

CHINA AS A DRIVING ACTOR IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE? FEASIBILITY AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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By dint of its size and its economic, military and political rise on the global stage, China is inescapably part of both world problems and solutions. On the one hand, some global and transnational problems are emerging or are gaining in importance as a result of the rise of China. Issues like the soaring world energy prices, global resource competition (copper, metals, etc.), climate change and the domestic adjustment pressures of economic globalization in large parts of the world, highlight the far-reaching impact of China's dynamic economic development on the global scene. The latent competition and hostility between the United States and China might be another new world problem, one that will determine whether stability or instability and cooperation or conflict will prevail in the international system.¹

On the other hand, it is clear that without active Chinese involvement it becomes practically impossible to address the current transboundary and global challenges. As a permanent member in the UN Security Council, its voice cannot be ignored in global crisis management. As the world's third-largest nuclear power and one of its major arms exporters, China must be a party to any arms control and disarmament agreement, in order to make it meaningful. It was not until the accession of China, at the moment already one of the largest trading nations, that the WTO could rightfully claim to be "a truly world organization."² The government's treatment of nearly one-fourth of humanity within its borders is inevitably a *global* human-rights issue.³ Willing or not, China is by default a pivotal actor in the debate on environmental sustainability, because it is already responsible for

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¹ MESSNER, Dirk, HUMPHREY, John, *China and India in the global governance arena*, Paper presented at the Pre-Conference Workshop on Asian and Other Drivers of Global Change, 7th Annual Global Development Network Conference, St. Petersburg, January 18-19, 2006, p. 9. (Available from: <http://www.die-gdi.de>, accessed on April 13, 2006).

² WTO, Press release: WTO successfully concludes negotiations on China's entry, September 17, 2001. (http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres01_e/pr243_e.htm, accessed on April 12, 2006).

³ KIM, Samuel S., *China and the world in theory and practice*, in: KIM, Samuel S., (ed.), *China and the world: Chinese foreign relations in the post-Cold War era* (Oxford, Westview Press, 1994), p. 3.

16.5 percent of global CO₂ emissions.⁴ If the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty is met by 2015, it will have been due in large part to the tremendous reductions in the number of poor in China.⁵ In sum, China has a critical role to play in maintaining peace, closing the North-South divide, enforcing the global human rights regime, ensuring international financial stability, preserving the global commons, and other issue areas. Without the cooperation of China, but also of other emerging powers (like Brazil, India, South Africa and Mexico), a lot of global public goods become impracticable.⁶

There is also a normative argument supporting China's inclusion in global governance. Hedley Bull, one of the leading proponents of the 'English School' of international relations, suggests that great powers have a responsibility to ensure order in a largely anarchical world. In return for their special rights and privileges, great powers must assume duties and managerial responsibilities in world affairs.⁷ Being widely recognized as a rising power, Beijing is increasingly coming under pressure from the international society to shoulder more responsibilities.⁸ One could indeed foresee that China will only be viewed as a 'responsible' power in the eyes of other nations, if it takes responsibility for the management of the global problems that it has in large part helped to produce.

To manage global and cross-border challenges the world needs leadership. Although leadership is a word bestowed with negative connotations, it remains a positive idea if it is thought of as the provision of the public good of responsibility. In his economic history of the 1930s, Charles Kindleberger outlined three preconditions for a country to exert leadership and to provide stability in the world: capacity, will and legitimacy.⁹ Whether China is likely to assume a positive leadership role in global governance depends largely on the extent to which it has these three assets at its disposal.

⁴ HUMPHREY, John, MESSNER, Dirk, *Unstable multipolarity? China's and India's challenges for global governance*, Briefing Paper No. 1/2006 (Bonn, German Development Institute, 2006), p. 4. (Available from: www.die-gdi.de, accessed on April 13, 2006).

⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 41.

⁶ LESAGE, Dries, Inleiding, in LESAGE, Dries, (red.), *Het beheer van de wereld: de politieke haalbaarheid van mondiale publieke goederen* (Gent, Academia Press, 2006), p. 13.

⁷ BULL, Hedley, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002), pp. 212-220.

⁸ For a wide ranging discussion involving Australian, British and Chinese scholars on the notion of China as a responsible great power, see YONGJIN, Zhang, AUSTIN, Greg, (eds.), *Power and responsibility in Chinese foreign policy* (Canberra, Asia Pacific Press, 2001).

⁹ KINDLEBERGER, Charles P., *The world in depression 1929-1939* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973), pp. 291-308; BROWN, Chris, *Understanding international relations* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005), p. 131.

This article will address two questions emanating from this introduction: (1) *Does China have the legitimacy, will and capacity to become a driving actor in global governance?* And (2) *What challenges does the possible inclusion of China into the global governance arena pose for the latter?*

1. LEGITIMATE? CHINA'S GROWING SOFT POWER

The exploding literature on the re-emergence of China as a great power has focused primarily on the rise of China's economic and military power. Far less attention has been paid to the rise of China's soft power. Yet in a global information age, Joseph Nye argues, soft power or "*the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion,*" has become at least as important as hard power.¹⁰ Whereas hard power grows out of a country's military or economic might, soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.¹¹ It is not until very recently that some observers have started to report an increase in Chinese soft power.¹² Buttressed by its economic growth and diplomatic adroitness, China's influence has expanded remarkably both in Asia and throughout the world. Although the view of China as a threat is still commonly held in countries like the United States and Taiwan, an alternative view appears to quickly gain ascendancy elsewhere, most notably in China's own neighborhood: that of China as a benign and responsible status quo power, inclined to multilateral cooperation and willing to engage itself actively in Asia for the purposes of peace and prosperity.¹³ In sum, China is becoming more widely recognized as an important and responsible country.¹⁴ It's new, favorable image divulges its accumulating great-power legitimacy.

