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Rethinking global governance: a China model in the making?

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Rethinking global governance: a China model in the making?

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This paper examines Chinese perspectives on global governance, an area in which China has increased substantially the depth and breadth of its participation. The paper attempts to draw a mainstream perspective to inform our understanding of some key aspects of China's foreign policy. It demonstrates that while China's statist preference appeals to some Third World countries, such a preference leads the country to clash with the West over how to tackle global issues collectively, particularly over humanitarian intervention. While the Chinese perspective is in the process of evolving and far from reaching maturity, it is questionable whether the global community led by the West would find the Westphalian practice that China embraces admirable.

Keywords: Beijing consensus/China model; global governance; good governance; sovereignty; humanitarian intervention

In the processes of global governance . . . [states] are very central indeed.
Rosenau (2005, p. 62)

Global governance is not democratically legitimate.
Scholte (2005, p. 331)

There is little dispute that China has increasingly integrated itself into the international system and that China has remarkably increased its presence in various international organizations and regimes. At the same time, the doctrine of understanding global politics in the West has been transformed from state-centric international politics to the notion of 'global governance' and

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from ‘non-intervention’ to ‘humanitarian intervention’ while stressing the importance of ‘good governance’ in development. As a rising power and the most populous developing state, does China have a national blueprint for its participation in global governance? Will China adapt to the West’s changing conceptualization of global governance or will it construct and promote its own philosophy of development?

The emergence of the ‘China threat’ arguments since the early 1990s, the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8 and the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002–3 have all had lingering impacts on China’s foreign policy. China’s policymaking elites and their think-tank advisers see the need to express China’s overall thinking about its roles in global affairs. In addition, since the beginning of this century, they have discussed the possible impacts China can make on the global community. A critical first step towards gauging China’s participation in global governance in the twenty-first century would be to gain a better understanding of how it interprets the concept of global governance. This paper therefore aims at examining how the Chinese conceptualize global governance and the associated concept of good governance in a globalizing polity so as to provide a context against which China watchers can assess China’s participation in various issue areas of global governance.

The paper consists of four sections. Against a rapidly expanding literature in the West about the changing role of the state, the reconceptualization of national sovereignty, and the rise of the paradigm of good governance, Section 1 lays out the Chinese mainstream perspective on these three issues. The second section explains how China comes to such a conception of global governance. Section 3 shifts the focus from perspective to praxis through an examination of how China applies its thinking to real-world politics. Emphasis is placed on the issue of the ‘Washington Consensus’ versus the ‘Beijing Consensus’ and on the more recent notion of a ‘harmonious world’. Section 4 concludes by exploring the implications of such Chinese perspective for China’s external behaviour as well as its relations with the West.

Chinese perspectives on global governance

Using ‘*quanqiu zhili*’ (全球治理; global governance) as a keyword to look for articles from the database known as ‘China Academic Journals Full-text Database: Economics, Politics and Law’ (中国期刊全文数据库: 经济、政治与法律专档), the search reveals that between 1979 and 2006, a total of 342 articles were published, of which more than 96% were in 2000 and after. In other words, the subject of global governance has only entered the Chinese discourse for a few years. In the West, in contrast, a vast amount of literature on the subject has been generated since the early 1990s.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to go to great lengths to discuss the Western understanding of global governance (see, e.g., Camilleri and Falk 1992, Rosenau and Czempiel 1992, Falk 1995, Held *et al.* 1999, Held and McGrew 2002a, 2002b). Suffice it to say that the concept emerged in contemporary times against the background of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, a growing awareness of the global nature of environmental degradation and the debt crisis of developing nations in the 1980s (Sinclair 2005). Admitting the futility of individual states to resolve the transnational issues on its own, the proponents of global governance call for a broadened participation of actors in regulating and managing global issues and problems. Not only is the relative role of the state under transformation, its foundations are shaken as a result of a series of atrocities against humanity by state actors in Africa, the Balkans and Southeast Asia in the 1990s. These tragedies have led to cries for reconceptualizing national sovereignty. The age-old principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states is no longer regarded as sacrosanct. Sovereignty is reinterpreted as the responsibility to protect people and their property and reoriented around people as well as states (Annan 1999, International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001). As a

corollary, the dichotomy between ‘global’ and ‘domestic’ issues has become blurred. An increasing number of problems are considered to have transnational impacts and hence on the agenda of global governance. The growing Third World debt crisis of the 1980s, which triggered a call for global governance, prompted international financial institutions to examine the structural factors that held back sub-Saharan African countries from successfully implementing market-friendly reforms. A solution advocated by the Washington-dominated financial institutions and donor governments is good governance. Since the end of the Cold War, the political conditionality of good governance has often been imposed on developing countries seeking financial assistance (see Smith 2007 for a comprehensive discussion). We shall return shortly to these three key issues: the changing role of the state in global governance; the changing nature of sovereignty; and the prominence given to the paradigm of good governance.

