

Tanja Walter

# Chinese (Non-)Interventions

A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Interventions  
in the Middle East and Africa



Nomos

Comparative Politics –  
Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft

edited by

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Volume 11

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**The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

a.t.: Universität Duisburg-Essen, Diss., 2021

ISBN 978-3-8487-7455-5 (Print)  
978-3-7489-3247-5 (ePDF)

#### **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8487-7455-5 (Print)  
978-3-7489-3247-5 (ePDF)

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Walter, Tanja  
Chinese (non-) Interventions  
A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Interventions  
in the Middle East and Africa  
Tanja Walter  
314 pp.  
Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-3-8487-7455-5 (Print)  
978-3-7489-3247-5 (ePDF)



Onlineversion  
Nomos eLibrary

1st Edition 2022

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## ABSTRACT

China's rise is increasingly covering the military activities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the global stage. Beijing's traditional principle of non-intervention seems to be interpreted more flexibly and the presence of Chinese troops in conflict regions in Africa and the Middle East is expanding. This thesis presents a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) combined with process tracing on drivers underlying China's decision (not) to intervene in areas of conflict in Africa and the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. In this regard, the study also considers a connection to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The inquiry shows that Chinese efforts at military diplomacy are largely concentrated on UN peacekeeping missions. Beijing has been focusing on well-established international structures to promote a soft image of China as a guarantor of peace and stability. With the help of an additional analysis of 300 UN Security Council Resolutions, this study finds evidence about changes in the design of UN peacekeeping missions over the last two decades. A Chinese "road map for peace" with particular characteristics is reflected in a new weighting of priorities in multilateral military diplomacy. To understand the implications of Beijing's quest for an indispensable position in the global balance of power, traditional theoretical explanatory approaches need to be expanded. In the framework of foreign policy analysis, this study contributes to a better understanding of the PRC's evolving role in international conflict resolution.

*Keywords:* China, Conflict Resolution, Military Diplomacy, Peacekeeping Mission, Balance of Power, Belt and Road Initiative



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step<sup>1</sup>. And so did this research project when I first stepped into my professor's office four years ago. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Nele Noesselt for her great support during my whole PhD process. Her advice and guidance, her commitment to and continuous encouragement of my work made this project possible. I am also thankful to Professor Thomas Demmelhuber, who kindly agreed to be my second supervisor, and whose input was very helpful in finalising this publication. Finally, I would like to thank the auditors, Professor Christof Hartmann and Beate Bernstein, for supporting my publication with this series.

On a personal level, I am deeply grateful to my husband and my family, who have always believed in me. This applies especially to my dear grandmother, who passed away in early 2022, but whose proud eyes I will always remember when I told her I had finished my thesis. This book is for her.

---

1 Proverb by the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu.





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## ABBREVIATIONS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
AMS	Academy of Military Science (of the PRC)
AU	African Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAR	Central African Republic
CAD	China–Africa Development Fund
CNP	Comprehensive National Power
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPC	Communist Party of China
CsQCA	crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
CWM	Civil War Mediation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDPD	Doha Document for Peace in Darfur
DDR	Disarm, Demobilise, Reintegrate
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETIM	East Turkistan Islamic Movement
EU	European Union
FC	Force Commander
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China–African Cooperation
FsQCA	fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	International Organisation
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
M23	Movement of 23 <sup>rd</sup> March (DR Congo)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

## ABBREVIATIONS

MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	Islamist National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MONUC	United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
mvQCA	Multi-Value Qualitative Comparative Analysis
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIF	National Islamic Front (Sudan)
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OBOR	One Belt One Road
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONUSCA	United Nations Observer Group in Central America
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLO	Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine
POLISARIO	Frente Popular para la Liberación de Seguiá el Hamra y de Río de Oro
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
P5	Five permanent members of the UN Security Council (People's Republic of China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America)
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RAID	Rights and Accountability in Development
R&D	Research and Development
RtoP / R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SPLA	Southern People's Liberation Army
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
ToT	Terms of Trade
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN	United Nations
UN DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNGOMAP	United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan

*ABBREVIATIONS*

UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNIIMOG	United Nations Iraq–Iran Military Observer Group
UNIKOM	United Nations Iraq–Kuwait Observation Mission
UNMHA	United Nations Mission to Support the Hdaydah Agreement
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
USA	United States of America
US AFRICOM	United States Africa Commands
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. *Outline of the Argumentation*

A famous Chinese proverb says “to know the road ahead, ask those coming back” (unknown author). This saying may be fitting for many different situations, both in the lives of ordinary people and on the global political stage. In terms of the road to world peace, the picture of returning and departing actors can be applied to current developments in conflict-affected countries. While great powers such as the United States of America (USA) have been at the forefront of many international conflict zones for decades, US troops have increasingly withdrawn from global hotspots in the recent past, most prominently during the presidency of former US President Donald Trump, who clearly denied the US role as the “world’s policemen”<sup>2</sup> in his speeches. Although Donald Trump’s narratives often did not reflect actual US foreign policy during his presidency, the hasty withdrawal of US soldiers from conflicts in Syria (2019), Iraq (2020), Somalia<sup>3</sup> (2020) and Afghanistan (2020/21) has left these countries in a perpetually fragile state with a population at risk of the resurgence of violent atrocities and war. Hence, those “coming back” often paint a disillusioning picture.

Over the last twenty years, academic debate about peacekeeping has covered models of “liberal peace”, which promised the achievement of welfare and stability (Newman, 2009; Paris, 2010). The advocates of liberal peace have always been accompanied by critics arguing in favour of alternative, “post-liberal” concepts or the combination of both models (Debiel & Rinck, 2016; Richmond, 2009). However, expectations of sustainable conflict resolution could frequently not be fulfilled and the imposition of standardised (democratisation) concepts have only been partially successful until today (Debiel, Held, & Schneckener, 2016, p. xi). Current conflict zones illustrate that achieving world peace remains an ambitious goal. The number of conflicts worldwide augmented from fewer than twenty

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2 Words used by Donald Trump in his commencement address for the United States Military Academy at West Point on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

3 Some troops were moved to other African countries such as Kenya and Djibouti.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

conflicts in 1946 to fifty-four in 2019<sup>4</sup> (Palik, Rustad, & Methi, 2020, p. 8; UCDP&PRIO, 2020). While conflict resolution therefore remains one of the most pressing challenges for the international community, the landscape of major actors is changing. The US presidency of Donald Trump has shown the retreat of US military troops from international conflict zones as well as a reduction of contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, which incrementally illustrated the US' withdrawal from their position as a self-appointed leader of peace<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has taken the road towards increased participation in international conflict resolution activities and appears to have abandoned its traditional policy of non-intervention. These opposite movements of the USA and China raise the question of whether China will follow the proverb and metaphorically "ask those coming back" about the way ahead. If yes, it is questionable if China will follow the US' footsteps or if Beijing will use this window of opportunity to present its own "road map for peace". This question is also relevant with regard to China's economic rise. At the opening forum for the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping indicated a connection between China's giant infrastructural project and Beijing's interest in international conflict zones when he stated that, "we should build the Belt and Road into a road for peace [since the] pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative requires a peaceful and stable environment" (Xi quoted from Xinhua, 2017). The PRC's aspiration to become a guarantor of peace and stability might thus create both hope and scepticism for some of the most volatile and conflict-affected states. Critical voices have been heard saying that the "[talk] of forthcoming peace and harmony may [...] be no more than a smokescreen to counter perceptions that China's attempted mass reorganization of national and regional economies seeks to secure its global dominance" (Bowen, 2017).

Data shows that Chinese troops were active in nine conflict-affected states in the Middle East and Africa in 2013, the official beginning of the BRI with increasing numbers of troop contributions until 2020 (Bowen, 2017; UCDP&PRIO, 2020; UN Peacekeeping, 2020). While Chinese troops have been present in Lebanon and Sudan for several years, however,

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4 The figures presented here relate to state-based violence only. When adding conflicts involving non-state violence and one-sided violence, the number of conflicts increases to a total of 152 conflicts in 2019 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020).

