

U.S. Power, China's Rise, and World Order(*)

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U.S. Power and the Potential Power Transition to China

It is a common knowledge that for a period following the end of Cold War the United States had such a comprehensive and extraordinarily prominent preponderance in the world as to make some people call it “the unipolar moment” without much exaggeration.¹ However, since the September 11 terror attack, especially since the Iraq War in early 2003, the United States has encountered extraordinarily serious challenge and unending difficulties, with her international power having been partially reversed in a wide extent and a profound depth. Most directly it is from the Al Qaeda transnational terrorism, “the second stage of the war on terror”, and the post-war situation in Iraq that such a development had resulted.

With its September 11 terror attack that brought the most severe psychological shock at least since Pearl Harbor to the American people, the Al Qaeda transnational terrorism most prominently demonstrates or symbolizes the enormous, lasting, and highly tenacious challenges the U.S. power encounters in the quite alien and complicated Muslim world. Moreover, these challenges as the primary diversion have pinned down in a protracted way a huge portion of U.S. national attention, spiritual energy, and resources that could be available to external political affairs and foreign policy, making her necessarily within a rather long period of time unable to focus upon the previously developed fundamental geopolitical objectives, and also having no real hope to contain or slow a long-term trend with more effectiveness than otherwise, i.e., the trend of gradual rise and increasing strengthening of other factual or potential power centers that might finally matching herself in some major fields (China of course the first of all among them).²

¹ Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs*, America and the World 1990-1991. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19910201faessay6067/charles-krauthammer/the-unipolar-moment.html>. 又见 Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, “American Primacy in Perspective,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2002. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020701faessay8517/stephen-g-brooks-william-c-wohlforth/american-primacy-in-perspective.html>. “If today's American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will. The only things left for dispute are how long it will last and what the implications are for American foreign policy.” “No global challenge to the United States is likely to emerge for the foreseeable future. No country, or group of countries, wants to maneuver itself into a situation in which it will have to contend with the focused enmity of the United States.” *Ibid.*

² For this enormous dilemma, cf. the following frank expression by a famous U.S. scholar on foreign policy and strategy: “Inherent in the idea of strategy is the idea that your goals are always in some degree of tension. People don't like that, and military people and strategists don't like it either, but at the end of the day, there are always goals in tension. In this particular problem, the goal of prosecuting the war on terror and prosecuting the delay of the rise of a superpower challenger are in tension in a variety of ways. One would be if you're going to pursue a rollback strategy against terrorists, you have to be very ambitious and expend enormous amounts of treasure and effort in a very risky attempt to re-engineer an entire region of the world. That tends, other things being equal, to run down your economic condition in ways that make it easier for a rising challenger elsewhere to eventually equal your economic power and pose that kind of great power threat to you. If instead we were more conservative and husbanded our resources in an attempt to delay the date at which our GDP is overtaken, perhaps, by a rising China, you would not be able to conduct the war in Iraq, for example, as energetically as we're doing, and the prospects for political change in the Mideast would be much more distant, if realistic at all.” “Military Victory in the Information Age: Conversation with Stephen D. Biddle, Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations,” by Harry

Even worse than that. Primarily due to the second stage of the war on terror and the flagrant launching of the Iraq War with a doctrine of preventive attack, an unilateralist foreign policy, and a kind of very unrefined diplomacy in despite of the widely respected Secretary of State Collin Powell, the system of politico-military alliance among the western advanced countries that always characterized since early post-World War II years as a major element of the U.S. power has quite seriously weakened by the U.S. herself. Due to the same causes, the U.S. prestige in the world—another major element of the American power—including particularly her “moral advantage” and “preponderance over agenda” of world politics that had been brought to her by September 11 terror attack, has also dramatically declined. With at least the same importance and resulted from nearly the same causes, another major element of the U.S. power in the form of the relative coherence of American domestic opinion and public’s support of the Administration in national security strategy (which was once in an extraordinary wonderful state for about two years following September 11) has been greatly weakened or even destroyed.

