

## Starting to Build? China's Role in UN Peacekeeping Operations

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**Policy Paper**

**November 2011/2**

**Starting to Build?**

**China's Role in UN Peacekeeping Operations**

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## Abstract:

China's growing engagement in UN peacekeeping operations is a positive development that reflects China's willingness to take on larger international responsibilities while pursuing its own national interests. There are huge gaps in the UN peacekeeping system that China can potentially help to fill. But with the global human security agenda shifting from pure militaristic peacekeeping to more holistic peacebuilding processes, China will also be tested for the goal of building peace in post-conflict countries. Clearly, there are differences of opinion as to what peacebuilding should entail and the dilemmas associated with host country consent, the issues of sovereignty and non-interference. Dialogue between the Chinese and Western policy communities should take full account of how and why conflicts start and should be used to inform policy makers to find areas where international actors can co-operate more closely. On a practical level, this includes tackling issues where China has so far been disengaged, for example security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, and preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all of which undermine development and stability in conflict-affected and fragile states. Development is not only affected by conflict – it often has an effect on conflict too. In the best cases, this effect is positive, addressing some of the root causes of conflict. In some cases, however, development initiatives that fail to understand the issues that divide the actors or the societies in which they are implemented can *exacerbate*, or even *cause*, conflict. A very simple way in which China could better assist conflict-affected countries that face continued instability is to place conflict sensitivity at the core of the development assistance it provides to its partners.

Chinas wachsendes Engagement in friedenssichernden Missionen der Vereinten Nationen stellt eine positive Entwicklung und einen Ausdruck von Chinas Willen dar, größere Verantwortung auf internationaler Ebene zu übernehmen, während es weiterhin die eigenen nationalen Interessen verfolgt. Im Peacekeeping System der Vereinten Nationen gibt es große Lücken, die China möglicherweise schließen helfen kann. Aber im Kontext der globalen Entwicklung weg von rein militärischen Prozessen der *Friedenssicherung* hin zu umfassenderen *friedensfördernden* Ansätzen im Bereich menschlicher Sicherheit, wird auch Chinas Position gegenüber dem Ziel von Friedensförderung in Nachkriegsländern auf die Probe gestellt werden. Offensichtlich gibt es Meinungsverschiedenheiten darüber, was Friedensförderung beinhalten soll und wie mit Dilemmata im Zusammenhang mit der Zustimmung des Gastlandes, der Souveränität und Nichteinmischung umzugehen sei. Im Dialog zwischen chinesischen und westlichen Politikern, Regierungsvertretern und unabhängigen Experten sollte umfassend untersucht werden, wie und warum Konflikte entstehen, um dann Politikern Bereiche aufzuzeigen, in denen internationale Akteure enger zusammenarbeiten können. Auf einer praktischen Ebene bedeutet das, Themen anzugehen, für die China sich bisher nicht engagiert hat, etwa Sicherheitssektorreform, Abrüstung, Demobilisierung und Reintegration ehemaliger Kämpfer und Unterbindung von Kleinwaffenproliferation – allesamt Themen, die die Entwicklung und Stabilität in Konfliktregionen und schwachen Staaten gefährden. Entwicklungsprozesse werden nicht nur durch Konflikt beeinflusst, sie haben oft auch selbst eine Wirkung auf Konflikt dynamiken. Im besten Fall haben sie einen positiven Effekt und helfen, Konfliktursachen zu beseitigen. In manchen Fällen allerdings können Entwicklungsinitiativen auch Konflikte schüren oder sogar heraufbeschwören, etwa wenn sie Streitfragen innerhalb der Bevölkerung ihrer Zielländer nicht verstehen. Ein einfacher Weg, wie China von Konflikten betroffenen Ländern, die unter beständiger Instabilität leiden, besser helfen könnte, besteht darin, „Konfliktsensibilität“ in die Entwicklungshilfe zu integrieren, die es seinen Partnern zukommen lässt.

