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Chinese Peacekeeping in South Sudan and Mali – A Comparative Study

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Abstract

China has in recent decades altered their foreign policy position from passive observers to reactive participants with vested interests in international affairs. One area where this is true is international peacekeeping efforts through the institutional settings such as the United Nations. China has become an active participant in numerous peacekeeping missions, particularly in Africa. In addition, they have also provided missions with combat forces to carry out mission mandates. This is evident in both South Sudan and Mali. A fascinating prospect to consider and which has been speculated are China's motivations and intentions for their more active and leading engagement with peacekeeping and even more so when considering their historical position of non-interference. This thesis aims to examine Chinese peacekeeping efforts in South Sudan and Mali and correlate their activity to their potential interests in both countries. To accomplish this, I have chosen to apply a theoretical framework of realism and constructivism, providing contrasting perspectives to complete a well-rounded analysis. The analysis offers insights into the contextual backgrounds of the missions, how they came to be and China's role in both. Moreover, Chinese interests in both countries will be discussed in detail and encompass interests extending in both the economic and political realm. The broad range of Chinese interests stretch across natural resources, One Belt-One Road promotion, military capability advancement, diplomatic training, political prestige and institutional ascension. Comparatively between both peacekeeping missions, China has a wide range of interests, both similar and dissimilar and dependant on the context go about pursuing them either in comparable or incomparable ways. My findings indicate that both economic and political material and non-material interests in South Sudan and Mali are a determining factor for China's participation in both missions and theoretically both strands of theory are applicable to analyse and interpret China's actions. Furthermore, both cases portray instances of similarities and discrepancies in their approaches conveying that China in the current political climate has adopted and exercises an increasingly multi-faceted foreign policy agenda and is willing to alter their traditional convictions towards a more modern and pragmatic approach to either pursue or protect their national interests.

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1. Introduction

China has experienced a fundamental alteration from isolationism and detachment to becoming increasingly invested in foreign global affairs imprinted with bi- and multilateral cooperation and coalitions that have vested interests in promoting prolific economic, political and social values, as exemplified by their continuing support and involvement with the United Nations institutions and initiatives, such as United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Their position and role in the UN peacekeeping system and how they operate today was not established instantaneously, but rather the result of decades of development which is currently still evolving incessantly.

Historically, China has voiced their scepticism to the necessity and morality of interfering in conflicts and disputes in foreign sovereign nations. In the 1970s, China was openly critical of the UN peacekeeping apparatus, as the Chinese leadership believed the Korean War (1950-1953) was an example of Western powers abusing the UN system to their advantage. UN forces were utilised in the Korea War where they legitimised and sanctioned actions against China, which was perceived as an aggressive military action in a situation where Chinese forces fought UN forces under United States command (Neethling, 2015). Another factor that has delayed Chinese participation in the UN peacekeeping scene was their fundamental principle of non-interference or non-intervention in foreign sovereign entities. China has advocated that difficulties whether they be social, economic or political, in all spectrums, should be managed domestically within the borders of an autonomous nation, as it is their right as a sovereign nation to control their own affairs without intervention from external interference. China occupies territories that have stirred controversy in the international arena, from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia as well as their claim over Taiwan, leaving them susceptible to international scrutiny and their border security and protection vulnerable.

Gradually, China became more vested in UN peacekeeping affairs after significant policy changes in the 1980s in response to the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping. These changes opened up the gate for China to promote an expanded international presence in order to improve standing, perception, and international cooperation (ISDP, 2018). Peacekeeping has been a mechanism to endorse Chinese soft-power abroad, as well as advancing its interests

overseas by promoting partnerships with other nations. China's first indicator that they were willing to increase their support and participation for UN peacekeeping operations came in 1981 where they for the first-time allocated funds for peacekeeping operations. This led to China joining the UN Special Committee of Peacekeeping Operations in 1988, signalling their intentions to participate in future peacekeeping operations. Four years after joining the Special Committee of Peacekeeping Operations, China partook in its first major peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992. Since then China has been steadily increasing their presence and influence in UN peacekeeping, participating in numerous missions over the years, as well as increasing their financial and physical contributions. In 2018, China had become the second largest contributor for peacekeeping operations, donating 10.25 percent of the budget, behind the United States 28.47 per cent (UN, 2018). Moreover, China contributes significantly more troops than the other four permanent members of the security council (France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States). As of February 2019 China, has allocated 2,512 peacekeeping personnel dwarfing the second largest contribution from a security council member, France, who contributed 739 (UN, 2019).

With China's increased participation in peacekeeping operations, their presence has likewise risen in the continent of Africa. Their relations with Africa have experienced a significant intensification over the past decades. In 2009 China surpassed the United States as the largest trading partner to Africa (Ighobor, 2013), signalling their sincere interest to foster beneficial trade, political and social relations on the continent. Moreover, China has invested vast amounts of resources that has supported with the construction of countless infrastructure projects throughout Africa, such as the African Unions headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. China's economic and political growth in Africa mirrors their peacekeeping upscaling in the continent, where they have participated in operations in Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur, Liberia, Mali and South Sudan. China's sentiment towards peacekeeping has seen a radical change from their previous perceptions of non-interference to currently advocating, contributing and participating in numerous operations while providing a large share of the personnel and troops deployed to the respective missions. China's shift, while garnering international acclaim, has also raised questions regarding the sincerity and morality of their actions. Chinese peacekeeping presence in Africa may possibly be concealed by ulterior motivations other than just fulfilling the peacekeeping operation mandate. A string of these possible motives includes China's desire to convey their diplomatic influence and soft power

in Africa, penetration of the African market and natural resource assets, increasing their military capabilities outside of war and promoting domestic interests, such as Belt and Road Initiative and One-China Policy. Though, the One-China agenda has overtime become less significant in China's engagement with Africa, as only one country, Swaziland, support Taiwan's claim.

In light of the above, this thesis intends to examine the role of Chinese peacekeeping efforts in Africa and help clarify their intentions and see if the suggested motivations hold true. This will be conducted through a comparative two-country case study of South Sudan and Mali where I aim to illustrate the similarities and differences between both operations from a Chinese point of view with respect to Chinese interests and motivations. Thus, I wish to answer the following problem formulation: **“Why is China active in the peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and Mali?”**.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows. In the first part I present a literature review encompassing articles and journals relating to Chinese peacekeeping history and their evolving efforts and motivations behind their prolific rise. Secondly, the methodology for the thesis will be presented, where I discuss topics such as why South Sudan and Mali were chosen as case countries, the choice of theories used in the analysis, what type of sources that will be the applied and the limitations of the paper. Thirdly, the theoretical chapter will present the theories selected for my analysis, namely Realism and Constructivism. Fourthly, I will provide a contextual background for Mali followed up with a Chinese material and non-material interest's breakdown. This will also be done with South Sudan. Fifthly, a comparative analysis between both studies will be conducted. Lastly, I will present my conclusion for this thesis.

2. Literature Review

The intention of this literature review is to present an overview of the publications that are available concerning Chinese peacekeeping in Africa which directly discuss the strategic, economic, political and social interests that China hold in their continuing and evolving presence in Africa. The literature that will be discussed in this section was released between 2007 and up until 2015, representing a more modern interpretation of Chinese peacekeeping efforts. I also believe it is important that the literature that is presented in this overview has been written by authors from both Western and Eastern countries, so that possible systematic biases are reduced, which in turn help paint a clearer and more holistic picture. Lastly, the literature that has been gathered for this review has primarily been collected from various political science journals and peer reviewed books.

Surprisingly, the quantity of literature available concerning Chinese peacekeeping in Africa is limited considering the scale of Chinese involvement in Africa that has occurred over the past decades and the elevated profile that peacekeeping retains globally. This is not to suggest that the literature that is available is unusable or incomplete, but rather it paves the way for original research to be conducted and provide a fresh perspective under new paradigms.

The available literature offers numerous insights and explanations with the intention to explain Chinese peacekeeping efforts in Africa. It encompasses discussions revolving around China's economic expansions and international power gains, state sovereignty, interdependence, international security, increased influence in UN's decision making, military capacity building, Chinese image and reputation boosting internationally and fostering political relations with foreign entities. There seems to be no clear definitive agreement among scholars that explains Chinese peacekeeping in Africa, but rather a blend of different factors which explain China's decision-making process.

Some research places great emphasis on the notion of state sovereignty and non-interference which China has had in the past and still maintains a strong inclination towards. This is being challenged in academia through scholars such as Neethling (2015) who recognises that China's non-interference stance has, and still is, an important feature in their foreign policy, but overtime China has had to change their strategy to accommodate their own growth and the alterations that have occurred in the world. China's rapid growth has raised expectations that they should intensify their efforts with global responsibilities that is expected of a world power

and their domestic interests have also become increasingly integrated and entangled with the African continent. To protect their interests and portraying to other entities that China is ready to take on a leading role in global affairs, they have been compelled to become present and intervene in domestic African affairs, where one of the approaches applied is peacekeeping. The notion of China using peacekeeping as a tool to expand their global influence is supported by Wang (2013) who shares the belief that the benefits China could obtain by demonstrating global responsibilities, extending economic and diplomatic influence persuaded the Chinese decision makers to alter their foreign policy strategy, where they especially viewed active participation in international organisations as a medium to gain more influence. Moreover, the added benefit of partaking in collective international discussions highlights to the rest of the world that China's power progression is a peaceful ascent and conveys themselves as a responsible power. Maintaining a positive perception of China from foreign states was vital for Chinese leaders according to Gill and Huang (2013). Chinese leaders were concerned that the Tiananmen incident in 1989 had left China with a poor image and reputation abroad, and therefore to restore and better their international and political relations overseas they began to project themselves as a peace loving and responsible rising power.

Other scholars have analysed China's peacekeeping evolution through the lens of realism. One of those is Rogers (2007) who argues that a deciding factors for China's peacekeeping presence in Africa is motivated by their own domestic needs, such as energy which they harvest from the vast natural resource deposits that Africa possess, bilateral trade relations between African countries and China, and China's pursuit of promoting the 'One China' agenda, which in the context of Africa is gathering support of African leaders to renounce Taiwan as a sovereign territory with no political, economic or lawful allegiance to China. The search for allies that support the Chinese One-China Policy is also reiterated by Wang and Dottin (2012) and Neethling (2015) as they discuss that there is a firm belief that China's deepening partnership and widening cooperative relations with Africa continues to be shaped by Beijing's strategic considerations, including One-China Policy. The domestic demand for resources to sustain growth for China is also mentioned in Zhengyu and Taylor (2011) stating that by participating in PKOs in Africa and increasing their presence China will be better equipped to negotiate the terms of attaining natural resources for their domestic needs.

An alternative trend in the literature debated by Gill and Huang (2013) is the idea that China views peacekeeping as an instrument to develop their military capacities through Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), both home and abroad.

