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## **Wind of change? An institutionalist approach to China's evolving policy on peacekeeping operations**

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Master Thesis

**Wind of change? An institutionalist approach to China's evolving policy on  
peacekeeping operations**

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## Table of Contents

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>7</b>
POWER CONSTELLATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS .....	7
<i>China in International Institutions and Organisations</i> .....	9
CHINA IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS.....	10
<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>13</b>
DEFINITIONS.....	14
HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM.....	14
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>18</b>
OPERATIONALISATION .....	19
METHOD OF ANALYSIS .....	19
DATA AND CODING SCHEME .....	20
<b>ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>23</b>
PATH DEPENDENCE.....	23
CRITICAL JUNCTURE .....	25
POLICY CHANGE .....	28
SUMMARY .....	31
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>38</b>

## List of Abbreviations

China	People's Republic of China
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PKO(s)	Peacekeeping Operation(s)
P3	Permanent three: France, United Kingdom, United States
P5	Permanent five: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States
R&D	Research and development
SC	Security Council
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WB	World Bank

## Abstract

China's rise in political power over the last decades has been reflected by its growing international influence, e.g., in international organisations like the World Bank or the United Nations. Especially its role in the UN Security Council is of importance as China holds one of the permanent seats. One important agenda item of the SC is peacekeeping operations. China's peacekeeping policy has attracted significant scholarly attention. However, there is a theoretical gap as previous research has not yet focused on the influence of institutions on China, in particular its peacekeeping approach. This study aims to fill this gap by looking at how China's increase in political power affects its peacekeeping policy. In order to answer this question, this paper connects prior research findings with an analysis of UNSC meeting records on peacekeeping operations from 2000-2003 to explore China's evolving peacekeeping policy. The analysis provides mixed results: While there is clear evidence for a path dependence and the critical juncture, there is ambiguity regarding a change in China's peacekeeping policy after 2001.

Keywords: Peacekeeping Operations / China / United Nations / Shanghai Cooperation Organization

## Introduction

The People's Republic of China (China) has seen a significant rise in primarily economic and political power over the last decades. Especially its economic growth has been distinctively rapid, so that China transferred from being a low-income state to a high-income one and is now the second largest economic power worldwide (Kolodko, 2020; Ross, 2019). The fact that economically weaker states are dependent on China gives it additional dominance in the international playing field, especially since "military power and economic power are the two sources of hard power in international politics" (Ross, 2019, p. 305). China's evolution from a developing state to a major global player has been reflected as well in an increase of political power, as can be seen by its influence in international organisation, such as the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank, or International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Kolodko, 2020). Especially in the United Nations (UN), China has always had an important role, being one of the permanent five (P5) members of the Security Council (SC).

China's remarkable development has increasingly attracted scholarly attention and there has been a substantial amount of literature dedicated to China's approach to peacekeeping, especially from the 2000s onwards. So far, academia significant focus on analysing China's position on peacekeeping operations (PKOs) from the perspective of its foreign policy (Reilly & Gill, 2000), its self-identity (Fung, 2016; Gill & Huang, 2013), its strategies (Fang, Li, & Sun, 2018; Lei, 2011; Neethling, 2015), and its reaction to changing peacekeeping concepts (Stähle, 2008; Zürcher, 2020). Despite this being profoundly relevant, informative literature, these research foci have tended to overlook the importance of institutions. Since previous research has shown that China's position within these institutions has been changing (Huasheng, 2013; Lanteigne, 2005; Mazarr, Heath, & Cevallos, 2018; Qingjiang, 2014; Wang, 2000), this paper will fill a research gap through combining both fields

of research by analysing China's peacekeeping policy from a historical institutionalist perspective. This not only provides more insight into how China is influenced by the international institutional framework and how it is possibly adapting to them, especially regarding PKOs, but it also shifts the focus from Chinese strategies in peacekeeping to a more exogenous perspective. Subsequently, this paper approaches this topic from a combined incentive- and norm-based angle, rather than from a classical realist or liberalist viewpoint (Lowndes, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to uncover China's evolving peacekeeping policy using a qualitative content analysis of UN meeting records from 2000-2003 informed by historical institutionalism. Therefore, this study will fill a methodological gap, as so far, research on China and PKOs has only employed process-tracing (Fang et al., 2018; Fung, 2015; Liu, 2014; Neethling, 2015), in combination with primary sources such as interviews (Fung, 2015; Zürcher, 2020), voting records (Liu, 2014; Stähle, 2008), and surveys (Lei, 2011; Reilly & Gill, 2000). Absent from this however, is a historical institutionalist content analysis focusing on meeting records. The theory of historical institutionalism focuses on the plausible impact of temporal phenomena on the establishment and change of (in)formal institutions that govern political relations. Institutional changes in turn affect the relevant actors and their behaviour (Fioretos et al., 2016). Typically, according to historical institutionalism, institutions follow a path dependence, likely gets disrupted at some point by a critical juncture that consequentially induces a policy change.

One example that follows the predictions of historical institutionalism is Brexit. The United Kingdom (UK) has been one of the strongest powers in the European Union (EU) advocating and reliant on tight cooperation with the EU and the USA. This is why its exit displayed a significant change in its foreign policy. Especially regarding its economy and

national autonomy, the UK is now determined to become a leading world power on its own again (Arnorsson & Zoega, 2018). The moment Brexit happened can be considered a critical juncture with a subsequent change in UK's foreign policy. This is a reverse example of this paper's case study but nevertheless shows that the institutional environment a state is in has an impact on a state's policy.

