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Asymmetry: Harmonious Intervention

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The negative attitude of China toward appeals for intervention in North Korea and Myanmar, discussed in our book *Harmonious Intervention: China's Quest for Relational Security*, has brought about the question that has been the staple of scholarly and policy debate since China has risen and become the most competitive great power: Is China adjusting itself to the status quo? Alternatively, is it bringing challenges and even threats to the current international order? This study focuses on the controversial issue of international intervention. Intervention through the use of coercion has caused arguments in the conventional understanding of the fundamental principle of international society: sovereignty of state. As Finnemore (2009, 7) argued, the application of military intervention provides a good analytical point for examining the flow of ideas regarding sovereignty and war, meaning of peace, and genealogy of legitimate use of force in the international system. The undeniable reality is that whether international intervention for "justice" can override the principle of sovereignty is still debatable. Understanding the root of the debate must start from how states define "justice," how they evaluate the conflicting institutions, and, more importantly, how states further legitimize and prioritize certain principles or norms. The answers to these questions signify the views of the states of the international and world orders.

In our discussion elsewhere, the Chinese nonintervention policies toward North Korea and Myanmar were examined by testing and analyzing six hypotheses designed in *Harmonious Intervention's* Chapter 2. In each case, the positivist approach was adopted, and whether realism, constructivism, and the Chinese perspective provide persuasive explanations to the responsive or irresponsive attitude of China toward international interventions was examined. A truly persuasive conclusion should be presented only by carefully comparing the action and reaction of China in both cases. Thus, the first major aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive comparison between both cases. Moreover, to strengthen the arguments, brief case studies are provided on the participation and reaction of China in the international interventions imposed on states in Africa and the Middle East.

The second aim of this paper is to find theoretical support for understanding the Chinese pattern of intervention from its function of balance of relationship whenever balance of power is eclipsed by practices. Here, the root of the logic that determines the attitude of China toward international intervention is traced back to its view of the world order. According to Bull (1977), order is a specific pattern and arrangement of social life leading to a particular result and promoting certain goals and values. Thus, world order signifies a pattern adopted and shared by actors at all levels (i.e., individual state, community of states, and non-state actor) to promote the specific values and goals in the world. Hence, actors living under this pattern anticipate specific outcomes. Different IR theories possess various views of world order. However, when discussing IR, as Cox (1981, 138) pointed out, world order is "the particular configuration of forces which successively defines the problematic of war or peace for the ensemble of states." Investigating China's view of world order is to understand how Chinese leaders perceive the prevailing norms and institutions that legitimize certain values and goals, and how they evaluate the regulations on war and peace. Only by analyzing how China views world order can we comprehend how China defines the legitimacy of the use of force, which deeply shapes its attitude toward intervention through coercion.

We will argue in the following sections that China's intervention behavior reflects a concern over relational security that is unfamiliar to the current IR literature. China seeks to achieve a reciprocal relationship in which countries need not engage in balance of power or balance of interest that drags them into continuous investment in national power and incurs an incessant power race. The cost and benefit of relational security is not easy to count at any given time. However, Chinese cultural conviction toward relational security stresses the benefit of long-term stability. In institutionalist terminology, this could be a parallel to managing transaction cost. Assume that China is used to very long historiography, any reduction of transaction cost in the long run would be rewarding and yet any increase would be expensive. In comparison, apparent national interests would appear relatively insignificant. Both yielding apparent national interests to secure a long-term relationship and punishing a perceived conduct for the sake of rectifying a relationship at the expense of apparent national interest would be rational if the purpose is to stabilize long-term relationships. Moreover, as relational security avoids value competition, China's intervention policy is always pragmatic. It is never aimed at transformation of value of another country.

### **Response of China to Appeals for International Intervention in East Asia: One Picture Depicted by the Six Hypotheses**

Both North Korea and Myanmar have been targeted as regimes needing to be intervened in to force them to stop the atrocity of human rights violations or to abandon plans threatening international security. The case of North Korea is even more controversial. The DPRK is developing a nuclear program and testing multiple ballistic missiles. These actions have caused great concern in the international community. Myanmar and North Korea share similarities. Other than being targets of international intervention, the most obvious one is sharing borders with China. Both states have built formal relations with the PRC since its establishment. Moreover, the ties between China and these two nations can be traced back to the imperial period when China was the center of its part of the world. The case studies based on the relations of China with these two states provide distinct empirical evidence for depicting the pattern of the intervention policy of China.

To complement the analytical structure of this research design, relations between the six hypotheses should be examined. In fact, the shared borders between China and its neighboring states have provided a basis for the other factors adopted in this analysis. In addition, these factors correlate with each other. Although in each case study six separate sections focus on different factors that shape the intervention policy of China, these factors are not independent of each other. For example, the pursuit of raw materials is always about reducing the apparent cost of production. Certainly, the apparent cost of transportation is considered in the realist rationale. This situation makes the bordering nations that possess crucial resources important to China. Therefore, the relationship with the bordering states has been given extra attention for the sake of security and stability. Concerns about the means applied to adjust the decisions of target states or reverse the current development of undesirable events certainly relate to the geopolitics and the international pressure on the issue in question. These concerns have been indirectly discussed elsewhere. In the following sections, these issues are mentioned again to make a more comprehensive comparison between the two cases.

#### *Shared Borders and the Rationale of Nonintervention*

For China, both North Korea and Myanmar are neighboring states that share its borders. Periodically these two nations were vassal states during the imperial time of Chinese history. In the past, neither the concept of “nation-state” nor the idea of “boundary” was introduced into the traditional dynastic and/or tribute system. Therefore, the delimitation of territory became problematic when China and its neighboring countries proceeded to the modern state system in the twentieth century. Border disputes between China and its neighboring states emerged. China successfully solved the border disputes with Myanmar (Burma) in the early 1950s. However, there remains the incomplete delimitation between China and North Korea. In fact, the status of the Sino-North Korean border dispute on sovereignty over Chouduan Dao (Pidan Island) in the outfall of the Yalu River can hardly be called a “dispute,” as China seems to consciously prevent the issue from being highlighted. Based on atlases published in Beijing, China either marks Chouduan Dao as part of the Sino-North Korean borderline (in so doing the ownership of the island remains vague) or further defines it as part of the DPRK.<sup>1</sup> In both cases, China settled the border disputes peacefully by making concessions and ceding great portions of territory to its neighbors. This decision negates the realist assumption in terms of the offensive action that a stronger state should adopt when confronting weaker states. Nevertheless, assuming that China has applied similar criteria to all border disputes with its neighbors, then explaining China’s conflicts with India in 1962, the former Soviet Union in 1969, Vietnam in 1979, and its recent resolute attitude as regards the South China Sea will have to be more sophisticated than realism. In fact, unilateral withdrawal after a brief but fierce engagement is the consistent style of China’s military action, one that claims sovereign ownership of a disputed area, demonstrates China’s capability to take it, but renounces the immediate occupation of it. In other words, China’s policy motivations in armed border conflicts are to show disapproval at a perceived irrevocable violation of reciprocity and to request a complete change of attitude by the other side before China is willing to restore the reciprocal relationship.

Shared borders are issues related to the consideration of security and stability. However, if China subscribed to realist thinking, then its concessions to North Korea and Myanmar on border disputes are not rational at all. The concessions are arguably rational on China’s terms that value stable relationships in the long run over immediate, apparent gains. If China had followed the arguments of offensive realism, proposing intervention in these two pariah states and using aggressive action, then it would have legitimately benefited by gaining control of the disputed territories and further expanding its influence. Contrary to the offensive realist hypothesis, China has taken a relatively cautious position and valued stability as the priority in its policies toward these two states. Proposals to impose intervention on states sharing borders with China did not gain support from China. Other factors weigh more than the desire to gain disputed territories back for China. If China opted not to argue over the disputed territories with North Korea or Myanmar for the preservation of regional stability, having China support intervention would be unreasonable, as intervention with coercive means always accompanies the endless risk of breaking stability and additionally causing more insecurity in other bordering areas.

Another factor that shaped the Chinese logic of intervention in the cases of North Korea and Myanmar is the issue of ethnic minorities. How the ethnic issue shaped China’s policy of nonintervention in these two cases is different. In the case of North Korea, the Chinese leaders considered the relationship with the Chinese Chaoxianzu, the ethnic minority with Korean heritage living in northeast China. A great portion of Chaoxianzu businessmen invested and traded in North Korea. If China clashed with North Korea, it would definitely

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<sup>1</sup>The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) owns four different atlases in its library. Except for the *World National Geographic Atlas* published by Geology Publisher in Beijing, which marks the Chouduan Dao as North Korean territory, the other atlases vaguely label the island as part of the borderline.

damage the interests of the Chaoxianzu businessmen. As China propagandized the ideal of building a “harmonious society,” it did not want to have any disturbance in its relationship with the ethnic minority groups. Thus, the Chinese central government would not support the proposal of intervention imposed on North Korea, which would threaten its relationship with the Chaoxianzu. This relationship is believed to be constructive in the long run, even though specific benefits are not apparent in the immediate run. For example, ultimately China was able to rely on its Chaoxianzu compatriots in the negotiation process with North Korea for the rights to rent Luojin harbor, which has given China access to the Sea of Japan. Having the right to use Luojin harbor greatly increased the maritime influence of China in Northeast Asia.

The ethnic minority factor in the case of Myanmar is a different story. The lack of harmony between the Myanmar central government and the armed ethnic minority groups made the Chinese decision makers more cautious about their policy toward Myanmar. Although there was a domestic voice claiming that the Chinese government should have supported some ethnic minorities with Chinese heritage in Myanmar, the official attitude of China remained the same: never become involved in the domestic issues of Nay Pyi Taw. Except for providing humanitarian aid to the cross-border refugees and sending troops to maintain order and security in the bordering area (although the PLA was ordered to stay within Chinese territory), China did not involve itself in the conflicts between the Myanmar government and the armed ethnic minorities. Such a restrained attitude is also related to China’s concern about its image in East Asia. Had China intervened in the Myanmar’s government war with the ethnic minorities, it would have complicated the situation and entangled itself in a long-term thorny swamp. It would have revived the “China threat” narrative and made other East Asian states fear the potential of China becoming a hegemon. By contrast, waiting for the fruits of stable relationship to ripen someday always pays off.

Doubts about China’s intentions and concern about China becoming a hegemon in the region linger in the minds of not just the Burmese leaders but also of the heads of other neighboring states of China. The experience of solving border disputes with Myanmar was defined by China as the example of how China should deal with the disputes with its neighbors. Solving disputes through peaceful discussion and bilateral cooperation accompanying the discourse of “building a harmonious world” emerged in 2005. These doctrines have become the guidelines for China in dealing with disputes with neighboring states. They are particularly pertinent in our two cases to the extent that China has perceived no real threat or intention to threaten from either Myanmar or North Korea that would make the reciprocal relationships beyond repair. The Myanmar and North Korea experiences are meant to maintain reciprocal relations by ceding a great portion of Chinese territory. Both Myanmar and North Korea did not adopt a belligerent attitude against China, as formal relations had been built. Thus, once the criterion of “peaceful and bilateral conversation” was satisfied, the concession from the Chinese side could be expected.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, for China, the effect of shared borders with North Korea and Myanmar on the Chinese nonintervention policy was entangled with border disputes in the past and issues of ethnic minorities in the present. China has adopted a more cautious attitude toward the bordering states. Its yielding to the requests of weaker neighbors and concerns about stable relationships with both the ethnic minorities and the central regimes of the neighboring states have revealed the national interest calculus of China in its decision-making process. The concern about image and the pursuit of reciprocal relations, which value stability rather than apparent gains, have greatly affected the national interest calculus of China toward states that have expressed willingness to cooperate and negotiate. After the economic reform era,

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, such a criterion is only suitable for negotiating with states or actors who are not defined by China as part of China. Certainly, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan do not belong to this category.

maintaining good relations with others in the international society was treated as the priority of Chinese foreign policy. Therefore, China will not accept intervention wielded through coercive means, as applying military force or imposing sanctions will hurt the development of the target states and possibly their relations with China.

