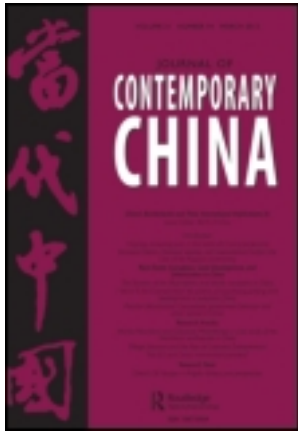


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## Journal of Contemporary China

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjcc20>

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Published online: 08 Nov 2012.

To cite this article: Chih-Yu Shih & Chiung- Chiu Huang (2013) Preaching Self-Responsibility: the Chinese style of global governance, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22:80, 351-365, DOI: [10.1080/10670564.2012.734087](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.734087)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.734087>

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# Preaching Self-Responsibility: the Chinese style of global governance

CHIH-YU SHIH and CHIUNG-CHIU HUANG\*

*The present study traces the cultural and political contexts within which Beijing considers global governance. They include: (1) Confucian dispositions toward non-interventionism and self-governance; (2) the socialist collectivist ethics that stress persuasion instead of unilateralism; (3) a lingering sense of inferiority arising from underdevelopment that harms self-confidence; and (4) the repugnant experiences with the United Nations (UN) and the United States that have dominated most international organizations since World War II. The consequential Chinese style of global governance is reactive rather than proactive, problem-solving rather than goal-driven, and attentive to obligation and reform more in other major countries than in failing states. That said, China could still assert global leadership by acting as a model of self-governance for other major countries and by intervening in failing states only through closed-door persuasion and exemplification as opposed to open sanctioning.*

## Introduction

Despite the widespread impression that China is rising, the Chinese elite is not ready to assume, alongside the United States, a major responsibility for addressing the great transnational challenges of our time. In the first place, there is no tradition in Chinese political thought, modern as well as pre-modern, that recognizes or even lays the intellectual foundations for recognizing potential duties of the state beyond its borders. In addition, at this time, the Chinese elite neither envisions China as an equal partner of other states in managing global affairs nor aspires to such a role for China. Moreover, the Chinese elite interpret the call for global governance as an implicit call for interference by powerful actors in the affairs of other states. In other words, rather than thinking of the call in constructive terms, particularly as an opportunity to support a more effective global governance structure and a much larger Chinese role in it (i.e. as a call for more effective collaboration or even partnership), the majority of the Chinese elite sees it lukewarmly.

This paper studies how the Chinese elite has approached global governance, intellectually as well as practically. It examines the character of political thought

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embedded in Confucianism as well as in Chinese socialism. That thought makes it instinctive for the Chinese elite to choose non-interventionism as a guiding principle in foreign affairs. By non-interventionism, the Chinese elite wants to convey the proposition that improving self-governance by all the nation states themselves is the best vehicle to global governance. Ironically, the humble evasion of global responsibility could appear in the eyes of others as arrogant or, at best, a self-centered and myopic rejection of responsibility.

The rise of China has led to the expectation that China will take on a more proactive role.<sup>1</sup> The present study argues, however, that China is neither culturally nor politically prepared to be effectively involved in global governance. In their recurring pledge that China will be a 'responsible major country' (*fuzenren de daguo*),<sup>2</sup> responsibility in Chinese terms practically refers to the fulfillment of China's share of duty. There has been no initiative in solving global problems beyond its borders. In fact, effective self-governance is how the Beijing authorities currently believe China should contribute to global governance. Xi Jinping, in his capacity as vice president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and one of the upcoming fifth-generation leaders, gave the following synoptic remark on 11 February 2009, concerning China's introspective duty in global affairs, when he rebutted international criticisms on China's unenthusiastic participation:

... China does not export revolution, for one. China does not export poverty or hunger, for two. And, China does not fool around (*bu zhe teng*) with you, for three. What else need be added?<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Beijing seems to believe that effective response at the national level to social, economic, and environmental problems should be the model for other nations to follow, and that the aggregate of responsible and effective national governance is the main ingredient of effective global governance.

The present study traces the cultural and political contexts within which Beijing considers global governance. They include: (1) Confucian dispositions toward non-interventionism and self-governance; (2) the socialist collectivist ethics that stress persuasion instead of unilateralism; (3) a lingering sense of inferiority arising from underdevelopment that harms self-confidence; and (4) the repugnant experiences with the United Nations (UN) and the United States that have dominated most international organizations since World War II. The consequential Chinese style of global governance is reactive rather than proactive, problem-solving rather than goal-driven, and attentive to obligation and reform more in other major countries than in failing states. That said, China could still assert global leadership by acting

1. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, (last modified May 2010), available at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf) (accessed 4 June 2010).

2. Jiang Zeming was the first to use the term 'the responsible major country' in his speech to the Duma in 1996. See 'Adhering strictly to independent foreign policy and peace diplomacy—speech given by Jiang Zeming on the reception welcoming for our diplomatic staff in Yugoslavia', *People's Daily Online*, available at: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:yjCmJuDDmNOJ:www.people.com.cn/item/kangyi/199906/02/ky60203.html+&cd=2&hl=zh-TW&ct=clnk> (accessed 2 June 2010).

3. 'Xi Jing Ping skillfully scolds other countries' finger-pointing at Chinese affairs', *Wenweipo (Hong Kong)*, (13 February 2009), p. 4.

as a model of self-governance for other major countries and by intervening in failing states only through closed-door persuasion and exemplification as opposed to open sanctioning.