The analysis of China's argumentation in the UNSC in the context of historical institutionalism connects to the previous research foci on China in international institutions and by that contributes academically to the current state of the art. In addition, this study's general academic relevance can be seen in the insight it provides into how a state's position on a certain topic gets affected by a changing institutional environment. Moreover, it is also politically relevant since China's rise in political power is worrying the current global leaders to different extents, as, looking from a more realist perspective, China's increase in power is threatening to restructure the current balance of power. Hence, uncovering China's possibly changing policy by analysing its argumentation, can further the understanding of China's motivations and its likely future behaviour and intentions not only in the UN, but also in other international organisations.

Therefore, this study aims to explain the puzzle of how China's peacekeeping policy changed during the years of 2000-2003 and what role its increase in political power played. This paper fills the demonstrated theoretical research gap by investigating the following research question: *How does China's increase in political power after the emergence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 affect its policy on peacekeeping operations?*

The thesis will be structured as follows. Firstly, a literature review will give an overview of the current state of art in presenting the relevant findings of other scholars. Next, the theoretical



framework will define the essential concepts and elaborate on the theory of historical institutionalism. Then, the methodology presents the case selection and research design, including the operationalisation of the relevant variables. This is followed by the main body, the content analysis of official UN meeting minutes on peacekeeping operations in order to detect patterns in China's argumentation. Lastly, the conclusion discusses the results – China's peacekeeping policy followed a path dependence until the emergence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) but did not clearly change afterwards – and shows possible avenues for further research.

## Literature Review

This section will present the current state of the art in the following research fields. Firstly, it looks at the more general debate of power constellations in international organisations in order to enable a clear positioning of China's role in them. Secondly, previous scholarly work on China in the UN and its position on PKOs will be presented to provide context for the following analysis.

### Power Constellations in International Organisations

So far, scholars in academia have discussed power constellations in International Organisations (IOs) with regards to the power of IOs themselves, power structures in IOs, as well as the concepts of (sovereign) equality, fairness, and inequality. First, it can be said that IOs hold great significance in international relations, as they "(1) classify the world, creating categories of actors and action; (2) fix meanings in the social world; and (3) articulate and diffuse new norms, principles, and actors around the globe" (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p. 710).

Moreover, the concept of power has been widely debated in the realm of political science. It is important to mention that power can take on different forms and thus expresses itself in different ways (Barnett & Duvall, 2005). Therefore, also the power that IOs themselves hold can vary due to different organizational environments (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Schifano, 2017). Moreover, IOs more generally are actors in their own right, as they do not always follow the purposes they were created for and thus pursue their own goals and agendas which in turn affects international affairs (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999).

The power dynamics between the states that constitute these organisations, however, are much more complex. First and foremost, the concepts of sovereignty and sovereign equality play an important role. It is assumed that state sovereignty automatically implies state equality (Grigorescu, 2015), even though international treaties impose different duties and rights on states and thus create diversity (Kelsen, 1944). The impact of this concept goes as far as that it is “deeply enshrined in international law” (Grigorescu, 2015, p. 50). Despite these assumptions, there are great levels of inequality between states within IOs, especially between the powerful Western states and less powerful, smaller states (Beckfield, 2003; Grigorescu, 2015; Viola, 2020). This can be seen in the special responsibility delegated to the more powerful states, e.g., in decision-making and voting procedures such as in the UNSC where the P5 members continue to have a veto right, despite several attempts of reforms (Grigorescu, 2015). Viola (2020) claims that the international system and its organisations are rather ‘closing’ than expanding, since there is such an inequality in the distribution of rights and resources to the detriment of less powerful states, which grows with the enlargement of organisations. This in turn creates an unequal allocation of power between the participating states of an IO.

While these authors have examined many essential factors determining power constellations in IOs, more can be done on states’ informal, soft power relations and how they are possibly enhanced by IOs.

## China in International Institutions and Organisations

Over the last decades, China emerged as an active player in the international field through the enhancement of its power in international institutions. Following eras of avoidance and caution towards international institutions, China has expanded and opened in order to form more bilateral and multilateral relations, also by joining international organisations (Lanteigne, 2005; Qingjiang, 2014). It has, therefore, changed its attitude toward multilateralism in so far as it has become part of its foreign policy. However, this is mostly a strategic decision and can thus be dependent on material conditions (Wang, 2000). Despite its increased engagement in the international arena, its support stays at times conditional or even selective with regard to specific areas like human rights, or with those institutions in which there is a visible US predominance (Mazarr et al., 2018). Especially in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN, China is particularly active (Hempson-Jones, 2005; Mazarr et al., 2018; Qingjiang, 2018). Regarding the UN, it is relevant that China holds one of the permanent seats on the SC and has thus the legal power of vetoing resolutions. Besides that, the selective support is also reflected in its actual cooperation and participation in these IOs. As long as the cooperation comes with little cost or high social incentives, China is willing to cooperate (Johnston & Evans, 1999). Nevertheless, overall, China is supporting and embracing the international, institutional frameworks and is using them to its advantage in terms of rebuilding its international image and benefitting its foreign policy (Mazarr et al., 2018; Qingjiang, 2017; Qingjiang, 2014; Wang, 2000).

One particularly relevant IO to China is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Since China has been the driving force behind the founding and continuation of the SCO, it is only an axiomatic assumption that it has a particularly strong interest in its own benefit. Hence, China is also the main contributor in political and economic terms which makes its participation

crucial. However, China does not aspire to lead or dominate the SCO, but rather wants to make it more beneficial to its strategies and aims through cooperation with the other members. Especially keeping the equality between small and large countries and coordinating their interests is important to China (Huasheng, 2013).

Overall, the current state of the art on China in IOs and institutions, including the SCO, has covered many important aspects. Nevertheless, it has overlooked how this institutional framework is influencing China with regards to specific, internationally relevant topics like PKOs.