#### *Pursuit of Raw Materials and China's Nonintervention Policy*

North Korea and Myanmar owning rich deposits of raw materials is a great blessing to China. Deposits of iron ore in North Korea are the richest in Asia, and Myanmar owns many unexploited oil and gas fields. As China is the closest ally with both nations, China could have had more opportunities to gain supplies of natural resources from these two countries. With the advantage of shared borders, China could save on the cost of transportation, which is a great benefit almost every great power would pursue. However, based on the analysis conducted in the case studies in *Harmonious Intervention*, China has gained very limited supplies from these two countries, and China even provides them with energy from time to time. The reasons have also been presented. Poor management of the natural resources, terrible political and economic environments, and long-term international sanctions have made the exploitation and development of raw materials in these countries far from useful and sufficient for China. Moreover, these states could not even satisfy domestic needs through their own production, and China even had to support them with energy for civilian use. For such reasons, Hypothesis 2 fails to explain why China opposes the intervention imposed on these two states in its pursuit of raw materials.

Another way of thinking suggests that, if China subscribed to realism, the rational choice would be to initiate interventions in these states and take the leadership in a collective action. The unwillingness of China to intervene in North Korea and Myanmar negates the realist argument that great powers apply military force to gain or maintain sources of raw materials. Raw materials are essential for states to construct military and economic power, and preserving the stability of sources of raw materials is crucial to the national security of states. Copeland (1996, 10) cited both Waltz and Mearsheimer and argued the following: “in anarchical international politics, states worry about their vulnerability so that they are forced to control what they depend on or reduce the degree of dependence”; or “states will try to extend political control to sources of critical economic supplies for the fear of cutoff or blackmail, so the conflict with the source or with its other customers is highly possible.” Copeland (*ibid.*, 26–39) also applied the case of Germany before the two World Wars to support his theory on how interdependency and trade expectations would easily lead states to wage war.

A more extreme argument, which also finds supporting evidence from world history, is Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1939, Chs. IV and X). This book was based on historical fact that Western great powers exploited the Third World in the era when colonialism prevailed. European great powers occupied nations with rich deposits of raw materials through military force to support their need for resources and expand markets for their domestic industries. In the current international community, colonialism and invasion of other countries to secure sources of raw materials are no longer legitimate. However, great powers imposing military intervention on countries with deposits of raw materials are still capable of the conspiracy of exploitation.<sup>3</sup> North Korea and Myanmar could have been the major suppliers of natural resources for China. With their rich deposits of iron, reserves of oil, and advantageous geographical location, North Korea and Myanmar could have greatly increased the economy and national power of China.

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<sup>3</sup> Similar to those on the US interventions in Venezuela and Iraq, analyses and critiques on the decision making of these policies often include the calculation of interests in gaining the most critical raw material: oil (Polychroniou 1995; D'Amato 2000; Cole 2007).

Moreover, China could easily find legitimate excuses to support the international interventions in these two states. If China waged unilateral intervention, justifying the cause would be easy, as there have been voices urging China to restrain the DPRK in disturbing regional peace. Moreover, during the crises in Myanmar, China was also expected by its Western counterparts to stop the atrocities of the Myanmar military junta. On the other hand, if China had supported the multilateral intervention waged by the UN Security Council or other international institutions, it could still have benefited by negotiating with other great powers and winning the trusteeship over North Korea and Myanmar. Furthermore, in the case of North Korea, the disturbances caused by North Korea's nuclear weapon testing, frequent provocation, and conflicts with South Korea have not only threatened regional security but also obstructed Chinese business with both Koreas. Applying coercive means to intervene in North Korea could more efficiently force it to adopt economic reform and open policy. This action could provide an ultimate solution to the current impasse in the North Korean economy.

In sum, the supply of raw materials provided by these two states does not constitute the conclusive reason that China keeps opposing intervention imposed on them. A potentially influential factor relating to the supply of raw materials is the strategic meaning of the geographic locations of these two states. Myanmar has provided China with the opportunity to build a pipeline, which can help China reduce the cost and risk of transporting fuel from the Middle East. North Korea has granted China access to a business route through the Sea of Japan and the chance to expand its marine power in Northeast Asia. In other words, the deposits of natural resources owned by these two states seem inconsequential to China, despite those resources being concrete. Maintaining a good relationship and maintaining the opportunity for potentially future strategic cooperation mean more to China, even though they are nonapparent for the time being. Such factors weigh more in the nonintervention thinking of China than the oversimplified explanation of the pursuit of raw materials.

#### *International Pressure and China's Response to Calls for Intervention*

China has been facing severe international pressure due to the crises in its two neighboring countries: the development of a nuclear program in North Korea and the bloody oppression of revolutions in Myanmar. International pressure normally came in the form of criticism and persuasion. China has been criticized as behaving passively and hesitantly when the crises occurred. International pressure was presented through condemnation when China refused to join the collective action proposed by its Western counterparts. Persuasion often came with criticism made by the Western states or international organizations through official visits to Beijing. Proposing appeals during public events was often adopted as a way to impose pressure on China as well. The degree of pressure is not like a concrete object, which can be measured by a scale or any appropriate material. The most common and reasonable way to determine whether international pressure is strong enough is to examine whether the criticism, persuasion, and other related events threaten a state's national interests defined as crucial by its own national interest calculus. In the case of China, such threats include damage to its apparent economic interests and violation of its relations with others.

In the case of North Korea, international pressure over its development of a nuclear program and testing of missiles caused severe condemnation and criticism of China's inaction. Moreover, the hostile attitude of North Korea even triggered potential military intervention led by the US.<sup>4</sup> The Western media reported that an anti-China bloc could be created by the US, Japan, and South Korea in response to China's shielding of the North Korean nuclear

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<sup>4</sup> In 2005, the Bush administration sent 15 F-117A stealth fighter-bombers to South Korea to target North Korea. This decision shows that the option of applying military intervention is still on the table of US policy toward North Korea (Symonds 2005).

program (Pomfret 2009). In the case of Myanmar, international pressure prompted by the bloody oppression of peaceful protests stirred the appeal for blocking the 2008 Beijing Olympics. If such an appeal had materialized, it would not only have harmed the economic interests China would gain through the Olympic Games; it would also have greatly hurt the pursuit of status and dignity of China as a responsible nation in the international community. These examples show that international pressure caused threats and potential damage to the national interests of China. International pressure on the crises occurring in the neighboring areas of China is strong, but China remains reluctant about and even opposes appeals for intervention in North Korea and Myanmar.

Nonetheless, international pressure still plays a role in pushing China to respond to calls for intervention. As discussed in the case of North Korea and Myanmar in *Harmonious Intervention*, although China did not respond as the Western countries expected, China did answer the call for it to take more responsibility in dealing with the crises. In both cases, China mediated between the target regimes and the international community. China sent special emissaries to both countries to encourage them to communicate with the outside world. Only when the target regime rejected China's mediation or undermined its credibility as a mediator did China adopt harsher means. Even then, China's punitive action was always restrained, since no intention of the target state to destroy its relationship with China was present. Chinese punitive measures under these circumstances always come with concomitant repairing policies.

This patterned mix of disciplining and repairing measures can be observed in the case of North Korea. China publicly condemned North Korean nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, adopting a harsh attitude for two reasons. First, China had promoted the Six-Party Talks for several years, which was viewed as an important achievement by both Chinese officials and academia. However, North Korea withdrew from these talks a month before the 2006 nuclear test, an act China took as a slap in the face. The second nuclear test was then considered a declaration of China's failure to mediate between North Korea and the US-led Western camp. According to Chinese logic, these acts compelled China to take the side of international society for once at least in order to maintain China's image as a responsible state, one which could ultimately still serve North Korea's interest by playing the role of a mediator. The second reason has to do with China's view of the world order and its evaluation of the current international institutions. Of all international endeavors in which China has actively participated, nuclear nonproliferation is one of the most crucial.<sup>5</sup> Supporting nuclear nonproliferation is consistent with the quest for stable international relations that China as a major nuclear power desires. Moreover, China has openly subscribed to the institution of nonproliferation and has to act faithfully in front of the world in accordance with the expectation of the international community.<sup>6</sup>

The case of Myanmar reveals another possible explanation for why strong international pressure has no effect on China's nonintervention policy. China's policy of nonintervention toward Myanmar is consistent with ASEAN's "constructive engagement." At the same time, Myanmar pertains more to China's image and relations with ASEAN states than to Western powers, resulting in a concessive attitude toward weaker Southeast Asian states. While China possesses a strong attitude toward both Japan and the US and pays little attention to the

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<sup>5</sup> Ian Johnston (2008, 99–117) analyzed China's participation in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty using the social learning process.

<sup>6</sup> According to an interview with a Chinese scholar who prefers to remain anonymous, the development of China's nuclear capability has never been viewed as an achievement in China. The source indicated that the pursuit of nuclear weapons has a historical background; actually, no one in China truly celebrates owning nuclear power as a good thing. However, it has long been suspected that China has continued developing nuclear capability in secret. A recent report by the *Washington Post* reveals the long-term suspicion about China's increasingly sophisticated missile and nuclear arsenal (Wan 2011).

Indian influence on Myanmar,<sup>7</sup> it emphasizes the ASEAN position on matters involving Myanmar. In interviews conducted by the International Crisis Group, Chinese officials claimed that China could not apply a strong attitude and coercive means against Myanmar because of the prevailing “China threat” discourse in Southeast Asia, and thus China needed to reassure ASEAN states by insisting on a nonintervention policy. The Chinese officials also indicated that China did not want to usurp ASEAN’s leadership in managing the Myanmar issue. Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that China only voted in favor of the resolutions condemning Myanmar’s military junta when ASEAN publicly expressed its outrage over the crises occurring in Myanmar, namely, the junta’s blockage of foreign humanitarian aid after Cyclone Nargis struck in 2008 and the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2009 (International Crisis Group 2009b, 25–6).<sup>8</sup> Thus, ASEAN’s passive attitude toward international intervention strengthened China’s nonintervention policy toward Myanmar, regardless of international pressure.

### *Balance of Relationship in China’s Nonintervention Policy*

The meaning of *guanxi* was developed under Chinese social and historical contexts. It is a kind of social connection based not only on personal relationships but also on mutual responsibilities and an awareness of one’s role in the community. Role playing leads to actions that reflect neither China’s liking nor its calculation. Rather, it requires China to take actions that can reproduce a relationship. Role consciousness is not uniquely Chinese except that the Chinese culture specifically cherishes role playing. In fact, even a superpower is capable of, and even inclined to, role playing in order to efficiently reproduce its prestigious position in the status quo.

