

Chinese Peace?

An Emergent Norm in African Peace Operations

Steven C. Y. Kuo

Abstract: The steady rise in Chinese participation in peace operations in Africa is a significant development in the post-Cold War collective security architecture. An aspect of China's rise and its challenge to the liberal global order is its contribution to post-conflict peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace-making in Africa, areas that have been dominated by the West. The purpose of this article is to bring together literatures that do not usually speak to one another: Chinese discourses on peacebuilding and the debate on the liberal peace in Africa. The subject of this article is the emerging "Chinese peace" discourse. By examining the "Chinese peace" — both its normative content and its on-the-ground participation in a comprehensive liberal peace project — as a part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) — this article begins to highlight differences, identify tensions, and recognize complementarities between the dominant liberal and the emergent Chinese approach to peacebuilding.

Keywords: Chinese peace; liberal peace; Sino-Africa relations; Chinese security policy; Liberia.

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Like the other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa) states, China operates both within and outside the liberal peace and is prone to both status quo and critical modes of behavior within comprehensive peace operations.¹ Identifying and exploring the ideological and normative contents of the Chinese peace and how it contradicts and/or compliments the liberal peace is important for the following reasons. First, the evolution of Chinese policy position toward peacekeeping operations — from non-participation, to engagement, to being an emergent norm-maker as indicated in Chinese participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) — offers an excellent case study of China's evolving security strategy and whether it is a revisionist or a status quo power.² Secondly, from the perspective of understanding China's rise to great power status, that a Chinese norm has been generated, which contradicts and complements the liberal norm, attests to China's rise and characterizes it as an emergent great power.³ Finally, as the only (self-identified) developing country in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), China has emerged to become a valuable source of materials, personnel as well as legitimacy to United Nations peace operations.⁴ Moreover, given China's own successful experience in poverty alleviation and post-conflict development (World War II, Chinese Civil War and various other domestic upheavals in the twentieth century) and its increasing presence and stake in Africa, the Chinese peace offers a potential alternative to the liberal peace and deserves closer study.⁵

This article is structured as follows. First, a discussion of evolving Chinese participation from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is presented.

¹O. Richmond and I. Tellidis, "The BRICS and International Peacebuilding and Statebuilding," *NOREF Report*, January 2013, <http://peacebuilding.no/Themes/Peacebuilding-in-practice/publications/The-BRICS-and-international-peacebuilding-and-statebuilding>.

²See Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003), pp. 5–56.

³He Yin, "Zhong Guo Jueqi yu Guoji Guifan Tixi [China Rising and International Norms System]," in Zhao Lei, ed., *New Strategy Research*, Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2013.

⁴He Yin, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations," (Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2007).

⁵Steven C. Y. Kuo, "Beijing's Understanding of African Security: Context and Limitation," *African Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (February 2012), pp. 24–43.

This is followed by an account of the conception of the Chinese peace. Thereafter, the Chinese on the ground in the form of Chinese participation in UNMIL is presented. Finally, perceptions of the Chinese peace by Liberians and Western aid workers in Liberia are presented.

From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding

A body of literature has emerged which accounts for the potentials and limitations and traces evolving Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping operations over the past two decades.⁶ Seven years after the first tentative Chinese participation in an African peace mission to monitor elections in Namibia, Fravel noted that "China's peacekeeping policy mirrors the leadership's domestic emphasis on maintaining legitimacy and power."⁷ Elaborating on China's concerns over sovereignty, Carlson points out two foundational positions held by the Chinese. First, Chinese scholars emphasize *Bainian Guochi* [the Century of Humiliation] and the Chinese loss of sovereignty during Western colonization. Second, Chinese foreign policy elites are apprehensive that developments in humanitarian intervention will set a precedent for the international community to intervene in the Taiwan issue.⁸ With reference to China's UNSC voting records, Stähle traces the easing of Chinese reluctance to support UN peace operations over the decade of the 1990s and concludes that China has become a confident supporter of peace operations in the new millennium. He notes this confidence was due to the Brahimi Report in 2000 where China's concerns

⁶See M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Attitude toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since 1989," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 11 (November 1996), pp. 1102–1121; Stefan Stähle, "China's Shifting Attitude Towards UN Peacekeeping Operations," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 195 (September 2008), pp. 631–655; Bates Gill and Chin Hao Huang, "China's Expanding Role in Peacekeeping: Prospects and Policy Implications," Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2009; Saferworld, *China's Growing Role in African Peace and Security* (London: Saferworld China Program, 2011).

⁷M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Attitude toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since 1989," p. 1121.

⁸Allen Carlson, "More than Just Saying No: China's Evolving Approach to Sovereignty and Intervention since Tiananmen," in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 217–241.

about sovereignty were addressed by placing restrictions on the use of force in peace support operations, limiting the role of pivotal states by clear mandate, and trying to address the root causes of the conflict.⁹ Gill has been a proponent of encouraging greater Chinese participation. He makes the liberal argument that this gives the West an opportunity to engage with China more closely on security issues, improve regional stability, military transparency and build confidence.¹⁰ However, there is skepticism as to whether the cooperative behavior by China on participating in Western-led peacekeeping can be sustained.¹¹ Arguing that participation in peacekeeping is China's way of demonstrating its commitment to its status as a responsible power, Richardson claims that we can expect China to remain committed to modest engagements in peacekeeping and that China has a potential to play a more constructive role in UN peacekeeping.¹²

He Yin, a Chinese scholar and experienced peacekeeper provides three strategic reasons accounting for China's increasing engagements with UNPKOs. First, it is a part of Beijing's strategy to project the image of China as a *fuzherendaguo* [responsible great power]. Second, in the face of unilateralism by the U.S. and its Western allies in the post-Cold War era, Beijing's efforts at bolstering the UN and the multilateralism it represents also serve to counterbalance a hegemonic West. Finally, given China's expanded economic interest, it is in China's interest to foster a peaceful international environment.¹³ Wu and Taylor observe that as Beijing has emerged as an economic superpower, China's position on UNPKOs has been normalized. However, continued Chinese concern about Western hegemony in Africa, as well as deep suspicion and mistrust between Western countries and China, mean that meaningful cooperation on UNPKOs remains

⁹Stefan Stähle, "China's Shifting Attitude Towards UN Peacekeeping Operations," pp. 631–655.

