

Sovereignty, Intervention and Peacekeeping: The View from Beijing

Bates Gill and James Reilly

The concept of national sovereignty serves to sustain domestic authority against foreign incursions. For the Chinese leadership, defence of a 'thick' notion of sovereignty also serves its efforts to enhance its legitimacy, to deflect criticism of its domestic policies, and to resist outside involvement in the Taiwan issue. Yet from the initial opening of the People's Republic in the 1970s, China has steadily acquiesced in the slow erosion of its strict sovereign prerogatives. Today, the nexus where defence of Chinese sovereignty meets the imperative of engaging the outside world defines both the limits and the possibilities of further enmeshing China within the norms and institutions of international society. The challenge for the international community is to understand the dynamics of that sovereignty-integration nexus in China, then to identify and to implement policies that will strengthen China's commitment to international peace and stability in a more globalised world. In this regard, China's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is an often-overlooked area of interest.

Encouraging China to take on a greater peacekeeping role could lead to significant benefits for the international community. These include China's greater integration into international society, its greater acceptance of international norms, establishing a new multilateral confidence-building measure to gain greater Chinese military transparency while reducing regional distrust of China, and spreading the burden of and strengthening international support for UN peacekeeping. As China's concepts of sovereignty and peacekeeping change, concerned observers need to revisit previous assessments that expressed little hope for expanding Chinese participation in such operations.¹ By focusing primarily upon China's official rhetorical rigidity and its limited participation to date, such work may have overlooked signs of limited Chinese flexibility on issues of sovereignty and intervention.

Bates Gill is Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at The Brookings Institution, and inaugural Director of the Brookings Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies. **James Reilly** is a Ph.D. candidate at The George Washington University and a Research Assistant at The Brookings Institution. The authors wish to thank the United States Institute of Peace for its support of this research.

A careful survey of China's recent actions, public statements, scholarly writing, and bureaucratic evolution reveals the emergence of a pragmatic orientation suggestive of limited flexibility on peacekeeping issues. Building upon current policies of constructive engagement, to include fostering greater Chinese participation in UN PKOs, could take advantage of this opportunity at minimal cost with significant long-term benefits for both regional and global security.

Of course, potential drawbacks to this approach cannot be dismissed. China's military and political power may in fact grow faster than its acceptance of international norms. Alternately, UN peacekeeping may become captive to minimalist or obstructionist Chinese positions, further stymieing recent reform and expansion efforts. Finally, such policy efforts may ultimately fail to build greater Chinese participation, thus threatening the success of similar policy initiatives in the future. Even in a best-case scenario, significant change in China's approach to peacekeeping will come slowly. However, encouragement of responsible Chinese engagement with international organisations offers a patently preferable policy to either antagonistic containment or shortsighted disregard of China.

This argument raises three broad questions. First, what are some of the conceptual and material impediments to China taking a greater role in peacekeeping? Second, what are the possibilities for more extensive Chinese participation in the future? Finally, what do the answers to these questions tell us about Chinese views of sovereignty and the country's integration into the international community?

Chinese Conceptions of Sovereignty

China's approach to peacekeeping is strongly shaped by its conception of sovereignty, which is less a static concept than an idea in flux. China's adherence to strict Westphalian norms of state sovereignty derives from its traumatic entry into international society during the tumultuous late imperial period, roughly extending from the first Opium War in 1839 to the fall of the last dynasty in 1912. From its earliest years in the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) used its defence of China's sovereignty to buttress its nationalist credentials and advance its broader state-building project.² Yet during the anti-colonialist movement in the developing world during the 1960s and 1970s, China supported an array of populist movements for national self-determination.³ It has been only in recent decades that more Chinese leaders, facing separatist movements themselves, have increasingly emphasised the central importance of state authorities in notions of sovereignty. One recent definition states:

According to the standards of international relations, the meaning of national sovereignty is undoubtedly of the greatest importance for the entity of the nation state. The crucial principle is that the national authorities which rule over the people within a specific area are the ultimate authority for dealing with all domestic and foreign affairs faced by the nation state. These authorities alone enjoy these rights

and responsibilities, to the exclusion of any other actor. Within their territorial area, they can freely and independently stipulate their national system and form of government, their internal organisation, foreign policy, and the form of legally-sanctioned use of force.⁴

This statist emphasis in Chinese notions of sovereignty has shaped China's general conceptions of the role and structure of the UN in the post-Cold War era. Chinese leaders fear the UN becoming a 'supra-national government' and so insist that the UN remain a state-based organisation aimed primarily at reducing transaction costs, enhancing cooperation and defending the interests of sovereign states.⁵ Chinese analysts seek to distinguish between the dangers of a 'world order', a set of world regulations that might threaten sovereign authority, and a more desirable 'international order', which simply represents certain statist norms designed to ease and manage transactions between states.⁶

Growing acceptance of interdependence

However, the apparent uniformity in Chinese rhetoric masks an underlying tension and transition in current conceptions of sovereignty. One example of change has been in the economic realm. Since the mid-1980s, China's ongoing economic reforms have been based on the understanding that the country's overall national interests demand steadily increased global economic integration and interdependence. Despite concerns that such a development remains a 'double-edged sword', most Chinese officials and analysts seem to acquiesce in China's vastly reduced sovereign economic authority.⁷

Similarly, many Chinese analysts believe traditional, exclusive notions of state sovereignty should be made subordinate to advancing China's overall national interests. One exemplar of a group of influential younger scholars, Yan Xuetong, argues in a recent book that 'sovereignty is not synonymous with national interests anymore, rather it should be subject to overall national interests, not protected at all costs.'⁸ A growing number of scholars recognize that advancing the overall goal of enhancing China's comprehensive national power requires at least some level of cooperation with international society.⁹ This pattern of flexibility and change is mirrored by China's rising involvement in peacekeeping operations, particularly since the end of the Cold War.¹⁰

Chinese Peacekeeping

To be sure, compared with other countries, China's current level of involvement in peacekeeping remains minimal. China contributes less than 1% of both the overall UN budget and the UN peacekeeping budget. Over 35,000 UN military personnel are currently involved in 18 different missions, yet China fills only 53 of these slots on five of these missions. Indeed, in terms of financial contributions, number of peacekeepers, and its record of exchanging small concessions for maximum benefit, China is generally a very minor player in UN peacekeeping operations.