### China in the United Nations and Peacekeeping Operations

Looking at China's role in the UN and its position towards peacekeeping, it becomes apparent that previous scholarly work has mainly focused on China's strategies and interests, its principles and self-identity, as well as possible future developments of China in the UN and peacekeeping context. With the restoration of its UN membership in 1971, China has experienced an increased integration into the international institutional framework and simultaneously also an increased interaction with other states in different forums (Liu, 2014). Generally, there is a consensus in academia that China's position has moved from passive and reluctant to active and supportive not only in the UN itself, but even more so with regards to peacekeeping missions (Liu, 2014; Neethling, 2015; Stähle, 2008; Zürcher, 2020). This has evolved to an extent that puts China now in the position as the main contributor of finances and troops for PKOs (Fang et al., 2018; Neethling, 2015; Sun, 2017). In addition, "China is uniquely positioned to represent the perspectives of both developing and developed countries in UN peacekeeping" (Fang et al., 2018, p. 464) which present a bridge between the two sides and an opportunity for more legitimate PKOs (Fang et al., 2018). China's development brings

benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand, China contributes significantly to the peacekeeping missions and by that facilitates the UN's peace and security efforts, as well as it gets integrated increasingly into the global community (Gill & Huang, 2013). On the other hand, not only is China at times still reluctant towards peacekeeping, but also do Western states treat China's growing power and influence with caution (Lei, 2011; Reilly & Gill, 2000).

Most scholars explain China's change in behaviour by referring to its strategies and interests, including its foreign policy. According to Liu (2014), China's UN policy reflects its general foreign policy orientation. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that firstly, China bases its decisions oftentimes on calculations of interests and secondly, that other scholars have found this to also be applicable to China's contributions to PKOs (Fang et al., 2018; Gill & Huang, 2013). This implies that through its participation in peacekeeping, China had, and still has, the opportunity to expand its economic and political influence on to other UN fields and organisations (Neethling, 2015). Scholars have described these strategies regarding the UN and peacekeeping in different terms, such as peace and development (Lei, 2011), "system-transforming and system-reforming to system-maintaining — and system-exploiting" (Liu, 2014, p. 6), or "purchase" to "investment" model (Sun, 2017).

Despite these strategies, it is important to mention that China continues to stick to its two main principles when it comes to PKOs: sovereignty and non-intervention (Fang et al., 2018; Liu, 2014; Neethling, 2015; Reilly & Gill, 2000; Stähle, 2008; Zürcher, 2020). Another relevant aspect has been China's objection towards PKOs in countries that recognise Taiwan. These principles are one explanatory factor of China's continued hesitation towards PKOs at times (Gill & Huang, 2013). At the same time, staying committed to these precepts appears to be increasingly difficult as China gets more and more involved in peacekeeping (Neethling, 2015), despite Reilly and Gill's (2000) observation that China has adopted a looser definition of sovereignty.

Self-identity is another factor that goes hand in hand with China's strategic approach to peacekeeping. As several scholars have highlighted, China's desire to be seen as a responsible, cooperative global power that actively supports the upholding of international peace and stability has subsequently also led to a more active role of China within PKOs itself (Fang et al., 2018; Fung, 2016; Gill & Huang, 2013; Liu, 2014). In addition, China's simultaneous position as a great power and developing power gives it the ability to be receptive to the demands from both parties (Fung, 2016). Especially from the side of developing states, China seeks "confirmation of its status as a responsible, major power" (Gill & Huang, 2013, p. 152).

While most research has focused on 'internal' Chinese factors explaining its change in behaviour in the UN and towards PKOs, there are claims that changing PKO concepts played a role as well. Over the years there have been reforms of UN peacekeeping which mostly widened the scope of PKOs and increased its complexity in several areas. These adaptations have led China to find more consensus with these missions and thus increased its participation in peacekeeping (Stähle, 2008; Zürcher, 2020).

Lastly, scholars have examined possible consequences and future developments of China's approach to peacekeeping. Generally, as China's influence in the UN grows, so will its impact on peacekeeping (Zürcher, 2020). Nevertheless, it is likely that China will remain cautious in its participation in PKOs despite its increased flexibility regarding the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention (Gill & Huang, 2013; Reilly & Gill, 2000). Regardless of this prediction, China's greater role in peacekeeping might bring advantages to the global community with it, as its contributions and participation strengthen the international security and peace efforts (Fung, 2016; Reilly & Gill, 2000). Additionally, China's constant exposure to the international institutional framework, especially its norms and values concerning human rights, will most likely affect China's foreign policy as well (Gill & Huang, 2013).

With regards to China's behaviour within the UN and especially towards peacekeeping, academia has for the most part approached it from an 'internal' Chinese angle, i.e., from its strategic and self-identity perspectives. However, the 'external' view on this topic, such as from an institutionalist angle, is also relevant and can provide further insights into China's policy changes.

In general, the current state of the art on power constellations in IOs, China in IOs, and China in the UN, including PKOs is quite elaborate. Nevertheless, it has also been apparent that there are still some research gaps within these fields, i.e., more can be done on states' informal, soft power relations and how they are influenced by IOs. Another aspect worth examining is how these institutional frameworks in IOs are influencing states like China regarding certain, internationally pressing, topics like peacekeeping. Since China – as a P5 member of the UNSC – has considerable influence, it is interesting to see under which circumstances its PKO policy might change. Since scholars before have not yet studied China's changing position within institutions and its effect on China's policy on peacekeeping, this paper will fill the apparent research gap by focusing on China's argumentation on PKOs within the UNSC from the angle of historical institutionalism. A historical institutionalist perspective gives more insight into China's behaviour from an external perspective rather than from an internal, strategic one.