Last of all, much of the literature debates that China has increased their peacekeeping involvement from a bilateral and multilateral standpoint, creating mutually beneficial partnerships, supporting development and promoting China overseas. Agubamah (2014) communicates this notion writing that China is conscious of the benefits peacekeeping has for China, but also the benefits that it brings to Africa and its people. It also assists China with fostering new and dynamic relationships by building confidence and trust. Furthermore, China became aware that peacekeeping operations were an important means of maintaining international peace and security which is in China's self-interest, as Zhengyu and Taylor (2011) describe. Herman (2015) reiterates this statement enforcing that it is a part of China's rise and development strategy, promoting its international status and showing everyone else that they are a responsible actor.

To briefly summarise the different strands of literature and what they tell us about Chinese peacekeeping efforts in Africa, it is evident that there is no agreement among scholars of a defining characteristic that explains the behaviour of China. Scholars who conduct their research under a realism paradigm seem to agree that Chinese peacekeeping presence in Africa is motivated by domestic interests, particularly development, that manifests in diverse forms. Furthermore, Chinese interventions can also be viewed as a method to accrue international influence and power over other nations as well as in international organisations, such as the UN. Others argue that it is a progression to illustrate to other world powers that China is in fact empathic with global affairs and are willing to contribute to solve such issues, while at the same time increasing their standing on the global stage.

Lastly, I wish to elucidate, with the literature review in mind, what I believe my research can contribute to in this field of study. Thus far, most literature seems to only consider Chinese behaviour based on one select feature, but as we have seen there are a great number of characteristics that might help to shed light on this topic. Therefore, I want to examine Chinese peacekeeping involvement in separate countries, that have different contexts and bilateral relations to China in order to garner a more holistic perspective and too analyse if indeed China operates and behaves under dissimilar circumstances.

3. Research Design

3.1 Choice of case countries

This thesis is based upon a comparative analysis between two case countries where there is an ongoing PKO with the involvement of China. The two countries selected for the case studies are South Sudan and Mali. The South Sudanese PKO termed the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) began its mandate in 2011 directly after South Sudan gained its independence as a sovereign nation, separating from Sudan. The second PKO, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Mali was established in 2013 to support political processes and carry out a number of security-related tasks (UN, 2019). What both these operations have in common is a high degree of Chinese involvement, which is essential to answer to problem statement of this thesis. In fact, South Sudan is currently China's largest peacekeeping engagement and was the first time that China actively deployed combat troops to support a UN mission and Mali represented the second time China dispatched combat troops.

In raw numbers, China currently has 1.607 personnel situated in South Sudan, representing the largest contribution among all countries in the permanent security council (UN, 2019). Prior to UNMISS, China has had a vested interest and relationship with South Sudan, as well as Sudan. Before the independence of South Sudan, civil unrest was rampant through Sudan, with the dominant Arabic northern part of the country, based around the capital Khartoum, wielding power and authority over the other Sudanese districts. The southern part of Sudan, with a Christian majority felt that they were being discriminated against from their northern peers. A factor involved was the production and export natural resources, particularly crude oil, which was abundant in Sudan. The vast majority of the oil deposits are situated to the South, and the oil would be transported north where the primary logistical route to export was situated. China at the time had a mutually beneficial relationship with Khartoum, which had been criticised by outside spectators, partly due to their arms dealings during the Darfur conflict. However, with the inception of South Sudan, China has formed new relationships with the South Sudanese authorities. China has invested large amounts of resources in South Sudan, particularly their oil resources, which serves as 5 per cent of their oil imports while it was running at full production before the civil conflict broke out, and China's national state-owned petroleum corporation (CNPC) has a 40 percent stake in South Sudan's leading oil consortium (Al Jazeera, 2019). Other business ventures between the two states that roam outside the

inclusion of natural resources include the sale of arms from China to South Sudan, which has also received criticism. Outside of economic incentives and interests, China has undertaken great responsibilities in promoting and facilitating peace talks between the present government and opposition. This was an unusual change in behaviour from China, where Zhong Jianhua, China's special representative on African affairs, said that South Sudan would be "a new chapter for the Chinese foreign affairs" (The Washington Post, 2019).

China's third largest peacekeeping operation, MINUSMA, allocates 402 personnel, with the vast majority being combat troops (UN, 2019). It was also the second time that China had deployed combat troops to a PKO. Unlike South Sudan, Mali is not endowed with rich natural resource reserves, and holds by no means any particular goods or services that are essential for China. However, both countries have shared a collegial relationship since Mali's independence from their former colonial rulers, France, in 1960. Their mutual cooperation has included political, economic, medical, military and cultural fields. Former Chinese president, Hu Jintao, visited Mali in 2009 during the 'Journey of friendship and cooperation' tour in Asia and Africa. During his visit Hu Jintao stated that:

"The China-Mali traditional friendship has remained unshakeable and become even firmer as time goes by [...] China cherishes its ties with Mali and would like to enhance then friendship and cooperation between both sides". (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

Today, China is one of Mali's largest trading partners together with Senegal, Ivory Coast and France, where they primarily supply China with cotton, while receiving a larger variety of goods the other way, such as machinery, chemicals and raw materials constituting the majority (World Bank, 2019). China has also invested large amounts of resources in infrastructure projects throughout Mali, as well as in their competitive business sectors, aimed at improving the country's infrastructure and connectedness to their adjacent neighbours. Furthermore, Mali is home to many Chinese nationals that live and work in the country.

My decision and argument for choosing these two countries as case studies is rationalized on the basis of inter-state relationships and interests. On the one hand, South Sudan has obvious vested interests that China seeks to control and stabilise, such as their oil sector, where China has invested considerable amounts of time and resources into acquiring. The conflict in South Sudan is a severe hinderance to China's efforts to extract and export oil back home, and their peacekeeping participation in UNMISS could be largely attributed to that. On the other hand, China has no apparent business ventures that hold high importance for Beijing that would institute their actions for being a part of MINUSMA. However, the two countries

have a had a longstanding cooperation which is evolving as China tightens its grip in Africa, and China's expanded presence in Africa might serve as a national interest when further analysed. If I chose to write this thesis on the background of one country as a case study, the results that I would derive would possibly only show one piece of a much larger puzzle for Chinese motivations in Africa. By incorporating two countries, each with differing contexts in their Chinese relations, it will portray a more comprehensive picture, perhaps illustrating that there exist several reasons why China has chosen to increase their efforts in PKO and their motivations.

3.2 Method

The nature of the data that will be used to answer the problem formulation will largely be based around qualitative information. However, quantitative data will also be applied to a lesser extent throughout the thesis, to support evidence gathered from qualitative sources. By adopting this approach, I believe the outcome of the problem formulation will be addressed effectively.

The methodological approach which I have decided to adopt is that of a comparative study. According to Collier, the label "comparative method" has a standard meaning within the discipline and in social sciences more broadly: it refers to the methodological issues that arise in the systemic analysis of a small number of cases (Collier, 1993). Moreover, comparative studies feature three distinct, yet ultimately connected goals. First, the systemic examination of covariation among cases for the purpose of casual analysis. Second, the examination of a number of cases with the goal of showing that a particular model or set of concepts usefully illuminates these cases. Third, the examination of two or more cases in order to highlight how different or similar they are (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). In a nutshell, comparative research is studying two or more similar cases by comparing them against specific characteristics.

The advantage of using a comparative method to answer my problem formulation lies within the format of my research topic. I aim to analyse China's participation in PKOs in Africa and through their interests illuminate their actions and decisions. A comparative research method allows me to identify, analyse and explain differences and similarities between the case studies, leading to a deeper understanding of the issue as a whole. Therefore, by incorporating more than one country in the study I will be able to increase the field of information which will paint a more holistic and reliable picture as a basis to answer my research formulation. The data from each country will be presented separately and then systematically compared further

on in the analysis chapter. I will mainly apply the comparative analysis in which I have combined the outcomes of a historical analysis of China's path to participating in the peacekeeping operations as well as their current role in each country and what their interest are internationally and domestically.

3.3 Clarification of applied theories

China's involvement in PKO and their affairs in Africa illustrate great levels of complexity and diversity. In order to acquire a better understanding, and thus a higher quality outcome of this thesis, I will be using two theories for the analysis. These theories are respectively realism and constructivism, with emphasis national interests.

I have chosen to adopt the theoretical framework of these specific for a couple of reasons. First, both realism and constructivism are contrasting theories that abide not only by different assumptions, but also how states interact with one another. Exercising realism instead of constructivism to make sense of China's material interests will bolster and construe the outcome of that component, and constructivism is better equipped to explain non-material interests. Hopefully, throughout the analysis, the conjunction of both theories will help complement each other to reach stimulating and valuable insights to China's participation and motivations in their PKOs in Mali and South Sudan. Though, it may also show that one strain of theory is much more effective in analysing China's peacekeeping agenda, which would underline the effectiveness for applying the theory in other works. Second, realism has been a preferential framework for many scholars to use as their theoretical base in previous publications concerning China's foreign affairs. It has served as a reliable and explanatory foundation that shapes and interprets China's behaviour. However, by adding in constructivism, I hope to see an evolvement in Chinese affairs, with increased cooperation through international institutions, such as the UN, and also their relationship with other sovereign states, as well as their international perception and image from allies and enemies. At the end, if constructivism proves to be a valid and illustrative means to recognise Chinese foreign affairs, it perhaps might be time to see China from a different angle than previous egoist realism virtues.

3.4 Sources

This section discusses the different types of data and sources that I have collected for this thesis and how they have been applied throughout. This thesis has gathered data from both primary and secondary sources, which provides me with confidence that the overall outcome of the paper is built on a solid foundation with a satisfactory conclusion. Specifically, the types of primary data which will be implemented include Chinese official white papers and UN documents. The secondary sources will comprise primarily of academic journal articles, international or non-governmental institutional publications, as well as news articles from accredited global or local news outlets.

In terms of quantitative data applied throughout the thesis, I will rely on international databases to gather such data, and additionally also through reports published that concern areas where that are applicable to this thesis. This path of data collection, I believe, will offer credibility to the findings of the paper. It is especially important to incorporate a wide selection of sources throughout the paper, so that the study does not get tarnished by subjectivity bias by solely using certain sources of information from one branch of possible suitors. Furthermore, when discussing China in international relations, Western sources might, perhaps unintentionally, paint a tinted picture of China's dealings in a certain matter, and to counteract such a scenario for this paper, I intend to, as I am allowed, introduce Chinese sources as well into the discussion. However, this is not to suggest that Chinese sources are not riddled with their own subjectivity and bias towards the West, but rather, my intention is to remove said subjectivity by combining information from both types of sources, and from that provide an objective result.

3.5 Limitations

In this section I discuss the possible limitations that this thesis may face, how it may impact the eventual outcome of the thesis and my thoughts on dealing with them. To begin with, I want to raise the issue of source biases and the difficulties it may bear. Writing about China and their role in international relations, many of the available sources have been written by Western scholars, who either unknowingly or through cultural predispositions discuss Chinese affairs through a Western lens. Cultural values and norms in China and the West are inherently different in many ways and this difference may be observed in the literature through

subjectivity, and not objectivity, which should always strive to be met. Moreover, this principle should likewise also be considered when dealing with Chinese sources and their norms and values, contra the West. However, I expect most of the potential biases to occur from Western sources because they will be the dominant form of information sources.

