

The Role of the Chinese Media in Establishing Common Ground between Sino-African Philosophical Traditions: A Case Study on Peacekeeping Operations

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This work examines the role of the Chinese media in African peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in view of Chinese and African traditions that are combined through the concept of communitarianism. The values and belief systems of Confucianism and the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* in the peacekeeping environment stress the importance of focusing on collective achievements and producing results for the common good. Meanwhile, positive reporting is used as media approach to harmonize interaction between the peacekeepers and the parties in a conflict. As a result, as similar communal features are emphasized, value is added to China's peacekeeping presence and confidence-building is encouraged. The Chinese media also has a good resonance on the perspectives of Africans toward China's PKOs.

Keywords: Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs); Communitarianism; Confucius; *Ubuntu*; Positive Reporting

Introduction

In recent years, the Chinese media has become an important player in African Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) as it is deployed within the peacekeeping environment to foster the image of China as a peaceful and harmonious society. In conjunction with the belief and value system of Confucianism and the African tradition of *Ubuntu*, whether the media plays any role in connecting the two traditions into an understanding of communitarianism is to be determined. Positive reporting as media practice can strengthen basic forms of assistance, help in confidence-building, facilitate power-sharing arrangements, act as an election support tool, enforce the rule of law, and is a useful instrument to guide societies in underdeveloped states to paths of development. In addition, perspectives from citizens of mission countries place emphasis on cooperative mechanisms that can positively influence interaction with Chinese peacekeepers. This work, thus, describes the role and influence of Chinese media reporting in Africa PKOs, shedding light on a conceptualizing of Confucianism and *Ubuntu*, examples of theoretical considerations in practice, perspectives from African citizens and the collective impact on the community.

Conceptualizing *Ubuntu* and Confucianism

Communitarianism emphasizes the need to balance individual rights and interests with that of the community as a whole, and argues that individual citizens are led by the cultures and values of their communities (Harwood, 1996: Chp. 3). The core of Confucianism lies in its emphasis on human capability of being taught to improve personal and communal behavior. In communities where these virtues are the standard norms, Chinese peacekeepers have a tendency to judge the correctness of their behavior according to their own morals and cultural norms. What discerns their contribution from other contingents is the

manner in which self-cultivation and self-creation are set as personal goals. Acting properly within the group can enrich one's own life and those of others, and thereby uphold cardinal moral values. This also leads to gaining a personal sense of fulfillment, righteous behavior and the moral disposition to do what is right. The instilment of Confucianism in the actions of Chinese peacekeepers thus plays a central role in their peacekeeping activities among local populations. David Shinn, a scholar of Sino-African relations noted: "China emphasizes the family and society's collective interests over the interests of the individual. China is less concerned about individual civil and political liberties and more concerned with collective human rights and their impact on the community. China's stated goal is a society free from want and one that eventually achieves moderate prosperity. This approach provides China with an alternative human rights theory to the one encouraged by the West and is shared by many Africans as morally and socially correct" (Shinn, 2012). An article in the Christian Science Monitor, written by renowned Chinese scholar, Lin Yutang (林语堂) held the same belief as U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull that moral order was crucial for peace (Fu, 2012).

Reports from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) state that an official rehabilitation of Confucius has been undertaken (Dotson, 2011). One of the stated goals of this measure is to assert China's desire for a harmonious society and for peaceful development at home and abroad (Dotson, 2011). Scholars note that Confucianism does not represent a key moral value of the recent modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and that values change according to information needs from militaries worldwide, but Dotsan (2011) argues that the revival of Confucianism in state propaganda as a national icon of China's traditional culture, as well as a symbol of the Party's concern for public welfare and international image, serves as a link for peacekeepers to promote a positive image of the coun-

try abroad. The implication of this range of vision for Chinese peacekeepers is that they can justify their actions on the premise of humanitarian aid and assistance to mission areas. This is an imaginative insight for Africans to receive Chinese goodwill and sincerity, and highlights how contacts between peacekeepers and local populations can be based on philosophical grounds.