The evolution of Chinese perspectives on global governance has come under the influence of a ‘new security concept’ advocated by Chinese leaders since 1996 when China presented a report to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence-building Measures in Tokyo in January 1996. With American hegemony as its implicit target, the new security concept calls for using cooperative means to deal with security issues without diluting its state-centric version of international relations (Yahuda 2005). It stresses the importance of ‘common security’ as well as multilateral approach to manage security threats. With this new security concept, China began to demonstrate a preference for a multilateral approach to participating in international affairs and for taking an active part in international forums involving various intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). To put flesh on the bones of this new concept, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a Position Paper on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues in 2002 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2002). The discourse of global governance among Chinese scholars has started to flourish since the dawn of this century.

Key figures in the study of globalization and global governance in China include Cai Tuo, Yu Zhengliang, Wang Yizhou and Yu Keping. The former three distinguish themselves from their colleagues in the country by sharing a globalist (*quanqiu zhuyi*) approach by virtue of their embrace of idealism, liberalism and non-statism (Dan 2006). In the first Chinese article that addresses the issue of global governance squarely, Cai Tuo, Director of the Research Centre on Globalization and Global Problems at China University of Political Science and Law, defines global governance as:

A set of new regulations, mechanisms, methods and activities for the administration of the public affairs of man, with the doctrine of holism of mankind and its common interest as the value orientation, and with dialogues, consultations and cooperation on equal footings among multiple actors as the approach so as to deal with global changes as well as global problems and challenges facing the contemporary world (Cai 2004b, p. 57).

A brief discussion of this definition reveals some interesting Chinese understandings of the concept of global governance. The term ‘administration of the public affairs of man’ refers apparently to the subject matter of practical politics. (Man [*ren lei*] here presumably means humankind, including both genders.) The ‘doctrine of holism’ derives from some Chinese philosophical appreciation of comprehensiveness of and balance in nature. It is interesting to point out that approaches such as ‘dialogues, consultations and cooperation’ are suggested, which tie in well with China’s diplomatic approach these days to resolve international problems through peaceful means, and is in tune with the desire for the development of a peaceful environment, both international and domestic, for its modernization to proceed smoothly. Furthermore, Cai (2004a) envisages five trends of global governance:

1. a move from government to non-governmental sector;

2. from state to society;
3. from territorial politics to non-territorial politics;
4. from an administration that is coercive and hierarchical to one that is based on equality, consultation, voluntariness and network; and
5. global governance as a special political authority.

The first three refer to the growing prominence of non-governmental actors, including civil society organizations and multinational corporations (MNCs), in global politics and their cross-border activities in what James Rosenau regards as ‘spheres of authority’. The fourth transformation signifies the activity of making collective decisions by a multitude of actors through non-hierarchical negotiations and agreements. As a result of the fourth factor, global governance has its own special political authority which would undermine the authority of the state but have yet to completely deprive it of authority. It seems that China is adjusting incrementally to these trends, with some people moving more readily than others. For example, those working in the theoretical domain of politics and international relations are more flexible and liberal than those working in the practical domain. Similar to the Western conceptions of global governance, Cai (2004b, p. 66) emphasizes the significance of compliance with global norms. He says that ‘to meet the challenges [of governing global problems], norms and mechanisms acceptable to all nations have to be created through dialogues, consultations and cooperation, to be followed by coordinated joint actions.’

Yu Zhengliang and his associates in Shanghai have coined the complex notions of ‘global co-governance’ (*quanqiu gongzhi*) and state co-governance (*guojia gongzhi*). In the former, a wide array of actors, not restricted to nation-states, manage issues of common concern in multilateral institutions and international treaties. To achieve this goal, state co-governance is the primary form of governance. Amounting in practice to no more than inter-state multilateral cooperation, state co-governance is to be accomplished by multilateral institutions, which have to be reformed in ‘democratic’ ways, with great powers assuming principal responsibilities for institutional redesign (Yu *et al.* 2005).

Influenced by Anthony McGrew of the University of Southampton, UK, Yu Keping (2002, 2006a, pp. 87–88), Deputy Director of the CCP Central Bureau of Translation, refers global governance to the legally binding international regimes used to resolve global issues such as military or non-military security threats so as to maintain a proper international political and economic order. Sun Kuanping and Teng Shihua (2003), currently of the CCP Central Bureau of Translation and East China University of Political Science and Law respectively, are of the view that global governance is characterized by four defining features, namely: involvement of multiple actors; participation, cooperation and consultation based on widely accepted regimes; commitment to resolving common human problems; and compliance with institutions and rules on the basis of a common set of values. Thus the focus of global governance is seen to be moving from the government to the non-governmental sector, and from the state to society.

When Cai, Sun and Teng refer to ‘on equal footings among multiple actors’ and ‘involvement of multiple actors’, do they imply that the Chinese approach to international relations is moving away from a state-centric focus? The following sections try to analyse the Chinese perspective from the three aforementioned aspects by focusing on to what extent China has learned from the West and subsequently modified its understanding of global governance.

