

China's Rise in Africa

Perspectives on a Developing Connection

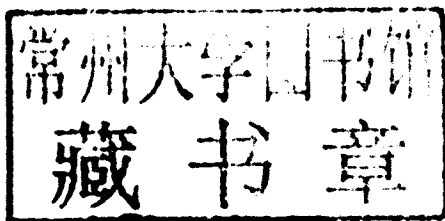
Edited by
Dominik Kopiński, Andrzej Polus and
Ian Taylor

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In seeking to cultivate external relations with African countries, China has long stressed its commonly shared roots with African nations as a developing country rather than a Western state, and as such the symbolic attraction of China clearly reverberates with many African elites who seem to look on China as a positive development model. However, it should be noted that this has not been embraced solely by dictatorial or authoritarian regimes but in fact China's approach to non-interference has struck a chord even with those democratically elected leaders in Africa. While such practices clearly benefit African elites, it remains doubtful that they do so for ordinary Africans, although sustained analysis suggests that potential exists, albeit hampered by the modalities of governance on the continent.

This book brings together experts on the topic to throw light on some of the more contentious aspects of the relationship.

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Contextualising Chinese engagement in Africa

Dominik Kopyński, Andrzej Polus and Ian Taylor

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In seeking to cultivate external relations with African countries, China has long stressed its commonly shared roots with African nations as a developing country rather than a Western state, and as such the symbolic attraction of China clearly reverberates with many African elites who seem to look on China as a positive development model. However, it should be noted that this has not been embraced solely by dictatorial or authoritarian regimes but in fact China's approach to non-interference has struck a chord even with those democratically elected leaders in Africa. While such practices clearly benefit African elites, it remains doubtful that they do so for ordinary Africans, although sustained analysis suggests that the potential exists, albeit hampered by the modalities of governance on the continent.

The growing presence of Chinese economic and political actors in Africa reflects what is, perhaps, the most important set of dynamics to shape Africa's external relations since the end of the Cold War. The political dimension of this upsurge in interest from Beijing can be traced from the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, where China found itself under pressure from its erstwhile economic partners in the West (Taylor 1998, 447). Notably, several African countries rallied around Beijing and expressed support for the measures employed by the Chinese military. In the context where Western powers (temporarily) ostracised Beijing, the Chinese leadership's view of Africa in China's broader foreign policy was subsequently transformed from 'one of benign neglect to one of renewed emphasis . . . the developing world was elevated in Chinese thinking to become a "cornerstone" of Beijing's foreign policy' (Taylor 1998, 447).

Beijing found in Africa a supportive constituency. Many African leaders viewed – and continue to view – China as a success story in that it has risen from backwardness to staggering economic growth without following the prescriptions of the West (Alden 2005, 156). Notably, China's leaders have avoided the calls for democracy and good governance that the West ostensibly demands. Equally, China's leadership has in recent years actively courted African leaders with a return to the rhetoric of a shared colonial history of repression. Though this rhetoric harks back to the 1960s and it is doubtful whether it matters that a capitalist exploiter is French, Polish or Chinese (he is still an exploiter), this discourse is lapped up by many African elites, attracted by its intrinsically anti-Western sentiment. A heightened emphasis on the importance of

state sovereignty has also chimed with African leaders who have felt under pressure from Western demands for reform. At the same time, the Chinese have seen in Africa a useful arena where it can continue to isolate Taiwan (a struggle China has won hands-down) and as an increasingly important economic resource.

Indeed, the urgent need for oil has been a major impetus in the recent economic surge in Chinese activity in Africa (Shinn and Eisenman 2005, 7). While Beijing has been criticised in Africa that its trade practices significantly benefit the Chinese economy even if this is to the detriment of African countries, the importation of oil from Africa to China has in fact leveled the playing field to a degree between China and Africa. The annual growth rate on the Africa continent has increased in recent years and this is due in large part to the impact of China's economic ventures in the region and its purchase of oil specifically (Taylor 2006, 951). China's renewed interest in Africa has seen many Chinese businesspeople travelling to Africa to pursue their entrepreneurial agendas, and some analysts – as well as many African governments – believe that this will greatly increase the development prospects of local African economies, while also allowing access to a new range of products and services (Tull 2006, 472). Economic growth in Africa has also been furthered by a steady increase in Chinese tourism and this increase has occurred largely through the Chinese government's promotion of many African states as 'officially approved travel destinations,' bringing a much needed boost to the tourism industry in over a dozen countries on the African continent (Alden 2005, 154). Ultimately, it might be said that 'in the short term, China's trade with and investment in Africa are of assistance to the development of the continent, if for no other reason than that little investment is forthcoming from other sources. [Furthermore,] China's investment in Africa's crumbling infrastructure is needed' (Taylor 2006, 949).