When considered over time, however, Chinese participation and interest has expanded significantly. Yongjin Zhang traces three phases in Chinese

peacekeeping. After a period of antagonism in the 1950s and 1960s, China retained an antipathy toward the UN, even after gaining entry in the 1970s. By the 1980s and 1990s, China had reached a level of 'active cooperation' with UN peacekeeping.¹¹ In 1981 China participated in its first vote on peacekeeping, voting in favour of the operation, and then in September 1988 it applied, and was soon accepted, for membership of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. China first assigned military observers to PKOs in November 1989 and offered its greatest contribution to date in the UN effort in Cambodia in 1992.¹² For the Cambodia operation, China sent military units abroad for the first time in a peacekeeping capacity, a total of 800 engineering troops accompanied by 49 military observers over a two-year period, 1992–1994.¹³ More recently, in May 1997, China agreed in principle to participate in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) standby arrangement.¹⁴ In sum, from 1989 to 2000, China has filled a total of 532 UN peacekeeping slots with military personnel and civilian police for nine missions (see Table 1). Due to the UN procedure of regular rotation, an estimated 1,200 Chinese soldiers and civilian police have participated in UN peacekeeping operations over the past ten years.¹⁵

Chinese officials have consistently maintained that two preconditions are necessary to gain Chinese support for initiating a peacekeeping operation: host nation acquiescence and Security Council approval. At least one Chinese writer has argued that after the UN debacle in Somalia, one additional condition – the *a priori* achievement of a political settlement before sending troops – should be added to this list.¹⁶ Chinese writers and officials also emphasise that once committed to an operation, the UN should avoid becoming a party to the dispute and use only the minimal level of force necessary.¹⁷

Increasing flexibility

Despite such continuing limitation, upon careful inspection current Chinese standards exhibit flexibility in three areas: the types of cases subject to intervention; acceptable levels of force; and justifiable objectives. For example, the definition of 'host nation' used in China's 1998 White Paper on National Defence, *dangshi guo* (literally 'the state that is a party'), suggests that it is not necessary that all parties accept UN involvement.¹⁸ Such flexibility may be particularly important in cases where state authority is either highly disputed or effectively non-existent.

In considering acceptable means, the White Paper states that PKOs should not 'lightly undertake the use of force.' However, it does not specifically exclude certain military measures. A greater degree of pragmatism is also suggested by the assumption common in Chinese analysis, that each operation must establish its own rules of engagement on a case-by-case basis.¹⁹ Finally, China's somewhat legalistic concern with adhering to the 'spirit' of the UN Charter frees it to support some Chapter VII operations 'including blockades, trade embargoes, economic sanctions, all the way up to mobilising land, air or naval forces.'²⁰

Table 1 Chinese Participation in UN Peacekeeping

UN PKO		Chinese Contribution	
Dates of UN operation	Date of China's entry	Type	Number of Peacekeeping slots filled
UNTSO¹			
UN Truce Supervision Organisation			
June 1948–Present	November 1989	Military Observers	5 (currently deployed)
UNIKOM			
UN Iraq–Kuwait Observer Mission			
April 1991–Present	1991	Military Observers	20 (now down to 11 currently deployed)
MINURSO			
UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara			
April 1991–Present	1991	Military Observers	16 (currently deployed)
ONUMOZ			
UN Operation in Mozambique			
December 1992–December 1994	1993	Military Observers	10
UNAMIC			
UN Advance Mission in Cambodia			
October 1991–March 1992	December 1991	Military Observers	3 (2 became staff officers for UNTAC)
UNTAC			
UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia			
March 1992–September 1993	April 1992	Military Observers	47
		Engineering Troops	400 (2 separate rotations, a total of 800 served)
UNOMIL			
UN Observer Mission in Liberia			
September 1993–September 1997	October 1993	Military Observers	10 ²
UNAMISL			
UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone			
October 1999–Present	June 1999	Military Observers	6 (currently deployed)
UNTAET			
UN Transitional Administration in East Timor			
October 1999–Present	January 2000	Civilian Police	15 ³ (currently deployed)
TOTAL Number of Peacekeeping Slots Filled			532

Notes

¹ Supports various peace agreements in the Middle East including on the Golan Heights and on the Sinai Peninsula.

² This number is an approximation offered by Chinese officers based at the UN.

³ Forty more civilian police are expected to be deployed by Autumn 2000.

This greater practicality is also visible in Chinese discussions of justifiable objectives. Several studies in the West have criticised China's disregard for the ultimate goals sought by peacekeeping operations.²¹ Yet, more recent Chinese writings indicate instead a greater willingness to evaluate PKOs according to their contributions to the 'conditions of peace and stability'. China frequently justifies its resistance to humanitarian intervention with the argument that such interventions might foster domestic turbulence, civil wars, and even regional conflict.²² China's concerns about regional stability have increasingly been justified within its existing ideological formulations. In this context, if an intervention is perceived as likely to 'advance the condition of peace and stability,' according to one Chinese analyst, it is thus 'a just war.'²³ Interviews with Beijing-based strategists and former UN PKO participants suggest the priority of 'stability' over other conditions as an increasingly important factor in Chinese thinking.²⁴

Such Chinese rhetoric is frequently dismissed as empty phrases, designed to extract maximum political benefit at minimum cost.²⁵ To be sure, Chinese leaders often stress their cooperation with peacekeeping operations primarily as a means to enhance China's international reputation.²⁶ However, China's very desire to 'fit in' offers external actors an opportunity to encourage further participation that should be leveraged. But such efforts to draw China in must be based upon a realistic assessment of the specific objections and objectives that shape China's evolving policy on PKOs. Such assessments, in turn, require careful examination of Chinese policy in two important and recent cases: Kosovo and East Timor.

