

Wenting  
Meng



# Developmental Peace

Theorizing China's Approach to  
International Peacebuilding

*ibidem*

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Verlag

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# Abbreviations

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
AU	African Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCPS	Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
CHEC	China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement between The Government of the Republic of The Sudan and The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/ Sudan People’s Liberation Army
CPC	Communist Party of China
CTSAMM	Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism
DFID	Department for International Development of the United Kingdom
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNPOC	Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company
ICG	International Crisis Group
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JMEC	Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLA	People’s Liberation Army
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan

SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition
SPLM	South Sudan People's Liberation Movement
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cul- tural Organization.
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOAU	United Nations Office to the African Union
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
US	United States
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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# Foreword

## The Vital Significance of *Developmental Peace*

Dr. Meng Wenting's masterpiece, *Developmental Peace*, is making its debut in the English language. This meticulously prepared edition stands as a testament to the dynamism that permeates her research.

At the core of *Developmental Peace* lies a profound exposition of ideas, illuminating the distinct and invaluable contributions that China's peacekeeping academic community offers. Moreover, it reveals a vista of diverse possibilities for the evolution of UN peacekeeping doctrines. As is well known, the earliest international peacekeeping mechanisms were founded on the principle of "peace keeping", with the objective of preventing further confrontations between conflicting parties by the deployment of UN peacekeepers. While this approach theoretically safeguarded the sovereignty and autonomy of the nations involved, it was limited by its inability to deeply influence the course of crises. Following the end of the Cold War, this principle faced challenges, leading to an emerging trend that emphasizes intensified efforts at peacebuilding. This entails deeper engagement and transformative interventions in the internal affairs of the nations involved, especially concerning their political arrangements, electoral systems, and the pursuit of good governance, thus effecting substantial progress. The strengths and weaknesses of this second-generation peacekeeping philosophy are intricately intertwined. For instance, in certain regions of Africa and the Arab world, the intervention has yielded radical changes in the internal dynamics of the countries affected, culminating in the fall of dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. However, it has also led to persistent social instability, political turmoil, and even the emergence of violent extremism.

Since its initial involvement in UN peacekeeping operations in the early 1990s, China has steadily transitioned from the periphery to the core of the undertaking. Notably, in the past decade, it has contributed more troops than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council, and is also the second-largest funder of UN

peacekeeping missions. In contrast to traditional powers, China consistently maintains a proactive, constructive, and collaborative approach when executing UN peacekeeping missions. It places great importance on respecting the sovereign rights of the nations involved and proactively assists in the reconstruction of impacted regions. To my understanding, the concept of Developmental Peace primarily entails the external promotion of peace based on the fundamental goals of national development, economic progress, and the well-being of the affected populations. Additionally, it encompasses the coordinated participation of various Chinese entities – the military, the diplomatic corps, commercial concerns, and civil society – in the noble endeavor of the UN. The Chinese people’s wholehearted dedication to advancing Developmental Peace is no mere happenstance; rather, it is the reflection of China’s progressive spirit.

In my personal estimation, the doctrine of Developmental Peace is neither exclusive nor reductive, but an enlightened and mutually beneficial approach. Externally, it compensates for the limitations inherent in traditional peacebuilding doctrines; internally, it kindles greater enthusiasm for participation. Though the exploration of this concept is still in its nascent stage, the vision of Developmental Peace holds tremendous potential as a crucial pathway for China’s promotion of innovation in the international peacebuilding arena.

With sincere felicitations, I extend my warmest congratulations on the release of the English edition of *Developmental Peace*. I eagerly anticipate it becoming a cherished topic of exchange and discourse among colleagues, both at home and abroad.

Wang Yizhou  
Boya Distinguished Professor of Peking University  
Late May 2023 in Nanjing



# Introduction

We are witnessing profound changes in the global order as the rise of emerging countries has a significant impact on the world landscape. The traditional focus on “geopolitics” has given way to the growing significance of “geoeconomics” (Nye 2011, 23). These emerging nations have not only experienced remarkable economic growth but also aspire to shape a more inclusive and democratic international order by bolstering their global influence (De Carvalho & De Coning 2013). This endeavor finds expression in a growing commitment to fostering global peace and stability, exemplified by their active involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, challenging the traditional dominance of Western countries.

Western and emerging donors differ in their approach. The peacebuilding efforts of the former are conducted strictly within the framework of sovereignty. They consider governments and states as the primary partners in aid, development, and nation-building, emphasizing the role of economic and social development in the process of peacebuilding. In contrast to Western countries, which sometimes resort to the use of force to protect civilians and promote democracy, emerging countries exhibit a more cautious and, at times, antithetical stance. The practice pursued by emerging countries has received praise in conflict-affected African nations, demonstrating a more proactive attitude in shaping new international peace agendas and norms.

