

# CHAPTER 1

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## International Responsibility and China's Foreign Policy

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In the early 1990s, then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping laid out a guideline for Chinese foreign policy, “Keep a low profile, do something”( *tao guang yang hui, you suo zuo wei*). Since then, for more than a decade, Chinese foreign policy generally followed the “Keep a low profile mantra” concentrating on creating a favorable external environment for economic development at home. Although it is difficult to say that Chinese foreign policy has undergone a sea change, it is safe to say that, “Do something” is becoming a more important part of Chinese foreign policy. Being the fourth largest economy, the third largest trading power and possessing the largest foreign currency reserves, China's decision to do or not to do something in the international area not only concerns the Chinese people, but also countries around the world. Under these conditions, a discourse on international responsibility has emerged in foreign policy debates inside and outside of China. Scholarly works have accumulated<sup>1</sup> and government leaders and diplomats frequently use this concept in their policy documents and speeches<sup>2</sup>. To the author, this new discourse on international responsibility reflects an important shifting trend in China's foreign policy. Therefore, efforts to understand the genesis and implications of this discourse and practice are much warranted. To serve this purpose, this article intends to clarify

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<sup>1</sup> Xia Liping, “China: a Responsible Great Power,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10, No. 26, pp. 17-26; Yongjin Zhang and Greg Austin, eds., *Power and Responsibility in Chinese Foreign Policy* (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2001); Chan, Gerald, “Is China a Responsible State?,” Cheng, Joseph Y.S. ed., *China's Challenges in the Twenty-First Century* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2003), pp. 218-245; Liu Feitao, “Quanli, Zeren yu Daguo Rentong [Power, Responsibility and Great Power Identity],” *Taipingyang Xuebao [Pacific Journal]*, No. 12, 2004, pp. 25-32; and Li Baojun and Xu Zheng-yuan, “Lengzhanhou Zhongguo Fuzeren Daguo Shenfen de Goujian [China's Self-identity Construction as a Responsible Power in the Post-cold War Era],” *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu [Teaching and Research]*, No. 1, 2006, pp. 49-56.

<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?,” September 21, 2005, <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/Sep/22-290478.html>; and European Commission, “EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities,” October 24, 2006, Communication from the Commission & the European Parliament, [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/china/docs/06-10-24\\_final\\_com.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/china/docs/06-10-24_final_com.pdf). Chinese president Hu Jintao and premier Wen Jiabao also proclaimed that China is a responsible state. See, <http://www.china-embassy.org/chn/zmgx/t211962.htm>, and [http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/14/content\\_4303953.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2006-03/14/content_4303953.htm).

the concept of international responsibility in China's foreign policy doctrine and practices, to identify the driving forces behind it, and discuss the challenges it poses to the conduct of Chinese foreign policy in the coming years.

## **International Responsibility: The Concept and Its Implications**

### *The Concept of International Responsibility*

The notion of international responsibility stems from the fact that states live in an international society where their sovereign status is recognized by other members of the international society and their behaviors are bounded by the rules established by the states themselves. As sovereign entities, states have a primary responsibility for managing their own affairs in order to meet the demands of their people. However, as members of the international society, states also bear responsibilities to other actors beyond their borders and people.

The concept of international responsibility is not always clearly defined. For Adam Watson, "responsibility implies accountability for one's actions, for their consequences."<sup>3</sup> Accountability or answerability is just one aspect of responsibility. Both in the Chinese and English languages, responsibility could refer to two different meanings; responsibility as an obligation one should fulfill, and responsibility as accountability for the consequences of a person's actions or inaction. Therefore, responsibility could be understood in two directions; a rear-facing sense of responsibility and a forward-facing sense of responsibility. The former refers to such concepts as accountability, answerability and liability, while the latter corresponds to obligation, duty and tasks to be accomplished.<sup>4</sup> Following that logic, international responsibility could imply the international obligations of one state, and its accountability for the consequences of its actions and inactions to other actors and peoples beyond its border.

International responsibility as obligation has legal, political and moral roots. States are units within an international society. Through history, states have developed a

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Watson, *The Limits of Independence: Relations Between States in the Modern World* (London & NY: Routledge, 1997), p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Cane, *Responsibility in Law and Morality* (Oxford and Portland: Hart Publishing, 2002), p. 31.

legal order which governs the behaviors of states in bilateral and multilateral dealings. These international legal norms define the legal obligations of states, demanding that states do what laws expect them to do, and not do what laws forbid them to do. States also have political obligations internationally. As international laws are generally regarded as soft laws, the political choices of states to abide by the laws and to use their discretionary power under the general legal norms or in cases where such legal norms are totally absent is of great importance to the interests of other states and peoples. Jackson terms this discretion-based responsibility as political or prudential responsibility as against the legally-based procedural responsibility.<sup>5</sup> International political responsibility requires states to avoid the possible adverse consequences of any contemplated decision, policy or action in the circumstances of time and place in which it must be taken. Finally, legal and political responsibilities are partly shaped by states' moral responsibility.

