ACTORS AND STRUCTURES IN PROCESS AND POLICY APPROACHES TO CHINA'S PEACEKEEPING

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ABSTRACT

The argument in this paper is that China's peacekeeping decision-making is the product of a number of actors and structures, focusing on the interplay between domestic and international processes and actions. Examining the interaction between process and action approaches provides answers to who are the actors involved and the structures that affect decision-making, which in relation to foreign policy analysis in China is a complicated field. In view of this complexity, the actors and structures treated in the analysis of China's peacekeeping decision-making shall be examined as follows. The first step in this overview is to determine what is to be explained, i.e. the explanandum (or dependent variable). The second question is how peacekeeping decision-making is explained, referring to the type of explanans (or independent variables) invoked in its analysis. The nature and role of actors are then discussed in relation to these explanatory dimensions and the approaches that they have generated within China's peacekeeping decision-making. Finally, two further issues are briefly raised, the agency structure problem, and the question of whether an integrated framework within peacekeeping decision-making is feasible, before concluding with a recommendation of how to resolve the former in terms of a constructive answer to the latter.

INTRODUCTION

As a field of study, foreign policy analysis is characterized by its actor-specific focus (Hudson, 2005). In the simplest terms, it is the study of the process, effects, causes, or outputs of foreign policy decision-making in either a comparative or case-specific manner. The underlying and often implicit argument theorizes that human beings, acting as a group or within a group, compose and cause change in international politics (Foreign Policy Analysis, 2012). Foreign Policy making is a complex process of interaction between many actors, differentially embedded in a wide range of different structures. Their interaction is a dynamic process, leading to the constant evolution of both actors and structures (Hill, 2003). In other words, China has a number of actors, both domestic and international who are closely involved in peacekeeping decision-making in one manner or another; and equally there are a number of structures on both sides of the domestic-international divide that decisively affect these actors in many different ways.

A few elementary examples will suffice to illustrate the complex nature of this abundance of both actors and structures in the conduct of peacekeeping policy. First of all, who are the most important actors making foreign policy decisions in China? The obvious candidates are the Chinese Paramount Leader and Leadership Nuclear Cycle, the Politburo and its Standing Committee, the Secretariat, the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group and Other Coordinating Bodies. These are what Hill calls the 'responsible decisions-makers', i.e. those with a political mandate in one form or another (Hill, 2003). They are to be distinguished from the wider body of civil servants and experts also involved in the process, in the first place within ministries of foreign affairs, but also within rival entities such as military establishments, economic ministries, intelligence services, lobbying firms, as well as specialists, advisors,

and opinion makers working within various think tanks, research institutes, and the media (Foreign Policy Analysis, 2012). In addition, while these actors are usually domestically based, they are often in contact, even acting in consort, with their counterparts in other countries, as well as with various governmental and non-governmental organizations, both domestic and international (Carlsnaes, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 86). The same apply to the structural factors affecting the making of decisions. In the realist tradition of International Relations (IR), such structural entities are usually seen as belonging primarily to the international system, but this clearly is an exceedingly narrow conception of this phenomenon. Indeed, structures, political, cultural, psychological, economic, national, regional, global, technological, ideational, cognitive, and normative in type, to name just some of the most important, are omnipresent in societies everywhere, exist on all levels (Hudson, 2005: 2). Not all are equally important to foreign policy making, but many are vital and central to understanding and explaining its manifestations. In summary, it is not only the inclusion of both domestic and international politics that complicates matters for the foreign policy analyst, but also the omnipresence of both actors and structures, and the intimate and dynamic link between the two (Carlsnaes, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 86).

The explanandum of foreign policy analysis includes the processes and resultants of human decision-making with reference to having known consequences for foreign entities (Hudson, 2005: 2).China's peacekeeping decision-making does not focus on a single decision, rather a constellation of decisions are considered with reference to particular mission areas. Furthermore, these decisions are modified over time, for example when a new contingency leaves for a mission area, an examination of the goals, options and consequences are made to deliver the best results. The idea here is essentially that the object of examination, i.e. the peacekeeping policy is a decision of what decision-makers are actually doing; and what they are doing is participating in the dynamic process of making decisions. This specification of the object of analysis has some obvious consequences for the role assigned to actors and structures (Hudson, 2005: 2).A central question here is what function the Chinese state plays in approaches that focus on decision-making processes (rather than specific policies). Viewed in the context of the two major historical strands briefly discussed above, the choice here is between viewing the Chinese state in realist terms as the sole and independent actor in foreign policy, or viewing foreign policy actors in terms of the domestic functioning of a state, in which decisions are made by number of elite decision-makers acting on behalf of the state.

