

Defense Diplomacy Strategies through Peacekeeping Missions: A Comparison of China and Indonesia

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Abstrak

Diplomasi pertahanan telah memainkan peran penting bagi banyak negara, baik negara berkembang maupun negara maju, dalam mencapai kepentingan strategis melalui partisipasi dalam misi penjaga perdamaian di bawah mandat Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa. Sejak tahun 1948, Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa telah menginisiasi lebih dari 70 misi penjaga perdamaian di seluruh dunia, melibatkan lebih dari 1 juta personel dari lebih dari 120 negara. Partisipasi negara dalam misi ini dapat dilihat dari perspektif idealis, yang memandang keterlibatan negara sebagai komitmen terhadap perdamaian internasional, serta perspektif realistik, yang melihatnya sebagai upaya untuk mengejar kepentingan nasional, termasuk pertimbangan keamanan, ekonomi, dan pengakuan internasional. Artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana negara maju dan berkembang, China dan Indonesia, memanfaatkan keterlibatan militer mereka dalam misi penjaga perdamaian sebagai bagian dari strategi diplomasi pertahanan. Dengan membandingkan China dan Indonesia, artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perbedaan dalam pendekatan mereka dalam mencapai tujuan strategis, mempromosikan perdamaian global, dan memperkuat hubungan diplomatik baik di tingkat regional maupun internasional.

Kata Kunci: *Diplomasi Pertahanan; Misi Pemeliharaan Perdamaian; Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa; Indonesia; China*

Abstract

Defense diplomacy has been crucial for many countries, both developed and developing, in achieving their strategic interests through participation in peacekeeping missions under the United Nations' mandate. Since 1948, the UN has initiated over 70 peacekeeping missions worldwide, involving more than 1 million personnel from over 120 countries. The participation of countries in these missions can be viewed from an idealist perspective, which sees involvement as a commitment to international peace, and a realist perspective, which views it as a pursuit of national interests, including security, economic, and prestige considerations. This article analyzes how developed and developing countries, exemplified by China and Indonesia, use their military involvement in peacekeeping missions as part of their defense diplomacy strategies. By comparing China and Indonesia, the article aims to explore the differences in their approaches to achieving strategic objectives, promoting global peace, and strengthening diplomatic relations at both regional and international levels..

Keywords: *Defense Diplomacy; Peacekeeping Missions; United Nations; Indonesia; China*

Introduction

Defense diplomacy has been instrumental for many countries, both developed and developing, in achieving their strategic interests (Pedrason & Inkiriwang, 2021), particularly through participation in various peacekeeping missions abroad under the United Nations' mandate. Peacekeeping missions are a key way for the UN to support global peace and security (Bing, 2023). Since 1948, the UN has set up over 70 peacekeeping missions across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Over 1 million peacekeeping personnel from more than 120 countries have been involved, with over 3,500 have sacrificed their lives (Zenxi, 2018). At present, there are still 71,417 peacekeepers in 11 missions (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024a). These missions not only allow countries to engage with the host nation but also to interact with other Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) through their military units and personnel. United Nations Peacekeeping is crucial for helping countries move from conflict to peace. It offers unique advantages, such as legitimacy, shared responsibility, and the capability to deploy and maintain troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeeping forces to advance a multidimensional mandate (Better World Campaign, 2024).

There are two main perspectives on why countries contribute troops to peacekeeping missions: the idealist perspective and the realist perspective. The idealist perspective suggests that a country's involvement in peacekeeping is motivated by altruism and a commitment to maintaining international peace, even when the country has no direct interests in the situation. This participation is often inspired by adherence to international norms and values that encourage peace and cooperation. On the other hand, the realist perspective argues that countries participate in peacekeeping missions primarily to pursue their own national interests, where in this perspective national interests are not limited to hard issues such as military and security, but also include economic interests and state prestige. National interests can be seen as the battery that drives countries to participate in humanitarian action. Therefore, altruistic humanitarian actions, which provide assistance without considering national interests and without expecting reciprocity, are actions that are too idealistic for the state. This is because a state's national interests always take priority (Amani, 2019).