China's churning economic engine has made its traditional culture acquire global popular attractiveness. The fact that a former developing nation finances some of the world's most daring architectural projects, launches men into space, and even intends to land a man on the moon by 2020, has evoked world-wide fascination.¹⁵ As a spill-over of China's growing economic engagement with the world, Chinese print media, television, music, food, popular culture, and tourists are spreading

¹⁰ NYE, Joseph Jr., OWENS, William A., America's information edge. In: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, No. 2, 1996, p. 21.

¹¹ NYE, Joseph S. Jr., *Soft power: the means to success in world politics* (New York, Public Affairs, 2004), 192 pp.

¹² LEONARD, Mark, How China is wooing the world. In: *Guardian*, September 11, 2004.

¹³ SHAMBAUGH, David, China engages Asia: reshaping the regional order. In: *International Security*, vol. 29, No. 3, 2005, pp. 64-99.

¹⁴ KIM, Samuel S., China's path to great power status in the globalization era, in LIU, Guoli, (ed.), *Chinese foreign policy in transition* (New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 2004), p. 365.

¹⁵ N.N., China to train next spacemen. BBC News World Edition, February 2, 2004. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3450643.stm>, accessed on April 7, 2006).

around the globe as never before.¹⁶ Chinese cultural products not only seem to be in vogue, they also seem to be surrounded by a new-found chic. Chinese novelist Gao Xingjian won China's first Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000, and the Chinese film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" became the highest grossing non-English film of all time.¹⁷ Today, the Chinese film industry has even blossomed into the third-largest in the world.¹⁸ Yao Ming, the Chinese star of the American National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets, is rapidly becoming a household name, matching that of Michael Jordan.¹⁹ The list is endless.

Another side-effect of China's tremendous economic growth seems to be that virtually every nation-state is pushing and shoving to secure a fair slice of the cake. Wherever they go, Chinese officials get red-carpet treatment by countries yearning to obtain lucrative contracts of the world's fastest growing economy. When Hu Jintao, China's president, visited Paris in 2004, the French government celebrated by bathing the Eiffel Tower in red light and staging a dragon parade along the Champs-Élysées.²⁰ Jacques Chirac even named 2004 the Year of China, and did not mention Taiwan or human rights.²¹ His posture of wooing Chinese leaders is emblematic of the 'China fever' that has seized the world. This year London is celebrating Chinese culture and in 2007 Russia will hold its own Year of China.²²

China's mounting cultural magnetism is further stimulated by deliberate official campaigns to popularize Chinese culture abroad. More than creating domestic revenue, this 'cultural diplomacy' is intended to generate positive reputation effects. It reflects an increased appreciation by the Chinese government of the importance of norms and soft power in international affairs. Beijing has successfully bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympics — a chance to show the world what it is capable of.²³ It has created 26 Confucius Institutes around the world to teach its language and culture,²⁴ and while the Voice of America has cut its Chinese broadcasts to 14 from 19 hours a day, China Radio International has increased its

¹⁶ SHAMBAUGH, *China engages Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁷ POCHA, Jehangir, The rising "soft power" of China and India, in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, vol. 20, No. 1, 2003, p. 5.

¹⁸ EIMER, David, The Chinese cinema industry: China's cultural revolution, in *Independent*, January 5, 2006.

¹⁹ NYE, Joseph S. Jr., The rise of China's soft power, in *Wall Street Journal Asia*, December 29, 2005.

²⁰ N.N., The reds in the West, in *Economist*, January 15, 2005, p. 50.

²¹ ASH, Timothy Garton, Chasing the dragon, in *Guardian*, March 24, 2005.

²² GOSSET, David, A new world with Chinese characteristics, in *Asia Times*, April 7, 2006.

²³ POCHA, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁴ FRENCH, Howard W., Another Chinese export is all the rage: China's language, in *New York Times*, January 11, 2006; VATIKIOTIS, Michael, The soft power of 'Happy Chinese', in *International Herald Tribune*, January 18, 2006.

broadcasts in English to 24 hours a day.²⁵ Equally important, the Chinese leaders have opened up their country to foreigners. The enrollment of foreign students in China has tripled to 110,000 from 36,000 over the past decade, and the number of foreign tourists has also increased dramatically to 17 million last year.²⁶ Although the net influence of these people-to-people exchanges can never be exactly measured, David Shambaugh believes that they are very important. The academic training of future generations of Asian elites in China will “sensitize them to Chinese viewpoints and interests. [...] Those who enter officialdom may be more accommodating of Chinese interests and demands.”²⁷

The developing world too, is increasingly taking notice of the Chinese juggernaut. The World Bank, using its 1\$/day income measure, estimates that China has lifted 400 million people out of absolute poverty in the past 25 years.²⁸ China’s resounding economic success is a source of inspiration for other developing countries. The “Beijing Consensus” has become the new buzz-phrase, coined by former Time-editor Joshua Ramo. He asserts that the Chinese development paradigm represents a direct challenge to the neo-liberal “Washington consensus” sponsored by the Bretton Woods institutions.²⁹ The recipe for success is so intoxicating that countries like Thailand, Vietnam and Brazil are sending study teams to China.³⁰ But the attractiveness of the “Beijing Consensus” is not just the by-product of China’s booming economy. Although it officially denies it, the Chinese government is *actively* promoting its own brand of economic development, encouraging developing nations to fashion their economic systems after the Chinese model.³¹ By doing so, it is also implicitly exporting *political* values, such as its authoritarian political system and its professed respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.³² Contrary to the United States, China does not lecture other nation-states on democracy or human rights. These values are particularly appealing to leaders in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Anouar Abdel-Malek, an Egyptian social scientist, sees China’s experiment with economic liberalization and gradual political reforms as a model for the Arab world.³³

²⁵ PERLEZ, Jane, Chinese move to eclipse U.S. appeal in South Asia, in *New York Times*, November 18, 2004.

