthermore, the only regularly published official PRC document containing information about China’s peacekeeping participation are China’s National Defence white papers which come out once every two years. This lack of information makes methods that require significant data on the decision-making process particularly difficult to use. Similarly, the use of quantitative methods is also problematic due

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49 For example, it would be extremely difficult to use process-tracing to uncover China’s motives for participation in UNPKO.
to the limited number of cases available for analysis. As mentioned previously, the PRC has participated in 23 UNPKO since 1989—a very small dataset for statistical analysis.

Due to the above limitations, I have opted to use a comparative small-\(n\) case study approach that examines how Chinese participation in UNPKO has changed over time. After discussing the years in which China did not participate in UNPKO, my analysis focuses on the two stages of China’s engagement with UN peacekeeping: the limited participation phase (1989-2002) and the increased participation phase (2003-present). I examine a total of ten cases of Chinese participation, five of which occurred within the 1989-2002 phase (UNTAG, UNTSO, UNTAC, UNMEE, and MONUC) and five that took place during the 2003-present phase (MONUC,\(^{50}\) UNMIL, UNMIS, UNIFIL, and UNAMID). Of the first set of missions, two were traditional operations that involved token contributions (UNTSO, UNMEE), one was a wider operation with a token contribution (MONUC), another was an assisting transition with a token contingent (MINURSO), and one was a transitional administration with 400 PLA personnel (UNTAC). For the second set, I examine the five missions to which China contributed 200 or more non-combat PLA personnel: one peace support operation (MONUC), an assisting transition (UNMIL), a traditional mission (UNIFIL), and two wider UNPKO (UNMIS and UNAMID).

\(^{50}\) MONUC is listed as an observation in both categories because the nature of the mission and the nature of Chinese participation in it underwent substantial changes during the 2002-2003 period.
### Table 3: 1989-2002 Case Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>China Years</th>
<th>Mission Type</th>
<th>Chinese Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNTAG</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
<td>Assist. Trans.</td>
<td>20 Election Observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTSO</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1990-</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>5 Military Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONUC</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>9 Military Ob., 1 Troop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: 2003-present Case Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>China Years</th>
<th>Mission Type</th>
<th>Chinese Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MONUC</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2003-2010</td>
<td>PSO</td>
<td>218 Troops, 16 Mil. Ob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIS</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2005-</td>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>435 PLA, 23 Mil. Ob., 18 Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIFIL</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>2006-</td>
<td>Assist. Trans.</td>
<td>344 PLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMID</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2007-</td>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>322 PLA, 2 Mil. Ob.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 1949-1988: Non-Participation

The People’s Republic of China adopted a hostile stance toward UN peacekeeping almost immediately after its birth as a state on October 1, 1949. As a non-member of the UN—and by extension a non-member of the international community—the PRC had little motivation to endorse UNPKO during its first three decades of existence. Historically, China had suffered greatly from foreign military interventions, both in terms of lives and wealth, as well as self-image. Bates Gill and James Reilly, for instance, argue that China’s original aversion to peacekeeping was greatly influenced by its experiences between the start of the First Opium War (1838) and the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, known in China as the “Century of Humiliation.”51 When these historical memories were combined with related recollections of the Sino-Japanese War, the Korean War (in which hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops died fighting UN forces)52 and the 1962 Indo-Chinese conflict, the PRC’s Communist leadership had strong reason to be anxious that UNPKO could be used to undermine PRC’s sovereignty indirectly or even be used to justify future military action against it.53 This concern was not unwarranted, as the PRC’s exclusion from the UN Security Council meant that it lacked the authority to veto future interventions. The result was that China took a dim view of any UN involvement in international conflict management, including traditional peacekeeping missions.


52 It is hard to overstate the impact that having to fight against UN troops during the Korean War had on China’s aversion to UNPKO during this period. For instance, Chin-hao Huang describes how “[i]n the aftermath of the Korean War (1950–53), during which Chinese forces encountered and fought the United States-led UN Command, China held an antagonistic position toward UN operations, often viewing them with skepticism and questioning their legitimacy.” See Chin-hao Huang, “Testimony before the U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission: China’s Military and Security Activities Abroad,” March 4, 2009, U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_03_04_wrts/09_03_04_huang_statement.php (accessed November 27, 2010).

