

**THE RISE OF PRAGMATIC CHINA:
U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL 1997 – 2012**

By

JEONG, Hae Yeon

THESIS

Submitted to
KDI School of Public Policy and Management
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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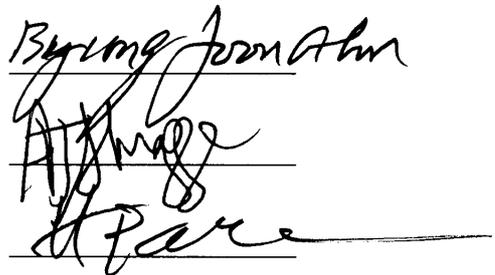
MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

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Approval as of December, 2012

ABSTRACT

THE PRAGMATIC RISE OF CHINA: U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL 1997 – 2012

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As a rising political, economic, and military power, China has responded to worldwide attention by playing a more active role in regional and global multilateral regimes. This paper focuses on how China's multilateral strategy has evolved in the UNSC between 1997 and 2012. What important factors led to the seven vetoes since 1997, and how has China's voting behavior changed over this time period? A thorough analysis of the official UNSC documents show that the ultimate goal for China is to secure the Chinese interests and compete for more decision-making power upon the global stage. China's voting behavior in the UNSC strongly support China's pragmatism in multilateralism; to continue high economic growth and relationship building, China has become highly sensitive to the changing international norms and constraints of multilateralism, while gaining international support especially from the developing countries of Africa and Southeast Asia. China is consistently aware of the UNSC mandate, and will continue to vote with firm positions on state sovereignty and internal affairs, clearly because China has a strong interest and desire to avoid foreign intervention in its own affairs.

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2012 (Year of publication)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I praise God, the Almighty for providing me this opportunity and granting me the capability to proceed successfully. This thesis appears in its current form due to the assistance and guidance of several people. I would therefore like to offer my sincere thanks to all of them.

I want to acknowledge my esteemed supervisor, Professor Byung-Joon Ahn, who in my third semester got me interested in international politics and broadened my academic pursuit into the field of international politics and foreign diplomacy. I truly thank Professor Ahn for his warm encouragement, thoughtful guidance, critical comments, and correction of the thesis.

My deep thanks also go to my dear friends for being constantly supportive. To my fellow 2011 MPP colleagues, words cannot express my sincere thankfulness to all of you. Thank you for reassuring me when I doubted my ability to complete this paper and provided a necessary dose of humor and sanity along the way. Without whatever information and suggestions you have all provided me, I would never survive the pains of writing this thesis. I love you all like family, really. To Ji Eun Kim and Hae Lim Lee, thank you both for your moral support. You both always had the tendency to phone just in time and save me from some late-night “men-boongs.” Though we seem to be on different tracks now, our friendship will always help me survive the difficult time (if there is any) in the future. To Chelsea Park, Jeena Lee, Mina Jang, and Ahra Cho, thank you for thinking of me when you say your prayers. Your encouraging words keep me working on with the greatest amount of patience. I am so glad we all somehow found each other in oh-so-cold-and-dreary Minnesota. To Soo

Jung Moon and Jenny Lee, thank you for all the food therapy sessions. Your moral support and amazing food therapy brings me a lot of warmth.

Last but not least, I want to express my deepest thanks to my parents and MJ. My gratitude is beyond words. I am deeply indebted to their unfailing support, both in the emotional, spiritual, and financial aspects. During this whole process, they were very patient and supportive of whatever decisions I made. Their words of encouragement and to not be afraid of challenges were what kept me going. To momsie, daddykins, and dongs, thank you, thank you, thank you. Without any of you, I can never make my thesis and degree possible.

Thank you all for everything.

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ONE

INTRODUCTION

In order to further understand China's role in multilateral affairs, this paper examines China's voting behavior in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). But why China, why the UNSC, and why now? As an emerging leader in the international stage, China is increasingly gaining attention for its rise in economic, military, and political power. This increasing attention has led to various scholars theorizing on China's dynamic role and participation in multilateral institutions. The UNSC is a global multilateral regime with representation from both developed and developing nations. Under the UNSC's institutional framework, China acts as a unique permanent member amongst others that are of European descent, democratic, and developed nations. Additionally, with the ongoing UNSC expansion debate since the early 1990s, an analysis of the UNSC is timely. As debates are getting heated, various governments are in a conundrum regarding how to deal with the question of additional permanent seats, the question of veto power for these new additional seats. Therefore, it is imperative and timely to understand China's recent multilateralism in the context of the UNSC.