### *Categorizing China's International Responsibilities*

Four sets of international responsibilities can be identified for the state of China according to its status in the international society: The internal responsibilities of China as a large developing state; the legal responsibilities of China as a normal sovereign state; the additional responsibilities of China as a great power; and the special responsibilities of China as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

As the largest developing country in the world, China's primary responsibility lies at home; that is, to develop the country for the welfare of 1.3 billion Chinese people. Improving the welfare of the Chinese people is not only the primary responsibility of Chinese state domestically, but also has tremendous international implications. As China possesses one-fifth of the world's population, the rapid enhancement of the welfare of the Chinese population and a reduction in the population of the impoverished would be China's critical contribution to the world agenda of development and poverty reduction. This would also work to diminish the risk of mass emigration that brings with it instability, a dangerous spillover effect of a Chinese economic

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<sup>5</sup> Robert H. Jackson, "Surrogate Sovereignty? Great Power Responsibility and 'Failed States'," *Working Paper*, No. 25, Institute of International Relations, The University of British Columbia, November 1998.

collapse. Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's reform policy, generally conceived of China's international responsibility in this way.<sup>6</sup> This view is still alive and well, and as Ambassador Wu Jianmin recently argued, China's first responsibility is to do well for itself.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, like any sovereign state in international society, China has to fulfill its legal responsibilities and abide by the treaty obligations to which China has committed itself. In Lucas's view, responsibility could be seen from a negative or positive angle.<sup>8</sup> Following this logic, these two dimensions can be observed in a country's honoring of its commitments to other contracting parties. Positive responsibility refers to the fulfillment of one's commitments, while negative responsibility refers to states bearing responsibility for their misconduct. As one of 192 sovereign states in today's international society, China is a contractual party to numerous international treaties and agreements. As China entered more and more multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements, and China's treaty compliance becomes increasingly important for the maintenance of the global and regional legal order, China is highly expected to honor its treaty obligations.

Thirdly, great powers bear additional international responsibilities. While contractual responsibility must be carried out by every sovereign state, China has additional responsibilities in international society due to its important position in the power structure of today's international society. Hedley Bull once argued that great powers should contribute to the international order in two main ways: by managing their relations with one another; and by exploiting their preponderance in such a way as to impart a degree of central direction to the affairs of international society as a whole. Regarding the latter responsibility, great powers have to try to avoid being responsible for conspicuously disorderly acts themselves, and to seek to satisfy some of the demands for just change being expressed in the world, like economic justice, racial justice, etc. For Bull, "A great power cannot ignore these demands, or adopt

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<sup>6</sup> In Deng's view, China's economic development itself, if achieved, will be the "true contribution to humankind." See Deng Xiaoping, "Shehuizhuyi Bixu Baituo Pingqiong [Socialism must Get Rid of Poverty]," April 26, 1978, *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping]*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1993), p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> Wu Jianmin, "Zhongguo shi yige Fuzeren de Guojia [China is a Responsible State]," *Renmin Ribao [People's Daily]*, overseas edition, March 22, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> J. R. Lucas, *Responsibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 54.

a contrary position in the way that lesser powers can do; its freedom of maneuver is circumscribed by 'responsibility'.<sup>9</sup>

As one of the leading political and economic powers, China's domestic and external policy will inevitably impact other nations. Such external impact could be the result of an intentionally designed policy or as unintended consequences. Therefore, every other nation will surely expect that China can make its domestic and foreign policies in a prudent way and take external impacts into consideration. They will also expect that China's domestic and foreign policy could produce positive impacts on their countries, not negative ones.

Furthermore, China is obliged to undertake special responsibilities as one of five veto-bearing permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Charter of the United Nations provides that, "in order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."<sup>10</sup> During the Cold War, due to rivalry between the east and west blocs, the Security Council was paralyzed by the internal split among veto-bearing members. With the end of the Cold War, the Security Council started to function as the founding fathers of the United Nations had envisaged. China holds a special position in the international society, along with other four countries, and thus is bestowed with special responsibilities in maintaining peace and development in the world.

### *China's Responsibility Diplomacy*

The foreign policy of the People's Republic of China always has a responsibility dimension, albeit with vastly differing content over the past half century. During the first three decades, international responsibility was highly ideologically driven, and China devoted a fairly large part of its resources in supporting revolutionary movements and developing states. Beginning with the reform and opening policy, China adopted a much more pragmatic foreign policy, and significantly reduced its

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<sup>9</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: a Study of Order in World Politics*, third edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 199-222.

<sup>10</sup> Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations.

foreign assistance programs in terms of financial, material and human resources. The responsibility aspect of China's foreign policy was reframed to focus primarily on domestic development, and the cultivating of cooperative relationships with major economic partners, mostly the western and neighboring countries. While China was still very sympathetic towards developing countries, China's support for them was mostly in diplomatic form, calling for the building of a new international political and economic order.