Kosovo and East Timor

As the Kosovo crisis worsened through 1998 and 1999, China encouraged local actors to manage the dispute in order to deflect claims of UN jurisdiction over this 'domestic' conflict. NATO's subsequent air campaign, carried out in the face of virulent Chinese objections, was undoubtedly a lesson fresh in Chinese minds as Beijing opted for a more flexible and engaged approach toward tension in East Timor. Chinese flexibility on the authorised level of force in East Timor and the use of national (non-UN) forces helped the UN ultimately to manage the international response. In sum, it seems that as long as the two core conditions of host nation acquiescence and Security Council approval are met, we should expect a slow yet steady rise in Chinese support for UN PKOs. One important caveat to this assertion remains the case of Taiwan. China has repeatedly used its UN veto to block the implementation of PKOs in states that established diplomatic ties with Taiwan, apparently regardless of the broader security issues involved.²⁷

Kosovo: Hard Lessons Learned

The international response to the Kosovo crisis was managed primarily by the six-power Contact Group, made up of France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. This group coordinated its operations with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but

maintained only limited contacts with the Security Council. Confident perhaps that Russian influence would restrain the group from undertaking military action, Chinese statements in the Security Council indicated that China was prepared to accept a region-based solution for dealing with the crisis in Kosovo.

Uninvolved with the Contact Group and less concerned than Russia about the problems of instability or Western influence in the Balkans, China's initial priority was to resist UN involvement in what it dubbed a domestic dispute, despite the obvious regional security and humanitarian implications. In explaining China's decision to abstain on a vote supporting the arms embargo on Serbia, Ambassador Shen Guofang argued that it was 'inappropriate to bring into the Council the differences between OSCE and FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia]', particularly since the situation did not threaten international peace and security and since it involved complicated 'ethnic issues'.²⁸

As the dispute worsened in the autumn of 1998, a pattern developed whereby the OSCE and the Contact Group would first take actions to pressure Serbia and subsequently seek the support of the Security Council. Increasingly worried about the marginalisation of the UN in this dispute, ensuing Chinese statements in the Council opposed both decisions 'made unilaterally without consulting the Security Council or seeking a Council authorisation' and 'using [a] Council Resolution to pressure FRY or interfere in its internal affairs.'²⁹ China's statement illustrates its concern to counter UN involvement in the Kosovo crisis while still resisting unilateral action that bypassed the UN. To reconcile these apparently contradictory objectives, China offered instead to support in the UN 'a well-focused technical resolution' negotiated on a regional level.³⁰

The subsequent negotiations at Rambouillet appeared to China, and indeed to much of the world, to offer a way out. With a possible accord in the works, Chinese rhetoric hinted that China would support an agreement on sending in peacekeepers if the Yugoslav authorities agreed. State-run media sources noted that despite its 'legitimate right to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity', Yugoslavia 'does not have the political, economic, or military capability to confront Western powers.'³¹ Chinese media also publicised China's participation in shaping a Security Council Presidential Statement that voiced support for the Rambouillet negotiations.³²

However, no agreement emerged from Rambouillet. Tired of Serbian stalling and concerned over the safety of up to 350,000 refugees, NATO began its air operations on 24 March. Chinese objections were threefold. First, with the 'domestic affair' now 'internationalised,' it evoked China's strong opposition to foreign involvement in domestic ethnic disputes for humanitarian reasons.³³ Secondly, the UN had been bypassed; NATO had dismissed the UN's authority to decide on threats to international peace and stability and when to undertake humanitarian intervention. Finally, military force had been employed to advance these goals.

During the bombing campaign, on 7 May, a US warplane unintentionally bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese citizens and wounding over twenty others. Immediately calling a rare emergency meeting of the Security Council, China's official attacks were vitriolic, calling the NATO act 'a crime of war that should be punished,' and hinting at possible military responses.³⁴ The authoritative 'Observer' and 'Commentator' columns in the *Renmin Ribao (People's Daily)* labeled the bombing a 'barbarian crime' and likened the US to Nazi Germany in its efforts to become 'Lord of the Earth.'³⁵ Accompanied by widespread public protests at the US Embassy and consulates in China, subsequent front-page columns decried the US 'global strategy for world hegemony,' and called the air campaign 'an aggressive war' that was 'groundless in morality or law'.³⁶

The embassy bombing is perhaps best understood as crystallising for Chinese leaders many of their previous objections to the NATO campaign, as well as broader concerns over growing US power. It may also be that the shock of the NATO campaign and especially the embassy bombing compelled Chinese strategists to seek new ways to ensure Chinese influence over the methods and processes of international intervention efforts. This impetus could evolve into a more activist Chinese position on peacekeeping affairs, including greater participation.

Throughout the Kosovo crisis, China's primary concern was to ensure that international organisations did not supplant the sole authority of national leaders to use force within their own territory. To avoid sanctioning UN intervention, Chinese leaders rejected a role for the UN in mediating a solution to Kosovo, deferring instead to regional actors. When the negotiations failed, Chinese complaints about the marginalisation of the UN reflected their own concerns over diminished influence in delineating the norms governing humanitarian intervention. China's stance on Kosovo thus contrasts sharply with its willingness to take a more active role in shaping the UN response in East Timor, a policy undoubtedly influenced to some degree by the worrisome lesson learned in Kosovo.

