

Influence of A4P on Future Peacekeeping Operations and China's Stance on Peacekeeping Reform

BACKGROUND PAPER

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The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres launched the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative in March this year, which called on all parties to refocus peacekeeping missions to have more realistic expectations of outcomes; to make peacekeeping missions stronger and safer; and to mobilize greater support for political solutions and for well-structured, well-equipped and well-trained forces. As an integral part of the A4P initiative, the Secretary-General called on all Member States and peacekeeping stakeholders to recognize the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, and planned to issue an official UN A4P document by the end of 2018. So far the Declaration of Shared Commitments has been endorsed by more than 150 member states and 4 international organizations (EU, African Union, NATO and Organization Internationale de la Francophonie). This means that the Secretary-General's initiative, which was launched at the right time and place and has gained broad support, will have positive and far-reaching impacts on future UN peacekeeping operations. China always supports the reform of UN peacekeeping operations, and is a major contributor by investing huge amounts of human resources and capital. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has made unremitting political efforts to make sure UN peacekeeping operations can proceed on the right track, and expressed its views on their reform on many occasions. China is comprehensively implementing the commitments announced by President Xi Jinping to further support UN peacekeeping operations, and will continue to support them and make greater contributions to public goods for world peace.

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Impacts of A4P on future peacekeeping operations

(I) The initiative gained political consensus among peacekeeping stakeholders again and adjusts the strategic direction for future peacekeeping operations.

Peacekeeping, as an important part of UN operations over the past 70 years, has helped countries like Angola, Salvador, Namibia, Cambodia and East Timor to move from the chaos of war to peace, winning extensive praises for the organisation. However, after the Cold War, some countries tried to impose their own values on peacekeeping operations, and enforced peacekeeping without respecting the host state's sovereignty, resulting in the failure of some operations. In view of this, the UN formed an expert panel in 2000 headed by former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi to fully evaluate UN peacekeeping operations. In 2015, the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon formed an independent expert panel to re-evaluate peacekeeping operations. The UN Evaluation Report on Peacekeeping Operations issued in the same year once again put peaceful, political solution's in the center of all efforts for solving conflicts. When submitting the report to the Security Council, the then UN Secretary-General suggested refocusing on prevention and mediation, strengthening regional and global partnerships, adapting to the new situation on the ground, and adopting new methods to plan and carry out peacekeeping operations.

By proposing the A4P initiative, Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated that taking a political approach to solve conflicts should be the guide that the UN should follow when designing and deploying peacekeeping operations for which the "three principles" remain the cornerstone. This adjusted the strategic direction for future peacekeeping operations.

(II) The initiative responds to Member States' concerns for peacekeeping operation reform and draws the reform roadmap.

The call for reforming the UN peacekeeping operations has existed for a long time. The two UN evaluation reports in 2000 and 2015 took in the opinions of peacekeeping stakeholders and put forth hundreds of reform recommendations. Generally speaking, the stakeholders had extensive consensus on reform of the following six aspects.

1. The three principles of peacekeeping remain the cornerstone for peacekeeping operations. In face of new challenges and threats, the UN can adopt new policies and countermeasures, but peacekeeping operations shouldn't become a tool to interfere in the host state's internal affairs.
2. The UN peacekeeping operation mechanism has to adapt to new changes and the existing institution must undergo bold and massive reforms.
3. Security Council mandates must be clear, credible, specially tailored for the mission area and achievable.

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4. Communication and cooperation must be strengthened among the Security Council, UN Secretariat and the troop contributors, as well as among the UN, regional organizations and host states.

5. More financial support should be given to peacekeeping operations to ensure sufficient resources and equipment.

6. Efforts must be made to enable peacekeeping operations to better protect civilians, to ensure the safety of peacekeepers, to realize gender balance in peacekeeping forces, and to give zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and crime.