In seeking to cultivate external relations with African countries, China has long stressed its commonly shared roots with African nations as a developing country rather than a Western state, and as such 'the symbolic attraction of China, a once-impooverished country victimised by Western imperialism and held back by its own pursuit of disastrous forms of socialism, clearly resonates with African elites looking for a positive development model from the Third World' (Alden 2005, 156). China has provided an economic development model that many African leaders have found to be an attractive alternative to the 'free' and 'open' market economies of both the United States and the European Union (EU). Unlike the aid given to Africa from Western-oriented organisations and countries, Chinese aid rarely comes to Africa with conditional stipulations stressing the importance of tenets such as good governance or a heightened respect for human rights (Tull 2006, 463). Many African elites then have favoured and appreciated such a practice, as this has greatly aided them in legitimising and consolidating their rule (Muekalia 2004, 11). However, it should be noted that this has not been embraced solely by dictatorial or authoritarian regimes but in fact 'China's traditionalist approach to non-interference in domestic affairs accords well with the outlook even of democratically elected leaders in Africa, who view the unity of the state as a *sine qua non* of effective governance' (Alden 2005, 156). While such practices clearly benefit African elites, it remains doubtful that they do so for ordinary Africans (Tull 2006, 459).

Contested discourses

In the academic, as well as the political arena, there have been mixed reactions to China's flourishing relations with Africa. One discourse, reflecting the official Chinese view, argues that this partnership will prove to be beneficial for the long-exploited African people in that China is offering a strategic relationship based on mutual benefit, one in which Africa cannot lose. Academics who subscribe to this argument generally talk up how favourable Africans seemingly view China. However, the opposite discourse argues that China, as an ever-aspiring world power, is no different from any other external actor that has shown an interest in cultivating relationships with Africa. By this it is meant that China gains a significant amount more from the relationship than Africa does. In fairness, as Wilson (2005, 7) points out, China and Africa have complementary economic and commercial needs. Africa is short on capital, has a low manufacturing base, is highly import dependent, lacks basic infrastructures and exports a lot of natural resources. China has ample investment capital, a huge manufacturing exporting base, is willing to build infrastructure and imports a significant amount of petroleum and other natural resources. Here, we must be careful to heed Wilson's warning to not generalise Beijing's relationship with a handful of African states to reflect China's ties with the entire African continent.

Having said this, what should Africa be gaining from this increased engagement? If the Chinese promise that it is committed to expanding 'Sino-African trade and economic relations on the basis of *mutual* benefit and win-win cooperation' (Luo Guijin 2006) is to be trusted, then Africa should expect to experience a fundamental surge in economic growth and development, but this remains highly contested and various facets of Sino-African relations reflect both the positive *and* negative aspects of this relationship.

For examples, with regard to trade, Chinese companies and corporations have increasingly begun to look abroad for new markets and Africa has emerged as an attractive destination. Beijing has been keen to promote the idea that China should be given privileged access to African markets on the basis of South-South 'solidarity' and as a concrete manifestation of a broader counter-hegemonic strategy that China is keen to encourage within Africa. The self-serving nature of this stance is obvious. This, coupled with the end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement which had long imposed quotas on Beijing, has meant that cheap Chinese goods, textiles in particular, are flooding Africa markets, causing the academic and political world alike to talk of a textile 'tsunami' (Wilson 2005, 9). This has had a devastating effect on local industry in some countries in various ways. Firstly, most African producers cannot compete with Chinese companies even in Africa's domestic markets, as they are unable to undercut Chinese production costs and prices. Secondly, the growth of Chinese exports to the United States has arguably shut down the promising (albeit artificial) growth of African exports to Washington (Taylor 2009). At present, 'nothing indicates that Africa will be able to compete successfully with China, a result of which is that its exports to China are by and large limited to capital-intensive commodities' (Tull 2006, 472). Tull acknowledges that whilst this is the result of legitimate market competition, it contravenes Beijing's statements that enhanced Chinese-African interaction will always result in win-win situations (*ibid.*). As a consequence, there has been visible domestic reaction by the labour and business

sector across the continent, which Kopinski and Polus discuss with regard to the situation in Zambia.