Of the emerging countries, China, as the most influential economy, has increased its level of involvement in global affairs. China is proactively expanding its presence in overseas markets; it is also securing resources in and forging strong partnerships with various countries, even those grappling with conflicts. However, the unstable local environment presents China with substantial risks and potential losses for its interests abroad. Consequently, China actively engages in peacebuilding endeavors in conflict-affected regions, utilizing methods such as participation in UN peacekeeping missions, economic aid and investment, and diplomatic mediation.

This has led to the emergence of a unique “Chinese-style peace” that differs from the traditional Liberal Peace (Kuo 2015; Wang 2017c).

Although China has consistently lacked a policy framework for international peacebuilding, it is evident at the grassroots level that the integration of the aforementioned three areas has contributed to China’s growing influence in conflict regions. For example, China’s economic influence and aid in conflict-affected regions has given it leverage in influencing the outcome of mediation processes. The deployment of peacekeepers has facilitated local humanitarian relief efforts and enabled large-scale infrastructure projects that contribute to China’s engagement in local economic recovery. On the other hand, China’s assistance and business activities in conflict regions have been subject to criticism, with concerns raised about increased debt, elite enrichment, widening inequality, corruption, suppression of dissent, and hindrance of the development of civil society (De Coning & Osland 2020, 14; Abb 2018, 2).

Therefore, it is important to question whether China’s peacebuilding practices genuinely bring about peace in the affected regions. If they do, what are the underlying theories and rationale behind China’s peacebuilding endeavors? This book aims to address these questions through an exploratory construction of a Developmental Peace framework. To lay the foundation for discussing China’s approach, it is imperative to examine the evolving theory of peacebuilding, along with its limitations.

### **Peacebuilding: Theory and Practice**

As world politics and the nature of conflicts have undergone transformation, the scholarly exploration of peace and conflict has been grouped into three distinct generations. The first generation encompasses traditional conflict management research conducted within the framework of sovereignty norms. The second generation revolves around conflict resolution research, focusing on addressing universal human needs. Finally, and most recently, the third generation encompasses interdisciplinary and dynamic peacebuilding

research, embracing a holistic approach to fostering sustainable peace (Richmond 2008).

### *Conflict Management Research*

The first generation of research is grounded in the diplomatic traditions and cultures of the Westphalian system. It asserts that even within an anarchical international system characterized by competing state interests, conflict management can serve as an optimal solution, even in the presence of some social development (Bull 1977). Specific methodologies employed in conflict management include diplomatic negotiations, mediation, and peacekeeping operations aimed at enforcing ceasefires. This approach to conflict management prevailed until the Cold War era, serving to prevent conflict escalation through the exercise of diplomatic mediation, often referred to as crisis management. The UN played a significant role in international mediation, as in the case of then UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's mediation of a dispute between Israel and Jordan in 1957, which led to an agreement on oil transportation, the initial issue, and ultimately contributed to peace in the entire region (Franck & Nolte 1996, 179-180; Bercovitch 1996, 28). During the Cold War, peacekeeping endeavors were instrumental in reducing the duration and occurrence of overt conflicts, as illustrated by the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus, ongoing since 1964 (Richmond 1998).

The concept of conflict management is often associated with political realism, as it is rooted in the belief that conflict is an inherent aspect of human nature. It adopts a state-centric approach aimed at establishing order and preserving the existing state of affairs without triggering conflict (Bercovitch 1996; Bercovitch & Rubin 1992; James 1994). Disputes or conflicts that have the potential to jeopardize regional or global stability have developed through centuries, making them challenging to resolve or change. However, they can be effectively managed so as to establish a self-sustaining international order. Nevertheless, the limitations of conflict management become apparent. Third-party mediation and interna-

tional negotiations, among other methods, claim to adhere to principles of consent, impartiality, and neutrality. However, they often operate within power dynamics and may be influenced by hegemonic activities. Negotiation, though a valuable tool, has inherent limitations. The research conducted by Stedman (1991, 23) supports this notion, as it reveals that, from 1900 to 1980, unilateral military victories resolved 85 percent of civil wars, while only 15 percent were resolved through negotiation. This rigid understanding of sovereignty impedes the responsibility to address humanitarian issues and narrowly prioritizes national interests, leaving limited room for official or private actors to effectively tackle the root causes of conflicts. As argued by Burton (1991, 45), traditional approaches are often temporary in nature and can inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of conflicts.

### *Conflict Resolution Research*

Since the 1970s, there has been growing criticism of the state-centric international system from global civil society and the international community. Barry Buzan's influential book, *People, State and Fear* (1983) played a significant role in this discourse in the 1980s. Buzan argues for a broader understanding of security, one that encompassed systemic concerns involving individuals, states, and the entire system. He emphasizes the importance of considering not only political and military aspects but also economic, social, and environmental factors. This expansion of the security debate shifted the focus from national security to human security, addressing essential aspects of human life, values, protection against deprivation, natural disasters, and authoritarian persecution.