A diminished role of the nation-state in global governance?

According to Cai (2004a, 2004b), China’s vision of global governance differs from that of the West in several ways. First, due to its rising and yet limited power in global politics, China tends

to take a prudent and low-profile position in international affairs and work within the established frameworks of international organizations and multilateralism. This view is echoed by Yang Jiemian (2005) of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, who agrees that the Chinese government should adopt a prudent attitude towards global governance because of the thorny issues of a likely infringement on national sovereignty and on the traditional role of the state.

While admitting that it is in China's national interests to participate actively in global governance, Cai (2004b, p. 59) argues that since Chinese participation has been 'in the name either of the government or of the state', so for China there is little difference between global governance and international governance. He points out that developing countries, being relatively novices in the architecture of global governance, are apprehensive of both Western developed nations and global civil society because of the challenges they pose to the state as well as national sovereignty. Using the Kurds as an example, Wang Yizhou (2000) of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences argues that a nation without the capability to establish a corresponding sovereign state is unable to secure itself from foreign encroachment and intrusion. This national concern with foreign coercion and intervention conjures up to the calamitous situation that China had experienced at the hands of foreign powers for more than a hundred years from 1839 until the end of the Second World War (we will return to this point later) and the problematic control over ethnic minorities at its periphery, let alone the unresolved issue of Taiwan. For the Chinese leadership, contemporary China has to deal with the twin demands for state building and economic development. Hence, the state is required to play a leading role in global governance, particularly in the light of the nascent development of domestic NGOs. Implicit in this approach is the understanding that all non-state actors have to rally around and co-ordinate themselves with the state, so as to keep foreign forces at bay. For Cai (2004a, 2004b), it is more rational to view the state-NGO relations as mutually cooperative and complementary than conflicting.

Yu Keping (2002) also emphasizes that international organizations, global civil society as well as international regimes and regulatory mechanisms are often subject to enormous influence and even manipulation by the powerful West led by the US. Developed states tend to use their influence to impede effective global governance. He warns against any move that would infringe on national sovereignty and undermine the role of nation-states in domestic and global governance. This view is echoed by Liu Jinyuan (2005) of Nanjing University who says that powerful states have dominated and shaped the conduct of international institutions for promoting their own foreign policy agendas. He calls on developing states to ally themselves to stave off a monopoly on governing international institutions by the powerful states.

The demise of the Westphalian notion of national sovereignty?

The foregoing survey of the Chinese discourse on global governance indicates that the sovereign state still plays a paramount role in the Chinese thinking. But in its deepening engagement with global institutions, has China undergone a reconceptualization of the notion of sovereignty? More importantly, how has China responded to the United Nations efforts to redefine sovereignty as responsibility?

Allen Carlson (2004, 2005) argues that China conceptualizes sovereignty as a bundle of rights, which are pursued unevenly in the country. China's desire to boost its domestic economic development and to enhance the legitimacy of the communist regime as well as its growing interest in portraying itself as a responsible state have pushed China to modify its stance on economic sovereignty and human rights intervention. However, China is not to be budged on such territorial and jurisdictional issues as the questions of Taiwan and Tibet. Overall, he demonstrates that China's stance on sovereignty is dynamic and malleable rather than static.

Bates Gill (2007) also shows China's increased flexibility and pragmatism in its changing approach to sovereignty, peacekeeping and antiterrorism.

Chinese scholars in the country tend to 'unbundle' national sovereignty into two broad categories regarding economic and trade matters on the one hand, and political and security issues on the other. Chu Shulong (2001), Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, has stated that if China wants to integrate into the international community and benefit from that integration and globalization, 'China has had to give up some of its sovereign rights'. A typical example is its membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In order to benefit from its membership, China not only has to adhere to the rules of the organization but also needs to rewrite some of its domestic regulations in order to fit in with the organization's requirements. Su Changhe (2005) of Shanghai International Studies University argues that the increased need to address global public issues whose resolution requires global cooperative action pushes China into accepting multilateralism and international regimes. In the engagement process, China has modified its exclusive view of national sovereignty. Although he does not elaborate on the change, he refutes the allegation that China is the staunchest fortress of the Westphalian world order. Liu Dongguo (2005) of Renmin University of China holds that the demand for global governance is in conflict with the prevailing world order. To establish global governance, new ideas have to be constructed. The first step to establishing a new world order is to reform the age-old doctrine of national sovereignty and to allow the participation of an extensive array of non-state actors. However, Liu does not seem to have dwelt at length on whether and how the construction of new ideas about global governance is to be undertaken in China.