Ever since the People's Republic of China officially replaced Taiwan in 1971, the nation has casted a total of nine vetoes in the UNSC. Although this may be an incredibly low veto record when compared to the other permanent members, since seven of those vetoes were casted since 1997, a strikingly high veto rate can be observed.

Table 1. UNSC veto record

	CHINA	FRANCE	RUSSIA	UK	US	TOTAL
SINCE 1946	9	18	125	32	82	265
SINCE 1997	7	0	6	0	12	23

As seen above in Table 1, the United States (US) has casted a total twelve vetoes, Russia six, while France and the United Kingdom (UK) have a zero voting record since 1997. In 1997,

Table 2. China's veto record since 1997

DATE	AGENDA ITEM	VOTING RECORD
10 January 1997	Guatemala	14-1-0
25 February 1999	Macedonia	13-1-1
12 January 2007	Myanmar	9-3-3
11 July 2008	Zimbabwe	9-5-1
4 October 2011	Syria	9-2-4
4 February 2012	Syria	13-0-2
19 July 2012	Syria	11-2-2

* Voting Record numbers denote votes: (in favor – against – abstain)

China vetoed against a resolution concerning efforts towards peace in Guatemala. Two years later, in 1999, China's veto was against a resolution regarding the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Interestingly, a large gap can be observed in China's refrain from using the veto for eight years between 1999 and 2006. In 2007 and 2008, Russia and China double vetoed a draft resolution concerning Myanmar and Zimbabwe. More recently, in 2011 and 2012, Russia and China once again double-vetoed a resolution concerning the Middle East crisis in Syria.

I. Methodology and Roadmap

What are the underlying reasons for China's voting behavior in the UNSC? Under what circumstance does China resort to its veto power? More specifically, I use China in the UNSC (1997-2012) as a case study to answer the larger question: what does the evolving voting behavior reveal about China as an emerging rising power? This research is important for two reasons. First, the research inspects China's multilateralism in the context of a *global* multilateral regime. The current literature of Chinese multilateralism is primarily based on understanding China's behavior in *regional* multilateral institutions. The literature on Chinese multilateralism will benefit my research, which examines China as a global player on a global stage like the UNSC. Second, there is a disappointingly limited amount of research about China in the UNSC and its voting behavior. Furthermore, the existing published findings are outdated. My analysis of China's recent 2007-2012 vetoes will supplement and update the existing literature.

To answer the research question, I analyze primary sources that concern China's seven vetoes and voting records through electronically accessible documents of the UNSC press releases, meeting records, and draft resolutions. Then, I compare my findings with the dominant theories of Chinese multilateralism. This disciplined interpretive case study method is most suitable for interpreting new events and changes to identify factors, and further understanding how they relate to existing theories of Chinese global multilateralism.

I identify China's four phases in the UNSC from 1997 to 2012. The 1997 and 1999 veto against Guatemala and Macedonia mark the first phase, which I have called *The Selfish Vetoes*, in which China boldly clarifies its stance on the question of Taiwan. The second phase, named *Rebuilding its Reputation*, is between May 1999 and 2006, in which China avoids the use of veto and abstains when unable to fully support a resolution. I frame the third

phase as *The Confident Vetoes* with the 2007 and 2008 vetoes regarding the situations of Myanmar and Zimbabwe. Lastly, *The Stubborn Vetoes* is the fourth phase whereby I analyze the recent 2011-2012 vetoes regarding the crisis in Syria. In this final two phases, China is more assertive in casting the veto because of its support from a significant number of other member states and multilateral regimes — especially those from developing nations of Southeast Asia and Africa. Based on these findings, I assert that China's actions in the UNSC firmly attest to the pragmatist theory of China's multilateralism. With an emphasis on maintaining high economic growth and building strong international relationships, China has become highly sensitive to the changing international norms and constraints of multilateralism.