Resource security is undoubtedly the biggest driving force behind China's increased involvement in Africa. Realists would argue that, as an aspiring world power, China is vying to attain material preponderance in order to increase its power and further its campaign for super power status. The volatility of the Middle East, as well as competition from other economies, has forced Beijing to encourage Chinese oil companies to seek other sources of oil to fuel China's rapidly growing economy. Thus Chinese oil companies have turned towards oil producing regions where risks and challenges have meant that the major international companies have overlooked their potential. Africa is one such arguable region. This engagement has had some positive economic impact on the African oil-producing states as the subsequent growth in demand has meant that mineral prices are reaching record highs, reversing a long decline for many of Africa's major exports over the past few decades. For African oil producers, in particular, there has been a substantial windfall. Indeed, as Corkin shows in this volume, African states such as Angola have been quite adept in managing this scenario.

However, the positive implications have the potential to be overshadowed by the negative. Dependency theorists would see Africa as being involved in a classic core-periphery dependency relationship, where the core subordinates and exploits the periphery, whose function it is to supply the former with primary products. The periphery is therefore trapped in a dependent relationship; its economy is entirely reliant on the demand of the core's economy, making it very vulnerable to fluctuations (Taylor 2006, 251). By focusing primarily on exporting natural resources, in particular oil, African states may find themselves open to market shocks which may devastate fragile developing economies. Naidu and Davies (2006, 81) argue that in order to avoid this, Africa must shift its current activities in the natural resource sector towards secondary and tertiary production. Whether this will occur very much depends on the political economies and modalities of governance in various African countries and has little *per se* to do with China.

Motives and messages

China, like any other state, is concerned with advancing itself on the international stage. This means securing energy resources and new markets, in order to drive the Chinese economy. Ultimately, any economic engagements that Beijing undertakes will be with profit securely in mind. However, it is the political context of these economic arrangements that need to be analysed.

At the rhetorical source of the political implications of the Sino-African relationship lie China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These effectively lay out how Beijing will conduct its foreign policy, and are: respect for each state's sovereignty; a pact of mutual non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; equality and mutual benefit; and finally, peaceful coexistence with states by seeking common interests. Out of these, it is the policies of non-interference and in turn the respect for sovereignty, which has proven to be the most controversial in the international arena. In a continent that has been wrecked by corrupt and dictatorial leaders, this is a widely criticised political stance. Indeed, critics have suggested that the long-term consequences of Chinese alleged indifference towards

the internal affairs of its partners could have problematic results, not least for Chinese business concerns. Yet equally, as Wu Zhengyu and Taylor point out, the policy of strict non-interference is increasingly flexible and is demonstrated through China's increased willingness to partake in peacekeeping operations.

On the international level, it is clear that China is attempting to increase its bargaining power by positioning itself 'at the helm of a coalition of African developing countries' (Muekalia 2004, 10). In doing so, Beijing is hoping to leverage its position on the UN Security Council as well as improving its bargaining power in other international institutions. Beijing is genuinely worried about Washington's long term objectives, and it views any criticism of its domestic policies as imperialist in nature. This concern manifests itself in a search, a 'breaking with the traditional aloofness of Chinese foreign policy' (Alden 2005, 152), for strategic partners. It is in Africa that China has targeted one area where this is to be done. Thus, as China's power and influence grows, Beijing is becoming more and more willing to challenge incumbent powers *and* protect its interests in Africa. As mentioned, the Chinese effectively win over African elites by emphasising South-South solidarity, asserting that China and Africa share identical or similar opinions on many major international affairs as well as common interests. In doing so, China promises to raise the status of African voices on the international level, and this may be partially true. On the political level, Chinese and American competition over Africa *has* enhanced Africa's profile in the international arena. Certainly, in the last few years, Western politicians have placed Africa higher and higher on their agenda. This competition may also allow the African governments to play one power off against the other and thus Africa has regained some of the strategic importance that it had lost after the Cold War.