What is particularly anguishing to the American policy-makers is that the nation they lead has been plunged into such painful politico-military difficulties, in a large country with a first-rate magnitude in the Middle East, which proved again and again very hard to be dealt with and virtually impossible to be eliminated in the predictable future, if ever they might. Militarily, (quoted from an assessment published by this author in April 2003, shortly after the onset of the Iraq War) “having waged an violent conquest largely without legitimacy, a foreign expeditionary army is now almost totally unable to get any assistance from any substantial local armed forces to help it conduct the occupation of the whole country, with its numerous tasks of pacification and internal security”; “The large-scale and protracted occupation of Iraq will gravely restrain the American resources and energy to be needed for dealing with the major crises that might happen elsewhere (especially in the Korean Peninsular and some other areas in the Middle and Near East)...In other words, this occupation will probably constitute the severe overstretch the ‘American Empire’ has never experienced in the past three decades, depriving her in a substantial degree and in a period of time the military ‘flexible response’ capability required by a global power.” Politically, “having conducted a lightning-paced conquest without any organized ‘internal collaboration’, a foreign expeditionary army faces a very rarely seen situation in the modern history of conquest all the world: There is not any local ‘administrative infrastructure’ available to its use, resulting in a serious local state of anarchy following its military victory, together with the avoidable chaos: all in a country with a population of tens of millions, a quite low degree of modernization, and the potential political (and religious) dividing forces nearly everywhere.”³

The American domestic opinion, whether public or elite ones, was almost evenly divided on security strategy and foreign policy during the 2004 presidential election. From then on, situation in this respect has been becoming ever worse from the perspective of the incumbent. This has been demonstrated beyond doubt by the unstoppable decline of the popularity of President George W. Bush and the miserable defeat of his party in the most recent U.S. mid-term election. It shows that

Kreisler, January 27, 2006. <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people6/Biddle/biddle-con6.html>.

³ Shi Yinhong, “America’s Post-war Difficulties and the International Political Consequences of the Iraq War” (in Chinese), *Contemporary International Relations*, No. 4, 2003.

the coherence of domestic opinion and the fundamental consensus on the government's foreign policy and national security strategy, a major basis of the U.S. power and her will to power, has already disintegrated. In a certain sense, the greatest trouble the American society as well as the Bush Administration faces at the present is in the mental and intellectual side of the fundamental national security strategy. Self-contradictory mentality, highly confused outlook, and nearly non-existing self-confidence: All of this can be said as the greatest "situational weakness" of the current American foreign policy.

The remarkable relative decline of the U.S. power from its summit is also resulted from its long-term structural weaknesses. They have been talked more and more by the American policy opinion in the recent two or three years, with their greater permanence and mid/long-term significance. These discussion are fairly represented by, for example, an article published by *Foreign Affairs* in its July/August 2004 issue with "A Global Power Shift in the Making" as the title. Among frequently seen discussions of the similar kind in the Western and Asian printed media, this article emphasizes far from uniquely that with China's "extraordinary economic rise" (which "is likely to continue for several decades") as the chief content and number one factor, "the transfer of power from West to East is gathering pace and soon will dramatically change the context for dealing with international challenges...Asia's growing economic power is translating into greater political and military power".⁴ Or rather, one could narrow one's perspective from global to Asian and to observe the ongoing change of the regional international power structure, which, according to an article ("As U.S. Influence Wanes, A New Asian Community") published in *The International Herald Tribune* a few hours after George W. Bush won his re-election as the U.S. president, was "the legacy of America's shrinking influence in Asia over the last four years. A profound rearrangement is under way, with China and its expanding economy (and, as the article says later, China's 'diplomatic dexterity') leading the charge". In general, the four years of the first Bush Administration "was the period when American influence in Asia, the driving force of the region in the second half of the 20th century, began its downward spiral and America did not see it."⁵ Up to now in the end of 2006, this not so pleased situation in American eyes has developed even further in the same direction.