My argument adheres to the following structure. I first outline the UNSC's voting procedures, the Chapter VII resolution, and what I mean by multilateralism and pragmatism. Second, I briefly cover the background behind the evolution of China's foreign policy and its current foreign policy. Third, I touch upon the importance of pragmatism in International Relations theory. Then, fourth, I review the literature regarding China's multilateral diplomacy. As mentioned earlier, there are two areas of literature I am covering. First is the general literature of Chinese multilateralism, and second is the more specific and limited literature on China in the UNSC. I then divide the main analysis of China's UNSC voting record into three sections in order from earliest to most recent, each beginning with a description of the case. The first section is the 1997 and 1999 vetoes. The second surveys the seven years (1999 to 2006) in which China refrains from the use of veto. The third section focuses on 2007 and 2008, while the fourth and final section highlights the three vetoes cast between 2011-2012. The analysis concludes by reiterating how my findings compare to the existing dominant theories of Chinese multilateralism.

II. Defining Key Concepts

At this stage, it is important to establish some working definitions for key concepts explored in the paper. Before proceeding further, I feel compelled to restate Charles Tilly's advice on attempts to define large social processes, that "although definitions as such cannot be true or false, in social science useful definitions should point to detectable phenomena that exhibit some degree of causal coherence."¹ In this section, I provide information about the UNSC, its voting rules, the hidden veto, Chapter VII resolutions, and multilateralism.

A. United Nations Security Council and the (hidden) veto

The UNSC body is composed of five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. The five permanent members, also commonly referred to as the P5, are China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US. The UN General Assembly (GA) elects ten non-permanent members of the UNSC for two-year terms starting on January 1, with five replaced each year. Regional representation is important for the non-permanent member states. The African bloc elects three countries, while the Latin America and the Caribbean, Asian, and Western European select two countries each, and the Eastern European bloc chooses one country. An Arab country is also represented, and alternates from the Asian and the African bloc.

Under the UN Charter Article 27, paragraph 3, at least nine members of the Security Council must vote affirmatively for a resolution to pass. A negative vote by a permanent member is counted as a veto, in which case the resolution will not pass. In voting, members can vote in favor, against, or abstain. An absence or abstention, however, is not considered a veto. When permanent members are unwilling to support a draft resolution, but are also unwilling to veto, they often resort to abstention.

¹ Charles Tilly, "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1 (2004): 8.

Despite the diminished number of vetoes in the post-Cold War era, Senior Advisor to Global Policy Forum Celine Nahory explains the continued use of the permanent member's hidden veto, the silent threat of possible veto use. The hidden veto has multiple effects. First, the hidden veto controls the UNSC agenda. There is an unwritten taboo list that the UNSC never discusses because they are issues that P5 states consider to be issues of internal affairs. The taboo crises are Chechnya, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Sudan, Taiwan, Tibet, and Uganda.² Even when a P5-sensitive issue is adopted in the UNSC agenda, the hidden veto is used to prevent the resolution from passing by stating that they "refuse to support." This ambiguous phrasing could be interpreted either as an intention to veto or abstain. Elected non-permanent members also quickly learn the taboo topics, and consequently engage in a self-censorship process by avoiding sensitive topics. Nahory identifies this self-censorship as the double hidden veto. Nahory's concept of the hidden veto is important when later discussing China's use of it in 2005 regarding the UNSC expansion agenda.

B. Chapter VII resolutions

My research will examine Chapter VII resolutions, and so, I shall define it here by borrowing Zaum's description:

The UN Security Council can assert authority over a territory under Chapter VII, and has the right to delegate this authority to a transitional administration ... to take all necessary measures to maintain or restore international peace and security, even without the consent of the affected states.³

In other words, under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is deemed able to apply any sort of enforcement measures on a country for the sake of restoring

² Celine Nahory, "Changing Patterns in the Use of the Veto in the Security Council," *Global Policy Forum*, 2008, http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/Z/Tables_and_Charts/useofveto.pdf.

³ Dominik Zaum, "The Authority of International Administrations in International Society," *Review of International Studies* 32 (2006): 461.

international peace and security. Such measures, for example, range from economic and/or other sanctions not involving the use of armed forces to international military action.