## 1. Introduction

The nature of peacekeeping has changed profoundly over the past 20 years. In the first decades after the creation of the United Nations some main common features characterised UN peacekeeping missions: deployment took place only when a ceasefire had been agreed and the conflicting parties had given their consent; the main aim was to separate two fighting parties; the overall scale of deployments was rather small; peacekeepers were lightly armed and were not expected to ever fight; and the great bulk of UN peacekeeping forces was provided by Western, i.e. rich countries. Nowadays, peacekeeping looks very different: it deals increasingly with intra-State conflicts, at times when fighting has not completely ceased; missions are much larger and peacekeepers are more heavily armed; the consent of all parties to a conflict is sometimes unreachable; mandates go well beyond the interposition between fighting parties to include the protection of civilians, the reform of the security sector, the disarming of combatants, institutions building, etc. Finally, 'peacebuilding' and the 'responsibility to protect' have been added to the vocabulary, in recognition of a new principle in which, theoretically, all agree that innocent civilians merit the protection of the international community.<sup>2</sup> As a result, peacekeeping missions have become larger, more complex and more dangerous. But despite the much more difficult tasks at hand, peacekeeping missions around the world have boomed. Currently, there are 15 peacekeeping missions worldwide with a total number of personnel reaching almost 120,000, while an additional 122,000 personnel are employed in 16 peace missions led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).<sup>3</sup> The total cost of running all these operations is significant, with approved resources for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 amounting to more than \$7 billion.<sup>4</sup> Western powers still provide the lion's share of financial support to peacekeeping missions, but have become increasingly reluctant to commit troops and the vacuum left open by their 'withdrawal' has been filled by poorer countries.

Parallel to the evolution of UN peacekeeping, China's position on peacekeeping missions has also evolved, following a trajectory that has led from outright rejection in the 1970s, through to a gradual change in attitude in the 1980s and 1990s, and eventually to active engagement from 1999 onwards.<sup>5</sup> China's increased involvement in peacekeeping has been mirrored by an equally dramatic increase in the number of Chinese peacekeepers participating in peacekeeping missions. Until 1989, China had no peacekeepers. As of August 2011, 1,925 Chinese peacekeepers were serving on 12 UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>6</sup> While the number of Chinese peacekeepers worldwide is much smaller than that of other countries, including

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<sup>2</sup> Heinbecker, Paul (2006), 'Ten Reflections on Peacekeeping', Cairo Conference on Peacekeeping, 27 November 2006

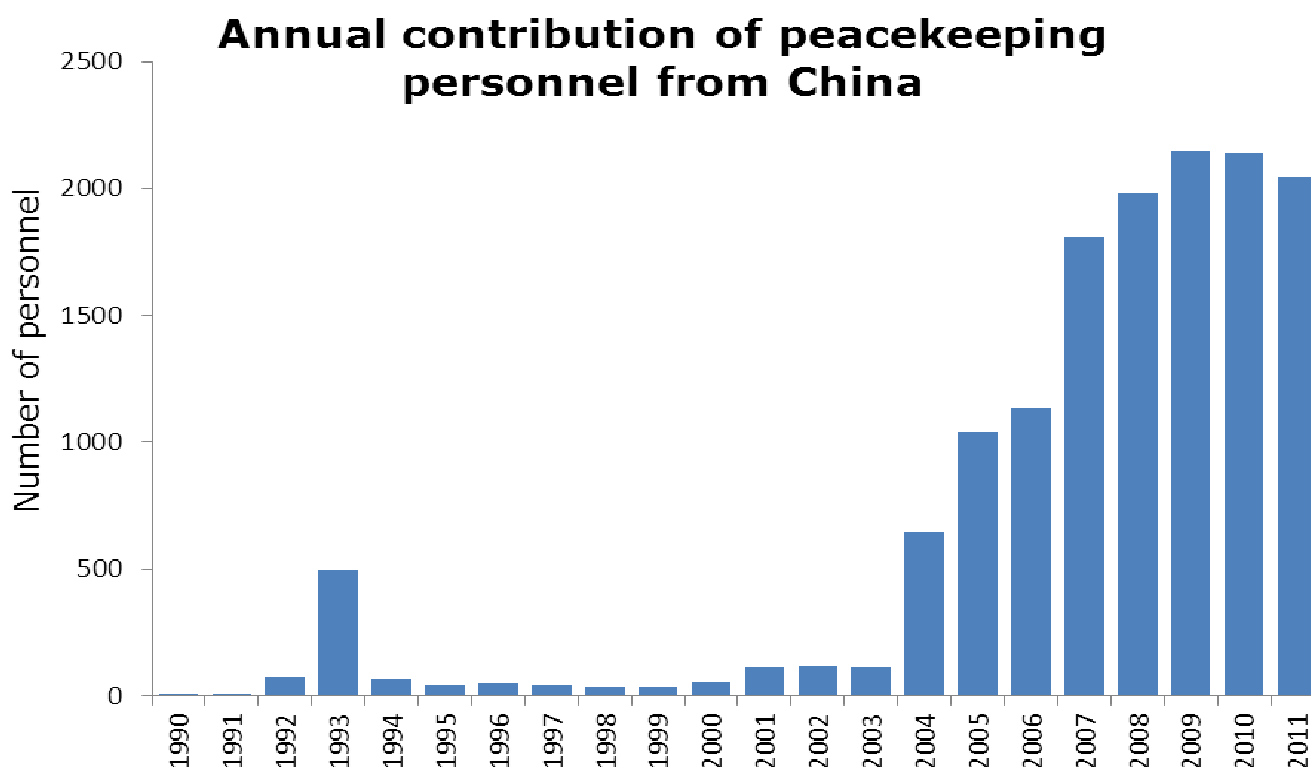
<sup>3</sup> United Nations, 'Peacekeeping Factsheet', <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>>, 13 September 2011