## Theoretical Framework

In order to lay a solid theoretical foundation for the following analysis, this chapter will define the key terminology relevant to this study, as well as elaborate on the theory of historical institutionalism itself.

## Definitions

The concept of power is one of the most essential ones to the study of political science. Generally, it can be defined as “the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate” (Barnett & Duvall, 2005, p. 42). Following this definition, Barnett and Duvall (2005) distinguish between four types of power: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive power. Consequentially, China’s increase in political power can also be described in several ways, e.g., in terms of China’s economic and military power (mostly compulsory power) or its influence in international organisations (institutional power). Since this paper employs the theory of historical institutionalism, the definition of political power in terms of institutional power appears to be the most fitting. Barnett and Duvall (2005) describe institutional power as “the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction” (p. 43). This resembles Lai’s (2012) description of soft power which seems to be a more elaborate definition of institutional power: “soft power reflects a nation’s ability to handle international issues through non-violent means. This ability usually rests on the nation’s economic resources and technological and scientific capacity.” (p. 10). Hence, in the context of this study, political power will be defined as soft power, as it highlights all relevant aspects to China’s increase in political power.

## Historical Institutionalism

The theory chosen to conduct research on this thesis’ topic is historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism looks at the possible influence of temporal phenomena on the establishment and change of (in)formal institutions that govern political relations. A change in



the institutional environment can have a significant effect on the relevant actors and their behaviour (Fioretos et al., 2016). Such a change is most likely to happen at a critical juncture, which can be defined as “moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby creating a ‘branching point’ from which historical development moves onto a new path” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 942). Typical examples of critical junctures are the end of (cold) wars like 1918, 1945, or 1989 (Ikenberry, 2016). However, since the likelihood of such big turning points is rather low, there can also be smaller critical junctures, e.g., in the history of a state, that still lead to a substantial institutional change for the concerning state. According to Capoccia and Kelemen (2007), such a moment needs to fulfil the following five criteria in order to count as a critical juncture. Firstly, it is typically exogenous and secondly, it has a heightened contingency in the sense that the consequences of actors’ choices for the outcome of interest are likely crucial for the course of history. Thirdly, it is a relatively short period of time (“the duration of the juncture must be brief relative to the duration of the path-dependent process it instigates” (p. 348)) and fourthly, there is a “substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest” (p. 348) in comparison to the probability before and after a critical juncture. Lastly, the actors’ choices trigger future path dependence (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

Most of the time, because a critical juncture leads to an alteration in institutions, a policy change is very probable, as it opens institutional space for new manoeuvres. However, it is not a given that a policy change will happen after all. Fioretos et al. (2016) state that there are four ways an institutional change, which is highly likely connected to a policy change, can take place in. Firstly, when existing rules get replaced by new ones, it is called displacement. Secondly, layering happens when new rules get established on top of or alongside existing ones. Thirdly, a drift indicates that a shift in the environment is changing the impact of the

existing rules, while, fourthly, a conversion implies that there is a strategic redeployment of existing rules leading to a changed enactment (Fioretos et al., 2016).

Moreover, the concept of path dependence is closely connected to this, as it determines the institutional direction especially before, but also after a critical juncture. As Fioretos (2011) puts it, path dependence is “a process in which the structure that prevails after a specific moment in time (often a critical juncture) shapes the subsequent trajectory in ways that make alternative institutional designs substantially less likely to triumph, including those that would be more efficient according to a standard expected utility model” (p. 376). According to the logic of increasing returns to institutions, more states see the benefits of the existing international, institutional framework which, over time, has become more stable as it has been increasingly firmly established and hence, states return to these institutions rather than changing their path. Path dependence is thus marked by positive feedback on the ‘current’ institutional framework which leads to increasing returns to institutions and therefore reinforces path dependence (Ikenberry, 2016). Due to the prevalence of path dependence, the focus on the timing and sequence of political events is particularly relevant as it helps explain the point of institutional change and its further, possibly limited, development (Fioretos, 2011).

From an international perspective, historical institutionalism is a useful tool in the comparative analysis of a political actor’s behaviour before and after a specific and crucial moment in time, as institutions oftentimes play an important role in shaping the actor’s conduct by providing the normative and/or legal framework (Ikenberry, 2016). Furthermore, compared to other forms of institutionalism, the historical one fits this study best, as it neither lays the focus solely on strategic aspects like rational choice institutionalism does, nor on a purely normative perspective like normative institutionalism. Much more, the historical version combines incentive- and norm-based explanations to show how institutions affect international players (Lowndes, 2018). That is the reason why this theory is most suitable for the purpose of

this research, which will examine how China's argumentation on peacekeeping operations in the UNSC differed before and after co-founding the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001. China's entry into the SCO can be seen as a significant point in time with regards to China's rise in political power, as it possibly marks a turning point in China's international positioning. Even more so, because China was not just joining the SCO but was one of the five states founding it and hence, actively making the decision to pursue international relations with other countries on the political, economic and security level.

Therefore, by approaching the research question from a historical institutionalist perspective, it can be assumed that the institutional framework before and after that point of time changed for China, as it got more integrated into the international community and thus as well into the global net of institutions. This in turn is likely to have influenced China's policy on diverse internationally relevant, political topics, including peacekeeping. Building on that, the analysis of China's argumentation regarding PKOs is an insightful technique to truly determine whether a changing institutional context has resulted in an alteration of China's policy on – in this case – an internationally sensitive topic like PKOs and thus fits the chosen theory of historical institutionalism which predicts a policy change after a critical juncture.