In his discussion about the relationship between infectious diseases and non-traditional security issues, Wang Yizhou (2003) points out that it would be sensible to adopt a flexible approach to understand the meaning of sovereignty in the age of globalization. While the traditional concept of security needs to be enriched, the notion of sovereignty also needs to be enhanced as well. The traditional notion of sovereignty proclaims the centrality of the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs without considering that the authority of a state is derived from the consent of its citizens. Therefore, the concept of sovereignty should be understood at two different levels. First, domestically it should be bound to the obligation of protecting human rights of the local populace. Failure to respect, defend and promote human rights within one's territory would call into question the legitimacy of the state. This position is closer than those of many Chinese analysts to the UN notion of 'responsibility to protect'. However, at the external level, particularly regarding inter-state relationships, Wang contends that China needs to maintain a defensive approach, according to which the principle of non-intervention still 'remains the foundation stone of the world politics'. While taking a 'progressive' approach, Wang (2000, 2006) warns that China needs to be mindful of the dangers of the erroneous idea that human rights can 'replace sovereignty' or that 'human rights matter more than sovereignty'.

The Chinese government in general accepts the principle of humanitarianism, but it is adamantly opposed to interventionism. In preparing its report on humanitarian intervention, later known as *The Responsibility to Protect*, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) held a number of roundtable consultations around the world. According to Ramesh Thakur (2006, pp. 268–269), a member of the ICISS, the strongest opposition against intervention was made by the Chinese in the Beijing consultation in June 2001. China's apprehension about the norm of 'responsibility to protect' is more evident in a Position Paper on the United Nations Reforms released by the Chinese government in June 2005. China maintains that the reforms should safeguard the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs. Even if a massive humanitarian crisis takes place, it says that the opinions of the country in question and the regional organizations concerned should be respected, and that it is eventually the responsibility of 'the Security Council to

make the decision [to ease and defuse the crisis] in the frame [*sic*] of [the] UN in light of specific circumstances' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2005). In other words, interventions must be authorized by the Security Council and must not be unilaterally hijacked by great powers, notably the US. Humanitarian intervention is also viewed with much suspicion in the Chinese scholarly community. A Chinese survey of the national literature on the study of national sovereignty in the period 1995–2005 makes little mention of the notion of 'responsibility to protect'. Neither is the background to the emergence of the new norm of humanitarian intervention given much attention (Wang 2006). Qian Wenrong (2005) of Xinhua Center for World Affairs Studies gives a critical review of the notion and rejects it as a new global norm. Gao Feng (2001) of the editorial board of the *Chinese Yearbook of International Law* takes issue with the proponents of humanitarian intervention over the double standard of intervention. He concludes that global governance would be possible only if the principle of sovereign equality is closely observed.

In spite of the evolution of a new thinking of sovereignty in economic matters, the Westphalian understanding of sovereignty still weights heavily in the Chinese official view, particularly in regard to the strategic issue of national security which would threaten the survival of the Communist regime and pose dangerous precedents for Tibet and Taiwan. In addition, common to the Chinese studies under review is an argument that power in the existing international order lies largely in the hands of the Western states, particularly the most powerful ones, for the major extant IGOs are the creation of Western states, with the rules of the games or institutions serving their national interests and favouring Western values. Wary of the intervention by major powers through IGOs in the pretext of sustaining global governance, China is opposed to the idea of the 'pooling of sovereignty'. Sun and Yu (2004) argue that the United Nations should shoulder the principal responsibility of global governance, even though in the short run it is still subject to the manipulation by the US-led Western powers. That is why they paradoxically call for an inclusion of non-state actors in the practice of global governance and for giving developing countries a stronger voice in the decision-making process of international organizations.

Since the 1990s, Chinese external behaviour has largely reflected these theoretical concerns about global governance. On the one hand, China has embraced multilateralism and global governance and abided by international norms and rules in various issues. For instance, China proactively founded the Shanghai Five in 1996 and the succeeding Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 and the Boao Forum of Asia in 2001. In January 2004 a permanent secretariat of the SCO was set up in Beijing with Zhang Deguang, a former Chinese ambassador to Russia, serving as the first secretary-general (Chung 2006). China approved the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2002 whereas the US was reluctant to commit itself to it. In the economic arena, since joining the WTO in 2001, China has steadfastly reformed its domestic trading system, making it more compatible with WTO rules and norms. Although some commentators have cast doubts over China's compliance record, particularly in the areas of intellectual property rights and market access, China has demonstrated a strong will to adhere to the rules of the game by enacting and amending legislation and regulations with the aim of setting up a legal system that is compatible with the WTO.

On the other hand, Beijing has expressed deep concerns about humanitarian interventions and about the alleged quest for global hegemony by the United States, as shown in its reactions to the Kosovo crisis. Zhang Yunling (2000, p. 117) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing revealed that China was worried that 'what happened yesterday in Yugoslavia could occur tomorrow in Asia, especially in China, whose minority and human rights policies are always criticized by the United States and its allies'. The Chinese were annoyed not only by the 'accidental' bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by a US warplane in May

1999, but also by the fact that without an authorization of the UN Security Council, the US-led NATO used armed forces against the former Yugoslavia, a sovereign state which was not a member of the regional organization and posed no direct threat to it. To counter American influence, China has reiterated its new security concept and called for remedying the damaged credibility of the UN Security Council. When the UN and major stakeholder states were debating how to respond to the outbreak of political violence in East Timor in the wake of a referendum on deciding the relations of East Timor with Indonesia in late August 1999, China (and Russia) stressed the need for the consent of the Indonesian government – although Indonesia's claim to sovereignty over East Timor and its occupation of it in 1975 were not recognized by the UN and many of its member states – and a mandate from the Security Council. Both conditions were fulfilled in mid-September 1999 (Martin 2003).