With this pragmatic approach, China is able to fulfill its first and foremost international responsibility through developing its economy and improving its people's welfare. Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government has rightly put economic and social development on top of the government agenda. With gradual but effective reform and opening policies, China has achieved the best economic growth performance in the world over the last three decades. China's GDP rose from 147.3 billion US dollars of 1978 to 2.2 trillion US dollars of 2005, GDP per capita rose accordingly from about 300 US dollars to 1,700 US dollars, population in the countryside living in poverty reduced dramatically from 250 million to about 23 million during the same period.

In terms of contractual responsibility, by the end of 2004, China was party to 267 multilateral treaties or treaty-like agreements. While the total number of China's bilateral treaties and treaty-like agreements is still unavailable, in 2005 alone, China signed 370 bilateral treaties or treaty-like agreements.<sup>11</sup> The massive accumulation of the international treaties in which China participated reflects China's major efforts to integrate itself with the international society, and as a result, China has increasingly put itself under contractual obligations to other parties. In terms of participation in international organizations, based on the *Yearbook of International Organizations 2002-2003*, a group of Chinese scholars have calculated that China has joined 40 out of 67 total world-wide intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), with a participation rate of 61.19%, ranking 26th globally. China's participation rate is only behind India, Brazil and Egypt among developing countries, and in total number, the United States

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<sup>11</sup> Figures from the website of the Department of Treaty and Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/chn/wjb/zzjg/tyfls/default.htm>.

participates in only five more world-wide IGOs than China.<sup>12</sup> Johnston's earlier study also indicated that China had dramatically increased its participation rate from almost zero in the mid-1990s to a level of over-involvement in international organizations for its level of development.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the compliance dimension, Johnston also argued that, "in sum, on a number of international normative questions, China appears to be conforming more with an extant international community, such as it is, than it has in the past."<sup>14</sup>

In terms of China's great power responsibility, China has stabilized relations with major powers, and has made considerable contributions to international development and stability. China has managed to develop a candid, cooperative and constructive relationship with the United States out of various difficulties, ranging from Taiwan, the trade deficit, power rivalry and human rights. China has a closer relationship with its northern neighbor, Russia, with whom China shares a thousands of miles long border. China-EU relationship has become a global strategic partnership, with the EU as China's biggest trade partner and China as the EU's second largest trade partner. The two sides have also developed strong commitments to explore possible cooperation in global affairs. China's relationship with Japan experienced difficulties during the Koizumi years, but since Mr. Abe came to power, bilateral relations have been steadily improving after Prime Minister Abe's ice-breaking and Premier Wen Jiabao's ice-melting visits to each other's capitals.

Apart from this, China has been displaying a strong willingness to design its domestic and foreign policies in a way which could reduce the negative impacts on other countries and bring benefits to them. China started to embrace the concept of being a "responsible state" from the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, when China decided

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<sup>12</sup> World-wide IGOs include three out of four categories of intergovernmental organizations: federations of international organizations; universal membership organizations; intercontinental membership organizations; and regionally defined membership organizations. See Li Shenming and Wang Yizhou, eds., *Quanqiu Zhengzhi yu Anquan Baogao 2007 [Annual Report on Global Politics and Security, 2007]* (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Johnston's assumption here is that more resource-constrained states with fewer linkages to the global economy should be less involved in international institutions as well. High levels of development are associated with high levels of interdependence, hence a high demand for institutions that can regulate these interactions. See Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2003, pp. 5-56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

not to devalue its currency in the context of the region-wide currency collapse in East Asia, and furthermore, to lend emergency loans to crisis-hit countries. In the 2003 SARS outbreak within and out of China, after initial cover-up attempts, China adopted a more transparent approach, with full cooperation with the World Health Organization and neighboring countries to combat the spread of SARS.

Not only developing a strong awareness of prudence in the design and execution of policies to avoid unnecessary negative impacts on other countries, China also worked to contribute to international development and stability with proactive policies. In 2006 alone, in addition to normal bilateral exchange visits at the state leader level, China hosted three major multilateral summit diplomacy events, the June Shanghai Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the October Nanning ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit and the November Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, with participation from heads of state or government from 67 foreign countries. Through these institutional platforms, China has worked with partners to promote peace and prosperity in foreign regions both near and far such as Africa, by improving mutual trust and confidence, providing market access, encouraging investment and offering development aid.

China has also become an active player in the UN Security Council. The Chinese government has been acting enthusiastically in the Six-Party Talks over North Korean nuclear issues, and in order to induce a diplomatic solution, China joined the international community in 2006 to impose limited sanctions on North Korea, its close and long-time ally. In September 2006, China pledged to increase its peacekeeping force in Lebanon to 1000 soldiers, the biggest contingent China has ever sent abroad. Foreign observers do not lose sight of these new developments of China's foreign policy. As commented by Kenneth Lieberthal, a leading China expert at the University of Michigan, "China is thinking in much more active terms about its strategy, not only regionally, but globally, than it has done in the past. We have seen a sea change in China's fundamental level of confidence."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted from Michael Elliott, "China Takes On The World," *Time*, January 11, 2007.