²⁶ NYE, Joseph S. Jr., The rise of China’s soft power, in *Wall Street Journal Asia*, December 29, 2005.

²⁷ SHAMBAUGH, China engages Asia, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²⁸ WORLD BANK, *China: Promoting Growth with Equity*, Country Economic Memorandum (Washington D.C., September 2003), p. 9.

²⁹ RAMO, Joshua Cooper, *The Beijing Consensus: notes on the new physics of Chinese power* (London, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004), 74 pp.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³¹ FRENCH, Howard W., In a class for diplomats, China cultivates African ties, in *International Herald Tribune*, November 20, 2005; THOMPSON, Drew, China’s soft power in Africa: from the “Beijing Consensus” to health diplomacy, in *China Brief*, vol. V, No. 21, 2005, p. 4.

³² THOMPSON, *op. cit.*, p. 3; TAYLOR, Ian, Beijing’s arms and oil interests in Africa, in *China Brief*, vol. V, No. 21, 2005, pp. 5-6.

³³ ABDEL-MALEK, Anouar, Peaceful rising, in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, October 14, 2004.

Using diplomacy, aid, technical expertise, trade and investment, Beijing is trying to rally Third World support around a paradigm of globalization that favours its interests.³⁴ The net result is an increase in Chinese influence in developing countries. In Africa, where China gets more than a quarter of its oil imports, China is in some countries even challenging the influence of the United States.³⁵ Washington is so concerned with China's growing influence in Latin America that it has dispatched the assistant secretary of state responsible for the region, Thomas Shannon, to Beijing to find out what is going on.³⁶ Joshua Kurlantzick is worried of the potential spread of China's political values, saying: "*These are not values one would wish on the world, on Asia, or on ordinary Chinese. [...] If China's soft power grows, [...] more countries will choose this authoritarian model.*" His conclusion is rabid but clear: "*China's global rise is a bad thing, and must be combated.*"³⁷

The burst in China's soft power is entangled with some powerful geopolitical undercurrents. Some Americans fear that rising Chinese influence in Southeast Asia has come at the expense of the United States. According to John Mearsheimer, the Chinese are developing their own version of the Monroe Doctrine, directed at the United States.³⁸ Eric Teo believes that China is resurrecting the imperial tributary system of the Ming and Qing dynasties, where the Middle Kingdom was the central heart of a regional system of trade, cultural eminence and respect.³⁹ Others, by contrast, view China's increasing regional influence as largely a natural consequence of its economic dynamism and see it as a source for stability, complementary to American interests.⁴⁰ Beyond their fundamental differences, both groups have in common that they exaggerate China's rising influence. Its growing soft power should be put into perspective for at least three reasons.

First, prevailing media and scholarly assessments are unbalanced, emphasizing China's strengths and the United States' weaknesses. There are congressional,

³⁴ See, for example, PERLEZ, Jane, China races to replace U.S. as economic power in Asia, in *New York Times*, June 28, 2002; MURPHY, David, China's foreign relations: softening at the edges, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 4, 2004, pp. 32-36; THOMPSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

³⁵ ZWEIG, David, Bi, Jianhai, China's global hunt for energy, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, No. 5, 2005, pp. 25-38.

³⁶ HAWKSLEY, Humphrey, Chinese influence in Brazil worries US. BBC News World Edition, April 3, 2006. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pt/fr/-/2/hi/americas/4872522.stm>, accessed on April 16, 2006).

³⁷ KURLANTZICK, Joshua, China's chance, in *Prospect Magazine*, March 2005, Issue 108.

³⁸ MEARSHEIMER, John J., The future of the American pacifier, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 80, No. 5, 2001, p. 57.

³⁹ TEO, Eric, Asian security and the reemergence of China's tributary system, in *China Brief*, vol. IV, No. 18, September 2004, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁰ LAMPTON, David M., China's rise in Asia need not be at America's expense, in SHAMBAUGH, David, (ed.), *Power shift: China and Asia's new dynamics* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006), pp. 306-328.

media and interest group pressures on the Bush administration that employ these overstated assessments of China's increasing power in order to push for tough American policies to confront and compete with China. If one paid more attention to China's weaknesses, one would realize that Beijing's willingness and ability to lead in Asia is seriously undermined, notably by many domestic preoccupations.⁴¹ Those who assert that China is posing a major threat to American soft power and predict a new Cold-War style ideological rivalry,⁴² overlook how much the China of today differs from the Soviet Union of the late 1940s. As Robert Zoellick contends, Beijing is simply not seeking to spread radical, anti-American ideologies. China may not be democratic; it does not see itself in a twilight conflict against democracy around the globe. While at times mercantilist, it does not see itself in a death struggle with capitalism. And most importantly, China does not believe that its future depends on overturning the fundamental order of the international system. In fact, quite the reverse: Chinese leaders have decided that their success depends on being networked with the modern world.⁴³