China embracing good-governance practices?

In stark contrast to the considerable discussion about the role of the state and national sovereignty in globalization, only a small number of Chinese globalization specialists have introduced the notion of good governance (*shanzhi*) to their audience in the country. Yu Keping (2006a, pp. 77–86) is one of them. Both the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8 and the following SARS outbreak of 2002–3 posed a difficult dilemma for China's foreign policy. On the one hand, it had to maintain economic growth by deepening its economic ties with the world; on the other, it had to heed the call for good governance in the international community. It faced an uphill battle to avoid being seen as an existential threat to human lives and to the economic growth of itself as well as that of the world in its bid to shore up its internal and external legitimacy. China has made strenuous efforts to improve both the transparency of its public policy making and implementation and the availability of information on the policy to stakeholders in response to external demands for good governance. Even so, it does not align itself with the West in attaching the political conditionality of good governance to its commercial deals and its financial assistance to less developed countries, particularly those in Asia and Africa which have notorious human-rights records. In defending itself from widespread criticisms of its 'no-strings-attached' policy, Beijing advises some members of the international community against interfering in the internal affairs of others.

Constructing the Chinese perspectives

Why and how does China come to have such preferences and interests about global governance and good governance, and what would be the possible impact on the world order? The central focus is on why China behaves according to the dictates of *realpolitik*. Why is the doctrine of sovereignty enshrined in China's worldview? Why does China consider them as prescriptive guiding rules for a peaceful international order?

Social learning theory asserts that an actor learns new norms and practices in its interactions with other actors. The learning process involves the questioning of previous beliefs, the reconceptualization of the problems and the articulation of new goals. World order in China's imperial era was characterized as a hierarchical one in which the unequals were 'integrated into a system of reciprocal relations'. Underlying this hierarchical system was the Confucian idea of harmony or universal community (*da tong*) whereby the seniors bestowed benevolence from above while the junior members exercised obedience from below (Chan 1999). The Westphalian world order was also hierarchical in nature. On the one hand, it recognized equal legal status of the 'civilized' sovereign states in Europe; on the other, it legitimized the expansion of the 'civilized' European system into the 'uncivilized' non-European world by force (Jackson 1999, Suzuki

2004). China began to be internalized into such a state-centric, *realpolitik* world order in the mid-nineteenth century when it suffered from humiliating defeats at the hands of the Western and Japanese powers, which forcefully brought China into the Westphalian international system and subjected it to the principle of 'extraterritoriality' (Spence 1990, pp. 158–160, Suzuki 2004). Since then, Chinese leaders – both republican and communist – have steadfastly maintained that the international system is composed of juridically independent and equal but materially unequal states. Chinese perspectives on world order are thus informed by both its relative position in the order and its attempts to improve its relative position in it. China defines a just world order not only in terms of anti-imperialism but also of a militarily and economically strong China, showing 'a mixture of victimology and aggrandizement' (Mitter 2003, p. 221). When rhetoric is translated into practice, China, by instinct, attaches primary importance to the norms of national sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful coexistence among nation-states, as epitomized in the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. As observed by Samuel Kim (1993), the 'siege mentality' was reactivated as soon as the CCP began to experience internal and external legitimation crises in the late 1980s. The former was due to the military crackdown on the pro-democracy student movement in 1989 and the latter was the consequence of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. To fend off the alleged attempts by foreign powers, notably the US, to change or 'peacefully transform' its communist political system, China resorts to the Westphalian notion of world order, notably the sanctity of the principle of non-intervention (Chan 1999, Men 2004).

Inherent tensions exist between China's grave misgivings about the West's intentions towards the country and the view held by the Chinese leadership that increased enmeshment with globalization remains the most viable way for China to modernize itself. A reaction is what Cai Tuo (2004b, p. 58) explicitly sounds out: 'the existing international order [is] profoundly unjust.' The Chinese view on global governance holds that the world economy is highly unequal in the distributions of the fruits of development, resulting in a huge wealth gap between the world's rich and its poor (Shen 2001). This highly unequal world is also attributable to the claim that the decision-making power in international institutions is tightly held by the developed world (*People's Daily Online* 2000). China, therefore, calls for a democratization of international relations as a way to remedy this problem. The measures to do so have, however, not yet been spelt out in any detail by Chinese officials and scholars. But it would be a mistake to equate this with the views in the West that the world structure is undemocratic and that the development of global civil society should be encouraged to deal with this democratic deficit at the global level (Scholte 2005). This latter view is not shared by Chinese officials. China's scepticism of global civil society and for that matter most major INGOs derive partly from the fact that they are dominated and controlled by the West. Also, for reasons that are apparent, China puts a lot of hope on the role played by the UN, since it holds a veto power in the Security Council. China's influence in other major international organizations pales in comparison with its status in the Security Council and the UN as a whole.