### **‘Harmonious world’ and governance**

#### *A harmonious world*

China’s approach to global governance is currently called the ‘harmonious world’ approach. President Hu Jintao explains in detail what the harmonious world means.<sup>4</sup> It ‘upholds multilateralism to realize common security’. This enjoins all to ‘oppose acts of encroachment on other countries’ sovereignty, forceful interference in a country’s internal affairs, and willful use or threat of military force’. Hu reminds us that ‘... globalization should benefit all countries, developing countries in particular, instead of leading to a more polarized world where the poor become poorer and the rich richer’. In the harmonious world, ‘... the developed countries should shoulder greater responsibility for a universal, coordinated, and balanced development in the world’. Regarding the differences among countries, Hu stresses ‘the spirit of inclusiveness’, respect for ‘diversity’, and ‘a country’s right to independently choose its own social system and path of development’. Finally, the UN should be reformed, according to Hu, by increasing ‘the representation of the developing countries, African countries in particular, and allow more countries, especially small and medium-sized countries, to participate in the decision making ...’. It is noteworthy that, as the rest of the present study will argue, the harmonious-world theme incorporates precisely those portions of Confucianism and socialism that can agree with each other.

The Communist Party once came up with the notion of a peaceful rise to conceptualize China’s new image in 2003.<sup>5</sup> Since 2005, it has been the notion of the harmonious world. Both notions focus on China’s style of rise, responding directly to the external fear of a Chinese threat. The first notion was aborted quickly because the rise rhetoric could be misleading from the internal Chinese point of view. Any notion of rising would destroy China’s image of being reciprocal. After all, China still perceived itself as a Third World country. It was at this time that the ‘harmonious world’ came to the rescue. Enabling all to be responsible for their own internal affairs is the key component of the harmonious world.

#### *A self-responsible country*

First, in light of Chinese sensitivity to China’s autonomy, a responsible major country refers exclusively to one that is responsible for good self-governance. Second, all other major countries should be mindful of their responsibility for self-governance rather than intervention. Third, the range of responsibility for self-governance has to

4. See Hu Jintao, *Build Towards a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity* (statement by H.E. Hu Jintao, President of the People’s Republic of China at the United Nations Summit, New York, 15 September 2005).

5. Bijian Zheng, ‘China’s “peaceful rise” to great-power status’, *Foreign Affairs* 84(5), (2005), pp. 18–24.

be negotiated among all. Finally, those who fail in their responsibility for good governance should improve by emulating other examples of good governance without the pressure of external intervention. In brief, self-governance contributes to global governance to the extent that it responds to global needs by fulfilling the shared duty that each country agrees to through the process of multilateral and democratic consultation.<sup>6</sup> For China, global governance is no more than dividing duty into national shares according to the capacity, the causes, and the national conditions through a multilateral process.

Realistically, preaching the 'harmonious world' theory brings to light the incapacity of the Communist Party to position China or to provide substantive platforms on the global issue and, to that degree, justifies China's passive attitude in most cases.<sup>7</sup> China sometimes appears so active in consultation with other countries so as to suggest that other countries could learn from China's domestic governance style of progressive engagement. The appearance of internal progressive engagement could, in turn, defend China's refusal to intervene in non-consenting nations by imposing sanctions. Ultimately, it provides a dual defense for China from potential intervention by other major countries with less than noble intentions—intervention is, in principle, an unacceptable approach, and China is not a legitimate target anyway. For the Chinese government to agree with intervention, all other nations, including the nation in which intervention is to take place, should give their consent; hence, the conditions, the goals, and the means of intervention should be agreed upon in advance through a multilateral process of consultation.

The present study will argue that the current discourses on global governance in China, informed by the notions of harmonious world and responsible major country, can find ready support in both Confucianism and socialism. The Chinese elite is able to re-appropriate portions of them to guide China's policy toward global governance. To the extent that Confucianism can make sense of the Chinese style of non-intervention, the social learning capacity of China to become a global state, as some observe,<sup>8</sup> has a cultural limit.

In fact, the harmonious world can incorporate the socialist democratic mass-line approach inasmuch as China's position is always persuasion rather than sanctioning intervention. The mass-line approach is presumably registered in the demand that all must be included in the multilateral process. According to the mass-line approach, the consultative style of persuasion does not rely on restrictions or threats to impose

6. Jingsong Zhang, 'On the responsibility of our government in the era of global governance', *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian [Social Science Front Bimonthly]* no. 8, (2008), pp. 158–164; Zhongying Pang, 'How would China participate in global governance after all?', *Guoji Xianqu Daobao [International Herald Leader]*, (13 July 2009), available at: <http://www.china-review.com/sao.asp?id=22523> (accessed 1 June 2010); Zhe Song, Keynote Speech given at the Conference on China, the EU and the Restructuring of Global Governance (Brussels, 6 May 2010), *Newsletter of Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union* 40, (14 May 2010).

7. Yeling Tan, *China's Role in the World: A Perspective through Global Health Governance*, Working Paper 006 (Center on Asia and Globalization, National University of Singapore, June 2009); Zhongying Pang, 'Playing by the rules? China's growing global role', *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, (18 October 2008). See also Thomas S. Mullaney, 'See for the state: the role of social scientists in China's ethnic classification project', *Asian Ethnicity* 11(3), (2010), pp. 325–342.

8. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Also see Rucker Culpepper, 'Nationalist competition on the Internet: Uyghur diaspora versus the Chinese state media', *Asian Ethnicity* 13(2), (2002), pp. 187–203.

sanctions. Rather, it proceeds on the assumption that the targeted country would likewise hope to achieve a harmonious relationship with the rest of the world. China could serve as a model of just how to accomplish this feat. It is in these implications that the Confucian underpinning of socialism becomes clear.