East Timor: Participation and Flexibility

Western scholars have emphasised China's reluctance to support 'non-traditional' UN interventions, including Chapter VII authorisation of 'all necessary means' and employing forces under national, rather than UN, command.³⁷ Yet in the case of East Timor, once China's prerequisite of Indonesian acquiescence was fulfilled, China played a supportive, unobtrusive role in shaping the UN response. China sent election observers, voted for sending in a multinational, non-UN force to quell the violence, and then contributed civilian police for the first time in a UN role. Chinese actions in the East Timor case suggest that the negative example of Kosovo, combined with China's geographic proximity to the conflict and initial commitment to the referendum in East Timor influenced China's decision to undertake this more active and supportive role.

After 23 years of restrictive control, in June 1998, Indonesia proposed limited autonomy for East Timor. An agreement between Indonesia and Portugal reached on 5 May 1999 gave the UN Secretary-General authority to administer a 'popular consultation' among the people of East Timor on the question of limited autonomy within Indonesia. In the 30 August elections administered by the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) over 78% percent of the population voted for independence instead of limited autonomy. Pro-integration militias, often supported by elements of the Indonesian security forces, incited violence throughout East Timor.

The Security Council concluded that Indonesian authorities were ineffective in responding to the violence, and a visiting UN mission convinced Indonesia to allow a multinational, non-UN force authorised by the Security Council to restore order. The Security Council quickly authorised the Australian-led International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support UNAMET, and to facilitate humanitarian-assistance operations.³⁸

As a contributor of observers to East Timor's elections, China shared the general concern within the Security Council about the violence. Most notably, China supported a statement just following the elections that 'the Council is ready to consider sympathetically *any* proposal from the Secretary-General to ensure the peaceful implementation of the popular consultation process.'³⁹ The subsequent Australian proposal was to send in a multinational force under UN authorisation. Both the Iraqi and Cuban objections in the debate echoed familiar Chinese concerns with the use of force for humanitarian purposes and unequal distribution of peacekeeping resources.⁴⁰

In sharp contrast, China indicated its support for the elections in East Timor, arguing that the will of the population should be respected. China's senior representative to the UN, Qin Huasun, stated that China was 'gravely concerned over the continuing violence and resulting humanitarian crisis.' He emphasised that 'the issue of East Timor must be solved through the United Nations.' He argued that with Indonesian consent and the endorsement of the Security Council, forces should be sent, and promised that, 'China is willing to be actively involved in United Nations efforts in this connection.'⁴¹ The next day China committed itself to sending civilian police to take part in the subsequent UN mission in East Timor.⁴²

China's statements and actions indicated that as long as both host nation acquiescence and the UN authorisation were realised, they were willing actively to support the intervention of non-UN troops with the authorisation to use 'all necessary means' to address humanitarian concerns. China's support in this regard was rare, but not unprecedented. In the 1992 case of Somalia, when the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) proved unable to manage the disputes between feuding warlords, China voted to approve a US-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF), designed to establish a secure environment in Somalia.⁴³ Although Chinese officials predictably emphasised the uniqueness of this decision, the parallels with East Timor suggest its potency as a precedent. The

lessons of Somalia also seemed to shape Chinese policy on the scope of the intervention in East Timor. During the East Timor crisis, Chinese officials argued that intervening rapidly with a significant number of well-trained troops with an expansive mandate but limited time frame was the best way to avoid the pitfalls of Somalia.⁴⁴

Evaluating Chinese Actions

Much of the significance of China's role in East Timor comes not from what China said, but what it left unsaid. In contrast to the Kosovo case, China's statements on East Timor were few in number, brief in length, and modest in tone. China's principal media offered no public critiques of the mortal force employed by Australian troops, despite repeated Thai criticisms.⁴⁵ Unlike numerous previous attacks on the expense and expanse of UN peacekeeping operations, China made no such criticisms of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), established with the goal of steadily replacing INTERFET's military role in East Timor and whose bill was expected to reach over \$1 billion a year.⁴⁶ This minimalist, yet cooperative, role suggests not a dramatic transformation but rather the possibility of positive evolution in Chinese cooperation.

The international response to East Timor clearly did not challenge China's core principles on UN intervention. However, Chinese support for UN intervention on humanitarian grounds, for the use of force to establish stability, and for regional-level responses under national, non-UN leadership did indicate greater flexibility. A range of factors are likely to have been responsible for China's decisions. Geographic proximity; a desire to respond in some way to anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia; initial involvement with the voting process; and a desire to retain UN authority, and thus Chinese influence, over issues of intervention and the use of force were all likely factors in China's ultimate policy choices. Notably, most of these key factors were also present in China's most significant peacekeeping contribution to date, in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993. This continuity suggests the importance of these factors as determinants of China's peacekeeping policy.

The Evolving Bureaucratic Environment

Another factor shaping that policy is the domestic environment in which decisions are made. Despite a surge of scholarly interest in the domestic sources of Chinese foreign policy, little attention has been paid to explaining how those factors affect Beijing's views of peacekeeping.⁴⁷

As usual for China's highly centralised bureaucratic structures, key decisions on peacekeeping are made largely by top leaders in Beijing. In order to facilitate Chinese participation however, China has developed a small group of People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers stationed both in China and abroad who have expertise in peacekeeping issues. Spread both geographically and organisationally across different sectors of the Chinese government, such officers provide information for Beijing, facilitate coordination with the UN, and direct China's expanding training programmes. Although information on

these processes and individuals is only just emerging, exploring their role may provide one important key to understanding China's policies.