Moral obligations found in Confucianism are likewise reflected in African moral values with regard to the collective interests of communities that outweigh those of individuals. A central value of the philosophy of *Ubuntu* is that “a person is a person through other persons” (Botman, 2012). This concerns whether individual rights are primary and cannot be violated for any reason, or whether individuals should instead pursue values regarding the common good. The community in Africa has priority over the individual, and is defined by the community’s interests, and not by qualities such as rationality, will, or memory (Gyekye, 1997). Both Africans and Chinese are born into a community and express their association by sharing obligations, values, and communal interests. Thus, members of these separate communities often invest intellectual, ideological, and emotional attachment in the community, and engage in reciprocal social relations within the family, clan, village, ethnic group, neighborhood, city, and nation. The idea of community implies a common good, which is not merely the combination of individual interests, but shared values, working together to meet the necessities of life and community values, which thereby do not refer to all of the values a community shares: peace, freedom, respect, dignity, security, and satisfaction. Moderate communitarianism emphasizes social values, such as peace, harmony, stability, solidarity, mutuality, and reciprocity (Gyekye, 2004: p. 16). For instance, two of the most influential West African moral philosophers maintain: “The fundamental meaning of community is the sharing of an overall way of life, inspired by the notion of the common good” and “every member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all” (Gbadegesin, 1991: p. 65). Confucianism and *Ubuntu* thus both provide a conceptual framework for an interrelation of norms and values that promotes the common good; an increase in the understanding of each other’s environments, and the role that has to be played in such an environment; an intuitive interplay of the mind without reasoning, with the focus often being on non-verbal forms of communication that can lead to subjective thoughts of feeling entity or sharing identical characteristics. In verbal communication, it is possible that ideas, opinions and language can be exchanged, but by contextualizing the actions of the peacekeepers in the mission areas, discourse is centered on learning from observing, and not by direct conversation. Interaction strengthens interpersonal relationships, increases mutual respect, and solidifies common goals and outcomes. Of paramount importance is the extension of advancing peace, harmony and humanism through positive reporting as a media approach.

Manner of Investigation

Empirical evidence in the form of interaction in peacekeeping societies may establish whether a relationship exists between *Ubuntu* and Confucianism and if communitarianism is promoted by media reporting. This relationship is tested by analyzing media reports on Chinese peacekeeping activities and

interviews with citizens of countries where Chinese troops are involved. The interviews present eye-witness accounts of how Africans view the presence of Chinese peacekeeping troops, while positive reporting by the Chinese media portray the country’s intentions to bring about peace and stability, if the available data can shed light on coalescing factors between these two views. The countries under discussion are: the Western Sahara (MINURSO mission), Liberia (UNMIL mission), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Darfur (UNAMID) and Sudan (UNMISS). The following questions were asked and the responses integrated into the research design. The point is to show that local populations have diverse opinions and feelings on the presence of Chinese peacekeeping troops, but most of the respondents agreed that communal values are exemplified through mutual interaction and communication.

1) What are the views of the local populations in the Western Sahara, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on humanist philosophies? While a connection between Confucianism and *Ubuntu* is explained in this work, a general view on humanism and the moral practice to be good citizens in the countries mentioned are also taken as valid opinions. The interviewed subjects all agreed that *Ubuntu* as a philosophical tradition is universally understood in the African context.

2) Are humanism and communal values spread and maintained in the post-conflict societies? This question was asked to establish if peace and the moral goods are pursued and as a stepping stone for further researching the links with Confucianism.

3) How do the local populations in the countries under investigation view the presence of Chinese peacekeeping troops, and do they possess attributes that are different from other peacekeeping contingents? A common answer was that the local populations in these societies welcome the peacekeeping troops and see them as instruments of change.

4) Do interaction between the local populations and the Chinese peacekeeping troops promote the common good? Of vital concern is looking at distinctive qualities of the two philosophies that are mutually shared.

5) Who benefits the most from the interaction and what do the different groups learn from each other? The motivation is that both groups do not only see each other as outsiders, but as friends and compatriots. A bonding exists that is not always observable through physical interaction, but by means of caring about the livelihood of fellow human beings.