Foreign policy is the discrete purposeful action that results from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals, and as such it is not the decision, but the product of the decision (Herrmann, in East, Salmore and Herrmann, 1978: 70). There is considerable consensus today on this explanandum, at least with regard to putting emphasis on the purposive nature of foreign policy actions, a focus on policy, and the crucial role of state boundaries (Carlsnaes, in Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmonds, 2002: 335). The important point here is that by distinguishing the implementation of peacekeeping policy from the decision-making process preceding it, there is no particular approach to answer 'why' the policy was implemented. What are the implications for the role of actors and structures of such a specification of the object of analysis (or explanandum)? Contrary to process-oriented approaches, this perspective does not a priori view either actors or structures in any particular way, since the focus is on 'policy undertakings', rather than the behavior of any particular entity within a specific structural environment (Carlsnaes, in Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmonds, 2002: 336). The fact is that Chinese peacekeeping policy relies on both structural and actor-based forms of explanation and that neither one is privileged over the other. This shows that

no considerable contrast exists in the decision-making process and explanations are carried out essentially by assigning them to analytically similar levels of analysis

An Appraisal of China's Peaceekeeping Decision-Making

This section seeks an answer to the question. How does China conceptualize peacekeeping policy implementation as a form of strategic and dialectic interplay in the African environment? A successful implementation of peacekeeping policy depends not only on a clear definition of objectives and on a sound choice of instruments, but also, and rather crucially, on the interplay between China's strategy and the context surrounding it. Accordingly, it also depends on China's ability to adjust to unforeseen circumstances. If it is reasonable to assume that both elements are at play in the peacekeeping context, what becomes interesting is investigating how constraints and preferences interact, sometimes clashing and sometimes producing virtuous synergies (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 119). If one applies this approach to peacekeeping as a dimension of China's foreign policy, certain aspects of implementation are found. Firstly, China's Peacekeeping Operations (PKOS) does not play out in an isolation but makes use of the environment to adopt strategies that can explain the successes or failures of such policy and if there are intended outcomes. An exclusive focus on China's domestic politico-military process cannot explain the instances in which outcomes deviate from intentions. Conversely, an exclusive focus on peacekeeping per se places too much emphasis on the constraints and opportunities shaping action, and cannot contemplate any real sense of intentionality.

Figure 1: The Strategic-Relational Approach to Foreign Policy
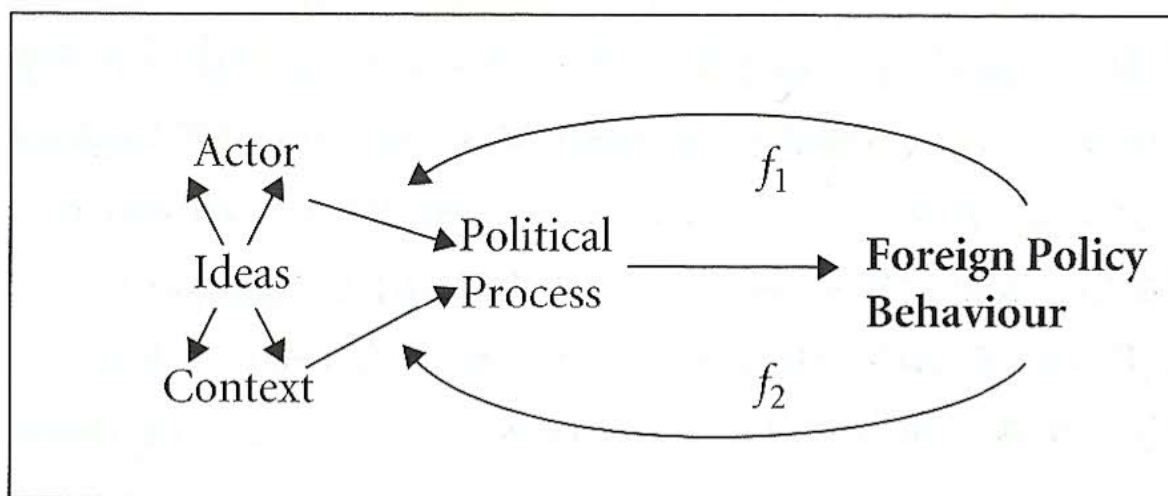
Source: Brighi and Hill, "Implementation and Behavior", in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 120).