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> He Yin (2007), 'China's changing policy on UN peacekeeping operations', Institute for Security and Development Policy, July 2007

<sup>6</sup> Position Paper of the People's Republic of China at the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 9 September 2011

Bangladesh (10,654)<sup>7</sup>, India (8,423)<sup>8</sup> and Pakistan (10,626),<sup>9</sup> China currently ranks as the 15<sup>th</sup> largest troop-contributing country in the world and is the largest troop contributor among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). It ranks seventh amongst the top providers of financial contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, after the USA, Japan, the UK, Germany, France and Italy.<sup>10</sup> China has boosted its peacekeeping credentials further by establishing a Civilian Peacekeeping Police Training Centre in Hebei Province in August 2000 and a new peacekeeping centre for the training of Chinese military peacekeepers, which became operational in Huairou in November 2009. China has also carried out international exchanges with other countries and undertaken professional training together with the DPKO.



## 2. What motivates China and who benefits from China's participation in peacekeeping?

Chinese and Western experts have indicated a mix of factors which are crucial to the cost-benefit rationale that motivates China's engagement in peacekeeping.

The first beneficiary from China's involvement in peacekeeping is China itself. Some experts see China's support to peacekeeping as a means of supporting multilateral, rather than unilateral, solutions to global

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (2011), op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Peace Operations (2010), 'Year in Review', <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/publications/yir/yir2010.pdf>>, 13 September 2011

security challenges.<sup>11</sup> Involvement in peacekeeping gives China influence within these operations and ensures that its views over what is and what is not a legitimate UN intervention are not only heard but are also consequential to decision making. This engagement also gives China a higher profile throughout the UN system, which allows it to make diplomatic gains in other areas.

China's involvement in peacekeeping also stems from the recognition that China's plans for economic growth and modernisation are increasingly linked to a stable, secure and peaceful world, and that UN peacekeeping operations work in China's national interest as they are "important means of maintaining international peace and security".<sup>12</sup>

China's engagement in peacekeeping boosts China's standing in the world as a constructive and responsible power. Beijing wants to be seen as sharing the burden of upholding international security. Furthermore, Zhao Lei emphasises that China has had to put into practice concrete actions to prove that its promotion of the idea of 'a harmonious world' has not been an empty slogan.<sup>13</sup> This may be an especially important consideration in Africa, where Beijing wants its engagement to be seen as a south-south partnership that encompasses more than commercial ties.

In some general ways, peacekeepers do serve China's economic interests: they promote peace in countries where Chinese banks and commercial actors have made significant investments and have an interest in restoring stability. They also improve bilateral diplomatic relations with the governments that have given their consent to peacekeeping missions, which in turn serve to strengthen commercial relations. For some, China uses UN peace operations in order to protect its strategic interests abroad, especially in those countries "whose resources may prove crucial for meeting China's energy needs".<sup>14</sup> The presence of Chinese peacekeepers in resource-rich countries such as the DRC or Sudan is highlighted as evidence of this. However, it should also be noted that Chinese peacekeepers do not only deploy to resource-rich countries, as confirmed by their presence in Western Sahara and Haiti. Additionally, peacekeepers are not a strategic prerequisite to resource access, and more often than not economic ties pre-date China's peacekeeping commitments.