In order to examine the practical application for the study under investigation, it is useful to first look at the role of the Chinese media in the context of PKOs. Factors that shed light on media coverage are: 1) the Chinese government’s stance on positive reporting that finds expression in the grand external propaganda strategy initiated by president Hu Jintao in 2005; 2) and the value of interaction between peacekeepers and the local population that strengthens the connection between *Ubuntu* and Confucianism. A detailed account of the answers to the questions is then given in the section that deals with African views on Chinese peacekeeping troops.

The Chinese Media in the Context of PKOs

The Chinese Ministry of Defense revealed that news coverage of the country’s PKOs strives to be objective and focuses on positive news, and to present a correct image of China, its

culture and its plans on the continent. China's African PKOs are characterized by a strong devotion to upholding the principles of peace and harmony, which improves two-way flow of communication. China is aware that PKOs occur in a multinational operational environment where the world can observe their peacekeeping actions and where foreign observers take a less criticizing stance on the country's international image. The general consent is that the political elites in post-conflict societies hesitate to oppose China's media reporting. Nearly all mission-area countries agree that the press should focus on collective achievements, and mobilize public support for the state, rather than report so-called "negative news". In the words of a BBC news reporter: "The Chinese media will leave a footprint on Africa, just as the BBC has been doing for many years" (China's Media Footprint in Africa, 2012). Assuming that the media is used as a propaganda tool to influence the hearts and minds of the local populations and expose the parties to the conflict to the outside world must not be underestimated. The media is often criticized as not being in touch with the desires, issues and problems in these societies because of strict government control on what journalists can say and not. On the contrary, Chinese media reporting in the peacekeeping areas broadens socio-cultural perspectives, and helps in attaining sustainable building blocks for the transition to a post-conflict society. Whether these objectives can be achieved without rigorous, aggressive media reporting and use of propaganda techniques is subject to debate. In addition, Chinese media reporting on African PKOs complements the soft power initiative launched by President Hu Jintao in 2005, also called the Grand External Propaganda Strategy (Pan, 2006). A derivative of this initiative is the spreading of China's influence through cultural and language programs in peacekeeping areas, such as Confucius institutes and cultural exchange programs. Media intervention in peacekeeping areas also gives the Chinese government a greater voice in the international media, as well as supplanting what it considers to be biased western media sources on Chinese PKOs. The aim of the project, which are to seize the initiative, gain the right to speak, maintain an active role, and grasp the power to raise the appeal of China's positions in public opinion and international broadcasting, are perfectly sound goals and conform to China's African strategy (Pan, 2006). A fair description of seizing the initiative is the intensity with which Chinese peacekeepers perform their duties in relation to other peacekeeping contingents working in the same mission areas.

Peacekeeper to civilian relationships can be built on characteristics that are distinct to the environment in which interaction takes place and not necessarily linked to the motivations of the politicians or a peacekeeping policy or strategy (Singh, 2009). Feedback from the conflict areas can further strengthen the interaction between the peacekeepers and the civilian population. By focusing on specific points of discussion, such as the meaning of interpersonal communication and the value both groups attach in learning from each other, it is possible to denote a common understanding of the environment and the promotion of harmony. Although China and the West differ on the concept of humanitarian intervention in peacekeeping areas, it is not to say that Chinese peacekeepers and humanitarians do not communicate or work together on protection. In contexts such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Darfur and Chad, Chinese peacekeepers and individuals in the humanitarian community do interact around protection is-

ues, but their relationship can often be best described as one of co-existence rather than a meaningful desire to implement coordination strategies (Lilly, 2010). As indicated by peacekeeping commentators, having reliable and verified information is the cornerstone of effective protection work. Chinese peacekeeping missions in this regard have enormous potential to collect information on protection risks, and peacekeepers on the ground often see the merit of establishing relations with local populations (Lilly, 2010). It is in these situations, where issues that have an impact on the community are addressed and the moral teachings of Confucius and the humanitarian principles of *Ubuntu* become interconnected with the aspirations and goals of the post-conflict societies. By looking at the essence of what is presented in the media, it becomes clear that China is gradually realizing that peacekeeping missions can help bolster socio-cultural interaction based on similarities in philosophies.