Sometimes, these concerns appeared to border on paranoia. For example, in response to the UN’s decision to create UN Emergency Force I (a traditional PKO) to deal with the Suez Crisis in 1956, Chinese officials publically claimed that the UN would actually use the force “to occupy Arab territories” instead of oversee the withdrawal of French, British, and Israeli troops.\(^{54}\)

The PRC maintained a strong and outspoken anti-UNPKO position through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1971, however, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, granting formal recognition to the PRC UN delegates as “the only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations” and expelling “the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations.”\(^{55}\) Even though it remained opposed to peacekeeping in principle, China abstained during Security Council voting on the three UNPKO-authorizations during this period in order to avoid being labelled obstructionist and harming its legitimacy as a newly recognized member of the international community.\(^ {56}\) As the UN could no longer authorize military force against the PRC or its close allies, China’s anti-peacekeeping attitudes continued to lessen during the first half of 1970s.

Chinese support for UNPKO began to increase dramatically following Mao Zedong’s death in 1976. This momentous event paved the way for more open-minded officials to take the


\(^{55}\) UN General Assembly, Resolution 2758 (A/RES/2758), October 25, 1971.

\(^{56}\) Pang Zhongying, “China's changing attitude to UN peacekeeping,” *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 1 (2005): 89. The three UNPKO in question are the UN Emergency Force II (UNEF II, 1973-9) that was authorized in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights (UNDOF, 1974-present), and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL, 1978-present). All three missions were traditional UNPKO.
helm of the Chinese Communist Party apparatus, which in turn allowed them to consider the possibility that a more positive stance toward UNPKO might serve Chinese interests after all. Within five years of Mao’s death, the Chinese delegate to the UNSC voted for the first time on a peacekeeping-related resolution—the extension of the long-standing and uncontroversial traditional PKO in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In 1984, the PRC leadership decided to formally declare their previously ambiguous stance toward UN peacekeeping. The 1984 policy statement stated that the Chinese government would lend its support to traditional operations as long as all parties agreed to the deployment and the use of force by UN troops would be minimal. Provided that these stringent conditions were met, China was willing to concede the existence of a “universal demand for strengthening the peace-keeping capability of the United Nations.” By 1988, China was comfortable enough with the idea of UNPKO to join the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations—a body that it had previously described in 1965 as the “US-controlled headquarters of international gendarmes to suppress and stamp out the revolutionary struggles of the world’s people.” Despite these significant attitudinal shifts, however, China’s “support” for UNPKO was limited to little more than occasional affirmative UNSC votes, as the PRC was still unwilling to contribute to such operations with blood (peacekeepers) or treasure (peacekeeping dues). Thus, while China was beginning to see

58 Pang, “China's changing attitude,” 90.
60 Chinese Deputy Permanent Representative Lian Yufan, quoted in Shichor, “China and the Role,” 262.
diplomatic support for UN peacekeeping as helpful in promoting its international legitimacy, it remained sceptical of the potential benefits of actual participation in UNPKO.

5.3 1989-2002: Limited Participation

1989 was an important, if troubling, year in the history of the PRC. The 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations revealed “the government’s lack of legitimacy” in the post-Mao era, and forced the PRC leadership to look for new sources of legitimacy to bolster the country’s internal stability such as increased nationalism and economic growth. However, the PRC’s brutal reaction to the protests—the so-called “June Fourth Incident”—had even more far-reaching implications for both China’s domestic and international legitimacy than the demonstrations themselves. First and foremost, the Tiananmen Square massacre caused other great powers, especially the US and its European allies, to question the PRC’s status as a legitimate member of the international community. Few states expected the PRC to adhere to the same standards as a liberal country would in response to this sort of popular pressure; however, Beijing’s violent suppression of the demonstrators was extraordinary enough to be seen as almost universally illegitimate. Within hours, world leaders publically condemned the PRC for its actions, with some states expelling Chinese ambassadors from their capitals. Even the Kremlin was “extremely dismayed” by Beijing’s actions. In Western Europe and the US, leaders decided that China’s rulers could no longer be trusted to use its military might as a responsible country

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would, thereby leading both the European Economic Community and the US to enact bans on arms sales to the PRC.

In October 1989—a mere four months after the Tiananmen Square demonstrations—the PRC made a sudden and unprecedented move: it announced its intent to make its first contribution to a UNPKO. Several commentators have taken note of the proximity between China’s announcement of its contribution and the Tiananmen Square massacre and have noted a likely connection between the two. As mentioned earlier, Rogers believes that the move was meant to improve the image of the PLA. Similarly, Swedish security analyst Jerker Hellström suggests that the move had two goals: to improve the PLA’s image (thus supporting the international legitimacy explanation) and to help the PRC “to reap political as well as economic benefits” in spite of the then-unfriendly international environment (instrumental perspective).  