Involvement in peacekeeping has payoffs for the Chinese military too. As with anti-piracy, participation in UN peacekeeping missions also brings operational benefits, as it contributes to the modernisation of the Chinese military, which has become the armed forces' main priority. Given the PLA's limited ability to

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<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group (2009), *China's Growing Role in UN Peacekeeping*, Report no. 166, p 8

<sup>12</sup> Pang Zhongying (2005), 'China's changing attitude to UN peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 1:87, p 97

<sup>13</sup> Zhao Lei (2010), 'China's International Peaceful Involvement Strategy and Anti-Piracy Efforts', paper presented at the *China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development*, Beijing, 2-4 June 2010

<sup>14</sup> Anurag, Viswanath (2008), 'China plays its Africa card', *Business Standard*, 21 September 2008

project power away from China's territory, as well as its lack of operational and combat experience, peacekeeping operations provide the Chinese army with important field experience.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore the operations represent a fulfilment of the military's ambitions to conduct military operations other than war (MOOTW). Lastly, peacekeeping missions bring the Chinese military into close contact with other national militaries, providing significant opportunities for bolstering co-operation and building confidence.<sup>16</sup>

The first external beneficiary of Chinese engagement in peacekeeping is the UN peacekeeping system. Firstly, China's increasing contributions to UN peacekeeping missions have helped to address the problem that the UN's demand for peacekeepers far outstrips supply. By providing engineers, transport battalions and field hospitals, China contributes to give UN missions the much-needed but scarce resources to execute their mandates. This is particularly important as a way of dealing with the troop disengagement of Western members of the UNSC. Secondly, China's involvement in peacekeeping improves the image of peacekeeping operations as a whole. The legitimacy of peacekeeping missions in the eyes of local populations and political elites is crucial for mission success. The active participation of a P5 member in peacekeeping missions has helped boost the legitimacy of the UNSC and its decisions to deploy troops with robust mandates to use force.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the fact that China is a developing country with a painful history of colonisation and exploitation serves to allay concerns by the host governments that peacekeeping missions are a disguised form of neo-imperialist intervention.

Ultimately, however, what matters most is the impact that Chinese contributions to peacekeeping have for the people whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by conflict, chaos and violence. By taking on projects such as building or improving infrastructure, schools and hospitals, or providing medical assistance, Chinese engineering battalions and medical units also provide the support vital to addressing the immediate needs of local populations in fragile states that have come out of conflict, or remain affected by it. Since their first deployment under the UN banner in 1989, it is estimated that Chinese peacekeepers have altogether built or repaired 8,000 km of roads and more than 230 bridges, dismantled 8,700 mines and explosives, transported 4,300,000 tonnes of goods and provided medical treatment for more than 60,000 patients.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, in contributing to policing and the training of local police forces in complex, difficult environments where the provision of public security is often weak or non-existent, Chinese peacekeepers

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<sup>15</sup> Huang Chin-Hao (2011), 'Principles and Praxis of China's Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:3, p 261; Bates, Gill and Huang Chin-Hao (2009), 'China's Expanding Role in Peacebuilding: Prospects and Policy Implications', SIPRI Policy Paper 25, p. 16; ICG (2009), *op. cit.*, p 14

<sup>16</sup> Zhao Lei (2011) 'Two Pillars of China's Global Peace Engagement Strategy: UN Peacekeeping Operations and International Peacebuilding Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:3, p 347

<sup>17</sup> Gill & Huang (2009), *op. cit.*, p 27

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, 'Chinese blue helmets renowned as devoted peacekeepers', 26 April 2010; Jiang Zhenxi (2010), 'China's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa', paper presented at the *China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development*, Beijing, 2-4 June 2010

are also making a valuable contribution to the lives of many ordinary citizens. Operationally, Chinese peacekeepers have overall fulfilled their tasks with professionalism and have received significant praise for their work.<sup>19</sup>

### **3. Non-interference vs. constructive engagement**

There are limits to the extent to which China participates in peacekeeping. China has yet to contribute combat troops to peacekeeping missions. This stems from China's current reluctance to engage with peace operations in a hands-on and direct way, which many in China would perceive as contrary to the country's principles of non-interference and respect of state sovereignty. It is also partially explained by nervousness about putting troops in the direct line of fire, by a reluctance to be seen as using force, and by a lack of experience in doing so. However, a more constructive engagement is slowly in the making. As early as 2008 Chinese leaders publicly made offers to contribute combat troops, and analysts believe that China is likely to send combat forces in operations in the near future.<sup>20</sup> Chinese troops will also most likely partake in a wider spectrum of activities as part of the broader aspects of peacekeeping missions. While China has yet to implement disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and small arms control programmes in post-conflict countries, it is training the military in the DRC and so it is, to a degree, already an actor in security sector reform (SSR). Yet, this assistance has been provided unilaterally and is extremely opaque. Its current unwillingness to co-operate with other actors, let alone openly share information with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), suggests that China's engagement in peacekeeping activities might not always be as co-operative as others may wish. This may change as China becomes more confident about partaking in complex multilateral efforts.