The previous point also extends into the second limitation that I wish to discuss, namely access to literature. There is the possibility of literature, from Chinese authors, being scarce. Not all documents are written, or have been translated into English, leaving me with only those that have. I do not have the capacities to understand Chinese oral or written, so I am unable to use original sources. This introduces the chance of missing meaningful and insightful material that would benefit the thesis.

Lastly on the matter of sources, I want to mention the issue of African sources. African sources are also difficult to attain, especially those written by authors from either case country. Such sources would be very valuable when debating peacekeeping from the receiver's perspective but attaining them might prove difficult or impossible. Acquiring primary data from the local population might be problematic, as I am unable to collect such data by myself due to economic and time constraints and relying on external sources to provide me with it is also not always successful. Data sensitivity and protection is a delicate issue in many areas, and even if I do locate a provider that holds the data I wish to use, I may not be allowed to use it.

The peacekeeping operations in both South Sudan and Mali are still ongoing in the time of writing this thesis, and do not have a definitive expiry date. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that because of the circumstance's fluidity significant alternations may occur that might render the context of this thesis inadequate. All findings that this thesis represents are based around the current context when written.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Realism

The first theoretical framework that will be presented is realism. Realism is divided into two different strands, namely classical realism and neo-realism, also coined structural realism. Specifically, the application of realism for this thesis will focus primarily on the notion of national interests, and how realism attempts frame such national interests when discussing the foreign policy behaviour of states in the international system.

Both sets of realism share similarities between them in their guided assumptions of the international sphere. These assumptions are: First, the world is driven by anarchy, meaning that there is no higher authority than states, and because of this, states are not held accountable, or assisted due to an absence of a higher authority. Second, states are the principle and most important actors, that are the main unit of analysis. International organisations and institutions are recognised, but do not share the same level of importance as states, but instead as secondary importance. Third, states are rational actors who pursue their own interests and maximize their relative gains, and their actions are reflected by the level of power, goals and consistency of the state. Fourth, states ultimate goal is survival, which is prerequisite in achieving any other state goals, from autonomy to hegemony. The pursuit of power, capabilities and resources are directly linked to states fundamental instinct to survive and a 'self-help' scenario, and attaining more than other states, their power status and likelihood increases too (Mearsheimer, 1995).

Before delving to the concept of national interests of the state, it is important to discuss the term of power that exists in a realist's world, and which is wrapped tightly together with national interests. Relevantly, Morgenthau describes "the basic realist premise that states act in accordance with their national interests is defined simply as a pursuit of power" (Morgenthau, 1993). In realist thinking, power is essential to fulfil a states goal to survive. Powerful states live, and weak ones do not. Because of this fate, states are motivated to seek and secure higher levels of power, and the foreign policy decisions by states should be considered an approach to increase a state's level of power. Moreover, power is considered to be a zero-sum game, where an increase to one state's power, will lead to a decrease to another state, or states. A state's power is visible in terms of their respective military capabilities, or the amount of resources possessed by the state.

States actions are driven by their pursuit of power, and the pursuit of power is driven behind their national interests. Thus, national interests can be defined as the pursuit of national interests is the pursuit if power. Waltz writes that national interests form in response to the anarchic structure of the international system and the condition of anarchy leads states to seek survival by pursuing national interests (Waltz, 1979). Moreover, Morgenthau states that “objectives of a foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest” (Morgenthau H. , 1960). National interests are considered to advance states goal to preserve their political autonomy and their territorial integrity. Furthermore, based on the rationality assumption, states will pursue their national interests, because they are rational actors in an anarchic system (Morgenthau, 1993). States national interests can either be material or non-material, such as their expansion to secure more natural resources or to spread their own economic and political philosophies into other territories. National interests in the lens of realism can also be interpreted differently, depending on which branch of realism is selected.

Abiding by classical realism or structural realism will present a contrast to how states perceive the behaviour and actions carried out in the international system. On the one hand, adhering to the philosophy of classical realism, their belief system and state construction is based around the notion of ‘human nature’. Morgenthau wrote that “politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (Morgenthau H. J., 1948). In other words, classical realists observe that there exists a connection between the nature of men and the roots of political power and state behaviour. Their reasoning for this belief is that human nature is inherently flawed and subject to misgivings rooted in perceptions and fear. Moreover, because a state is governed by its citizens, their beliefs and expressions will naturally be reflected in the foreign policy decisions carried out by the state. Because of the anarchic system and lack of a centralised authority, states are obviously sceptical about the behaviour and intentions looming from foreign realms. The uncertainty of other states actions may transform into fear, and higher levels of fear direct how a state will respond in their foreign policy, which is expressed by its citizens and leaders. Lastly, another aspect that differentiates classical realism and structural realism is a state’s need for recognition or prestige. A state’s foreign policy can be dissected into three different types of goals: status quo, imperialism and prestige (Morgenthau H. J., 1948). The endeavour for prestige is also a major driver that states consider in their foreign policy decisions.

On the other hand, structural realism, unlike classical realism, does not consider the role of human nature in states, that influences their actions, to be a fundamental trait which

explains why states act as they do. Structural realism, instead, focuses on the *structure* of the international system. The core assumptions that are embedded in classical realism, such as the anarchic international system, which Waltz describes as “anarchy is taken to mean not just the absence of government, but also the presence of disorder and chaos” (Waltz, 1979), states are the main unit of analysis, states behave rationally and that the ultimate goal of the state is survival is also observed in structural realism. However, the structure of the international system is based around the state as the principle actor, with little emphasis of human nature within the state, and a state’s relative distribution of capabilities and power. Structural realism is divided into two sets of theoretical models, namely defensive realism and offensive realism. An important distinction between both is how they consider a state’s ultimate goal for survival. Defensive realism subscribes to the supposition that states seek to maximise their security, or they will seek to adhere to the notion of ‘balance of power’, whereby states seek actions that guarantees their security and survival but does so through a set of defensive actions that limits potential altercations with other states (Waltz, 1979). Offensive realism, on the other hand, positions itself more aggressively, as states will pursue the goal of becoming a hegemony, that will ensure their survival as no other states has the ability nor the capability to challenge their status in the world order. However, both strands still share commonalities in the behavioural aspects of states. Because of the anarchical structure in the international system and that states are wary of relative capabilities of other realms, there exists a degree of fear, or unpredictability, which influences the foreign policy decisions. Moreover, in light of the competitiveness and pursuit of relative gains, states are more concerned with the relative distribution of power than their own individual gain (Jaafar, 2017).

For this final part, the role of institutions and realist perceptions towards institutions will be outlined. Institutions do exist and play a role in international relations, but do not exceed the sovereign states, but do have the ability to influence economic and political outcomes. Institutions are perceived by states as an alternative channel to influence and attain their national interests. Moreover, states that are a part of an institutions, or several, invest many of their resources in them, and naturally through the lens of realism, states only do so to chase and influence specific economic and policy decisions that are in tune with their own goals. As Mearsheimer wrote “institutions are merely an intervening variable in the process [and] largely mirror the distribution of power in the system” (Mearsheimer, 1995). Mearsheimer mentions that the distribution of power in the system is reflected through institutions, which again makes perfect sense in realism. The most powerful states will naturally be those that lead and elect

interests for the institution, which should mirror those interests of the states. Thus, institutions are merely a means by which states can achieve goals. As such, states will only choose to act through an institution if it deems it the most effective way to advance its interests (Jaafar, 2017).

4.2 Constructivism

The second theory that I will use in this thesis analysis is constructivism. Constructivism is a social theory that is concerned to with the relationship between structures and agents (Carlsnaes, 2012) and argued not to be a standalone international relations theory but might be better understood as a modification or an enhancer to an existing theory, such as realism or liberalism. However, for the purpose of this thesis, constructivism, as presented in this chapter, will be considered and applied as a separate theoretical international relations framework.

Previously, dominant theories in international relations used to understand and formulate the actions of states foreign policy revolved around neorealism and neoliberalism. Constructivism emerged to offer a differing approach that would shed light on the actions of states in contemporary times and also to challenge the existing presumptions of the global order. Despite neorealism and neoliberalism being dissimilar theoretical approaches, they both however share the same assumption to anarchy as a defined condition in the international system. In constructivism, anarchy is interpreted more nuanced than the former theories. Constructivists dispute that anarchy is a fundamental condition in the international system. Instead, anarchy is an “imagined community” that does not exist and should not be considered as a granted given, or as Alexander Wendt writes “anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992).

Global politics according to constructivism is socially constructed (Jaafar, 2017). Unlike realism, where an actor’s behaviour is rooted in “objective or material conditions”, constructivism observes and interprets behaviour shaped by social norms, ideas and relations (Barkin, 2003). The social structure of the international system leads to the formation of identities of states, or as Wendt describes that interactions between *alter* and *ego* (states) are the framework where identities are formed (Wendt, 1992), which in turn constitutes or allows the analysis of state behaviour. The interactions that occur between states are highlighted by the historical subjectivity in a socially constructed international system, contrasting realism’s “all states are states” notion. Subjectivity and history between states is a vital component that

clarifies inter-state cooperation and actions. As such, the context of state's has significance when measuring against one's own. By viewing international relations through this specific lens, states can in effect be a number of things at the same time, dependant on who a state is collaborating with. Thus, social constructivism rests on an intersubjective dimension of human actions and is about human consciousness and its role in international life (Ruggie, 1998). In addition, this is further explained when delving into how states interact with one another. States interact through the process of signalling, interpreting, and responding, which will constitute a "social act", which is part of the intersubjective meanings process (Wendt, 1992). This behaviour ripples continuously, as states continue to interact amongst each other, their pool of knowledge increases, further illustrating a states ideology. The formation and durability of a state identity is linked to the perception that other states have of such a state. In order for identity to be sustained, other have to represent the state in the same way as it sees itself. Thus, a state's identity is only valid as long as outside states accept this identity.

Because constructivism is embodied around social constructs, states are susceptible to inheriting a "role identity", which either states would like to maintain or cast away contingent on how others perceive their identity to be. Having a negatively associated identity will cause uncertainty and anxiety from other states and may prohibit and deter fostering relationships or maintaining an existing one. Though, for almost any identity, practices and information that challenge it are likely to create cognitive dissonance and perhaps perceptions of threat, and these may cause resistance to transformations of the state and thus to social change (Wendt, 1992).

The identity that is shaped and formed in a state also holds significance to the national interests which a state pursues. Identity is the premise on which a state's political agenda and national interests are formed (Carlsnaes, 2012). Moreover, Martha Finnemore argued that "interests are not just 'out there' waiting to be discovered; they are constructed through social interaction" (Finnemore, 1996). Thus, constructivism theorizes that states interests, and policies are formed in response to its identity.