Whether African governments will take advantage of this position, or squander it, is in the hands of Africans themselves and here the picture is frustrating. China's renewed interest in Africa and the concomitant attention it has provoked from other countries *could* offer African governments the perfect opportunity to exploit the various sides. Ideally, leaders could get their voices heard in the international arena, they could increase the value of foreign aid by getting the donors to actually listen to what is needed and they could utilise the upsurge in receipts to promote development. The fundamental problem, however, lies in the leaders themselves. So long as Africa remains in the grip of corrupt and predatory dictators, these opportunities will always be largely wasted. It is then in the political economy of Africa that one must really look to see how and where China's upsurge in Africa will play out and who will benefit from this engagement and, conversely, who will not.

Overview of the collection

The collection of studies on China–Africa relations starts with Wu Zhengyu and Ian Taylor's contribution on Chinese involvement in peacekeeping in Africa. As the two authors note, China has, in the past decade or so, emerged as an important contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, with Chinese peacekeepers serving in places as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia and Sudan. Indeed, China currently sends more peacekeeping troops abroad than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council. This is a major development in Sino-African relations given that historically, Beijing has held a highly hostile

attitude towards the notion of 'interference' of any type in a country's affairs. And due to the role of the UN in the Korean War (1950–1953), China's attitude towards the UN sanctioning military missions was, for decades, considerably antagonistic. China's stance on peace operations is – and always has been – closely tied to its attitude on state sovereignty. This has meant that China has set limits on the type of interventions that Beijing is prepared to sanction vis-à-vis its role in peacekeeping missions. Yet it appears that Chinese policy in this regard is evolving. Wu and Taylor discuss why and how China's role in peacekeeping in Africa has played out and the likely directions this is to take in the future.

The discussion then shifts towards the commonly-held idea that China is some sort of voracious 'dragon' intent on grabbing as much of Africa's natural resources as possible and being a pivotal actor in the so-called new scramble for Africa. The security dimensions of this and the suggested possibilities that this will provoke conflict in the future are addressed by Péter Marton and Tamás Matura's study, which notes that Western reactions to China's increasing investment in a number of countries in Africa, as well as Chinese counter-reactions, are often conceptualised as symptoms of a 'honey pot' conflict. Such an impression, as noted, stems from viewing contemporary African development as a 'new scramble' for the continent's natural resources. However, Marton and Matura critically unpack these claims in various fundamental ways, demonstrating how it is untenable. Their objections are based on a survey of Chinese discourses regarding Western criticisms as well as empirical objections based on the supposedly 'conflictual' cases of Angola and Sudan, where one in fact finds mutual toleration between Western and Chinese actors. These realities contradict the assumptions of a honey pot conflict. Marton and Matura conclude their analysis with the alternative proposition that any Sino-Western conflict can be more aptly described as partly self-interest-driven, but at the same time normative, and is much more related to Western concerns about a 'spoiler' role played by China in Africa than by any real security threat per se.

The collection then continues with two contributions related to energy issues involving Chinese actors in Africa, with concentrations on two specific case studies: Angola and Zambia. First, Lucy Corkin discusses China's evolving relations with Angola. As she notes, conventional accounts suggest that there exists something entitled the so-called 'Angola Model', whereby the Chinese government is heavily involved in the national reconstruction programme through various financial institutions as a means to ensure closer relations with Angola and thus access to oil. In this light, China's strategy is thus ostensibly to accumulate political capital through the provision of infrastructure, financed by oil-backed concessional loans extended by Chinese state-owned banks. Corkin's study, however, traces the history of China's relations with Angola before examining the various parallel structures involved in the two countries' co-operation over infrastructure, loans and oil. It examines the so-called 'Angola Model' by looking at three key assumptions surrounding risk, access to oil and China's political access in Angola. The study also evaluates the nature of the so-called 'strategic partnership' for both Angola and China. Political posturing indicates that both China and Angola see each other as necessary strategic allies for the foreseeable future, but this may mask an uneasy marriage of convenience. Corkin thus questions the very idea of the 'Angola Model'.

Similarly, Dominik Kopyński and Andrzej Polus question some of the received wisdom about Sino-Zambian relations. They note that Sino-Zambian relations are

exceptional to a remarkable degree, and do not seem to fall into the common pattern used to describe the Sino-African relationship as part of a so-called 'new scramble for Africa'. Zambia is a country where both positive and negative developments took place earlier than elsewhere on the African continent and in this respect Zambia has always been one step ahead of the rest of its peers. Kosiński and Polus divide their study into three parts. The first part presents a historical overview of diplomatic relations between China and Zambia. The second part deals with the domestic politics of Zambia and the usage by Zambian elites of the Chinese presence as an argument in internal political discourses. The third part focuses on emerging patterns of Chinese investment in Zambia, and tries to unpack some of the common myths pertaining to the scope and nature of China's engagement in Africa.