Chinese media reporting in PKOs highlight some of the success stories based on positive reporting. These success stories are categorized in four themes and presented in the next section. They are: negotiation skills and peace support; contributions made in the field of disease control and medical assistance; accomplishments in building or repairing infrastructure; successes in cultural exchanges that have promoted friendly relations between the Chinese peacekeepers and local populations.

Examples of Theoretical Considerations in Practice

The contributions that have been made by Chinese peacekeepers reflect Confucian values in practice, and have likewise been recognized by African host countries. The negotiation and conflict resolution skills of Chinese peacekeepers are not only recognized by the UN, but also by individual governments. As the following example indicates, the Sudanese government significantly praised the actions of the Chinese peacekeepers. The relations between China and Sudan had withstood the test of time since the establishment of the bilateral diplomatic relations. The two sides trust, support and assist each other, forming a friendship and all around cooperation. Sudanese government officials have expressed their gratitude to the Chinese government for dispatching peacekeeping troops to Sudan, and have maintained that China was helping Sudan to realize peace. The governor of the South Darfur State even expressed that he would make all-out efforts to ensure the safety of the Chinese peacekeeping troops, and offer various forms of assistance and support if necessary (Yang, 2012). The conflict resolution skills of Chinese peacekeeping officials were promptly illustrated with the role that Major-General, Zhao Jingmin the military head in MINURSO played. The PLA Daily reported: "Zhao Jingmin was praised for his tireless efforts in improving the stability of military departments, and also emphasized his effective negotiation skills that contributed to useful interactions between conflict parties" (Lin, 2011: p. 3).

Another concrete contribution that Chinese peacekeepers make is in the field of disease control and medical assistance. Alain Le Roy, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations remarked: "In a country with a high occurrence rate of malaria, the Chinese class II hospital has done a very important job for the health of the peacekeepers from all participating countries, and the Chinese military doctors make malaria not fearful any longer" (Wu, 2009, p. 3). The Chinese medical detachment to the UNMIL has made use of their expertise to treat

members of other peacekeeping forces and locals for a number of illnesses. The nurses of the medical detachment have rapidly become known as the “angels in white” by the local population for their dedication to render assistance to the ill and disabled. In addition, Chinese doctors distributed nearly 1000 boxes of anti-malaria drugs to local people, winning wide praise from the local government and people (Dong, 2009: p. 5). “The Chinese people are always our most sincere friends!” said Grace-Mahlongo, president of the Wau Charity Hospital of Sudan, expressing her gratitude to Zhang Zuojian, the commander of the Chinese peacekeeping medical detachment to Sudan (Chinese Peacekeeping Nurses in Liberia, 2009: p. 5). Madam Marata from the Congo who is in charge of the SOS children village in the Bukavu mission area has said: “I feel very happy because during the past seven years since the PLA started to send peacekeeping medical attachments to the Congo (K), the Chinese peacekeeping medical attachment has offered medical service, food, clothes and other support. We are grateful for the help from the Chinese second-class hospital” (Zhang, 2012). Medical assistance thus builds person-to-person relations between Chinese and Africans, is beneficial to both sides, and is seen as a tangible action for serving the public good.

There have also been successes in building infrastructure. In recognition of the conspicuous contributions made by Chinese troops in pushing the peace process in the Congo, the highest executive official of the eastern zone of MONUC at a medal-conferring ceremony has said: “The Chinese peacekeeping troops improved the road infrastructure and medical condition in south Kivu area with their practical actions” (Xu & Wu, 2009: p. 4). The Chinese engineering detachment to UNMIL repaired a major transportation road in one of the mission’s sections after heavy rains and caused the traffic to flow normally again. This action was praised by locals who traverse the road on a daily basis. During the heavy rains, a few villagers were rescued from possible drowning after they attempted to cross a river in flood. This rescue operation by the Chinese Peacekeeping Engineering Detachment (CPND) was seen as an act of extreme bravery by the UNMIL command. A notice recommending the action and selfless help provided by the CPND was circulated among the other divisions by UNMIL. Zhang Jian, a non-commissioned officer from the CPND, displayed the fine quality of the Chinese blue-helmet soldiers by saving a child who was already submerged under water and was near drowning. He said: “I’m a blue-helmet soldier and I’m glad to work for the peacekeeping. In the eyes of foreign servicemen in the same profession, Chinese peacekeeping servicemen are the synonym of outstanding skills” (Luo, 2009: p. 3).