C. Multilateralism

I employ Keohane's definition of multilateralism, which is the "practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions."⁴ This definition underlines two principles of international multilateralism, that is, one of "multilateral institutional involvement and that of policy practice substantively affected by such involvement."⁵

D. Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition centered on knowledge, existence and socio-political affairs. Pragmatists place immense importance on the idea that "human experience is not simply a spectator-like event or a matter of grasping the unique essences of objects in the world around us."⁶ Instead, experience is seen as "a series of active engagements or interactions between an organism and its environment."⁷ In other words, people tend to utilize their surrounding circumstances to their benefit — whether by probing into problems or engaging in some sort of political action — and, in turn, their behaviors and perception are transformed by the interactions.

⁴ Robert O. Keohane, "Multilateralism: an Agenda for Research," *International Journal* 45, no. 4 (1990): 731.

⁵ I. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne, "International Multilateralism with Chinese Characteristics: Attitude Changes, Policy Imperatives, and Regional Impacts," in *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, ed. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 5.

⁶ John P. Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 219.

⁷ *Ibid.*

TWO

BRIEF BACKGROUND: CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

I. The Evolution of China's Foreign Policy

Ever since China formally established itself as the People's Republic of China in 1949, the nation's foreign policy has often been known to emphasize sovereignty and non-intervention.⁸ This somewhat stubborn idea is derived from China's past experiences of victimization from other nation-states, and its persistence to govern an ambitious and utopian idea of a unified and cohesive "one-China" — one that includes controversial territories of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.⁹ Thus, these experiences have catalyzed China to emphasize sovereignty and non-intervention.

In 1953 and 1954, China's First Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai advocated the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* which once again highlighted China's foreign policy framework: (1) mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) mutual benefit and equality; and lastly, (5) the overall peaceful coexistence.¹⁰ Throughout the Cold War, China exercised absolute loyalty to these five principles by abstaining from any of the UNSC's attempt to deploy peacekeeping missions.¹¹

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping emphasized a policy that focused on the nation's economic development called the '*Bide our Time, Build our Capacities*' (韬光养晦 tāo guāng yǎng huì) foreign policy, also known as the 'low profile' foreign policy. This in turn

⁸ Jochen Prantl and Ryoko Nakano, "Global Norm Diffusion in East Asia: How China and Japan Implement the Responsibility to Protect," *RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies*, Working Paper no. 5 (2011): 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Jonathan Davis, "From Ideology to Pragmatism: China's Position on Humanitarian Intervention in the Post-Cold War Era," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 44, no. 2 (2011): 225.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

led to the change in the nation's strict adherence to sovereignty.¹² Especially following the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident's foreign criticisms, China's respect for the principle of non-intervention remained an integral part of this policy.

Ever since the Cold War, Chinese foreign policy has shown "greater moderation, engagement, and integration."¹³ Specifically in regards to issues on intervention, China has changed its views from refusing to participate in peacekeeping intervention missions, to assessing and justifying the means of an intervention.¹⁴

II. Current Foreign Policy

According to China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, China has always pursued an "independent foreign policy of peace" with China's territorial integrity and sovereignty always coming first. Additionally, he has emphasized that the current Chinese foreign policy has aims of not only creating a "favorable environment" for developing China, but also advocating world peace.¹⁵

As stated above, China's foreign policy goals include national security, maintaining territorial integrity, and promoting its image in the international stage.¹⁶ However, other factors such as China's economic investments may also have a considerable impact on its foreign policy. For example, in 2010, China invested \$3.4 billion in foreign direct investments into Iran, Algeria, Nigeria, and Sudan.¹⁷ These investments are significant because it had a great affect on China's foreign policy towards these nation-states.

¹² Ken Sofer, "China and the Collapse of Noninterventionist Foreign Policy," *Center for American Progress*, March 8, 2012, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2012/03/08/11224/china-and-the-collapse-of-its-noninterventionist-foreign-policy/>.

¹³ Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 1.