Moreover, there's also a viewpoint that contributions to peace could enhance a country's efforts to secure an elected seat on the United Nations Security Council. For some nations, this might be linked to their efforts to obtain a permanent seat on the Security Council, which could undergo reform. Overall, various countries view UN peacekeeping missions as a means to gain more respect and authority in international bodies, particularly the UN, thus giving them a larger voice on international security issues than they might naturally possess (Bellamy & Williams, 2012). The purpose of this article is to analyze how developed and developing countries utilize their military involvement in peacekeeping missions as part of their defense diplomacy strategies, and to explore the differences and similarities in their approaches. By using China, a developed nation, and Indonesia, a developing country, as examples, this article aims to compare and contrast how these countries integrate their peacekeeping engagements to achieve their strategic objectives, promote global peace, stability, and security, and strengthen their diplomatic relations at both regional and international levels.

Research Method

The research method to be used is a qualitative comparative approach with case studies. This study will compare the involvement of China as a developed country and Indonesia as a developing country in UN peacekeeping missions as part of their defense diplomacy

strategies. Data will be collected through secondary document analysis, including official UN reports, relevant government publications, as well as academic literature and news articles. Data analysis will involve comparing how China and Indonesia integrate their involvement in peacekeeping missions to achieve their strategic objectives, promote global peace, and strengthen their diplomatic relations at both regional and international levels. The main focus of the analysis will include differences and similarities in their approaches to defense diplomacy and the role of peacekeeping missions in achieving their national interests. The findings from this analysis are expected to provide clearer insights into how both countries leverage peacekeeping missions within the context of their defense diplomacy strategies.

Result and Discussion

China in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has been actively involved in UN peacekeeping missions. Over the past 20 years, China has deployed more than 50,000 peacekeepers to over 20 countries, fulfilling their mandates and upholding their mission of peace. China is committed to continuing its support, promotion, and participation in UN peacekeeping missions, aiming to make even greater contributions to maintaining international peace and security (Shuang, 2024). As of May 2024, China has contributed 1,735 individuals consisting of military personnel, police and civilians to these missions. China is the second largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget, with a contribution of around 15 percent of the total budget, while the United States contributes 28 percent (Arrey, 2023). It is also worth noting that while China ranks eighth in countries troop contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, its contributions are significantly larger than those of other permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC).


 Uniformed Personnel Contributing Countries by Ranking Experts on Mission, Formed Police Units, Individual Police, Staff Officer, and Troops As of: 31/05/2024						
Line Number	Rank	Country	Male	Female	Total	Report Date
1	1	Nepal	5393	684	6077	31/05/2024
2	2	Bangladesh	5480	471	5951	31/05/2024
3	3	Rwanda	5301	605	5906	31/05/2024
4	4	India	5319	136	5455	31/05/2024
5	5	Pakistan	2975	130	3105	31/05/2024
6	6	Ghana	2378	466	2844	31/05/2024
7	7	Indonesia	2560	180	2740	31/05/2024
8	8	China	1735	67	1802	31/05/2024
9	9	Morocco	1660	49	1709	31/05/2024
10	10	United Republic of Tanzania	1356	182	1538	31/05/2024

Figure 1. Top 10 Uniformed Personnel Contribution's Rank by Country in UN Peacekeeping Missions (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024b)

China has several reasons to cooperate with the United Nations. One of them is to increase its positive image. Chinese media and the government described the troop deployment as proof of the country's commitment to international cooperation. Additionally, involvement in the United Nations peacekeeping missions provides an opportunity for

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People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to gain operational experience abroad. To ensure their personnel fully benefit from this experience, China has set up two training centers (one near in Beijing and the other one in Hainan) to prepare them for duty at the United Nations peacekeeping missions (Lanteigne, 2018). Peacekeeping deployments provide the PLA with the opportunity to gather intelligence about other United Nations units and the countries where they are stationed (Duchatel et al., 2016).