International institutions in constructivism an important and visible function in the international system. Institutions function with relative independence from individual states and are crucial in developing international norms (Jaafar, 2017). They often inhibit a set of formal rules and norms, which are only valid through the virtue of contributing actors' socialisation to a participation in collective knowledge (Wendt, 1992). Overtime, an institution

can develop its own identity, distinct from the identities of its constituent states. The identity established through social interaction and mutual understandings can lead to independent bureaucracy or organisational culture within the institution (Jaafar, 2017).

The structure of an institution i.e. constituent states opens up the possibility for interest driven states to re-shape institutions where their interests lie or to normalise its preferences, through exporting norms and codifying values favourable to them (Jaafar, 2017). Institutions are considered as being a cognitive construction comprised from those who create it, and virtually also susceptible to alteration in its “beliefs” contingent on who embodies it at a specific time. Moreover, institutions establish a scenario for states to increase cooperation that may alter state identities and interests. However, due to the often large and influential number of constituent states, complications of cooperation through institutional settings could face constraints because of the length of time discussions take place, involved parties and their national interests vis-à-vis each other. The extending periods of time where discussions take place is expected to change the identities of actors within the system, which might have negative acuties from states, if they are unwilling to shed their identity, and national interests. But, as Wendt argues “the process of cooperating tends to redefine those reasons by reconstructing identities and interests in terms of new intersubjective understandings and commitments” (Wendt, 1992). Over time, states have transformed through positive intersubjective relations, and a new paradigm of interests are formed increasingly linked together by states and their shared interests.

5. Analysis

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the paper. However, before I begin, I wish to devote a brief section to clarify China's augmentation in their foreign policy behaviour, particularly concerning their approach to non-interference. Subsequently, the remaining chapter will be structured as follows. First, I will individually analyse both case studies, outlining Chinese motives and interests to why they are active in the current PKOs. Thirdly, I will conduct a comparative analysis between both case studies and from that present similarities and differences between them. Lastly, I will offer concluding remarks to the comparative analysis.

5.1 China's perception of non-interference and R2P

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a global political commitment endorsed by all Member States of the UN 2005 World Summit. The R2P is meant to end the worst forms of violence and persecution. It seeks to narrow the gap between Member States pre-existing obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and the reality faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (UN, 2019). Essentially, the commitment is a declaration that sovereign nations have the responsibility to protect their citizens from the conditions mentioned in the agreement. However, if a nation-state is incapable or unwilling to protect its citizens, the UN Security Council has the authority to endorse an intervention of force in to protect the citizens, if a state cannot. Despite the R2P being endorsed by all Member States in 2005, criticism regarding the commitment is present. Critics have claimed that R2P infringes on state sovereignty, as a nation-state possess little influence and consent if the UN Security Council deemed it necessary to interfere. One of those critics has been China, where they not only view the R2P as an infringement of state sovereignty, but also a mechanism for – particularly Western – states to achieve regime change in non-Western countries that could weaken Chinese influence and lead to greater instability in the developing world. Additionally, the perceptions towards states that violate their citizens' political human rights could strengthen the notion that such states have less legitimacy in international relations and less entitled to sovereign rights than democratic states (Van Der Putten, 2015). Overtime, China's position on R2P has moderately shifted towards a partial endorsement. Their new stance is explained by a growing presence in Africa

where they have many interests, and to protect those interests a more visible and robust security dimension, through R2P, would aid them. Thus, to better pursue and protect their interests in Africa, China has had to bend its principles to adapt to the shifting African security climate, being prepared to intervene in the domestic affairs of other nation-states (Cabestan, 2018).

5.2 MINUSMA

5.2.1 Contextual Background MINUSMA

The Malian crisis, that eventually led to the formation of The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Missions in Mali (MINUSMA), and how it began, can be traced back to the conflict that occurred in Libya, 2011. The domestic dispute between the then leader Muammar Gaddafi and a rising insurgency had caught international attention, where France and Britain, with the support of the US, attempted to convince the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya (Cabestan, 2018). China, being a part of the UN Security Council was not in favour of this resolution (alongside Russia), partly due to their non-interference approach in foreign policy, and China perceived it to be a strategy for Western countries interests to change regime. However, previously China had endorsed another resolution scripted by the UN Security Council which condemned the actions of Gaddafi, particularly the serious human rights violations which had happened throughout the crisis. China's willingness to only go so far as denouncing the actions of Gaddafi but would otherwise abstain their vote for a resolution that would have substantial consequences for Libya as a whole illustrates how, at the time at least, China operated in international relations, abiding by their non-interference policy. It should also be noted that China had large investments in Libya at that time. China had both economic and human capital investments in Libya, encompassing 36,000 Chinese nationals as well as projects which exceeded US\$18.8 billion contractual value (Alden, 2014). China successfully managed to evacuate their nationals in Libya, but unsuccessfully managed to mitigate and recuperate their financial losses tied to the ongoing projects across the country. After Gaddafi's capture and death, and the events that followed, Libya quickly became an undivided and unstable country, where many groups sought claim to power. The chaos and turmoil in Libya proliferated the already growing movement of radical Islam, and the absence of a strong and stable authority in Libya to counter-act the rise of radical Islam brought the negative effect of dissemination across the Sahel region (Sudan, Chad, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Mauritania and Senegal), where China also had vested financial and political interests.

The aftermath of Libya, and the growing ideologies of radical Islam, had paved the road for conflict in nearby countries. Such a country was Mali, where the crisis erupted in March 2012 when president Amadou Toumani Touré, accused of not doing enough to combat the Tuareg rebellion in the north of the country, was deposed by a military coup (Cabestan, 2018). After the successful coup, the interim leader, Captain Amadou Sanogo suspended the constitution and dissolved the Government institutions, further weakening an already frail state (UN, 2019). The coup was not well received internationally, where both China and the members of the UN Security Council condemned the actions of the Malian Junta. The Malian Junta only held power for a month before they passed their authority to a civilian government, after international pressures from Western powers, such as France (their former colonial rulers), the EU and the US, and regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Cabestan, 2018). However, despite the appointment of a new Government, the tensions in Mali did not diminish and the international community's concern over the conflict was justified, as hostile Islamic militant groups in the north of Mali began to take and claim larger amounts of territory, as far as proclaiming the independent state of Azawad, without much pressure from government forces.

With growing uncertainty over the domestic capabilities of the Malian government to answer and repel the Islamic groups in the north, the ECOWAS decided to act. In November 2012, with the backing of the AU, the ECOWAS established the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to recapture the north of Mali (Cabestan, 2018). The AFISMA received support from outside spectators, including the UN Security Council. Though, before AFISMA could officially begin its mandate and deployment, the Islamic militant groups progressively claimed more territory, moving south towards the capital of Bamako. The Government was not able to deter their advance, and Bamako was under real threat overrun. The Malian government requested immediate assistance from France, to defend Mali's sovereignty and restore its territorial integrity (UN, 2019). France swiftly responded and set up their military intervention plan dubbed "Operation Serval" and proceeded with the assistance of local Malian forces to repel the invasion from the North, liberating sieged cities and restoring order. After the successful French intervention, AFISMA was accelerated so that they could assist with maintain order and stability in the northern regions. Despite the enhanced conditions and territorial integrity which had been restored, a number of issues and threats still lurked. Terrorist activities and military operations were still underway in the north, with hazards such as terrorist attacks, weapons proliferation, drug smuggling and other related

criminal activities (UN, 2019). In 2013, following a request from the interim President of Mali, where he sought to combine AFISMA together with a UN stabilisation and peacekeeping mission, which after recommendations from a scoping mission was granted. On the 25th of April 2013, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2100 which approved the MINUSMA.

With MINUSMA being operationally approved, China, who recently during the same time period witnessed a change in leadership, from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, decided to participate in the PKO. For the mission, China would supply a total of 395 troops and personnel, which consisted of 170 soldiers, 70 medical staff and 155 engineers (Van Der Putten, 2015). It was also the second time that China sent combat forces on a PKO, the first being South Sudan, and the first time that these troops would provide protection to nationalities other than Chinese personnel or nationals. In total, there are 12,664 contingent troops operating in Mali, and China has provided 395 of those (UN, 2019). From the outset, it would seem as a relatively low number in relation to the overall number of troops associated to the PKO. Though, China is the largest contributor of all the permanent members of the UN Security Council, demonstrating a greater commitment to the success of UN initiatives and African security. China's newfound motivation to increase their presence in African security can be linked to the growing presence of instability in Africa with weak states potentially collapsing and opening up a power vacuum for rebel and terrorist organisations to take advantage of. The threat of Islamic groups claiming substantial power in Africa is not an ideal prospect for China. When France was asked to assist the Malian Government in Operation Serval, Chinese spectators described it as "neo-colonial" ambitions, where France's motivation was to keep a strong foothold in their former colony to maintain and increase their sphere of influence on the continent (Cabestan, 2018). However, when China decided to pledge its services to MINUSMA, the discourse back in China changed. They observed a negative changing political and social climate in Africa that was a danger to Chinese interests, both domestically and foreign. Although unlikely that the terrorist activities in northern Mali would spread to China and pose a threat to national security, the threat was still there, and needed to be addressed. It was more likely that the threats posed a risk for foreign interests in Mali. The Chinese government increasingly acknowledges that armed groups such as extremists and armed criminal organisations can have a destabilizing effect at the international level, and that UN peacekeeping missions can contribute to addressing this threat (Van Der Putten, 2015). It is in China's interests as a peaceful rising power to encourage and progress towards global and regional stability and security, which would ensure their international growth and power

progression rise without the complications of foreign disputes. A secure Africa would be mutually beneficial for both parties, as China would have the ability to protect their overseas interests, increasing their own expansion, while also benefitting the states and their citizens in their own development.

The Chinese troops and personnel are posted in the northern city of Gao. Gao is strategically important due to its linkages to the remainder of the conflict areas, as well as being situated close to the capital of Niger, Niamey. Their role and responsibilities are to guard and protect the UN's military base in the city. Shortly after they arrived, Chinese contingents quickly built a hospital open to all those who required medical treatment (USIP, 2018). In terms of operational importance, China's role is modest, but that can be explained due to their lack of military combat experience. Disparate to other large powers, China has little experience with war. The deployment of their military to PKOs offers them first-hand exposure and experience to combat, as well as learning and training with superior forces to increase their operational capabilities.