From these elaborations, three hypotheses can be derived. Firstly, due to the prevalence of path dependence and an increased return to institutions, it is anticipated that a state will stick with its established policy even though there might be other options available (H1). Secondly, and most importantly, it is expected that when a state is joining an international organisation, this will act as a critical juncture, and thus it will change the state's attitude towards certain topics because of the new international institutional frameworks it is influenced by (H2). Building on that, the third hypothesis states that the institutional alteration after a critical juncture will lead to a policy change of the state concerned (H3).

## Research Design

In this section, the research design of China as a single case study, together with the method of analysis in form of a content analysis will be presented. In addition, there will be some elaboration on the choice of data and the resulting coding scheme.

The topic of this paper will be examined using a single case study of China. This is an extreme case (Gerring, 2008), since China experienced a particularly fast rise in political power during the last decades. By having the fastest economic growth rate worldwide, China managed to go from a low-income country to a high-income country within just forty years (Kolodko, 2020; Liu, 2014). This economic surge is also reflected in China's increase in political power, as it takes on a bigger role and exerts increasing influence in international organisations, such as the WB and IMF (Kolodko, 2020; Ross, 2019). Similarly, China also has considerable power in the UNSC because of its status as a permanent member. In becoming a leading global power, China's behaviour within the UNSC has changed as well, specifically with regard to its policy on PKOs. Due to China's distinctive journey, it is suitable for the purpose of this study as an unusual, extreme case, showing off the possibility of policy change within a changing institutional environment. However, due to China displaying a particular rareness, the representativeness of this case and thus its comparability with other cases can be limited (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Although the external validity of this research might be low because it is a single case study, it is still valuable as it enables a particularly detailed analysis that in turn creates high internal validity (Halperin & Heath, 2017). In addition, a single case study is useful to test a theory, especially with regard to unusual cases like the one in this paper.

## Operationalisation

China's increase in political power will be operationalised in terms of its soft power, as defined in the theoretical framework. This will be measured as its annual percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) growth and its annual research and development (R&D) spending in percentage of the GDP. The relevant data is taken from the World Bank. This quantitative measurement of soft power adds another kind of data to the analysis and thus creates a triangulation which in turn leads to a higher internal validity and reduces bias. Moreover, China's policy on peacekeeping operations will be operationalised as China's argumentation on PKOs in UNSC meetings before and after the creation of the SCO and will thus be analysed using a content analysis.

## Method of Analysis

This study constructs a longitudinal design with the focus on historical processes. The method used to conduct the research is a directed, qualitative content analysis, as it uses deductive coding derived from historical institutionalism and case-specific characteristics. By first determining categories and then assigning fitting keywords, it is made possible to analyse the documents in the context of historical institutionalism. Moreover, since it is a conceptual content analysis, it is a thematic analysis of latent content. The recording unit will be text segments, i.e., sentences and paragraphs. The program used for the analysis is 'MAXQDA 2022'. Even though content analysis is particularly transparent due to the coding scheme and tendentially reduces bias through, in this case, deductive coding, it can also be reductive regarding the data analysis and subjective in terms of data interpretation (Halperin & Heath, 2017). Nevertheless, this type of analysis fits the study best as it enables the discovery of

China's possibly changing peacekeeping policy by analysing its argumentative strategy before and after joining the SCO in 2001. This point in time marks a decisive moment in the institutional path of China and thus potentially predicts a policy change afterwards. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, China's co-founding of and leading role in the SCO can be considered as particularly relevant, because it marks the time that China actively decided to join and make use of international institutions. This can also be seen by its joining of the WTO later that same year. Moreover, since a qualitative content analysis enables a detailed analysis of argumentative strategies by looking and interpreting the words one uses in a given context, this is most suitable in order to detect patterns in China's peacekeeping policy.

### Data and Coding Scheme

The data for this research is primary sources in the form of official documents from the UN Digital Library, more specifically they are meeting minutes from the UNSC on PKOs from 2000 until 2003. This timeframe has been chosen because it includes the year 2000 before the critical juncture in 2001, as well as two years after the critical juncture so that a possible policy change can be detected. Moreover, since the critical juncture happened in June 2001, the year of 2002 has also been included in the analysis for critical juncture indications. Due to the limited scope of this paper, the timeframe is kept rather short to enable a thorough analysis of the abundance of documents. In order to find and include all relevant documents in the search, the following search bar content and filters have been used: in the search bar it said subjectheading:[PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS]. For the filter 'collections' the option 'all collections', for 'resource type' the option 'Meeting Records', for 'UN Body' the option 'Security Council', and for the 'date' the applicable years were chosen. In addition, to avoid bias, no particular PKOs have been selected for this analysis but those documents in which,

first of all, China spoke out about PKOs, and secondly, in which the later-found codes were actually relating to their peacekeeping policy. Moreover, SCO documents have been selected to determine whether the SCO's creation was a critical juncture. Additionally, WB data on China's GDP growth and R&D spending, as well as secondary literature on China in the UN and its relation to PKOs will be used.