The focus of the collection then shifts to looking at how external players fit into the wider Sino-African relationship. Firstly, Karolina Wysoczańska examines Sino-Indian co-operation in Africa, specifically looking at joint efforts between Chinese and Indian actors in Africa's oil sector. As Wysoczańska notes, sourcing sufficient supplies of energy to meet rapidly growing domestic demand is a major challenge for both China and India. The choices these two giants have made to meet that challenge in recent years will have long-term repercussions for the rest of the world. Although efforts to join forces in a global search for energy security are unlikely to overcome deeply ingrained Indian suspicions of China, both countries have already signed a series of energy co-operation agreements, which have indicated that the two states are seeking each other as strategic partners. Wysoczańska provides an overview of the incentives for Sino-Indian co-operation in satisfying domestic oil demands and also examines the implications of such collaboration on regional and global orders.

Maurizio Carbone then follows with his study of how the EU and China variously compete in Africa. Carbone analyses the impact of China's rise in Africa on the EU. Contrary to conventional wisdom, he argues that the EU's renewed interest in Africa is not the result of China's new assertiveness in the continent, but is a consequence of the intensive search for a more coherent external policy by Brussels, something which has been in place since the early 2000s. According to Carbone, Africa represents an ideal venue in which different EU actors could simultaneously pursue traditional development goals together with new political objectives. However, the existence of three competing visions within the EU have negatively affected its ability to constructively engage with China: the European Commission has sought to affirm the EU's aspiration to become an influential global actor; the European Parliament has projected its preference for a value-based development policy, blended with paternalistic overtones; and the Council of the EU has been driven more by the emotional reactions of some member states, who have not wanted to lose their position as Africa's main reference point. Unsurprisingly, the result has been a confused message which China has found hard to follow, never mind Africa, since they were not effectively involved in the process and were sceptical about the whole idea of 'trilateral cooperation'.

Finally, Łukasz Fijałkowski critiques the notion of China's 'soft power' in Africa. He notes that Beijing's political 'charm offensive' in Africa has ostensibly made China a major player on the continent. The source of this success in China's African policy is sometimes attributed to China's political and economic 'attractiveness'. Whilst it is true that China is building a positive image targeted to the audience in Africa, promoting for example the vision of 'win-win' mutual economic benefits

from cooperation and so this in part might be viewed as being close to the concept of soft power, soft power is much more about about dynamic relationships between agent and the subject of attraction. Hence, as Fijałkowski asserts, the general growth of Chinese soft power and its success depends not only on whether China can sell its image to African states, but also whether African states are willing to buy this.

As might be noted, a large part of the contributions are from scholars based in, or from, Central Europe. After a hiatus in the post-Cold War era, when African Studies were downgraded by all of the ex-Warsaw Pact nations, African Studies is becoming more popular and is increasingly attracting younger scholars from Central Europe, who conduct fieldwork and detailed academic work. The proposed and imminent establishment of an African Studies Centre at the University of Wrocław in Poland, a centre to serve the central European region, demonstrates the emerging importance of Africa back on the academic agenda in the former Eastern Bloc countries. This development is something that all Africanists, wherever they are based, should welcome. This collection of essays is thus, in part, an effort to showcase this renaissance of interest in Africa and demonstrate the type of scholarly work on Africa being conducted by academics from that part of Europe.

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From refusal to engagement: Chinese contributions to peacekeeping in Africa

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China has, in the past decade or so, emerged as an important contributor to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, with Chinese peacekeepers serving in places as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia and Sudan. Indeed, China currently sends more peacekeeping troops abroad than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council. This is a major development in Sino-African relations. China's stance on peace operations is closely tied to its attitude on state sovereignty and this limits the type of interventions that Beijing is prepared to sanction vis-à-vis its role in peacekeeping missions. Yet it appears that Chinese policy in this regard is evolving. This study discusses why and how China's role in peacekeeping in Africa has played out and the likely directions this is to take in the future.

Since 1990, China has contributed over 7,000 peacekeepers to United Nations (UN) operations, and Chinese peacekeepers have served in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia and Sudan. In fact, China currently sends more peacekeeping troops abroad than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council. Wang Guangya, China's UN ambassador, has noted that 'China is filling a vacuum left by the West. The major powers are withdrawing from the peacekeeping role. That role is being played more by small countries. China felt it is the right time for us to fill this vacuum' (*Washington Post*, 24 November 2006).