5 This observation refers to developments until January 2021, the end of Donald Trump's presidency in the USA.

Beijing has refrained from getting involved in conflicts in Yemen and the Central African Republic (CAR)<sup>6</sup>. Whether President Xi's proposed connection between China's increased activities in conflict resolution practices and the BRI is shaping Beijing's quest to become a guarantor of peace is one of several questions emerging from China's recent activities.

Throughout recent years, the PRC's infrastructural activities particularly in Africa have been confronted with local political instabilities and conflicts that have outlined China's economic vulnerability abroad (Hartmann & Noesselt, 2020, p. 1). Beijing's foreign policy behaviour has therefore increasingly considered questions of security and stability (Hartmann & Noesselt, 2020, p. 4; Noesselt, 2020, p. 18). China's second Africa policy paper of 2015 even states that:

“China will play a constructive role in maintaining and promoting peace and security in Africa. It will explore means and ways with Chinese characteristics to constructively participate in resolving hot-button issues in Africa and exert a unique impact on and make greater contributions to African peace and security” (China Daily, 2015).

To identify which direction China's road to peace will take and how Beijing's increased international conflict resolution is changing the PRC's power status in the international community, it is necessary to take a closer look at the PRC's peacekeeping efforts. In doing so, this dissertation identifies drivers for Chinese interventions in conflict situations in the MENA region and Africa and examines to what degree they can be considered specifically “Chinese characteristics” in international designs for conflict resolution.

First, this dissertation aims at understanding when, how and why China intervenes in conflicts, either alone or as part of an international mission, thereby abandoning its traditional policy of non-intervention. Second, the thesis provides answers to the question of China's changing role in the international balance of power system. Specifically, the following questions were addressed in the research phase:

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6 In 2020, China contributed to a UN Peacekeeping mission to the CAR for the first time.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*What variables drive China's interventions in the MENA region and in Africa?*

*How do China's contributions to conflict resolution affect the PRC's power status?*

To answer these questions, a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) in combination with process tracing was used. This method allowed a range of empirical conflicts to be analysed and causal factors for China's interventions in conflicts in the MENA region and in Africa to be discovered. Overall, twenty cases were identified and analysed along twenty-six coded criteria in fifteen categories. Whilst previous research has concentrated on conducting case studies of Chinese activities in specific countries such as Mali and Sudan or on the African continent (Seesaghur & Ansong, 2014), this comparative analysis adds knowledge about China's general approach to international conflict resolution. In his regard, previous results of case studies were valuable in order to compare factors such as trade relations or the type of conflicts.

The QCA in this dissertation focused on the year 2013 to investigate a possible connection between Chinese interventions in conflict regions and the beginning of the Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, in 2013 Xi Jinping presented the strategy of "striving for achievement" for the first time, which indicated a departure from China's previous concept of "keeping a low profile" (see chapter 2.1.) and might have effects on China's behaviour in international conflict resolution, too (Yan, 2014, p. 154). In addition to the comparative analysis of cases in the year 2013, the method of process tracing was added to the study with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the circumstances during the time of intervention. This approach enabled the causal mechanisms of China's decision to be understood better (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 2). When these two methods were combined, the causal factors identified provided evidence concerning the drivers and characteristics of China's international efforts. The question about drivers was broadly defined and intended to find out what temporal, geographic and geopolitical conditions must be met for China to militarily intervene in a conflict. The goal was to understand which conditions must be fulfilled for China to participate in an operation. Clustering the factors identified made it possible to recognise drivers that characterise China's activities in conflict resolution. An additional examination of 300 resolutions adopted by the Security Council between



2001 and 2020<sup>7</sup> hinted at the increasing influence of such drivers on the design of international peacekeeping missions and points to a change in the international balance of power towards a greater weight of Chinese priorities.

The results cast doubt on some widely accepted theories. For example, the assumption that military intervention is only used to increase a country's own wealth cannot be confirmed (Carr, 1939; Mearsheimer, 2001). Instead, the results of this study suggest that China's interventions aim at repositioning the PRC within the international community and the system of UN missions in particular.