In contrast to the first generation of research, the second generation of scholars adopted a perspective grounded in human needs (Burton & Azar 1986; Gurr 1970; Burton 1987; Burton 1972; Azar 1990; Burton 1990). John Burton introduces the concept of "rooted causes of conflict", which highlights unmet human needs as the source of conflicts. He contends that conflicts often emerge in situations characterized by social inequalities and barriers to the

fulfillment of the need for identity and participation. In such situations, communities may resort to violence to protect their culture and values. Burton (1990) argues that conflicts are rooted in discriminatory, biased, or unequal social, economic, and political structures. The theory of relative deprivation identifies the sense of injustice as a fundamental cause of social unrest, while the frustration-aggression theory suggests that individual frustration can be a necessary or sufficient condition for aggression (Runciman 1972; Berkowitz 1993). Studies on violent events stemming from community or ethnic divisions have also revealed that these divisions often arise from the denial of basic human needs (Azar 1990, 9-12). The second generation of scholars recognize that the repression and deprivation of human needs are at the core of protracted conflicts and contribute to the structural imbalance of center-periphery development. They perceive conflicts as sociobiological phenomena resulting from the structural suppression of the fundamental level of human needs.

The second generation of researchers aimed to uncover the underlying causes of conflicts that drive transformative change, centering their focus on the concept of conflict resolution (Boulding 1978). This approach addressed the injustices stemming from individual needs and structural violence, challenging the belief that individuals play a passive role in international politics. Instead, it viewed both individual actors and institutions as capable of addressing human needs and fostering social justice. The goal of conflict resolution was to tackle the societal roots of conflicts by directing attention to non-state actors and their transnational connections, aiming to rectify the unequal distribution of universal needs, such as identity, political participation, and security (Azar 1986, 29). However, this generation's methods of conflict resolution met with criticism for their tendency to bypass elite decision-making levels in favor of consensus-building at lower levels.

### *Peacebuilding Research*

The first and second generations' understanding of conflict was limited to a one-dimensional perspective. Conflict management



methods focused on controlling conflicts from a state-centric standpoint, while conflict resolution aimed to resolve conflicts by addressing individual needs. These theories, which relied solely on aspects of the international system, states, or individuals, proved inadequate for comprehending the intricate and evolving nature of real-world conflicts. As a result, the third generation of researchers introduced novel approaches to address conflicts, seeking to incorporate local, national, and regional organizations, as well as non-state actors, in a collaborative effort to tackle the multifaceted issues associated with dynamic conflicts. This approach is a hybrid one, combining top-down decision-making with bottom-up demands.

Conventional studies in international relations have traditionally centered around the notion of negative peace, which defines peace as the absence of war. These approaches primarily stress conflict management strategies, like containment and mediation, to prevent conflicts from escalating (Richmond 2008). Conversely, the concept of positive peace involves identifying the causes of conflicts and addressing their underlying roots to establish sustainable peace. In a discussion about achieving positive peace, the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung introduced the concept of peacebuilding in 1976. In the decades since, despite the shift in the nature of conflicts from inter-state to intra-state, the essence of peacebuilding as rooted in positive peace has remained unaltered (Galtung & Jacobsen 2000; Galtung 1976).

In the traditional sense, violence has been defined as warfare or conflict that directly inflicts harm and suffering on individuals' physical well-being. However, Galtung argues that this understanding is limited as it only encompasses direct forms of violence that cause bodily harm or damage. He introduces the concept of structural violence, which refers to the indirect forms of violence originating from within social structures, primarily manifested as oppression and exploitation. Structural violence specifically focuses on the problems within social, political, and economic systems, along with the resulting injustices in the distribution of political power and economic benefits. Furthermore, Galtung recognizes the role of consciousness and ideas in perpetuating violence

and advances the notion of cultural violence. Cultural violence encompasses the ideas, consciousness, language, art, empirical science, and formal science that can be employed to legitimize or enable both direct and structural violence. These three forms of violence are interconnected: direct violence intentionally undermines the basic needs of others, structural violence incorporates these harms into social and global structures through exploitation and suppression, and cultural violence validates both direct and structural violence.

The three forms of violence give rise to corresponding concepts of peace: direct peace, structural (indirect) peace, and cultural peace. Direct peace refers to the absence of direct violence, and encompasses the absence of organized wars and conflicts. Structural peace, on the other hand, involves the eradication of structural violence, leading to freedom rather than oppression, and equality rather than exploitation. Cultural peace represents the elimination of cultural violence, where the legitimacy of peace replaces the legitimacy of violence. To transform conflicts, Galtung proposes three essential approaches: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Peacemaking and peacekeeping primarily aim to eliminate direct violence and establish immediate peace. However, to address the root causes of violence, it is necessary to engage in peacebuilding, which goes beyond direct violence and targets the eradication of structural violence and cultural violence. This comprehensive approach aims to create a foundation of structural peace and cultural peace, ultimately leading to sustainable peace. Galtung views peace as a nonviolent revolutionary process that is ongoing and perpetual. According to John Paul Lederach, peacebuilding is a dynamic and continuous process. It involves not only the cessation of direct violence but also the transformation of deep-rooted structural violence and the promotion of social reconciliation (Lederach 1995, 29-35).