The number of Chinese military personnel sent on peace missions has been growing in recent years and is a major development in Sino-African relations. However, China's stance on peace operations is closely tied to its attitude on state sovereignty and this limits the type of interventions that Beijing is prepared to sanction vis-à-vis its role in peacekeeping missions. The most remarkable feature of China's 'flurry of UN peacekeeping' efforts in the post-Cold War era has been its focus on the 'domestic political scene' of the countries where the Chinese contribute to peace operations (James 1993, 359). This study discusses why and how this has played out as China has become more and more involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa.

State sovereignty

It has long been a central tenet of Chinese foreign policy post-1949 that the normative principles of state sovereignty and non-interference must serve as the bases for international relations between states. Though this position is shifting somewhat, as Beijing's growing involvement in peace operations demonstrate, this remains fundamental. China's valorisation of sovereignty springs from its experiences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This Century of Humiliation, in popular Chinese parlance, lasted from the First Opium War in 1839 to the triumph of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1949 when, per Mao Zedong, the Chinese people stood up (*zhongguo renmin zhancilai le*). China guards its sovereignty as a correlative of 'regaining' its 'rightful place' in international affairs (Elegant 1963): 'The attainment of . . . great-power aspirations . . . draws upon strong emotions, linked to nationalist sentiments, traditional cultural ethnocentrism, and a deeply rooted sense of injustice at the hands of . . . (especially) Western countries' (Swaine 1995, 84).

In addition, China has traditionally emphasised the right of states to resolve issues among themselves, in keeping with its resistance to outside involvement in affairs it perceives as strictly domestic, such as those of Tibet and Taiwan.² As Pang Zhongying (2005, 88) notes, 'Central to Chinese concerns is the changing nature and context of peace operations – with the potential for mission creep and the move to 'coalitions of the willing' – and the implications [these] would have for international involvement in China's key internal affairs relating, for example, to Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang'. Beijing has scrupulously avoided establishing international precedents that could later be used to justify interference in China's so-called domestic issues.

However, we should emphasise that the rhetoric contained in official Chinese pronouncements 'has led many observers to reach the premature conclusion that Beijing opposes all forms of intervention and is wedded to an antiquated approach to sovereignty' (Carlson 2006, 218). In fact, it is possible to discern a subtle shift in China's position regarding state sovereignty.³ Consider, for instance, the evolution of four its official guidelines on legitimate intervention. These state that intervening bodies must first proceed with respect for the concerned state's sovereignty. Second, they must gain the authorisation of the UN. Third, they must secure an invitation from the concerned state. Finally, they should use force only when all other options have proven ineffective (Carlson 2004). This set of necessary conditions demonstrates that Beijing has softened its hard-line stance on state sovereignty and non-interference.

Yet the Westphalian notion that interference requires an invitation holds even in the event that the host government has embarked on widespread and systematic killing or territorial cleansing. By implication, such governments can veto intervention. In the past, when foreign troops intervened in the affairs of a state at the behest of its government, China based its opinion of the legality of the action on whether the official request corresponded to the genuine desires of 'the people' as it saw them. This qualification, of course, permitted China to decide legality on the basis of political expediency. China has now effectively abandoned this position and currently focuses on a legalistic interpretation of state sovereignty in the face of intervention. The will of the people is not part and parcel of China's diplomacy or decision-making process in this regard.

Perhaps to avoid such potential conundrums, China has become quite adept at pursuing a strategy of nonparticipation or abstention from Security Council debates and votes on peace operations. It can in fact be argued that abstention is an expedient strategy for China, since it precludes both criticism from the West regarding obstructionist opposition to contentious peace operations *and* criticism from the developing world, allowing China either to disassociate itself from controversial operations or to remain in accordance with its doctrine of non-interference even with respect to popular peace operations.