Besides other powers' developments, first of all China's rapid peaceful rise, as a major external structural cause, the relative decline of American power is also resulted from several profound internal structural ones. They are defined by an article published by *Foreign Policy* in its July/August 2004 issue as "the clay feet of the U.S. colossus": (1) her "growing dependence on foreign capital to finance excessive private and public consumption"; (2) her grave shortage of enough military man-power to meet the formidable requirements of protracted large-scale military occupation, pacification, and political stabilization; (3) her "republican institutions and political traditions make it difficult to establish a consensus for long-term nation-building projects (overseas). With a few exceptions, most U.S. interventions in the past century have been relatively short lived."⁶

⁴ James F. Hoge, Jr., "A Global Power Shift in the Making," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2004. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040701facomment83401/james-f-hoge-jr/a-global-power-shift-in-the-making.html>

⁵ Jane Perlez, "As U.S. Influence Wanes, A New Asian Community," *International Herald Tribune*, November 4, 2004.

⁶ Niall Ferguson, "A World without Power," *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2004. <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/>

In a sufficient long-term perspective, the rise of China will probably be the number one factor in influencing U.S. international power and status. Since Deng Xiaoping launched China's reform and open-door about one-fourth century ago, and especially since the sustained soar of the Chinese economy launched by his famous inspection tour of South China in 1992 with his highly reformist statements then on China's economic and even social orientation, various enormous changes have already happened in this huge country. Particularly in the most recent years, those changes have raised quite intensive attention all over the world, especially in the advanced Western countries and China's Asian neighbors, while resulting so many predictions and discussions about China's rising to a future World Power status, together with those on the implications of this probable prospect to the regional and world political economy, power structure, the relationship among the great powers, and general peace and security, that they have almost overshadowed previous predictions and discussions on the same topic which for many years were definitely *not* characterized by anything like scarcity in quantity.⁷

For China, what has the most practical significance in a certain sense is observing, assessing, and predicting American power and status within an East Asian regional framework. As to this, a mid/long-term fundamental development is the trend of "power transition" from the U.S. to China (i.e., the transformation of the balance of strength and international influence between these two countries), though its completion is by no means determinist "inevitability" and would almost never a comprehensively all-of-the-range matter even it completes. This trend or potentiality has already been marked by China's rapidly increased economic influences and her recent quite pro-active diplomatic posture. It at the same time is the trend that China rises as a huge-sized great power first of all in East Asia.

Look forward according to national magnitude, development speed, and general trend of

story/files/story2579.php. As to the first point, it is interesting to read the following quoted words in the above article by Jane Perlez: "When China's foreign exchange reserves, parked in Treasury bills, funds U.S. budget deficits, should the U.S. treasury secretary be haranguing the Chinese to revalue their currency?" McCahill (William McCahill II, the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing during the second Clinton term) said.

⁷ See, for example among so numerous cases with so different worries and attitudes or "theoretical/ideological" inclinations, James F. Hoge, Jr., *op cit.*; *China Rising: How the Asian Colossus Is Changing Our World*, special issue of *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2005 (especially Zbigniew Brzezinski, John J. Mearsheimer, "Clash of the Titans" in the same issue); Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia:--Promises, Prospects, and Implications for the United States* (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, February 2005); Jason T. Shaplen and James Laney, "China Trades It Way to Power," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2004; Jane Perlez, *op cit.*; "China Rise Shifts Balance of Power in Asia," *The Korea Herald*, September 8, 2004; Michael Richardson, "Will S-E Asian States Be Forced to Take Sides?" *Straits Times*, August 19, 2004; Martin Walker, "China As Center of Bush's World," *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2005; "Rising China to Haunt Bush in Second Term," Agence France Presse, Jan. 16, 2005; Chalmers Johnson, "The Real China Threat," *Asia Times*, March 19, 2005; "China Poised to Overtake U.S. in 2020s," *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2005; "China Surpassed America As World's Biggest Consuming Country," Associated Press, February 17, 2005; "China Shows It Can Move Markets," *South China Morning Post*, October 30, 2004; "China and Latin America: Magic, or Realism," *The Economist*, December 29, 2004; Barton W. Marcois and Leland R. Miller, "China, U.S. Interest Conflict (over the Middle East oil resources)," *Washington Times*, March 25, 2005.