More importantly, nevertheless, the Chinese concept of *guanxi* enables a particularly strong community-centered orientation that treasures the consolidation of reciprocal relationships above formal procedures and written regulations. In Chinese society, *guanxi* can be seen as a warm accelerant used to soften the performance of cold institutions. The ultimate aim of managing *guanxi* is to reach and maintain harmony. To be in a state of harmony also means that all types and levels of *guanxi* have been properly settled and balanced; conflicts and contradictions are peacefully resolved without shaking the foundations of *guanxi*. *Guanxi* is a cultural concept that is conducive to the preparation of reciprocal relationships, but its influence extends to all aspects of Chinese daily life. The stable existence of two parties is central to the operation of *guanxi*. *Guanxi* should be both intrinsic and voluntary to each party’s self-understanding. The relationship is voluntary and does not serve only one party. The relationship is intrinsic because China’s self-understanding of being a cultural model or a worthy ally would be obsolete without it. The Chinese easily invest much emotion in *guanxi* that is usually produced in a relationship, most conspicuously including international relationships because it is highly visible. The longer the relationship, the stronger the Chinese feel obliged to preserve it. Thus, if North Korea or Myanmar is denied sovereign integrity,

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<sup>7</sup> The best way to describe the mutual perspectives of China’s and India’s roles in Southeast Asia, including their policies toward Myanmar, is “India distrusts China, and China dislikes India.” The *Washington Post* released a report describing how distrust between the two states in Asia might hinder their peaceful rise (Denyer 2011). On the Myanmar issue, China recognizes that India is gaining more benefits at China’s cost, but the Chinese academia and media have focused more on the US intention of balancing power in Myanmar than on India’s conduct. In contrast to China’s lack of attention, India has been greatly upset by China’s influence on Nay Pyi Taw. Talk of the “China threat” is often featured in the Indian media and in academic reports (Egretau 2008, 42–3).

<sup>8</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi has been under repeated house arrest by the military junta. In March 2009, an American named John Yettaw swam across a lake to Aung San Suu Kyi’s home. This event caused Aung San Suu Kyi to be charged with breaching the terms of her house arrest. The military junta began the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi on May 18, 2009. The majority of international society and the global mass media have denounced the Myanmar military junta’s brutality and condemned the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi (Mydans 2009).



China is obliged to come to their aid, even at the expense of a reciprocal relationship with a much stronger power if it is geographically or culturally distant, as the United States.

*Guanxi* shapes the logic of Chinese policymaking, worked by policymakers into the core of Chinese national interest calculus. This fact is explicit in China's official statements regarding North Korea and Myanmar. As often stated in public announcements by the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or leading figures in China, fighting the Korean War in the 1950s is an unforgettable memory that binds China and North Korea together. Similarly, when asked about China's relations with Myanmar, the term "baobo" (brothers) would be repeatedly emphasized, demonstrating the unchangeable *guanxi* between China and Myanmar. For example, since the end of 2011, when Myanmar started showing signs of political reform and President Thein Sein suspended a hydroelectric project that China had greatly invested in, China has encountered questions and suspicion about its relations with Myanmar. Responding to such suspicion, the Chinese state media repeatedly stressed the long-term relationship between China and Myanmar as "baobo" (Liu 2011). Even in official statements given by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to Myanmar, the term "baobo" has been adopted to emphasize the unchangeability of Sino-Burmese relations (Xinhua Net 2011; Yang 2011).

*Harmonious Intervention* discussed *guanxi* as one of the independent variables shaping China's attitude toward international intervention. However, the process of investigating other variables reveals that China's concern for *guanxi* also shapes the functions of other core concepts in this book. For example, in the border disputes with both North Korea and Myanmar, China took into account its *guanxi* with the two regimes. Apparent material interests were never the immediate concern for the Chinese leaders, at least not at the expense of stable relationships; rather, balance of relationship dictated China's protracted national interest calculus. In the name of *guanxi*, China could yield to its weaker neighbors and cede most of the disputed territories to them. Even as they faced severe international pressure, decisionmakers put China's *guanxi* with all related parties at the core of Chinese national interest calculus and decided on a mediatory role. In so doing, China kept the balance of its *guanxi* with both the target states, their regional organizations, and the states exerting social pressure. If China did not value *guanxi* to such an extent, it would have supported the calls for intervention to secure its apparent gain and deflect a dubious reputation away from "China threat." The alleged threat could in effect be more alarming with a China willing to intervene, compared with a China credibly sticking with the principle of sovereignty.

However, note that China's exercising half-way interventions in North Korea and Myanmar are different in approach. Their differing historical and political backgrounds required China to adopt different strategies to consolidate its *guanxi* with the two states.

The Kim family in North Korea has relatively solid personal ties with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Although North Korea has tried to develop its own path toward socialism, and Kim Jong-il has sought Russian support from time to time, North Korea's long-term comradeship and status as China's closest ally remain solid. However, some Western academic experts on North Korean issues admit that China's influence on North Korea is in fact more limited than conventional thinking suggests.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the *guanxi* between China and North Korea is strong enough that China remains the state with the most access to, and communication with, North Korea.<sup>10</sup> For China, while peacefully convincing

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<sup>9</sup> For example, You Ji (2001), a senior lecturer in the University of New South Wales, argued that the relationship between China and North Korea is actually fragile, and it has been gradually eroding. His article analyzes the historical background and the reasons causing the degeneration of the Sino-North Korean *guanxi*.

<sup>10</sup> However, since Kim Jong-il died of a heart attack in December 2011, possible changes in Sino-North Korean relations have been a matter of concern in the international community, especially when his successor, Kim Jong-un, thanked foreign leaders for sending messages of condolence but did not include China in the list. This dismissal of China caused great suspicion that the relationship between China and the Kim regime might be deteriorating (China Review News 2012).

North Korea to negotiate remains a possibility, the support for or initiation of coercive means can only violate its *guanxi* with North Korea, something that goes against China's national interest.

The personal *guanxi* between the CCP and Myanmar's political leaders could hardly compete with that of the Kim family. The Chinese leaders' relationships with the Thein Sein administration and the former Than Shwe regime are categorically different. Consistently, despite some discrepancies, China has, and as a matter of policy, elaborated on interactions with Myanmar since the 1950s to maintain a stable bilateral relationship. It should be noted that China's desire for a stable relationship is not a precise aim with a clear operational strategy. Indeed, China is aware of its strategic interests and the complexity of Southeast Asian geopolitics. However, unlike other major states (e.g., India) competing with China for influence in Myanmar, China rarely stressed its concerns about other states' influence on its Myanmar policy as long as Sino-Myanmar relations were stable; nor did China hold a harsh attitude toward Nay Pyi Taw or make strong requests after the Obama administration clearly declared US intentions of restoring its sphere of influence in the Asia Pacific. Official reports released through the Chinese mass media show that China maintains a cautious and positive attitude toward the future of Sino-Myanmar relations, even as the US has revealed its ambitions.<sup>11</sup> China's confidence has to come from its assumption that all understand that a China in quest of stable environment has no ambition in Myanmar.

In both cases, China's policymaking seems to focus more on maintaining the existent *guanxi*, patching up differences, strengthening the relationship when it turns weak (*la guanxi*), and responding to obstructions and threats to the existing *guanxi*.

This study focuses on China's relations with North Korea and Myanmar. However, historically, China has valued its *guanxi* with neighboring nations much more than did states in other regions. In September 2011, China published a White Paper entitled "China's Peaceful Development." In this White Paper, China once again emphasized building positive and amiable relations with its neighboring countries as one of the main goals of its foreign policy, envisioning a harmonious world (Xinhua Net 2011). The perceived major troublemakers in East Asia, North Korea and Myanmar, have constituted part of Chinese imperial history, and both North Korea and Myanmar have maintained good relations with China. Such *guanxi* has become a strong kinship that China would hardly abandon for the sake of apparent material interests. At the same time, however, China also believes that its responsibility as a great power includes not just regional security but also maintaining harmony in its relations with neighboring states, as stated in the aforementioned 2011 White Paper. The breaking of harmony would be a slap in China's face and a challenge to its claim of building a harmonious world, incurring uncertainties in the future and thus requiring constant alerts. For such reasons, supporting the proposals of coercive interventions, which could lead to a breach of *guanxi*, is not rational for China.

### *Evaluation of Regime Ability and China's Nonintervention Policy*

In cases in which China has supported international intervention, one crucial criterion is the consent of the target regime. This consent is only given when the target regime admits that it is no longer capable of controlling the development of the crisis. China's insistence on a regime's ability and treating it as a major criterion for imposing intervention should be considered a reemphasis of the prior status of the institution of sovereignty. In the cases of

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<sup>11</sup> In most reports written by Chinese scholars and reported by the mass media in China, the common opinion tends to believe that the US policy of restoring relations with Myanmar will not change China's position regarding Nay Pyi Taw's foreign policy. In contrast, most English mass media analyses of the Obama administration's policies in the Asia Pacific view the reengagement with Myanmar as a form of competition with China (Weiss 2010).

North Korea and Myanmar, the target regime's ability to maintain internal stability and manage crises is unquestioned. In *Harmonious Intervention*, China's attitudes and responses to interventions imposed on East Timor and Sudan were briefly examined. Two cases were used to predict China's possible response if the Kim regime fails in North Korea. The case of Myanmar is especially useful for verifying Hypothesis 5. As in the case of Myanmar, the former military regime in Myanmar was relatively stronger than other antagonist forces, such as the armed ethnic minority groups. China's major concern about intervening in Myanmar was the possibility of the military regime losing control over its domestic affairs, causing strong secessionism and turning Myanmar into another Yugoslavia in Asia. ASEAN, the regional communal body, also shared this concern and opposed harsh measures against Myanmar. No apparent gain can sufficiently justify to China the loss of long-term stability despite the latter goal's benefits being uncertain and lacking immediate substantiation. For these reasons, it is against China's national interest calculus to give up its nonintervention policy toward Myanmar.

Clearly, China's responses to appeals for intervention focus much more on the maximization of regional stability and long-term relationships than on eliminating the target regimes behind the crises. China has claimed that intervention (especially military intervention) would only worsen an already complicated situation.

First, intervention violates the institution of sovereignty and equality among states, and intervention imposed on weaker states arouses suspicion of renewed imperialism. China, being a victim of Western imperialism, shares a historical memory with other Third World nations; this memory has strengthened the discourse of "national humiliation" that remains popular among Chinese civil society and its netizens.<sup>12</sup> Bearing such historical memory, the Chinese have a strong antagonism toward Western imperialism, which in turn presents itself as the Chinese nationalism that causes the international community to worry about China's rise and intentions. Such historical and political conditions contribute to China's opposition to intervention in states that remain vigorous and in control of their domestic conditions. Should China do otherwise and support the violation of sovereignty and equality among states, it would stir up the suspicion of Chinese expansionism and imperialism, especially among Third World countries. This transitory loss of image is a remote cost from the realist perspective, but China is highly sensitive to it.

Second, past examples prove that military intervention and economic sanctions rarely work.<sup>13</sup> In particular, US unilateral action taken in the name of war only alerted China to the dangers of military intervention and the rise of neo-interventionism. Many other cases in history prove that violating the sovereign rights of other states only helps plant more roots of insecurity.<sup>14</sup>

China's consideration of regime ability is accordingly the result of pragmatic thinking combined with the belief that only by adopting soft means (i.e., conversation and negotiation through China's mediation) can the preservation of stability be guaranteed. For China to vote

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<sup>12</sup> On the discourse of how "national humiliation" (*guochi lun*) has developed and prevailed in China, see the profound analysis made by Zhao Suisheng in *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (2004) and by William Callahan in *China: The Pessimist Nation* (2010).

<sup>13</sup> As Frank (2006, 7) pointed out, sanctions rarely succeed: "Even the conservative Heritage Foundation cautions against the excessive utilization of sanctions as a tool of foreign policy and points to the adverse effects they can have on all involved parties."