¹⁰J. Reilly and Bates Gill, "Sovereignty, Intervention and Peacekeeping: The View from Beijing," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (December 2000), pp. 41–60; Bates Gill and Chin Hao Huang, "China's Expanding Role in Peacekeeping".

¹¹Chin Hao Huang, "Principles and Praxis of China's Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (June 2011), pp. 257–270.

¹²C. Richardson, "A Responsible Power? China and the UN Peacekeeping Regime," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (June 2011), pp. 286–297.

¹³He Yin, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations".

problematic. On Chinese participation in African peacekeeping missions, it was noted that the UNSC and other international initiatives will “never be fully effective and meaningful without the participation of China.”¹⁴ The same report also noted that the “[o]ne area of peace operations where China has yet to play a significant role is in peacebuilding, i.e., the use of a wider spectrum of security, civilian, administrative, political, humanitarian, human rights and economic tools and interventions to build the foundations for longer term peace in post-conflict countries.”¹⁵

On the issue of expanding Chinese participation in peace operations to peacebuilding, Zhao Lei, a Chinese academic at the Communist Party School, writes,

China spent almost 40 years seeking to understand, accept and trust the UN and its peacekeeping operations. To China, the rapid changes and sensitive nature of peacebuilding exceeded its acceptance level, which inevitably resulted in China’s cautious attitudes toward peacebuilding. Yet along with the wider acceptance of peacebuilding by many states, China is beginning to embrace it as a stake holder.¹⁶

The existing literature on Chinese participation in UNPKOs focuses on Chinese participation in peacekeeping missions as indicated by figures (voting records, financial contribution, and troop numbers) and also on China’s strategic calculations concerning participation or the limitations of socialization. It does not account for China’s increasing participation in comprehensive peacebuilding missions. There is also a presumption that the current UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding regimes are without serious problems. Authors are eager to observe and commend China for its increasing participation in liberal peace missions but ignore the fact that Beijing has its own assessment of intractable conflicts in Africa and does not agree that the top-down imposition of democratic reforms by way of elections, capacity building, and constitutional changes will lead to sustainable peace.¹⁷

¹⁴Saferworld, *China’s Growing Role in African Peace and Security*, p. 71.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 350–351.

¹⁷Steven C. Y. Kuo, “Beijing’s Understanding of African Security,” pp. 24–43.

In other words, Anglo-Saxon commentators can be too eager to socialize Beijing to their neo-liberal mainstream view on peacebuilding in Africa and do not pause to consider that, as the most successful developing country in terms of economic growth and internal stability, China might offer norms, insights, and experiences that may be better suited to the local conditions and more welcomed by recipient countries. In addition, with a few exceptions, research into Chinese UNPKOs is seldom based on primary material in the form of on-the-ground interviews and Chinese language sources. As a result, there is precious little knowledge of Beijing's understanding of African security or how effective Chinese blue-helmeted missions have been. While many note Beijing's desire to project an image of a responsible great power as a foundational reason for greater UNPKO participation, there is as yet no assessment of whether China has been successful in its aim. Moving beyond figures and broad strategic aims of Chinese participation in peacekeeping, the gap in the existing literature is *how* China conducts peacebuilding and whether these blue-helmeted Chinese peacekeepers have been able to project the image of soft power desired by Beijing.

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The Liberal Peace and Other Emergent Peacebuilding Frameworks in Africa

Traditional peacekeeping aims "to contain conflicts and prevent them from escalating, and to maintain stability, so that political solution can be achieved between states."¹⁸ Its principle concern was war between states. In the post-Cold War era, peacebuilding operations began to develop and reflect "the idea that maintaining peace in post-conflict societies requires a multifaceted approach, with attention to a wide range of social, economic and institutional needs."¹⁹ The concept "peacebuilding" was first articulated by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his *Agenda for Peace* (1992) and heralded

¹⁸Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2009), p. 6.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 7.

the new state-building role for the UN. Since adopting the wider peace-building role, the liberal peace thesis has “permeated UN and international doctrine pertaining to peacebuilding.”²⁰

The term “liberal peace” was made popular in a number of largely critical accounts of contemporary peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace-making operations.²¹ The liberal peace rests upon a framework of “democracy, the rule of law, human rights, free trade and development.”²² It is the dominant form of peace-making and peacebuilding that is supported by leading states, international organizations, and international financial institutions.²³ The liberal peace thesis underlay UN documents such as the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*,²⁴ the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000), the High-Level Panel Report (United Nations, 2004), and the new UN peacebuilding commission. The liberal peace aims not only to maintain peace between states, as was the case with traditional peacekeeping, but to build peace within and between states “on the basis of liberal democracy and market economics.”²⁵

As a comprehensive and multifaceted operation, the liberal peace framework in practice involves activities such as promoting domestic security; strengthening governance and the rule of law; promoting development and humanitarian assistance; demobilization and disarmament of former combatants; stabilizing the economy; employment creation; repatriation of refugees; responding to food security; addressing health concerns; strengthening law and order; promoting democratic practices;

²⁰Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, “Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 38, No. 27 (March 2007), p. 28.

²¹See David Chandler, “Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the ‘Liberal Peace’,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2004), pp. 59–81; Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, “Liberal Hubris?”; Roger Mac Ginty, “Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-down and Bottom-up Peace,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (August 2010), pp. 391–412.

²²Oliver Richmond and Jason Franks, *Liberal Peace Transitions: Between State-building and Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

²³Roger Mac Ginty, “Hybrid Peace,” pp. 391–412.

²⁴See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace, Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* (New York: United Nations, 1995).

²⁵Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, p. 7.

bolstering institutions of justice and legislation; resuming public service delivery; addressing land reform claims; and redrafting and amending constitutions.²⁶ Critics of the liberal peace argue that despite this comprehensive list of activities, the liberal peace has failed in its promises of delivering welfare, social justice, and listening to local voices because Western peacebuilders favor their own goals and interests over local ones and only focus on building local institutions and supporting local elites.²⁷ Focusing her critique on Western intentions in Africa, Willett contends that while the West is ostensibly concerned with peace, it is built on the narrative that African underdevelopment and poverty breeds terrorism.²⁸ Concentrating on the African context, Taylor points out that the liberal peace assumes the existence of a Weberian state in Africa and ignores the neo-patrimonial nature of post-independence African politics.²⁹ Instead of guaranteeing peace and security, the African experience has shown that the liberal strategies such as elections, have in fact contributed to further violence on the continent.³⁰ Instead of offering security, democracy, rule of law to its recipients, it has offered resources to often predatory elites and only a “virtual peace” is built.³¹

Peacebuilding can be seen as “a political contest involving questions of authority, legitimacy, equality, and knowledge . . . peace [is] not as something to be discovered or imposed, but as a number of different and continually contested practices.”³² Alternative approaches to and practices of

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Oliver Richmond and Patrick Tom, “In search for Emancipatory Hybridity: The Case of Post-war Sierra Leone,” *Peacebuilding*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February 2013), pp. 239–255.