The analysis of different cases of conflict-affected states showed that the causal structures underlying Chinese intervention are complex and vary from case to case. The most important condition found in the study was the existence of UN peacekeeping missions, which turned out to be an indispensable factor in conflict intervention by China. However, conflict-affected states' recognition of the One-China principle was also significant<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, other factors tested such as trade relations, the threat of regionalisation and reputational opportunities were identified as coincidentally causal conditions for China's decision to participate in international missions for conflict resolution. The QCA furthermore showed that bilateral military Chinese interventions in conflicting areas in the MENA region and Africa could not be found. However, the focus of China's interventions in the MENA region and Africa is connected to China's need for regional stability and security to realise its giant infrastructural project of the BRI. Chinese interventions in conflict-affected countries in both regions are also determined by the PRC's attempt to increase its soft power image (Arif, 2017; Kurlantzick, 2007). Beijing is thus using the reputation of UN peacekeeping to establish a positive image of China's armed forces. From a theoretical perspective, Joseph Nye's theory about soft power is valuable in explaining China's approach. According to Nye, soft power refers to the ability to shape preferences and co-opt by means of attraction in contrast to coercion (see chapter 3.4.1.) (Nye, 2004). Yet,

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7 This period was chosen since the results of the QCA showed increased Chinese military contributions to UN peacekeeping since the beginning of the new millennium.

8 The One-China principle insists that both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan—also known as the Republic of China (ROC)—are parts of a single state. Since the “1992 Consensus”, both the PRC and ROC have agreed about the existence of one China but disagree on which government is the legitimate one to represent and govern it. See also Chapter 6.3.2.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

to fully understand how the PRC is using its military activities to create the image of China as a guarantor of peace, an extension of Nye's theory is necessary.

The results of this study have also been discussed with renowned Chinese scholars. On the occasion of a two-day workshop on "China's Silkroad Initiative", which took place at the Confucius Institute of the Free University in Berlin in June 2019, Liu Haifang and Tang Xiaoyang were interviewed in English with regard to the research question of this study. Their input provided valuable insights into the Chinese perspective on peacekeeping and the connection of China's military activities to the BRI. Liu Haifang, an Associate Professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University considered that China is still upholding its principles of non-intervention while, at the same time, the PRC is seeking another way of assuming responsibility (Liu, 2019). According to Liu, one such way is the provision of 8,000 blue helmets and a budget of one billion USD to the United Nations (*ibid.*). Liu furthermore named the Forum on China–African Cooperation (FOCAC) as a major platform for security questions. Yet, she considered that while the BRI is a project that encouraged everyone to join, security aspects were dealt with separately on a case-by-case basis. The participation of China in peacekeeping operations (PKO) was thus not directly related to security challenges on the ground such as robbery, but rather an indicator of China becoming a more responsible power within the international platform (*ibid.*).

Deputy Director Tang Xiaoyang from the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy shared Liu Haifang's perception that China's participation in UN missions is politically motivated (Tang, 2019). Tang likewise did not see a contradiction between China's principle of non-intervention and its participation in UN missions since China would not intervene in any conflict without the UN. The expert furthermore considered the BRI more important for China than the implementation of UN missions since the BRI covers a whole network and PKOs are usually seen on a case-by-case basis. Within the BRI partner countries, local governments were asked to ensure protection. Tang, nevertheless, admitted that security assumes a high priority in President Xi Jinping's speeches given that the keyword "peace" is frequently mentioned. Tang highlighted that while host countries along the Belt and Road were asked to take care of security, China would promote peace and security through employment and development, which would automatically lead to a more secure environment (*ibid.*).

## *1.2. Setting the Stage: China in Conflict-Affected States*

Overall, the results of this study confirm the opinions expressed by Liu Haifang and Tang Xiaoyang with regard to the observation that the PRC's activities remain within established international structures of conflict resolution. Whilst the USA, Great Britain, France and Russia (P5) have historically remained reluctant to provide peacekeeping personnel to the UN and the USA has reduced its financial support recently, both China's increasing troop and financial contributions to UN missions as well as the changing patterns of UN Resolutions are evidence of China's growing influence on decisions about peacekeeping in the UN Security Council, an organ that is respected by all 193 UN member states.