Second, just as the United States holds the balance of raw military power, America reigns supreme in the realm of soft power and culture. Over all, China's stepped up endeavors in cultural suasion remain modest compared with those of the United States, and American popular culture, from Hollywood movies to MTV, is still vastly more exportable and accessible.⁴⁴ China may have increased its attractiveness, it does not yet rank high on the various indices of potential soft-power resources that are possessed by the United States, Europe, and Japan.⁴⁵

Third, perceptions are volatile. In March 2005, a BBC poll of 22 countries found that nearly half of the respondents saw Beijing's influence on the world as positive, compared to only 38 percent who said the same for the United States.⁴⁶ According to another global opinion poll, published in June 2005 by the Pew Research Center, China had already a better image than the United States in most European nations.⁴⁷ More recently, however, a new BBC poll showed a more moderate picture for 2005. The 33-country survey indicated that views of China have deteriorated sharply over the last year, especially in Europe and in some Asian countries. Nonetheless, on balance, China still has considerably more

⁴¹ SUTTER, Robert G., *China's rise: implications for U.S. leadership in Asia*, Policy Studies 21 (Washington D.C., East-West Center Washington, 2006), p. vii.

⁴² KURLANTZICK, Joshua, How China is changing global diplomacy, in *The New Republic*, June 27, 2005.

⁴³ ZOELICK, Robert B., Whither China: from membership to responsibility?, in *NBR Analysis*, vol. 16, No. 4, December 2005, p. 7.

⁴⁴ PERLEZ, Jane, Chinese move to eclipse U.S. appeal in South Asia, in *New York Times*, November 18, 2004.

⁴⁵ NYE, Joseph S. Jr., The allure of Asia, in *Daily Times*, November 26, 2005.

⁴⁶ N.N., China's influence seen positive. BBC News World Edition, March 5, 2005. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4318551.stm>, accessed on April 6, 2006).

⁴⁷ KNOWLTON, Brian, The U.S. image abroad: even China's is better, in *International Herald Tribune*, June 24, 2005.

countries holding a positive than a negative view of it.⁴⁸ The sharp swings in normative thinking about China's influence in world affairs, reveal that Beijing has not yet unconditionally earned a favorable reputation. The view of China as a 'responsible great power' has yet to consolidate, despite its advance in recent years.

2. WILLING? THE 'NEW THINKING' IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

To a large extent, the amelioration of China's image has been nourished by some profound adjustments that have crept into China's foreign policy over the course of the last decade. In recent years, and particularly since the elevation of Hu Jintao to the most prominent positions in the country's leadership, several China specialists have noted this 'sea change' in China's diplomacy. As Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel put it in a very comprehensive article in *Foreign Affairs* in late 2003: "China has begun to take a less confrontational, more sophisticated, more confident, and, at times, more constructive approach toward regional and global affairs."⁴⁹ Kenneth Lieberthal and Robert Sutter observed that China has become "more confident [...] increasingly pragmatic, nuanced and consistent,"⁵⁰ and "increasingly moderate and flexible."⁵¹ China's peaceful and friendly diplomacy in Asia, viewed against the backdrop of America's unilateralism and myopic focus on the war against terrorism, has gained high praise in the region.⁵² As a consequence, Beijing has certainly revamped its international standing after the dramatic downturn in the mid-1990s. But what exactly has changed in China's external relations that can account for this shift in the perception of China? Four major transformations appear to have altered the form and content of China's foreign policy: a tendency towards more activism, cooperation, pragmatism and multilateralism.

China's recent diplomatic **activism** sharply contrasts with the low-key position it assumed in the wake of the Tiananmen incident of 1989. From a passive, inward-looking non-player, Beijing has evolved into an outward-looking, pro-active actor, not only engaging in its own periphery, but with a global presence. The former diplomatic isolation and autarkic economic strategy have been exchanged for an interaction of unprecedented intensity with the outside world and the forces of globalization. Thus, Beijing has become more active on the international scene, but as a positive, **cooperative** and constructive force. It has not turned into an

⁴⁸ N.N., Global poll finds Iran viewed negatively. World Public Opinion, February 3, 2006. (http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/168.php?nid=&id=&pnt=168&lb=btvoc, accessed on April 6, 2006).

⁴⁹ MEDEIROS, Evan S., FRAVEL, M. Taylor, China's new diplomacy, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, No. 6, 2003, p. 22.

⁵⁰ LIEBERTHAL, Kenneth, Has China become an ally?, in *New York Times*, October 25, 2002.

⁵¹ SUTTER, Robert, Asia in the balance: America and China's "peaceful rise", in: *Current History*, September 2004, p. 284.

⁵² SUTTER, *China's rise, op. cit.*, p. 1.

aggressive, expansionist future hegemon as was widely feared in the mid-1990s when China seized the Mischief Reef, vigorously claimed the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and beleaguered Taiwan. Along with the new accommodative posture, the former ideological obstinateness has disappeared in favour of **pragmatism**. China's international orientation no longer serves the purposes of the communist world revolution, but essentially revolves around the promotion of hard economic interests. The most important shift in post-Cold War Chinese foreign policy can be seen as the confluence of these three former tendencies. It is a new, emerging commitment to global and regional institutionalized **multilateralism**. Given Beijing's traditional rigid and inflexible attitude as regards sovereignty, this evolution is all the more striking. To be sure, China's participation in global multilateral regimes dates as far as the early 1970s, when it joined the United Nations (UN). But it is not until the mid-1990s that China has become a player in *Asian* regionalism and that important changes have occurred in Chinese regime's *behaviour*. Whereas Beijing used to play the part of a free-rider, seeking influence without shouldering responsibilities, it nowadays acts more like a team-player, offering substantial support to various regimes even if this entails certain domestic costs.⁵³