From perspectives to praxis: a China model in the making?

In defiance of the once-prevalent prediction of an imminent collapse of the Chinese economy and political system in the wake of the Tiananmen crisis, China's economic development regained momentum in 1992 after registering a slow growth in 1989 and 1990. This gave rise to the 'China threat' theory in the US and Japan (Deng 2006, pp. 191–195). To counter it, China adopts a two-pronged strategy regarding its involvement in global governance. First, it has largely abided by international norms and been party to all major international treaties and organizations. This is to assure other members of the international society that China is a

responsible and benign rising power (Mitter 2003). Second, it has been proactively playing the roles of protagonists at the international arena. Among its various new roles, the following ones stand out (Pang 2006b):

- as a safeguard of the existing international order with an emphasis on maintaining the central role of the United Nations;
- as a constructive critic of the unjust international rules and regimes by offering alternative options for reforms, of which one proposal is to ‘democratize’ international relations; and
- as a leading force to foster the formation of regional communities, particularly in Asia.

It is said that what China now lacks is not a stance, but rather the capacity to exert widespread influence and the experience of exercising its power skilfully. With the foregoing discussion of the Chinese perspectives on global governance as the backdrop, the following paragraphs are concerned with how China translates its perspectives into practice. The discussions surrounding the ‘Beijing Consensus’ and Hu Jintao’s notion of a ‘harmonious world’ are illustrative and deserve special attention.

‘Beijing consensus’ vs. ‘Washington consensus’?

As a result of successful economic reforms and a rise in hard power, it is not surprising to presume that China would project its model of development and governance abroad, thus presenting a challenge to the still dominant model advocated by such international financial institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the White House, Wall Street and the US Treasury, commonly known as the ‘Washington Consensus’ or neo-liberal economic order. The Washington-based financial institutions portray themselves as the ‘exclusive holders of legitimate knowledge about development’, leaving little room for alternative paths for development. With little respect for the national sovereignty of the recipient countries, they imposed uniform policy prescriptions onto Latin American, African and Southeast Asian countries suffering from economic turmoils from the 1980s to the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8, even though the indebted countries experienced economic problems of a different nature (Weiss *et al.* 2004, p. 274, Thomas 2005).

In the wake of the demise of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the Washington-based financial institutions (and the UN) showed reduced tolerance of the authoritarian or state-led models of economic growth in the Third World and in the former socialist countries for their dismal performance. The effort for the Washington-based financial institutions to promote good governance was aimed to address the dual problems of the unrepresentativeness of corrupt governments and the inefficiency of non-market systems (Weiss *et al.* 2004, pp. 248–252). The concept of good governance is an extension of the Washington Consensus with added emphases on the Western cultural values of the rule of law, transparency, accountability and democracy.

These values, however, seem to matter little in China’s success story. Joshua Cooper Ramo (2004) summarizes China’s success as the ‘Beijing Consensus’ and frequently compares it with the Washington Consensus. According to Ramo, the Beijing Consensus is characterized by three features: economic growth is led by innovations; development has to be balanced and sustainable; and more importantly, China’s path to development is a quest for self-determination, without copying blueprints for economic development from any country. However, the term ‘Beijing Consensus’ does not acquire widespread approval and accord among Chinese scholars, who prefer to use ‘China model’ in their discourse. They argue that consensus is normally understood as an ‘ideal model’ which other states can recognize and promote. By contrast, the China model refers to a model which tells others about China’s

experience for development. Over the past three decades, China has developed its own path of development, including the notion of 'socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics' since the 1980s. This can be claimed as a strategic policy for development or 'a model for governance' under the opportunities and challenges of globalization. Other countries might develop their own ways with reference to China's experience, but the China model cannot be treated as a consensus or universal blueprint for others to follow (Yu 2006b, Yu *et al.* 2006).

Akin to Ramo, Randall Peerenboom (2007, pp. 4–10) asks whether China presents a new paradigm for developing states. The China model favours a gradual undertaking of economic reforms led by the state instead of a big-bang shock therapy. By attaching significance to self-determination and national sovereignty, it defies the policy prescriptions handed down from the IMF, the World Bank as well as governments in the West. It is worth noting that Chinese analysts only disagree with Ramo over a different use of terminology to sum up China's experience. By and large, they resonate with Ramo by putting emphasis on the claims that the state should play a predominant role in reform and development. They also point out that there should not be any universal blueprint for development imposed by external actors from above (Zhao 2004, Zhang and Huang 2005).