Finally, the investigation of both concrete conflict cases and UN Resolutions allowed for the concretisation of Chinese priorities and "characteristics" in the field of peacekeeping. Throughout the research process, it became clear that China does not add new elements to international conflict resolution but rather introduces a new weighting of previously known components in the design of UN peacekeeping missions. "Chinese characteristics", therefore, refer to a new proportioning of elements, which can be considered a new "road map for peace". In this regard, an increased focus on stability can be noted in the design of UN Security Council resolutions on peacekeeping. While traditionally, Western principles such as the protection of human rights, the installation of (liberal) institutions and a system of good governance are still included in the clauses of UN resolutions, topics such as economic development and infrastructure have gained weight during the last two decades. Hence, this study finds that China's contributions to international conflict resolution have gained weight on the international stage and could possibly change the global balance of power in the field of conflict resolution. China has changed the country's policy of (non-) intervention and is promoting reorganisation in the proportions of well-established ingredients on the international road to peace. However, the implementation of this new road map will also depend on other actors' reactions and their efforts in defending Western values in peacekeeping.

## *1.2. Setting the Stage: China in Conflict-Affected States*

This dissertation considers China's (non-) interventions in conflict-affected states and aims at finding drivers that unveil Beijing's approach to conflict resolution and shed light on a possible Chinese "road to peace". Three main reasons underpin this research project's relevance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

First, the PRC is increasingly present in conflict-affected world regions, particularly the Middle East and Africa, where Beijing has introduced its own international agenda, challenging the previous US leadership. In recent studies, scholars have explored the integration of both regions into China's BRI and highlighted China's economic interests there (Blanchard, 2021; Farooq, Feroze & Kai, 2019; ZiroMwatela & Zhao, 2016). Indeed, at least some countries in the MENA region are already part of the Silk Road Economic Belt, whereat Eyler noted that the Maritime Silk Road Initiative was "all about Africa" (Eyler, 2014). So far, most analyses have focused on the economic advantages and risks of greater integration of these countries into the BRI. When the BRI—previously announced as One Belt One Road (OBOR)—was first presented in 2013, commentators used to view China as a free rider of US security provision in risky areas, while Beijing was focusing on business relations only (Haenle, 2013; Spegele & Bradley, 2013). In recent years, however, multiple security threats against Chinese citizens and companies in volatile regions were followed by an increase in activities related to security protection by the Chinese government. This also helped Beijing to defend the government's strategy of "going out" domestically (Grieger, 2019, p. 2). As ZiroMwatela & Zhao note: "Whichever powerful state controls the security of [the Horn of Africa region and the Suez Canal], also controls the maritime trade routes between Asia, Europe and Africa" (ZiroMwatela & Zhao, 2016, p. 11). Beijing's recent interest in global security is noteworthy since China's diplomacy has been driven by the People's Republic's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for many decades (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2014). These principles were laid down by Premier Zhou Enlai at a Peace Conference held in Bandung in 1955 and include respect for the sovereignty of others, non-aggression, peaceful coexistence and non-interference (Dirlik, 2015). Referring to these principles, China mostly kept out of conflicts in the past. The principles thus helped China to refrain from situations that might have challenged its government to take sides in a conflict (Gonzales-Vincente, 2015, p. 208). Yet, considering the increasing numbers of Chinese military in conflict-affected countries during the last two decades, the principles seem to have been interpreted more flexibly, as has Beijing's attitude towards unstable world regions. While China's increased efforts in questions of international security were still welcomed by the US in 2008 and 2009 (see chapter 2.1), the Trump administration<sup>9</sup> broadly judged China's secu-

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9 The presidency of Donald Trump began on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and ended on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021. He was the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.