<sup>14</sup> The current case of international intervention, the UN-authorized intervention in Libya, provides an obvious example. After Qaddafi was toppled, a strong voice in the National Transitional Council (NTC) urged Libya to become an Islamic state following Islamic law. International human rights organizations were concerned about Libya's pro-conservative tendencies leading to the further violation of Libyan citizens' rights, especially women's (Sheridan 2011a). Nevertheless, there remains a great portion of militiamen who did not submit to the National Transitional Council. In fact, rival militias waged several armed confrontations in Tripoli, posing a serious threat to the security and stability of not only Libya but also of its neighbors. The possibility of a civil war between rival militias has hardly been eliminated (Sheridan 2011b).

in favor of intervention there must be no conflict between action (supporting intervention) and principle (prioritizing sovereignty and equality among states). In the two cases investigated in *Harmonious Intervention*, this condition was not met because of the target regimes' ability.

The concern for *guanxi* plus the insistence on regime ability kept China from intervening in North Korea. Analyzing China's policy toward North Korea without taking *guanxi* and regime ability into account, one would conclude that it is totally irrational that China tolerates North Korea's nuclear program. China's reaction to the developing nuclear capability of a neighboring state negates realist arguments of power politics and preconceptions of the behavior of great powers.

The case of Myanmar provides additional evidence that balance of relationship and regime ability are crucial to explaining China's nonintervention policy. If China did not value regime ability, it would have intervened in Myanmar during the late 1960s, when anti-Chinese movements swept across Southeast Asia. During this period, the Chinese diaspora in Burma encountered severe antagonism: on June 26, 1967, the most serious anti-Chinese movement, later called the "6.26 event," occurred in Yangon. According to Fan's (2006) analysis, both the Chinese side and the military regime were responsible for stirring hostility between the Burmese Chinese and the Bamar people. China tacitly supported the spread of Maoist propaganda in Burma, thereby irritating the Burmese military junta. The military regime, faced with a serious economic crisis and a potential coup d'état, decided to divert domestic attention by supporting the anti-Chinese movement, sending soldiers disguised as civilians to join in the slaughter of the Burmese Chinese. However, aside from expressing serious objections and remonstrance, China did nothing to stop the anti-Chinese movement in Burma (Fan 2006).

Several factors contributed to China's inaction in Burma. First, China was undergoing the Cultural Revolution at the time, and it suspended almost all diplomacy. Foreign affairs were not a major concern, and the internal turmoil caused by the Cultural Revolution might have strangled China's capability to intervene in anti-Chinese movements across Southeast Asia. But, the counterargument that the People's Liberation Army could take advantage of this opportunity to resume power in domestic politics and leave behind the annoying Red Guards could be an equally convincing realist choice. However, this latter choice never emerged as did later via the clashes on the Sino-Soviet borders in March 1969 that immediately cooled down the Cultural Revolution. Second, if China had sent troops to assist the Chinese in Yangon, it would have faced the danger of being entangled in internal conflicts between the military junta and multiple armed ethnic minority groups. China would have encountered greater uncertainty toward its national security conditions in the long run than just a sour relationship with the Burmese military regime.

If China had any ambitions of expansion, it would have made use of the anti-Chinese movements and secretly instigated secessionism or supported regime change in Yangon. As explored in the case of Myanmar, China once provided aid, including material resources and weapons, to the Burmese Communist Party. Aside from a shared communist ideology, most members of the Burmese Communist Party inherited consanguinity and culture from the Chinese. China could have used the anti-Chinese movement and the slaughter of Chinese immigrants as an excuse to initiate a call for intervention, and, if successful, China could have established a pro-Chinese communist regime in Burma. At a time when China was experiencing a rift with the Soviet Union and facing US-led containment, making Burma a dependency would have been conducive to national security. Nonetheless, China's intentions at the time are out of the question. China did not use its ties with the Burmese Chinese to expand its sphere of influence even after it had gained a moral excuse. After China's relations with the Myanmar central regime recovered, China could not possibly support the proposal

for intervention, considering the potential crisis that the Myanmar military junta's failure to rule could bring about.

*Engagement Rather than Intervention: China's Insistence on Noncoercive Means*

Intervention is often utilized by great powers to expand their sphere of influence and to control weaker states; this was especially common during the Cold War era. If a great power subscribes to expansionism, even when alternative measures for settling disputes are present, it will always opt for intervention by military force and defend its decision as legitimate. Military intervention exists up to this day, but because of changes in moral norms and the increasing status of international institutions, states need more lawful reasons to legitimize coercive intervention against other states. In addition, intervention, whether by the use of military force or economic sanctions, has rarely proved effective (Gordon 1999; Frank 2006).<sup>15</sup> For its part, intervention for humanitarian reasons has become accepted by international society, although weaker states remain uncertain and suspicious of the great powers' intentions. These factors explain why international intervention is often a controversial issue: even if an action is taken collectively, it still foments severe debate in the international arena.

China used to stand strongly against international intervention. To this day, the direct Chinese translation of intervention, "gan she," is still a controversial and politically incorrect term. However, in its rise as a great power, China is expected to act as an international stakeholder and manage international crises and disputes. Thus, China, never ignorant of such expectations, needs to find a way to conform to international expectations without violating its own principles. The two cases analyzed in *Harmonious Intervention* provide examples of China's efforts to create such a middle course. As the two cases prove, although China has opposed interventions in North Korea and Myanmar, Chinese leaders have never neglected the expectations of the international community. China responds by utilizing its connections (also *guanxi*) with the target regimes and by acting as mediator. China engages itself in crises and bridges the target states and the outside world through these methods. In ideal balance of relationship, the target state meets the international request half-way just enough to dissuade intervention but without giving in fully to the intervening forces. Thus, China maintains good relations with all parties involved in the dispute and prevents its engagement from being defined as interference in others' domestic affairs.

There are several explanations for China's reluctance to intervene in the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, Chinese foreign policy at the time was still under the influence of Deng Xiaoping's principle of *tao guang yang hui* (to conceal one's ability and bide one's time). The main theme of this principle is not to be at the front and to hide the offensive. China considers itself still in the process of developing; Chinese officials and leaders emphasize that even if China eventually becomes a great power, it will never act as a hegemon or seek to expand its power over other nations.<sup>16</sup> The same applies to China's management of the Six-Party Talks: coordinating meetings between core states involved in the crisis and providing a platform for peaceful communication are China's responsibilities. Being a host involves taking responsibility and letting others share the authority. However, being a leader implies a

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<sup>15</sup> As Gordon (1999) noted, economic sanctions rarely reach their goals. The successful case of South Africa is a unique one. South Africa was once the target of UN-favored economic sanctions for its apartheid policy. It successfully transitioned into a democratic society in the early 1990s, and the sanctions were lifted right after. Gordon pointed out that South Africa's success could not be attributed to economic sanctions alone. The strong inner force led by the democratization movements in South African society played the key role.

<sup>16</sup> Both Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao claimed several times during public occasions that China would never "Cheng Ba" (seek hegemony). Chinese leaders insist that the "never seeking hegemony" strategy has long been the foundation of Chinese foreign policy since the Mao era (Tian 2010).

monopoly of authority and power, which is against Chinese officials' claims of never acting in a hegemonic way. Thus, China can only become the host but never the leader. Second, interfering in North Korea's nuclear program is not an action taken to satisfy any single state's national interests; it is for the good of the global community. In Chinese leaders' self-perception, the purpose of China's involvement in events<sup>17</sup> and its management of the Six-Party Talks are not for China's benefit alone. The point is to harmonize the dispute by coordinating the needs of all parties. China recognizes the difficulty of achieving harmony and balancing the interests of all parties, and oppressing any side to benefit a specific party is against China's beliefs in long-term relationships. Thus, assembling the positions of all parties and pushing them to communicate is the proper approach to find the critical point of balance for mitigating conflicts.

The case of Myanmar leads to similar conclusions as those involving North Korea, albeit in a different format. At a time of large-scale anti-Chinese movements, China had a good opportunity to intervene and expand its political power in Southeast Asia.<sup>18</sup> However, China opted to stand by its principle of nonintervention. This decision might have been due to the weakness of its material power at the time. However, China still fought a border war with India and a "punitive war" with Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s hardly from a position of strength. Had China wished, it could have waged war against a much weaker Burma as well. The more crucial reason for China to choose a nonintervention policy was China's consideration of its *guanxi* with Myanmar and the regime ability of the Burmese military junta. The judgment of power was not the drive for China's decision making; it was balance of relationship that forms the base of China's intervention policy. As revealed by the analysis in *Harmonious Intervention*, Myanmar enjoys a special status with China, being the first non-socialist state to recognize the PRC as well as China's primary connection with other Third World nations during its period of US-imposed containment. Moreover, the joint announcement of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" is of significant historical meaning to China. It is viewed as a milestone through which China established a new international association representing the interests of all Third World countries. Myanmar is one of the members of the joint announcement, and it has remained a close ally of China. China describes its relationship with Myanmar using the Burmese term "baobo" (brothers). Supporting intervention against a brotherly neighboring country is against China's own integrity in which Myanmar's integrity is a necessary component. Therefore, despite severe international pressure regarding the humanitarian crises in Myanmar, China adopted a similar response by sending special emissaries to persuade the military junta to accept China's mediation. Chinese officials describe this as a creative way to obtain engagement and involvement yet maintain noninterference in Burmese internal affairs.<sup>19</sup>

China acts as a mediator not only to balance and maintain relationships but also to prove the existence of the relationships. Acting as mediator demonstrates that China is in a good relationship with the target state and that China is capable of managing disputes through discussion and negotiation. Moreover, it is also China's politics of "face." The mediator occupies an important position in the dispute, and must be seen as legitimate and responsible.

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<sup>17</sup>Reviewing all the academic works on China's position on international intervention in the post-Cold War era published in China, one would find that the use of the verb "intervene" is rare when "China," "Beijing," "our country/state," or "we" is the subject of the sentence. "Intervention" is still a politically incorrect term in Chinese academic writing. We thank an anonymous Chinese scholar at Peking University for pointing out this stylistic expression.

<sup>18</sup>In unilateral as opposed to multilateral interventionary practice, protecting the security of overseas citizens and property has been used by the great powers as a favorite excuse for imposing intervention. Examples are Belgium's intervention in Congo in 1960, the US military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and Belgium and France's joint action against Shaba Province in 1978.

<sup>19</sup>More details about how the Chinese special emissary Wang Yi achieved his mission in Myanmar can be found in the Chinese scholar Wang Yizhou's book *Creative Involvement: A New Direction in China's Diplomacy* (Wang 2011).

For China, taking this role symbolizes the fulfillment of its responsibility as a great power in the Asia Pacific. More importantly, acceptance of China's role as mediator (by target states, other great powers involved in the issue, and the international community) certifies China's status in global politics. Managing mediation and maintaining engagement seem to be what China is willing to offer in settling international crises; supporting or initiating international intervention is still difficult for China. China's attitude toward intervention stands firmly on the canon established in the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." Intervention through coercion would negate this canon and the logic behind Chinese policymaking, which treats *guanxi* with other nations as an important national interest. Thus, except for certain special circumstances, such as the US-led intervention in Somalia and UN-authorized action in the East Timor independence movement, China will remain negative in its attitude toward international intervention imposed by force.