China uses peacekeeping missions to protect its investments in Africa. A notable example is the deployment of over 1,100 PLA peacekeepers currently in South Sudan. China's significant presence in South Sudan is directly linked to the long-term investments by the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in South Sudan's oil sector. Since 2015, most of China's blue helmets in South Sudan have been stationed near strategic oil pipelines and deposits to ensure China can oversee its investments (Savkov, 2020). In addition to protecting investments in South Sudan, China uses its peacekeeping presence to prevent conflicts from spreading to neighboring countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia, which host several important Chinese investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in East Africa (Dyrentforth, 2021).

China uses peacekeeping missions as a way to gain a more influential role in the United Nations. They are interested in leading departments related to peacekeeping as part of their efforts to enhance their profile and influence within the United Nations. This is part of their strategy to demonstrate global leadership in the security domain. They aim to show that Western influence within this organization is declining while China's influence is growing. They also have a significant opportunity to present their views and ideas on international peace by providing substantial funding (Fung, 2023).

China's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions include integrating strategic communications into its training system, which has provided targeted training to peacekeepers from dozens of TCCs, helping them improve their communication capacity. Peacekeepers from China have provided free medical services and built infrastructure in missions in South Sudan, the DRC, and Lebanon, which has helped improve local communities' understanding and trust in UN peacekeeping missions, and maintain the positive image of blue helmets (Jun, 2022). China took the lead in establishing the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of UN Peacekeepers and held multiple thematic events on this topic, playing a positive role in enhancing peacekeepers' safety and security. Last year, China hosted the first Shared Vision international peacekeeping forum, inviting officials from major TCCs, financial contributors, and regional and international organizations to provide input on the reform and development of UN peacekeeping missions. China will continue to firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, actively participate in UN peacekeeping missions, and work with all parties to make greater contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security (Bing, 2023).

Indonesia in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

Indonesia as a developing country is committed to maintaining global order with the principles of freedom, eternal peace, and social justice. This is a message articulated in the fourth section of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This commitment continues to be upheld through Indonesia's active role in peacekeeping missions. Indonesia's military participation in these efforts also helps enhance the professionalism of individuals and organizations directly involved in international missions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2024). This is in line with Indonesia's Strategic Vision for international peace, which is based on the belief that when the world is plagued by prolonged

conflicts and wars, the responsibility of the international community is not only to prevent conflicts but also to resolve them (Dewan Redaksi Kemhan, 2014). As is known, Indonesia has a national goal to become a peacemaker. When involved in peacekeeping missions, Indonesian peacekeeping forces not only serve as peacekeepers but also engage in efforts to approach and negotiate with the local community to create conducive conditions in their operational areas (Syahputri, 2018).

Indonesia's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions began in 1957 by sending 559 personnel to the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Sinai. This was followed by sending 1,074 personnel in 1960 and later 3,457 personnel in 1962 to join the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in the Republic of Congo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2024). Currently, the number of Indonesian personnel serving in various United Nations peacekeeping missions as of May, 2024, is 2,560 military, police, and civilian personnel. Indonesia's largest deployment is with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), where peacekeeping forces continue to carry out the mission mandate in a highly challenging environment. Indonesia also deploys peacekeeping troops to several other missions, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (Hutomo, 2024).

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Figure 2. Top 10 Uniformed Personnel Contribution's Rank by Country in UN Peacekeeping Missions (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024b)

The reasons for Indonesia's participation in these missions include subsidizing part of the armed forces' salaries and allowing the armed forces to gain real-life combat experience. Participation in these missions is an excellent opportunity to connect and share experiences on the ground with other armed forces and to develop valuable networks. The armed forces play a key role in promoting democracy, building partner nations' capacities through military-to-military relations, personnel exchanges, and humanitarian assistance operations (et al., 2022).

The active involvement of Indonesia in United Nations peacekeeping missions not only has significant local impacts in the related countries but also substantially enhances Indonesia's diplomatic reputation on the international stage. Through defense diplomacy

efforts, Indonesia's participation in peacekeeping missions reaffirms their strong commitment to playing a proactive role in fostering global peace. This not only strengthens bilateral and multilateral ties between Indonesia and other nations but also expands their diplomatic network on a global scale (Arhanudya et al., 2023). If Indonesia participates in a United Nations peacekeeping mission, it will open opportunities to directly interact with the local community and contingents from other countries. By contributing to such missions and gaining approval from the host, Indonesia can build a strong network or multilateral relationships (Syahputri, 2018).