There have also been successes in cultural exchanges that have promoted friendly relations between the Chinese peacekeepers and local populations, which have further contributed to respect generated by Africans and Chinese serving abroad. Exchange activities with local students took place in December 2011, when students from the Young Students Development Committee of Bukavu and peacekeepers from the thirteenth Chinese peacekeeping detachment performed traditional dances and sang songs together as parts of cultural and art exchange. Both sides praised the mutual interaction as impressive, and a gesture to build relationships. An insight was gained into each other’s traditions and cultures, and the exchanges also showed that the peacekeepers make a difference in the countries or

areas where they are stationed. They are viewed by the local people not only as the “blue helmets”, but also as friends and partners in changing stereotypes and building a better future for all (Zhao & Li, 2012). Chinese peacekeepers in Darfur also strengthened the training on dialogue in foreign languages and psychological qualities that raised the troops’ language communication abilities. The construction of a primary school in South-Darfur by the engineering corps is a major boost for the image of the Chinese peacekeepers in the region. It shows the sincerity of the peacekeepers to not only complete required tasks, but also to make additional efforts to win the support of the Darfurians. These educational institutions will play an important role in promoting the local culture and social development (Yang, 2009: p. 4).

The next section on African views on Chinese peacekeepers is significant for two reasons. First, the moral obligations of soldiers to protect, serve and keep the peace as guided by the values described above is put into practice by eye-witness accounts of Africans. Second, the accounts are taken from a broad spectrum of citizens in post-conflict societies, highlights that the link between theory and practice is not coincidental and presents a glance on reality that enforces the credibility of the research under investigation.

African Views on Chinese Peacekeepers

The first country where a firsthand account of the African views on Chinese peacekeepers is presented, is Liberia. Chinese peacekeepers operate under the mandate of the UNMIL mission and according to a Liberian citizen¹, they are considered to be committed and professional in the task they perform. Besides the economic influence of China in Liberia, where strong foundations for trade and investments contributes to maintaining a sound relationship, peacekeeping troops are viewed as natural mediators of the peace. In the opinion of the interlocutor, Liberian’s view on humanist philosophies is to establish peaceful coexistence where security and equal justice benefits all the citizens. She remarked Chinese peacekeepers desire that common ground between all the parties to the peace be reached and that they make a generous effort in doing this. It is very important that China should maintain the mission’s mandate and have peacekeepers act as unbiased agents. Whether communitarianism can be promoted depends on whether the local population and the peacekeeping troops respect fundamental human rights, which will make it possible for the common good to be achieved. Interaction between Liberians and peacekeeping troops basically concerns their common humanity and the moral obligation to feel empathy at the sight of the sufferings of fellow human beings. This sense of empathy in turn can lead to a form of moral action that strongly reflects on the philosophies advocated by Confucius and *Ubuntu*. She does not feel that any group benefits more from the interaction, but only that the two groups have some kind of moral obligation towards one another and the simple fact that a moral system is forged through mutual interaction. For example, if the Chinese troops did not act out of moral obligations, how would Liberians perceive them? It would mean Liberians could not trust the troops and their presence would be one of only considering their own interest. Finally both parties are open to the idea to the fact that they are

¹Interview with Liberian national, Zambia, Lusaka, 10 July, 2012.

²Interview with Liberian national.

capable of love, friendship, solidarity, and tolerance².