The last topic that needs to be stressed here is the other approach adopted by China to increase its involvement in multilateral action related to international intervention: taking part in UN peacekeeping operations. Among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China contributes the highest number of personnel to assist in UN peacekeeping operations, thus gaining the commendation of the international community. As reported by the International Crisis Group, China adopts a "case-by-case" approach in its participation in UN peacekeeping operations. This approach is intended to balance its responsibilities as a great power with its traditional principles of nonintervention. In short, only cases that satisfy three criteria (i.e., host country consent, impartiality and neutrality of peacekeepers, and use of force only in self-defense) receive PRC approval (International Crisis Group 2009a, 2). However, some flexibility remains. For example, in 1992, China voted in favor of peace operations in Somalia and insisted that the case of Somalia was an exception and needed unique management (International Crisis Group *ibid.*, 23). The special circumstances in Somalia—i.e., the lack of central authority—made it possible for China to make an exception and display its strong pragmatism. Moreover, note that Chinese personnel sent to UN peacekeeping efforts are mainly civilian police, military observers, engineering battalions, and medical units (International Crisis Group *ibid.*, i). China does not send combat troops, possibly because of its principle of nonintervention and insistence on noncoercive methods. The International Crisis Group report (*ibid.*) also agrees that China made valuable political contributions by capitalizing its relations with tough host regimes, pushing them to accept UN peacekeeping and thus succeeding where most Western nations failed. In sum, by actively participating in UN peacekeeping operations without sending combat troops, China can balance its principle of nonintervention with involvement in international crisis management. In so doing, it ensures that actions taken with the consent of the target states and under the authorization of the UN Security Council.

### **International Interventions in Other Regions and China's Balance of Relationship**

To construct a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese interventionary pattern, an examination of more empirical cases is required. In this paper, several additional brief examples are provided discussing China's attitudes and reactions toward intervention in pariah states in the Middle East and Africa, two regions that have seen the most number of international interventions since the end of the Cold War. These regions are also where the UN has invested the most humanitarian aid and sent the most peacekeepers. China's active participation in UN peacekeeping missions demonstrates its deep involvement in the crisis management of both regions. At the same time, the Middle East and Africa are major providers of energy and raw materials to China. Economic ties with pariah states in both areas and China's indifferent attitude toward intervention have earned China international

reproach. Comparing China's attitudes and behaviors toward international interventions in more geographic areas can clarify whether the six hypotheses applied in the cases of North Korea and Myanmar truly informs us of China's interventionary pattern.

### *Humanitarian Crises in Africa and China's Responses to Calls for Intervention*

Africa occupied a crucial position in China's foreign relations during the Cold War. Chinese leaders not only paid lip service to maintain intimate relations with African countries (so they could keep sending propaganda and remain allied with their "Third World brothers") but also constantly invested in and sent aid to this continent. However, the 1980s saw the "lost decade" in Sino-African relations. During this time, Deng Xiaoping changed the focus of Chinese foreign policy: reconstruction of relations with the US and other Western countries began, and Africa was marginalized. The turning point did not come until 1989, when the events of Tiananmen Square brought China severe international condemnation, and the honeymoon between China and the West came to an abrupt end. Most African states, behaving as China's "old friends," kept official relations with China. Some, such as Angola, even showed public support for China. To reciprocate the friendship and political support given by African countries since 1989, Chinese commitment of aid and investment in Africa grew dramatically (Taylor 1998, 443–50). China's relationship with Africa has become conspicuous to its economic and foreign policy. China even called 2006 the "the Year of Africa" when drafting its foreign policy guidelines for that year (He 2007, 23).

Raw materials and energy resources imported from Africa have solidified Africa's strategic position in China's foreign policy. China's pursuit of raw materials in Africa has led the international community to suspect that China supports authoritarian regimes in many African countries to strengthen its economic interests. Although China's great investment in, and support of, current regimes in some African pariah states remains, contrary to conventional thinking, China does not always block calls for intervention against these alleged pariah states. The most obvious example is Sudan.

The China National Petroleum Cooperation gained exploitation rights to the oil fields of Sudan in 1995. Over 60 percent of Sudan's oil is exported to China, providing 5 percent of its oil needs (Rocha 2007, 21; Sautman and Yan 2007, 79–80). However, when the Darfur crisis occurred, China supported UN-authorized intervention with conditions and did not veto resolutions to impose pressure on Khartoum. At most, China adopted a strategy of abstention in the UN Security Council, abstaining, for example, from the voting process of Resolution 1706, "which expanded the UN Mission in Sudan to include deployment of some 17,300 troops and 3,300 police to the war-torn region of Darfur, absorbing a previous African Union mission" (Wuthnow 2010, 70). The reasons for China's abstention are clearly described in the above quote: the lack of the host state's consent and the abridgement of the participation of the African Union. Instead, China applied the same strategy it used in North Korea and Myanmar: it played the role of mediator between Khartoum and the UN. China ordered its representative, Wang Guangya, to insist on the necessity of gaining consent from the Sudanese government. In addition, China provided US\$11 million in aid to Darfur and US\$1.8 million to the African Union in support of peacekeeping missions under the Union's authorization (He 2007, 35). Furthermore, Chinese President Hu Jintao initiated discussions with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir both in Beijing and during Hu's visit to Sudan in February 2007. China also continued sending its special emissary, Liu Guijin, to Sudan and Darfur. After South Sudan became an independent state in July 2011, Liu Guijin kept his position as special envoy representing China in Sudan and South Sudan (Higgins 2011).

In the end, China successfully persuaded Khartoum to accept, for the time being, the UN deployment of peacekeeping forces in 2007. In our discussion elsewhere, a short analysis of China's reasons for supporting UN intervention in Sudan has been provided. International



pressure on the possible boycotting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, regional stability concerning the security of China's economic interests in neighboring areas, and the inability of the al-Bashir administration to control humanitarian atrocities in Darfur all contributed to China's decision to act decisively and take the role of mediator, but still short of the extent of giving consent to unilateral intervention.

However, Sudan is not the only case in which China supported UN-authorized intervention in Africa. In 2003, China also voted in favor of the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in Liberia. Before reluctantly supporting the UN resolution to impose sanctions, China had been the largest buyer of Liberia's wood products, especially timber. China's economic interests in Liberia had helped former Liberian despot Charles Taylor stay in power (Tull 2006, 475; Chan-Fishel 2007, 147). However, investment in Liberia did not guarantee the stability of Sino-Liberian relations. Liberia repeatedly broke off diplomatic relations with China. For instance, in 1997, Liberia terminated relations with China in favor of rebuilding diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Liberia went back to China in 2003, reportedly because it needed financial aid and China's support in the Security Council (Yang 2003). China did support the UN Security Council's 2003 decision to send a multinational force to Liberia to end its 14-year civil war. To what extent the restoration of Sino-Liberian diplomatic relations influenced China's decision is difficult to determine, as more powerful factors were involved.

The crucial reason behind China's voting in favor of UN intervention was the consent of Liberian President Charles Taylor. Severe external pressure<sup>20</sup> and long-term internal chaos caused Taylor to agree to step down and accept UN interference in July 2003; he even publicly announced an invitation for US intervention (China.com 2003; Hook and Fiore 2003). Another factor shaping China's supportive attitude was the proper involvement of the regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS had been sending peacekeeping missions to Liberia since 1990 (Ero 1995). The Chinese vice-representative to the United Nations, Zhang Yishan, praised the cooperation between the UN and ECOWAS in a speech explaining China's support for the Security Council resolution.

In sum, the host state's consent and the leading role of the regional organizations (the African Union and ECOWAS) were the key factors in China's approval of UN-authorized intervention. The cases of both Sudan and Liberia support this finding. China's economic interests in both states did not lead China to oppose the proposals for intervention (i.e., use its veto power). Thus, both cases support the hypothesis that China's support of intervention rests upon the condition that the target regimes are unable to maintain stability. Note that judgment of the incapacity of the local regime is usually from the regional organization rather than through unilateral investigation of the interventionary forces dominated by the West.

On the other side of the coin, we have China's response to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and some of his subordinates were accused by the International Criminal Court of crimes against humanity, including systematic rape, torture, murder, and other atrocities perpetrated against supporters of the opposition party (The Economist 2008). As a result, the US and the EU have imposed targeted sanctions on Mugabe and several of his party members since 2002 (CNN 2011). In April 2008, a spokesman for the Zimbabwe opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, told the international media that Robert Mugabe was about to order a crackdown to shape the results of his presidential run-off campaign and retain his status as the incumbent president. Thus, the opposition party called for UN Security Council intervention to prevent potential violence against civilians in

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<sup>20</sup> The Bush administration publicly requested Charles Taylor to quit and accept its offer of asylum. US Secretary of State Colin Powell also discussed the Liberia issue with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for a resolution and crisis management (Semple and Sengupta 2003; Marquis and Shanker 2003).

Zimbabwe (Chivers 2008). In July 2008, the US and the UK proposed a resolution to the UN Security Council calling for an arms embargo and financial and travel restrictions on Robert Mugabe and 13 other regime leaders. However, the resolution was later vetoed by China and Russia (Nasaw and Rice-Oxley 2008).

China expressed its position on the Zimbabwe issue through public talks given separately by the Chinese representative to the UN, Wang Guangya, and the Chinese ambassador, Yuan Nansheng. According to them, China vetoed the resolution for two reasons. First, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) objected to intervention because they, like China, did not consider the internal turmoil in Zimbabwe a threat to world peace. Second, China did not agree with the sanction of issuing travel bans on Mugabe and his party members. Yuan Nansheng argued that if these leading figures in Zimbabwe could not travel to neighboring countries and engage in regional organizations, the development and democratization of Zimbabwe would only worsen (Xinhua News 2009; Nasaw and Rice-Oxley 2008). Third, which was not spoken directly, was the lack of consent from the host regime. As the ruling party insisted that the election was a domestic affair, and it did not want the issue to be discussed in the UN Security Council, it was impossible for China to support UN intervention. However, although China vetoed the resolution to sanction Zimbabwe, it agreed to the release of a “presidential statement” issued by the Security Council in June 2008. The nonbinding “presidential statement” used strong language in blaming the Zimbabwean government for the humanitarian and political crisis (The Economist 2008).

#### *Nuclear Threat and Civil War: Cases in the Middle East*

In the Middle East, cases involving appeals for international intervention often involve the threat of nuclear proliferation and atrocities caused by civil wars. Aside from having a notorious human rights record, condemned by many Western states and nongovernmental organizations, Iran’s development of nuclear weapons has made it the top target for international intervention. The case of Iran has much in common with the case of North Korea; however, as Iran does not share borders with China, it seems China does not feel the need to take as much responsibility for it. Conventional thinking suggests that China should have more flexibility in terms of dealing with the nuclear crisis in Iran as well as better consideration of its economic interests. However, in practice, China’s response to the Iranian nuclear crisis was little different from how it dealt with North Korea. While supporting UN sanctions against Iran, China did not give up on its diplomatic approach, encouraging multilateral talks involving the US, Britain, Germany, France, Russia, and China itself.

China has many good reasons to oppose intervention in Iran. Iran is one of China’s major oil suppliers, and it has often been suggested that China’s negative attitude toward intervention is a means of protecting a major source of energy. According to a recent report, trade between China and Iran increased by 55.8 percent from 2010 to 2011. A large portion of this increase is attributed to oil exportation from Iran (Huanqiu Shibao 2012). Such important ties have a certain influence on China’s response to Western appeals to widen sanctions against Iran. Although China has voted in favor of resolutions that “called upon Iran to suspend all nuclear enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development” since 2006 (Shichor 2006), it has also rejected US and EU efforts to weaken Iran by taking away its ability to refine gasoline as well as investment in its oil industry (Landler 2011). In early 2012, the US sent Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner to Beijing to persuade China to support US sanctions against Iran, especially those that target investment in Iran’s petroleum industries. However, not only did China turn down Geithner’s petition, but the Chinese media also publicly criticized the US decision to expand sanctions on Iran as an act of overstepping UN authority (Hornby 2012).