Historically, China and Mali have maintained a friendly relationship since Mali's independence from French rule in 1960, cooperating closely in political, economic, medical, military and cultural fields, and hosted China's former president Hu Jintao during his state visits across Africa in 2009 (Cabestan, 2018). Their inter-state trade relations are also fruitful, with China being the second largest import country for Mali (behind Senegal), and the eight largest destination for exports (OEC, 2019). Unlike other African countries, such as South Sudan, Angola etc, Mali is not richly endowed in natural resources that China seek. The main items that are imported from Mali are wood and vegetable products. In other words, Mali does have the same economic importance as other African trading partners. However, despite Mali having little resource endowments it is still an interesting prospect for further cooperation and development. Africa has become a flourishing destination for Chinese interests, supported by their bilateral trade relations. China is Africa's largest trading partner, overtaking the United States in 2009 (Ighobor, 2013). In the case of Mali, China already had numerous infrastructure projects underway before the crisis erupted. These projects included the construction of roads, bridges and railways, aimed at improving the country's infrastructure and its connections with its neighbours, particularly Senegal and Guinea (Cabestan, 2018). Specifically, constructing up-to-date railway systems throughout Africa is of vital Chinese interest, providing a reliable, efficient and cost-effective route for trade between inter-state African countries, as well as neighbouring continents. Moreover, it not only benefits African countries and its neighbours,

but also it an important component for China's, and Xi Jinping's, "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) strategy, an ambitious intercontinental network and trade infrastructure route encompassing Africa, Asia, and China (World Bank, 2018). Because of Mali's geographical placement and size, its role in advancing the OBOR is not to be understated. After China had deployed peacekeepers to MINUSMA, China and the Mali had agreed upon two major railway projects. The first project is to restore and upgrade the existing railway between Bamako and Dakar, with estimated costs of US\$ 1.5 billion. The second, building a brand-new rail between Bamako and Conakry, with estimated costs of US\$ 8 billion (Van Der Putten, 2015). For China to succeed their vision of OBOR, or to safeguard their overseas interests, especially economic, they must either be certain of stability and security over their investments, or if that is not possible, they must then be able to protect those investments themselves. Participating in MINUSMA, and the actual operational role of Chinese troops does not directly influence and protect their assets, as their task is to guard and protect the UN military base in Gao. However, the presence of Chinese troops has an indirect impact on their investments. Their peacekeeping presence and assistance will support the overall mandate of MINUSMA, hopefully securing an end to the conflict. Furthermore, this deployment can be seen as a further step in the gradual build-up of a modest Chinese military presence in Africa (Van Der Putten, 2015) and also a route to foster relationships with local and regional suitors for future ventures, as well as promoting Chinese "soft power" in Africa, contesting the French and European position in Mali.

The importance and capacity that the UN represents for China, for its fulfilment of foreign interests should not be understated. China's willingness and participation in their UNPKOs evolution has changed dramatically and continues to do so. Their participation in MINUSMA contributes to a higher standing within the UN institution, granting them additional power in the processes that occur within, and making the institution more relevant and influential. Bettering their position in the UN permits China to shape and form decisions and actions that would be beneficial for their interests.

5.2.2 *Chinese Material and Non-material Interests MINUSMA*

The MINUSMA mission is China's third largest PKO and represents only the second time that China deployed troops under the guise of the UN. Previous Chinese relationships with Mali have been respectful and harmonious, stretching almost 60 years, and they maintain beneficial trade affiliations. However, despite gracious cooperation, China has historically not wielded as much influence as other nations in the country. Their former colonial power France has continued to stay relevant in Mali, as well as the EU. After the lack of success from AFISMA, France were the first actors from outside Africa to intervene in the crisis. Chinese intervention in Mali became evident with their pledge to take part in MINUSMA. Previous state-to-state relations between Mali and France/EU is an interesting aspect to delve further into in relation to China. China has recently devoted significant political and economic attention to Africa and has fostered good relationships with numerous African countries acquiring immense influence. However, Mali does not represent one of those countries where Chinese influence supersedes former dominant powers, often colonial affiliates or EU institutional bodies. Instead, China has opted to engage in a country where their political and economic influence is held at a lower regard than their other peers. Why has China chosen to invest political, economic and human resources in Mali, supported by a PKO? To clarify this question, it is first important to dissect what interests China have in Mali.

Chinese interests in Mali cover a broad domain of activities currently being sustained. From economic concerns including trade relations, infrastructure investments and construction of OBOR initiative, military training and political prestige comprising of raising China's international image and promoting African security and institutional integrity.

Mali's economic importance to China might seem insignificant if purely based on trade relations, especially from a Chinese perspective. But the economic possibilities that reside in Mali are located in its geography. Since Xi Jinping's ascension to power, he has put forward a proposal outlining the OBOR initiative. The OBOR is aimed at seeking new opportunities for foreign relations both to the west and the south, developing infrastructure, creating a large economic market by strengthening relations China and various nations in Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, and easing excess domestic production through exporting (Aoyama, 2016). Mali's location in Africa is a strategically important territory to carry out Chinese aspirations of fulfilling the OBOR. It is a gateway to several states in the north African region. China already had infrastructure investments

underway before the crisis began and consented to several critical new projects while the crisis was ongoing. The new agreements consisted of restoring and upgrading the route between Bamako and Dakar and secondly the construction of a new railway between Bamako and Conakry. Creating an infrastructural network between the countries is paramount to further implement the OBOR initiative to ease the transportation of goods. However, with tensions and violence in Mali, these projects were under risk of halting, ensuing complications to OBOR and economic losses. Being an active participant in MINUSMA, China both through the political and military spectrum were able to influence outcomes and safeguard their ongoing projects. Unlike in South Sudan, where their peacekeepers are mandated to protect civilians by their oil installations, in Mali their role is centred around the protection of the UN military base in Gao, far to the north. Even though they are not directly able to protect their interests, they indirectly do so because their troops are placed on the front line where the conflict resides. They, together with other countries' peacekeeping troops, act as a shield, blocking the conflicts from the north, keeping the south confined in a more peaceful and productive state. However, the threat of extremist attacks on Chinese nationals and Chinese sites is a reality in Mali. Regardless of their best efforts, violence still managed to find a way to Chinese nationals, where three railway executives were killed in Bamako during a terrorist attack, eliciting a response from China: "China will strengthen cooperation with the international community, resolutely crack down on violent terrorist operations that devastate innocent lives and safeguard world peace and security" (Reuters, 2015). Analysing their troop contribution through a realist lens, China is actively using their military capabilities to safeguard their material investments throughout Mali. Though, their role is not aggressive by nature, but more reactive to their surroundings. It serves as a means to protect Chinese interests to increase the states level of power, both within Mali and extending to China as a whole.

The Chinese military presence in MINUSMA has several benefits which China takes advantage off. In spite of their rather small operational role of protecting the UN military base, the opportunities to train their military through combat and training exercises enhances their capabilities, not only in typical combat warfare, but also warfare in otherwise hostile foreign environments. At a time when Chinese interests and civilian presence in the African continent is growing fast and Chinese commitment to international peace and security in Africa, it is advantageous that the Chinese military not only better their combat abilities, but also acclimatise to the conditions of Africa, becoming more suited to participate in current and future missions (Van Der Putten, 2015). Similar to the aforementioned paragraph, Chinese

military presence in MINUSMA is an instrument that benefits the advancement of Chinese military capabilities and does so through MOOTW and without concrete involvement from the Chinese State, where they still maintain their stance on partial non-interference and R2P. Moreover, alongside combat training and environment adaptation, Chinese commanders and troops have the possibility to interact with militaries from other nations, where they have the possibility to learn necessary modern military means to augment their own capabilities. An additional feature that Chinese troops brought to Mali was the construction of a hospital in Gao available to both peacekeeping personnel and the local population. The service the hospital provides is humanitarian care for the most vulnerable people and acts as a catalyst for Chinese sympathy from the local population. It is an effective and multi-beneficial approach to transmit Chinese ideals across the host country. The local population receive modern medicine and examinations while China boosts its image in Africa.

The mandate of MINUSMA is centralised about ending violence, restoring peace and ensuring that local governments and authorities are able to govern and police their territory. In other words, the pursuit of security and stability is a sought-after solution keen to be achieved by all involved parties. Achieving a peaceful settlement and restoring order to Mali is not only beneficial for the local population, but also for China. China stands by their peaceful development policy as the best model for countries to flourish in an interdependent international system. Their official development white paper states:

China has declared to the rest of the world on many occasions that it takes a path of peaceful development and is committed to upholding world peace and promoting common development and prosperity for all countries [...] China should develop itself through upholding world peace and contribute to world peace through its own development [...] The central goal of China's diplomacy is to create a peaceful and stable international environment for its development (People's Republic of China, 2011).

For both Mali and China to continue their co-dependent development path, there must exist a condition of absolute security and peace throughout the country. From a political and diplomatic standpoint, China is a determined member of MINUSMA that strives to uphold peace and reinforce common development. Chinese interests and motivations in this circumstance is however up for discussion. It is conceivable that their diplomatic motives are founded in protecting their material and non-material interests. For instance, military intervention is an observable and palpable mean to either directly or indirectly protect their overseas interests. However, the diplomatic channel leaves a great deal open for discussion. Are Chinese efforts aimed at safeguarding their economic interests, or are they meant as

Chinese desire to actually promote world peace, and become a “responsible great power”? Perhaps it’s blends of both. On the one hand, realism would suggest that China is acting under the assumption of being a rational actor pursuing their (self)interests in Mali through diplomatic relations – which is strengthened by their relative capabilities – to secure construction projects, particularly the railways links between Mali-Senegal and Mali-Guinea, an important piece to ensure that OBOR in northern African becomes a success. The success of OBOR will have a direct effect on China’s further development, and therefore, China’s pursuit of its own interests not only might offer an explanation to its general interests in peacekeeping in MINUSMA, but also illustrates how cleverly China masks its own needs in Mali under the labels of “peacekeeping” and “peaceful development”. On the other hand, applying a constructivist framework to China’s diplomatic approach conceptions might change. Reviewing the Chinese development white paper, it is written that “it should work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity” (People's Republic of China, 2011). If indeed, this was the primary interest of China in MINUSMA, it would build upon the notion of China becoming a “responsible stakeholder” in the international community and not a revisionist great power, potential downplaying concerns from other states and their perception of a “Chinese threat” (Cabestan, 2018). As such, China is attempting to shape an image of peace and cooperation, rather than being branded an aggressive authoritarian and hegemonic power. It’s an effective strategy that signals to external states, that despite China’s recent active and more assertive foreign and security policy, their ascension and enhanced diplomatic activism is rooted in world peace and prosperity.

Within an UN institutional setting, their efforts in MINUSMA develops their internal capacity and influence on UN affairs, as well as signalling their intent to increase their stake and responsibility. China has received praise from high-ranking officials of the UN for their contribution in MINUSMA. Koen Davidse, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in MINUSMA said: “They have a crucial role and its essential to the success of the mission [...] it shows that the partnership between China and the UN is continuing” (Lintao, 2019). China’s better standing in the UN possibly lays a foundation for the installation of Chinese officials in high and well-regarded positions in the UN structure. In late 2016, reports surfaced that China had an interest to contest for an executive position in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which had until that time been headed by French nationals for more than 20 years (Cabestan, 2018). The responsibilities of the DPKO include a political and executive direction to UN PKOs and is a significant and influential position in a

peacekeeping context. If the rumours were true about China's desire to run for an executive DKPO position, it candidly illustrates their willingness to further integrate with international institutions to claim a larger stake in responsibility and global governance. Whether China is willing to unconditionally adopt already in place western institutionalized norms and values is yet to be seen, but with a higher degree Chinese leadership, those norms are susceptible to modifications, aligning more with Chinese values.