The Western Sahara (MINURSO)

An official at the Sahrawian Sahraouian Embassy (Western Sahara) in Pretoria, South Africa, commented that Western Saharans basically ascribe to moral obligations proclaimed by Muslim philosophy (the Quran), but also accept the humanist character of *Ubuntu*³. What is important for citizens in Western Sahara is to be kind, honorable and humble to one's fellow human beings, keep one's promises, be honest and fair in one's interactions and not be arrogant in one's claims or beliefs. These are moral obligations and beliefs that are also shared by *Ubuntu*. Western Saharans attempt to live according to the Muslim moral obligations, and these values are maintained under the present peacekeeping conditions. The community, however, is difficult to unite because of the fighting and the unstable situation creates conditions for deviation from one's beliefs and a breakup of community values. This official perceives the Chinese peacekeepers as agents of good and those who are against their presence are elements of corruption and sin. The functions of peacekeepers are part and parcel of denoting development and improvement in the country and are seen as Godly acts worthy of praise and reward. The Chinese peacekeepers are praised for their hard work and dedication, and deserve to be called special keepers of the peace. The kindness and humbleness of Chinese peacekeepers stand out as distinctive attributes, while showing that African and Asian values on humanism share a common understanding. Nobody benefits more from the interaction as the qualities of honesty and fairness are promoted. This expresses the mutual interaction between the two groups⁴.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

Living a life that reveres the values of humanism and respecting African philosophical traditions is different in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) than in any of the other peacekeeping missions in Africa, according to remarks made by a Congolese businessman⁵. The situation in the Congo is in flux and the African philosophy of Pan-Africanism is probably the only humanist tradition Congolese understand. After so many years of fighting, there is one desire, and that is the unification of the country and the people living there. There is not much to speak of community values because the war torn families apart and it is difficult to restore faith and trust in broken communities. Survival, family integration and avoiding contact with the vicious and marauding rebel groups are characteristic of people's daily lives. Congolese citizens in general are happy about the presence of the peacekeepers and although the government wants to eject them, the locals see them as essential to keeping peace and bringing stability. The Congolese feel that no peacekeeping effort from anybody will succeed if the citizens of the host country do not want peace. Sentiments on Chinese peacekeeping troops are mixed. One segment of society welcomes the peacekeepers because they are supposedly separate the belligerents and provide the locals with humanitarian assistance. Congolese also believe that the "Chinese

will come and fix" not only their roads, but also the country and its people. Another segment of society see the Chinese peacekeeping troops as agents of the state that wants to exploit the country and its natural resources, as the huge business deal the PRC signed with the Kabila government indicates (Whewell, 2012). Interaction occurs in a less open and reciprocal way while rebels groups are threatening the village leaders and locals with reprisal if they are on too friendly terms with peacekeeping troops. Overall, the DRC is a country where the values of Confucius and *Ubuntu* are intertwined to a lesser degree because of the absence of humanist beliefs and the perilous environment⁶.

Darfur (UNAMID) and Sudan (UNMISS)

Due to Arab cultural influences in the north and African or Christian religion in the south, views on harmony and peaceful coexistence is as diverse as the 600 tribes found in the country. The tribes in Sudan technically are African, Afro-Arab or solely Arab and do not adhere to a single viewpoint on humanism. A Sudanese embassy official in Pretoria, however, agrees that the promotion of welfare and happiness can be spread as a single value in community-building and peacekeeping efforts. Speaking as a member of the Ja'alin, an Arab tribe, it is to be understood that he is biased in his opinions on the Christian or black south. He regularly receives reports from fellow Sudanese and observers on the intervention of peacekeeping troops and commented that they are judged by the same standard. In his view, no particular contingent is elevated above the rest as they all fall within the jurisdiction of the UN. However, this official commends the Chinese soldiers as worthy, dignified and respectful soldiers. On the other hand, Darfurians perceive Chinese soldiers as shielding Khartoum and here to protect their oil interests. In this light, it is understandable that Darfurians are antagonistic toward the Chinese presence. However, this attitude does not deviate from the official Sudanese government position that Chinese troops are welcomed in Darfur. One specific characteristic that discerns the Chinese troops from, for example, the Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis or Western forces, are their strong moral obligations to care about each other's material well-being, and promote the common good among each other. Interaction brings them closer into harmony, and cultural and social values are exchanged. Finally, there is not a single group that benefits more from the interaction as they view each other all as equals and see the soldiers as indispensable keepers of the peace⁷.