Evidence of this transformation abounds.⁵⁴ China has improved relations with all fourteen countries that it borders, successfully settling territorial disputes from Laos to Kazakhstan and narrowing its differences even with former arch-enemy India. It signed a friendship treaty with Russia and was the driving force behind the establishment of the first regional multilateral security forum in Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Beijing has also been playing a leading role in the organization of the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. During the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, China earned much praise for not devaluing its currency and for contributing \$4 billion to the IMF bailout of Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.⁵⁵ In 2002, China for the first time agreed to a multilateral approach of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.⁵⁶ China also proposed establishing a free trade zone with Southeast Asia by

⁵³ MEDEIROS, FRAVEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-35; MEN, Jing, *Converging to the international society? An analysis of Chinese foreign policy from 1949 to 2002*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Brussels, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2003-2004), 387 pp.; OKSENBERG, Michel, ECONOMY, Elizabeth, Introduction: China joins the world, in: ECONOMY, Elizabeth, OKSENBERG, Michel, (eds.), *China joins the world: progress and prospects* (New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), pp. 1-41.

⁵⁴ See also: VAN DE GRAAF, Thijs, *De nieuwe Aziëpolitiek van de Volksrepubliek China, in Samenleving en Politiek*, vol. 12, No. 9, 2005, pp. 43-49.

⁵⁵ MOORE, Thomas G., YANG, Dixia, Empowered and restrained: China's foreign policy in the age of economic interdependence, in LAMPTON, David M., (ed.), *The making of Chinese foreign and security policy in the era of reform* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 215-222.

⁵⁶ BUSZYNSKI, Leszek, ASEAN, the Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea, in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 25, No. 3, 2003, p. 357.

2010, and became in 2003 the first non-member to sign a friendship treaty with ASEAN.⁵⁷

China's international posture remains Asia-centric to be sure, but the 1990s also witnessed China's growing integration in the global community and greater levels of cooperative behaviour within it than ever before. The most symbolic milestone was China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), in late 2001. China's membership and participation in UN-related regimes and treaties have increased steadily. Even in the sensitive domain of arms control and disarmament, China's involvement and support of international norms have increased substantially. In the past ten to fifteen years, Beijing has signed onto agreements or made arms control commitments that it had previously opposed vigorously, like for instance the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).⁵⁸ As regards environmental issues, China has already ratified all relevant international conventions, including the Kyoto Protocol.⁵⁹ Peacekeeping is another issue area in which the pattern of increased Chinese involvement is mirrored. In 2000, China for the first time ever dispatched peacekeepers to East Timor. Ever since, China has sent, altogether, 392 peacekeeping police officers to six UN operations in East Timor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liberia, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Haiti.⁶⁰ In the human rights field, China signed the two keystone covenants in 1997 and 1998, but it has yet to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁶¹

The changes in China's diplomatic practice were cloaked in a "new" discourse. Since 1997, Chinese officials have been talking about China's "New Security Concept" (NSC). The NSC is not a detailed, elaborated policy blueprint, but a series of principles that propagate a new approach of security as the foundation for a new international order. It states that the groundwork of inter-state relations should be mutual trust, cooperation and confidence. Basically, the NSC reaffirms the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that have been a central theme in Chinese foreign policy since the 1950s.⁶² In 2003, another innovating concept entered the Chinese foreign policy rhetoric: China's "peaceful rise". The term

⁵⁷ MEDEIROS, FRAVEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-35; PAN, Philip P., China's improving image challenges U.S. in Asia, in *Washington Post*, November 15, 2003, p. A01.

⁵⁸ SWAINE, Michael D., JOHNSTON, Alastair Iain, China and arms control institutions, in: ECONOMY, OKSENBERG (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁵⁹ KIM, Samuel S., China's path to great power status in the globalization era, in LIU, Guoli, (ed.), *Chinese foreign policy in transition* (New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 2004), p. 374.

⁶⁰ DING, Zhitao, In the name of peace: China's role in UN peacekeeping missions. In: *Beijing Review*, November 4, 2004, pp. 16-17.

⁶¹ MEN, Jing, GEERAERTS, Gustaaf, China's rise and Northeast Asian security, in *Studia Diplomatica*, vol. LVI, No. 6, 2003, p. 47.

⁶² Those principles are: (1) mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-interference; (4) equality and mutual benefits; and (5) peaceful coexistence. ROY, Denny, China's pitch for a multipolar world: the New Security Concept, in *Asia-Pacific Security Studies*, vol. 2, No. 1, 2003, pp. 2-4.

reflects a recognition that China is rising quickly and that this causes anxiety in Asia and the United States. The peaceful rise doctrine can be seen as a rather belated answer to the “China threat theory.” Historically, the rise of new great powers often resulted in war. China wants to avoid this scenario by not choosing the path of territorial expansion and a neo-mercantile economic policy, but by continuing the policy of reform and opening up. Therefore, China will have an essential interest in preserving a peaceful environment and will play an active role in the development, prosperity and stability of all Asian nations. China’s rise is presented as a ‘non-zero sum game’.⁶³ In time the concept of “peaceful rise” was replaced with “peaceful development” to further emphasize the non-threatening nature of China’s growth.⁶⁴