While China's position on peacekeeping has evolved, its insistence, before supporting peacekeeping operations, on the three principles - of consent by the host state, of impartiality and of the non-use of force except in self-defence<sup>21</sup> - remain areas of contention between China and other members of the international community. Currently, as long as missions are authorised by the UN with host country consent, China is supportive. The problem arises in circumstances where host-country regimes have embarked on widespread and systematic killing of their own populations, or on territorial cleansing, which undermines their legitimacy; or when they have only tenuous claims to represent the wishes of all parties to a conflict; or where national governments have collapsed, as in Somalia. A strict interpretation of host

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<sup>19</sup> For example, in March 2010 the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf praised Chinese peacekeepers for contributing not only to the security and peace of Liberia but also to the West African country's post-war reconstruction and development by helping build infrastructure and providing medical treatment to local communities.

<sup>20</sup> Hirono, Miwa & Lanteigne, Marc (2010), 'China and UN Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:3, p 245

<sup>21</sup> Position Paper of the People's Republic of China (2011), op. cit.



country consent would mean that such countries can veto intervention,<sup>22</sup> running contrary to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle adopted in 2005, of which China is a signatory. However, it is possible to discern a subtle shift of China's position "away from the hard-line interpretation of state sovereignty, at least on a case-by-case basis".<sup>23</sup> This is reinforced by polls of Chinese public perceptions. According to a survey conducted in 2009, about 43% of respondents supported the idea that peacekeepers could be deployed without the consent of the conflicting parties.<sup>24</sup>

The UN peace mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has recently presented an interesting test for China, as it has had to decide whether in this particular instance the responsibility to protect civilians supersedes the host country's consent. In 2010, the Congolese Government demanded that UN troops leave the country by the end of August 2011.<sup>25</sup> In May 2011, the Congolese government reiterated its calls for UN peacekeepers to withdraw, albeit in an orderly and progressive manner.<sup>26</sup> Strictly speaking, the DRC mission has lost the full support of the host-country. Violence and widespread human rights abuses are, however, on-going. To avoid the crisis that a sudden withdrawal of peacekeepers would have caused, China and the other UN Security Council members unanimously voted in June 2011 to renew the mandate of MONUSCO for one more year.<sup>27</sup> This will see the largest peacekeeping force in the world remain in DRC until at least 30 June 2012. Reiterating that the Congolese Government "bore primary responsibility for security, peacebuilding and development in the country",<sup>28</sup> China and the other Council members "encouraged the Government to remain fully committed to protecting the civilian population by establishing professional and sustainable security forces and the rule of law, and by respecting human rights and promoting non-military solutions as an integral part of an overall solution to the threat posed by Congolese and foreign armed groups".<sup>29</sup> The DRC case has showed again that China, under particular circumstances, is willing to stretch its foreign-policy faith on host countries' consent and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs.

#### **4. Starting to build peace?**

In 2000, a high level panel headed by the former Algerian Foreign Minister, Lakhdar Brahimi, issued a report that made recommendations, amongst others, for a diversified approach to peacekeeping, including

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<sup>22</sup> Wu Zhengyu and Taylor, Ian (2011), 'From refusal to engagement: Chinese contributions to peacekeeping in Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29:2, p 138

<sup>23</sup> Hellström, Jerker (2010), 'China's role in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)', Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), unpublished briefing paper presented at a seminar on 'China's Response to Security Threats in Africa', hosted by the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS), Brussels, 17-19 May 2010

<sup>24</sup> Zhao Lei (2011), op. Cit, pp 349-350

<sup>25</sup> United Nations News Centre, 'UN presence in DR Congo crucial despite call for early withdrawal says relief chief', 3 May 2010

<sup>26</sup> AFP, 'DR Congo calls on UN to withdraw peacekeepers', 18 May 2011

<sup>27</sup> UN Security Council (2011), Resolution 1991, 28 June 2011

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

the training of local police, strengthening the legal machinery in post-conflict states, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and the advancement of human rights.<sup>30</sup> The report marked “a shift from traditional peacekeeping”.<sup>31</sup> It recognised that countries that share a long-term peace and security agenda are required to take a proactive, strategic and, above all, more flexible approach that goes beyond the issue of keeping the peace to focus more on building the foundations for long-term peace and security. This is what is referred to as ‘peacebuilding’, i.e. the use of a wider spectrum of security, civilian, administrative, political, humanitarian, human rights and economic tools and interventions to build the foundations for sustainable peace in post-conflict countries. In the past, Beijing has shown great reluctance, if not outright opposition, towards multilateral missions that in its view would heavily interfere in what are still perceived to be the domestic and sovereign affairs of states. Today, Chinese policy makers are re-adapting the official position, calling for “the development and innovation of traditional theories such as conflict prevention, dispute mediation, crisis management and post-conflict peacebuilding”,<sup>32</sup> while some scholars consider international peacebuilding operations to stand alongside peacekeeping operations in China’s global peace engagement strategy.<sup>33</sup>