In applying this model to peacekeeping policy implementation and behaviour, three considerations are relevant (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 120). Firstly, China's involvement in the context of PKOs is not monolithic and impenetrable. The other actors in the peacekeeping environment are in interaction with China and do not stand powerless in implementing their own peacekeeping goals. The context refers to all the actors and the set of relations they entertain. Even the material environment, which arguably forms an important and 'objective' part of context, becomes fully meaningful through the relations that actors establish with one another (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008:

120). The likelihood that China can achieve its objectives dependents on how strategically it is placed in the peacekeeping terrain: given its position in relation to the context, some actions, in other words, will be more successful than others. In addition, the way in which China interprets the features of the peacekeeping terrain emphasizes the relational nature different actors attach to the context. Secondly, the interplay between China, other actors and the environment, produces behaviour that mediates the role of ideas and discourses. Thus, it is important not to just take into account the way the context responds to the actor's behaviour, but also the way such responses are filtered through perceptions, paradigms, and narratives, to be eventually internalized in the political process (Dunne and Wheeler, 1999). Thirdly, there is constant feedback from the actor to the context and vice versa. This means that Chinese peacekeepers through interaction with the peacekeeping environment act as agents for the Chinese government and feed Chinese foreign policy back into the context. Without any doubt, when called to formulate interests and implement objectives, the greatest challenge for Chinese peacekeeping decision-makers is both to harmonize the two dimensions, and to keep a certain degree of internal consistence with each.

Taking into account the strategic-relational model presented in figure 1, the nature of China's PKOs projects a crucial relation between the ends and means on the one hand, and between overall foreign policy actions on the other. The mediation of ideas and their impact on the African societies explain much of the successes and failures of implementing peacekeeping in the appropriate context. For middle and small states, the 'global' remains most of the time an aspiration, or a rhetorical commitment (Hoffmann, 1966:863). However, Chinese peacekeepers can bring an international dimension to post-conflict societies by pushing middle and small states especially to strengthen the regional scope of their foreign policies. There is also a second dimension along which actors measure the 'international', and that is the vertical axis of functional differentiation. Thus, the 'international', results not just from a horizontal continuum but from its stratification in different layers, the most important being political, economic, military, normative, and cultural (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 123). Two qualifications must accompany such a characterization, however. Firstly, the hierarchy among layers is by no means fixed; indeed, the traditional distinction between 'high politics', and 'low politics', which claimed a primacy for political and military issues is increasingly problematic in a world in which issues such as culture have become (or rather, returned to be) the terrain of greatest contestation.

Secondly, while analytically separable, these layers are in fact at least marginally interlinked, partly because any given foreign policy has effects at many different levels, and partly because layers overlap in important ways, empirically as well as conceptually (Hoffmann, 1966: 865). The Chinese government's linking security sector reform with economic aid and development in post-conflict societies is evident that 'high' and 'low' politics are complimentary and that the two terms reinforces the implementation of foreign policy in peacekeeping societies. The political dimension of the 'international' acquires, at least potentially, further depth in three directions (Held and Archibugi, 1995). These directions have implications for China, in that the 'international' is formed by the complex web of interrelations which bind China together with other actors in a globalized world. Firstly, the domestic politics of China of which civil-military relations, the modernization of the PLA and security and strategic decision-making are all part, has a mutual effect on peacekeeping policy implementation for China itself and other actors involved. Secondly, the progressive formation of China's 'global public sphere' means that political interdependence gradually comes to feature processes of political adjudication and contestation in peacekeeping arenas. Thirdly, a variety of actors, state and non-state, participates in China's peacekeeping political

interdependence which makes up the political layer of the 'international'. This, however, does not happen on a condition of parity, as states still express their agency through channels which are far more institutionalized, accountable, and varied than those at the disposal of non-state actors (Held and Archibugi, 1995). The political dimension of the 'international' has important areas of overlap with the social and normative 'layer' (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 123). This means that the political dimension of China's peacekeeping decision-making extends into other policy arenas as well, for example humanitarian intervention, which affects the social and normative layers of reconstruction and development efforts. China and other state's peacekeeping policies must now confront environments which is also a society, and not just a society of states, but of individuals as well (Linklater, 1998). When discussing the reach of China's peacekeeping decision-making, it is customary to turn to geographical/geometrical metaphors such as 'circles' or spheres'. Understanding the expression 'sphere of influence' diffuse the exercise of representing the 'outside', or the 'abroad' and if the 'international' unfolds on a horizontal or vertical dimension. Horizontally, the international unfolds on a continuum, from proximity to distance, from 'near' to 'far', from local to global.