From the Chinese explanation, the sanctions wielded by the US and some Western great powers are unilateral actions and therefore illegitimate and in violation of the authority of the UN Security Council. Despite China's support for the sanctions imposed by the Security Council, it has repeated that the diplomatic approach and negotiation between core parties should be the main method for solving problems. The Chinese spokesman also stressed that China's emphasis on bilateral ties with Iran is not just for the good of the two countries but also for the good of the international community (Xinhua News 2010). China's relationship with Iran should have some gains already. One example is the Iranian president's public condemnation of the US in response to Washington's bullying of China to join sanctions against Iran. The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, even paid a visit to Shanghai two days after China had voted in favor of a fourth round of sanctions in the UN Security Council (Richburg 2010a). However, it is not yet clear to what extent China is capable of utilizing its gradually constructed *guanxi* with Iran to deal with the nuclear crisis and to respond to the call for intervention. What is certain is that China will not participate in any action unless it is authorized by the UN and done with Iran's consent.

Although China opposes any unilateral action against Iran taken without UN authorization, its attitude toward nuclear issues, especially nuclear nonproliferation, is not much different from that of its Western counterparts.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, voting in this matter in favor of sanctions against Iran is not necessarily in conflict with China's principles, as the major appeal is to cease the violation of nuclear nonproliferation. China takes the position that agrees with the West in principle regarding nonproliferation, but balances it by insistence on Iran's sovereign integrity.

China remains cautious and conservative when dealing with international interventions. The other case of intervention in the Middle East proves that even given UN authorization, if the criteria of "inability of the target state" and "consent of the target regime" are not met, China will still hold a negative attitude toward intervention. The intervention imposed on Libya in early 2011 provides another stylistic example of the Chinese pattern of intervention.

Former Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi was one the most notorious dictators in the oil-rich Middle East. Since February 2011, the civil war between Libyan rebels and the Qaddafi regime had caused great concern in the international community. The Arab League approved the setting up of a no-fly zone on March 12, 2011. This decision provided an opportunity for the Western great powers to debate on imposing military intervention against Qaddafi. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 1973 to establish a no-fly zone over Libya, authorizing all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians. Two days later, a broad bombing campaign led by the US and France was carried out in Libya (Cody 2011; Richburg 2011). To the surprise of many observers, China abstained from the voting process (Tisdall 2011). After the passage of Resolution 1973, China condemned the Western airstrikes against Libya. Officials also explained that China's abstention (as opposed to a veto) was due to the fact that the Arab League and some African states had shown support for the UN intervention (China Review News 2011c).

China could have vetoed Resolution 1973 but did not. Despite suffering great economic loss caused by the civil war and military action executed by the multinational forces, China did not recognize the Libyan rebels immediately after the fighting had swung in their favor. Even after Qaddafi was defeated, China did not recognize the rebel-led National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate ruling body of Libya until September 12, 2011. According to reports, by being the last major power in the UN Security Council to recognize the legitimacy of the NTC, China lost a great opportunity to profit from Libya's rich deposits of oil or to

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<sup>21</sup>Ian Johnston analyzed the process of China's being socialized and supportive of the international institutions on nuclear nonproliferation in his book *Social States: China in International Institutions* (Johnston 2008).

participate in the reconstruction business. In addition, the Libyan rebellion accused China of violating the UN embargo by shipping weapons to Qaddafi (McDonald 2011). The fact that China had received representatives of both the Qaddafi regime and the Libyan rebels while the war was ongoing created the impression that China was trying to keep its feet in both camps. The Chinese mass media explained that China's intention was to show that it could accept a future Libyan government not under Qaddafi's rule. Chinese spokesman for foreign affairs expressed China's intention of ending the warfare through peaceful negotiation (China Review News 2011b).

Although the Libyan civil war did not end the way China could have worked to avoid, and China did not gain much space to wield its influence on events, China's abstention from the voting process and its hesitation in recognizing the legitimacy of the NTC make Libya a crucial case in the examination of our hypotheses. The uncertainty involved in the intervention and regime change in Libya has left China in an awkward position. The case of Libya nevertheless proves that without the consent of the host regime, China cannot allow itself to support the imposition of intervention, even though the action is authorized by the UN Security Council and has the support of regional organizations. In addition, China's concern about the attitude of the Arabic League also reveals the importance it places on maintaining relationships with core actors in the region, as dictated by the Chinese logic of policymaking. The best contrast can be found in the case of Zimbabwe in which China used its veto power in the Security Council. The appeal for intervention was clearly against China's principle of noninterference; and, most importantly, the African Union and other regional states opposed coercive intervention. This opposition supported China's strong reaction of vetoing the call for intervention against Zimbabwe. Thus, understanding why China abstained in the case of Libya is not difficult. Only in doing so could China show respect for the regional institution and the Arabic states, thus maintaining its relations with them (*guanxi*). Abstention also enabled China to practice its principle of nonintervention and its reluctance to apply force against functional sovereign states. The only significant neglect, if any, in China's action is consistently about China's own material interests.

China's responses to proposals for intervention in pariah states in Africa and the Middle East provide comparison and contrast with the cases of North Korea and Myanmar. The fundamental difference between these cases is the shared borders with China. The physical distance between the target states and China makes the degree of social pressure different; clearly, the crises happening around China's neighboring area would exert more international pressure on China. The reason is that China is expected by the international community to take more action and be more responsible when dealing with crises happening in East Asia. Issues in Africa and the Middle East require China's cooperation; however, China is less frequently asked to initiate actions dealing with turmoil in remote areas. For example, China was asked by its Western counterparts to help stop the North Korean nuclear project, but in the Iranian nuclear crisis, China took a more passive action and attitude. *Guanxi* with the target regimes and regional international organizations is always foremost in China's considerations of how to respond to calls for intervention. Thus, host state consent and the approval of regional organizations are always crucial in shaping China's intervention policy. The use of noncoercive means remains the major point in China's crisis management. This insistence on the use of noncoercive means also depends on whether the target regime is capable of handling the crisis in question. Based on the case studies and comparison of China's responses to different cases of international intervention, the criteria determining China's attitude and decision making are clearly depicted. These criteria are never independent from each other. However, to understand why they are important to China's logic of decision making, an investigation of the Chinese political tradition and its philosophical thought is required.

## Harmonious Intervention: A Pattern in Process under a View of World Order

Realist Hypotheses 1 and 2 appear problematic now. Hypothesis 1 seems to hold and, accordingly, realist calculation falls along with China's stubborn resistance to any suggestion of intervention by international forces in states sharing its borders. Hypothesis 2 falters badly as economic and other concrete material temptations could not prompt China to launch interventions or to even support intervention on the one hand, and yet reliance on the target state for energy supply does not preclude China from supporting sanctions on the other hand. Constructivist Hypotheses 3 and 4 fare a little better. Anticipation of Hypothesis 3 regarding the impact of stronger social pressure is met half-way as China is willing to engage with the target state to solicit its concession, at least nominally. Hypothesis 4 holds to the extent that the relationship with the target state contributes to the choice of nonintervention. However, it is with regard to the internal situation of the target state informed by Hypotheses 5 and 6 that performs best. China's concern over relational security and, following this, the regime's capacity and noncoercive means explain its objection to intervention better than hypotheses regarding international structure or socialization. China's sensitivity toward the internal conditions of the target state thus merits further discussion and explanation.

By investigating multiple cases, as was done in the previous sections, the details can now be presented in the following analysis. The clues, if they can be defined as such, are the results of inductive inference based on previous work. They include the following points: the criteria for China to support intervention; the measures China applies to balance international pressure calling for intervention; and the maintenance of its principle of nonintervention in the existing local relationship. The content of these points is directed to the "pragmatism" in China's national interest calculus and its attitude toward international intervention. These points are the conditions for China to accept or turn down calls for international intervention; they *form* the pattern, but they are not the root. The root of the Chinese pattern of intervention should be related to China's preoccupation with the target state's internal conditions. Since China's determination to stress these internal conditions is not international, it has to be found in its political culture, particularly its national interest calculus that centers on stabilized long-term relationships. In other words, China's attitude toward intervention and its insistence on the institution of sovereignty are shaped by how China defines its relationship with the rest of the world. Such world order is the apparatus driving the motion and function of global politics, and it defines China's role in global governance. Other countries likewise consider and rely on the long-term relationship except that China considers it as the priority. This factor is the ultimate one that leads China to engage in specific interventionary behavior—i.e., "intervention without confrontation." Both the form and the root of this special pattern of intervention will be explained and analyzed in the following sections.

### *Pragmatism in the Chinese Pattern of Intervention*

Summarizing the previous cases regarding China's responses to calls for international intervention, certain criteria are used to determine China's attitude toward intervention. These criteria were based not only on Chinese political tradition but also on China's experiences in its international affairs. These criteria reflect the orientation of pragmatism in Chinese calculus. Pragmatism means transcending values and ideologies for the sake of preserving reciprocal stable and long-lasting relationships. Pragmatism for China is balance of relationship instead of power. It points to China's relations with the target state, the international interventionary forces, and the rest of the world. It also refers to the target state's relations with the interventionary forces and its internal relations. Such pragmatism is aimed at finding a balance between principle and reality while taking care of national

interests and the image China wants to present to the international community at the same time. Pragmatism in China's policy toward international intervention does not exclude the consideration of national interests. However, how China evaluates and categorizes its national interests in the much longer run should be the focus of inquiry. The way China ranks its national interests is different from what most Western observers might expect. This method may explain why, in the North Korea and Myanmar cases, China's relationship with the target countries seems to play a more crucial role in its decision making than the apparent matter of raw materials. However, China's current response to the nuclear crisis in Iran, a country that has little historical relationship with China, seems to prioritize the pursuit of energy interests, which falls back to the predictions of the realist argument.

China's decisions on intervention are therefore a balance of the relationship between China and the target state on the one hand and between China and the interventionary forces on the other hand. At first glance, China seems to behave inconsistently in different cases of international intervention. The case studies presented in our research reveal the rather consistent principles guiding China's actions and reactions toward intervention. These principles, or criteria, include the following: UN authorization, host state consent, attitude of the regional community, and scope of the use of coercion. Among these criteria, the host state's consent holds the foremost status, as it is the most crucial condition in China's insistence on state sovereignty and equality. Only when there is agreement from the target state, regardless of how it is achieved, can China positively respond to a proposal for intervention and treat it as a "request" from a target nation in need of external assistance.

One of the rare exceptions is the case of intervention imposed on Somalia. At that time, the internal situation of Somalia was anarchic—i.e. none of the fighting forces could represent a legal government of Somalia and formally accept UN intervention. After China voted in favor of the UN taking action in Somalia, Chinese officials reiterated that China's decision was based on Somalia's unusual conditions and should be seen as an exception (Davis 2011, 231–2). Indeed, in this rare case, China clearly could not attach great importance to the consent of the target state. The most obvious contrast lies between Liberia and Libya. The principle of host state consent was fulfilled in the case of Liberia, while the latter case failed to match the condition. Although both cases won endorsement from regional communities, China supported the UN's resolution to send forces to Liberia yet severely condemned a similar operation in Libya. The support of regional organizations is nonetheless one of the necessary conditions for China's support, if not a sufficient condition. After all, considering the consent provided by the regional organization, China did not formally veto the UN's Libyan operation.