There are Chinese scholars who argue that through its peacekeeping activities – building roads and other infrastructure projects, providing medical care or removing mines – China is already participating in peacebuilding.<sup>34</sup> Without dismissing these efforts, Zhao Lei argues that in reality China needs both to substantially “increase the proportion of peace building in the peacekeeping missions” and to play a wider role in activities beyond peacekeeping.<sup>35</sup> This already appears to be official policy. In 2005 President Hu publicly and officially embraced a “comprehensive strategy featuring prevention, peace restoration, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction.”<sup>36</sup> The current position paper of the People’s Republic of China at the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly reiterates that “China, as always, supports the UN’s leading role in post-conflict rebuilding and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)”.<sup>37</sup>

On most aspects of peacebuilding there is already broad international agreement on the goals of consolidating peace and the prevention of a recurrence of armed conflicts. It is the opinions on the most

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations (2000), Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, A/55/305 - S/2000/809

<sup>31</sup> Wu & Taylor (2011), op. cit, p 140

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Remarks by Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei at the Opening Ceremony of the International Symposium on Peacekeeping Operations’, 19 November 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Zhao Lei (2011), p. cit, p 344

<sup>34</sup> Jiang Zhenxi (2010), ‘China’s Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa’, paper presented at the *China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development*, Beijing, 2-4 June 2010; Zhao Lei (2011), op. cit, p 356

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Statement by President Hu Jintao at the UN Security Council Summit, New York, 14 September 2005

effective means to reach these goals that differ. Zhao Lei points out that while Western countries' involvement in peace building is anchored in the principle of liberal democracy, China believes every country has its own priorities: to promote a democratic system immediately after the end of conflicts is not necessarily a 'must'. Instead, economic development priorities, such as reducing poverty, resolving unemployment, and infrastructure development, should be regarded as the key areas laying the foundations for peacebuilding.<sup>38</sup> Already in 2001, China's Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN argued that because poverty leads to instability, the longer-term objectives of peacebuilding must be "the eradication of poverty, the development of the economy as well as a peaceful and rewarding life for people in post-conflict countries and regions."<sup>39</sup> Typically, Chinese approaches are heavily state-centric, taking the view that the "focus of work should be on enhancing the concerned country's capacity building instead of weakening its leadership."<sup>40</sup> This translates to direct government-to-government support that gives little or no space for civil society. This has its own risks, especially when state actors are themselves conflict actors and heavy-handed top-down impositions of security exacerbate already precarious conditions.

While there may be legitimate questions to be asked of the liberal democratisation agenda which has dominated Western peacebuilding discourse, equally serious questions must surround an approach that is purely economic. Can peace really be built without tackling more fundamental political problems – such as the legitimacy of those who control the state – which may drive conflicts in the first place? Ultimately, peace and stability stem from healthy state-society relations, which are in turn dependent on accountable and legitimate political institutions, the rule of law and opportunities for economic development that are open for all.<sup>41</sup> Linked to this is a basic fact that Chinese scholars and officials have yet to adequately address: that through its economic engagement in conflict-affected countries – for example when it buys resources that fuel a conflict or when it provides loans to a government that is engaged in fighting - China has an inevitable impact on politics. The two cannot be separated. This does not mean that China must interfere in politics, but it does mean that China must be far more sensitive as to the political impact its economic footprint has.

In the words of Kofi Annan, *"There is no long-term security without development. There is no development*

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<sup>37</sup> Position Paper of the People's Republic of China at the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 9 September 2011

<sup>38</sup> Zhao Lei (2011), op. Cit, p 356

<sup>39</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, Statement by Ambassador Shen Guofang, Deputy Permanent Representative of China to UN at the Security Council on the Topic of 'Peace-Building: towards a Comprehensive Approach', 5 February 2001

<sup>40</sup> Zhao Lei (2010), 'China's International Peace Involvement Strategy and Anti-Piracy Efforts', paper presented to the *China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development*, Beijing, 2-4 June 2010

<sup>41</sup> Saferworld (2011), 'Saferworld Response to the Building Stability Overseas Strategy', *Saferworld Briefing*, 19 July 2011