It is clear that the Chinese government is “*communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies.*”⁶⁵ This corresponds to Hans Tuch’s definition of “public diplomacy”. Generating a favorable image allows to achieve multiple objectives. It helps to advance all kinds of transactions, whether promoting policies, selling products or attracting investment.⁶⁶ Beijing is trying to mould public perceptions to create an enabling environment for its economic development, by calming regional fears and reassuring Asian neighbours. Furthermore, creating a positive reputation allows isolating Taiwan internationally and enhancing Beijing’s prestige as an emerging pillar in a new multipolar global power constellation.⁶⁷

3. ABLE? CHINA’S DOMESTIC GOVERNANCE CRISIS

Because of their fundamentally intertwined nature, China’s foreign and domestic policy cannot be analyzed separately. Indeed, as mentioned above, internal debates may well define the contours of China’s new global role.⁶⁸ As the rapidly transforming Chinese society engenders huge socio-economic challenges, it is very conceivable that the priorities of the Chinese leadership will lay in the domestic arena for quite another while, thus prohibiting a larger political role of China in global governance. While proud of their accomplishments, China’s

⁶³ MEDEIROS, Evan S., China debates its “peaceful rise” strategy, in *YaleGlobal*, June 22, 2004. (<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=4118>, assessed on April 10, 2006).

⁶⁴ SUETTINGER, Robert L., The rise and descent of “peaceful rise”, in *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 12, 2004, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Hans Tuch quoted in: MELISSEN, Jan, *Wielding soft power: the new public diplomacy*, Clingendael Diplomacy Papers No. 2 (The Hague, Clingendael, May 2005), p. 8.

⁶⁶ LEONARD, Mark, Diplomacy by other means, in *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2002, pp. 49-50.

⁶⁷ SUTTER, Robert, Why does China matter?, in *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, No. 1, 2003-04, p. 84.

⁶⁸ ANSFIELD, Jonathan, Giver or taker? China: an internal debate over aid underscores Beijing’s struggle to cope with its new global role, in *Newsweek International*, January 17, 2005.

leaders recognize their country's weaknesses. According to Minxin Pei, China is facing a real domestic governance crisis.⁶⁹ Beneath the dazzling economic success, a number of time bombs are ticking. One such time bomb is the vast income inequality between the booming economies of the coastal cities in the east and the stagnation and poverty of the rural interior, where two-thirds of China's population — nearly 900 million people — are living.⁷⁰ Environmental and social problems and the “bad” loans that continue to plague China's state-controlled banks could equally bring China's economic expansion to a halt. The flourishing corruption and abuses of power are contributing to the rising social unrest in China. In recent years, protests are increasing in number and size and are becoming better organized. China's diplomacy does not remain unaffected. “*China's pervasive fear of unrest [...] has quietly insinuated itself into almost every issue in China's major bilateral and multilateral relationships and, in many ways, will set the limits on how far China can go in its new diplomacy.*”⁷¹

Given China's size, one could state that, if the Chinese government succeeds in managing domestic governance, it has already provided a large contribution to global governance, because the way China manages its transition will have a large impact on the rest of the world. As David Dollar, the World Bank's country director for China, explains: “*the Chinese economy is already so big that failure to manage its financial system, to adjust rationally to natural resource scarcity, or to cope with its enormous air and water pollution problems will be felt by its neighbours, its trading partners and its geopolitical rivals alike.*”⁷² If the Chinese economy would suffer a hard landing, the rest of the world will feel the bump, because China is already a major locomotive of the global economy.⁷³ If the Chinese authorities fail to manage critical national transformations, internal tensions could result in nationalistic, aggressive foreign policy options.⁷⁴

China's domestic order continues to a certain extent to cast a slur on its changing international image and diplomacy. China's increasingly liberal internationalist foreign policy is incompatible with its illiberal domestic order. There is indeed one part of the normative pressure of ‘international society’ to which China has yet to respond before it can be considered as a full-fledged ‘global citizen’: the standards of good governance, democracy and human rights.⁷⁵ Although the

⁶⁹ PEI, Minxin, China's governance crisis, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, No. 5, Sep/Oct 2002, pp. 96-109.

⁷⁰ ZOELICK, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁷¹ TANNER, Murray Scot, China rethinks unrest, in *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, No. 3, 2004, p. 153.

⁷² DOLLAR, David, China's economic problems (and ours), in *Milken Institute Review*, third quarter 2005, p. 58.

⁷³ WOODALL, Pam, The dragon and the eagle, in *Economist*, October 2, 2004.

⁷⁴ HUMPHREY, John, MESSNER, Dirk, China and India as emerging global governance actors: challenges for developing and developed countries, *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 37, No. 1, p. 111.

⁷⁵ FOOT, Rosemary, Chinese power and the idea of a responsible state, in YONGJIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-42.

widespread criticism on the Chinese government's human-rights practices has tarnished China's international influence and reputation, it has appeared to have only a small impact on Chinese practices.⁷⁶

The yin-and-yang pattern that could sometimes be discerned in China's foreign policy — with cooperative and multilateral tendencies on the one hand, and aggressive, nationalistic rhetoric against Taiwan and Japan on the other hand — is largely explained by the nature of the Chinese regime. Susan Shirk succinctly described this dynamic: “*In a communist state like China with no democratic elections, a communist party monopoly on political power and no fixed terms of communist party office, the competition for power never ends and continuously pervades the policy process.*”⁷⁷ Continuous power struggles in Beijing, with conservatives far more adroit at exploiting popular nationalist sentiments than their more liberal-minded colleagues, undermine China's execution of a constructive, long-term foreign policy. Insecurity, secrecy, intolerance and unpredictability are flawed characteristics, inherent to all autocracies.⁷⁸