For a few influential examples in book form, see Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000); Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997); David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Lester Brown, *Who Will Feed China?* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1995).

growth of national power, one may predict that any great power now factual or potential, with the only exception of the United States, will be remarkably weaker than China in terms of the aggregate national strength toward the end of early 21st century, and by then the very wide gap in that respect now between China and the U.S. will be greatly narrowed, especially so in the structure of the balance of strength in East Asia, *if* China can sustain rather permanently her fundamental political and social stability, while positively advance her politico-economic reforms and appropriately accelerate her military modernization. The general trend in international politics is the relative decline of the U.S. power and the increasing rise of that of China, a trend going to the degree that the power transition in East Asian would probably complete at large remarkably earlier than people guessed a few years ago. It would be particularly so if China could control effectively the Taiwan issue, prevent the Sino-Japanese hostility fixed into a permanence, and deal with the North Korea problem relatively well.⁸ The recent developments shows that in the first issue area above the situation China faces has been enormously improved and her capability to deal with it much strengthened, in the second she begin to won very hardly an advantageous progress which is at the present absolutely no more than preliminary but will surely increase with a quicker pace, though in the third her “management” experience has full of frustrations and up to now there is still no light in the end of the channel.⁹ Whole of this development has great significance, and ranks among the most important mid/long-term factors deciding the future state of U.S. power and world structure.

The Primary Meaning and the Huge Strategic Benefits of China’s “Peaceful Rise”

China’s rise has been “peaceful rise” and will continue to be so at least in the predictable future. At the same time, it is also the fundamental strategic approach adopted by the Chinese government with great self-consciousness and firm determination. As the national orientation for a whole historical period, “peaceful rise” in its most basic sense *directly* means two things: first, China aspires to develop into a World Power; second, China will do so without going through any major war or protracted cold war confrontation with other great power or powers. Meanwhile, “peaceful rise” also in a nearly same basic sense *indirectly* means a third thing that China aims at becoming a lasting or sustainable first-rate World Power, instead of a one with quick rise and soon quick fall that has been seen frequently in the modern world history. A peaceful rise without major war or protracted cold war confrontation with other great power or powers, or in other words a rise evading these two circumstances with their probably enormous costs (costs both direct and indirect, and in the short- and long-term), is a requirement not only for becoming a first-rate great power, but also for sustaining such a valuable status as long as possible.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Shi Yinhong, “The Pre-conditions for China’s Rise: A Discussion from the Perspective of Her Foreign Relations” (completed in July 2005), in Shi Yinhong, *International Politics and Statecraft* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2006).

⁹ Cf. Shi Yinhong, “N.K. Missile Crisis and China’s Diplomacy” (in Korean), *Donga Ibo*, August 13, 2006 ; Richard McGregor, “Failure of Policy to Restrain Neighbour Rankles with China,” *Financial Times*, October 9, 2006; Maureen Fan, “North Korean Test on Agenda,” *The Washington Post*, October 9, 2006; Robert Marquand, “Outrage over North Korean Dissipates: Righteous Anger Gives Way to Realpolitik for North Korea’s Neighbors,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 25, 2006.

¹⁰ Shi Yinhong, “The Pre-conditions for China’s Rise”.