### Cultural and political contexts

Although Confucianism is neither coherent nor static, sensitive scholars still discover the lasting, middle-kingdom mentality throughout the PRC today.<sup>9</sup> According to learned observers, all political forces in China seem to enjoy some mix of Confucianism and socialism in their belief and behavior.<sup>10</sup> Both Confucianism and socialism attend to role fulfillment by members of the group and the elite's generous concession of material interests to the ruled. This is why Confucianism and socialism, regardless of their logical contradiction, can give simultaneous support to self-governance but suspect top-down sanctions. The key lies in the self-concept that is shared between Chinese socialism and Confucian thought. Indeed, Confucianism likewise calls for selfless leadership.

#### *Harmonious relations and self-restraint*

The cultural/ideological barriers to China's participation in global governance can be succinctly summarized. Confucianism teaches that leaders should learn to become gentlemen so that they know how to achieve best governance through exemplification and rectification of relationships.<sup>11</sup> This requires that leaders show selfless benevolence and govern in such a way that harmony is achieved. In the PRC history, every time the Chinese Communist Party examines its own wrongdoing, the blame is usually laid on the inadvertent abortion of self-ethics. In theoretical terms, interference presumes a purpose, which inadvertently implies a separate self in cadres, to the effect that cadres and the masses are not in unity. In practical terms, being selfless indicates the deduction of levies and conscriptions, along with budgetary control. Together, selfless leadership should ensure that little men are always given ample room to breathe and recover from natural hardships. Thus, intervention appears to be anathema to good governance. This is where socialist practices, due to their repeated mass campaigns, have been farthest away from Confucianism. A twist occurs under the Communist Party rule—being selfless

9. Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009); Daniel Bell, *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Hundred Years of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1984).

10. Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Lucien Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988); Krishna Praksha Gupta, 'Tradition of modernity: a comparative study of Asian and Western systems', *China Report* 9(29), (1973), pp. 29–45; Gengwu Wang, 'The fourth rise of China: cultural implications', *China: An International Journal* 2(2), (2004), pp. 311–322; Chih-yu Shih, *The Spirit of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Psychocultural View* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

11. The first Communist leader to appeal to Confucianism was President Liu Shaoqi. This is in his 'How to be a good communist?'. See Howard Boorman, 'Liu Shao-chi': the man and the iceberg', in C. Hseuh, ed., *Revolutionary Leaders of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 544–545.



becomes less an ethic of the rulers than one of the governed. However, even at this farthest, the primary concern is not governance, but the demonstration that everyone had been selflessly devoted to the building of socialism.

The notion of responsibility under Confucianism is invariably introspective, and hence is an issue of attitude rather than capability. Even under Mao's reign, the Communist Party largely relied on Confucian wisdom to withhold the exportation of the revolution that had been inadvertently launched by those revolutionaries eager to demonstrate their selfless politics, insisting instead that revolution should be the responsibility of the local people.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the Chinese Third World policy before the arrival of the global age echoed the same wisdom in that small loans were provided to show benevolence. Beijing consistently dramatized China's quest for a relationship by emphasizing that its loans carried low- or zero-interest rates and had no political strings attached.<sup>13</sup> The volume of the donation mattered less than the selfless gesture of donation.

### *Mass line and persuasion*

In a nutshell, for the Communist Party to gain legitimacy, in internal as well as foreign affairs, the leaders must appear to want only what the masses or the people of the world want. The Confucian principle of egalitarianism was essentially preserved under socialism. Egalitarianism was meant to ensure that no one was left out of redistribution, and served as the reasoning behind Mao's mass line. The mass-line approach, which ensures the appearance of comprehensive participation, continues to rest upon one proposition: redistribution should be achieved through the self-governance of the masses. In fact, when the totalitarian rule runs into problems, the diagnosis in the aftermath usually points to the failure to follow the mass line.<sup>14</sup>

The maneuvering by the totalitarian party is ironically geared toward achieving the romantic image of selfless leadership. The justification that the Communist Party should rule permanently is precisely that, as a proletarian party, it has no interests other than those of the collective.<sup>15</sup> The mass-line approach implies that the government is legitimized only by collective effort. Thus, it alludes to Beijing's advocacy for multilateralism in global governance. Internally, institutionalized political consultation has become a permanent feature of Chinese governance since the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> Consultation could generate enormous social pressure to conform by

12. Zhou Enlai *Nianpu* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai's Career], Vol. 1 (Beijing: Central Literature Press, 1997), p. 393; also, see Peter Van Ness, 'Mao Tse-tung and "revolutionary self-reliance"', *Problems of Communism* no. 20, (January/April 1971), pp. 68–74.

13. Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009).

14. See, for example, the Chinese Communist Party Centre's 'Resolution Concerning the Strengthening of the Connections between the Party and the Masses' (*Zhonggong Zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang dang tong renmin qunzhong lianxi de jueyi*) passed on 12 March 1990 by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Thirteenth National Congress (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1990).

15. *The CCP Central Committee's Decision on Strengthening the Party's Ties with the Masses of the People* (Shanghai: New China Bookstore, 1990).

16. Wei Pan, 'Toward a consultative rule of law regime in China', in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *Debating Political Reform in China: Rule of Law and Democratization* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), pp. 3–40; also see Ingrid Nielsen et al., 'Personal wellbeing among ethnic Koreans in China's Northeast', *Asian Ethnicity* 13(1), (2012), pp. 75–96.

exposing the unethical self-centeredness of uncooperative citizens. In global affairs, Chinese leaders are used to criticizing the United States for failing to consult because of its self-centered concerns over national interests.