There are two significant observations whose implications are largely overlooked by both Rogers and Hellström, however. They are the nature of the mission that China contributed to in late 1989 as well as the type of contingent that it sent to the mission. China’s first UNPKO was not a traditional mission such as UNTSO or MINURSO, but rather the UN Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG)—an assisting transition operation that involved a significant political component aimed at promoting democratic governance in Namibia. It is also significant to note that China’s contingent was not composed of PLA troops, military observers, or even civilian police (the most common types of Chinese peacekeepers), but rather a group of 20 civilian election observers. Under normal circumstances, one would not expect an

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authoritarian regime without free and fair elections of its own to send personnel to facilitate such an election in a foreign country. However, sending a token contingent of election observers provided Beijing with an extremely low-cost way to demonstrate China’s “support for democracy” and peace when its international legitimacy was suffering due to its own decidedly undemocratic and violent actions at home.

The PRC’s participation in UNTAG heralded the arrival of a pattern of UN participation that would remain largely in place until 2003: token contributions of unarmed or lightly armed personnel to a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional UNPKO. Contrary to Fravel’s statement in the introduction, China never went through a period in which it only contributed to missions adhering to the “traditional model” of UN peacekeeping. Of the thirteen missions in which China participated between 1989 and 2002, only five can be accurately classified as “traditional” operations according to Bellamy and Williams’ typology. What China did do, however, was to avoid participating in UNPKO where one or more of the parties did not consent to the operation, although exceptions were made to this policy. This decision to avoid participation in coercive missions was partly the result of China’s well-noted preference for preserving the Westphalian conception of sovereignty as well as its historical memories of uninvited foreign interventions in its own territory. However, there is another consideration that likely influenced China’s preference for avoiding coercive UNPKO: the fact that such operations are generally not seen as legitimate by developing states.

For instance, China’s second contribution to a UNPKO was in 1990, when it deployed a contingent of five military observers to the UN Truce Supervision Organization—the UN’s first and oldest peace mission. Due to the contingent’s small size and UNTSO’s long-standing mandate, there is little reason to believe that UNTSO needed China or even requested that China
contribute to the mission. However, China offered its personnel anyway and has maintained a contingent of four to five military observers in UNTSO ever since. Similarly, the PRC also sent token contributions of military observers to eight other UNPKO. In UNMEE, for example, China sent a small group of military observers to monitor the Ethiopian and Eritrean border, while in MONUC it sent a group of nine military observers and one PLA soldier to monitor the withdrawal of foreign forces from the DRC and the demobilization of local militias. In neither case was China’s contribution particularly useful: UNMEE eventually was forced to withdraw due to insufficient cooperation from the combatants, and MONUC struggled daily with the fact that it had little peace to keep (the Second Congo War was still being fought at the time of its initial deployment). These contributions however, did provide some benefits for China’s international legitimacy. By sending token contingents, China rapidly demonstrated that it could participate in many different UNPKO throughout the world. This gave the impression that China was actively participating in helping solve multiple conflicts at once: from patrolling the Iraqi-Kuwait border (UNIKOM) to monitoring a ceasefire in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL); from monitoring disarmament and demobilization in Mozambique (NUMOZ) to helping with civilian policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH). Far from being a repressive state obsessed with preserving its own sovereignty, these actions portrayed China in a new light: a benign power actively involved in resolving some of the world’s most intractable conflicts.

There was one important exception to both of these aforementioned rules, however. In 1992, the PRC sent 400 PLA engineers to the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). UNTAC was a highly ambitious transitional administration that functioned as the de facto government of Cambodia between 1992 and 1993. In addition to traditional peacekeeping tasks (e.g., monitoring the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and supervising the national
disarmament and demobilization program), UNTAC was given the mandate of “controlling and supervising civilian administration, organizing elections, coordinating refugee repatriation, promoting human rights, and facilitating economic rehabilitation.”66 Although not always able to exercise its full authority, UNTAC had remarkable powers over the Cambodian state and the various factions, including the right to “remove factional officials who did not respond to its directive.”67 Most fundamentally, however, was the fact that the mission did not receive full consent from all the parties involved. The Party of Democratic Kampuchea (better known as the *Khmer Rouge*) openly resisted UNTAC throughout its deployment period by regularly violating the cease-fire, attacking ethnic Vietnamese civilians, and even taking UN peacekeepers hostage and attacking their vehicles.68 In addition to contributing personnel and materiel to this mission, China also used its diplomatic weight to encourage the Khmer Rouge to cooperate with the UN.69

If UNTAC was not purely consensual, then why did the PRC contribute such a large number of personnel to the mission? One author has argued from an instrumental standpoint that China contributed to UNTAC “to counteract ASEAN dominance in the region.” However, the

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67 Doyle, “Authority and elections in Cambodia,” in Doyle, Johnstone, and Orr, 143.