Several UN Secretary-Generals have made relentless efforts to implement these reform requirements, and some reform measures are put into practice. But in general, peacekeeping operation reform is far from meeting the Member States' expectations. The A4P initiative expressed the vision to reform the Peace and Security Pillar of the UN Secretariat and put forth specific reform measures regarding the communication of peacekeeping stakeholders, civilian protection and safety protection of peacekeepers. It is endorsed by more than 150 member states, including the permanent members of the Security Council. UN peacekeeping reform has moved from the stage of discussions to that of true actions. The initiative responds to Member States' expectations and draws the reform roadmap.

(III) The initiative specifies the host state's primary responsibility for protecting civilians and defines the civilian protection mandates of peacekeeping operations, providing the policy basis for future operations.

Article 9 and 10 of the Declaration of Shared Commitments point out explicitly, "We recognize that host states bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians and stress the contribution that peacekeeping operations, where mandated, can make to international efforts to protect civilians and to promote and protect human rights. We collectively commit to support tailored, context-specific peacekeeping approaches to protecting civilians, in relevant peacekeeping operations, emphasising the protection of women and children in those contexts. We commit to implement protection of civilians mandates of peacekeeping missions, including through using all necessary means when required, in accordance with the UN Charter, mission mandates, and applicable international law."

Civilian protection is a new challenge faced by peacekeeping operations in the new century. The Security Council, out of humanitarian considerations, includes clauses on civilian protection in many peacekeeping mandates, but there are difficulties in practice. First of all, Security Council mandates are usually general and on principle and lack practical details for frontline peacekeepers to follow. Second, the chain of command for civilian protection in UN missions is unclear and frontline commanders cannot receive clear and definite orders during emergencies. When I carried out a survey in a mission area together with the Challenges Forum expert panel, I heard a humanitarian official complain that the peacekeeping troops did not follow his direction on

civilian protection, whereas the peacekeeping officer in charge said he did not receive an order from his superiors and, as a military officer, he could not carry out orders given by others. Third, some peacekeeping troops had the UN mandates to protect civilians, but they could not fulfill the mandates due to inadequacy of equipment provided by the UN. Fourth, civilian protection is a politically sensitive task that many peacekeepers are incapable of performing due to the lack of targeted training.

The initiative specifies the host state's primary responsibility for protecting civilians and defines the civilian protection mandate of peacekeeping operations. I believe that based on auxiliary reform, equipment upgrades and necessary training, peacekeeping operations will better achieve the goal of civilian protection in the future.

(IV) The initiative calls for improving the safety and security of peacekeepers, strengthening their conduct, and ensuring the safety and security of future peacekeepers.

UN peacekeeping operations are faced with an increasingly complicated environment and tasks. Organised multi-national crimes, terrorist organisations and hostile armed factions pose a serious threat to the safety of peacekeepers, whose casualties keep rising. About 140 peacekeepers have died since the Mali mission area was designated in 2013. The initiative specifies the host state's primary responsibility for protecting peacekeeper security. It commits to better preparing, training and equipping uniformed personnel by pursuing innovative approaches, including triangular partnerships and co-deployments. It requires all peacekeeping stakeholders to collectively commit, within their respective responsibilities, to hold personnel and leadership accountable for proper conduct, including through support to the UN zero-tolerance policy with its victim-centered approach on all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Peacekeeping operations cannot be carried out if peacekeepers' security is not guaranteed, and the misconduct of a handful of peacekeepers would disgrace the entire operation. Therefore, this reform is extremely important.

China's stance on the reform of UN peacekeeping operations

China believes that UN peacekeeping operations are an effective means of mitigating regional conflicts and maintaining collective security, and has made important contributions to safeguarding world peace and safety. China is always positive about the reform of UN peacekeeping operations and appreciates the A4P initiative proposed by Secretary-General Guterres, hoping it will forge consensus and make peacekeeping operations more efficient and effective. The Chinese government has publicly expressed the following views on the UN peacekeeping reform on different occasions.

First, the tenet and principles of the UN Charter, which is fundamental

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to lasting peace and common security, should be adhered to. The basic principles of international relations should be honored and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries be safeguarded. Adhering to the basic principles of peacekeeping, including consent of the parties, impartiality, non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate, is the cornerstone of peacekeeping operations and the precondition and guarantee for such operations to win member states' trust and to succeed.