### *Siege mentality and inferiority*

The sanctions imposed by the UN on China during the Korean War created a great sentiment against interventionism among the Chinese. Since then, interventionism in the name of international organization without the consent of the targeted region, usually represented by a weak or failing government, incurs immediate suspicion from Beijing.<sup>17</sup> Beijing's insistence on the use of persuasion in place of direct action may hinder the immediate relief of global problems. From the official Chinese perspective, global governance, humanitarian or otherwise, always runs the risk of declining into imperialism unless local consent is acquired in advance.

Despite the rhetoric of a rising China, Beijing continues to suffer an inferiority complex. This occasional sense of inferiority includes a lingering siege mentality that Washington intends to exploit to keep China from rising.<sup>18</sup> Beijing sends the message that China is not really rising. Far from being ready for G-2 leadership composed of Washington and Beijing,<sup>19</sup> the Chinese elite is not interested in the internal affairs of other nations. What 'global' means to Beijing is not yet clearly distinguished from the terms 'international' or 'foreign'. Beijing faces all kinds of expectations and criticisms on various global issues. Consistency is most easily maintained as Beijing sticks with the trinity of self-governance, non-interventionism, and prior local consent.

### **Undecided discourses**

Given the principle of 'harmonious world' as a goal, and the responsible-country tenet as a role, the Chinese literature on global governance typically lacks specific reference to China's vision of good governance. Instead, the literature concentrates on how China should respond to the external call for global governance. Despite their different orientations toward globalization—some embracing it, others suspecting it, and still others questioning China's qualification to take part in global governance<sup>20</sup>—Chinese narrators seem to share the concern over how China should adjust its internal configuration to fulfill its role as a responsible country. Self-reflections dominate the Chinese literature on global governance.

A good portion of the literature is merely a faithful introduction of global governance as conceived in Europe and North America.<sup>21</sup> Regarding how China

17. Keping Yu, *Democracy is a Good Thing: Essays on Politics, Society, and Culture in China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), p. 149.

18. William A. Callahan, *China: Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

19. G-2 was criticized as a tactic to kill by praising; see Jianjun Dang, *Sino-US Disputes over the Climate Issue and the Battle over Discourse*, available at: [http://www.qstheory.cn/tbzt/gbhg/zxbd/200912/t20091214\\_17018.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/tbzt/gbhg/zxbd/200912/t20091214_17018.htm) (accessed 2 June 2010); also see Jian Junbo, 'China says "no" to G-2', *Asia Times*, (29 May 2009), available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KE29Ad01.html> (accessed 2 June 2010).

20. Hongying Wang and James N. Rosenau, 'China and global governance', *Asian Perspective* 33(3), (2009), pp. 17–22.

21. For a few examples, see Zhuo Yang, 'Probe into global governance', *Nei Menggu Shifan Daxue Xuebao [Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University]* 36(5), (September 2007), pp. 39–42; Yunzhen Bai, 'Retrospect and



should position itself in global governance, three areas appear to be controversial. First, the literature acknowledges that the call for global governance reflects the decline of American hegemonic power but is typically unsure whether China, or any other country, is ready to substitute for American leadership. Second, there is the question of whether the scope of national security should be much broader than political and military security alone. There is widespread judgment that a non-traditional security issue could be politically manipulated by negative forces to encroach upon China's traditional security. Third, the literature disagrees on whether or not global governance should embody liberal values.

The majority view sees opportunities in the age of global governance for international politics to become more democratic (i.e. multilateral). The formation of the G-20 and the incorporation of the so-called BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries in global leadership are always used in the literature to reflect the inability of Washington to cope with global economic problems.<sup>22</sup> Together, they are far from a fungible superpower, though. This is because, according to one prominent narrator, none of the four is capable by itself of taking the lead, and they cannot agree among themselves on anything.<sup>23</sup> Multilateralism is lauded as the only viable principle of global policy making in a world rid of superpower politics. Multilateralism is supposedly democratic. More importantly, the multilateral participation of all countries will make the resolution of global issues fairer. The blame is thus made international rather than heaped on a few failing states awaiting transformation and intervention.<sup>24</sup> To that extent, global governance is democratic governance, responsibility is nationally divided, and each country's responsibility should be negotiable and agreeable to every other.

According to a group of leading international relations specialists, the new concept of security should include economic security, energy security, food security, ecological security, transportation security, health security, and security from crime. This list is made for policy makers to protect domestic security comprehensively, but is considered parallel to issues of global governance. The discussion is invariably focused on coping with these security threats either coming from outside of China or arising from within China. There is no intellectual attempt at resolving these

*Footnote 21 continued*

prospect on studies of global governance', *Jiaoxue Yu Yanjiu [Teaching and Research]* no. 4, (2007), pp. 76–83; Yajun Bao, 'Retrospect and prospect of the Chinese academic literature on governing', *Gansu Lilun Xuekan [Gansu Theory Research]* no. 188, (July 2008), pp. 45–49; Xuehua Xie, 'Some issues on global governance', *Huxiang Luntan [Huxiang Forum]* 22(20), (2009), pp. 120–122, 128.

22. Jiru Shen, a leading IR scholar, is quoted by the *Renminwang* on 26 March 2010: 'The discussion of global crises and global governance by three central European scholars' ['Zhongou San Xuezhue Tan Quanqiu Weiji Yu Quanqiu Zhili'], *Renminwang*, (26 March 2010), available at: <http://news.sohu.com/20100326/n271128716.shtml> (accessed 31 May 2010); Qin Ye, 'It's just about time to participate in globalization', *Renminwang*, (13 April 2010), available at: [http://www.dzwww.com/rollnews/news/201004/t20100413\\_5984558.htm](http://www.dzwww.com/rollnews/news/201004/t20100413_5984558.htm) (accessed 31 May 2010).