The other famous and noteworthy exception is the case of Sudan. China attempted to forcefully obtain host state consent by sending a special envoy to intercede and make the then government accept UN intervention. However in Khartoum, the government's ability to handle the internal warfare and stabilize domestic politics should be noted. China's evaluation of the target regime's ability should have driven China to consider those criteria fulfilled. If China recognizes that the internal turmoil of the target state can still be controlled by the current regime, it will not compel the fulfillment of host state consent. In the case of Sudan, secessionism was so strong that the Khartoum authorities were unable to control the violence and atrocities (eventually leading to the independence of the Republic of South Sudan in 2011). The importance of the relationship with Sudan was not so great as one with the international community threatening to boycott the Beijing Olympics. With the logic and materialization of the strategy of balance of relationship, Sudan's consent was finally, painstakingly acquired.

The criterion of host state consent was not fulfilled in the case of both North Korea and Myanmar. To some extent, the issues giving rise to calls for international intervention

differentiate the two cases. China has yielded more to the Security Council resolutions on the imposition of sanctions on North Korea. This action is partly the result of the nature of the issue—i.e., the nuclear crisis, which the international community considers a great and imminent danger that China has to respond to cooperatively in order to achieve recognition as a responsible state.

Another important factor shaping China's decision making is the attitude of the regional community. In the case of North Korea, the major great powers and regional states in Northeast Asia all condemned North Korea's violation of nuclear nonproliferation. In contrast, the major regional intergovernmental organization, ASEAN, remained opposed to the call for intervention against the military junta in Myanmar. Thus, the regional community placed social pressure on China to respond in a manner ensuring the preservation of its *guanxi* with all parties involved in the issue.

One more relatively less crucial criterion is authorization given by the UN. If the other criteria have not been fulfilled, China would veto, or at least abstain from, any decisions approving international intervention. However, in its official announcements on intervention imposed on pariah states, China insists that the UN is the only legitimate initiator of interference in sovereign states. If an international intervention is led by a single state, China would insist that such action should still seek authorization from the UN. This view further explains why China can support sanctions issued by the Security Council against Iran but severely condemn unilateral sanctions imposed by the US and the EU. Of course, China's insistence that UN should always take the major role in international interventions is related to the fact that only when the UN is in charge can China wield some influence or at least control the scope of the use of force. Under the principle of noninterference, China has opposed the imposition of intervention through coercive means. China has tried to create a balance between such principles and the trend of current international politics (which favors imposing intervention for humanitarian reasons), and it remains very cautious and hesitant in cases of intervention involving the use of military force. This hesitation is reflected in China's refusal to send out fighting troops, rather only police and professional personnel mainly in charge of peacekeeping work and postwar reconstruction. Refraining from the aggressive aspect of intervention but contributing to the passive part of construction seems to be a special characteristic of the Chinese pattern of intervention.

The last point regarding China's interventionary pattern is the specific feature of "institutionalized personal diplomacy." If the previous criteria are the passive side of the Chinese pattern of intervention, then institutionalized personal diplomacy should be considered its active side. Personal diplomacy is not new in international politics, and it was not invented by Chinese officials. This specific feature of the Chinese application of personal diplomacy is a product of the prioritization of *guanxi*. When managing international crises, China tends to send the same political figures to the same area to deal with similar issues. Thus, the term "institutionalized personal diplomacy" is coined in this study. This approach relies on personal capability and private connections to the issues in question, and it has been purposely maintained in the bureaucratic apparatus. These characteristics are well presented in Wang Yizhou's book *Creative Involvement* (2011). In Wang's analysis, in almost all "successful" cases of China's involvement in international intervention—i.e., cases in which China received a positive response or even praise from the Western world—skillful and wise Chinese diplomats were always involved in the process of mediation. Through the outstanding performance of these Chinese diplomats and their personal ties with foreign political figures, China was able to lead the process smoothly and complete its role as mediator. Case studies analyzed in Wang's work include Wang Yi's mission in Myanmar, Liu Guijin's status as special envoy to Sudan, and Fu Ying's skillful and talented engagement

with the global mass media.<sup>22</sup> Wang also analyzed China's performance in different international crises using the diverse theories or sayings currently prevailing in China.

Institutionalized personal diplomacy demonstrates the importance of the balance of relationship in China's ranking of national interests. Chinese diplomats' personal skill and ties with the host states or organizations lead to better communication. Institutionalized personal diplomacy is a special type of track-two diplomacy designed specifically to strengthen track-one diplomatic work. Once such a foundation has been built, it helps ease the friction of negotiation. It also proves that China values relationships between nations. When China plays the role of mediator, institutionalized personal diplomacy frequently plays a key role in reducing tension and minimizing the possibility of further intervention through coercive means.

### *Philosophy behind "Intervention without Confrontation"*

The development of institutionalized personal diplomacy in China's response to international intervention demonstrates the balance of relationship in Chinese diplomatic thinking. For the West, personal diplomacy is often a product of practice or coincidence, but for China, it is an intrinsic component of the Chinese style of diplomacy. Applying this to China's response to international intervention, institutionalized personal diplomacy offers a private channel to reconcile the appeal for intervention and the political needs of the target regime. In so doing, either the call for intervention through coercion can be averted or the criterion of host state consent can be fulfilled. Thus, the ideal of "intervention without confrontation" can be achieved. This skill not only applies to China's response to proposals for intervention in North Korea and Myanmar but also to its management of crises and negotiating with the two states.

The ideal of intervention without confrontation points toward the root of the Chinese pattern of intervention. This root has grown from China's view of the world order and has shaped China's understanding of the current international system. In addition, the Chinese view of the world order also determines how China defines the responsibilities of great powers. There has been much research, both philosophical and empirical, focusing on China's view of the world order. This study does not intend to join the investigation into the origin and components of the Chinese view of world order, as this should be done by historians and philosophers. What this study plans to address relates only to the construction of China's interventionary pattern and its response to international crises. This part of the Chinese view of the world order, simply put, is the special characteristic in the traditional Chinese political thought that can be summarized as *ontologically relational and epistemologically hierarchical*. Ontological relationality reflects the Chinese fantasy on how international society and China should be mutually constituted by its members. Epistemological hierarchy guides China's approach to problem-solving. In China's epistemological hierarchy, groups are more important than their members and relationships rank higher than their individual parties. Moreover, groups and actors external to the relationship are less important. Accordingly, Chinese leaders always look for a relational hierarchy when making foreign policy. In the same vein, intervention policy acquires its meanings from the selected relational hierarchy.

China's motivation behind its response to international intervention is the assertion of a specific hierarchy of actions. This hierarchy has five aspects. First, if force is to be used at all, only the UN can authorize it. No single state or collective can replace the UN. Thus, only

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<sup>22</sup> A similar technique was adopted in China's dealings with Taiwan. Chen Yunlin and the late Wang Daohan were both representatives sent by China to negotiate with Taipei. Both are noted for their people skills and good personal relationships with Taiwanese politicians. In addition, Wang was the most famous figure to advocate a pragmatic approach of peaceful engagement with Taipei.



when an intervention is authorized by the UN can China support that intervention, *providing* that all other criteria are met. Second, the internal is higher than the external; the fundamental international institution should be prioritized: the sovereignty and equality of states. Thus, consent from the target regime is crucial to China's support for international intervention. Third, this hierarchical thinking regarding which relationships are more important also shapes China's relative attitude toward adjacent and distant neighbors. Neighboring states that are part of the China-centered East Asian international system carry more weight with China than those in the far distance. This ranking system can better explain the figure of concentric circles described in Confucianism. It is a derivative of typical Chinese family and social relations. As kinship is defined by diverse ranks, the Chinese central authority also adopts policies and ways of thinking in which actors are classified into different ranks. Fourth, managing relations with powerful or rich states is more important than with weaker or poor states. Last, managing relations with a larger population or more states (e.g. the Third World countries) is more important than with a smaller population or fewer states (e.g. the Western countries).

The meanings of the traditional Chinese world view—hierarchical thinking—direct our attention once again to the importance of the balance of relationship that centers on *guanxi*; it has little to do with choices of value between conservatism, liberalism, nationalism, socialism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, multiculturalism, and so on. This shunning attitude appears similar to realism indeed. The ultimate purpose of the Chinese pattern of intervention without confrontation is to manage relationships rather than power, though. Similar to the intervention theory in IR literature, the Chinese pattern of intervention aims to change the policy of target nations, preferably with the change done voluntarily. If this voluntary change is achieved, the *guanxi* between China and all parties involved in the issue is maintained. This strategy also aims to maintain regional and global order, with China setting the example as a fine role model for other nations to be attracted to and learn from. This special characteristic in the Chinese world view explains why China opposes intervention for the sake of regime change and democratization. The point here is that, if liberal democracy is a truly desirable form of government, then others will voluntarily come and learn it. In the same vein, if a political system is not voluntarily adopted by others, then that system must be flawed, or other limitations exist because of such conditions as environment and cultural background. From China's perspective, imposing a political system through coercion is neither legitimate nor long-lasting.

Regime change is not only a negation of the institution of sovereignty; it also transforms untroubled relations into antagonism. Furthermore, regime change and value planting often introduce bias against different cultures and value systems. Avoiding potential conflicts caused by such biases is the main task of traditional Chinese political thought, given China's long history of integration of diverse ethnicities. Thus, preventing ethnic and cultural conflict is the main theme in Chinese political philosophy. This theme explains why harmony is always the most important virtue in Chinese political thought. Many Chinese political thinkers follow the common usage and call this specific political thought *tianxia* (or "allunder-heaven" as it is often given in English).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>In this paper, the concept of *tianxia* adopted to explain the philosophical background of China's interventionary pattern is mainly from Zhao Tingyang's work. His definition of *tianxia* is a refined and renewed one, as it is a derivative of the political system of the Zhou dynasty in Chinese history. He indicated that the concept of *tianxia* should not be treated as a "Chinese system" but as an ideal type of new world order newly designed for making a better world (Zhao 2005). Such a claim forms the response to William Callahan's critique of Zhao's work. Callahan (2008) argued that Zhao's theory of the *tianxia* system is the endorsement of the official propaganda, which represents a top-down ideological construction designed by China. However, many China experts have adopted the concept of *tianxia* as an analytical variable to investigate whether and how traditional Chinese political thought, which they call *tianxia* or the old usage "tribute system," has affected Chinese foreign policy and its self-definition of its role in current world politics. Such works can be found in Alan Carlson

Zhao Tingyang became the most well-known scholar of traditional Chinese political theories since publishing his book *Tianxia System* in 2005. In this book and in subsequent articles, Zhao claims that *tianxia* is an ideal rather than a political option or aim pursued by China. He defines the concept of *tianxia* by renewing and refining the political philosophy inherited from the Zhou dynasty.<sup>24</sup> However, this philosophy portrays a utopia, and treating it as a goal for China as a rising great power to achieve is unrealistic. A better way to understand how the ideal of *tianxia* shapes China's foreign policy is to consider it as a metaphysical method that affects the logic of Chinese leaders' decision making.