## Four Driving forces

There are at least four major factors which are driving China to take more international responsibilities; three from within, and one from external.

### *The Extension of China's Interest*

To a large extent, states undertake international responsibilities out of their own interests. That is why the great powers who have the widest interests have always been the biggest providers of international responsibilities in the past. As China's economy grows increasing global, China's interests are also extending to every corner of the world. This is a brand new phase in China's foreign policy. In the past, China's main trading partners were the western countries and neighboring countries, so China's foreign policy was mainly aiming to create a peaceful international environment for China's development, to stabilize its relations with the above-mentioned countries. While China's traditional economic ties with these countries were further strengthened, China's economic cooperation with Africa, Latin America and the Middle East also increased dramatically. For example, China's two-way trade with Africa over the past six years increased four times, from 10.8 billion US dollars to 55.5 billion US dollars in 2006; China's two-way trade with Latin America also increased four times, from 14.9 billion to 70.2 billion. It can be seen on the table below that over the last six years, China's trade with Africa and Latin America registered the fastest growth compared with its other major trading partners. As a result, the percentage of Africa and Latin America in China's total trade rose from 2.1%, 2.9% to 3.1% and 4.0% respectively in the same period.

**China's Trade Growth Rate with Major Regions, 2001-2006** (unit:%)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Average	7.5	21.8	37.2	35.7	23.2	23.8
Africa	1.9	14.7	49.7	58.9	34.9	39.6
Latin America	18.6	19.3	50.4	49.3	26.1	39.1
Asia	5.3	25.2	36.5	34.2	21.5	21.5
North America	8.0	19.7	29.7	35.8	24.7	23.9
Europe	13.2	15.4	43.3	33.9	24.7	23.9
Oceania	5.9	17.0	31.1	47.9	31.4	20.8

Source: Website of Ministry of Commerce, China.

One of the major driving forces behind the explosive trade expansion is China's sudden increase in imports of oil and other raw materials from Africa and Latin America. Therefore, Africa and Latin America are now not only economically important for China in terms of trade volumes but also in terms of particular trading items.

Politically, as China aims to assume a greater international role, it has put multilateral diplomacy at the top of its diplomatic agenda. While China's foreign policy agenda expands from issues of national unification, protecting its political independence and resisting foreign interference in its domestic affairs to broader issues such as the reform of the United Nations, the WTO and the IMF, promoting common security, cultural diversity and dealing with climate change while safeguarding the rights of development of China and other developing countries, China found more common ground with other developing countries. On maintaining and expanding a liberal trade system, combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, China also sees growing common interests with the developed world.

As China's interests extend globally, China has a growing interest in the stability and prosperity in every region of the world, and develops a vested interest in all the mechanisms which could help maintain the world and regional peace and development. For its own interests, China has to undertake more international responsibilities than in the past.

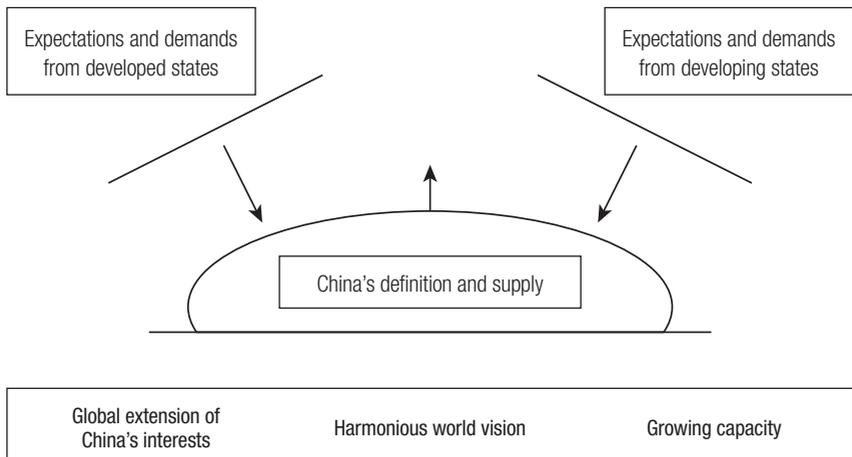
### *The New "Harmonious World" View*

Since late 2003, Chinese leaders and scholars have been searching for key concepts to present new foreign strategies. The concept of "peaceful rise" was firstly picked up by the leadership and think tanks. However, after several months, the Chinese government removed this concept from its official documents due to confusion caused by the word of "rise" among foreign audiences. For a year, "peaceful development," the concept derived from Deng Xiaoping's previous speeches, replaced the "peaceful rise" to articulate Chinese foreign policy.

Apparently, this concept did not grasp the central tasks and objectives which China's foreign policy needed to pursue under new circumstances. It is true that China will continue to mainly focus on domestic development, and will endeavor to achieve this development in a peaceful environment with the aim to contribute to a peaceful world.