Following on from the idea of the Beijing Consensus and the succeeding notion of the China model, Chinese leaders began to realize the increasing importance of 'soft power' in world affairs. In early 2004 the CCP Central Committee promulgated the 'Opinions of the CCP Central Committee on Further Developing and Bringing about Flourishing Philosophy and Social Sciences'. In May of the same year, members of the CCP Politburo gathered to study the building of China's soft power in the context of the debates about the Central Committee document as well as the Beijing Consensus/China model (Yang 2006). Accordingly, the promotion of China's development model is argued to be a viable measure for China to build up its soft power. At the core of the China model are the values of economic development, social stability and harmony (Y. Chen 2007). Treating the Beijing Consensus/China model as a major component of its soft power, Beijing began to make a spate of diplomatic forays into the developing world, particularly in Africa, in a bid to win more friends and allies to counter the predominance of Washington. With rising criticisms of the Washington Consensus, the discourse on Beijing Consensus/China model serves to enhance the voice of developing nations in global affairs.

An issue that could have far-reaching effects on global governance is whether Beijing is proactively promoting an international order that is at odds with the West by strengthening economic ties with and extending its normative influence to developing countries. Naazneen Barma and Ely Ratner of the University of California at Berkeley assert that the China model, which combines illiberal capitalism and illiberal sovereignty, 'could set scores of developing nations away from the path of liberal democracy, creating a community of countries that reject Western views of human rights and accepted standards of national governance' (Barma and Ratner 2006, p. 57). Indeed, for the leaders of the developing world, China's soft power lies in its espousal of the doctrine of non-intervention in domestic affairs, the provision of 'no-strings-attached' financial and technical aid – including health diplomacy (Thompson 2005) – to Third World countries, the expansion of commercial opportunities, and the ability of the CCP to sustain rapid economic growth under an authoritarian regime. For example, Angola has found China 'a more supportive and less critical partner' than the International Monetary Fund (Reed 2006). Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo has been quoted as saying that the twenty-first century is 'the century for China to lead the world' and 'when you [i.e. China] are leading the world, we want to be close behind you' (cited in Alden 2007, pp. 68–69). Iran reportedly looks to China for ways to enliven the economy without losing political power (Higgins 2007).

The appeal of the China model is, however, constrained by the fact that Chinese values and practice run counter to global norms which now attach much weight to liberalism, democracy

and accountability of political elites to the people, respect for human rights and ecological balance. The former president of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz, had pointed out that China and its big banks had not yet subscribed to the 'Equator Principles'. As a voluntary code of conduct, launched in 2003, the principles are designed to introduce good corporate governance by pledging that private bank-financed projects should meet certain human rights and environmental standards (Crouigneau and Hiault 2006, Wolfowitz 2006). The West is also prodding China into supporting the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which aims to strengthen transparency and accountability – in short, good governance – in resource-rich countries through 'the full publication and verification of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas and mining' (cited in Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative 2005, Gill *et al.* 2007, pp. 19–20, Malloch-Brown 2007). China's robust economic growth is achieved at the expense of income equality and the environment. Political and legal reforms in the direction of promoting democracy and the rule of law lag far behind economic transformation. That is why even when American reputation and soft-power influence in liberal democratic countries is on the wane as a result of its unilateral actions in Iraq and elsewhere, China's endeavours to build up soft power do not advance much in the West, global civil society and democrats in the developing world (Kurlantzick 2005, Gill and Huang 2006).

A pluralist 'harmonious world'

Following the Fourth Plenum of the 16th CCP Central Committee, held in Beijing in September 2004, which proposed, among other things, the building of a 'harmonious socialist society' in China, China began to expound on the concept of a 'harmonious world' (*hexie shijie*), culminating in Hu Jintao's address to the United Nations 60th Anniversary Summit in September 2005 (Hu 2005, Jiang 2005, Tang 2005, Wang and Yin 2006). It is said that the new notion represents China's overall goal and theory of global governance (Lu 2006, Pang 2006a, Yu 2007). A harmonious world is to be built on a world composed of sovereign nation-states that respect a plurality and diversity of cultures, ideologies and politico-economic systems and handle their relations on the basis of 'respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as respect for countries' right to independently choose their own social systems and paths of development' (Hu 2005).

Based on the official doctrine, both Lu Xiaohong (2006) of China Foreign Affairs University and Yu Keping (2007) expound on the Chinese perspective on global governance. For them, the principal actors in global governance are nation-states and the United Nations. From this point of view, the idea of a harmonious world shares the same logic of the Westphalian international system. China's advocate for strengthening the United Nations-based multilateralism and constructing a harmonious world is obviously targeted at the hegemonic role of the US and its neo-conservative mission to transform the prevailing Westphalian international system into a self-proclaimed 'more peaceful' world based on the solidarist values of liberty, human rights and democracy. On a theoretical level, the Chinese notion bears a resemblance to the English School's pluralist conception of international society, in which sovereign states can maintain international order, in spite of the fact that they hold varying conceptions of human rights and global justice (Linklater 2005).

