

# **Procházka, Jan: “The Role of China in the United Nations’ Peacekeeping Operations.” Bachelor thesis, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague 2015.**

## Opponent’s Report

The People’s Republic of China has since its entry into the United Nations gradually embraced UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) as an appropriate way to increase its global influence, despite its adherence to the principle of non-interference as the basic tenet of its foreign policy. The candidate seeks to investigate the rationale behind PRC’s growing involvement and the historical path towards it, basing his work primarily on past and present PRC policy papers. The thesis also briefly chronicles PRC’s contributions to UN missions in recent decades.

This topic strays quite far from traditional philologically and historically defined sinology; it must be said that the author makes no particular effort to bring it any closer, creating something of an extended summary of relevant Chinese official documents and commentaries on them by Western political scientists (mainly of Chinese descent). Most of the text is heavy on long quotations of a quite general nature (definitions of UNPKO, principles of Chinese foreign and defence policy etc.), which makes for a dull reading with little original content. It only gets better in the roughly 25 pages towards the end, which are more specific about the actual history of PRC participation in UNPKO.

Although the compilation is done on the whole competently, it appears quite sterile. With no original analysis of written sources to speak of, and historical narrative composed of simple statements of fact culled from the literature, there is a sense of a missed opportunity to derive some insight about the working of Chinese foreign policy. An image of a monolithic PRC rules throughout, with no mention of individual Chinese policymakers or even institutions. Everything is inferred simply from observed Chinese behaviour, without recourse to published record of internal deliberations within the leadership, for example.

The choice of English as thesis language leaves the author open to criticism that he simply copied large parts of his text from (acknowledged) sources. He uses official English translations of PRC documents, but also copies the entire Chinese original for each quoted passage, which is of little benefit apart from making the thesis look longer. The confrontation of both language versions would have been more fruitful if resulting in a glossary of key terms, which is sadly missing. The author’s own language is mostly correct and lucid, although the fact that he does not routinely write academic papers in English sometimes takes its toll.

In summary, I find the thesis rather unsatisfactory for a Bachelor degree in Sinology, given its lack of work with the sources and of an individual perspective. The demonstrated knowledge and its

contextualisation merits a 1st-2nd, relevance and conciseness 3rd, structure 1st, Chinese sources 3rd-F, language 2nd and overall impression 3rd. **The overall mark is a weak 2nd.**

The author should describe in the Q&A session how the Chinese political system works vis-à-vis the United Nations – which departments of the Government and which bodies within the Communist Party have a say over such involvement. Have there been any signs of disagreement because of institutional interests (for example the defence sector willing to participate to gain experience, the ideological sector opposed because of established principles of foreign policy)? Are there reasons to believe that China wants to play a more visible role in the future, including eg providing leading personnel for some UN agencies connected with UNPKO?

Prague 7 September 2015

Jiří Hudeček