Institutions and Processes in Domestic Decision-making

Two groups of PLA officers offer much of China's current expertise and experience on peacekeeping issues. The first group consists of officers based at the Office of Peacekeeping in China, located under the PLA's General Staff Headquarters.⁴⁸ The office is lightly staffed with perhaps four or five staff officers and headed by a senior colonel. It has a range of responsibilities, including selecting peacekeepers, monitoring peacekeeping developments, and communicating with relevant branches and offices both inside and outside China. These tasks are augmented by the work of Chinese military officers serving with the Chinese mission at the UN in New York. These officers play an important role both in representing Chinese policies in the UN and in providing information and expertise on peacekeeping for top decisionmakers in Beijing. Both organisations claim to play a limited lobbying role in urging their superiors within the PLA to give more serious and sustained consideration to China's peacekeeping role.⁴⁹

Forward progress on any peacekeeping proposal must first await the fulfillment of the military's stringent concerns on issues such as security, transportation, and safety. The PLA General Staff must then give its approval, after which it confers with the State Council and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On particularly controversial issues, the Central Military Commission and possibly even the Standing Committee of the Politburo must also agree.⁵⁰ The sclerotic pace of this bureaucratic process often impedes Chinese participation. In the case of East Timor, for example, although both the Office of Peacekeeping and the PLA officers based at the UN in New York supported sending military observers, by the time the central authorities in Beijing issued their approval, all the UN slots had already been filled.⁵¹

Typical of a broader trend in Chinese politics, a few of these emerging 'technocrats' with expertise in peacekeeping issues are slowly building cross-bureaucratic links with like-minded officials in other ministries. For example, officers affiliated with the PKO office explain that while the office's low-ranking status has stymied their advocacy efforts within the PLA, they have found willing bureaucratic allies within branches of the Foreign Ministry. This is the ministry responsible for sending a wide variety of civilian officials to support different UN missions abroad, such as the eight civilian officials they placed within the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) administration.⁵² As a growing number of Chinese officials gain personal experience and professional interest in peacekeeping issues, it seems likely that such cross-bureaucratic alliances will continue to develop.

Progress and Impediments in Chinese Participation

One of the clearest indicators of Chinese commitment to participating in peacekeeping activities has been the establishment and expansion of training programmes for peacekeepers in China. The Office of Peacekeeping helps

administer, staff, and support the PLA's peacekeeping training programme, based at the military's International Relations Academy in Nanjing. This facility is closely associated with the China's 'er bu', or defence intelligence and defence attaché system. Since 1989 about ten of these three month-long programmes have been run. The peacekeeping office in Beijing selects about forty-five people, takes them out of their regular units and supervises the training programme. Classes are held on topics such as PKO principles, the UN Charter, how to write reports, how to organise patrols, medical and communications training, and even specific job training such as driving and intensive language study. To date, students have not been taught rules of engagement, as the programme emphasises training military observers rather than UN soldiers.⁵³

Most recently, the Public Security Bureau, China's national police force, established its own training programme in Nanjing. The PLA helped establish and run the first round of these classes, but now the Public Security Bureau is administering the programme independently. Students are trained for UN civilian police duties such as conducting arrests, enforcing laws and training local police. The 15 Chinese police officers already sent to take part in the East Timor mission were trained under this programme, as were forty additional officers preparing to leave for East Timor.⁵⁴

The establishment of a viable police presence in UN operations gives China a level of contribution greater than that of observers, and yet less controversial than sending troops. This capability may enable China to be more flexible, innovative and proactive in its participation in future peacekeeping operations. Having initiated this police-training programme on its own, China is clearly seeking ways to enhance its contribution to peacekeeping, a development that should be encouraged. However, China's ongoing limitations and reticence are made clear by a quick survey of China's participation in the standby arrangement.

The UN Standby Arrangement

In May 1997, China agreed in principle to participate in the UN DPKO's standby arrangement, pledging to contribute military observers, civilian police, engineers, medical personnel, transport and other support services.⁵⁵ However, China has yet to even provide a list of its capabilities or planning data, as the DPKO requires.⁵⁶ Originally viewed as a hopeful sign of China's expanding peacekeeping role, Beijing's reticence illustrates a continued shallowness of commitment.

China's limited participation in the standby arrangement (and to peacekeeping overall) is also due to an array of both conceptual and practical obstacles. To begin with, the PLA, like armies of other states, is concerned about 'bodybags': the political implications of casualties incurred, especially among single-child, only-son families.⁵⁷ The Chinese military is also concerned with the levels of transparency that might be required and with the expenditure of scarce resources on peacekeeping rather than on other priorities.

Simple logistics also stand in the way. The standby arrangement requires that troops be trained and ready within 30–60 days of a UN request. The UN will not pay for transportation, nor will it fund the troops for the first 30–60 days after the troops are in the country where the operation is taking place. For this reason, some experts expect that the standby arrangements will accelerate the regionalisation of PKO responses, as in Africa.⁵⁸ Other Chinese analysts argue the arrangement's greater costs and requirements are likely to further enhance Western domination of PKO operations, thus justifying China's resistance to the programme.⁵⁹ In any event, some Chinese officers explain that China simply does not have the requisite air- or sea-lift capacity to transport efficiently a significantly large number of troops over transcontinental and transoceanic distances.

In addition to such logistical difficulties, the PLA has problems retaining enough qualified officers with the necessary language skills. After undergoing peacekeeping training, many officers disperse to military schools as instructors, to border regions and to China's embassies and missions abroad. Those who are promoted are often difficult to recall and/or to retain on permanent 'alert', as the UN's stand-by agreement would require. The pool created by this training programme is thus drying up.⁶⁰

Chinese participation is further limited by a problem familiar to students of the PLA, an unwillingness to expand military transparency even on low-cost, high-benefit issues. China's White Paper, for example, touts China's rhetorical commitments to peacekeeping operations without even mentioning the ongoing training efforts in Nanjing.⁶¹ Both practical and cultural, this level of suspicion can only be reduced through extensive and sustained contacts between the PLA and other militaries, especially those favorably disposed to peacekeeping norms and missions.