Vertically, the international is stratified into a number of functional layers: political, social, economic, military, normative and so on (Dodds and Atkinson, 2000). Without any doubt, when called to formulate interests and implement objectives, the greatest challenge for Chinese peacekeeping decision-makers is both to harmonize the two dimensions, and to keep a certain degree of internal consistence with each. In horizontal terms, the implementation of peacekeeping objectives starts from the environment closest to the actor, and for China, generally the neighbouring states usually grouped in a region. Regional environments are, of course, specific to where actors, and in this case, China is placed with them, and how concentrated and widely spread their interests are. However, the regional borders of China's peacekeeping policy are far from fixed. They are susceptible to being renegotiated following historical, political, or simply ideological developments in regions where peacekeeping troops are stationed. Consider also how geographical proximity does not by definition ensure inclusion in the region of interest to peacekeeping decision-making. Geography must always be read in conjunction with politics (Simms, 2000). The political and ideological bond of mission countries that geographically connect with China, serves that distance does not matter if a strategic-relational approach is followed.

If all states have a region of priority for their foreign policy, then only a few can really aspire to have a genuinely global frame of reference (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 122). China's PKOs, as a political activity has the potential to become an extension of foreign policy because of its relationship with the independent policy of peace and the effect on promoting peace and security in mission countries. Many international peacekeeping actors can elaborate, let alone afford, a truly 'global' foreign policy. On the contrary, in peacekeeping mission areas, China has the ability to use peacekeeping to reinforce its foreign policy and connect the local with the global. China's vision of an independent foreign policy of peace proclaimed under the leadership of President Hu Jintao is partly fulfilled through the economic and cultural dimensions attached to peacekeeping and the benefits it can bring to post-conflict societies. Taking into account the strategic-relational model presented earlier, the nature of China's PKOs projects a crucial relation between the ends and means on the one hand, and between overall foreign policy actions on the other. The mediation of ideas and their impact on the post-conflict societies explain much of the successes and failures of implementing peacekeeping in the appropriate context. For middle and small states, and these include troubled hotspots of the world, the 'global' remains most of the time an aspiration, or

a rhetorical commitment (Dunne and Wheeler, 2009). Chinese peacekeepers can bring an international dimension to post-conflict societies by pushing middle and small states especially to strengthen the regional scope of their foreign policies. There is also a second dimension along which actors measure the 'international', and that is the vertical axis of functional differentiation. Thus, the 'international', results not just from a horizontal continuum but from its stratification in different layers, the most important being political, economic, military, normative, and cultural (Brighi and Hill, 2008: 123). Two qualifications must accompany such a characterization, however. Firstly, the hierarchy among layers is by no means fixed; indeed, the traditional distinction between 'high politics', and 'low politics', which claimed a primacy for political and military issues is increasingly problematic in a world in which issues such as culture have become (or rather, returned to be) the terrain of greatest contestation. Secondly, while analytically separable, these layers are in fact at least marginally interlinked, partly because any given foreign policy has effects at many different levels, and partly because layers overlap in important ways, empirically as well as conceptually (Hoffmann, 1966: 865). The Chinese government's linking of peacekeeping intervention with economic aid and development is evident that 'high' and 'low' politics are complimentary and that the two terms reinforces the implementation of peacekeeping decision-making in post-conflict societies.

At yet another level, foreign policy must take into account the existence of patters of military alignment, both cooperative and adversarial. According to some theories of international relations, most notably neorealism, this is indeed the layer which is ultimately the most significant in foreign policy terms (Aron, 1966). According to this theory, the structural constraints of the international system and most notably the absence of a formal central authority that governs agent's strategies and motivations, allow states to seek its own interests and not to become subordinate to the interests of others. In addition, the equal, sovereign status of all countries involved in PKOs at a minimum means that peacekeeping troops are subjects of a legitimate agent which are not counterbalanced against the purposes and intentions of other states. The freedom with which to act under certain environmental constraints and options available for decision-making, furthermore, adds a non-conditional element in policy implementation. There are no definite rules that spells out precisely what means China should use in achieving objectives because of the anarchic nature of the system. Ensuring the survival of Chinese peacekeeping troops as agents of the Chines state, is therefore, a prerequisite to pursue peacekeeping goals, which falls under the broad spectrum of developing a security framework with post-conflict societies and contributing to security reforms.