evidence and logic behind this explanation are weak, and there is a better and more empirically supported interpretation of China’s role in UNTAC. Specifically, the answer lies in the fact that the main uncooperative party was a former client of the PRC. During its rule in Cambodia, the *Khmer Rouge* committed human rights abuses against its own people on a scale not seen in Asia since the end of the Sino-Japanese War and World War II. Despite evidence of genocide taking place within Cambodia’s borders, the PRC actively supported the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia, the Beijing responded by waging a punitive war against Phnom Penh. There is even evidence that China continued to supply weapons to the Khmer Rouge as late as 1990, or one year after the “June 4 Incident.” Participation in UNTAC offered the PRC a means not only to demonstrate its support for the UN and international peace in general, but also to publicly make amends for its past support of a genocidal regime. Specifically, China knew that its own “international respectability” required a public effort to distance itself from the Khmer Rouge. China’s efforts at increased international legitimacy paid off when UN officials publicly lauded China’s contribution as “essential” in helping UNTAC fulfill its mission in Cambodia.

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70 Specifically, this commentator fails to explain the causal mechanism in his argument: namely, how the presence of 400 Chinese engineers in Cambodia would dramatically reduce ASEAN’s influence over Southeast Asia or, for that matter, even put a small dent in any of ASEAN’s sub-regional interests. See Carl Bergquist, “Profiles: Contemporary Actors in the Peace Process,” Conciliation Resources, November 1998, http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/cambodia/profiles.php (accessed November 27, 2010).


5.4 2003-present: Increased Participation

China’s post-2003 participation calculus has been driven by two interconnected strategies based on international legitimacy concerns. The first, as mentioned earlier, is a reaction to the limited ideational successes of China’s 1989-2002 participation strategy. While China may have contributed to a variety of geographically diverse missions prior to 2003, its contingents tended to be so small as to not warrant the attention of the international community. This was reflected in the fact that foreign media coverage as well as scholarly analyses of China’s participation in UNPKO were few and far between throughout the 1990s—while interesting to some sinologists, China’s contingents of twenty or fewer peacekeepers tended to not to be newsworthy.

For a country with virtually limitless supplies of personnel and a rapidly growing defence budget, the easiest and most obvious solution to this dearth of international attention was to up the ante by increasing the average size of Chinese peacekeeping contingent. Indeed, between 2002 and 2008, the average size rose from less than 20 to more than 200—an increase of over 1,000 percent.\(^74\) The PRC also substantially improved its own logistics and personnel training infrastructure for UN peacekeeping during this period. Among other projects, it established the China Peacekeeping CIVPOL Training Center in 2003 for training Chinese police to participate in UNPKO,\(^75\) and also made substantive improvements to its programs for military peacekeepers.\(^76\)

China’s current mission selection criteria appear to be based on a calculated strategy to maximize the legitimacy-granting benefits of each contribution. The PRC sent personnel to

\(^{74}\) UN, DPKO, Monthly Summary.

\(^{75}\) He, “China’s Changing Policy,” 44; Gill and Huang, “China’s Expanding Role,” 6-7.

\(^{76}\) Gill and Huang, “China’s Expanding Role,” 6.
missions where it believed that they could make noticeable differences and would likely be appreciated both by other great powers and developing states. China’s first major contribution was in 2003, when it declared its intent to deploy a contingent of 176 military engineers to the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). This was followed eleven months later by another announcement that it would send a 500 person contingent of engineers and medics to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Next, China sent 435 engineering, transportation, and medical personnel to the UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) in May 2006, a 182 member engineering battalion to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in March 2006, and finally 135 engineers to the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in November 2007.

China’s contribution to each of these missions shows considerable forethought and planning. In MONUC, for instance, China contributed badly-needed engineering personnel whose work in rebuilding the DRC’s seriously damaged infrastructure gained it considerable praise from UN officials. In particular, China’s MONUC contingent demonstrated excellent


78 “Liberia; Chinese Advanced Team Due Tomorrow For Peacekeeping Operations,” The NEWS (Monrovia), December 9, 2003.


discipline and behaviour when personnel from other troop-contributing states were under investigation for human rights abuses against Congolese civilians.\textsuperscript{83} The Chinese commitment was also well-timed: while the PRC had previously made a token contribution to MONUC in 2001 at a time when the operation was struggling with serious problems (e.g., an ongoing war, insufficient troop authorization, and poorly-worded mandate), its 2003 contribution took place in a context of increased stability.\textsuperscript{84} UNMIL and UNIFIL, similarly, were both relatively stable and had relatively high levels of legitimacy at the time which Chinese peacekeepers started to arrive. They also both resulted in Chinese personnel receiving praise from the UN and the international community. In 2003, for instance, the vast majority of international community saw UNMIL as a legitimate operation with the objective of overseeing the departure from power of an internationally despised despot (Charles Taylor) and the establishment of a new democratic order. In the eyes of other great powers, China proved that it was willing to commit troops in support of democracy and against corruption and dictatorial rule—a striking ideational statement coming from an authoritarian regime with its own human rights and corruption-related issues.