The following table (Table 1) shows the coding scheme developed for the content analysis of China's argumentation in the UNSC on PKOs. The coding scheme's categories have been derived from the theory of historical institutionalism. Subsequently, the first category is *path dependence* – in this case it relates to China's PKO policy path before 2001. The second category is *critical juncture*. To test whether the SCO does qualify as a critical juncture, the aforesaid criteria by Capoccia & Kelemen (2007) will be applied. The third category *policy change* can take place in four different ways, as mentioned above. The accompanying keywords for the categories of path dependence and policy change have been derived from the theory of historical institutionalism combined with the characteristics of China's peacekeeping policy and the expected changes in it. The indicators for the critical juncture have been taken mainly with regards to possible external changes influencing the creation of the SCO, as all other criteria can be determined without a content-analysis.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description/Codes</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
Path dependence	Increased returns to institutions, positive feedback → reinforces China's policy path	continue, continuation, long, held, hold, position, remain, maintain, always, consistent(ly), support, embrace, peace, peaceful, provide, development, develop, contribute(r), sovereignty, territorial integrity, commit(ment), involve(ment)
Critical juncture	X Typically exogenous Heightened contingency X Relatively short periods of time X Substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest X Actors' choices trigger future path dependence	time moment, crucial response, trend, emerging, launch, new, multipolar
Policy change	<i>Displacement</i> (existing rules get replaced by new ones) <i>Layering</i> (new rules on top of existing ones) <i>Drift</i> (shift in environment → changed impact of existing rules) <i>Conversion</i> (strategic redeployment of existing rules → changed enactment)	change, new, start, ready, recently, will(ing), increase(d), increasing, future, more, addition(al), greater, enhance, active

Table 1. Coding Scheme.



## Analysis and Discussion

The ensuing analysis explores the three individual categories of historical institutionalism as applied to the content analysis on China.

### Path Dependence

In order to determine whether a path dependence can be found in China's peacekeeping policy, the policy itself must be defined. According to official documents published by the Chinese government, China has always supported PKOs ever since its first troop contribution in 1990 (Information Office, 2011, 2020; Xinhua News Agency, 2016a, 2017, 2019). In addition, China claims it stood and still stands behind the PKO principles, especially the ones of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as peace and (peaceful) development (Jiang & Qingyum, 2015; Xinhua News Agency, 2017, 2020). Moreover, China increased its contributions over the years and is now the second-largest financial contributor and the largest contributor of troops (Information Office 2011, 2013, 2020; Jiang & Qingyum, 2015; Xinhua News Agency, 2016a, 2016b, 2017).

The first part of the analysis looks at the category of path dependence in the years of 2000 and 2001. Since the anticipated critical juncture happened mid-2001, it is not expected that a possible policy change can be observed in the same year. Therefore, the year 2001 was analysed for indicators of path dependence. In total, out of the 15193 codes in 71 documents, 65 codes from 41 documents were related to China's peacekeeping policy. The word used most by China that indicates a certain path dependence was 'support', as it can be seen in the following exemplary quotes: "The Chinese delegation supports the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in their work" (S/PV.4154, 2000); "China supports the work of UNTAET and is ready to continue to

contribute civilian police and experts.” (S/PV.4165, 2000); and “The Chinese delegation supports the efforts made by international security personnel to maintain peace and stability in the areas concerned” (S/PV.4100, 2000).

Accordingly, there has thus been found evidence of the existence of path dependence in China’s peacekeeping policy as indicators for path dependence were found that are in line with all major aspects of China’s peacekeeping policy. Firstly, it is obvious that China has always supported PKOs as it has been shown above and in a statement such as: “We have always supported effective measures to overcome the problems faced by peacekeeping operations and to improve and strengthen the capacity of United Nations peacekeeping so as to enable the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security more actively and effectively.” (S/PV. 4220, 2000).

Secondly, its defence of the principles of peace and development, as well as sovereignty and territorial integrity can be seen in the following examples: “Peace and development are the two themes of our time” (S/PV.4272, 2001); “it is necessary in international relations to strictly abide by the basic principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity” (S/PV.4334, 2001); and “the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be fully respected and safeguarded” (S/PV.4271, 2001). These findings also confirm what previous scholars have found regarding the importance China places on sovereignty and non-intervention in its approach to PKOs (Fang et al., 2018; Liu, 2014; Neethling, 2015; Reilly & Gill, 2000; Stähle, 2008; Zürcher, 2020).

Thirdly, its active contribution of troops and finances can be proven by these statements: “Besides the personnel that China has already contributed or is going to contribute to relevant peacekeeping operations, the Chinese Government is right now working with the Secretariat on details of China contributing logistic contingents to peacekeeping operations” (S/PV.4288, 2001); and “We would like to join the international community in making

contributions within our capacities to the peace and development of East Timor” (S/PV.4351, 2001).

These findings support the assumption that in the years preceding the Chinese co-founding of the SCO, a path dependence has been established in the Chinese policy towards PKOs. Subsequently, the phenomenon of increasing returns to institutions can also be applied to China’s peacekeeping policies. The analysis’ results show that China’s already established peacekeeping policy path must have worked well enough so that China decided to stick with it and thus return to the existing institutional framework. This also confirms the hypothesis (H1) that due to the prevalence of path dependence and an increased return to institutions, it is anticipated that a state will stick with its established policy even though there might be other options available, e.g., a limited or more selective participation in PKOs. Overall, these results confirm the assumption that due to the nature of path dependence, China stuck with its peacekeeping policy throughout the years before the anticipated critical juncture.

### Critical Juncture

This section intends to determine whether the creation of the SCO verifies as a critical juncture, according to the four criteria by Capoccia and Kelemen (2007). Firstly, the creation of the SCO took a short amount of time compared to especially the path dependent-marked time before in which there was no overarching predominantly-Asian organization for cooperation on the economic, political and security level. Secondly, it had a heightened probability that the actors’ decision to create the SCO not only affected their own outcome of interest, but also had a heightened contingency as it marked a crucial point in time for (mostly) Asian countries’ cooperation. Moreover, this in turn triggered a certain future path dependence due to the fact that the concerning states are still regarding the institutional framework of the organization in

terms of cooperation as more beneficial and efficient than another path. Lastly, the content analysis of SCO documents proved that the SCO creation was also influenced by “structural, antecedent conditions” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 342).