*without security.*<sup>42</sup> There is a strong connection between the ability of individuals and communities to prosper and the levels of insecurity and violence that they experience. Unfortunately, peaceful aims do not always guarantee peaceful outcomes, and some well-meaning development programmes actually fuel conflict. There are two clear dimensions to this. First of all, conflict undermines development. In 2007, Saferworld released a report which showed that, since 1990, armed conflict has cost Africa almost \$300 billion – about the same amount as it received in aid during the same period. Conflict and insecurity undermine development because of both direct costs (such as military expenditure or destruction of infrastructure) and indirect costs (such as rapidly declining investment, capital flight, the destruction of markets, and unemployment). Clearly, if development is to successfully reduce poverty, it must also address the issue of violent conflict. Beyond peacekeepers, China has traditionally been reluctant to allocate resources to peace and security initiatives that it often sees as outside the remit of development work. But the lack of a peaceful and secure environment can make development programmes difficult or impossible to implement. Therefore, tackling issues which focus on security, such as the proliferation of small arms or police reform, is essential if development is to take root and flourish. Secondly, development, if it is meant to benefit peacebuilding, must be conflict-sensitive. Development is not only affected by conflict – it often has an effect on conflict too. In the best cases, this effect is positive, addressing the root causes of conflict and contributing to lasting peace. In some cases, however, bad development initiatives can actually *exacerbate*, or even *cause*, violence, as exemplified by the Amibara Irrigation Project in Ethiopia.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

If the international community fails to address the challenges arising from conflict-affected and fragile states, it will inevitably have to deal with the much more costly international security and humanitarian challenges arising from them. The case of Somalia is particularly pertinent. That Chinese policy is evolving and China has become far more engaged in UN peacekeeping operations opens up new avenues to strengthen the current international peacekeeping regime and improve peace, security, the stability and long-term development goals of conflict-affected and fragile states. In some cases, for example over Somalia, China has even taken the lead at the UNSC in calling for the deployment of blue helmet troops.<sup>44</sup> These developments reflect China's willingness to take on larger international responsibilities while

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<sup>42</sup> The address by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom, Central Hall, Westminster, United Kingdom, 31 January 2006

<sup>43</sup> In the Awash river region in north-east Ethiopia water is scarce and local ethnic groups sometimes come into conflict over this water, particularly the Afar and Issa peoples. In the 1980s, in a well-meaning attempt to develop Ethiopia's economy, international donors put together the Amibara Irrigation Project, designed to irrigate large tracts of land. However, the Afar people who lived in the area affected by the project were almost entirely excluded from its planning and, when displaced by the irrigation, the resettlement packages they received were inadequate. By the late 1980s, the reduction in available grazing land caused by the irrigation project had provoked violent clashes between the Afar and the Issa peoples.

<sup>44</sup> In June 2006, China urged other nations to support the deployment of peacekeepers to Somalia.

pursuing its own national interests. Although it still harbours a narrow interpretation of the international community's right to intervene, China's endorsement of and support for more robust peacekeeping missions that are mandated to take necessary measures, including force, to protect the human rights of civilians illustrates that China is, at least within consent-based UN peacekeeping, contributing to "bolster civilian protection both at the thematic level and in establishing and renewing country-specific operations."<sup>45</sup>

In the new age of peacekeeping, China's contributions to peacekeeping are bound to grow, as will the variety of roles that Chinese peacekeepers will have to play. There are huge gaps in the UN peacekeeping system that China can potentially fill, especially in conflict, or post-conflict environments that tend to attract few contributors. Now is the time, however, to try to spell out the specifics of how China can contribute to the success of peace operations in the future. As regards peacekeeping, there is a need for: increased contributions to troop deployments (Chinese combat troops would be a beneficial addition in the future) and operational capabilities;<sup>46</sup> the allocation of further resources to peacekeeping training; increased involvement in the work of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to help develop better peacekeeping policies and actions; and, last but not least, increased financial support in line with China's rising economic power and its Security Council and global status.<sup>47</sup>

Peacekeeping would also benefit from further Chinese discussions with other P5 states and large troop contributors on how peacekeeping policies and mandates can be made more effective, especially with regards to improving civilian protection. While some missions, such as MONUSCO in the DRC, have prioritised the protection of civilians and been given wide mandates to meet this task, they have fallen far short of their aims, mainly because there is no consensus of what constitutes 'robust peacekeeping' and what should be done to protect civilians. This urgently needs to be improved, and China, with troops in the DRC, needs to actively work with others to find solutions. Compared to Western states, China remains cautiously conservative in supporting peace-enforcement missions where Chapter VII of the UN Charter is invoked. While the reluctance to allow for the use of force or for the flexible interpretation of what constitute threats to international peace might be commendable, there are situations, like the tragic experience of Rwanda, that require urgent and forceful action by the international community rather than cautious restraint. This is now being recognised by the Chinese epistemic community and has prompted Chinese diplomats to go as far as saying that the UN should intervene in conflict areas "earlier, faster and

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<sup>45</sup> Teitt, Sarah (2011), 'The Responsibility to Protect and China's Peacekeeping Policy', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:3, p 306

<sup>46</sup> For example, the UN mission for Darfur was crippled by the refusal of military capable nations to provide two dozen helicopters.