Furthermore, Indonesia's involvement in peacekeeping missions has strategic and economic advantages by promoting the growth of the national defense industry. Engaging in peacekeeping missions can be beneficial by promoting Indonesian-made military equipment, providing opportunities for Indonesia's strategic industries to market their military equipment. Although it has been used to introduce Indonesian-made weapons and military vehicles that meet international standards, this strategy has not yet fully yielded significant profits. From a more positive perspective, involvement in peacekeeping missions can be an effective way to gain international experience. It can be beneficial as a strategy to evaluate performance and enhance the quality of Indonesia's security forces through direct experience with other countries in the field (Amani, 2019). This participation also allows the Indonesian forces to enhance their skills and knowledge in various fields such as human resources management, logistics management, and efficient military tactics (Pradhana et al., 2023).

Comparison of Defense Diplomacy Strategies

China and Indonesia, despite having similar goals in participating in UN peacekeeping missions, adopt different approaches in their implementation and strategic objectives. Both countries use peacekeeping missions as part of their defense diplomacy strategies, but with different focuses. China and Indonesia have different motivations and goals in their involvement in peacekeeping missions. China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, uses peacekeeping missions as a means to enhance its positive image and expand its global influence. Through active participation, China aims to demonstrate global leadership and reduce Western influence in international organizations. They also leverage these missions to secure their strategic investments, as seen in South Sudan. Conversely, Indonesia participates in peacekeeping missions as part of its commitment to maintaining global order, following its constitutional principles and international strategic vision. This participation helps Indonesia enhance its diplomatic reputation, strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations, and support the development of its defense industry.

China is one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping budget and has a significant contribution in terms of personnel, although it is not at the top in terms of troop contributions. They have also invested in training and infrastructure to support these missions and are involved in various international security forums related to peacekeeping. On the other hand, Indonesia, although its budget contribution is smaller compared to China, ranks higher in terms of personnel contributions. Indonesia actively deploys personnel to various UN missions, with the largest deployments in Lebanon and involvement in the Central African Republic and Congo. Indonesia's contributions are more focused on enhancing the professionalism of its armed forces and expanding its diplomatic network through direct engagement with local communities and other countries.

The impact of China's involvement in peacekeeping missions includes strengthening China's position in the international arena and enhancing the security of its investments, especially in Africa. Their presence in South Sudan, for example, not only protects oil

investments but also prevents conflict from spreading to neighboring countries. Additionally, China seeks to showcase global leadership through funding and reform initiatives. Conversely, the impact of Indonesia's involvement is more apparent in the enhancement of its diplomatic reputation and domestic defense industry development. Indonesia's involvement also helps in expanding its diplomatic network and building good relationships with other countries, as well as improving the skills and knowledge of its armed forces through firsthand field experience.

Conclusion

The fundamental differences in China and Indonesia's approaches to peacekeeping missions highlight how each country leverages its involvement for defense diplomacy. China uses peacekeeping missions to enhance its positive image, expand its global influence, and protect strategic investments, particularly in Africa. Its significant participation allows China to demonstrate global leadership, reduce Western influence in international organizations, and safeguard its economic interests abroad. The integration of peacekeeping into China's broader strategic framework illustrates its intent to assert itself as a major global player while reinforcing its standing within the UN system. In contrast, Indonesia's participation in peacekeeping missions reflects its commitment to global order and adherence to constitutional principles. Through its active involvement, Indonesia enhances its diplomatic reputation, builds bilateral and multilateral relationships, and supports the development of its defense industry. The strategic benefits for Indonesia include expanding its diplomatic network and gaining valuable international experience, which contributes to improving its armed forces' capabilities. This engagement underscores Indonesia's role as a proactive contributor to global peace while advancing its national interests through direct interaction with other nations and local communities.

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