Second, priority needs to be given to political solutions. Fully promoting political processes, achieving national reconciliation and stabilizing the security situation is an important foundation and guarantee for effectively performing the civilian protection mandates of peacekeeping operations. The operations aim to help the host states establish and maintain a sustainable peaceful environment and create the conditions for politically solving conflicts.

Third, mandates by the Security Council on peacekeeping operations should be tailored and focused on the central task of sustaining peace. The Security Council needs to make realistic mandates for peacekeeping missions that have clear goals and focuses, continuously adjust the priorities and key tasks in each stage dynamically, and better maintain stability in the host state and assist in its political agenda.

Fourth, peacekeeping partnerships should be forged. The host state, troop contributors, capital contributors, the Secretariat and other stakeholders should be motivated to ensure resources for peacekeeping operations are adequately available and are used more efficiently. Cooperation with regional organisations should be strengthened. Efforts should be made to give full play to the African Union's advantages in peacekeeping operations in Africa, build capacities in different fields according to its will and needs, and assist the African Union in setting up the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis at an early date.

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Fifth, policies need to be implemented in a coordinated way to improve peacekeeping performance. This requires the concerted efforts of a number of departments, including the Secretariat and military, police and civil sections in the peacekeeping mission. The Secretariat and civil section should support and guarantee the performance of duties by peacekeeping troops with higher efficiency and quality. Efforts must be made to ensure the security and medical assurance for peacekeeping units and personnel, make sure resources and measures are in place, and improve the emergency response capability. More attention should be paid to the needs of troop contributors, especially developing country contributors, and to their peacekeeping capacity building. Continuous efforts need to be made to summarize and improve the current peacekeeping performance evaluation system and fully engage troop contributors in relevant work.

Sixth, peacebuilding should aim at strengthening political security

and development capability and facilitate the change from conflict to development and reconstruction. Countries have their specific conditions and are in various development stages, and many of them have the fine tradition of resolving divergences and reaching consensus through consultation. Peacebuilding efforts must respect the dominant position of the host state, advocate seeking common ground while resolving differences through democratic consultation, conform to the host state's conditions, leverage the cooperative tradition of regional countries, and promote social integration and consolidate the peace. When working to build peace, UN bodies should observe their mandates, focus on improving the host state's "blood-making" capability, and concentrate resources on helping it solve the most pressing issues.

These six points show that China's stance is highly consistent with the A4P initiative proposed by UN Secretary-General. China is always a steadfast supporter and active participant of peacekeeping operations. By the end of 2017, it had assigned a cumulative total of 35,522 peacekeepers, making it one of the largest military personnel contributors among the five permanent members of the Security Council. From 2016 to 2018, China shared 10.2% of UN's peacekeeping cost, becoming the second largest capital contributors among all member states.

At present, China is comprehensively delivering the commitments made by President Xi Jinping at the UN Peacekeeping Summit in 2015 to further supporting UN peacekeeping operations. It has formed the peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 troops, including six infantry battalions, three engineering companies, two transport companies, four level-2 hospitals, four guard companies, three fast response companies, two mid-size multi-purpose helicopter detachments, two transport plane detachments, one UAV detachment and one surface vessel detachment. The 28 detachments of 10 disciplines as well as two standby peacekeeping police squads have completed the registration at UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.

At the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in early September this year, China announced it would set up the China-Africa peace and security fund, continue to provide free military aid for the African Union, and push the implementation of 50 security aid programs in the peace and security field, including UN peacekeeping efforts. Within the UN framework, we will continue to take an active part in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, and mobilise the international community to give stronger support in setting up the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis.

It is said that the UN is never short of plans and initiatives, but it seldom turns them into reality, which requires the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. Therefore, Secretary-General Guterres' call for all parties to take actions is especially important. Only by taking action can we narrow the gap between ideal and reality and overcome the difficulties

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Only by taking action can we narrow the gap between ideal and reality and overcome the difficulties encountered by peacekeeping operations. There is an old Chinese saying that "Better return home and make a net than long for fish by the waterside". We hope stakeholders of UN peacekeeping operations will support Secretary-General Guterres' initiative and take actions for peacekeeping.