The Future of Chinese Peacekeeping

China now has established four levels of involvement in peacekeeping: provision of civilian officials, military observers, police units, and military forces. It also has a small but dedicated community favouring expanded Chinese participation. Most significantly, peacekeeping accords with some of the government's larger goals: enhancing cooperation and reducing distrust of China while more firmly establishing China's Great Power image within the international community. This may open the window for focused policy initiatives aimed at integrating China more actively into the international community through peacekeeping-related activities. Such policies could include four steps:

1. Encourage greater Chinese involvement in the UN DPKO and on PKOs, in particular on issues where their participation would not be very controversial.

The UN DPKO is responsible for monitoring all ongoing and possible peacekeeping operations, and making assessment reports to the Secretary-General and the Security Council. As of this writing, China currently has no

officers working for the DPKO, having recently lost its sole position on the influential 'Mission Planning Unit.' By fostering greater Chinese involvement in this unit, and similar institutions such as the 'Lessons Learned Unit' of the DPKO, China would be likely to gain an early stake in supporting subsequent operations, an important factor in Chinese participation in the operations in both East Timor and Cambodia.

2. Promote peacekeeping-related military-to-military exchanges between China and countries which have both substantial peacekeeping capabilities and good relations with China.

Over the past two decades, China has dramatically expanded its military-to-military ties as the PLA has become more professional and more internationally aware.⁶² Outside observers could build upon this trend in a positive way by encouraging greater cooperation between China and some of the leading peacekeeping contributor states, including Poland, Bangladesh, Austria, Canada, the Scandinavian countries and Australia. To date, British, Canadian and Australian officials have expressed interest in cooperating more closely with China on peacekeeping.⁶³ Britain's efforts bore fruit in June 2000, when China and Britain co-hosted a seminar in Beijing on the future of peacekeeping.⁶⁴ Further expanding this policy offers the possibility of multilateral cooperation in engaging China in a low-cost and non-controversial manner.

3. Use UN PKO training centers around the world to help train Chinese peacekeepers.

The UN has rapidly expanded its peacekeeping-training programmes, which have helped establish 20 new forces since 1995.⁶⁵ A greater number of the training materials could be produced in Chinese, and provided to the programme in Nanjing. Only a few Chinese peacekeepers have been trained at UN centres to date, but with funding assistance and outreach efforts, these numbers could be significantly expanded. Efforts to place foreign officers within Chinese training schools as visiting lecturers would be an effective long-term goal aimed at further enmeshing China within the global peacekeeping-training regime.

4. Encourage the Chinese themselves to increase openness and exchanges with other peacekeeping forces.

This effort can not simply be a one-way street. The Chinese will need to accept a greater degree of transparency and reduce their minimalist stance toward peacekeeping. After initial encouragement and incentives, only a programme of reciprocity whereby Chinese efforts to contribute are rewarded in kind will be effective. China wants to be accepted by the international community, to gain access to assistance and markets, and to be listened to on key issues of world order in the United Nations. As part of a larger programme of balanced cooperation and accommodation, Chinese participation in peacekeeping should be selectively rewarded.

Conclusion

Enhanced Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping operations can make a dual contribution: fostering China's integration into the global community while facilitating UN peacekeeping efforts. As peacekeeping continues to evolve toward 'coalitions of the willing,' greater Chinese participation and support will ease the implementation of such operations. Furthermore, as China's military power increases, the international community should value opportunities that encourage Beijing to shoulder greater responsibility for regional peace and a more stable world order.

More broadly, the international community needs to take note of how China's future approach to peacekeeping might signal Beijing's more flexible and pragmatic approach to questions of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention. To be sure, such international encouragement needs to be tempered with a heavy dose of realism, and a sober understanding of China's hard-headed views on Taiwan's sovereignty. Nonetheless, China's approach across a range of other critical issues – including trade, foreign direct investment, Hong Kong governance and dealing with transnational threats such as illicit narcotic flows and international crime – suggests that Beijing adheres to a looser definition of 'sovereignty' than ever before. This evolution is likely to continue – although certainly not always smoothly. China's participation in peacekeeping will be a significant indicator for assessing this important trend.

Notes

¹ Samuel S. Kim, 'China and the United Nations,' in Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg (eds.), *China Joins the World, Progress and Prospects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), pp. 42–90; M. Taylor Fravel, 'China's Attitude Toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Since 1989', *Asian Survey* vol. 36, no. 11, November 1996, pp. 1102–1122; Nigel Thalakada, 'China's Voting Pattern in the Security Council, 1990–1995,' in Bruce Russett (ed.), *The Once and Future Security Council* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 83–118. Despite his generally conservative depiction of China's UN policy, Kim's recent work does conclude that the evolution in both China's domestic structures and its foreign policy 'provides some ground for cautious optimism about gradually cracking the absolute and exclusive hard shell of state sovereignty.' Kim, 'China and the United Nations,' p. 82.

² Samuel S. Kim, 'Sovereignty in the Chinese Image of World Order,' in R. St. J. Macdonald (ed.), *Essays in Honor of Wang Tieya* (UK: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), pp. 425–445.

³ Pan Shen, 'Guanyu minzu zijuequan de yixie sikao' ('Some Thoughts on the Right of National Self-Determination'), *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu (International Studies)*, no. 2, 1997, p. 38.

⁴ Guo Longlong, et al. *Lianhe guo xinlun (New Theories About the United Nations)* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), pp. 14–15.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15. See also: Zhang Jian, 'Lianheguo weihe xingdong de lishi yu xianzhuang' ('The History and Current State of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations'), *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu (International Studies)*, no. 4, 1994, p. 14.