4. TOWARDS GLOBAL GOVERNANCE WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

The previous sections of this article highlighted two important shifts, relevant for any assessment of China's potential role as an Asian driver for global governance. First, there are some significant perceptual changes. China is becoming more widely viewed as a “responsible great power”, and is itself assuming a ‘great-power mentality’, recognizing the need to take on its share of responsibilities in the international community. In the eyes of other nations, China was until recently generally regarded as a “problem”. Today, by contrast, there seems to be wide acceptance of China as a responsible participant in global affairs. The world seems to be less and less hostile to the idea of China playing a benevolent leadership role in its own region and beyond. Chinese leaders, for their part, are more self-confident and increasingly view their nation as a major power. They now talk explicitly about the need to “share global responsibilities” among great powers — China included.⁷⁹ Reflecting these changes, President Hu Jintao became the first Chinese leader to attend a meeting of the group of eight highly industrialized countries (G8) in June 2003.⁸⁰

Second, there are some important policy changes. As illustrated by its recent active support for multilateralism, China is increasingly matching its foreign policy deeds with its words. Over the past decade China has shifted its posture

⁷⁶ SUTTER, Why does China matter?, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁷⁷ SHIRK, Susan, The domestic roots of China's post-Tiananmen foreign policy, in *Harvard International Review*, vol. 13, No. 2, 1991, p. 32.

⁷⁸ PEI, Minxin, Beijing's closed politics hinders ‘new diplomacy’, in *Financial Times*, September 9, 2004.

⁷⁹ KIM, China's path to great power status in the globalization era, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-368.

⁸⁰ MEDEIROS, FRAVEL, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

from that of an aggrieved victim of Western imperialism to that of an increasingly responsible member of the international community. Formerly acting as a passive, free-rider, Beijing became an adept player of the multilateral game, embracing much of the current constellation of international institutions, rules, and norms as a means to promote its national interests. Increasingly, the Chinese have suggested a role for themselves as a supplier of global public goods.⁸¹ For example, they have initiated the establishment of regional multilateral security *fora*, both institutionalized (the SCO) as well as more informal (the six-party talks). They have also presented themselves as the architects of a new regional free-trade order by proposing a blizzard of new Asian multilateral economic arrangements, including two agreements with ASEAN (“ASEAN plus one” and “ASEAN plus three”, with Japan and North Korea), as well as China-ASEAN and East Asian free-trade areas. Clearly, the Chinese are exerting leadership to ensure that their status in the international political arena matches their growing economic power.⁸² There are signs of an increased willingness of the Chinese leadership to work more openly and cooperatively with its neighbours on such transnational issues as environmental protection, public health, drug trafficking, and governance. Even though the region undoubtedly recognizes the limitations of China as a leader on such issues, China’s role as a contributor to transnational problems dictates its presence at the table. Elizabeth Economy contends, however, that “*to the extent that China is reforming its own practices and increasingly behaving in a responsible manner both domestically and internationally, the opportunity for China to assume a leadership role will increase exponentially.*”⁸³

In short, shifting perceptions and practices are paving the way for an increased Chinese role as a ‘responsible power’ that helps to address global and cross-border problems. From this, the question inevitably arises which role China is likely to assume in the global governance arena. Oddly enough, the potential role of China as a driving actor in the management of global and transboundary challenges has been generally overlooked in most of the literature on global politics and governance.⁸⁴ In the literature on China’s foreign policy there have been lots of scholarly attention for the theme of China and international regimes, but Chinese foreign policy has not been explicitly linked to the concept of global governance.

Nevertheless, the emergence of a new global player in international relations poses a series of daunting questions for the future “governability” of global regimes. China’s unusual identity as the most populous non-Western nation, a non-demo-

⁸¹ FUKUYAMA, Francis, *East Asian political economy from a global perspective*, paper presented to the PRI-SAIS Conference on “The Future Prospect of the East Asian Economy and Its Geopolitical Risk.” February 23, 2004, p. 3 (<http://www.mof.go.jp/english/others/ots022a.pdf>, accessed on April 13, 2006).

⁸² FUKUYAMA, Francis, Re-envisioning Asia, in *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2005.

⁸³ ECONOMY, Elizabeth, China’s rise in Southeast Asia: implications for the United States, in *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 14, No. 44, 2005, p. 423.

⁸⁴ MESSNER, HUMPHREY, China and India in the global governance arena, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-3.

cratic state and the largest emerging market, makes its inclusion in the global governance process a compelling and complex challenge. First, despite China's multilateral rhetoric and practice, its willingness and capacity to play an active and responsible role in global governance remains questionable.⁸⁵ According to Joshua Kurlantzick "*Beijing continues to ignore the global implications of its actions while aggressively pursuing its own course.*"⁸⁶ How do Chinese leaders conceptualize their 'national interests' and China's role as regional and/or global power? Is there a basis of support, both on societal and elite level, for China to assume a greater role in global governance, or will China continue to be mainly concerned with its own internal affairs?