²⁸Susan Willett, “New Barbarians at the Gate: Losing the Liberal Peace in Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 32, No. 106 (2005), pp. 569–594.

²⁹Ian Taylor, “Earth Calling the Liberals: Locating the Political Culture of Sierra Leone as the Terrain for ‘Reform,’” in Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, 2007, pp. 159–177.

³⁰B. Osei-Hwedie, “China’s Re-engagement with Africa: The Search for Peace and Security,” in James Shikwati, ed., *China-Africa Partnership: The Quest for a Win-win Relationship* (Nairobi: Inter Region Economic Network, 2013).

³¹Oliver Richmond and Jason Franks, “Liberal Hubris?” pp. 27–48.

³²Devon Curtis, “Introduction: The Contested Politics of Peacebuilding,” in Divon Curtis and Gwinyayi Dzinesa, eds., *Peacebuilding, Power, and Politics in Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012).

peacebuilding exist and competed for authority and legitimacy in Africa. They range from ones that draw on local traditional and customary practices,³³ to the “illiberal peace” as carried out by the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) in Angola,³⁴ to various approaches adapted by rising BRICS countries.

The emergence of BRICS has begun to generate a shift in norms and practices of development cooperation, peacebuilding, and state-building.³⁵ Reluctant to call themselves donors and keen to accentuate the difference between them and traditional donors, BRICS countries depict themselves as “Southern development partners” pursuing a “win-win strategy.” Their approaches all have the common theme of emphasis on state sovereignty, solidarity, and mutual respect.³⁶

As the second largest economic power, a permanent member of the UNSC and the emergent great power, what are the norms and practices of the Chinese peace?

Conceptualizing the Chinese Peace: Sovereignty, Stability and State Directed Economic Development

On the issue of Chinese participation in UNPKOs, the debate is now moving beyond whether China is being socialized into and adapting liberal norms and toward the extent in which it is reshaping international order and challenging norms of the multilateral institutions from within.³⁷ If the

³³Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

³⁴Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, “Illiberal peacebuilding in Angola,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 2011), pp. 287–314.

³⁵Gregory China and Fahimul Quadir, “Introduction: Rising States, Rising Donors and the Global Aid Regime,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (January 2013), pp. 493–506; and O. Richmond and I. Tellidis, “The BRICS and International Peacebuilding and Statebuilding”.

³⁶Sarah Vaes and Huib Huyse, *New Voices on South-South Cooperation between Emerging Powers and Africa: African Civil Society Perspectives*, KU Leuven: HIVA-Research Institute for Work and Society, 2013.

³⁷Miwa Hirono and Marc Lanteigne, “Introduction: China and UN Peacekeeping,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (June 2011), p. 244.

liberal peace can be distilled to democracy, the rule of law, and neo-liberal free market economics, what underpins the nascent Chinese peace? What is the Chinese perspective on the liberal peace and how can China's own developmental experience be utilized in its participation in peacebuilding?

The Nascent Chinese Peace

Consensus has emerged among Chinese security scholars that participating in African peace operations is central to projecting China's identity as a responsible great power and consistent with Chinese national interest.³⁸ Therefore, it is reasonable to expect greater and deeper Chinese participation in African peacebuilding. The question remains, however, on *how* China thinks sustainable peace can best be built. Xu Weizhong of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations assesses current Chinese understanding of further participation in comprehensive peacebuilding operations as follows:

It is reasonable to expect greater and deeper Chinese participation in African peacebuilding.

China lacks experience in international security cooperation. There is not enough research on the issue of whether [China] should participate in more international security cooperation and how [China] is to cooperate. . . In the future, discussions need to be held on the breadth and depth of Chinese participation in [non-traditional] peacekeeping missions so that a policy and strategy can be found that both suits China's national condition and makes the greatest contribution to the world.³⁹ (Author's translation)

While Beijing has undeniably made great strides by taking part in multi-lateral peacebuilding operations, it is important to keep in mind that, like

³⁸See He Yin, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations," p. 48; Xu Weizong, "Zhongguo Canyu Feizhou De Anquan Hezuo Ji Qi Fazhan Qushi [Chinese Participation in African Security Cooperation and its Tendency]," *Xiya Feizhou* [West Asia and Africa], No. 11, 2010, pp. 11–16; Zhao Lei, "Wei Heping er Lai: Jiexi Zhongguo Canyu Feizhou Weihe Xingdong [Come for Peace: Analysis of China's Peacekeeping Operations in Africa]," *Waijiao Pinglun* [Foreign Affairs Review], No. 1, 2007, pp. 29–36.

³⁹Xu Weizong, "Zhongguo Canyu Feizhou De Anquan Hezuo Ji Qi Fazhan Qushi," pp. 11–16.

other states, Chinese participation is motivated by its own national interests. Discussing how China should expand its role in peacebuilding, Li Dongyan of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences emphasizes the importance of *zhongguosilu* [Chinese ideas] being incorporated:

Chinese participation should move beyond the model of “building roads, bridges, and hospitals,” especially with regard to thinking about non-traditional peacekeeping missions. Attempts should be made at experimenting with participating in new projects with a view that Chinese and Western thinking can *xianghucujin* [mutually promote] and *xianghubuchong* [complement each other].⁴⁰

In searching for these “Chinese ideas” or even a “Chinese model” that can be transplanted to Africa, it is important to be very cautious.⁴¹ As an alternative to the neo-liberal “Washington Consensus” economic model, Joshua Ramo coined the term “Beijing Consensus.”⁴² While this concept enjoyed some attention in the popular media, it was never embraced by the Chinese. Moreover, it was persuasively argued that the much touted concept of the Beijing Consensus is “a misguided and inaccurate summary of China’s actual reform experience.”⁴³ Kennedy points out, however, that as a conception of China’s developmental experience, the Beijing Consensus is “... nevertheless a useful touchstone to consider the evolution of developmental paradigms, compare China’s experience with that of others, identify the most distinctive features of China’s experience, and evaluate its significance for the development prospects of other countries and for international relations.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰Li Dongyan, “Zhongguo Canyu Lianheguo Weihe Guo Weihe Jianhe de Qianjing yu Lujing [China’s Approach and Prospect of Participation in UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding],” *Waijiao Pinglun* [Foreign Affairs Review], No. 3, 2010, pp. 1–14.