Thus, China have considerable economic and political interests located in Mali, from developing OBOR, enhancing military capabilities, boosting China's image in overseas and both international and institutional political prestige. Their role and support in MINUSMA assist them to protect and accomplish their interests and dependant on which interest is under review, both sets of theoretical frameworks are applicable in this case.

5.3 UNMISS

5.3.1 Contextual Background UNMISS

The historical background for the creation of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has its roots before the division of the Sudan's. This section will not be going into detail outlining all the events that occurred in Sudan, leading to where we are now, but will begin where the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed.

The CPA was signed on 9 January 2005, signifying the conclusion of more than 20 years of war in Sudan between the Government of Sudan to the north and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to the south. The CPA paved the way for South Sudan's independence, thereby separating from Sudan becoming the world's newest country. A referendum held in January 2011 to separate the southern part of Sudan into a new state won with overwhelming support. The result of the referendum lead to formation of South Sudan on 9 July 2011.

The UN had previously maintained a PKO in Sudan, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which ended its mandate the same day as South Sudan became a legitimate country. Outside spectators were well aware that ending the conflict in Sudan, and the formation of South Sudan was a favourable and long-sought after solution after many years of conflict. However, they also knew that establishing and maintaining a functioning government, with the capacity to administrate state objectives was of highest priority, otherwise South

Sudan might fall into chaos soon shortly after its inception. The SPLM was tasked with developing a country bearing the consequences of their previous conflict with Sudan, heavily underdeveloped and those who were to reign had been at war for decades (Large, 2016). To assist the new government, acting on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1996 on 8 July 2011, launching the UNMISS. UNMISS's objective was to consolidate peace and security and help establish conditions for development in the Republic of South Sudan, with a view to strengthen the capacity of the Government of South Sudan to govern effectively and democratically and establish good relations with its neighbours (UN, 2019).

Despite the best efforts of the UNMISS's mandate, South Sudan erupted into violence on 15 December 2013 in the capital Juba. First reports out of South Sudan hinted that an attempted coup orchestrated by South Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar to depose the President Salva Kiir was the cause of the violence. Later reports explained that an in-fight between the presidential guards had caused the violence to erupt, spreading throughout the capital. The conflict is further complicated due to ethnic tensions in South Sudan, with two of the largest tribes involved, the Dinka and Nuer, where Salva Kiir is part of the Dinka tribe and Riek Machar a part of the Nuer tribe. The violence that started in Juba quickly proliferated across the country, capturing seven out of the country's ten states. Shortly after the crisis began, the Government suspected that the UNMISS was partisan, and it was aiding and abetting the rebel forces, which created an increasingly tense relationship between both parties. The UNMISS also became overwhelmed with the development of the conflict. The crisis had fostered a humanitarian disaster, with thousands killed and blatant humanitarian and human rights abuses, conceived from both sides. Moreover, large parts of the population were struggling to flee from the violence and resorted to flock towards UNMISS compounds and bases. The original mandate of UNMISS was not constructed with the intention that civil conflict would break out in South Sudan, meaning the UN personnel and compounds were under tremendous pressure with few resources at their disposal. Together with various humanitarian organisations, they responded as best they could, but could not guarantee the protection of civilians. To react to the unfolding situation in South Sudan, the UN re-evaluated the UNMISS mandate to effectively combat the burdens upon the mission. On 27 May 2014, the UN Security Council adopted its revised resolution, now focusing towards the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and increased troop strength (UN, 2019).

The role and influence of China in both Sudan and South Sudan is noteworthy and will be discussed further in this chapter. In terms of Chinese contributions to UNMISS during its operational period, they have been an important and committed stakeholder. UNMISS represents an evolution in Chinese foreign and peacekeeping policy as well as being the largest invested PKO from China. At the beginning of the UNMISS in 2011, China supported the mission with logistical, engineering and health support staff, as their first deployment (Large, 2016). When the crisis broke out in 2013, China, under the re-evaluated mandate, for the first time in their history deployed combat troops a PKO mission. These troops were stationed in Juba, and their core role was to protect civilians. In total, China has deployed 1,067 troops and personnel to South Sudan: 1,031 combat forces, 12 police, 5 mission experts and 19 staff officers (UN, 2019). The amount of troops and staff that China has vested into UNMISS dwarfs their second largest contribution in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as well as being the largest contributor of troops in the UN Security Council, where the United Kingdom are the second largest providing country, deploying a total of 295 troops and personnel (UN, 2019).

In order to understand and explain why it is that China decided that South Sudan would constitute as their first troop deployment under a PKO mandate, and also the large quantity of troops provided, one must begin to delve down and understand Chinese relations with South Sudan and their national interests. A predominant interest that China has vested in South Sudan is their economic activities, mainly in the oil industry. This relationship and their oil investments go back before South Sudan became an independent state. China first began venturing overseas for oil investments in the 1990s, and a destination was Sudan. Beijing's engagement with Sudan progressed in the mid-1990s onwards when the Sino-Sudanese petro-partnership was initiated (Large, 2016). The venture was spearheaded by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and the advantage to setting up production in Sudan, despite civil unrest, was that global competition from otherwise superior oil conglomerates from Europe and the United States were absent, as they perceived Sudan to pose too much risk to their operations. Moreover, the experiences acquired of Chinese national oil companies in host countries would influence their competitiveness and global strategy through the financial benefits, technical skills and managerial know-how attained by operating overseas (Patey, 2017). In the initial phases of investment, China sought to establish a beneficial cooperation with the Sudanese government, who at the time were the governing authority and controlled the main trade routes where the oil would be exported from. China's support of the Sudanese

government in Khartoum was not perceived fondly by opposition in the south. Following the CPA and the high possibility that South Sudan was about to secede forming a new state, China moved to enhance its relations with the then regional authority, the Government of Southern Sudan, to ensure CNPC's oil investments would remain unscathed by the separation (Patey, 2017). This alteration in Chinese engagement with Sudan was mainly dictated as 75 per cent of the oil production in Sudan was from the south, soon to be a part of South Sudan. For China not to lose their investments, forming relationships with South Sudanese officials was of paramount importance. The foundation for relationship building was when Beijing opened a Chinese Consulate in Juba 2008 and established formal diplomatic relations with South Sudan on 9 July 2011, when it became a new, independent sovereign state (Large, 2016). Even though previous relations between South Sudan and China had been tense, China were still permitted to continue their oil operations in the South Sudan after their independence. This decision was a result of pressure from outside actors that persuaded the Government of South Sudan that expelling China on the bounds of previous political grievances would risk serious reputational and legal complications and that China were already established and fully operational in an industry so vital to the future development of South Sudan (Patey, 2017).

Apart from their natural oil sources, South Sudan does not have additional competitive industries to collect revenue. Oil is so important for their economy that a staggering 98 per cent of government revenue is from their oil. Furthermore, if South Sudan pushed China away, it would seriously threaten their development, because the CNPC accounts for most of the investment in its oil industry; its withdrawal would render it impossible to maintain production levels and could prompt a collapse of the formal economy (International Crisis Group, 2017). Likewise, China also had a vested interest to remain and continue their production in South Sudan. Between 1999-2011, the oil from South Sudan accounted for on average 5.5 per cent of China's total oil imports and was the largest overseas revenue earner for the CNPC, where over 40 per cent of their production originated from (Patey, 2017). Moreover, the success of Chinese oil ventures proliferated further in the business community. Many Chinese companies decided to invest in South Sudan, accompanied with Chinese loans. Bilateral trade reached \$534 million in 2012, with a growing presence of Chinese companies, who perceived South Sudan to be a "paradise for investors", due to low operational cost, huge infrastructure needs, lack of industry and little to no competition from local or international actors (International Crisis Group, 2017). As such, the relationship between South Sudan and China regarding their oil interests seem to have mutually beneficial rewards. Without China, South Sudan faces the

risk of economic collapse and China is able to harvest oil to supply their domestic demand while increasing their overseas experience in a low competitive environment.

After the outbreak of violence in December 2013, Chinese oil interests in South Sudan were faced with a detrimental threat, severely impacting production levels and the safety of their employees. Chinese oil fields were targeted and destroyed by opposition forces because of their financial significance for the South Sudanese government. Only a few days after the conflict began, China evacuated their nationals working on the oil fields, leaving them barren. Many battles were centred around oil sights, prompting a shut down in production. As long as the conflict was rampant, China was unable to utilise their oil sites in South Sudan, provoking heavy economic losses. Before the war, Chinese production level was reported as running at around 245,000 barrels per day (bpd), however, throughout the war and with numerous sites shutting down production was reported to be 140,000 bpd (Large, 2016). The drop of production is visible when observing the import ratio from China, dropping from 5 per cent to 2 per cent in 2013 (Patey, 2017). Thus, the crisis in South Sudan confronted China with two vital complications connected to their national interests. First, the economic misfortunes of a partial closure of their oil industry, and secondly, the inability to safeguard their overseas nationals employed at those sites.

Oil interests is not the only aspect of Chinese involvement in South Sudan. China has progressively committed themselves to greater involvement with political relations and diplomacy in the country. Historically, China has steered clear of foreign issues but with their global rise to power China has begun to shift their stance of total non-inference to one that is active and positive, within their own playing field. Unlike the United States, China has little experience and expertise as the role of mediator and conflict negotiator. South Sudan presents China with an opportunity develop their capacities in this role, where outside spectators have suggested that South Sudan is a “testing ground for China’s proactive diplomacy” (Shen, 2012) and “a real-world laboratory to test the boundaries of its non-interference principle” (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Amidst the raging conflict China was adamant to participate and take upon a leading role in conflict resolution between the two warring parties. A main feature of China’s diplomacy to conflict resolution was their impartial stance to both parties. Officially their main relationship was with the SPLM, but they also opened up channels to engage with the opposition. As Chinese Foreign minister Wang Yi iterated: “China stresses its fair and

objective stance [...] China always adheres to a just and objective position” (Yi, 2014). China’s political engagement with the conflict involved diplomatic efforts to support and promote a negotiated end to the fighting (Large, 2016). In their efforts to end the bloodshed, China arranged and patronized a “special consultation meeting” in Khartoum in 2015 between Sudan, South Sudan (government and opposition), Ethiopia and Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD). The meetings conclusions led to an agreement on the “five point peace plan”, encompassing an immediate cessation of hostilities, accelerating the formation of a transitional government as soon as possible, taking concrete steps to relieve the humanitarian situation in the conflict zones and working to facilitate delivery of international humanitarian assistance to South Sudanese citizens, and supporting the IGAD efforts aimed at achieving peace in the newly-born state (Karti, 2015). However, parallel to Chinese diplomacy criticism arose concerning the intentions of Chinese involvement in South Sudan peace talks. Questions arose if China’s oil interests in South Sudan possibly being the core driving force behind their actions. If they could successfully negotiate a peace agreement between the two parties, the fighting around their oil fields would cease and oil production could commence again. The accusations towards Chinese motivations were not unfounded, as they have publicly stated that both sides have a responsibility to protect oil infrastructure in South Sudan (Large, 2016). China denied that their motivations were based on national interests and economic gain, asserting that: “China is an active promoter of peace in South Sudan [...] its international responsibility and not to achieve any other purposes” (Yi, 2015). Thus, China reiterated their foreign policy strategy in Sudan becoming more involved and acting as a mediator and peace negotiator between the parties. Their intentions in this process is up for debate, whether domestic interests or African security and peace are guiding them, or a combination of both.