Meeting at the Nan Hua Temple in South Africa

The information a Chinese expatriate presented at the Nan Hua temple was essential in describing the Chinese point of view⁸. A moral code of conduct is necessary to guide the actions of peacekeepers in a humane and peaceful manner. He referred me to the words of a venerable master, Hsing Yun, who said: "*There is no greater peace than contentment. The best reward in life is peace, something that cannot be given to us by the Buddha or any God. We need to create the conditions and environment for peace within ourselves. The key to peace is contentment*" (A Visit to the Nan Hua Buddhist Temple in

³Interview with official at the Sahrawian, Sahraouian Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, 16 July 2012.

⁴Interview with official at the Sahrawian, Sahraouian Embassy, 2012.

⁵Interview with Congolese businessman in Johannesburg, South Africa, 18 July, 2012.

⁶Interview with Congolese businessman, 2012.

⁷Interview with official at the Embassy of Sudan, 2012.

⁸Meeting with Chinese scholar at Nan Hua Temple, Bronkhorstspuit, South Africa, July 27, 2012.

Bronkhorstspruit, 2012). He indicated that Chinese peacekeepers, which are trained at Langfang City, Hebei Province, are instructed to behave and act in a selfless manner, but do not act independently of the government's decision to send peacekeepers, and that the promotion of international prestige is the overriding motivational factor. The crimes committed by soldiers from other peacekeeping countries against the local populations, such as sexual abuse and the handling of narcotics, are inexcusable in comparison with the clean record Chinese troops have. Except for the situation in Darfur where they are accused of siding with the Sudanese government, they are heartily welcomed by the local populations in other mission areas. Chinese troops strictly focus on being messengers of the peace and allegations by the western media that Chinese troops act as intermediaries to further the economic agenda of the PRC in these countries, are unfounded, and are a deliberate attempt by western observers to discredit the good work of Chinese peacekeepers. Contrary to what western observers believe, human rights and humanitarian assistance are also important for the Chinese government and that interaction with the local population can assist them in achieving unity of purpose. This witness recalled how they once helped with road repair work in the Eastern Congo (MONUC mission), when the locals were so surprised to see Asians fix the road that the children ran away in disbelief. It was the first time these children came into contact with Asians and they had no idea how to face the peacekeepers. Afterwards, it was common for the locals and Chinese engineers to engage in collaborative efforts to repair infrastructure. Although language was a serious barrier in communication, interaction was mutually rewarding and led to the acceptance of the work being carried out by the engineering contingent.

The Chinese media in the context of PKOs, examples of theoretical considerations in practice and African views on Chinese peacekeeping troops have one aspect in common and that is an understanding of the collective impact on the community. The next section draws on the manner of investigation and presents the findings that is mutually rewarding for peacekeepers and the local populations.

Media Reporting and the Collective Impact on the Community

In analyzing the evidence of Chinese peacekeepers making positive contributions to societies in different African countries, China's interaction with local populations is beneficial in advancing its peaceful intentions and reaching consensus on a collective understanding of human rights. Mediating peace in post-conflict societies leads to an emancipation of thoughts, and improves communication and multiple-channel dialogues between members of communities and peacekeepers. The media promotes an engagement with African leaders that lays the foundation for a common discourse, and allows Chinese journalists to speak out freely about positive contributions. The emphasis on positive journalism that values social solidarity of the peacekeepers and the civilian population also reduces the tension between the parties in conflict areas. There is a parallel between positive and developmental journalism, both of which emphasize community-building, increasing mutual interaction, making the Chinese presence become greater, and more visible. The traditions of communitarianism emphasize the need to value social justice. A relationship between Chinese and African traditions of communitarianism in practice proves to exist if

the media plays a role in establishing confidence-building between Chinese peacekeepers and the local populations. In the first instance, the citizens have knowledge of the operational environment in which the peacekeepers are employed. They have the capacity to facilitate outreach by peacekeepers and foster trust among the wider population in post-conflict regions. Citizens also act as an important check on government excesses, and thus promote greater accountability while also representing a vital pillar to facilitate the task of building democratic structures in post-conflict societies (Lamprey, 2007).