However, with China's growing capacity and influence, and the growing anxiety about China's rise around the world, China is strongly expected to demonstrate its vision for the world and how it will use its newly gained power and influence to work towards that international order. In a sense, China needs a foreign strategy which can answer these questions. Such a foreign strategy should not just be China-centered, but should be a global vision. It should not only focus on the process of China's peaceful rise, but should also elaborate on China's vision for the world and steps China will take to realize it. As a result, this strategy cannot be a passive or reactive one merely aiming to defuse the "China threat" school, but a proactive one, which can combine Chinese national ambition with a global vision that is attractive to many other countries.

In that regard, the new "harmonious world" thought, firstly put forward by Hu Jintao at a 2005 UN special summit meeting, poised to become China's new foreign policy strategy. This new thinking calls for China to undertake a more proactive foreign policy to build a harmonious world where states can be equal and have mutual trust, common security can be achieved, win-win cooperation leads to common prosperity and diversity of civilizations can be maintained. While the broad objectives of this new strategy may sound romantic to some critics, China's "harmonious world" strategy has already demonstrated that it is both a declarative as well as an operational policy. In short, over the last two years, China's foreign policy has become much more proactive and internationalist, which strongly inspired China to undertake greater international responsibility.



### *The Accumulation of China's Capacity*

While China feels the need to take on more international responsibilities, its capacity to do so has also increased. In terms of per capita GDP, China ranked 128th in the world in 2005, at 1,700 US dollars. However, if we look at China's aggregate figures, China has become a top economic power in the world. In 2006, China's GDP reached 21.94 trillion RMB (about 2.68 trillion US dollars), an increase of 10.7% over the previous year, ranking below only the European Union, the United States and Japan. China's national revenue reached 3.93 trillion RMB (about 503.2 billion US dollars), with a year-on-year increase of 20%. China's import and export volume totaled US 1.76 trillion dollars, a year-on-year increase of 23.8%, which ranked China below only the European Union and the US. At the end of 2006, China had the world's largest foreign exchange reserves, with 1.066 trillion US dollars, up from 212.2 billion dollars at the end of 2001. Furthermore, having been the biggest foreign direct investment recipient developing country for over a decade, China now is becoming an important source of outward direct investment, with annual ODI rising from 5.5 billion US dollars in 2004 to 16 billion in 2006. Consequently, China now offers a substantial market for developing countries, and has become a new source of FDI and development aid for them.

Even in the military field, China's contribution has been growing rapidly. As China's defense budget expands, standing at 44.5 billion US dollars in 2007, China is also able to contribute more to the peacekeeping budget of the United Nations. China now contributes about 2% of the total annual PKO budget, ranking 9th globally and is the biggest contributor among the developing countries.<sup>16</sup> As of November 2006, China has dispatched a total of 6,808 military personnel including police officers in UN-led PKOs, and has 1,665 personnel on duty in 11 out of 18 ongoing UN-led PKOs. This ranks China as the biggest troop contributor among the P-5 in UN-led PKOs.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Rise of External Expectations*

China's assumption of more international responsibilities is also a result of growing international demands and expectations. Clearly, in recent years, international society has substantially raised its expectation and demands of China's international

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<sup>16</sup> Figures from website of the United Nations, <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko>.

<sup>17</sup> State Council Information Office, *China's National Defense 2006*.

responsibilities, though the external expectations and demands are not always identical, with obvious difference from the developed and developing countries.

Among the developed countries, the United States implemented the “responsible stakeholder” concept into its China policy from mid-2005. The then Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Robert B. Zoellick, first used that concept during a policy speech. In his view, China is big, growing, and will influence the world in the years ahead. For the United States and the world, the essential question is – “how will China use its influence?” To answer that question, “it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system; We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system.”<sup>18</sup> The concept conveys a message that the United States believes that China is now basically a member of the western-dominated international system, and it is time that China takes its responsibilities to safeguard this international system in which China also has its huge stakes. In October 2006, the European Commission also issued its latest China policy paper, titled “EU-China: Closer Cooperation and Growing Responsibilities,” which demanded that China undertake more responsibilities in EU-China bilateral relations and in global affairs. But with a closer strategic partnership, mutual responsibilities increase. The partnership should meet both sides’ interests and the EU and China need to work together as they assume more active and responsible international roles, supporting and contributing to a strong and effective multilateral system. The goal should be a situation where China and the EU can bring their respective strengths to bear to offer joint solutions to global problems.<sup>19</sup> The shifting focus of developed countries in their China policy indicates an enhanced level of recognition of China’s importance in today’s world. Meanwhile, developed countries also intend to make use of China’s growing power and influence to strengthen the existing international system, and expect China be a supporter rather than a challenger of the existing system. Therefore, they demand that China should further open its market, better protect intellectual property rights, more strongly support western countries’ policies toward the so-called “rogue states” and their humanitarian intervention policy, and support their global efforts to promote human rights and good governance.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, *op. cit.*, October 24, 2006.