⁴¹Ian Taylor, *The International Relations of Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 76–78.

⁴²Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004).

⁴³Scott Kennedy, “The Myth of the Beijing Consensus,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 19, No. 65 (April 2010), p. 461.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

As China has increased its participation in UN peacekeeping missions and is now deepening its participation by participating in peacebuilding, it is important not to mistaken the nascent Chinese peace as a “model” or a “finished product.” Rather, by identifying the central tenets of the Chinese peace, I am merely noting the most distinctive features of China’s own developmental experience that the Chinese will likely continue to emphasize as it deepens its practices in post-conflict state-building and peacebuilding. To be sure, the Chinese peace is not necessarily established in competition with the liberal peace and it should not be construed from a binary perspective as a

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Chinese replacement for the liberal peace. Drawing on its developmental and aid experiences in Africa and based on self-interested foreign policy calculations, Beijing’s intention is to brand its peacebuilding efforts with a uniquely Chinese mark, distinct from Western powers so that its own interests can be served and Chinese soft power may be projected. Three distinctive characteristics are fundamental to present and future Chinese understanding of building sustainable peace: sovereignty, stability, and state-directed, infrastructure-led economic development.

Sovereignty

China’s evolving attitude toward collective security and peace operation from refusal to engagement pivots on its concept of sovereignty.⁴⁵ Chinese concern about Western interference dressed as humanitarian intervention is a consistent concern, and it is anxious that creeping interventionism may set a precedent for outside interference in its own “domestic” issues — the primary one being the Taiwan question.⁴⁶ Chinese reservation about

⁴⁵Allen Carlson, “More than Just Saying No”; M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s Attitude toward U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since 1989,” pp. 1102–1121; Zhu Liquan, “China’s Foreign Policy Debates,” *Chaiullot Papers* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, September 2010), pp. 44–47.

⁴⁶Wu Zhengyu and Ian Taylor, “From Refusal to Engagement: Chinese Contributions to Peacekeeping in Africa,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 2011), pp. 137–154.

encroaching interventionism in peace operations has historical roots in imperial China's loss of sovereignty to Western and Japanese colonization. It was during the Century of Humiliation when China faced an existential crisis that Chinese nationalism was born.⁴⁷ Along with continued economic growth, Chinese nationalism is the second pillar upon which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) relies for its legitimacy. Building its domestic legitimacy as the guardian of Chinese sovereignty and returning China to great power status through economic might, Beijing is hyper sensitive about any encroachment on its sovereignty or erosion of the principle itself. However, Beijing has always seen the UN as a source of international legitimacy. When China was branded the aggressor by the UNSC in 1950 during the Korean War and when the UN General Assembly condemned its invasion of Tibet in 1959, Beijing was careful to aim its protest at "imperialist manipulation and interference" by the U.S. and other capitalist powers.⁴⁸ Beijing was consistent in criticizing the U.S., French, British, and Belgium interference in the Third World through the instrument of UNPKOs in the 1960s.⁴⁹ While the CCP has always been very concerned about the trend of increasing interventionism in UN peace operations, it has always appreciated that participation in UN peace operations can enhance Beijing's international legitimacy, demonstrate its peaceful intentions, and offer an opportunity to exercise leadership on the world's stage.

According to Zhu Liquan, Chinese IR scholars now accept that sovereignty is a product of history and should be allowed to develop.⁵⁰ However, the Chinese position is that sovereignty needs to remain the *hexinyuanze*

⁴⁷Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 49.

⁴⁸See Lincoln P. Bloomfield, "China, the United States and the United Nations," *International Organization*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 1966), pp. 653–676; Byron S. Weng, "Communist China's Changing Attitudes toward the United Nations," *International Organizations*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 1966), pp. 678–681.

⁴⁹Byron Tzou, "The PRC's Policy toward UN Peacekeeping Operations," *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (1998), pp. 102–122.

⁵⁰Zhu Liquan, "China's Foreign Policy Debates," *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, September 2010, pp. 44–47.

[core principle] of international order.⁵¹ Wang observes that Western and developing countries (China) have different considerations when developing the concept of sovereignty:

Those countries that have experienced colonialism or have been oppressed by imperialism are more sensitive and circumspect on the issue of sovereignty. Western powers have not been subject to colonialism and therefore do not feel empathy toward the developing countries. They advocate their positions driven by power politics and market needs.⁵² (Author's translation)

Choosing a "third way" between absolute sovereignty and a post-Westphalian understanding, another Chinese IR scholar proposes a third model:

This model can simultaneously combine the ideals of modern liberal internationalism and reflect the needs of weaker developing countries to protect their interests. Based on the post-World War II principle of sovereign equality, it pursues the greatest prospect for cooperation under globalization, and base global governance on states giving up a part of its sovereignty.⁵³ (Author's translation)

Beijing has deftly used its permanent position on the UNSC and through increasing participation in UN peace operations (peacekeeping, peace-building, and peace-making) to shape and advance an international order that maintain state sovereignty as the core principle. Even when it was under immense international pressure during the Darfur Crisis in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Beijing remained steadfast that the

⁵¹Ren Bingqiang, *Quanzhihua Guojia Zhuquan yu Gonggong Zhengce* [Globalization, State Sovereignty and Public Policy] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007).

⁵²Wang Yizhou, "Zhuquan Fanchou zai Sikao [Rethinking Categories of Sovereignty]," *Ouzhou* [Europe], Vol. 6, 2010, pp. 4–11.

⁵³Li Qiang, "Quanzhihua, Zhuquan Guojia yu Shijie Zhengzhi Zhixu [Globalization, Sovereign States and Modern World Order]," *Zhanlue yu Guanli* [Strategy and Management], Vol. 2, 2001, pp. 13–24.

principle of sovereignty cannot be violated and that the consent of Khartoum was necessary before an UN-AU hybrid force could be dispatched to Darfur.⁵⁴ Today, as Chinese power grows and China has fewer concerns about potential interference in its own domestic affairs; as it seeks a greater role in reshaping international order, it is increasingly enthusiastic to demonstrate that it is a bona fide force for peace and that the Chinese practice of peacebuilding can be successful.