23. Renwei Huang, 'The BRICs and the system of global governance', a speech given at the *International Forum on The New Challenge, the New Role and the New Model: The Newly Rising Economies in the Post-crisis Era*, Hainan, 31 October–1 November 2009), available at: <http://business.sohu.com/20091104/n267950764.shtml> (accessed 1 June 2010).

24. Dai Bingguo, the personal representative of Hu Jintao, expounded these principles of global governance in specific terms in the G-8 meeting in L'Aquila on 9 July 2009; see, Shuo Zhang, 'G8 initiated dialogue with rising great powers; China expressed its idea about global governance', *Zhongxinwang*, (9 July 2009), available at: <http://news.qq.com/a/20090709/001655.htm> (accessed 1 June 2010).

transnational issues on a global level. This disparity implies that China's understanding of global governance is essentially the domestic governance of global issues by each country, although cooperation in terms of information exchange, as well as technical support, is usually appreciated. The same disparity similarly connotes distrust toward Washington and its allies concerning their possible intention to intervene in the so-called failing states on the grounds of relieving transnational security threats. According to the Chinese literature, the purpose of such intervention is ultimately to spread liberalism rather than transnational security.

The Chinese literature does not fail to note that civic organizations and non-governmental agencies that join national governments in resolving global issues carry a liberalist underpinning. Not surprisingly, there is a warning that global governance reproduces the current hegemony, seemingly in decline, in a subtler and more effective way. The majority of studies reiterate the indispensable role of national government leadership. In contrast, the noteworthy minority view promotes internal liberalization. According to this view, it is the historical sense of being victimized that has hindered China from becoming a respectable major power. It also promotes the idea that China cannot make any real contribution to global governance unless the country is opened up to civic activists both from within and abroad.<sup>25</sup> In short, successful global governance should invite the participation of non-governmental international organizations and Chinese civic groups.<sup>26</sup>

Between the majority and the minority views lies the increasingly faddish view of *Tianxia* (all under heaven),<sup>27</sup> which is philosophically in line with the 'harmonious world' ideal. The notion of *Tianxia*, referring to a variety of all differing with one another and yet coexisting in harmony, peculiarly provides a global value without actually providing it! It can be a source of dispute in that it specifically criticizes the endeavor to liberalize non-liberal countries.<sup>28</sup> However, to refuse the exportation of liberalism is not the same as denying liberalism. Presumably, the *Tianxia* style of global governance advocates the resolution of global issues by having each country act according to its own conditions. In this way, intervention could be harmonious. Admittedly, however, harmonious interventionism would require a good deal of negotiation and persuasion so that intervention proceeds without ruining the local variety.

25. Cong Riyun, 'Global governance, UN reform and political development of China', *Zhejiang Academic Journal* no. 5, (2005), pp. 108–115.

26. Boshu Zhang, *Global Governance and Democracy*, available at: <http://www.mianfeilunwen.com/Shehui/Zonghe/27282.html> (accessed 31 May 2010). Note that Zhang was already purged from the Chinese Social Science Academy.

27. Zhao Tingyang, 'A political world philosophy in terms of all-under-heaven (Tian-xia)', *Diogenes* no. 221, (2009), pp. 5–18; Zhixin Zhang, 'China's diplomatic strategy informed by classic wisdom', *China Review News*, (3 April 2010), available at: <http://www.chinareviewnews.com/doc/1012/7/5/5/101275587.html?coluid=93&kindid=4910&docid=101275587> (accessed 15 April 2010).

28. Harmony is considered categorically different from governing. See Xingtang Wu, 'Interpreting global governance from a critical perspective', *Dandai Shijie [The Contemporary World]* no. 12, (December 2007), pp. 41–43.

## Examples of introspective practices

### *Health: enlightened monopoly*

China's most embarrassing global issue in the past decade is in the area of public health. SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), which originated in China, plagued its Asian neighbors in 2003, shattering the self-image of the country that has always considered responsibility to be good self-governance. The case of SARS may be the best and the worst exemplification of China's global governance—the best because it shows how the Chinese government can learn and adapt generally within the principle of sovereignty, and the worst because it clearly shows how China's global governance is by no means global.<sup>29</sup>

The outbreak of SARS challenged China's sovereignty in two significant ways. First, the SARS outbreak was not containable. The concealment of information about the epidemic, done to protect China's image, ended up keeping SARS from being identified early enough.<sup>30</sup> Second, Taiwan had been among the hardest-hit areas during the SARS outbreak. It had become a humanitarian scandal after Chinese health officials resolutely refused Taiwan access to, as well as provision of, information through the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>31</sup> Beijing later resorted to private channels, hoping to serve Taiwan's information and technical needs socially.<sup>32</sup>

These days, health information in Beijing is more accessible to the outside world. Beijing no longer flatly denies technical support on health. However, this is not quite the case for other current health issues. For example, until 2010, AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) had been in the category of 'national secret to be guarded'.<sup>33</sup> Civic groups working on AIDS are sometimes welcome in certain Chinese cities, whereas at other times elsewhere they arouse deep suspicion. All technical and financial support from abroad is still controlled under the monopoly of the state. On the positive side, this monopoly is certainly becoming more enlightened and can at least be perceived to accept some support from its global counterparts.

### *Environment: cleaning the house before inviting guests*

It was in December 2009, in Copenhagen, when Beijing's controversial performance in the UN Climate Change Conference reminded us of one of the age-old dictums of

29. Tan, *China's Role in the World*; L. H. Chan, L. Chen and J. Xu, 'China's engagement with global health diplomacy: was SARS a watershed?', *PLoS Med* 7(4), (2010), e1000266, doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000266, available at: <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1000266> (accessed 31 May 2010).