On the other hand, the developing countries expect or demand China to play a positive role in their interests. Bilaterally, many developing countries see China as their development partner, hoping that China will offer them new opportunities to achieve social and economic development. They expect China to open its domestic market, provide economic assistance and expand direct investment. For many developing countries, expanding economic relations with China provide better hope for their economic and social development, and the aid from China does not come with stringent political conditionalities as the West has done since the end of the Cold War. As an editorial in *African Business* proclaimed, “sovereign African countries are fed up of being told that they cannot govern themselves unless an outside power keeps them in check by using aid as a carrot and stick device.” China is welcomed because China comes as an equal who would like to engage in mutually beneficial trade.” Therefore, China “certainly is a country that Africa needs to engage with more closely.”<sup>20</sup> Multilaterally, many developing countries also expect China to safeguard the principle of sovereign equality, to promote multilateralism and democracy in international relations, to give a bigger role to the UN Assembly where developing countries occupy a majority, to increase the representation of developing countries in the UN Security Council, and to promote a more balanced global economy to enable all countries to share its benefits and realize common development and prosperity.

In the context of these developments, China's diplomacy is much active than before. China's mediation of North Korea's nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks, and China's diplomatic campaign to forge closer relations with African countries through the recent China-Africa forum, are all indications of this new diplomacy.

## **Issues Raised by Responsibility Diplomacy**

A more responsibility-oriented diplomacy also poses multiple challenges to China's foreign policy. Whether China can manage these challenges is central to lasting responsibility diplomacy in the coming years.

### ***Responsibility and Interests***

From a realist point of view, international responsibility and national interests rarely

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<sup>20</sup> Anver Versi, “China Is Good for Africa,” *African Business*, March 2007, p. 11.

go in tandem with each other. As states tend to seek maximization of their national interests, altruistic policy most often does not serve their national interests, and thus is not welcomed. However, if we take a more enlightened view of international relations, which is particularly valid in this era of globalization, states increasingly have more interests in common. Even if we still invoke the concept of national interests, it can be seen that national interests are comprised of individual or private interests, which is exclusive to one state and not to be shared by other states, and collective or shared interests. One state's pursuit of such shared interests could automatically bring benefits to other states. Therefore, a state could act according to its own national interest, yet at the same time, undertake some of its international responsibility.

Nevertheless, states still possess their own individual interests. The pursuit of such interests would not benefit other states, and may even be detrimental to the interests of other states. Therefore, states may not undertake some international responsibilities if doing so is against their core national interests. For the European Union, because of the political importance of maintaining the Common Agriculture Policy, the EU has been reluctant to substantially reduce its domestic agricultural subsidies, and rendered the so-called "Doha Round" multilateral trade negotiation a stalemate. China's attitude since 1990 towards UN-led peacekeeping operations has become quite active, seeing such activities indispensable to the maintenance of regional stability. However, China has strongly opposed a UN presence in countries that have ties with Taiwan, which China views as a renegade province. To defend its core interest of national unity, China used its veto to terminate UN missions in Guatemala in 1997 and Macedonia in 1999 because of those two countries' ties with Taiwan. Macedonia ended up switching diplomatic relations to Beijing while Guatemala remains a Taiwan ally.

While always regrettable, states' choice of their core individual national interests over international responsibility is not unusual. Even an internationalist like Tony Blair, in his unveiling speech of the so-called Blair Doctrine for humanitarian intervention, specified the involvement of national interests as one of the five major considerations for deciding when and whether to intervene.<sup>21</sup> In other words, states mainly undertake

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<sup>21</sup> The Blair Doctrine, April 22, 1999, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/jan-june99/blair\\_doctrine4-23.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/international/jan-june99/blair_doctrine4-23.html).

international responsibility out of their own interests, not their selfish interests, but shared interests. When international responsibility runs into conflict with the core national interests, states may shy away from undertaking those responsibilities. Therefore, the tension between responsibility and national interests is ever present.

Recognizing this internal tension should not lead to the conclusion that states, like China, would not be able to assume more and greater international obligations. If a state defines its national interests more in line with the common interests of other nations and the international society, committing it to expand the scope of such common interests, it should increasingly see undertaking more international responsibility as in its own interests. That seems to be the current case for China. The newly developed “harmonious world” view and the discourse about peaceful development or even peaceful rise all aim to redefine China’s national interests in that fashion, and is inducive for China to embrace more international obligations.

### *Responsibility vs. Principles*

Along the road to assuming a greater international role, China must also confront its traditional principle of conducting international relations. As a longtime champion of equal sovereignty, non-interference of internal affairs and peaceful resolution of conflicts, China has been very cautious in keeping itself from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, and from endorsing the use of coercive power to solve inter-state and intra-state conflicts. However, in today’s world, if a country aims to take on a large role, it inevitably will be invited or demanded to take actions to influence internal development in a country when a humanitarian crisis breaks out, such as in the case of the ongoing Darfur crisis. As one of permanent members of the Security Council, China has no excuse to shy away from its special responsibility as stated in the UN Charter.