¹⁴ Stephanie Kleine-Ahilbrandt and Andrew Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," January 28, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/20080101faessay_v87n1_kleine.html?pagewanted=all.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007): 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Even though the aims of China's foreign policy are rather transparent, at times they may seem inconsistent. For instance, regarding the issue of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), China's supposedly 'strong' commitment to the principle of non-interference has been inconsistent. While China may have sought in promoting an international image as a responsible power by supporting the development of R2P, the nation has also at times been forced to compromise (ex. the 2011 peacekeeping efforts in Libya).

THREE

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS: PRAGMATISM IN IR THEORY

Because the goal of this paper will be to analyze what the evolving voting behavior in the UNSC reveals about China's pragmatic rise as an emerging power, it is imperative to examine how pragmatism plays a role in International Relations (IR) theory. One of the main challenges in delineating IR pragmatist theories is finding a way to clearly define the idea of pragmatism. It is generally known that the philosophy of pragmatism does not coincide with traditional IR theoretic frameworks — in this case, realism and liberalism. Nevertheless, I attempt to outline the two dominant IR theories — realism and liberalism — and suggest a connection to pragmatism.

I. Two Dominant IR Theories

A. Realism

A renowned 20th Century classical realist thinker, Reinhold Niebhur stated that the motivation to make wars and dominate others is innately human.¹⁸ Hans Morgenthau, another eminent classical realist, observed realism as “power-based interest,” but “not in a fixed or acontextual manner; rather, interest is always relative to the social and political situation in which foreign policy is crafted” — an admittedly pragmatist notion.¹⁹ However, with the new wave of realist thinkers (also known as neorealists), the classical realism of Niebhur and Morgenthau were very different from what today's IR scholars believe. Neo-realists define the global governance as “an anarchic space, roughly equivalent to a Hobbesian state of nature...[in which]...agents compete for geo-political power and influence.”²⁰ Within this

¹⁸ Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998): 31.

¹⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1978), 10-12.

²⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 91-93.

international stage of competition, offensive realists view each nation-state as innately aggressive, while defensive realists view each nation-state as engrossed with national security. Furthermore, nation-states also seek to balance their power in relation to other states. Specifically, they do so by both domestically accumulating natural resources or military-economic capabilities and internationally establishing alliances with other nation-states.²¹

From a pragmatist viewpoint, realism illustrates a sense of absolutism: a stubborn notion of state preferences, a static conception of the international community and a strong lean towards the idea of hierarchy with an emphasis on raw power.

B. Liberalism

Liberalism regards nation-states as plural or non-unitary actors. Unlike realism, liberalism makes preferences, not capabilities. Depending on political, economic, and cultural factors, these preferences vary between each nation-state. Therefore, the scale of interaction amongst nation-states enlarges by including events influenced by increase of security and political power, as well as development within the area of culture and economy. Additionally, the actions of various agents not affiliated to the state — such as, multi-national corporations, institutions, and individuals — are viewed as pertinent to affecting the means of forming foreign policy. For liberalists, the social, political, and economic interdependence of intra-state actors becomes the model for a global order of inter-state relationships.²² As a result, the international stage no longer resembles a Hobbesian war of all against all. Rather, it depicts an interdependent network of actors with opportunities to amicably coordinate actions, build global institutions and develop socio-cultural capital.²³

²¹ Ibid, 116-128.

²² 2. Scott Burchill, “Liberalism,” in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Terry Nardin, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, and Jacqui True (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 63.

²³ Helen Milner, “The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique,” in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Stephen Chan and Cerwyn Moore (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2006), 233-235.

Interestingly, liberalism's views on culture and economics can also be seen as a very generic IR theory of pragmatism. The many absolutist features of realism, such as fixed state motivations and strict adherence to hierarchy, that pragmatists disagree with are not found in liberalism. Rather than emphasizing the need to constantly secure power and security, pragmatists firmly believe approaching various actions through intelligent means by utilizing and consulting best policy-making practices will be more beneficial.