rity behaviour as an attempt to seek world domination (Yang, 2021, p. 144). While Trump outlined China as an existential threat that should be met with confrontation, the 2020 administration of Joe Biden has changed the US approach towards considering China both an economic and a normative challenge that has to be competed with (Chen, Rogers, Moore, & Yankus, 2021, p. 1). In March 2021, Biden presented the first interim national security strategic guidance of his presidency, which stated that “[China] is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system” (The White House, 2021, p. 8). The report continues with Biden’s assurance to “position [the USA], diplomatically and militarily, to defend [the US]’ allies” (ibid., p. 20). At the same time, however, the report states that the US “will right-size [its] military presence” in the Middle East because “[we] do not believe that military force is the answer to the region’s challenges” (ibid., p. 11; 15). Finally, Biden sets the goal of “[shaping] new global norms and agreements that advance our interests and reflect our values”, while “[detering] Chinese aggression and counter[ing] threats to our collective security, prosperity, and democratic way of life” (ibid., p. 20). Hence, the report illustrates the US recognition of China as a serious protagonist on the international stage, with whom cooperation is proposed whenever “national fates are intertwined” (ibid., p. 21). To examine when and where such cooperation might be possible, it is necessary to first assess and understand the underlying motives and capabilities of China’s increased military activities in conflict-affected countries. This study attempts to fill this research gap and contributes to a better knowledge of drivers for China’s changed behaviour in foreign policy.

Second, China has taken on a proactive role within the United Nations and the instrument of UN peacekeeping in particular. China’s mounting contributions to UN peacekeeping missions visualise the PRC’s shift in strategy towards a more prominent and assertive position in security-related topics on the multilateral stage. While China was reluctant to make international commitments during the 1980s and 1990s, the PRC has become the top provider of both financial and personnel contributions for this international instrument (UN Peacekeeping, 2020). As Niu pointed out: “China’s attitude towards the UN changed from denying and doubting the role of UN to recognizing and valuing it” (Niu, 2018, p. 65). The more Beijing intensified its participation in the UN, the more actively involved China became in multilateral diplomacy (ibid., p. 65). This observation can also be made with regard to different thematic areas dealt

## 1. INTRODUCTION

with at the UN. Whilst China used to focus on development activities, Beijing's increased contributions to UN peacekeeping illustrate China's interest in the UN's "peace and security work" (Feltman, 2020, p. 1). This shift became particularly apparent in September 2015, when President Xi Jinping announced he would expand China's contributions to the UN and establish a USD 1 billion "China–UN peace and development fund" (Xi, 2015). Xi declared that

"China will join the new UN peacekeeping capability readiness system, take the lead to set up a permanent peacekeeping police squad and build an 8,000-strong standby peacekeeping force. China has also decided that it will provide 100 million USD of free military assistance to the African Union in the next five years to support the establishment of the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis" (ibid.).

In combination with the BRI announced in 2013, Beijing underscored China's ambitions for a more confident international profile. In the following years, Western actors especially experienced the implications of increased Chinese participation in security-related questions. As a recent example, Feltman mentions China's affiliation with Russia in vetoing UN resolutions on the protection of human rights in Syria (see also chapter 2.1) (Feltman, 2020, p. 1). China's powerful negotiating position is strengthened both by its status as the second largest financial donor and by the fact that China—unlike the USA—paid its contributions to the UN on time (Feltman, 2020, p. 4). Whilst former US President Donald Trump introduced cuts to the US contributions to the UN budget, President Joe Biden announced that the US "will re-engage as a full participant [in the United Nations] and work to meet [the USA's] financial obligations, in full and on time" (The White House, 2021, p. 13). It remains to be seen to what extent the new US government will hold to Biden's promise. Whilst the amount of budget available to the UN defines how much the UN can spend and achieve, those spending the funds have traditionally also claimed greater influence on the organisation's orientation and the design of its missions. China's increased financial contributions have thus been accompanied by demands for the greater influence of Chinese substantive and content-related contributions on the design of peace and security policies (Feltman, 2020, p. 1). Pohl wrote, however, that "different religious traditions in China have also led to a specific political culture with other priorities for the common good and living together in society. China and most of the East Asian countries give top priority to social