What can be seen in the practice and doctrine of Chinese foreign policy indicates that China’s responsibility diplomacy has pushed China to make some subtle adjustments in these principles.

Firstly, China endorsed the general concept of responsibility to protect, though under strict conditions, during the 2005 world summit. The results of the world summit, which China also supported, specifies that while the primary responsibility

to protect the population rests on the country concerned, international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, to help to “protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” Should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations, the international community is prepared to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner through the Security Council, in accordance with the UN Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, as the Chinese position paper states, China puts strong emphasis on the prudence in judging a government’s ability and will to protect its citizens, as internal unrest in a country is often caused by complex factors. China also insists that, in responding to those humanitarian crises, the Security Council should take peaceful means “as far as possible.” In the case of enforcement actions, there should be more prudence in the consideration of each case. China’s active private diplomacy to persuade the Sudanese government to solve the Darfur crisis is an indication of this subtle change, and can open room for further Chinese proactive diplomacy in similar humanitarian situations.

Secondly, China’s attitude towards the use of peacekeeping forces has experienced radical changes over the past decade. China generally opposes the use of military means to solve international conflicts and intra-state conflicts. In exceptional cases, China insists on the centrality of the Security Council in making decisions regarding the use of force, and demands relevant actors to seek all the possible peaceful means to solve the conflict. Nevertheless, China’s attitude towards the value of peacekeeping forces has changed remarkably. Since China regained its seat in the UN and the Security Council in 1971, for almost a decade, UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations were seen as interference in countries’ internal affairs and as the undesirable result of US–Soviet hegemonic power competition. Therefore, China did not participate in votes on almost every UN peacekeeping operation and did not undertake any financial responsibility for such operations.<sup>23</sup> In the 1990s, China started to participate in UN-led peacekeeping operations, having dispatched 522 military observers, liaison

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations, “2005 World Summit Outcomes—Resolution Adopted the General Assembly,” October 24, 2005, A/RES/60/1, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Shen Hongsheng, *Lianheguo Weichi Heping Xingdong Falv Wenti Yanjiu* [*Study on the Legal Issues of the UN Peacekeeping Operations*] (Beijing: Junshiyiwen Press, 1988), p. 89.

officers and military advisors, and an engineering contingent of 800.<sup>24</sup> After this slow beginning, Chinese participation in UN peacekeeping operations surged over the past 6 years. While China has so far only sent military observers, engineering, transportation and medical contingents, during the discussion of increasing Chinese troops in Lebanon in late 2006, China expressed its willingness to send heavily armed troops capable of undertaking more demanding PKO tasks.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, as China now actively participates in UN-led PKOs, many of them being second generation PKOs, China still insists that it only participate in UN-led PKOs, and would like to see the Security Council control and oversee those operations. China also insists that UN PKOs should comply with the UN Charter and all the basic principles including neutrality, consent of parties concerned and non-use of force except for self-defense.<sup>26</sup>

Thirdly, China's strong opposition toward non-military coercive measures in international relations has also witnessed modest adjustment over the past few years. For example, in 2006, China supported the United Nation Security Council imposition of limited sanctions against North Korea and Iran in order to push the two countries back to the negotiation table to solve their nuclear issues. Nevertheless, the relaxing of its longtime opposition to sanctions only confines China to issues which pose threats to "peace and stability."

### *Responsibility and Capacities*

Assuming international responsibility demands the deployment of national resources which could also be used to serve domestic purposes. Therefore, there is always tension in allocating resources for domestic and international purposes, and a state is required to undertake its international responsibility according to its financial and human capacities.

Since 1949, China has been struggling to find a fine balance between responsibility and capacity. During the pre-reform era, Chinese leaders were too occupied by

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<sup>24</sup> *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], October 17, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Although in the end, China decided to send engineering and medical teams again under UN request. "Online Talk by the then Assistant Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army, General Zhang Xinsheng," *Xinhuanet*, September 28, 2006, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/1076/52983/4870385.html>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, and see the "Positions Paper of the People's Republic of China on the United Nations Reforms," June 7, 2005, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/zt/gaige/t199101.htm>.

appeals for revolution and the aspiration to make a greater contribution to mankind, and were somehow too generous in offering foreign aid to their fellow communist countries, national liberation movements and developing countries, particularly at a time when the state was still very poor. For example, in 1973, foreign aid expenditure accounted for 6.9% of the state budget. The generous aid helped a poor China gain political sympathy and support in the developing world, and with that support, China was able to regain its seat in the United Nations and its permanent seat in the Security Council. Nevertheless, negative impacts were also apparent. Chinese people had to accept a lower living standard, and the biggest receivers of Chinese aid, like Vietnam and Albania, either entered into armed conflict with China or rampantly abused the aid from China.