A *peaceful* rise has its more and more remarkable huge strategic benefits. It at most of times and in most aspects overwhelmingly relies on peaceful and non-military power resources and power exercises. The powers in the forms of economy, foreign trade, diplomacy (especially the attractiveness, persuasiveness, and other “soft” functions exerted by non-coercive diplomatic programs, style, and skills), culture, and emigration, together with those from additional national prestige and dissuasiveness (or “soft deterrence”) that would be brought about by the success in national development extra to her enormous “naturally endowed” magnitude:¹¹ All of these are characterized by their features of non-violence, progressive accumulation, extensive permeability, and great mutual beneficial effects. Such forces are most irresistible, and incur the least obstruction and lowest cost as well as the most acceptable consequences. Thus they are in a certain sense the most invincible forces.

There are only two reservations needed here: (1) the military strength, military will, and military institutional efficiency are most vital under certain possible crucial emergencies, and equally important are their essential function to deter the worse-case situation from happening in peacetime, together with the prestige, influence, and coercive diplomacy capability occasionally required by the nation that can be produced by them; (2) the political effects created by the peaceful power resources are sometimes less complete or effective, and often slow in functioning. However, their biggest cutting edge is their relatively low cost and their lasting effects somewhat like the traditional Chinese medicine. Lack of resource abundance but with a lot of internal difficulties, China very particularly has to “obsess” with keeping costs lower. Meanwhile, she has great patience and seldom seeks very quick attainment of her objectives, therefore can afford the above-mentioned relative slowness. And China has long-term great aspirations, so more prone to the comparatively lasting power effects.

The Fundamental Prospects of China-U.S. Relations in the Trend of Power Transition

With the assumption that China’s peaceful rise sustains, the United States in a forthcoming historical period would probably tend to consider with increasing seriousness or even eventually adopt certain peaceful “final settlement”. That is to differentiate the different balances of strength and influence in different functional and geographical areas through adopting the rationale of “selective preponderances” (instead of “comprehensive superiority”) or “advantage distribution”. That means accepting China’s leading position she may obtain in terms of GDP, foreign trade volume, and diplomatic/economic/political influences in Asia, together with the mutual strategic deterrence between China and the United States, and China’s military parity or even a marginal superiority to the U.S. for the former’s offshore area (with Taiwan’s east coastline as the approximate “demarcation line”) and a peaceful or basically so reunification of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Meanwhile, the United States with China’s acceptance would retain her lasting position of technology leadership and her over-all military superiority in the world in general and in the Central and Western Pacific in particular, as well as her predominance in diplomatic influence in some other major regions. The principle of co-existence, bilateral and multilateral policy coordination, and selective cooperation would be practiced by both China and the United

¹¹ These are the sources of China’s increasing power in the world, as well as those of China’s rise itself.

States in the world energy consumption and monetary affairs, global security and environment protection and major international political issues, relationship among main value systems, and other major functional areas. This would be the beginning of the completion of the power transition discussed here, desirable as well as feasible. In other words, it means a sort of sharing between China and the United States, and the latter's final acceptance of peaceful rise of China as a world power.¹²

But indeed, on the other hand, the great power "structural rivalry" between China and the United States is becoming broader and more profound than in the past, perhaps like a gathering storm over the distant horizon. The gross volume of China's economy and foreign trade grow with really high speed and a very impressive sustainability; the Sino-American trade frictions have had greater structural and independent significance; China's economic/political/diplomatic influence in East Asia and even in numerous other regions expands rapidly with steady consolidation in most cases; the gradual rise of her "popular nationalism" is becoming more and more remarkable; her efforts on military modernization has been escalated on a protracted basis, with continuous two-digit increase of defense budget for many years; she is striving for strategically significant energy resource almost all over the developing world, driven by increasingly urgent economic imperative as well as security considerations. What particularly important is that China's lasting and escalating military build-up will surely become (or even already begin to become) the most prominent problem in the minds of American strategists and neo-conservatives. The United States since Ronald Reagan has always determined to maintain military superiority, perceiving it the most important and prominent strategic asset, while China has made up mind to realize essential military modernization for her vital national interests and self-respect: this contradiction is not absent of a possibility of paralyzing the future of China-U.S. relations.¹³