Political Stability

The current Chinese economic and other assistance to Africa is an externalization of its own developmental experiences gained since the reform and opening-up era.⁵⁵ Similarly, Beijing externalizes its own domestic political experience when analyzing African insecurity.⁵⁶ By Beijing's reckoning, political stability is the *conditio sine qua non* of development. This analysis can be traced to the Deng Xiaoping era, when he set China's path to development, saying to former U.S. President Carter that:

China's main objective is to develop, shake off backwardness, strengthen the nation, and gradually raise the standard of living. *In order to accomplish this, it is essential to have a stable political environment. Without that, nothing can be accomplished.* China has its own special conditions, which I am certain we in China understand somewhat better than our foreign friends do.⁵⁷

Deng's developmental doctrine of "political stability first" has remained fundamental and can be seen in a 2008 editorial in the *People's Daily* titled

⁵⁴Jonathan Holslag, "China's Diplomatic Manoeuvring on the Question of Darfur," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 17, No. 54 (December 2007), pp. 71–84.

⁵⁵Jiang Wenran, "Fuelling the Dragon: China's Rise and Its Energy and Resource Extraction in Africa," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 199 (September 2009), pp. 585–609.

⁵⁶Steven C. Y. Kuo, "Beijing's Understanding of African Security: Context and Limitation," *African Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (February 2012), pp. 24–43.

⁵⁷Deng Xiaoping, *The Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe [People's Publishing House], 1993), p. 116.

"Stability Comes First in a Country's Development." In his commentary on the post-election violence in Kenya, the author wrote that the instability "[was] a product of democracy bequeathed by Western hegemony; and a manifestation of values clashing when democracy is transplanted onto disagreeable land."⁵⁸ The opinion that forced democratization will lead to instability is externalized in the Chinese assessment of African instability. In fact, this assessment is widely held in China's Africa policy and academic circles.⁵⁹

The doctrine of political stability (without which development is impossible) and sovereignty (non-interference by the West) was faithfully reiterated by the Chinese Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN when he set out the Chinese position on peacebuilding:

In order to uproot the causes of conflict, we must help developing countries, especially the least-developed countries, to seek economic development, eradicate poverty, curb diseases, improve the environment and fight against social injustice. . .

. . . The internal matters of a country should ultimately be handled by the people of the country on their own. Therefore, while participating in peacebuilding efforts, the international community should focus on helping the people realize their independence and self-reliance so that their dependence on external assistance will gradually decrease. And the people in the country concerned should be encouraged to play a leading role during the peacebuilding process. The United Nations and the international community should refrain from stealing the show of the main actor.⁶⁰

Chinese foreign policy principles and practices can be remarkably consistent. Its starting point is *guojialiyi* [national interest] and it is characterized

⁵⁸"Stability Comes First in a Country's Development," *People's Daily*, January 14, 2012, <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/6337848.html>.

⁵⁹Steven C. Y. Kuo, "Beijing's Understanding of African Security," pp. 31–33.

⁶⁰Shen Guofang, "Peace-Building: Towards a Comprehensive Approach," Permanent Mission of the PRC to the UN Statement, 2001, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/thematicissues/peacekeeping/t29428.htm>

by pragmatism.⁶¹ Pragmatism also characterizes China's economic policy since the era of reform and opening-up.

State Directed, Infrastructure-Led Economic Development

As Chinese aid and investment began to expand overseas at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Chinese model of development that was developed in the 1980s and 1990s through a series of trial and error was brought to Africa.⁶² This model of development and investment is largely the externalization of China's own development model.⁶³ Brautigam wrote:

China's aid and economic cooperation differ, both in their content and in the norms of aid practice. The content of Chinese assistance is considerably simpler, and it has changed far less often (compared to traditional Western aid). Influenced mainly by their own experience of development and by the requests of recipient countries, *the Chinese aid and economic cooperation programs emphasized infrastructure, production, and university scholarships at a time when the traditional donors downplayed all of these.*⁶⁴

The Chinese economic model was a result of "a combination of mixed ownership, basic property rights, and heavy government intervention."⁶⁵ Combined with Beijing's non-interference approach, whereby the African governments can decide for themselves what the infrastructure priorities are instead of being dictated to and tied down by conditions so often associated with traditional aid is calculated both to curry political favor with

⁶¹Ye Zicheng, "Zai Xin Xingshi Xia Dui Deng Xiaoping Waijiao Sixiang de Jicheng Fazhan he Sikao [The Legacy, Development, and Reflections on Deng Xiaoping's Diplomatic Thought Under the New Conditions]," *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], Vol. 11, 2004, pp. 8–14.

⁶²Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶³See Ibid. and Jiang Wenran, "Fuelling the Dragon," pp. 585–609.

⁶⁴Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, p. 11, emphasis added.

⁶⁵Yang Yao, "The End of the Beijing Consensus: Can China's Model of Authoritarian Growth Survive?" *Foreign Affairs*, February 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65947/the-end-of-the-beijing-consensus>.

African governments and to emphasize the China's adherence to the principle of non-interference.⁶⁶

By sending out engineering, medical, and transportation units to UNMIL as well as by focusing on construction projects in its bilateral aid, China is building on its simple but effective aid practice. It is useful in building a good relationship with the recipient government, opening new markets for its construction firms, and showcasing Chinese values of hard work and respect for fellow developing countries. In terms of China's normative perspective and soft power projection, China is particularly keen to project its developing world credentials by emphasizing in both word and deed that it is willing to do the more "dirty jobs" on construction sites as opposed to office posts in the capital. In this way, Beijing is emphasizing its value difference to the West.

China is particularly keen to project its developing world credentials by emphasizing in both word and deed that it is willing to do the more "dirty jobs" on construction sites.

China, Liberia, and the United Nations Mission in Liberia

The civil war in Liberia ravaged the country between 1989 and 2003, with an interlude between 1997 and 2000 during which Charles Taylor was the elected president. A good deal of scholarship has been published analyzing and accounting for Liberia's history, the civil war, and the continued fragility of peace in Liberia.⁶⁷ The China-Liberia relationship has

⁶⁶Ian Taylor, *The International Relations of Sub-Saharan Africa*.