<sup>47</sup> Huang Chin-Hao (2011), op. cit, pp 263-264

more forcefully.”<sup>48</sup>

With peacekeeping operations becoming more complex and with many of their tasks increasingly focusing on peacebuilding in post-conflict environments, it is also clear that China, alongside more traditional international actors, will also be severely tested against the goal of building peace. Clearly there are differences of opinion as to what peacebuilding should entail, over the boundaries of what constitutes a legitimate intervention and the best ways of tackling the dilemmas associated with host country consent, the issues of sovereignty and non-interference. There is, and there will continue to be, a need to promote greater coordination of the actions of the different actors involved in peacebuilding. Within the UN system, this is the role of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which China has pledged to support.<sup>49</sup> However, there is a need for coordination and dialogue both within and outside the UN system. In particular, dialogue amongst the Chinese, the Western policy communities and key actors in the recipient countries should take full account of how and why conflicts start and explore the opportunities and obstacles for closer policy alignment on how to respond to them. Such dialogues should also be used to inform policy makers to help find areas where international actors can co-operate more closely or, at the very least, identify areas where Western states and China may be able to complement one another. This includes tackling on a practical level issues where China has so far been over-cautious or disengaged, for example security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, and combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all of which can support development and stability in fragile states. It will be crucial, as part of this dialogue that China develops a much stronger relationship with local civil society actors, rather than just government representatives in capital cities – not just to add legitimacy to China’s peace engagement, but “to take societal factors into consideration when making peacebuilding policy.”<sup>50</sup>

There are many ways through which Chinese assistance to maintaining peace and security can be delivered: through working at the UN Security Council, through continued support for peacekeepers, through supporting regional security organisations such as the African Union, and through taking part in anti-piracy efforts. However, a very simple way in which China could better assist conflict-affected countries that face continued instability is to place conflict sensitivity at the core of the development assistance it provides to its partners, whether it be a small aid project in a village or a national-scale infrastructure project. In essence, being conflict-sensitive means for donors to understand the issues that divide the actors, or the societies in which they work, and the power relations that characterise these divisions, so that they can target their work to promote peace. Undertaking a ‘conflict analysis’ is key to this practice and provides a foundation for conflict-sensitive work. A number of international donors have developed models for

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<sup>48</sup> Zhang, Yishan, Chinese Ambassador to the UN, cited by Gill & Huang (2009), op. cit, p 11

<sup>49</sup> Position Paper of the People’s Republic of China (2011), op. cit

<sup>50</sup> Zhao Lei (2011), op. cit, p 355

undertaking conflict analysis over recent years. It should be remembered, though, that conflict analysis is not the whole story of conflict sensitivity: it is merely its starting point. Conflict sensitivity is an approach that runs through the entire cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development projects.

All this will entail several significant changes in the way Chinese policy is conceptualised and implemented, including starting to exercise less rhetoric and more leadership within multilateral environments, making bigger strides in its posture on non-interference, and being able to trigger change rather than just react to crisis. Such changes, which would better fit China's global economic presence and its place in the world, will only happen in a cautious and selective way. In the words of an illustrious Chinese commentator, "it's only the accumulation of quantitative changes that will lead to a qualitative change of Chinese foreign policy."<sup>51</sup> China is not a monolithic bloc and "many new voices and actors are now part of an unprecedentedly complex foreign-policy making process",<sup>52</sup> with diverse segments of opinion that need to be reconciled. This also applies to China's future stance vis-à-vis its involvement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. But the way Chinese policy changes and how it responds to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be critical not only to the future of conflict-affected and fragile states, but to global security and stability and, consequently, to China's own economic growth and modernisation.

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<sup>51</sup> Yang Jiemian, President of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, remarks at a roundtable discussion on EU-China relations, hosted by the Austrian Institute for International Politics, Vienna, 13 September 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Shambaugh, David (2011), 'Coping with a Conflicted China', *The Washington Quarterly*, 34:1, p 7; Jakobson, Linda and Knox, Dean (2010), 'New Foreign Policy Actors in China', SIPRI Policy Paper no. 26