\textsuperscript{83} Specifically, MONUC had struggled with problems related to sexual exploitation by UN personnel. China’s contingent, however, has had no such problems. It appears that China may have taken extra care to send highly disciplined personnel to MONUC who would look good in comparison with personnel from other troop-contributing states. For more on the sexual abuse of Congolese civilians by UN personnel, see Jane Rasmussen, “MONUC: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: End of Assignment Report,” Peacekeeping Resource Hub, February 25, 2005, http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Library/MONUC%20SEA%20EOA-Rasmussen%20(25-02-05).pdf (accessed November 27, 2010).

\textsuperscript{84} Due to the explicit statements regarding the mission’s duty to “track down” groups refusing to obey the terms of the Lusaka Agreement, a vaguely worded mandate, an unstable environment involving frequent attacks on peacekeepers, and an initial authorization of only 5,500 personnel for a country one quarter the size of the United States, MONUC originally fit the wider peacekeeping category better than any other. By late 2002, however, MONUC began to transform into a more robust and capable peace support operation. Partly, this was due to the fact that Rwandan ground troops withdrew in the summer of 2002; however, subsequent authorizations beginning with UNSC Resolution 1445 in December 2002 played a major role in increasing the number of peacekeepers in the mission and clarifying the operation’s goals.\textsuperscript{84} Within four months of these important changes in the mission, China sent its first detachment of peacekeepers to the DRC. See UNSC, Resolution 1445 (S/RES/1445), December 4, 2002; see also “Backgrounder: Main distribution of current Chinese peacekeepers”, English.news.cn, January 19, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/database/2010-01/19/c_13143033.htm (accessed November 27, 2010).
For its developing world audience, China demonstrated a strong willingness to “fulfil its commitment to help Africans resolve conflict that hamper[s] development.” As in MONUC, China’s UNMIL personnel received medals and praise from the UN for their excellent discipline and hard work. In UNIFIL, China also showed that its commitment to the promotion of international peace and security extended to the Middle East—an area where its previous peacekeeping engagement was quite limited (i.e., its token military observer contingent in UNTSO). This contribution took place in the immediate aftermath of the July 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War, and was intended to showcase China’s “responsible power” status by providing necessary personnel and materiel to a mission trying to cope with new needs and responsibilities.

As with UNTAC, several authors have tried to explain China’s participation in MONUC and UNMIL (although not UNIFIL) as the result of instrumental factors, such as China’s desire to obtain access to natural resources or markets, isolate Taiwan, or gain military experience abroad. For instance, with regard to MONUC, Loro Horta contends that China’s post-2003 participation in MONUC was “strongly influenced” by the presence of important natural

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86 In 2004, the UN Special Envoy to Liberia praised the PRC for “sending the best of its police peacekeepers to challenging operations, including Liberia” and noted that the training of Chinese civilian police in UNMIL was “commendable.” More recently, the Secretary General’s Special Representative for Liberia gave medals to 137 PLA personnel serving in UNMIL in 2008. See “UN awards peace medal to Chinese civilian police contingent in Liberia,” China.org, September 24, 2004, http://www.china.org.cn/english/international/108052.htm (accessed November 27, 2010); see also “UNMIL Chinese Peacekeeping Role Crucial in Liberia’s Recovery,” The Inquirer (Monrovia), March 31, 2008.

87 UNSC Resolution 1701, passed after the end of the war, expanded UNIFIL’s mandated tasks and substantially increased its personnel authorization. See UNSC, Resolution 1701 (S/RES/1701), August 11, 2006; see also Center on International Cooperation, Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2010, ed. Benjamin C. Tortolani (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 114-9.

88 UNIFIL is generally ignored in the instrumental literature because Lebanon is not an important source of natural resources and has relatively little bearing on China’s national security.
resources in the Congo.\textsuperscript{89} Similarly, Jonathan Holslag suggests that China’s MONUC contingent spends the majority of its time befriending Congolese military officials in an attempt to secure their help in protecting Chinese assets in the DRC.\textsuperscript{90} However, there is little evidence to suggest the existence of a causal relationship between China’s participation in MONUC and its interests in the DRC’s natural resources.\textsuperscript{91} The evidence for an instrumental explanation of China’s participation in UNMIL is also weak and generally circumstantial. Some commentators, such as Joel Wuthnow, contend that Blah’s decision to cease recognizing Taiwan was the result of the PRC’s decision to “leverage support for peacekeeping with Liberia” based on its policy toward Taiwan.\textsuperscript{92} While it is likely that the PRC did persuade Blah to end Liberia’s relationship with Taiwan, it is more likely that China’s persuasion took other forms, such as bribing Blah during his last days in office.\textsuperscript{93} In addition to the Taiwanese explanation, a couple of authors have suggested that China’s participation in UNMIL was motivated by the possibility of increased


\textsuperscript{90} China does have material interests in the DRC—it has a large stake in the Congolese mining sector—but this does not mean that China’s participation in MONUC is the result of those interests. \textit{See} Jonathan Holslag, “China’s true intentions in the Congo,” \textit{Harvard International Review}, April 19, 2010, http://hir.harvard.edu/china-s-true-intentions-in-congo (accessed November 27, 2010).