The changing nature of United Nations' peacekeeping operations (UNKPOs) has itself made abstention an important tool of Chinese diplomacy. Under Chapter VII, the Security Council is allowed to take coercive action, including military force, against a state (Article 42) if the Council concludes that it has made 'any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression' (Article 39). The notion of state sovereignty 'shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII' (per Chapter I, Article 2). This article is a problem for Beijing, which has had to face several similarly thorny issues in the era following the Brahimi Report, issued in 2000 by a high-level panel chaired by former Algerian foreign minister Lakhdar Brahimi and reviewed all facets of UN peacekeeping operations. The report made four significant proposals:

1. Peacekeepers need to be expressly mandated to be able to use force more advantageously to defend themselves, their mission *and* civilians under threat of attack.
2. The UN should never mandate a peace operation prior to marshalling the necessary resources to execute the mission.
3. There needs to be improved discussion between the Security Council and the contributing countries to any peace operation.
4. A diversified approach to peacebuilding, including the training of local police, strengthening the legal machinery in post-conflict states, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of former soldiers and the advancement of human rights – basically the construction of liberal-democratic states under the rubric of what might be termed the liberal peace. (United Nations Secretary-General 2000)

Post-Brahimi, peace support emerged as a novel type of peacekeeping. The Brahimi Report effectively codified changes that had been occurring since the end of the Cold War. While providing a new framework and approach, it fundamentally reflected events and debates that had been going on since at least 1990. Importantly, it was understood that this framework amounted to clear authorisation for the deployment of military force to pressurise warring sides to abide by established peace agreements, although UN peace operations (also known as blue-helmet operations) still only deploy with host government consent. While the Brahimi Report did not legitimise intervention and indeed confined itself to talking about peace operations, it nonetheless dictated that blue-helmet troops deployed in peace operations could not stand by in the face of civilian massacres. But even this concession raised ire among the Chinese, as the argument of one scholar illustrates:

Will the out-of-control 'humanitarian intervention' become a reprint [*sic*] of the globalisation of colonialism in the twenty-first century? ... [The colonialists] didn't take into account [the] rights and ideas of people of the colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America at all. And today, it is these former colonial countries that [have] their hedge of sovereignty [*sic*] being breached in the process of the generalising of 'humanitarian intervention' (Qin Xiaocheng 2003, 169).

Ultimately, however, the Brahimi Report represented (and reflected) a shift from traditional peacekeeping actions to peace-support missions as the UN took a more active role in upholding international peace and security as well as in member-states' affairs. For the Chinese, traditional peacekeeping 'is organised and deployed directly by the UN with the consent of all parties' (Zhang Li 2003, 209). 'All parties' in this context refers to state actors. In contrast, the Brahimi Report urged consent from the host government but not necessarily from all the parties involved, a provision Beijing felt comfortable with, as the 2002 Chinese Defence White Paper illustrates: 'China supports the active measures taken by the UN Secretariat in this regard and welcomes the progress made by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council in deliberating the Brahimi Report on Reforming the UN's Peacekeeping Operations' (Information Office of the State Council 2002). This move has had implications for the evolution of China's peacekeeping commitments in Africa and elsewhere.

The evolution of China's involvement in peace operations

According to He Yin (2007), there have been four phases in the evolution of Beijing's attitude toward peace operations. The first phase, lasting from 1971 to 1980, was characterised by inactivity if not outright hostility with respect to such missions. The second phase reflected a gradual change in attitude from 1981 to 1987. The third period, from 1988 to 1989, saw Chinese cooperate in some UN peace operations while issuing a fair number of challenges toward others. And the fourth period, from 1999 onwards, is marked by greater and greater Chinese participation in operations, despite some remaining reservations on certain issues.

In the first phase, China avoided playing any role in UN peacekeeping missions and did not even contribute to their costs. We should remember, however, that China was the object of the first US-led enforcement mission sanctioned by the Security Council in 1951. Thereafter Beijing saw all UN interventions as superpower chicanery aimed at weaker states within the international system. This suspicion – compounded by the memory of the Korean War – lasted well past the era of Mao. Indeed, in 1990, then Foreign Minister Qian Qichen stated that Beijing's reluctance to support the enforcement mission in Iraq sprang from the fact that 'the Chinese people still clearly remember that the Korean War was launched in the name of the United Nations' (quoted in Kim 1995, 423). Consequently 'most of such UN actions were seen as interference in countries' internal affairs and as the undesirable result of US-Soviet hegemonic power competition' (Wang Jianwei 1999, 70). What is more, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was emerging from the Cultural Revolution at the time, so issues of Chinese diplomatic capacity within the UN system cannot be underestimated.

Conversely, upon joining the UN, China was often accused of free riding off of the international community and avoiding its global responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. Indeed, China was charged with being a group of