Is the Chinese media really exercising influence and connecting different perspectives on communitarianism? Looking at China's eagerness to balance the international media in the coverage of the Chinese image, positive reporting is playing a role in harmonizing Confucianism and *Ubuntu*, especially in the light of Beijing's strategy of engagement in Africa (Li, 2012). The intention is to use the media to promote China's traditional philosophy of peace or peaceful co-existence. In this regard, PKOs are carried out in an environment in which the values and principles of both philosophies find expression. Using the media as instrument to exert political power will not serve China's peacekeeping goals, instead, power politics will create division in building trust, confidence and harmony. Although it is not always possible to pursue positive media reporting techniques, China succeeds in changing the environment to suit its peacekeeping objectives. A common inference is that Chinese peacekeepers do not want to become objects of criticism, firmly hold a belief in promoting peace, and desire to be viewed as flawless in the performance of their duties. From an African perspective, the common good between locals and the Chinese peacekeepers should not be subordinated to that of individual needs, or pursuing the common good of one's own accord, but to pursue collective achievements in order to promote the good of others. Confucius' moral teachings and *Ubuntu's* humane view of life can function as a unifying factor and assimilate cultural backgrounds (Lutz, 2011: p. 5).

The two traditions both conform to the notion that recognizing non-material goods, such as humanity and relationships over material wealth can bring peacekeepers and locals into a situation of harmonious co-existence. China's involvement in peacekeeping improves the image of peacekeeping operations as a whole. The legitimacy of peacekeeping missions in the eyes of local populations and political elites is crucial for mission success (Mariani, 2012). The Chinese peacekeepers have a modifying impact on the lives and livelihoods of the parties threatened by conflict, chaos and violence. Projects such as improving infrastructure, building schools and hospitals, or providing medical assistance are vital for addressing the immediate needs of local populations in fragile states that have come out of conflict, or remain affected by it (Mariani, 2012). Interaction in mission areas not only strengthens mutual interest and improves relationships, but also dispels stereotypes, misunderstanding and sheds light on the lack of awareness that Chinese and Africans are largely focused on identical moral philosophical backgrounds (Herman & Naidu, 2010).

Conclusion

The media is having a considerable influence on connecting the Chinese tradition of peace and harmony and the African philosophy of mutual respect in peacekeeping areas. As a result, portraying a positive image on the scale and intensity of PKOs

shapes the discourse of China's engagement in Africa. There is definitely a connection between the African and Chinese traditions of communitarianism. Both recognize their individual membership in the community, and that the community is a holistic entity. Social cohesiveness keeps the community together, and by carrying out familiar tasks, shared by all and belonging to the whole community, this produces public good and promotes reciprocal interaction. The media advertently shows that a connection exists focusing on the shared-morally significant history of philosophical association. Confucianism, which advocates a peaceful society and *Ubuntu*, which emphasizes harmony, reconciliation and love between individuals, draws the two traditions into a common bond. *Ubuntu* might offer an attractive understanding of the specific forms that populations in post-conflict societies can take to engage the Chinese peacekeepers, insofar as both groups act in accordance with a sense of belonging and have an obligation to engage in mutual aid. The peacekeepers and local populations should strive to realize the ideals, aspirations, embedded in past experiences of those communities, seeing their efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good. Confucianism also emphasizes mediation over litigation as a way of dealing with social conflicts, and in the peacekeeping environment, this serves as an important factor in restoring harmonious relations. As the cases in Liberia, the Western Sahara, the DRC and Sudan-Darfur show, there is a concentric effort by Chinese peacekeepers to mediate as peace brokers in different segments of civil society and that through careful planning and considerate actions, community efforts are conceived by local populations as fulfilling their promises. Positive reporting plays a role in shaping the image of China's peacekeeping troops, and those adverse connections in the peacekeeping environment are discussed by expressing simple qualities without comparison. Further empirical research can highlight the interconnectedness of the two philosophies. It is in this instance in which the media can be used as a communication channel in connecting the common boundaries of Confucianism and *Ubuntu*, and help to bring transparency in the perceptions of Africans toward Chinese peacekeepers.

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