⁶⁷Festus. B. Aboagye and Alhaji. M. S. Bah, *A Tortuous Road to Peace: The Dynamics of Regional, UN and International Interventions in Liberia* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2005); Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG and Regional Security in West Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2002); Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (London: Hurst and Company, 1999); Mary H. Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); W. Reno, "Reconstructing Peace in Liberia," in Taisier M. Ali and Robert O. Matthews, eds., *Durable Peace: Challenges for Peacebuilding in Africa* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Zounmenou David, "Managing Post-War Liberia: An Update," Institute for Security Studies Situation Report (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, April 5, 2011).

had a checkered history as Monrovia took advantage of “cheque book diplomacy” between Beijing and Taipei. Beijing broke relations with Monrovia twice when President Samuel Doe and later Charles Taylor recognized Taiwan in 1989 and 1997 respectively. In the context of the history of Chinese relations with African states, especially compared with allies such as Zimbabwe, Zambia or Tanzania, Liberia has had very poor relations with China. Current China-Liberia diplomatic relations were established in October 2003 after the authorization of UNMIL. President Hu Jintao paid a state visit to Liberia in 2007 when a cancellation of debt of US\$10 million was announced together with a US\$1.5 million donation to Liberia.⁶⁸ The current diplomatic relationship is described as “cordial, mutually beneficial and built on the shared principles of mutual trust, respect and non-interference.”⁶⁹

The current UN Mission in Liberia was established by Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003), adopted unanimously on September 11, 2003. It mandated sending up to 15,000 personnel in a stabilization force consisting of 250 military observers, 160 staff officers and 1,115 civilian police officers. The original UNMIL mandate was to have expired in September 2010. UNMIL had completed the third stage of its withdrawal between October 2009 and May 2010, reducing the number of troops from 15,250 to 8,102.⁷⁰ Complete UNMIL drawdown, however, has been postponed three times (in September 2010, September 2011 and September 2012).

Beijing voted in favor of Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003) which authorized UNMIL and has sent peacekeepers to it since December 2003, consistently maintaining approximately 550–570 personnel. In October 2012, the Liberian mission remains the largest of the Chinese missions anywhere in the world with 584 personnel, followed by South Sudan (378), Lebanon (343), Darfur (323), and DR Congo (234).⁷¹

⁶⁸Wang Honghai and Gao Xinman, “Lienheguo Libiliya Weihe Xingdong Anli Yanjiu [A Case Study on the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Liberia],” *WujingXueyuan-Xuebao* [Journal of Chinese People’s Armed Police Force Academy], Vol. 25, No. 1 (2009), pp. 29–32.

⁶⁹Author’s interview with George Wisner, Deputy Minister of Afro-Asian Affairs, Republic of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia, November 29, 2009.

⁷⁰See Security Council Report, August 25, 2010, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gIKWLeMTIsG/b.6196113/k.1ABA/September.2010brLiberia.html>

⁷¹UN Mission’s Summary Detailed by Country: Month of Report 31 October 2012, available at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml

In Liberia, as is the case in other contributions to comprehensive peacebuilding missions, the Chinese contingent provides transport, engineering, and medical support to UN peacekeepers as well as providing police officers. The first dispatch of weapon-carrying Chinese peacekeepers was sent to Mali in 2013.⁷² In the UNMIL, the Chinese transport unit consists of 240 peacekeepers, tasked with providing transportation and supplies for UNMIL operations. The engineering unit consists of approximately 275 peacekeepers and is stationed in the southeast of Liberia, in Zwedru, in UNMIL Sector Four. Its mission is the (re)construction of roads, bridges, UN camps, and related basic infrastructure. The Chinese also provide five military observers and nine staff officers to the UNMIL mission.

Chinese Contribution to Liberia's Post-Conflict Reconstruction

The Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC) and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA) are responsible for the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). The PRS is the blueprint for Liberia's post-war reconstruction and "articulate[s] the Government's overall vision and major strategies for moving toward rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth and development during the period 2008-2011."⁷³ The PRS sets four pillars for Liberia's reconstruction, namely: Infrastructure and basic services; economic revitalization; peace and security; and governance and rule of law.

Table 1 breaks down Chinese aid to Liberia according to the four pillars of the PRS. It clearly demonstrates Chinese attention on infrastructure and basic services consisting of 77 and 16 percent of total respectively. This is followed by peace and security, with no contribution whatsoever to the governance and rule of law sector. Based on Premier Zhou Enlai's *Eight Principles of Foreign Aid* announced in January 1964, China's focus on infrastructure and economic revitalization is consistent with its aid practices in Africa.⁷⁴

⁷²Kathryn Hille, "China Contributes Combat Troops to Mali," *Financial Times*, June 27, 2013, available at <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/e46f3e42-defe-11e2-881f-00144feab7de.html#axzz2YBrWtSWq>

⁷³International Monetary Fund, *Liberia: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (Washington D. C., 2008).

⁷⁴Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*.

Table 1. Chinese Aid to Liberia, 2006–2008 (\$ millions).

Order of Contribution	Pillars of the PRS	Pledged	Percentage of Contribution
1	Infrastructure and basic services	68	77%
2	Economic revitalization	142	16%
3	Peace and security	6.2	7%
4	Governance and rule of law	0	0%
	Total	883	

Source: Based on Chinese ambassador's presentation to the LRDC on August 18, 2008, cited in African Centre for Economic Transformation, *Looking East: China-Africa Engagement Liberia Case Study* (Monrovia: ACET, 2009), p. 19.

Comparing the Chinese and UK's Contributions: The Case of Health Provision

Comparative literature on Chinese and Western aid in Africa has begun to appear.⁷⁵ Comparing Chinese and Belgian aid in the DR Congo, researchers struggled with what constituted aid, given the different Western and Chinese conceptions. Researchers found it was difficult to differentiate between Chinese "aid projects" in the DR Congo from Chinese "trade and investment projects."⁷⁶ While there is inevitably an element of "comparing apples with oranges," it is none the less important to examine and contrast them. Recent research into Chinese aid in Africa has discredited the view that Chinese aid in Africa is driven by the need to access natural resources and its lack of conditions exacerbates corruption and undermines democracy.⁷⁷ Literature comparing Chinese and traditional aid in African states have found that Chinese aid is providing a degree of complementarity as well as

⁷⁵Sven Grimm, Heike Hoss, Katharina Knappe, Marion Siebold, Johannes Sperrfechter, and Isabel Vogler, *Coordinating China and DAC Development Partners: Challenges to the Aid Architecture in Rwanda* (Bonn: German Development Institute, 2010); Ignace Pollet, Huib Huyse, Xiaofeng Zhang, Sylvain Shomba, and Pengtao Li, *Neither Conflict Nor Comfort: The Co-habitation of Chinese and Belgian Aid in the D.R. Congo* (Leuven: HIVA–Research Institute for Work and Society, 2011); Christine Hackenesch, "Aid Donor Meets Strategic Partner? The European Union's and China's Relations with Ethiopia," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2013), pp. 7–36.