30. Sung-Won Yoon, 'Sovereign dignity, nationalism and the health of a nation: a study of response in combat of epidemics', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8(1), (2008), pp. 80–100.

31. 'World Health Organization chief in China says "no room" for Taiwan to join', *Asia Africa Intelligence Wire*, (19 April 2004), available at: [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary\\_0286-21054687\\_ITM](http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-21054687_ITM) (accessed 31 May 2010).

32. This was done through 'non-governmental channels', which included 'relevant organizations and experts'. See *The Cooperation and Exchange on SARS Prevention and Control across the Taiwan Strait (05/16/03)*, (a statement by Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland), available at: <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/zmjg/jxgwt/xgwtw/t85603.htm> (accessed 2 June 2010).

33. See Bureau of Democracy, *Human Rights, and Labor, 2009 Human Rights Report: China*, (11 March 2010), available at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eap/135989.htm> (accessed 1 June 2010).

Chinese foreign policy, handed down to the current leadership 60 years ago. At the beginning of the People's Republic, Mao established the rule that China must first clean its own house before inviting foreign guests.<sup>34</sup> This was meant to indicate that the Communist Party must cleanse itself of the Kuomintang, as well as its imperialist legacies, before re-establishing diplomatic relationships with other countries. The rule has evolved into a stylistic trait in Chinese diplomacy. At the 2009 climate summit, Beijing rejected the proposal that international observers be allowed to examine domestic controls through some international monitoring systems. Other than the equally important issues of fair sharing of responsibility and multilateral participation by all countries,<sup>35</sup> what led to the deadlock in Copenhagen was China's refusal to allow any inspection of domestic carbon emissions. There is obviously still a long way to go before the central government in Beijing, facing the likely dishonesty of its local officials, could effectively enforce its targeted reduction of carbon emissions. Before China's own house is clean, any international observation would be annoying.

Beijing detected an intention among the industrialized countries to seal the discussion on climate change by claiming reduction goals for themselves. China saw these countries as bypassing the Kyoto Protocol and moving to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change,<sup>36</sup> thus leaving the remaining duties of carbon reduction to developing countries. Beijing believes that a country must understand what it has done to the world climate before it can really appreciate its duty. One Chinese estimate suggests that this duty should be no less than a 200% reduction based on the 1990 level for industrialized countries.<sup>37</sup> Beijing then calculates its own responsibility first from a per capita standard, which most countries largely welcome, and then from an enhanced self-request to reach the goal expected of developed countries by the Protocol (i.e. a reduction of 40% from the 1990 level by 2020). By taking the responsibility of a developed nation, China is presumably acting as a model to be emulated.<sup>38</sup>

### *Peacekeeping: double balancing*

Beijing's position toward UN peacekeeping has evolved over the decades, from resistance in the beginning and through a period of alienation, testing, and hesitation, to conscious participation.<sup>39</sup> Beijing is gradually learning and adapting to the changing

34. See *Selected Work of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, 2nd edn (Beijing: People's Press, June 1991), p. 1435; *Selected Work of Zhou Enlai* (last volume) (People's Press, November 1984), p. 87.

35. 'How has China fulfilled its duty on the issue of global climate: shoulder the responsibility, rectify the discourse', *People's Daily (overseas edition)*, (3 December 2009), available at: <http://info.yidaba.com/200912/031626581002100100020885880.shtml> (accessed 2 June 2010).

36. Weinan Wang, 'Battling over climate discourse', *Jiefang Ribao [Liberation Daily]*, (29 December 2009), available at: <http://finance.sina.com.cn/review/20091229/11397169338.shtml> (accessed 1 June 2010).

37. Martin Khor, 'Blame Denmark, not China, for Copenhagen failure', *The Guardian*, (28 December 2009), available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cif-green/2009/dec/28/copenhagen-denmark-china> (accessed 14 June 2010).

38. 'China says yes to reducing carbon emission', *World Journal* (New York), (25 October 2009) was pasted on *China Review News* with a new subtitle—'China becoming a model for the US', available at: <http://www.chinareviewnews.com/doc/10111/5/0/101115042.html?coluid=50&kindid=1078&docid=101115042> (accessed 2 June 2010).

39. Bates Gill and Chin-hao Huang, *China's Expanding Role in Peacekeeping: Prospects and Policy Implications*, Policy Paper 25 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 2009); Jingdong Yuan, 'Multilateral intervention and state sovereignty: Chinese views on UN peacekeeping operations', *Political Science* 49(2), (1998), pp. 275–295.

international context, its accumulated experiences, and its national self-image.<sup>40</sup> A few critical turns have taken Beijing to a higher level of participation in peacekeeping, such as beginning to share the UN peacekeeping costs in 1982 and dispatching five members to the United National Truce Supervision Organization delegation to the Middle East in 1989.<sup>41</sup> In a few incidents, Beijing even blocked peacekeeping missions to countries maintaining diplomatic relations with the anti-unification Taipei.<sup>42</sup>

However, active participation by Beijing did not take place until the unexpected shelling of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by forces led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999.<sup>43</sup> By its actions, NATO bypassed the UN; hence, Beijing suddenly saw the value in UN peacekeeping—only when multilateral peacekeeping is effective could unilateral actions by the US or NATO be preempted. If Beijing could ensure the multilateral nature of peacekeeping, it could actually persuade the target country to accept UN troops.<sup>44</sup> Beijing has finally realized by the end of the twentieth century that Beijing's own participation may generate just that multilateral characteristic. The consent of the target country becomes the leverage for Beijing to keep Europe or the United States from dominating UN peacekeeping.