Since Deng Xiaoping started the “reform and opening-up” era from the late 1970s, China seems to be heading in another direction. For Deng Xiaoping, to achieve the economic development of China is the biggest contribution of China to mankind. The shift of Chinese policy priority also affected China's foreign policy. The objective of foreign policy is to secure a favorable international environment for China's economic development, not a means to pursue an idealistic ideological agenda. A pragmatic Chinese foreign policy put less emphasis on China's aid to developing countries. After 1989, under Deng Xiaoping's “keep a low profile” policy, China focused its efforts on ending foreign meddling in its domestic affairs, like the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, Falungong, and human rights, and avoided taking a major role in global and regional affairs beyond its immediate neighbors.

With the coming of the current Chinese leadership, China has made stronger commitments to boost its international role, and is more willing to increase the financial and human resources to perform that role. This was reflected in President Hu Jintao's first New Year address after he assumed the position of president in 2003. He said, “Chinese people have always been concerned about and have a lot of sympathy for those people who are living in the flames of war, and suffering from hunger and poverty. Chinese people wish wholeheartedly that they would live happy and peaceful lives at an early date and China is willing to offer aid within our capabilities.”<sup>27</sup> It

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<sup>27</sup> “President Hu Jintao delivers New Year's message,” December 30, 2003, [http://english.people.com.cn/200401/01/eng20040101\\_131678.shtml#message](http://english.people.com.cn/200401/01/eng20040101_131678.shtml#message).

is further demonstrated in the approved budget for diplomatic affairs and external aid in 2007. The annual diplomacy-related budget in 2007 is projected to increase 37.3% over 2006, to reach 23 billion RMB, which includes the amount of foreign aid increasing from 8.2 billion RMB of 2006 to 10.8 billion in 2007, with an annual growth of 31.7%.<sup>28</sup>

There are domestic discussions about whether China should spend that much money to support other countries while China itself still has more than 20 million people living in poverty. However, the trend is, at the leadership level; there is a clear and strong willingness to devote more resources for international responsibility.

### *Responsibility and Expectations*

As China starts to assume more international obligations, external expectations also rise and apparently rise more rapidly than how China would like to see. As a result, a gap between responsibility and expectations is created, and calls for China to find a fine balance between responsibility and external expectations.

One aspect of this task is to deal with high external expectations. Should China try everything to meet the high expectation and demand to close the gap? Should this be seen as a foreign conspiracy to set up China through a “responsibility trap,” aiming to divert China’s energy and recourses from domestic development, and to be exhausted in external over-stretched adventures?

To find a proper and workable balance, we have to bear in mind that undertaking and demanding international responsibility are both noble causes. After so many years of concentrating on domestic development, high external expectations will help enhance the awareness of responsibility on the part of the Chinese leadership and people. Meanwhile, every country assumes its international obligations according to its national interest, in line with its diplomatic principles and approaches, and within its own capacity. Therefore, in the real world, the existence of the gap is normal, no matter how regrettable it is. China could not assume those responsibilities against its core national interests, its deep-rooted principles, and beyond its capacities.

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<sup>28</sup> *Xinhuanet*, March 5, 2007.

Furthermore, acknowledging the inevitable existence of the gap does not mean the gap cannot or should not be narrowed in the long run. Actually, strong efforts have been made on the China side to narrow that gap in the past years. Compared with the past, China has undertaken more responsibilities now. With the further extension of China's interests globally, the growth of its capacity, and stronger responsibility awareness, China is bound to share even more responsibilities in the future than now.

The second aspect of finding a proper balance is to deal with conflicting external expectations. Western countries' demands mostly focus on China's contribution to trade liberalization, the protection of intellectual property rights, the prevention of WMD proliferation, the spread of good governance, the protection of human rights, and finding solutions to "rogue states" and "failed states." On the other hand, a majority of developing countries, like members of the Group of 77 with which China is associated, expect China to play a more active role in safeguarding the principle of equal sovereignty, political independence, and lend bigger help in their economic development. In a way, China is caught in between by these seemingly conflicting demands. It poses daunting challenges to China, a developing great power, in its effort to meet the expectations from its other fellow developing countries, and to accommodate the demands from its fellow major powers of the world today. At the same time, it might also provide an opportunity for China to play a bridging role in bringing together the countries in the North and South, seeking mutual accommodations, and working for common peace and prosperity.

## Conclusion

Recently, David Gosset, a Shanghai-based French scholar, wrote an article in *Asia Times*, titled "World order with Chinese characteristics."<sup>29</sup> People outside of China might already feel difficulties comprehending and accepting the Chinese notion of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." They might have more difficulties and uneasiness embracing a world order with Chinese characteristics. Nevertheless, as China decides to reassume its greater role in international affairs, a process is unfolding which will lead to a reshaped world order with certain Chinese characteristics. For

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<sup>29</sup> David Gosset, "World Order with Chinese Characteristics," *Asia Times*, April 12, 2007, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/ID12Ad02.html>.

people within and out of China, it may be the time to prepare for this inevitable trend, and to ensure that that process is contributing to the welfare of all in this new world.