⁷⁶Ignace Pollet et al., *Neither Conflict Nor Comfort*, p. 7.

⁷⁷Andrea Goldstein, Helmut Reisen, Nicolas Pinaud, and Chen Xiaobao, *The Rise of China and India: What's in it for Africa?* (Paris: OECD Development Centre Studies, 2006, p. 53); Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, pp. 273–299.

competition to traditional aid in Rwanda,⁷⁸ DR Congo,⁷⁹ and Ethiopia.⁸⁰ In addition, the view that the Chinese are secretive is also being discredited. Hubbard points out that it is the lack of Chinese linguistic skills on the part of (Western) researchers rather than the lack of transparency that frustrates analysts.⁸¹ Brautigam comments that, "transparency about aid figures remains low, but it is not impossible to find information."⁸²

Like the Chinese, the United Kingdom is also a permanent member of the UNSC and a core participant of the liberal peace. While the UK does not send peacekeepers to UNMIL, it has made roughly comparable financial contributions. Between 2006 and 2008, China pledged \$88.3 and dispersed \$62 million in Liberia.⁸³ This is comparable to the UK's 2008–2010 budget which was approximately £37 million (US\$55.5 million).⁸⁴ It is illustrative to compare the different ways in which the two countries supported the health sector.

The data was uncovered after a search of available publications. No request for information was made with DFID to provide further details on the specifics of their support to the health sector. Arguably, a more detailed account of specific health projects supported by DFID may be found by a more skilled researcher, or would be made available upon request. The Chinese data, based on the Chinese ambassador's presentation, was made available to LRDC and published by a third party and not published by the Chinese.

Due to the nature of Chinese contributions and despite the presumption of higher transparency of Western aid data, it is actually easier to understand what and how China is contributing as part of its bilateral aid

⁷⁸Sven Grimm *et al.*, *Coordinating China and DAC Development Partners*.

⁷⁹Ignace Pollet *et al.*, *Neither Conflict Nor Comfort*.

⁸⁰Christine Hackenesch, "Aid Donor Meets Strategic Partner?"

⁸¹Paul Hubbard, "Chinese Concessional Loans," in Robert Rotberg, ed., *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, D.C. and Cambridge, MA: Brookings Institution Press and World Peace Foundation, 2009), pp. 217–229.

⁸²Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*, p. 164.

⁸³African Centre for Economic Transformation, *Looking East*, p. 19. Available at <http://acetforafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Looking-East-Liberia-China-case-study-August-20101.pdf>

⁸⁴"Operational Plan 2011–2015: DFID in Liberia," Department for International Development, updated June 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209414/Liberia1.pdf

Table 2. Chinese and UK DFID (Department for International Development) Assistance to the Health Sector (exchange rate at \$1.5 = £1).

	Chinese Funded Health Project (2006–2008)	Budget	UK Funded Health Project (2008–2010)	Budget
1	Anti-malaria drugs	\$300,000	Support to the Liberian health sector strategy	£16,070,000 (\$24,105,000)
2	Medical team to JFK Medical Centre	\$1,000,000	NGO health proposals—Liberia	£4,590,695 (\$6,886,043)
3	Chinese medical team residence	\$900,000	Support to primary health care services in Liberia	£605,704 (\$908,556)
4	Malaria prevention	\$400,000		
5	Hospital construction in Tappita	\$10,300,000		
Total		\$12,900,000		\$31,899,599

Sources: Chinese ambassador's presentation to the LRDC on August 18, 2008, cited in African Center for Economic Transformation, *Looking East*; DFID: Liberia, 2012.

efforts to Liberia. The UK's contributions on the other hand are pooled with other donors and it is more difficult to trace exactly what the UK has done on publicly available data. Despite this, as is the case with other studies with aid in Africa, there is a fair degree of complementarity as China focuses on hospital infrastructure and the UK provides budgetary support for capacity building and projects.

The Chinese peace and the liberal peace can be summarized in Table 3.

Assessing the Chinese Peace: Local and International Perceptions

Studies examining African perceptions of China and Chinese presence in Africa have begun to appear.⁸⁵ Based on written responses from 42 civil society organizations from 11 African countries and on 25 semi-structured interviews, the most comprehensive study to date is carried out by Vaes and Huyse.⁸⁶ Vaes and Huyse found that while there was a range of

⁸⁵Simon Shen and Ian Taylor, "Ugandan Youths' Perceptions of Relations with China," *Asian Perspectives*, Vol. 36 (2012), pp. 693–723; Sarah Vaes and Huib Huyse, *New Voices on South-South Cooperation between Emerging Powers and Africa*.

⁸⁶Sarah Vaes and Huib Huyse, *New Voices on South-South Cooperation between Emerging Powers and Africa*, p. 24.

Table 3. Liberal and Chinese Peace Compared.

Peacebuilding Issues	Liberal Peace	Chinese Peace
The goal of peacebuilding	Liberal democracy and free market system	Economic development and poverty alleviation. This needs to be done before political/democratic reforms
The focus of peacebuilding	Good governance	Good government
The principles of peacebuilding	Democracy and human rights are universal values and take precedence over sovereignty	Principle of sovereignty takes precedence, values and interpretations of human rights can be different
The strategic culture of peacebuilding	Preemptive	Reactive
The main ways of peacebuilding	Top-down and bottom-up, interaction between government and civil society amendments to the constitution, holding elections, establishing multiparty systems and strengthening civil society	Top-down. Improve the legitimacy of the government and the functions of civil service. Build infrastructure and provide basic services: education, health, agriculture.