In the category critical juncture there were a total of 75 codes in 14 documents in the timespan of 2001 until 2003 of which 20 codes in five documents were relating to the SCO’s founding in reaction to external circumstances. The word that appeared most in that context was ‘new’, as the following quotes show: ““upgrading the Shanghai Five” mechanism to a higher level of cooperation will help in making more effective use of emerging possibilities and addressing new challenges and threats” (SCO, 2001); “the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization signals the launch of the new stage in the development of cooperation among the member states and is in keeping with the trends of the modern era” (SCO, 2001); and “promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order” (SCO, 2002a).

The following examples show that the external circumstances in terms of globalisation, multipolarity, and a consequential alteration in political, economic, and security systems had an impact on the SCO’s establishment: “Convinced that the further development of cooperation and close interaction within the framework of the Shanghai Five on the basis of friendship and good-neighbourliness is in keeping with the basic interests of the peoples of the five countries and with current trends towards the establishment of a multipolar world and the creation of a new, just and rational international political and economic order” (UNGA, 2000); “The Ministers believe that the development of economic cooperation among the five States is not only a necessary response on their part to the situation that is evolving as a result of economic globalization” (UNGA, 2000); “Unanimously believing that the establishment and development of the Shanghai Five was in line with the needs of mankind and the historic trend towards peace and development in the conditions prevailing after the end of the cold war”

(SCO, 2001); and “The course of events in the world demonstrates that the decision to establish the Organization adopted on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai, was timely and in line with major trends of regional and world developments.” (SCO, 2003).

Furthermore, China also mentioned the establishment of the SCO in 2001 in the Security Council:

Recently leaders of China, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan held a successful meeting in Shanghai. They established a Shanghai organization which represents a new model for regional cooperation characterized by joint initiatives on the part of both large and small States, by making security the top priority, and by mutual benefit and synergy. The Shanghai spirit thus fostered stresses inter-State trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for pluralism in civilization and common development. This is also an important initiative in the area of establishing regional conflict-prevention mechanisms to fight terrorism, separatism and extremism, which are detrimental to regional security. (S/PV.4334, 2001).

This displays the importance China itself places on the founding of this organization and China’s desire to show its willingness to cooperate and embrace important values like equality and respect. In addition, China has actively claimed its determination to uphold international peace and stability: “China shall continue actively to support United Nations peacekeeping operations, to the extent allowed by its own capacity, in order to contribute to maintaining lasting peace and security” (S/PV.4818, 2003) which confirms its desire to be seen as a responsible, cooperative global power that supports the upholding of international peace and stability (Fang et al., 2018; Fung, 2016; Gill & Huang, 2013; Liu, 2014).

Taken together, the findings show that the second hypothesis (H2) – which states that it is expected that when a state is joining an IO, this will act as a critical juncture, and thus it

will change the state's attitude towards certain topics because of the new international institutional frameworks it is influenced by – can partly be confirmed according to the results of the content analysis and the criteria of a critical juncture. The findings so far only allow a confirmation of the first part of this hypothesis in that a state's joining of an IO acts as a critical juncture. This also shows that critical junctures can differ significantly in their graveness and impact on the institutional framework. As Ikenberry (2016) states, not only will rising states like China be faced with an already firmly established institutional framework with all its “constraints, opportunities, incentives, and legacies from the past” (p. 550), but also it is not guaranteed that those states “will be given the sort of critical juncture that past rising states have had and used to great effect” (p. 550). Subsequently, it does not have to be the end of a war for an institutional change to happen, but a state joining an IO can indeed be considered a critical juncture as well.

## Policy Change

Lastly, in the category policy change, UNSC meeting records on PKOs in the timeframe of 2002 until 2003 were examined. In total, out of 8748 codes in 44 documents, only 26 codes in 17 documents were related to China's change in peacekeeping policy. China's most used word in this category was ‘will’, as it can be seen in the following statements: “China will support the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and will support the United Nations in its peacekeeping efforts. We will continue to make our contribution towards that goal.” (S/PV.4705, 2003); “China will continue to provide assistance to the extent of its capabilities” (S/PV.4744, 2003); and “China appreciates the Mission's achievements and will continue to support its work” (S/PV.4646, 2002). Since these findings appear to be rather vague implications of a Chinese policy change on PKOs and could also be interpreted as indicators

of path dependence, since they all contain the word ‘continue’, the question of whether a policy change can be detected comes down to the definition of such a change. In the context of this study, China’s policy change is anticipated to take place in form of a more active role and enhanced contribution to PKOs, rather than a complete turn in policy which is unlikely.

This kind of policy change can be detected in the following instances: “The Chinese Government also decided recently to raise the level of China’s participation in standby arrangements for United Nations peacekeeping operations” (S/PV.4460, 2002); “In the future, the Chinese Government will continue to strengthen its consistent cooperation with Central African countries, support the United Nations in strengthening its cooperation and coordination and make further efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in the region.” (S/PV.4630, 2002); and “This means that China will take a more active part in peacekeeping operations in Africa” (S/PV.4460, 2002). Documents of the Chinese government confirm the enhanced participation, as China joined the UN Standby Arrangement System in 2002 and contributed additional engineer, medical, and transport unit(s) to the PKOs in Congo and Liberia in 2003 (2020). Additionally, this move from passive to active in terms of increasing the contribution of troops and finances has as well been described by previous scholars (Fang et al., 2018; Neethling, 2015; Sun, 2017).