\textsuperscript{91} Holslag argues that since “Chinese peacekeepers have also maintained close relations with the FARDC,” then China’s peacekeeping participation in MONUC is part of its overall strategy toward the DRC: forming a strategic relationship to further China’s ability to increase its share of the Congolese mining sector. However, Holslag’s insinuation that the Chinese peacekeepers in MONUC were actively wooing the \textit{Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo} (FARDC) in order to facilitate Chinese resource exploitation is unfounded, especially given that his only evidence of such a connection is the fact that China’s MONUC contingent occasionally helped build and refurbish FARDC barracks and Chinese and Congolese officers were sometimes seen talking together.\textsuperscript{91} Furthermore, neither Horta nor Holslag can satisfactorily explain why China sent peacekeepers to achieve their ends instead of using other means, such as simply paying the FARDC to patrol its mines or sending armed Chinese security guards—two practices that China has used in Sudan for protecting its oil-related operations.

\textsuperscript{92} Joel Wuthnow, “The Integration of Cooptation and Coercion: China’s Taiwan Strategy since 2001,” \textit{East Asia} 23, no. 3 (2006): 37. In October 2003, two days before handing over power to a UN backed transitional government, President Moses Blah (Taylor’s successor and former vice president), ended Liberia’s recognition of Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{93} An outright cash bribe would probably have been more convincing for Blah than the promise of a few hundred PLA engineers to aid UNMIL. This is supported by the fact that Blah did not appear to care greatly about UNMIL’s long-term success in rebuilding Liberia.
access to Liberian natural resources. Xulio Ríos hypothesizes that China’s decision to deploy peacekeepers to UNMIL involved “an emphasis [...] on the importance of fishing resources” off the Liberian coastline.94 Similarly, Lin-Greenberg suggests that China’s participation was motivated by Liberia’s bountiful forests, as China was desperately in need of timber for construction and manufacturing purposes at the time.95 However, neither of these explanations has reliable empirical evidence behind it. With regard to Ríos’s aquatic resources hypothesis, the only connection between China and Liberia’s fish stocks in recent years has taken the form of illegal poaching on the Liberian coastline by privately owned Chinese trawlers.96 UNMIL itself was relatively uninvolved with the protection of these resources, and UNMIL’s only reaction to the poaching was to occasionally photograph the illegal trawlers using low-flying aircraft.97 There is no evidence to suggest that Chinese peacekeepers played any role vis-à-vis the poachers. Lin-Greenberg’s hypothesis is similarly unsubstantiated due to the lack of a plausible causal link between timber and the presence of Chinese personnel who played no role in the protection of timber resources or in its exploitation. This explanation is also dubious, because China managed to import considerable quantities of Liberian timber before the mission was deployed. There is also no evidence to suggest that China’s contribution to UNMIL caused the Liberian government to look more favourably on private-sector Chinese timber operations. In short, international legitimacy is the most plausible explanation for China’s decision to contribute to these missions.


95 Lin-Greenberg, “Blue Helmeted Dragons,” 87.


As with the above UNPKO, China’s UNMIS and UNAMID contributions are better explained through the lens of international legitimacy than alternative perspectives.98 China’s participation in these missions follows a slightly different logic reminiscent of China’s decision to contribute 400 engineers to UNTAC in 1992. While China’s UNTAC contribution was shaped by its embarrassing and shameful ties to the murderous Khmer Rouge, China’s UNMIS and UNAMID contributions should be interpreted in the context of China’s widely known relationship with another brutal regime: the government of Omar al-Bashir. Since the 1990s, Beijing has built a substantial trade and diplomatic relationship with Khartoum. In addition to purchasing vast amounts of Sudanese oil and thereby giving Sudan access to badly needed foreign exchange, Beijing also provided substantial indirect aid (primarily in the form of arms sales) to the Sudanese government in both its war with the South as well as the conflict in Darfur. For the most part, the international community was slow to pay attention to China’s dealings with Sudan until 1998, when the Sudanese military forcibly evicted civilians in Southern Sudan to make way for a Chinese oil pipeline project. From then on, China’s international image began to suffer further as the PRC began to actively defend the pariah state in the UNSC. By the early 2000s, for much of the international community, China’s perceived

