

# China's Role in Sudan and South Sudan Peacekeeping Operations

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## I. Overview of the Peace Operations and China's Contribution

Currently, there are three ongoing UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations in the two Sudans. The first is the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) established under UN Security Council Resolution 1769 as of 2007, which provided the mandate for a combination of previous African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) and UN support. The second is the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) established under UNSC Resolution 1990 as of 27 June 2011. Its aim is to monitor and verify the redeployment of Sudan governmental armed forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) from the Abyei Area. The third one is the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) established under UNSC Resolution 1996. These three missions manifest different features of UN peace operations. The UNISFA carries on with it the traditional simplistic characteristics of peacekeeping operations, i.e. monitoring relevant parties' compliance with and implementation of ceasefire agreement. The UNAMID include the hybrid operation of AU and UN to address conflict prevention and peace maintenance work in the Darfur region of Sudan. And the UNMISS is actually a comprehensive peacebuilding and nation-building mission after the independence of South Sudan, which covers a wide range of issues and activities such as security sector reform (SSR), disarmament, demilitarization, and reintegration (DDR), as well as economic development and social reconstruction. The co-existence of three types of peacekeeping operations has again demonstrated the complicatedness of the challenges faced by both Sudan and South Sudan.

As a responsible major power and a country with friendly relations with both of the two countries, China actively participated in the peacekeeping operations in this region. Generally speaking, China's contribution to peacekeeping operations is manifested in three aspects. First, on the conceptual level, China always sticks to the development-oriented or "development first" policy, which means that the

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peacekeeping operations should be conducted in the way conducive to dealing with the root causes of conflicts and forging solid base for subsequent large-scale rebuilding work. Second, up to now China has only dispatched non-combatant troops to join peacekeeping forces, with engineering corps and medical teams constituting the major components of Chinese peacekeepers. This reflects to some extent China's worry about the situation of peacekeeping troops being endowed with too much power of using force. Yet in practice the non-combatant feature of Chinese peacekeepers has become a unique advantage and contribution to peacekeeping operations. Chinese peacekeepers have completed large-scale economic and social reconstruction work for the local community, including the building of basic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water supply facilities, etc.. The hospital established by Chinese medical team also contributed a lot to the health of local people. Such work has actually made a great contribution to the early recovery of conflict-affected local community and laid a solid foundation for the subsequent comprehensive rebuilding process. Third, aside from its role of a troop contributing country (TCC), China also works as a police contributing country (PCC) in this region. The riot police or civilian police dispatched constitutes an indispensable part of the process of restoration of justice and order in the local community. The engagement of Chinese police staff with local police staff is also much helpful to capacity building in local police institution and personnel. In a word, China is fulfilling its promise of being a genuine and responsible partner of the two countries through its active role in the relevant peacekeeping operations.

## **II. China's Policy Considerations in Participating in Peace Operations**

China's deeper involvement into UN peacekeeping operations will inevitably lead to a comprehensive change in the UN conflict management system. First, the power configuration in the decision-making and implementation process of UN peacekeeping operations may experience great transformation. With the western security apparatus dominated by the US tilting more towards the war on terror and the subsequent campaigns to suppressing the insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan since the 9/11 terrorist attack, the involvement of western countries in UN-led peacekeeping operations has been sharply weakened, especially in the African continent which has long been one of the focal areas of UN peacekeeping operations. The immediate consequence of this strategic shift of western countries' policies is the aggravated problems of shortage of military personnel, resources, and equipments, in particular the shortage of some critical equipments such as the

transport helicopters, which has become a significant bottleneck constraining the implementation of peacekeeping operations. Against this backdrop, the growing involvement of emerging countries including China, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, etc. will be conducive to the mitigation of constraints the UN now faces. And such a kind of gradually growing contribution to UN peacekeeping operations by emerging countries will definitely be followed with the change of power configuration in international conflict management system. Second, with the rising complexity of both the international and domestic environment for peacekeeping operations, the differences surrounding the guiding peacekeeping principles also loom large. The so-called PKO Three Principles include the following points: (1) impartiality (neutrality); (2) consent of relevant governments or parties; and (3) use of force limited to circumstances of self-defense. These principles have been the guiding principles and remain the cornerstone of UN PKOs. However, the western countries have endeavored to expand the scope of conflict situations applicable to peacekeeping operations, with the intention of including confrontational conflict situation into the scope of peacekeeping operations so as to expand the power of peacekeeping forces in terms of using force. And the emerging powers insist that peacekeeping operations should remain in the field of neutral stance to prevent escalation of inter-state or intra-state conflicts. The peacekeeping forces should not have too large scope of power in terms of using force and interfering into internal affairs of host states. With the growing influence of China and other emerging powers on coordinative work and decision-making process of peacekeeping operations, it's hoped that the confused or even inappropriate situation in relation to norms and principles of peacekeeping may be clarified or corrected. Third, the UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations also provided China with the means and channels to exert influence. As an emerging power in current times, the path for China's rise is definitely completely different from the rising paths of the old powers. In terms of management and resolution of international conflicts, China's role is manifested more in the use of UN-led multilateral platforms, the focus on political and diplomatic measures, and the stress on involvement and consent of all relevant parties. The UN-sponsored peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes are the most appropriate for the above-mentioned China's policy considerations. Therefore, in the future we may see more of this mutually-enhancing relation from the interaction between China and UN peace operations.