These findings show that it is debatable whether a policy’s reinforcement can be considered a full policy change or not. Consequentially, this makes it difficult to judge whether and to what extent a peacekeeping policy change took place. One explanation for these results is, building on the argument of path dependence, that China’s peacekeeping policy worked too well and was thus more beneficial to keep than to initiate a major change. Furthermore, there are different types of policy change. The ones most fitting in this context are layering, i.e., new rules are placed on top of existing ones, and a drift which means that a shift in environment changes the impact of the existing rules (Fioretos et al., 2016). As China has experienced an

increased integration into the international institutional framework through its co-foundation of the SCO, there has been an environmental shift that caused the existing rules to not have been abandoned but added on to with new ones that in turn led to a differentiated impact of the existing rules.

Overall, thus, the second part of the second hypothesis (H2), expecting that when a state joins an IO, this will act as a critical juncture, and thus it will change the state's attitude towards certain topics because of the new international institutional frameworks it is influenced by, can only partly be confirmed. The same applies to the third hypothesis (H3) that assumed that the institutional alteration after a critical juncture will lead to a policy change of the concerning state. Due to the question of whether China's increased participation in and contribution to PKOs can be considered an actual policy change or not, there is not conclusive evidence for the two hypotheses to be proven right.

Connecting these results to the question of how the increase in political power affected this policy change, it can be said that not only China's annual GDP growth increased significantly from 8.5% in the year 2000 to 10% in 2003, but also its annual R&D spending in percentage of the GDP rose from 0.89% in 2000 to 1.12% in 2003. Since a state's soft power, as aforesaid, "rests on the nation's economic resources and technological and scientific capacity" (Lai, 2012, p. 10), these increases imply a growth in China's soft power which, in the context of this paper, means its political power has risen as well. Taken together, it can be said that China's rise in political power went hand in hand with its co-foundation of the SCO and its subsequent, positive alteration in peacekeeping policy. In addition, one could assume that its GDP growth indicated that China had more money available to give to PKOs and thus is in line with its increased contributions to peacekeeping in form of funds.



## Summary

The analysis of China's argumentation in the UNSC on PKOs has provided several results. First of all, there were sufficient evidential remarks on behalf of the Chinese delegation to the UNSC that confirmed a path dependence in its peacekeeping policy. This was visible by China's statements in the UNSC on PKOs where it reiterated its support for PKOs in general, as well as its importance for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, peace, and (peaceful) development. Subsequently, this confirms the first hypothesis of path dependence (H1). Moreover, it could be proven that the creation of the SCO was a critical juncture, because it fulfilled all necessary criteria. Particularly, the aspect that it was influenced by exogenous factors could be confirmed by the analysis of SCO documents which in turn confirmed the expectation that a state's joining of an IO acts as a critical juncture (H2).

The proof for a policy change, however, is debatable, depending on the definition of policy change itself. China did increase its contribution in finances and troops after 2001 and became a more active player in PKOs. This does not present a complete change from support to opposition in peacekeeping policy but rather a positive strengthening of its position which can be viewed as some sort of policy alteration. Consequentially, hypothesis 2 and 3 cannot be decidedly confirmed. Nevertheless, it can be quite surely assumed that China's co-founding of the SCO in 2001 did play an important role for its institutional environment and hence influenced its peacekeeping approach.

Regarding the role China's increase in political power played, it should be mentioned that the focus lies on China's rise in institutional power which has been operationalised as its soft power, measured through its annual GDP growth and annual R&D spending. According to the given definition of soft power, it can be said that China's increase in political power did align with its co-founding of the SCO and peacekeeping approach.

## Conclusion

This study aimed at giving more insight into how a state's position on a certain topic gets affected by a changing institutional environment by examining the case of how China's peacekeeping policy changed during the years of 2000-2003 and what role its increase in power played. Drawing from the theory of historical institutionalism, three categories were determined: path dependence, critical juncture, and policy change. Based on a qualitative content analysis examining UNSC meeting records on China's statements on PKOs, as well as SCO documents, China's evolving peacekeeping policy was analysed in terms of the three historical institutionalist categories, before and after co-founding the SCO in 2001. As the results have demonstrated, China has generally and continuously been supportive of peacekeeping missions. The analysis provided sufficient support for the existence of a path dependence (H1), as well as that the SCO can be considered a critical juncture (H2). However, there was no conclusive evidence on a clear policy change in China's peacekeeping approach (H2+H3). Therefore, it can be said that China's increase in political power after the emergence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 affected its peacekeeping policy by taking on a more active role in PKOs and raising its financial and troop contributions.

The research design of a single case study and the methodology used, have proven to be generally suitable for this type of analysis, as it not only provided the opportunity for a detailed analysis, but also because a content analysis helps detect the underlying motivations and thus can give more insight into China's position on PKOs. Moreover, the theory of historical institutionalism presented a new viewpoint on the topic of research.

Nevertheless, there are some limitations to this research. Firstly, the timeframe was, given the scope of this study, relatively short. By extending the timespan, future research might be able to find more conclusive evidence as to whether a policy change can be found. Secondly,

a case study tends to have very low external validity, especially in this context where China is treated as an extreme, unusual case. Therefore, one should treat the results of this research with caution, as they might not be generalisable. However, at the same time this presents an avenue for further research in terms of testing these results on a different case, e.g., on the WTO that is not as Asian- and China-centred, in order to determine if especially this study's theoretical frame is replicable. Lastly, one might examine the effect of these results on UNSC decision-making, since China plays a significant role in the SC.

Overall, this paper has contributed to the existing academic literature, as it not only connected previous research foci by combining the research fields of power constellations in IOs, and China's role in the UN and PKOs, but also by simultaneously shedding more light on China's peacekeeping policy and behaviour in the international, institutional framework which might help further the understanding of China's motivations and possible future behaviour which is especially relevant for current global leaders.

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## Appendix

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