98 Some instrumental supporters cite China’s participation in UNMIS and UNAMID as the product of economic considerations. For instance, Roy Levy contends that China contributed to these missions because the resulting “stability, infrastructure, and good government-to-government relations will ultimately redound to its economic interest.” Yet, since Khartoum did not want either mission and China had to actively persuade Bashir to accept UNAMID, it is extremely difficult to identify the casual mechanism in this argument. If anything, participation in these missions put China at risk of incurring Khartoum’s displeasure and thus losing a valuable source of oil. Additionally, China’s material interests are only hurt by permanent resolutions to the Southern Sudanese and Darfuri conflicts, as new autonomous regimes could reduce China’s access to oil or offer oil fields to other states, since the US and other powers would likely drop their sanctions on Sudan under such circumstances. The responsible stakeholder explanation, in turn, also fails to provide a convincing account of China’s participation in UNMIS and UNAMID, especially given Beijing’s diplomatic and military support for Khartoum. See Roy Levy, “China’s Peacekeeping Deployments in Africa,” in Jennifer G. Cooke, “China’s Soft Power in Africa,” in Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 38.
complicity in Sudan’s internal conflicts became “the symbol of China’s activities in Africa.”99 As a result of Beijing’s dealings with Khartoum, developed states such as the US and France publically and loudly derided China for its role in the conflict.

By 2005, China realized that it had to do something to quash international criticism and save its reputation. Of particular concern to the PRC was the fact that the Beijing Olympics was only three years away, and the CCP elite had intended to use the Olympics as an opportunity to showcase their rising international legitimacy. Cutting ties with Bashir, however, was out of the question. With its rapidly growing economy, China needed Sudan’s oil even more than Sudan needed China’s advocacy in the UNSC. Maintaining a non-hostile relationship with Khartoum was essential in protecting the PRC’s “local oil empire” in Sudan.100 What Beijing needed was a less drastic means to publically distance itself from Sudan and reinforce its carefully constructed image as a “responsible power”—an image that was becoming harder to maintain under increasingly heavy international criticism.

China felt that it could use its participation in UNPKO to dampen international criticism. Since Beijing knew that it would be difficult to convince Bashir to accept a UNPKO in Darfur, China’s first option was to publically support and then commit troops to UNMIS—a wider UNPKO in Southern Sudan. This move was a striking departure from previous Chinese peacekeeping policy: with the exception of a token deployment of military observers in UNAMSIL, China had never before contributed to a wider peace mission. Yet, the risks of not participating in UNMIS clearly outweighed the risk of doing nothing and allowing international criticism to continue unchallenged. Therefore, in May 2005, China began its deployment of


peacekeepers to UNMIS with a token contribution of one military observer and one civilian police officer, which by September 2006 had increased to a substantial contingent of 443 troops, 15 military observers, and 15 police.\footnote{UN, DPKO, Monthly Summary.}

China’s participation in UNMIS did not have the desired ideational effect, however. The international community continued to use China’s support for Sudan as grounds to condemn the CCP regime. In Washington D.C., members of Congress continued to refer to China as “Sudan’s protector on the U.N. Security Council.”\footnote{Michele Kelemen, “China Envoy Responds to Critics of Darfur Policies”, NPR, September 7, 2007, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14248796&ft=1&f=1001 (accessed November 27, 2010).} This is likely due to the fact that UNMIS had very little impact on the situation in Darfur, and it did not help that China was unwilling to endorse an expansion of UNMIS’s duties to include Darfur in addition to the South. In August 2006, the PRC delegate to the UNSC abstained (along with Qatar and the Russian Federation) on Resolution 1706, which increased UNMIS’s overall troop authorization to 17,300 military personnel and 3,300 civilian police and expanded its competence to include traditional peacekeeping activities inside Darfur (mainly monitoring military movements and activity) in addition to its multidimensional objectives in Southern Sudan.\footnote{“Security Council Expands Mandate of UN Mission in Sudan to Include Darfur, Adopting Resolution 1706 by Vote of 12 in Favor, with 3 Abstaining,” Federal News Service, August 31, 2006. See also UNSC, Resolution 1706 (S/RES/1706), August 31, 2010.} Prior to abstaining, China also added a provision to Resolution 1706 requiring Sudanese consent to UNMIS’s expansion,\footnote{Holslag, “China’s Diplomatic Manoeuvring,” 76.} thereby signalling that it was still reluctant to put its international image too far ahead of its material interests in maintaining a positive relationship with Sudan.
As the months ticked by, activists and world leaders continued to call for a boycott of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Due to the increasingly hostile climate, China embarked on a new two-pronged strategy to distance itself from Khartoum and show that it cared about the situation in Darfur. This strategy differed dramatically from previous efforts in that it not only involved China agreeing to participate in a UNPKO in Darfur, but also had China play an instrumental role in creating the mission in which it would participate. First, Chinese diplomats joined with other international officials in pressuring Bashir to accept a UNPKO in Darfur. After much negotiation, the UN and Khartoum reached an agreement whereby a UN mission would be established; however, the majority of personnel would have to be from African states, after which China joined with other UNSC members in voting for the mission. Second, China followed up on its vote by stating its intention to send a 315 PLA engineers to aid UNAMID. While China may have been initially reluctant to contribute personnel to UNAMID or even endorse a UNPKO in Darfur, its decisions on the Darfur issue have largely paid off both in terms of international legitimacy and continued access to Sudanese oil. By supporting a (relatively) robust UN response to the situation in Darfur that still acknowledged Sudan’s rights as a sovereign state, the PRC convinced many Western leaders that it was committed to peace and was not going to put its access to oil ahead of the interests of peace in Sudan. Similarly, China demonstrated to its developing state audience that its interest in Sudan was not limited to oil, but also included efforts toward the non-coercive resolution of the South Sudan and Darfuri conflicts. As a result, officials from both developed and developing states “praised China for its