As Zhao explained (2005), the revision of the theory of the *tianxia* system complements the defects of Kantian peace, which is frequently quoted in many IR theorists' works (e.g., Alexander Wendt). According to Zhao, while Kantian peace requires all political existences to be similar (in international politics, the Kantian actor implies a republican state), the ideal of *tianxia* focuses on the achievement of universally compatible relations among all political existences. Such an idea is reflected in Chinese leaders' emphasis on *guanxi* in matters of international affairs. To find such universal compatible relations, in practice, the consideration of policymaking should focus on the balance of relationship. As Zhao (2011) points out, *tianxia* as a world view gives priority to relational security and reciprocal interests. By prioritizing relationships over individuals, conflicts will hopefully be easily settled and every individual's self-interest can be ensured. Zhao called this rationale "methodological relationalism." Moreover, the fundamental characteristic of the Chinese way of communication is not to determine right from wrong but rather to reach a mutually beneficial outcome that both parties want or at least accept (Zhao 2003, 93). China's emphasis on multiple party talks and China's role as mediator are the manifestations of this characteristic of Chinese political culture. Such strategies are designed to take care of China's need to maintain *guanxi*.

The slogan of building a "harmonious world" is a derivative of the theory of all under heaven. Socialism also partly contributes to this discourse. Chinese socialism has practiced pragmatism since the Deng era, finding win-win solutions through cautious experimentation with the ultimate goal of preserving justice and equality and eventually building a "harmonious society" within and outside China.<sup>25</sup> The slogan "building a harmonious society" formally became the principle behind China's national development strategy in 2004. On September 15, 2005, Hu Jintao used the term "harmonious world" in his speech at the 60th anniversary of the UN. Both "harmonious society" and "harmonious world" are legacies of traditional Confucian philosophy and are also embedded in the ideal of

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(2011), Jeremy Paltiel (2010), Zhang Feng (2009), David Kang (2007), Jonathan Adelman and Chih-yu Shih (1993), and Fei Xiaotong (1992).

<sup>24</sup> As defined by Zhao Tingyang (2005 and 2011), *tianxia* is the "dense concept of world" consisting of a trinity of meanings: (1) the earth under the sky; (2) the public choice made by all peoples in the world or the universal agreement of the "hearts" of all peoples; and (3) a universal system for the world, with a world institution responsible for universal order and peace. More discussions and analyses of the concept of *tianxia* can be found in Zhao's 2005 book *The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of World Institution*.

<sup>25</sup> Despite socialist ideas such as egalitarianism, collectivism, and revolution against exploitation being compatible with Confucian order, there are still many contradictions between the Confucian ideal and the Chinese practice of socialism. Socialist ideology imbued with nationalism in opposition to capitalism/the West is one example of these contradictions; another is one-party rule and the predominance of collective good over the good of partial interests (i.e., nation over clan, region, sector, and so on). Yet another is that the Confucian ideal suggests that politics should be in the hands of virtuous elites; but the communist spirit dictates exactly the opposite. As China did not inherit the Western idea of transcendence, pragmatism, and concession to the interests of the rank and file remain the themes for China to deal with, as well as the restoration of relationships broken by these contradictions due to the revolution against exploitation or imperialism. Historically, China once promoted the mass-line approach to mobilize popular support for gaining leadership. The mass line is actually a line adopted by the elite to discover the needs and expectations of the rank and file. Since Jiang Zemin took over the leadership, it seems that in the sphere of choosing successors and through Jiang's successor, Hu Jintao, China continues to hope to tame elitism through the populist mass line to ensure that the party remains selfless.

*tianxia*.<sup>26</sup> The idea of harmony emphasizes both spiritual civilization and subjective virtue, which are utilized for the preservation of harmony. The process of reaching harmony is more an internal task than an external imposition. That is, harmony is not uniformity, but rather seeking common ground while preserving differences (*qiu tong cunyi*). Focusing on consensus but not on the imposition of force is what Confucianism calls the difference between the selfless “kingly way” (*wangdao*) and self-centric hegemony (*badao*). This distinction forms the basis of the world order depicted in the ideal of *tianxia*.

To describe further the idea of harmony, Zhao Tingyang’s work once again provides a good definition: “In Chinese philosophy, harmony means the best of all possible relations... The strategy of harmony aims at making the best relations that maximize the reciprocal interests for all players” (Zhao 2011). Traditional Chinese political philosophy does not reject the pursuit of interests and utility, but utility that is self-centric should not be valued more highly than the consideration of relationships. Confucian harmony is a process of concession and consultation first given by the higher party and then followed by the lower party; this has been the traditional way to deal with controversies and conflicts amid diverse self-interests. Therefore, “the best concept of the political is about the arts of harmonization instead of the arts of antagonism and domination” (Zhao *ibid.*).

This philosophical perspective provides a profound explanation as to why China is more accustomed than the West to the warning that one should never become a motivated practitioner of international intervention. It is flawed to the extent that it does not immediately deal with violence and damage to humanity caused by inaction, and merely aims to restore relationships deemed drifting astray.<sup>27</sup> China will nonetheless support the use of coercion when its appropriate place in its view of the world order and its definition of harmony are rejected.<sup>28</sup> Chinese leaders evaluate China’s relations with other countries to determine if such a refusal has taken place. The goal of Chinese intervention is to restore either a relationship between China and other countries or a relationship among other countries in order to confirm China’s place in the hierarchical order. In short, the rationale in China’s view of the world order is ontologically and epistemologically relation oriented. Methodologically, maintaining harmony and relationships is the main theme.<sup>29</sup> Note that under very rare circumstances the Chinese quest for harmony does not at all guarantee peace, and sometimes it even prompts the use of force.

Emphasizing harmony, *guanxi* (relationship), interests based on the results of consultation, and the seeking of concession have deeply influenced China’s interpretation and practice of the application of power. After all, coercive intervention defeats the purpose of restoring relationships and harmony. In the cases investigated in previous sections, Chinese involvement in international intervention was an application of soft means intended to demonstrate the attraction of maintaining relations with China. Even in cases in which China

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<sup>26</sup> As Zhao Tingyang (2005) pointed out, the concept of *tianxia* is not equal to Confucianism. *Tianxia* is a political philosophy constructed by the combination of diverse Chinese political philosophies, with Confucianism and Daoism comprising the major part.

<sup>27</sup> Regarding the function of violence in the quest for harmony, see Shih (2010, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Violence or the use of force is an inevitable component in Chinese balance of relationship; yet it should always be the last resort. Whether or not applying coercion is the last resort is determined by the level of bearing which is attitudinal and subjective, not objective. In short, the moment of calling for the last resort emerges when the violation of proper relationship reaches the perceived point of no return. An example is shown in Chinese comments on the standoff between China and the Philippines over sovereign rights of the Scarborough Shoal. China accuses the Philippines of disrupting Chinese fishermen. In an interview with the Chinese IR expert Xing Qu, he pointed out that in Chinese philosophy there is a saying: “give way to avoid conflict (*tui bi san she*)”; yet there is never no limit of giving way. When the opposite side pushes over China’s limits of tolerance, retaliation is always a potential resort for China (Central News Agency 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Zhao Tingyang argued that *tianxia*, as a method, should be treated as “the methodology to make the world. The ultimate goal is to redefine and to justify universal values, and to make a world constitution, in terms of new universalism, that is relationalism.” Quoted from correspondence with Zhao Tingyang.

supported the use of economic sanctions or military force, it would insist that coercion could only be short term and punitive or constructive oriented in nature. Thus, the target state would not lose authority over its territory and would still be capable of controlling its domestic politics. In the Chinese ideal, intervention best achieves its goal when the intervening parties can obtain victory without taking anything and without hurting relations with the target regime. Noticeably, unilateral withdrawal has been a characteristic of Chinese military intervention since the early 1950s.<sup>30</sup>

Chinese political philosophy and China's ideal version of international intervention have led China to develop a distinct understanding of the use of power when participating in intervention. The Chinese intent when applying power—whether hard or soft—in international intervention is to pursue relational security and demonstrate that China would never be an enemy; such a style of applying power secures relationships and guarantees the peaceful solution of disputes. Hopefully, other countries do not define China as a source of problems during times of controversy. These facts, as reflected in Chinese foreign policy, support the previous arguments that the consideration of *guanxi* with target regimes and other involved actors shapes China's attitude toward international intervention. However, judging from the global media's lack of friendliness toward China, China clearly still has a long way to go to build a positive image in the Western world.<sup>31</sup>

The ideal of building a harmonious society and a harmonious world remains the ultimate goal of Chinese domestic and foreign policy in the foreseeable future. However, pragmatism developed through long experience in international politics has taught China to evaluate reality with great caution. China is aware that it is impossible not to encounter controversies caused by differences and disagreements, and the philosophy of *tianxia* may not be able to help solve disputes between states in real-world politics. Thus, *tianxia* remains a method at the metaphysical level; it shapes China's view of the world order and leads China to focus on relational thought. Reflecting on China's policy toward international intervention, the preservation of *guanxi* is considered the main goal of China's policymaking. Furthermore, the Chinese way of solving disputes tends toward the model in which concessions are made by the higher party, and consultation should take place with the lower party. This method is the typical Confucian style of dealing with controversies, and its great influence on Chinese foreign policy can still be seen in China's management of the territorial disputes involving North Korea and Myanmar.

We would like to borrow the rational-choice metaphor of the prisoner's dilemma in order to translate the idea of *guanxi* and harmony into a narrative that can make sense to realists. According to a typical game of prisoner's dilemma, the two players do not cooperate to achieve a mutually beneficial solution due to a structural lack of trust. In a continuously repeated game of prisoner's dilemma, however, it would obviously be too costly for either side not to cooperate. The structural lack of trust poisons the cooperative relationship, though. The rational choice solution for the player, facing the uncooperative partner taking advantage of the cooperative player, is to begin with cooperating in the first games to establish trust of the other side but to resort to an uncooperative option in the third if the other side refuses to reciprocate in the second. Then, the players should return to cooperation as a reward to the other side to opt for cooperation. Repeating this process would, in computer simulation,

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<sup>30</sup> Famous examples include China's wars with India and Vietnam. A more detailed analysis is provided by Jonathan Adelman and Chih-yu Shih in their book *Symbolic War: The Chinese Use of Force, 1840–1980* (1993).

<sup>31</sup> On July 1, 2010, the Chinese official news medium Xinhua News Agency launched a 24-hour English-language global channel called CNC World. This action is viewed as an important step in China's international media strategy. For more details, related news is available at <http://Chinaelectionsblog.net/?p=9163>.

usually overcome the structural lack of trust in the end.<sup>32</sup> This is tantamount to China's policy of alternation between concession and punishment at the expense of apparent national interest in the immediate run. China's intervention policy, embedded in a long-term perspective, may well incorporate this rational choice thinking and lead to the recognition that the balance of relationship represents a universal logic of international relations.

In sum, the Chinese style of intervention without confrontation aims to maintain and restore a long-term relationship with others. This characteristic leads China to prefer an informal manner of dealing with disputes: i.e., sending special envoys to the target state and communicating with all parties involved in the dispute. Concession and consultation are also better made through informal means. As a result, China does not agree with the use of coercion as the sole means of intervention. Coercive intervention is always confrontational and detrimental to world order in the Chinese evaluation. Moreover, its ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically relational-oriented worldview rooted in Chinese political philosophy leads China to define its national interests differently from Western states. Emphasis on long-term relationships with others enforces China's belief that its highest national interest is to show that China will not pursue its own national interests at others' expense. In this sense, apparent interests are far less important than the restoration of long-term relationships. Thus, we have seen China compromise on material interests in certain cases of international intervention (e.g., the crises in North Korea, Myanmar, Sudan, and Libya), turning hard intervention into a soft solution to gain long-term relational security.

#### References

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<sup>32</sup>This is the famous strategy of tit-for-tat proposed by Axelrod (1984), who believes that his widely cited strategy in the rational choice literature explains how a large population can live together with altruism.