The Value Requirements and the Emerging Value Effects of the Rise of China

In a very basic sense, major historical innovation, an essential precondition proved by modern history for a nation to become a sustainable world power, relates to her contribution to world history, her attraction to the world, and encouragement or invigoration to her own people, all at the level of values. In modern history of the world, innovations and contributions of this type were numerous in the rise of the Dutch, the British, or the Americans to their respective first-rate great power status. Since her reform and open-up till now, what has China contributed to the world in terms of values? It is fair to say that her contribution in this respect is too small, if there is any, in comparing with her leaps in gross volume of economy and foreign trade.

¹² Shi Yinhong, "The Significance and Possible Prospect of the China-U.S. Strategic Dialogue" (in Chinese), *China Review* (Hong Kong), February 2006.

¹³ "Some Chinese commentators are already aware of the dangers. Shi Yinhong, an expert on international relations, warns that growing military power could be the 'critical issue' in transforming US perceptions of China from economic partner to potential threat. Prof Shi says the US still has a 'baseline tolerance' toward China's military modernization - but that it may be undermined if Beijing acquires the ability to project power far from its borders. 'If this trend continues, some day opinion in the US towards China might change,' he says." Dickie, Mallet and Sevastopulo, "Washington Is Turning Its Attention From the Middle East....," *Financial Times*, April 7, 2005.

Up till today, one looming trend of value innovation by China that may probably have world historical significance is the conceptual system of “peaceful rise”, together with the involved idea of “harmonious world” which is yet to be much clarified and developed in its internal coherence and logic. In the conceptual system and practice of the peaceful rise of China, one very important element has already demonstrated amply by the current events in the first place, or in other words by the biggest national achievement of China since her reform and open-up began three decades ago. That is “the rise of trading state” emphasized by Richard Rosecrance, a theorist on international relations, in his rather famous book published in 1985¹⁴ and by the transformation tendency of a large part of the logics in world politics that it reflects (the tendency earlier revealed and expounded in 1977 by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, the authors of the “complex interdependence” theory¹⁵).

The orientation of world order is determined to a large extent by the answer to the following question: What are the most influential “international political culture” and “strategic culture” in the world? This in turn is decided by that to another: Which national agent of the international political and strategic cultures has achieved the most prominent major success? If America’s “New World Order” thesis based on “Washington Consensus” since around the end of the Cold War were greatly successful, or if the strategies of the Bush Administration on national security and international politics particularly since September 11 had the same luck, the world order would have been American, be it American hegemonic “liberal internationalism” or “offensive realism”. Under the later assumed situation, most major countries in the world would sooner or later be willing or forced to pursue the philosophy of realistic power politics, making the world a very much realistic one and full of inter-state power struggle. But more and more apparently, the really successful great power since the end of Cold War is not the U.S. but China: China’s success in “rising of the trading state”; the success of her philosophy and fundamental strategy of “focusing on economic construction”; and her success in peaceful rise and accompanied peaceful diplomacy. This will in a large extent define the international political culture as well as that of external strategy, thus affecting and partly defining the orientation of world order.

The Rise of China and the Future World Order

There are three main elements in world order: international power distribution; system of international norms; and transnational value complex. The relationship between China’s rise and the future world order is mainly the one between that rise and those three elements. Having talked so much about the international distribution of power at the present and in the predictable future, here only the latter two points need to be elaborated.

China’s rise and the system of international norms The nature of international norms partly determines the nature of the whole international system. The relationship between international norms and other elements of international system is that of a dependent variable to the independent variables. Within the framework of “China’s rise and world order”, what need to

¹⁴ Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

¹⁵ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1977).

be emphasized are the following two pairs of relationship between the independent and dependent variables: the relationship between the expansion of the boundary of international system—especially the boundary of culture or narrowly defined “civilization” — (or put it simply the expansion of modern international society) and the evolution of international norms; and the relationship between the change in international distribution of power and that evolution (or in other words between the dynamics of power and dynamics of norm).