Nowadays, Beijing's approach to UN peacekeeping amounts to a 'double balancing' strategy. On the one hand, peacekeeping is functional as a counter-balance to major powers' unilateral intervention.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, insisting on consent by the government concerned, regardless of how serious the situation is, is a way of balancing UN peacekeeping, so that it will not stray away from the supervision of the Security Council.<sup>46</sup> There could even be a third level of balancing. This is true as Beijing single-handedly and yet painfully persuaded an extremely reluctant Sudanese government to give consent to the deployment of UN troops between 2006 and 2007 in the civil war-torn country.<sup>47</sup> Along with the UN troops, Beijing financially supported peacekeeping by the African Union in Sudan. Considering that Beijing never initiates any peacekeeping proposal in the Security Council, its involvement in Sudanese internal affairs was unprecedented. After all, friendly China would be part of the peacekeeping to ensure its fair operation. Harsh provisions in the UN authorization of its Sudan mission were accordingly tabled on China's insistence.

40. The literature notes in general the image of a responsible country to be Beijing's major concern; see Yongjin Zhang, 'China and UN peacekeeping: from condemnation to participation', *International Peacekeeping* 3(3), (Autumn 1996), pp. 1–15.

41. Gary D. Rawnsley, 'May you live in interesting times: China, Japan and peacekeeping', in Rachel Utley, ed., *Major Powers and Peacekeeping: Perspectives, Priorities and the Challenge of Military Intervention* (London: Ashgate, 2006), p. 85.

42. International Crisis Group, 'China's growing role in UN peacekeeping', *Asia Report* (Brussels) 166, (17 April 2009), pp. 17–18.

43. Stefan Staehle, *China's Participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Regime*, M.A. thesis, The George Washington University, 2006, p. 44.

44. Gill and Huang, 'China's expanding role in peacekeeping', p. 14.

45. Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), p. 200.

46. Staehle, *China's Participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Regime*, pp. 75–79.

47. International Crisis Group, 'China's growing role in UN peacekeeping', pp. 20–22.



*Non-proliferation: embarrassment management*

Over a long time, Beijing has developed two points of concentration on the issue of non-proliferation, and yet continues to suffer from two irresolvable embarrassments. The two points push for all countries with nuclear weapons to renounce the use of these weapons and sign non-nuclear-zone treaties.<sup>48</sup> The first embarrassment is the contradiction between the urging by China for equality among countries and the monopoly of nuclear weapons by a few countries, including China. The second embarrassment is that China's close allies, North Korea in the north and Pakistan in the south, are becoming nuclear countries. Given their ultimate goal—toward a completely non-nuclear world—the two points of concentration to some extent temper the two embarrassments. Nevertheless, just as in other global governance issues where Beijing is typically more reactive than proactive, the non-proliferation issue has witnessed a similar style. The year before China celebrated its first explosion in 1964, Beijing proposed two principles on the use of nuclear weapons. According to these principles, China's nuclear weapons would be exclusively used for the second strike (so never directed at a non-nuclear country) and the goal of all nuclear countries should be to abolish all nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup> These long-held principles have not dissuaded either Pakistan or North Korea from their desire to go nuclear.

Beijing never fails to repeat these principles on almost all occasions that discuss non-proliferation. At the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April 2010, which was aimed at preventing terrorist organizations from procuring nuclear weapons, Chinese President Hu Jintao reiterated China's principles of using nuclear weapons, in addition to his firm support for consolidating non-proliferation regimes.<sup>50</sup> Even as Beijing has not been successful in eliciting any positive feedback from other nuclear countries,<sup>51</sup> its intention to show China's self-restraint is nevertheless welcomed by non-nuclear countries. In short, Beijing has consistently attended more to the responsibility of nuclear war prevention than proliferation. Only when China's image is in jeopardy, as in the case of weapons proliferation in North Korea, would Beijing's sense of urgency be noticeably stronger.<sup>52</sup> Before Hu went to Washington, for example, he impressively managed to secure Pyongyang's symbolic statement that it is committed to a denuclearization policy.

48. Liping Xia, *Nuclear Non-Proliferation: From a Chinese Perspective*, FES Briefing Paper 8 (Shanghai: Friedrich Evert Stiftung Shanghai, August 2008), pp. 6–8; Bates Gill and Evan S. Medeiros, 'Foreign and domestic influences on China's arms control and nonproliferation policies', *The China Quarterly* no. 161, (March 2000), pp. 66–94.

49. Mingquan Zhu, 'The evolution of China's nuclear nonproliferation policy', *Nonproliferation Review* 4(2), (Winter 1997), pp. 40–48; Yixian Xie, *Chinese Diplomatic History, 1949–1979* [*Zhongguo waijiao shi, 1949–1979*] (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press, 1988), pp. 301–305.

50. Hegao Chen and Dongkai Liu, 'Hu Jintao attends the summit on nuclear security and proposes five propositions regarding improving nuclear security' ['Hu Jintao chuxi he anquan fenghui, jiu jiaqiang he anquan tichu wudian zhuzhang'], *Xinhua Net*, (14 April 2010), available at: [http://big5.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/dhd/2010-04/14/content\\_1580131.htm](http://big5.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/dhd/2010-04/14/content_1580131.htm) (accessed 2 June 2010).

51. Ji You, 'China and North Korea: a fragile relationship of strategic convenience', *Journal of Contemporary China* 10(28), (2001), pp. 387–398; also see Larry A. Niksch, *North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy*, Congressional Research Service Report RL33590 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 5 January 2010).

52. Daniel A. Pinkston, 'Testimony before the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission', *Hearing on China's Proliferation Practices and Its Role in the North Korea Nuclear Crisis*, 10 March 2005.