Second, how will the West and the United States in particular, respond? Before we can assess the potential role of a rising great power in the management of global challenges, we have to ask if the rise itself is a manageable global challenge, or if rivalry with the established superpower is inevitable?⁸⁷ In a possible future multipolar power constellation, the interplay between an increasingly self-confident China and the United States might largely determine whether and how the transboundary and global problems of the twenty-first century are dealt with. How long will Western countries need to understand that their "coincidence of interests and power" and "custom-made globalization" no longer remains unquestioned?⁸⁸ Consider the following example. Holding the world's second largest currency reserves, amounting to over 670 billion US dollar,⁸⁹ China could easily buy out Europe's shares in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and render the IMF more "democratic". But the big question is whether the rich countries that have long ruled the roost at the Fund would actually surrender some of their power.⁹⁰

Third, to what extent will the architecture, content and process of global governance be altered by China's eventual inclusion? What influence could Beijing exert on the alliances and bargaining in international organizations? Do Chinese leaders perceive themselves as speakers of all developing countries as in the past? The most visible case of China acting in concert with other emerging economies and leading developing countries (Brazil, South Africa, and India) is the formation of the G-20+, which flexed its muscle at the WTO talks in Cancun. On environmental issues such as climate change, these four countries are grouped with Russia to define the five most influential countries outside of the OECD, each playing a

⁸⁵ ZHANG, Yongjin, *China goes global* (London, Foreign Policy Centre, 2005), p. xiv.

⁸⁶ KURLANTZICK, Joshua, Economic power, political enigma, in *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 25, No. 3, 2002, p. 63.

⁸⁷ KAGAN, Robert, The illusion of 'managing' China, in *Washington Post*, May 15, 2005.

⁸⁸ HUMPHREY, MESSNER, China and India as emerging global governance actors, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹⁰ ROGOFF, Kenneth, The real route to democracy at the IMF, in *Commentary*, March 2005. (<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/rogoff3>, accessed on April 17, 2006).

key role in their regions. Do these new blocs of developing nations herald an era of new alliances among emerging countries as a counterweight to industrialized nations?⁹¹ Will China adapt immediately to rules in whose compilation it has had little say, or will it try to re-write these rules to give greater prominence to the view of developing countries? What policy options and political values does Beijing stand for? Will, for the first time since the 1960s and the heyday of Soviet influence in developing countries, the “Beijing Consensus” offer a real alternative view of what development is and how to achieve it?⁹² China is known to be an ardent supporter of the UN and the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention.⁹³ Does this imply that, after the “power shift” towards private actors in the West,⁹⁴ intergovernmental governance will be strengthened again? Or will the Chinese private sector, social networks and NGOs, including human rights activists, find a way to liberate themselves from the straitjacket of the authoritarian government in China? To what extent does China build up effective and coherent institutions to deal with its new international roles? What could be the impact of a greater Chinese involvement in global governance on the legitimacy of the latter? On the one hand, its inclusiveness could be strengthened, but on the other hand, China remains an undemocratic and non-liberal state. This may pose problems for the legitimacy of global governance processes, which of course depend not least on the legitimacy of the actors that shape them.⁹⁵

5. CONCLUSION

This exploratory paper has been more concerned with mapping the questions for a new research agenda, than with answering them. Summing up some tentative conclusions, this article has stated that, by dint of what it is and what it does, China is inevitable a relevant actor in global governance. However, whether or not it is likely to provide the public good of responsibility remains to be seen. China’s growing soft power is building up great-power legitimacy. Consequently, the world is increasingly taking for granted that China is already a great power, and that this is not necessarily a bad thing. But the United States remains vigorously opposed to the idea of China playing a benevolent leadership role, and thus challenging American hegemony. As regards China’s will to assume a leadership role, its recent foreign policy behaviour potentially reflects an increased willingness to engage in world affairs. But this engagement seems to be driven by the

⁹¹ WHELAN, Caroline, The new alliances. A shifting geography of trade: developing countries’ economic clout grows, in *International Herald Tribune*, July 10, 2004.

⁹² HUMPHREY, MESSNER, China and India as emerging global governance actors, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁹³ KIM, Samuel S., China and the United Nations. In: ECONOMY, Elizabeth, OKSENBERG, Michel, (eds.), *China joins the world: progress and prospects* (New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), pp. 42-89.

⁹⁴ MATTHEWS, Jessica T., Power shift, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, No. 1, 1997, pp. 50-66.

⁹⁵ HUMPHREY, MESSNER, China and India as emerging global governance actors, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

wish to promote hard economic interests, like generating a favorable image to attract investment and securing the supply of energy and raw minerals, rather than advancing global public goods. Its principled insistence on sovereignty has not waned. The most important obstacle for China to play a leading role in the management of transnational issues is China's domestic governance crisis. The Chinese leadership is increasingly nervous about internal stability and pursues a foreign policy that maximizes stability at home. In sum, China's soft power, new public diplomacy and domestic weakness, provide all the ingredients for a capability-expectations gap regarding its potential role in global governance.

How can the world ensure that China cooperates with the international society to help promote security and prosperity? China's aspired identity of a responsible power could be used as a leverage to make it fulfill its aspirations. Normative pressure, in combination with the Chinese preoccupation to project a favorable image, can serve as a tool to generate Chinese compliance with international rules and norms, in other words, to constrain its national interests. But by enmeshing China into a complex web of interdependency, the world has an opportunity to provoke a more powerful Chinese commitment to international norms. Through participation in international regimes, and particularly through "epistemic communities", the Chinese elite may become "socialized", internalizing the constitute beliefs and practices institutionalized in the international environment.⁹⁶

On the other hand, the West should be open and receptive to some Chinese demands in order to encourage China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international system. By doing so, China will have an essential interest in preserving the international system that has enabled its success and it will work to address some of the pressing challenges within this system. In the end, China could "*transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge.*"⁹⁷

⁹⁶ KENT, Ann, China's international socialization: the role of international institutions, in *Global Governance*, vol. 8, No. 3, 2002, p. 343.

⁹⁷ ZHENG, Bijian, China's "Peaceful Rise" to great-power status, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, No. 5, 2005, pp. 18-24.