106 The UNSC unanimously voted in favour of UNAMID’s authorization. See UNSC, Resolution 1769 (S/RES/1769), July 31, 2007.
107 Kelemen, “China Envoy Responds.”
‘constructive policy’ with regard to Sudan, thereby allowing China to deflect international criticism and remove some of the tarnish from its international reputation just in time for the Beijing Olympics.

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108 Holslag, “China’s Diplomatic Maneuvering,” 84.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The People’s Republic of China’s overall attitude toward United Nations peacekeeping operations has undergone a sea change over the past 61 years. In its first decades as a state, the PRC distrusted and condemned even the most traditional UNPKO. Today, it contributes more peacekeepers than any of the other Permanent-5 members of the UN Security Council. Based on current trends in Chinese foreign policy as well as China’s rapidly improving peacekeeping infrastructure, it is very likely that the PRC will become an even more important contributor to the UN peacekeeping regime.

Traditional approaches to analyzing China’s contributions to UNPKO have failed to uncover the fundamental logic of Chinese peacekeeping policy. As I have sought to show in my analysis of China’s contributions to UNPKO between 1989 and present, China’s participation in these missions is driven by a deep-rooted desire for international legitimacy. Authors who claim that China’s principal interest in UNPKO is the promotion of international peace and stability have bought too much into China’s rhetoric and have ignored its actions. While the Chinese state may promote this explanation, the “responsible stakeholder” theory is contradicted by empirical evidence demonstrating China’s overall lack of commitment to the peace processes in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Sudan. Similarly, those who believe that China’s primary reason for participation is the isolation of Taiwan or the opportunity to exploit natural resources rely heavily on dubious causal mechanisms. No one can deny that China has material interests in Africa, and that the majority of China’s peacekeepers are located in this continent; however, correlation is not the same as causation. Aside from occasional
pieces of circumstantial evidence, there is remarkably little data to corroborate this theory of Chinese participation in UNPKO.

In comparison with alternative explanations, the international legitimacy theory is considerably better at explaining the nuanced history of Chinese engagement with the UN peacekeeping regime. While the PRC is obviously interested in obtaining natural resources, the country’s status as a legitimate member of the international community is also of high importance to the People’s Republic. China’s self-image and its ability to attain permanent great power prominence are not minor or inconsequential factors when it comes to China’s actions in the international sphere. At least with regard to the PRC’s contributions to UNPKO, ideational factors are important determinants of foreign policy.

One of the objectives of this thesis was to bring empirical evidence to bear on the study of China’s participation in UN peacekeeping. In order for others to take the international legitimacy explanation seriously, it is important that it can be backed up with references to actual examples of Chinese contingents being deployed to UNPKO. Furthermore, the relative strength of this evidence shows that the international legitimacy explanation is superior in comparison with the competing perspectives. Nevertheless, this thesis alone cannot provide conclusive proof of China’s real motivations for participating in UNPKO or its mission selection criteria. Further research is needed. In particular, more in-depth case studies supported by extensive interviews with Chinese peacekeepers, host state residents, and members of other peacekeeping contingents who have worked in close contact with the Chinese would go a long way to making the international legitimacy explanation an widely accepted and empirically supported theory. In the meantime, the “dragon with the blue beret” is still in flight—the world will have to watch and wait as China continues to implement is peacekeeping strategy.
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