However, Pyongyang is not easily compromising. Interestingly, Beijing has consistently opposed the imposition of sanctions against North Korea. Sanctions are incompatible with Beijing's non-intervention policy in general and could be devastating to the region's stability in particular. Instead, Beijing has tried a variety of signals to warn Pyongyang about further provocation.<sup>53</sup> Chaos could take the form of North Korean refugees spilling into Chinese borders, or Washington gaining an excuse to take military action.

### *Failing states: harmonious intervention*

Failing states that are geographically distant do not concern China, except that they should be allowed to resolve their internal conflicts by themselves and humanitarian intervention must have their prior consent.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, failing states on the border are different because their people and the Chinese mingle socially and economically, and their stability is important to China's stability. For China, failing states on the border are practical issues, whereas for liberalistic global governance, they are challenges to values. Myanmar is such a state, which the United States and the EU call a failing state. Myanmar poses a practical question to China.<sup>55</sup> Criticisms of China's continued support and the ASEAN's (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) incapacity to address the rampant human rights violations by the Myanmar military junta have mounted in the new century. Even as Washington and the EU blame the ASEAN for refusing to impose sanctions against Naypyidaw,<sup>56</sup> Beijing consistently encourages the ASEAN to deal with the Myanmar issue patiently. For the ASEAN member states, sanctioning Naypyidaw is nothing short of suicidal because the ASEAN spirit is non-interventionist, equal, personal, and informal.<sup>57</sup> Beijing finds the ASEAN Way so comfortable and familiar that the ASEAN has called on China to get involved in coping with the Myanmar challenge, and vice versa.<sup>58</sup>

From the interventionist point of view, Beijing's continued trade with and investment in Myanmar—a lukewarm response to the call for pressure—and even its facilitation of rapprochement between Naypyidaw and Pyongyang are all blame-worthy. However, it is exactly because of these friendly moves that Beijing is able to reason with Naypyidaw.<sup>59</sup> If Beijing's own style of harmonious intervention is

53. Christopher Twomey, 'Explaining Chinese foreign policy toward North Korea: navigating between the Scylla and Charybdis of proliferation and instability', *Journal of Contemporary China* 17(56), (2008), pp. 414–417.

54. Sophie Richardson, 'Challenges for a "responsible power"', in Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2008* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2007), pp. 28–30.

55. Chenyang Li and Liang Fook Lye, 'China's policies towards Myanmar: a successful model for dealing with the Myanmar issue', *China: An International Journal* 7(2), (2009), pp. 284–285.

56. Magnus Peterson, 'Myanmar in EU–ASEAN relations', *Asia–Europe Journal* 4(4), (2006), pp. 563–581.

57. Amitav Acharya, *Constructing Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2007); Mark Beeson, 'ASEAN plus three and the rise of reactionary regionalism', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 25(2), (2003), pp. 251–268; Ruukun Katanyun, 'Beyond non-interference in ASEAN—the association's role in Myanmar's national reconciliation and democratization', *Asian Survey* 46(6), (2006), pp. 825–845; Jürgen Hacke, 'Enhanced interaction with Myanmar and the project of a security community: is ASEAN refining or breaking with its diplomatic and security culture?', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27(2), (2005), pp. 188–216.

58. Pak K. Lee, Gerald Chan and Lai-Ha Chan, 'China's "realpolitik" engagement with Myanmar', *China Security* 5(1), (1995), pp. 111–112.

59. Chenyang Li and Liang Fook Lye, 'China's policies towards Myanmar', pp. 261, 283.

always to meet the international expectation of controlling the outburst of any global problem from China, the same logic follows for Naypyidaw, that is, Beijing hopes Naypyidaw could make an effort to gradually meet the international expectation of its dealings with the opposition and rank-and-file demonstrators. Social influence may or may not work, but Beijing remains a friend, and Chinese leaders' access to Naypyidaw remains. In contrast, the American and European way of sanctioning evokes a colonial memory in the locals, leading them to suspect the true intent of the negatively couched request for change. By not treating Myanmar as a failing state or its leaders as incapable of communicating, both Beijing and the ASEAN gain credit as friendly neighbors that have no territorial or political ambitions.

### Conclusion

Both political leaders and intellectuals in China want to present the image of a responsible country to the world. Their understanding of being responsible is not directed at an external audience, although they closely watch what the latter expects from China. In the global age, the expectation is always about China's contribution to the resolution, and the alleviation and prevention of global problems, whatever these may be. The Chinese cultural and ideological background is so introspective that Chinese narratives on their nation's duty in the world unanimously point to China's responsibility for handling its own domestic problems well enough to avoid causing global troubles. The Chinese care more about relationship than governance. Specifically, the Chinese want to make sure that global governance does not infringe upon the national sovereignty of China. This defensive mentality should explain China's unique style of global governance through self-governance.

China's participation in global governance does not draw direct lessons from either Confucianism or socialism. Nonetheless, the principle of non-interventionism gains inspiration from both the harmonious world and the self-image of the responsible major country, which both embody the kind of self-ethics shared between Confucianism and socialism. This internal ideal is familiar and pervasive, such that the Chinese elite and intellectuals easily perceive a false kind of external leadership in Washington's style of global governance. The resulting and peculiar re-appropriation of Confucianism and socialism into the harmonious world and the responsible major country encourages China to face Washington and global governance with a more assertive, yet introspective, attitude and does so with a sense of legitimacy. Beijing is able to rely on China's cultural and ideological resources in its demand for a multilateral, inclusive, and non-interventionist process. Only when Beijing becomes the most powerful country in the world, and can do whatever its leaders want, would the current principle of non-interventionism face its ultimate test.