The history of these two pairs since the 16th century shows that both the significant expansion of the boundary of international system and the profound change in international power distribution have led to major evolution of international norms. In the history of modern civilization, the drastic expansion of the European international system in the 19th century and the emergence of a genuine global one were particularly important. Accompanied with them are not only the decline of the traditional center of the international system and the rise and flourishing of the flanking powers, the multiplication of non-European great powers with the dramatic increased importance of their roles, the great rise of non-Western modern nationalism, and their successful revolt against the West, but also the profound and extensive transformation of international norms under the interaction of all these new forces.¹⁶

The current relationships between China and the external world can probably be generalized into two major dimensions. First, the huge Chinese nation-state with her own particular culture characteristics has been involving into or “intertwining” with the external world, with rapidly growing extent and depth and in almost all functional areas including politics, economy, diplomatic activity, intellectual and cultural intercourses, and demographic flows. This has been leading to a major expansion of the global international system—the expansion in terms of the richness of its connotation and of its boundary broadly defined; Second, “the rise of China” has been causing change in the international power structure, with its long-term effects that may be more and more likely transformative.

According to common sense and the basic experience of the modern world, such a major expansion of the broadly defined boundary of international system and volatile change of the international power configuration will surely result in corresponding alternations of international norms. First of all the fundamental pattern of behavior of the contemporary China (“the rise of [a huge] trading state”), then China’s culture and values, her international political outlook, and her inclination about international norms, together with their exchanges, integration, interaction, contradiction and accommodation with their counterparts abroad, will determine a large part of the future evolution of international norms. This might tap a new period in their history.¹⁷

China and the fundamental transnational value complex and their innovation: A least certain future Here, one should come back to the value requirements of the rise of China discussed above. The modern transnational values can be reduced in a very broad and reductionist way into four basic categories: “economic growth”, “liberty”, “social justice”, and

¹⁶ Shi Yinhong, “The Evolution of International Norms in the Modern and Contemporary Civilization” (in Chinese), *Forum of International Studies* (Journal of Shanghai Institute for International Studies), Summer 2006.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

newly born “environment protection”. The primary national achievement China has made since the initiation of reform and open-up falls into the category of “economic growth”. But this transnational value itself is definite not out of her creation. And now from the government to the public opinion, the sense is more and more acute that this achievement has been over many years excessively at the expense of “social justice” and “environment protection”. Since the beginning of reform the economic “liberty” of the Chinese society has been realized. Obtaining of economic liberty by 1.3 billion people is indeed a great extension of liberty in the history of the world. However, this value itself is not a innovation by China, not to mention that there is still a very long way to go before China fully realizes some other basic liberties or rights of freedom.

Thus, looking at the development of China and its impact on the world, one can say that we Chinese more and more has enormous and firm confidence in the growth of national strength or national power, and the self-confidence in changing peacefully the world’s power configuration has also remarkably increased. Moreover, it may be expected that with the rise of China the system of international norms will experience a major and positive evolution. But it is still difficult now to foretell what major contributions with a world historical significance the contemporary China will make to the transnational value complex of the world. Strictly speaking, we contemporary Chinese in this respect still lag far behind the Dutch, the British, or the Americans in the different past eras. We are probably not as good in the same respect as today’s Europeans, or maybe even as the Russians in the initial years after the October Revolution and the Chinese ourselves led by Mao Zedong in the era of the great rise and victories of the non-West modern nationalism. In this connection, the historical challenge China faces is: Can China create a set of “Beijing Consensus” that is innovative and has much transnational relevance and applicability? We Chinese will finally realize that China has to successfully cope with this challenge if she is to become a really sustainable world power.

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