By emphasizing the right of all states to choose their own paths of development while integrating itself into the global polity and economy, China, on the one hand, rejects a liberal political order imposed from the outside and, on the other hand, tries to develop and exercise soft power in dealing with global issues that require multilateral cooperation as well as recruiting support from developing countries. One can argue that key to the Chinese approach to global governance is for the state actor to use power softly in a multilateral setting. To avoid a

frontal attack on Washington, Beijing is careful to use soft balancing to counter US interests (Z. Chen 2007). Its reservation about using the term 'Beijing Consensus' is part of a strategy to avoid being seen as challenging the Washington Consensus directly. On the international level, it uses multilateralism and reciprocal engagement to offset against American hegemonic influence. In view of the changing norms of national sovereignty and role of the nation-state in global governance, China promotes the notion of a harmonious world which upholds the principle of non-intervention and stresses the predominant role of the state in governance.

Conclusion

One can summarise Chinese perspective on global governance by addressing the questions as to who makes the rules of governance, how, in whose interests and for what ends? China's approach to global governance remains fundamentally state-centric. It has developed a view of governance that posits that international order is to be produced and shaped by dominant states, with non-state actors playing at best epiphenomenal roles. Among many voices about China's approach to global governance, a highly consistent theme, which constitutes the core of the mainstream perspective, is their serious concern about the ulterior motives of the Western efforts to promote global governance. Wary of the possible loss of the country's national sovereignty, the Chinese view tends to attach significance to *intergovernmental* organizations, while admitting a multiplicity of actors, in managing global issues. Its embrace of multilateralism and grudging inclusion of non-state actors is better understood as part of its adaptive *realpolitik* strategy to reap the material benefits of economic globalization and to hedge against the US-dominated global governance in a non-adversarial way. China's rationalist conception of global governance prompts it to deal with globalization and its impact by participating in multilateral institutions and by seeking to adhere as far as possible to the underlying norms and rules of the institutions. Benefits accruing to the country from increased membership of the institutions are believed to outweigh the costs involved. Displaying signs of greater flexibility in dealing with rule making in the economic realm notwithstanding, the Chinese notion of national sovereignty insists on the principle of formal equality of states and the 'endowed' rights to non-intervention in internal affairs. Only very recently did the concept of responsibility to protect enter the Chinese discourse on sovereignty. The new thinking has not yet been reflected in any observable changes in its national policy. Under the ingrained influence of the Westphalian conception of sovereignty as well as the concern about the association between the promotion of good governance and the building of a pro-West liberal political order, China refrains from basing its offer of aid and loans to Third World countries on the condition that liberal reforms are to be undertaken. In sum, China perceives global governance as an international means to building an inclusive international society in which nation-states of diverse cultures, ideologies and politico-economic systems can coexist in peace and harmony. Behind a façade of deepening participation, China does not share much of the fundamental norms and rules underpinning global governance with the West. One may note two implications of this.

First, a formidable challenge to China's aspiration to be a responsible great power is that its statist conception of the rules and values governing the management and resolution of global problems clashes with the emerging international norms of human security and individual autonomy. Due to their dynamic interactions with international organizations and global civil society, Western powerful countries' conception of global issues is always ever changing, their view of sovereignty is becoming contingent on certain conditions and a new sovereignty game is in the making (Mallaby 2007). In contrast, without an equally heavy engagement with non-state actors, internationally and domestically, China often bears the brunt of being

accused of intransigence, resisting to respond to global crises proactively and innovatively. Since its founding, the People's Republic of China has firmly clung to the Westphalian conception of international politics, which looks increasingly anachronistic in the current globalizing era. Its agenda-setting power is undermined by its inability to propose creative alternatives to the American and European preferences. China faces a daunting challenge, as Rosemary Foot (2001) says that as soon as China begins to be aware of the need to increase its integration into the international system, the criteria of membership in the club of the responsible states has changed from pluralist concepts that emphasize respect for national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states to solidarist concepts that rest on notions of common values and democratic governance.

Another implication is that as soon as China feels confident enough that it is a great power, it may no longer feel totally obliged to comply with the established norms and rules of the West-dominated international institutions. Its intentions to bend the rules if feasible are evident from its criticisms of the injustices of the prevailing international order and its advocacy for a democratization of international relations. Tensions rise over who can legitimately define what constitutes the dominant norms of the day that guide global governance and international order. What is at issue is whether China can harness considerable soft power to modify the norms to its favour.

As Joseph Nye (2004, p. 31) has observed, politics 'becomes in part a competition for attractiveness, legitimacy, and credibility'. To slightly paraphrase the provocative question raised by Gerald Segal (1999), we may ask: can China lead the world? The preceding analysis tends to lead us to believe that it is less likely, at least in the foreseeable future. In order not to play the part of the villain in global politics, China has to either occupy the moral high ground by performing the role of norm entrepreneur or to follow in the West's footsteps in understanding, making and enforcing new rules and principles. Both options require the country and its analysts to devote more resources to research into both global issues and global governance and more importantly to deepen their engagement with a broadened array of actors in the world. They have no alternative but to accept that the institution of the state is undergoing transformation and contemporary globalization expedites this change.

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