5.3.2 Chinese Material and Non-material Interests UNMISS

The participation in UNMISS represented a pioneering action from China as it was the first time Chinese combat forces were deployed under a peacekeeping mandate to a foreign sovereign state. Moreover, it is currently the largest Chinese contribution to an ongoing mission, with significantly more humanitarian investment than their peers in the UN Security Council. To understand why China decided that UNMISS would be their maiden mission with the deployment of combat forces and large investments, it is important to highlight what interests China have in South Sudan.

From the initial outlook, it is clear that China both has material and non-material interests in South Sudan, and their interests span to different directions. One of the most significant interests that China hold in South Sudan is their investment, production and supply of crude oil. China has spent many resources to ensure rights to extract oil in South Sudan, which at one point represented around 5 per cent of their oil imports from overseas, as well as the CNPC owning a large stake in South Sudanese oil. Furthermore, many of the employees working on the oil fields are Chinese nationals, so not only does China have economic interests, but also human capital investments too. The conflict in South Sudan had an immediate impact to Chinese oil production, as well as the safety of their nationals. The consequences were a severe reduction in oil harvested and imported to China (hindering their energy demands), the evacuation of Chinese nationals and large economic losses to CNPC. The re-evaluation of UNMISS's mandate focusing on the protection of civilians, human rights, humanitarian assistance and a larger troop presence allowed China for the first time play a more impactful role in the affairs of another sovereign nation-state.

To interpret Chinese decision-making by deciding the send troops to South Sudan, incorporating a theoretical framework will provide a clearer picture. Abiding by realist philosophy, oil interests in South Sudan represent a function for Chinese growth, or pursuit of power. China are contingent on overseas ventures and imports to feed their energy demand domestically in order to continue their rapid development and increased position in international relations. China's foreign policy decision in this case, should be considered an approach to maintain their level of power. Losing their material interests would immediately decrease their relative level of power and may in the future lead to larger losses. Participating and supplying a larger number of troops to UNMISS not only serves to mitigate the situation in South Sudan, but also serves to protect their interests. Another fascinating perspective to incorporate in this case is the use of institutions – specifically the UN – from China to guard their interests. Typically, from a realist point of view, states are the primary actors, and foreign policy is state-to-state. However, Chinese interference in South Sudan has occurred through the UN. Institutions in realism is an alternative channel to influence and attain national interests for states. China has invested many resources, both economic, human and political – in the UN, increasing their distribution of power in the system, perhaps with the intention to influence specific decisions that mirror their own interests. In the case of UNMISS, the aforementioned institutional clout of China led to Chinese pressure to include a passage in the revised UNMISS mandate which stated (Large, 2018):

Deter violence against civilians, including foreign nationals [...] in areas at high risk of conflict including, as appropriate, school, places of worship, hospitals and the **oil installations** (Security Council, 2019).

China has successfully exploited their position and influence in a UN institutional setting to leverage a decision in favour of their own interests. Additionally, Chinese troops are tasked with the protection of civilians in their operational duties, which fall directly under the passage above. In effect, China has cunningly navigated the UN to directly protect their own interests using their own troops. The manner in which they have done so is aligned with their own perceptions and beliefs of non-interference, at least partially. China has avoided a situation where they would be torch bearers and faced with a dilemma to directly interfere in other nation-states affairs to protect their material interests or adhere to their non-interference approach and surrender their resources. This approach carry's the best of both worlds for China, they are able to protect their interests, thereby alleviating their power losses, and doing so under the banner of the UN while still complying with their non-interference approach.

Apart from protecting their interests under the guise of UN PKOs, China gains further benefits from their deployment, particularly military experience. Military power is a vital component in realist thinking, as it represents a state's capabilities and power vis-à-vis other states. Despite the size of China both in economic, political and population terms, their military – although strong – is not as modern and effective as other large nations, such as the United States. A recent report from the Pentagon, *China Military Power Report*, stated that China under Xi Jinping is pursuing comprehensive efforts to make China a “strong country” with a “world class military”, but that currently “they need to do more work [...] they are not quite there yet” (Erickson, 2019). A military and its relative capabilities are not exclusively determined by their level of technology, intelligence etc, but the training and operational experiences from its soldiers. In this regard, China is confronted with an impasse, as they hardly have warfare experience leaving their armed forces' operational knowledge and training unfulfilled. China is well aware of this issue, and as long as they continue to follow their peaceful development model, they cannot acquire much needed military experience. However, China has located an alternative route to meet their military needs to some extent. In China's 2015 military strategy white paper, they write:

As a necessary requirement for China's armed forces to fulfil their responsibilities and missions in the new period as well as an important approach to enhancing their operational capabilities, the armed forces will continue to conduct such Military Operations Other than War [...] China's armed forces will continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions (People's Republic of China, 2015).

Much like China's dealings in the UN to protect their material interests, they have also managed to secure military operational experience through Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), developing and expanding their military prestige and international stature.

Chinese interests in South Sudan are not exclusively tied to material interests, but also non-material interests. China has since their initial oil venture in Sudan attempted to maintain valuable political relations with those in power. First with Sudan and then South Sudan when it was clear that they were about to secede, capturing the majority of the oil fields. Subsequently after the violence broke out in, China together with the other members of UN Security Council, and UN Community discussed the preferred course of action that would put an end to the violence and secure a peaceful resolution. Ultimately, the UN, IGAD and the AU focused on a mediation process between both warring parties to negotiate a ceasefire and peaceful end to the conflict. The conclusion to those talks led to the five-point peace plan and China was keen to highlight the UN Security Council's role in supporting the IGAD mediation process and expressed the hope that the resolution would signal its desire for a breakthrough in the conflict (Large, 2016). From a realist perspective, China's political engagement through the UN was directed to cease the fighting and restore order. South Sudan's security is an important factor to ensure that their oil operations continue. However, from a constructivists point of view, Chinese involvement in the UN Security Council and their political actions to resolve the crisis in South Sudan, can be perceived to an alteration or re-interpretation of Chinese identity in the international system. China wishes to be considered a peaceful global power posing no military threat to other nations and also garner recognition from the international community. To form and re-enforce this notion, China's pursuit of a global identity is linked to national interests in South Sudan. Both through the UN Security Council and national efforts has China organized and managed peace negotiations. By acting as a leading role or contributing to an eventual peace agreement, China's broadcasts to other nations that their interests, values and norms encompass virtues such as peace, security and cooperation. In response, other nations recognise the actions taken by China to pursue a favourable outcome without violence, thereby changing their perception towards China. If states allow and consider China a responsible actor in international relations, then their identity is formally constructed, as for identity to be sustained, other have to represent the state in the same way it sees itself. Their new identity and power within the UN framework can allow China to substitute or modify certain values, norms and activities that would reflect domestic interests. Despite institutions functioning with relative independence from individual states, they are nonetheless susceptible for interests driven states,

such as China, to re-shape their core values where its interests are normalised to their preferences.

The earlier relations constructed between China and South Sudan is an important aspect to discuss too concerning peacekeeping efforts and political engagement in the country. Because of their long-standing political ties, South Sudan values Chinese collaboration and support in higher regards than its Western peers. There exists multiple explanations why Chinese interference is preferable, including Sino-African relations, where aid and development funding to Africa sent from China has a “no strings attached” policy (Li, 2017). Some African countries have questionable governance structures, corruption and human rights abuses, and from a Western perspective, cooperating with those countries is typically based on conditionalities imposed to financial aid, development and loans. China is willing to overlook these discrepancies and offer similar amenities without attachments. Because of China’s current investments in South Sudan and previous dealings, South Sudan officials perceive China as a beneficial partner to their security and development. Moreover, China’s sees an opportunity in South Sudan to acquire expertise, acting as a mediator that strives for peace and security. South Sudan being China’s “testing ground” for international diplomacy is further advantageous from a Chinese perspective as no matter the outcome of their involvement they will receive little backlash and criticism from Chinese nationals, because Africa is seen as an as a far away and inconsequential place, in comparison to SE Asia which is much more sensitive to Chinese relations and interference (International Crisis Group, 2017).

In summary, China has contributed and played a leading role in UNMISS to protect both their material and non-material interests in South Sudan. Chinese commitment to deploy – for the first time – a considerable amount of combat forces illustrates an evolution in Chinese foreign policy. They are prepared to partially interfere in the affairs of other states to safeguard their interests. In this context, China through cunning political agreements managed to implement a passage in the UNMISS mandate which authorized the protection of civilians of oil installations, directly protecting their economic investments, territory and human capital. While Chinese soldiers remain in South Sudan operating under the UNMISS mandate, they effectively acquire continuous valuable military experience that further develops the Chinese military through MOOTW. In the political realm, China has pursued a role as representative and pivotal player to achieve peace and security, both through the UN Security Council and national means to re-shape and excel as an international conflict mediator promoting peaceful development, which also would lead to protecting their oil investments. Although officially

China’s UN Security Council role concerned international security responses to the conflict, its engagement spilled over to other concurrent and connected forms of political engagement (Large, 2016).

5.4 Comparative Analysis

In the previous sections, I have provided a contextual background regarding both MINUSMA and UNMISS and China’s role and interests connected to the missions and conducted separate analysis for both PKOs. In this section, I will conduct a comparative analysis between both PKOs with reference to my findings in the previous analysis sections.

At the beginning of this thesis, I mentioned that by including two cases studies I would hopefully be able to depict a more comprehensive answer to my research question as I thought Chinese peacekeeping efforts, motivations and interests are inclined to be a multi-faceted and complex.