⁶ Kim, 'Sovereignty in the Chinese Image,' p. 430.

⁷ For the quote and one example, see Chen Dezhaoh, 'Jingji quanqiu hua dui zhongguo de jiyu yu tiaozhan' ('The

Opportunities and Challenges for China Posed by Economic Globalization'), *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu (International Studies)* no. 3, 1999, p. 9. To note the change, consider the transformation evident in Yan Xuetong's own writings. Yan Xuetong, 'China's Security After the Cold War,' *Contemporary International Relations*, vol. 3, no. 5, May 1993, pp. 1–16; Yan Xuetong *Zhongguo guojia liyi fenxi (Analysis of China's National Interests)* (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1996).

⁸ Yan, *Analysis of China's National Interests*, p. 217.

⁹ Li Shaojun, 'Guoji anquan moshi yu guojia de anquan zhanlue xuanze' ('National Security Models and Options for National Security Strategy') *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi (World Economics and Politics)*, no. 6, 1996, p. 7.

¹⁰ Samuel S. Kim notes, 'Unless directly challenged, Beijing has been remarkably willing to shelve the issue of sovereignty in the pursuit of national interests.' Kim, 'Sovereignty in the Chinese Image of the New World Order', p. 432. For past examples of Chinese pragmatism in the UN, see also June Teufel Dryer, *China's Political System: Modernization and Tradition* (New York: Paragon House, 1993), p. 415.

¹¹ Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 139. In line with his theory of China's 'mini-max' voting record in the UN, Samuel S. Kim is more cautious, calling the period from 1990 to the present one of 'contingent support/minimal participation.' Kim, 'China and the United Nations,' p. 53, 61.

¹² Kenneth W. Allen and Eric A. McVadon, 'China's Foreign Military Relations,' Report #33 (Washington DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, October 1999), p. 27.

¹³ Although armed with side weapons, these troops were mostly responsible for

rebuilding roads, bridges and airfields. Interviews with PLA officials at the UN, New York, January 2000.

¹⁴ *Zhongguo de guofang (China's National Defence)* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, People's Republic of China, July 1998), p. 40.

¹⁵ This figure represents both our own calculations and the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s own estimates. Huang Caihong and Xiao Pu, 'Reform Has Molded Crack Troops – Roundup on PLA – Building Successes in Two Decades of Reform and Opening,' *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* (3 December 1998), FBIS-CHI-98-343. An estimate of 1,500 was given by a PLA official based in New York who is responsible for PKO planning. Interview, June 2000.

¹⁶ Sun Wei, 'Peace-Keeping or Peace-Enforcing?' *Beijing Review*, 24 July 1995, p. 20.

¹⁷ *China's National Defence*; Guo, 'New Theories About the United Nations' p. 122; Zhang, 'The History and Current State of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,' p. 9; and Shao Zhongwei, 'Peacekeeping on Agenda', *China Daily*, 27 June 2000, available from www.chinadaily.com.cn/.

¹⁸ This lowered standard is common in Chinese writings. See Zhang, 'The History and Current State of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,' p. 9.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 9.

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 8.

²¹ Samuel S. Kim, 'China and the Third World,' in Kim, (ed.), *China and the World: China's Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 132–133; see also Fravel, 'China's Attitude Toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Since 1989', p. 1121; and Thalakada, 'China's Voting Pattern in the Security Council, 1990–1995', pp. 86–87.

²² Pan, 'Some Thoughts on the Right of National Self-Determination', pp. 40–41.

²³ Cao Xufei, 'Tupo zhanzheng bianyuan:

sikao yu chaoyue' ('The Breakthrough in the Brink of War: Thinking and Transcending'), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi (World Economy and Politics)*, 14 June, 1999, no. 6 (Overall # 226), p. 34. Cao is a professor in the International Relations Department of Fudan University, Shanghai.

²⁴ Interviews with PLA officials, New York and Beijing, January 2000.

²⁵ See Kim, 'China and the Third World,' pp. 141–142.

²⁶ China's desire to be accepted by the international community is seen as a foreign-policy determinant of increasing significance. For one such example, see: Michael D. Swaine and Alastair Iain Johnston, 'China and Arms Control Institutions,' in Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg (eds.) *China Joins the World: Progress and Prospects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), pp. 90–136.

²⁷ Small successes for Taiwan's 'dollar diplomacy' have elicited sharp Chinese reactions. After Haiti invited Taiwan's Vice-President to its presidential inauguration on 7 February 1996, China held up a subsequent peacekeeping operation for several weeks. See Barbara Crossette, 'UN Mission is Reprieved', *New York Times*, 1 March 1996, A 8. After Guatemala recognised Taiwan in January 1997, China vetoed a proposed UN peacekeeping mission to the area, although it subsequently reversed its vote. Finally, during the Kosovo crisis, Macedonia established diplomatic relations with Taiwan on 27 January 1999. China subsequently vetoed a proposed resolution to extend the UN force then safeguarding Macedonia's borders (UNPREDEP), despite general condemnation of China in the UN Security Council. See UN Doc. S/PV.3982, 25 February 1999, and Deborah Kuo, 'MOFA's Wu Stresses Taiwan–Macedonia Ties Firm, Solid', Taiwan Central News Agency, 22 February 1999,

FBIS-CHI-1999-0222.

²⁸ UN Doc. S/PV/3868, 31 March 1998, and S/RES/1160, 31 March 1998.

²⁹ 'Statement by Ambassador Qin Huasun, Permanent Representative of China to the UN At Security Council Meeting on the Question of Kosovo', 24 October 1998, available at <http://www.un.int/china/sckosovo.html>. Qin was discussing UN Doc. S/RES/1203, 24 October 1998.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ 'Prolongation of Kosovo Peace Talks Analysed,' Beijing Central People's Radio Network, 21 February 1999 (FBIS-CHI-1999-0222).