Sources: Zhao Lei, "Two Pillars of China's Global Peace Engagement Strategy: UN Peacekeeping and International Peacebuilding," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2011), p. 353; Saferworld, *China's Growing Role in African Peace and Security*, p. 81.

opinions, African civil society supported the Chinese emphasis on the principle of non-interference and appreciated the quick delivery and increased ownership of infrastructure.⁸⁷ They also noted ambivalence expressed toward the Chinese rhetoric of equality, solidarity, and mutual benefit and widely expressed the opinion that Chinese commercial interests are what drove South-South cooperation.⁸⁸

Between November 9 and November 30, 2009, together with colleagues, I conducted semi-structured interviews in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. The interviews aimed at understanding the Chinese peacebuilding in Liberia and attitude toward the Chinese presence in Liberia and Chinese participation in UNMIL. Interviewees were selected through reputational sampling and snowball sampling with a view to selecting a

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 64.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 45.

diverse range of interviewees. Liberian government officials, academics, local and international NGO managers, the Chinese ambassador to Liberia, a Chinese construction company manager as well as Western government and aid agency representatives were interviewed. In total, twenty 40–90 minute face-to-face interviews were conducted.

There is widespread discontent among Liberian civil society with the liberal peace.⁸⁹ In this context, “the Chinese” was seen as different from the West and equated to quick, if sometimes shoddy, infrastructure construction. No distinction was made by interviewees between Chinese peacekeepers, Chinese state-owned or private businesses ventures. Nor did the locals make distinctions between Chinese bilateral aid on its own or as a part of multi-lateral peacebuilding efforts. In fact, Chinese construction firms tender and carry out construction projects for the World Bank as well as for the China’s bilateral aid to Liberia. The speedy and positive impact of Chinese-built infrastructure in meeting the urgent needs of everyday people was universally welcomed. The difference between Chinese and Western approaches to peacebuilding was observed:

“The Chinese” was seen as different from the West and equated to quick, if sometimes shoddy, infrastructure construction.

The Chinese are not for human rights and democracy ... but infrastructure in Liberia is a problem and the Chinese are good at infrastructure ... the Chinese work in the communities and interact with the people, and this is different from the standard Western aid workers.⁹⁰

By focusing on infrastructure, the Chinese are making themselves very welcome in Liberia.⁹¹ Some interviewees felt that given Liberia’s weak state

⁸⁹ Author’s interview with newspaper editor, Monrovia, November 12, 2009; interview with academic, Monrovia, November 16 2009; interview with academic, Monrovia, November 17, 2009; interview with manager of local NGO, November 25, 2009.

⁹⁰ Author’s interview with manager of a Liberian NGO, Monrovia, November 13, 2009.

⁹¹ Author’s interview with government minister, Republic of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia, November 29, 2009.

and the history of colonialism in Africa, the balance of benefit will probably go to the Chinese.⁹²

The perceptions of the Chinese presence in UNMIL by Western NGO workers in Liberia were mixed. An official at an international financial institution pointed out that the Chinese way of delivering ready-made infrastructure through its construction companies were not building local capacity and was unsustainable.⁹³ While China was ostensibly a part of UNMIL, a manager at a Western aid agency pointed out that there was little contact or coordination between the Chinese and other (Western) international donors.⁹⁴ The limited coordination between Chinese and Western aid agencies was accounted by the Chinese as a result of the limited command of English by Chinese peacekeepers has also been cited as the reason why China does not participate more fully in other peace projects.⁹⁵ However, the view that China cannot train enough personnel with the sufficient language capacity is dismissed by He.⁹⁶ However, an official at a Western government aid agency conceded that it was noticeable that infrastructure was appreciated by everyday people and this was something Western donors can learn.⁹⁷

Conclusion

At the outset of this article, I pointed out that the Chinese peace deserves closer scrutiny for three reasons. First, the evolution of Chinese policy position toward UNPKOs offers an excellent case study of China's evolving security outlook as it rises in the liberal global order. Secondly, the

⁹² Author's interview with manager of local NGO, November 13, 2009.

⁹³ Author's interview with manager of an international financial institution, Monrovia, November 23, 2009.

⁹⁴ Author's interview with manager of a western aid agency, Monrovia, November 19, 2009.

⁹⁵ Wang Honghai and Gao Xinman, *"Lienheguo Libiliya Weihe Xingdong Anli Yanjiu"*; Author's interview with Zhou Yuxiao, Chinese Ambassador to Liberia, Monrovia, November 20, 2009.

⁹⁶ He Yin, "China's Changing Policy on UN Peacekeeping Operations," p. 64.

⁹⁷ Author's interview with western government aid agency manager, Monrovia, November 19, 2009.

emergence of a new norm in peacebuilding which openly contest with the dominant liberal peace is testament to China's confidence as a norm-maker and as a great power. Thirdly, China's developmental experience and capacity for assistance is invaluable for current and future peacebuilding missions.

Over the past three decades, as China slowly 'U-turned' on UNPKOs, it became an increasingly comfortable and confident as a member of the existing liberal global order. The fact that China can be said to be an enthusiastic participant of UNPKOs today bears testament to it abandoning the position of a revisionist state and becoming a status quo power.

Despite seeing the liberal peace as essentially Western hegemony (as indeed Western critics of the liberal peace do), China has been very circumspect and cautious in increasing participation in UNPKOs as it evolved. By working from within the liberal global order and by being a part of the debate about the evolution of UNPKOs from traditional peacekeeping to comprehensive peacebuilding, Beijing has skillfully shaped the international system to its advantage by advocating for sovereignty. As the West became more unilateralist and interventionist in the post-Cold War era, China deftly added its weight behind the arguments for multilateral UNPKOs that can only be dispatched at the consent of the receiving, sovereign government. As the liberal peace became discredited in Liberia and elsewhere, China offered the principle of non-interference and efficient delivery of much needed basic infrastructure.

By practicing the Chinese peace in Liberia, Beijing is showcasing and projecting its values and experiences as being different to the liberal peace and perhaps even more suitable in the developing world and in a post-conflict situation. As an established power in the liberal order, it is no longer in China's interest to provoke an open confrontation with the liberal peace. By playing a complimentary role to the liberal peace, the Chinese are following the well tried and tested path of cautious adaptation and "quiet diplomacy", an approach that is better appreciated by African elites.

While Beijing is operating within the liberal peace status quo, this does not mean it embraces the liberal peace. Seeing the crippling economic and political costs to the USSR when it openly contested against the Western alliance, China has chosen to operate within the liberal order and to shape it from within.