Table 1 *Summarisation of missions and Chinese interests*

| | MINUSMA | UNMISS |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Mission establishment</i> | - April 25, 2013 | - July 8, 2011 |
| <i>Personnel contribution</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combat forces: 170 - Medical staff: 70 - Engineers: 155 - Total: 395 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combat forces: 1031 - Police: 12 - Mission experts: 5 - Staff officers: 19 - Total: 1067 |
| <i>Material interests & non-material interests</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safeguarding and promoting OBOR interests specifically railway connections between Bamako-Dakar and Bamako-Conakry. - Pursuing military training through | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protecting oil interests (CNPC and others stake, oil sites and Chinese national employees) - “Testing ground” for |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>MOOTW and multilateral partnerships with more modern and advanced military forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional power and prestige increase. - Promoting Chinese soft power and Chinese values of peace, stability and development. | <p>Chinese Diplomacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional power and prestige increase. Ability to persuade UN directives that align with Chinese interests. - Acquiring military expertise through MOOTW. |
|--|--|--|

Firstly, both MINUSMA and UNMISS represent a meaningful token in China's expanding foreign policy engagement. Specifically, both missions involve Chinese combat forces being stationed in conflict areas overseas, with South Sudan being the first placement and Mali second. However, in terms of actual troop contributions China has provided significantly more to UNMISS than they have to MINUSMA. An argument to explain this unbalanced contribution may be clarified when analysing Chinese interests, relationships and operational duties. In UNMISS, China have substantial oil investments and ownership scattered across the country, while also employing Chinese nationals at their oil sites. They have a durable relationship with the South Sudanese government established through the co-dependency of oil extraction. China needs oil from South Sudan to feed their increasing energy demands, and South Sudan is contingent on the revenue they receive from their oil deposits. China's relationship with the South Sudanese government collegial and their presence in South Sudan is larger than for example Europe or the United States. China's troop contribution is a measure to protect its material interests oversea. Furthermore, the UNMISS mandate specifically allows for Chinese troops to protect civilians – national and foreign – by the oil installations. In Mali, Chinese presence is less apparent, despite both countries having long-standing political ties. Mali is more influenced by their former colonial rulers, France. China have little physical interests in Mali, apart from their railway projects. Unlike South Sudan, the railway projects are located in Bamako to the south being relatively safe from to conflict to the

north, while their oil sites in South Sudan were targeted and destroyed. Their operational duties are also much different. In MINUSMA their role is to protect the UN military base in Gao, meaning they cannot officially protect their interests as they can in UNMISS. The contextual and operational differences between both missions illustrates China's willingness to invest and provide troops. In this case, if China has notable economic and political stakes and their interests are confronted with evident threats, they are willing to at a greater level than if their stakes and interests were lower. In terms of military training, both PKOs serve as an opportunity for the Chinese military to develop their capabilities in MOOTW, while also learning skills from their more modern military counterparts. This is consistent with the Chinese military white paper, outlining how to plan to re-enforce and increase their military capacity. Thus, in both UNMISS and MINUSMA, China has opted to contribute combat forces to either directly or indirectly protect their interests overseas and the extent and relevance of those interests will influence the number of troops and operational duties.

Secondly, partially connected to the first paragraph, African security and stability potentially plays an important role in Chinese peacekeeping considerations. Promoting and stimulating security and stability – while also advocating for their “peaceful development” approach – in Africa influences their interests in otherwise unstable countries. In both cases, it is in China's interests to promote stability in order to continue their economic and political investments. For example, China under Xi Jinping has embarked on the ambitious OBOR designed to foster global economic integration. With more than \$1 trillion in funding and partnerships and for it to succeed, it is required that security and stability is present in Africa (Lanteigne, 2018). By participating in MINUSMA and the processes attached, it may help achieve these desired outcomes. Similarly, UNMISS presents an opportunity for China to have an impact on South Sudanese stability. Even more so than MINUSMA, China had taken a leading role to negotiate peace agreements between conflict parties. The style of Chinese foreign policy has become more self-assured. China has to some extent abandoned its former tendency to keep a low profile in global affairs. Instead, China is seeking a more influential role in international affairs, while also accepting greater responsibilities (Van Der Putten, 2015). These unfamiliar Chinese foreign policy actions should be viewed in their relative investments and interests in South Sudan. Because of their significant presence in South Sudan, they are better equipped to attempt peace and security efforts. It is also an additional self-indulgent approach, as they can potentially bargain a settlement more in favour of their preferences. Furthermore, it permits China to experiment in unaccustomed spheres, achieving

higher levels of international diplomatic competencies. As such, for both missions China has a strong inclination to promote security and stability, as it allows China to pursue their oil interests and construction of OBOR initiative in order to increase their domestic capabilities. However, China was much more active in peace processes in South Sudan, both at the UN level and national level, due to their existing relationship and influence in South Sudan.

Thirdly, focusing more on a political position, greater levels of involvement in the UN increases relevance and authority within the institution. Both UNMISS and MINUSMA represent Chinese efforts to benefit from their participation in order to develop their institutional capacities. There are several considerations for why China would like to increase their UN standing. As mentioned before, the most obvious reason first and foremost is to increase China's power and importance within the institution. Another perhaps surprising factor is China's perception of the UN, where they consider it to be an important aspect to international order and wish to make it more relevant in today's world. Moreover, China believes that the UN should be more representative of the interests of developing countries. The implication is that China would like to see some adjustments with regard to the division of power within the UN system (Van Der Putten, 2015). Even though China wishes that developing countries received more influence in the UN, they are the only developing country residing on the UN Security Council, which comes with a series of advantages. Because they are the only developing country, they are able to "represent" all developing countries interests and considerations during high level discussions. China has no interest currently in re-forming the UN Security Council potentially adding "competitors" that may not have China's interest at heart. Accordingly, both UNMISS and MINUSMA in a political sense is a means to increase their influence in the UN, so they can affect future and current PKOs so that their interests are protected. If we apply these considerations to the theoretical frameworks applied in this thesis, an argument for the applicability of both is fair. On the one hand, China uses their increased influence in the UN to protect their interests overseas, whether it be with political control and oversight of the missions, or by the deployment of troops through their influence on the UN Security Council. On the other hand, China's willingness to become more active and promote the values of peace and security throughout the world might be perceived the transformation to a "responsible global power" that values "durable peace and common development".

The intention of comparing China's role in both PKOs was to see the similarities they share and differences where they are contrasting. On the surface, both share similarities more than they do differences. Both possess Chinese troops, have emphasis on increasing African

security and serve as a mechanism to further Chinese influence within the UN system. Their subtle contrasts are hidden in the context of the mission, state-to-state affiliations and national interests. In this case, China is “more involved” in UNMISS because they maintain vested oil interests in the country, and to protect those interests China has deployed a larger number of troops, influenced the mission mandate to reflect their preferences, had a leading role in peace negotiations and have been vocal at high level UN Security Council discussions. In MINUSMA China has acted in accordance with their role in South Sudan, however to an arguably lesser extent as a result of limited and threatened interests. They have deployed fewer troops that conform to a less influential mandate that protects Chinese interests and absent in multi-lateral peace negotiations. However, MINUSMA should be considered an approach to increase their international reputation and influence in global institutions, while also safeguarding their physical interests in Mali. In regard to the theoretical frameworks applied to this thesis, I would argue that both are applicable depending which way the cases are observed. Realism is suited to analyse Chinese physical interests in South Sudan and Mali, where both oil interests and the development of OBOR are important aspects of China’s pursuit of power. Constructivism is better utilized to explain China’s expanding role in the UN and efforts to promote Chinese priorities of “peaceful development” and “common development”. Lastly, a fascinating prospect to consider under the guise of realism and China’s action in South Sudan, is whether China would be as vested in the PKO if they did not have large oil investments. Under the assumption of realism, China would certainly not, if at all, be present in UNMISS.

Thus, China’s role in both UNMISS and MINUSMA demonstrates a multi-faceted approach in foreign policy to safeguard their overseas interests while also evolving as a responsible international stakeholder. China increasingly understands the value and importance of aligning its national interests with these emerging global conventions, because active participation in peacekeeping also helps to burnish China’s image, standing and reputation (Huang, 2013). Peacekeeping has become an important tool for China to engage with the wider international community, protecting their interests and endorsing China’s eagerness to become a responsible actor that encourages peace.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have answered the problem formulation that I exhibited at the beginning: “Why is China active in peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and Mali?”. To answer this question, I argue that that China contributes to PKOs to safeguard their interests overseas. In order to answer my research question, I have analysed China’s involvement in both their endeavours in UNMISS and MINUSMA, according to the theoretical framework of realism and constructivism. In the end, I have conducted a comparative analysis between both PKOs and China’s contributions and probable gains in order to determine a conclusive interpretation that consistently explains why China remains active in both.

In the history of their peacekeeping actions, China has transformed from reluctant and passive to a willing and reactive stakeholder in the international scene. Previous tendencies of criticism towards behaviour of interference to emerging as a partial advocate in the R2P resolution. China has re-shaped their foreign policy stance in the past decades that symbolises their intent for international cooperation and being a part of the solution. This development is supported by their combat forces deployment in UNMISS and MINUSMA. Their alteration of foreign policy and revised non-interference stance is an appropriate outlet to further analyse why China has had a change of heart on this issue. Is it to protect their national interests, or is it a sign that China is evolving as a global international player?

My initial decision to conduct my analysis around the peacekeeping operation UNMISS and MINUSMA was based on Chinese previous and current Chinese state-to-state relationships overseas interests which they are willing to protect, China’s expanding influence in Africa and China’s rising political clout. Moreover, I was determined to use cases studies that at first glance had contrasting contextual backgrounds in order to investigate if the merits of Chinese contributions were carried out under the same considerations. On the one hand, South Sudan is endowed with large reserves of oil resources which China has large investments in and deep-rooted connections to the South Sudanese government. On the other hand, Mali has no resource endowments of significance and limited investments and relationships between both governments are respectable.

The current PKOs of UNMISS and MINUSMA share many similarities, as both share corresponding interests that are significant to China. South Sudan hosts Chinese CNPC with large oil reserves that fuel China’s domestic energy needs while Mali is a geostrategic piece in

the creation of the OBOR initiative. Both aspects represent Chinese interests which are vulnerable as long as both crises continue. By participating in the PKOs China is able to protect their interests overseas without having to interfere directly but instead through the UN under the banner of peace and security, while still continuing to partially comply with their non-interference stance. However, I have argued that China is in fact heavily involved in the PKOs in order to protect their interests and do so through the deployment of troops and cunning navigation of the political sphere to influence decisions that play in their favour. In UNMISS China has effectively woven their influence directly in the PKO mandate sanctioning them authority to protect their own citizens and material interests through the application of UN peacekeeping forces. Furthermore, on the political level China has exercised their power in the UN system to push for resolutions to secure peace, while also directly taking part in those negotiations. In MINUSMA, China has exhibited strong indications of their intent to be recognised and commended for their growing role in the international arena promoting peace and stability. Yet, their role in Mali is less significant politically than it is in Sudan. Their troops located in Gao are authorized to protect the UN base, benefitting the troops with much needed combat experience. The development of railway systems is a main priority for China in Mali to continue their goal of establishing the OBOR and their troop contribution to the north shields conflict from reaching further down south. As such, perceptions of China's position regarding peace and stability is strongly influenced in the ability to safeguard their interests. Even though I argue that Chinese presence in PKOs is motivated by protecting their interests, I maintain that it also serves as an avenue to promote Chinese values such as peace and stability that effects the development of countries. It illustrates China's evolving and dynamic role in international relations shifting from being a passive spectator to active shareholder in the affairs of other nations.

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