



## Dialogue on Globalization

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# New Powers for Global Change: China at the UN

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### The World's Biggest Country at the UN

While being a founding member of the United Nations (UN), China<sup>1</sup> only started applying its weight actively within the UN in the 1990s. Against the background of China's economic and political rise, its policy at the UN has been met with a mixture of fascination,<sup>2</sup> neglect and calls for caution.<sup>3</sup> Its leaders assert that the overriding principles of Chinese UN policy are mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence.<sup>4</sup> These principles inform China's way to achieve its goals. Repeatedly, it has emphasized that time pressure, coercion or sanctions are no instruments of choice. In fact, China wants to follow its own path and wants others to buy into the world-view it proposes.

For fear of being controlled, China does not want to enter into coalitions. But it seeks to gain trust from its neighbors and important powers so that it can pursue its growth path "in harmony". China started collaborating with the G77 in 1991, and became an observer in the Non-Aligned Movement in 1992. In addition, contacts to regional groups were established. In 1990, the Rio Group started organizing dialogues with China at the General Assembly (GA). In 2006, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation followed suit. Given the large number of UN members coming from Africa, this forum can enhance China's influence at the UN considerably.

### The "One China" policy at the UN

In 1971, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was recognized as the only lawful representative of China. With Resolution 2758, the UN General Assembly "expelled" Taiwan ("the representatives of Chiang-Kai Shek"). China (PRC) considers Taiwan to be part of its territory insisting that Taiwan cannot be a UN member and that the UN has no right to interfere in this internal conflict.

### Chinese Position on UN Reform

China measures the success of its UN policy in terms of its own socio-economic performance ("peaceful rise"). Mostly, it seems to see itself well served by the UN's status quo. The country's proposals<sup>5</sup> for UN reform seem to serve mainly the strengthening of its own position.<sup>6</sup> It fears a unipolar world, however, and, pointing at the USA, the Chinese Ambassador even "lashed out at 'a tyranny of a minority in the council.'"<sup>7</sup> While it tries to undermine the US's ability to damage and contain China, it does not want to replace the US. Instead, it keeps a low profile.<sup>8</sup> President Hu Jintao's 'four nos' ("no hegemonism, no power politics, no alliances and no arms race")<sup>9</sup> are seen to be at the heart of a new security policy that favors a multipolar world.

Most of the Millennium Development Goals will be reached in China. Primary education for all and the halving of extreme poverty have been reached

<sup>1</sup> The term *China* is used in the rest of the article referring to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

<sup>2</sup> Ramo, Joshua Cooper, *The Beijing Consensus* (2004), p.3 (retrieved from [fpc.org.uk/publications/123](http://fpc.org.uk/publications/123) [accessed: Dec. 8, 2006]).

<sup>3</sup> Möller, Kay, "The Beijing Bluff", *Survival* 48, No. 2 (2006), p. 137 - 146.

<sup>4</sup> President Hu Jintao at UN Summit on Sept. 5, 2005 (retrieved from [www.china-un.org/eng/zt/shnh60/t212915.htm](http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/shnh60/t212915.htm) [accessed Dec. 8, 2006]).

<sup>5</sup> Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on the United Nations Reforms, June 7, 2005 (retrieved from [www.china-un.org/eng/zghlgh/zzhgg/t199101.htm](http://www.china-un.org/eng/zghlgh/zzhgg/t199101.htm) [accessed Dec. 8, 2006]).

<sup>6</sup> Gareis, Sven-Bernhard, "Das Ende der Zurückhaltung?", *Vereinte Nationen* 53, No. 4 (2005), pp.127.

<sup>7</sup> Traub, James, "The World According to China", *New York Times Magazine*, September 3, 2006, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Mahbubani, Kishore, "The Impending Demise of the Postwar System", *Survival* 47, No. 4 (2005-06), p. 7 - 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ramo, p.41.

already thirteen years ahead of schedule.<sup>10</sup> This is a big support to the global effort. China has founded an International Centre for Poverty Reduction as a contribution to the "Action against Hunger and Poverty" and it has made direct contributions to Least Developed Countries which reach from tariff and debt reductions to training measures. As a member of the Security Council, it is a member of the Peacebuilding Commission whose creation it supported (pledging US\$ 3 million for the Peacebuilding Fund). China has participated in peacekeeping missions since 1989 and has founded the world's biggest training centre for police peace missions.