³² 'UNSC Voices Satisfaction With Rambouillet Accords' *Xinhua*, 23 February 1999 (FBIS-CHI-1999-0223).

³³ One day after the bombing began, a *People's Daily* article illustrated the dangerous implications that many Chinese leaders saw for the Taiwan issue. 'The Yugoslav Federation leaders have repeatedly announced that Kosovo is an inseparable part of Serb territory and they will not allow Kosovo to break away or to become a "state within a state"; the Kosovo problem is an internal affair of the Yugoslav Federation, and they resolutely oppose the internationalization of this problem; they are willing to hold a dialogue with ethnic Albanian representatives, but the criminal activities of illegal armed organisations must be punished according to law. For their part, the ethnic Albanian leaders have consistently demanded Kosovo independence, demanded intervention by the international community, and stressed that they will only negotiate with the Serbian authorities with the participation of representatives of the international community.' 'Answering Readers' Questions on the Kosovo Crisis', *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, 25 March 1999, p. 6i.

³⁴ UN Doc. S/PV/4000, 8 May 1999.

³⁵ 'Renmin Ribao Commentator on Embassy Bombing', *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, Internet Version, 9 May 1999, FBIS-CHI-1999-0509, and Observer, 'On the New Developments of US Hegemonism,' *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, May 27, 1999, p. A1; 'China Says U.S. Wants to Become Lord of the Earth', *Reuters*, 22 June 1999.

³⁶ Erik Eckholm, 'Bombing May Have Hardened China's Line', *New York Times*, 18 May 1999, available from www.nytimes.com.

³⁷ Fravel, 'China's Attitude Toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Since 1989'.

³⁸ <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/UntaetB.html>.

³⁹ UN Doc. S/PRST/1999/27 (3 September 1999) and S/PV.4042, 3 September 1999. Italics added.

⁴⁰ UN Doc. S/PV/ 4043, 11 September 1999.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Fifteen police arrived in January. 'Spokesman on Joining UN East Timor Special Mission', Beijing Xinhua Hong Kong Service, 16 September 1999 (FBIS-CHI-1999-0916), and Jia Hepeng, 'PRC Deploys Its First Peace Police', *China Daily*, Internet Version, 12 January 2000.

⁴³ Fravel, 'China's Attitude Toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations Since 1989', p. 1113.

⁴⁴ Interview with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁴⁵ 'Australian Troops Kill Two Militiamen in E. Timor Clashes' Hong Kong, AFP (6 October 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-1006; 'Interfet Foot Patrol Kill Militiaman in East Timor', Hong Kong AFP, 10 October 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-1010; 'Australian Troops Arrest "High-ranking" Militia Leader', Hong Kong AFP, 24 September 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-0924. For criticisms, see: 'Thai Military: Australian Interfet Troops Act "Coarsely"', *Jakarta Kompas*, Internet Version (in Indonesian), 25 September 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-0924.

⁴⁶ The largest UN PKO in operation, as of October 1998, UNTAET, consisted of 8,950 troops with 200 military observers and 1,640 police. 'UN Takes Over Control of East Timor', Hong Kong AFP, 26 October 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-1026.

⁴⁷ Two recent examples of this interest include: David M. Lampton, *China's Foreign and Security Policy Decisionmaking In An Era of Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming); and Robert S. Ross, *After the Cold War: Domestic Factors and US-China Relations* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

⁴⁸ Although the office is probably labeled foreign affairs (*wai shi*), it is distinct from the Foreign Affairs Offices (*wai shi qu*), which manage relations with foreigners. This may help explain why outside observers are generally unfamiliar with the Office of Peacekeeping. Interviews with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁴⁹ Interviews with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ China is currently on the waiting list for sending military observers, although they are actively planning to send an additional 40 civilian police within one to two months. Interview with Chinese officer based at UN in New York, June 2000.

⁵² One Chinese official was the chief political advisor for the political administrator for UNTAC, another was affiliated with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Interview with Chinese officer based at the UN in New York, June 2000.

⁵³ Interviews with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*; Interview with Chinese officer based at the UN, New York, June 2000.

⁵⁵ *China's National Defence*, p. 40.

⁵⁶ To date, 65 out of a total 87 states that originally pledged support have

provided specific information on capabilities or planning data. <http://un.org./DEPTS/dpko>.

⁵⁷ PLA officers cited the case of Cambodia, where two soldiers and one officer died, as an instance where such fears were realised. Interviews with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Guo, *New Theories About the United Nations*, p.121.

⁶⁰ The incentives for Chinese officers to participate in PKOs are mixed. Once they leave their unit, they 'lose' their position. This means that they are not only missing promotion opportunities, but also could lose their job in the PLA, due to the current force reduction.

However, many officers appreciate the opportunity to travel abroad, meet foreigners and practice their English. Most notably, they keep their UN pay (about US\$160 a day in Cambodia). Regular troops do not keep their UN pay, but receive instead their regular PLA salary. Interviews with PLA officials, New York, January 2000.

⁶¹ *China's National Defence*. These programmes are, however, summarily mentioned on the DPKO's website, <http://un.org/DEPTS/dpko>, information which the PLA officers at the UN provided to the DPKO voluntarily. This development suggests that further DPKO involvement is likely to foster further expansion of such transparency measures.

⁶² Allen and McVadon, 'China's Foreign Military Relations.'

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶⁴ Shao, 'Peacekeeping on Agenda.'

⁶⁵ Harvey J. Langholtz, 'The Training and Assessment of UN Peacekeepers with Distance-Education Pedagogy', *United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Peaceworks* no. 29, July 1999, p. 37-38. www.usip.org.