Neorealism also advocates that survival as the driving force of states security seeking in the international system, ensures that states develop offensive military capabilities for foreign interventionism and as a means to increase their relative power (Waltz, 1979: 133). A 2011 report highlights exactly this point. The report reinterprets the value of multilateral peace operations within an offensive realist framework, and discusses how multilateral peace operations are a tool that can facilitate self-interested, power-seeking behavior by major military powers (Karlsson, 2011). From this basis, China's contributions to PKOs is viewed as an effort to improve its global standing and share of world power (Karlsson, 2011). The possibility further exists that a security dilemma is starting to play out between participating countries because of uncertainty to each other's intentions, and untrustworthy relationships developing which have the ability to impair execution of power and survival strategies. As a measure to bring stability to PKOs and ensuring that peaceful development and co-existence with other states resonates in the environment, China uses the media to portray a positive

image of troops, with great effect. The Chinese media, which already has a wide reach in post-conflict societies, is indeed playing a balancing act, as the following statement indicates. "An analysis of attitudes in the African media from 2010 until 2012, suggest that a more balanced view of China's overall influence is emerging. Individual reports may still take an either/or stance but, when considered on the whole and across a range of media platforms, China is not represented in either a starkly positive or starkly negative light. It would seem that a cautiously optimistic attitude characterizes African media coverage while understanding that China's role in Africa is a complex one, which cannot be pigeonholed as either a bad or good news story (Wasserman, 2012)."

CONCLUSION

If implementation is about reaching out into the environment to transform one's objectives into outcomes, one should not think of this process as exclusively directed to, let alone from, the outside (Brighi and Hill, in Smith, Hadfield and Dunne, 2008: 124). The implementation of China's peacekeeping decision-making also involves an important 'domestic' or 'internal' component. More specifically, domestic actors balance the interplay between different agencies responsible for peacekeeping decision-making; what goes on inside the actors, and their projection towards the outside, illustrate the dialectic course of action and the impact of the strategic-relational model. Implementation, presupposes not only the capacity to pursue goals with effective means, but more generally the ability of governments to extract and mobilize resources from their audiences, both material and immaterial, and channel them into the pursuit of given objectives (Mastanduno, Lake and Ikenberry, 1989: 460). Chinese peacekeeping decision-making is not only the prerequisite of the Communist party of China (CPC), the Chinese government and the People's Liberation army (PLA), but also include actors on the margins of the traditional power structure. These actors include resource companies, financial institutions, local governments, research organizations, the media and netizens. While the CPC's highest body, the opaque Politburo Standing Committee, retains the ultimate decision-making power, the number of official actors vying to influence the top leadership's decisions has expanded considerably. Several CPC organs, government agencies and departments of the PLA all mold foreign policy thinking and behaviour. Within the Chinese Government bureaucracy, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is today merely one actor in the realm of foreign policy, and not necessarily the most important one.

The importance of consensus building in peacekeeping decision making, or the need to create at least the perception of consensus, encourages all actors both inside and outside the official foreign policy establishment to find ways to influence the views of top leaders. Then again, there are actors on the margins who do not necessarily seek an active role in foreign policy but, nevertheless, can at times end up complicating Chinese diplomacy (Jakobsen and Knox, 2010: 1-2). For example, Chinese companies doing business in post-conflict societies desire to pursue commercial interests, but inadvertently entangle foreign policy officials into a web of human rights, energy security concerns and political interests by their actions. This has an effect on PKOs, as the Chinese government is hesitant and sometimes reluctant to define their position on the protection of civilians in areas where their troops are stationed. Placing the business interest of their citizens above the mandates of missions to gain economic advantage and thereby, in a sense, abusing the legitimacy of their assigned status is an essential part of implementing foreign policy. In general, therefore, implementation develops on two levels, 'domestic', and 'international' which are in constant interaction. This is what the political scientist Robert Putnam had in mind when he imagined foreign policy as a 'two-level game' (Putnam, 1988: 430). Using this metaphor in simple terms, peacekeeping troops act as agents

of the Chinese government, assumingly, leveling the playing field for Chinese companies to engage in bilateral or multilateral economic bargaining. In return, the Chinese government by way of diplomatic persuasion exerts influence over these societies, facilitated by the intermediary, softening approach of the peacekeepers. Lastly, in order to be successful in achieving its objectives, China needs to implement decision-making that is compatible with the policies of post-conflict societies, and at the same time, supported by a reasonable degree of agreement inside the state. Implementation thus calls for an attention to both fronts, domestic and international, and foreign policy makers need to make them work in tandem as much as possible.

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