### Human Rights Council

China supported the creation of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and became a member of the Council. While this was met with considerable international skepticism<sup>11</sup>, China pledged in its candidature letter for the HRC to improve the human rights situation (e.g., ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).<sup>12</sup> Some see this as a step to improve China's human rights record. China asked the HRC to put a priority focus on human rights abuses in international armed conflicts and asked the international community to fulfill their commitments to assist developing countries. According to Chinese thinking, enjoying human rights is a question of development and financial resources. In general, China ranks national sovereignty above human rights and opposes confrontational measures to enforce human rights. In practice, however, the country often acts pragmatically and did not resist when the SC decided to refer the situation in Darfur to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

### Security Council Reform

While China favors a reform of the Security Council that leads to the inclusion of small and medium sized developing countries, especially those from Africa,<sup>13</sup> it was clearly against the inclusion of Japan.

### Disarmament

China has no biological and chemical weapons. Being a nuclear weapons state, it signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992 and became a member of the Test Ban Treaty in 1996. But it abstained from the vote on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. China voted for the Mine Ban Treaty and supports the UN program to combat illicit

trafficking in small arms. China has abstained in the vote on the Arms Trade Treaty, citing economic considerations and saying that more time was needed. Amnesty International complains that China often exports arms to countries where there is a risk of serious abuse.<sup>14</sup>

### Environment

As energy consumption is growing rapidly, China has started to participate actively in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development's discussions on renewable energies. The country convened the Beijing International Renewable Energy Conference in 2005 and pledged to increase the share of renewable energies to 10% until 2020 (from 3% in 2003). China has ratified the Kyoto-Protocol, but it is not required to reduce carbon emissions. China insists that the gas emissions level is a multiplication of its per capita emission and its population. As China has enacted population control measures while maintaining low emissions per capita<sup>15</sup> it claims it should be considered a benefactor to the world environment.

<b>Date of accession:</b> Oct. 24, 1945 (PRC: Oct., 25 1971)
<b>Contribution to regular UN-budget (2006):</b> \$ 35 million
<b>Contribution to peacekeeping (Sept 2006):</b> 1,413 troops, 168 police, 67 military observers (13 <sup>th</sup> from top)
<b>SC member:</b> since 1945 (PRC since 1971)
<b>Important positions:</b> Mr. Chen Jian (USG GA and Conference Services), Mrs. Margaret Chan (DG WHO), Mr. Shi Jiuyong (judge, former President ICJ), Mrs Qin Xiaomei (member UNPFII)
<b>Membership in Commissions and Committees<sup>16</sup>:</b> Peacebuilding, Disarmament, Trade Law and Law Commissions, Human Rights Council, Committees against torture, on Rights of the Child, against Racial Discrimination, CEDAW, Governing Council UNEP and UN-HABITAT, Panel of External Auditors, Joint Inspection Unit
<b># of NGOs from China registered with DPI<sup>17</sup>:</b> 6 (out of 1634)
<b># of registered partnerships with Commission for Sustainable Development active in China:</b> 30 (out of 321)
<b># of Chinese enterprises participating in Global Compact:</b> 57 companies (out of 3762)

Source: Several UN websites: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

<sup>10</sup> UNDP China, Millenium Development Goals (retrieved from [www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=10&sid=5](http://www.undp.org.cn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&catid=10&sid=5) [accessed Dec. 13, 2006]).

<sup>11</sup> China (like Brazil and India) is placed among the countries with the worst human rights abuses. Human Security Report 2005, Human Security Centre (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), p.92.

<sup>12</sup> Aide memoire China (retrieved from [www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/china.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/china.pdf) [accessed Dec. 8, 2006]).

<sup>13</sup> Niquet, Valérie, "La stratégie africaine de la Chine", *politique étrangère*, No. 2 (2006), pp. 362.

<sup>14</sup> ai USA, „People's Republic of China" (retrieved from [www.amnestyusa.org/countries/china/document.do?id=ENGASA170302006](http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/china/document.do?id=ENGASA170302006) [accessed Nov. 18, 2006]).

<sup>15</sup> China's ecological footprint (EF) is 1.6 gha/person (USA: 9.6). EF measures the land and water area required for resource production and waste absorption. Living Planet Report, WWF, (retrieved from [www.wwfchina.org/english/downloads/lpr2006final.pdf](http://www.wwfchina.org/english/downloads/lpr2006final.pdf) [accessed Dec. 8, 2006]), p.3.

<sup>16</sup> For lack of space, this list is non-exhaustive.

<sup>17</sup> Data on NGOs registered with ECOSOC were not available.