II. Deweyan — A Pragmatist IR Theory

According to Dewey scholar Stephen M. Walt, "the 'complete diplomat' of the future should remain cognizant of realism's emphasis on the inescapable role of power, keep liberalism's awareness of domestic forces in mind, and occasionally reflect on constructivism's vision of change."²⁴ Likewise, another Dewey scholar by the name of James S. Johnston observes that for pragmatists, "different contexts, in which different subject matter is under consideration, necessitate different techniques, different approaches, indeed, different use of (differing) abstract ideas."²⁵ In general, Deweyan IR theory would help observe myriads of international problems through meticulous analysis and experimentation approaches. Some of these problems may include unjust wages and working conditions harbored by multi-national corporations, human rights issues regarding child soldiering and human trafficking, as well as illegal trade of drugs and armory. Additionally, most importantly, the Deweyan IR theory would also bring rigorous means of observation to situations where military force is exercised unilaterally by state or non-state actors, and to cases where nation-states seek to achieve narrow goals of increase in political power or exclusive control over limited natural resources.

²⁴ Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (1998): 44.

²⁵ James S. Johnston, *Deweyan Inquiry: From Education Theory to Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 33.

FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHINA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS

From the above framework of pragmatism in IR theory, this literature review focuses on two specific areas. First, I cover two dominant competing theories of Chinese foreign diplomacy — liberalism and realism — and how pragmatism plays a part on each theory. Because generally most theories on Chinese foreign relations are observed in context of regional multilateralism, I attempt to contribute to this literature by observing the two theories in context of global multilateral institution. Second, I specifically narrow my focus to literatures that view China as a permanent member in the UNSC. Because of the limited and outdated literature on China's behavior within the UNSC, my analysis of China's voting behavior in the UNSC between 2007, 2008, and 2011-2012 vetoes will add and update the already existing literature.

I. Liberalists – Successful Integrationists

Liberal scholars view China's rise to be peaceful and non-threatening. They believe in something called 'neoliberal institutionalism' whereby international organizations facilitate cooperation amongst nations by deterring conflict and building trust. Kent, for instance, concludes that as compared to its behaviors prior to the early 1980s, China's "acceptance of, and integration into, the international system have been nothing short of extraordinary."²⁶ Lampton believes that "China had gone from trying to build a Third World United Nations (to compete with the UN) in the 1960s to wanting the UN to be the principal legitimator of the use of force and economic sanctions in the international system."²⁷ Steinfeld argues that

²⁶ Ann Kent, *Beyond Compliance: China, International Organizations, and Global Security* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007), 222-223.

²⁷ David M. Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power: Might, Money, and Minds* (California: University of California Press, 2008), 4.

China has continuously assimilated itself into the Western economic order and has consistently played the rules set and dominated by the West.²⁸ As a strong believer of China's "peaceful rise," Zheng Bijian argues that China intends to assimilate its drive for modernization with economic globalization and as a result, "will not change the international order and configuration through violence."²⁹ Due to this profuse optimism of China becoming a crucial part of the existing international order, liberal scholars believe that the encouraging further trade, foreign direct investments, cultural development, and amicable foreign diplomacy will lead China into adapting to the existing global governance.

II. Realists – Doomsday Pessimists

On the other end of the spectrum, realist scholars view China's irrational, bellicose, and expansionist means as a threat to the global balance of power. Due to their outright pessimistic perception of China's multilateralism, such alarmist scholars also interpret the nation's rapid economic development and heavy investment on its military as a threat to regional security. Moreover, various neo-conservatives in the US are particularly guarded of China's rise and active involvement in international organizations because it challenges US hegemony and status in the international stage. Mearsheimer, for instance, strongly believes that there is almost no leeway for China to successfully become part of the existing international order and "China and the United States are destined to be adversaries as China's power grows."³⁰ Additionally, Jacques believes that the widespread positive view of China embracing the existing international order is deeply mistaken. He argues that "an increasingly powerful China will seek to shape the world in its own image...[and that]...in coming

²⁸ Edward S. Steinfeld, *Playing Our Game: Why China's Rise Doesn't Threaten the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6.

²⁹ Zheng Bijian, *China's Peaceful Rise: Speeches of Zheng Bijian* (Washington DC: the Brookings Institution, 2005), 2.

³⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 4.

decades, the West will be confronted with the fact that its systems, institutions and values are no longer the only ones on offer.”³¹ Other scholars go as far as interpreting China’s increased military spending as an opportunity for expanding the nation’s sovereignty through the initiation of hostile conflicts with neighboring countries. Overall, realists view China’s rise as strategically aligning with the nation’s sovereignty and security.

III. Pragmatists of Various Kinds

Pragmatism, as stated before, is essentially grounded on the logic of national interest. Specifically, this logic of national interest is channeled by security, power and survival of the fittest. With Deng Xiaoping’s economic liberalization in the 1980s and China’s increasing involvement in international organizations, both new opportunities as well as constraints began to hinder the nation’s policy options. Consequently, a pragmatic approach to Chinese multilateralism started to develop: selectively implementing international norms that were advantageous to its foreign policy, while rejecting others that did not align with its national interests. Among the observers in this category, some are cautiously optimistic and others are more concerned about the uncertainties that China’s involvement in global multilateralism might engender.

Cautiously optimistic scholars view China as willing to accept and participate in the existing international system but at the same time, mostly utilizing its participation in a pragmatic fashion to maximize the country’s national interest. They believe that China prioritizes participation in multilateral institutions so that the nation can exercise more decision-making or bargaining power, facilitate its domestic economic development, restrain the hegemony of the United States for the purpose of pushing for ‘multi-polarity’ in the

³¹ Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: the End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2009), 15.

international system, and improve China's international image.³² Moore notes that China's increasing engagement in major multilateral institutions reflects China's strategic and realpolitik considerations on the one hand, but also exhibits some liberal internationalist features.³³ Kissinger believes that while China has been a positive participant in the international system, the future of global economic order will largely depend on the Sino-U.S. interaction in the coming years.³⁴

On the other hand, pessimistic pragmatists strongly believe that China has been actively participating within international institutions through a "supermarket" approach — "buying what it must, picking up what it wants, and ignoring what it doesn't...[largely because the Chinese leaders]...see the international scene as fundamentally one of competition, not condominium."³⁵ David Shambaugh adds to this belief by stating that China is likely to act cautiously as a "selective multilateralist" within international institutions by cooperating with like-minded nations on a case-by-case basis and at the same time, trying to avoid too many commitments and/or entanglements.³⁶ A report by the American National Intelligence Council expects that China's cooperation with multilateral institutions in line with the new geopolitical landscape by 2025 is one of the key uncertainties.³⁷ Many pessimistic pragmatists share this sense of uncertainty and state that China's pure size, rapid increase of power, and now, its display of growing assertiveness "represent[s] a challenge to the established global order and the future global multilateral architecture is far from clear

³² 11. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne, "International Multilateralism with Chinese Characteristics: Attitude Changes, Policy Imperatives, and Regional Impacts," in *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, ed. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 7-9.

³³ 3. Thomas G. Moore, "Racing to Integrate or Cooperating to Compete? Liberal and Realist Interpretations of China's New Multilateralism," in *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, ed. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (Oxon: Routledge, 2008): 46-48.

³⁴ Henry A. Kissinger, "The Chance for a New World Order," *International Herald Tribune*, last modified January 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/12/opinion/12iht-edkissinger.1.19281915.html>.

³⁵ Gary J. Schmitt, introduction to *The Rise of China: Essays on the Future Competition*, ed. Gary J. Schmitt (New York: Encounter Books, 2009): xii.

³⁶ David Shambaugh, "Beijing: A Global Leader with 'China First' Policy," *YaleGlobal*, last modified June 29, 2010, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/beijing-global-leader-china-first-policy>.

³⁷ National Intelligence Council (US), *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, ed. Office of the Director of National Intelligence (US) (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2008), 29-30.

and not at all determined.”³⁸ Instead of a peaceful integration of powers within the international community, many scholars believe that there is always the possibility of China using “its influence in international institutions as a spoiler instead of a partner.”³⁹ Some go as far as arguing that while China may continue to engage with global institutions, a more powerful China is likely to encourage “a shift from a universal conception of political values to recognizing diversity in human civilization, and recalibrating the multilateral order to set aside claims of universal civil and political rights to focus instead on solving common problems.”⁴⁰

China ascertains that its selective multilateralism proves that increased multilateral involvement equates to increased power. Wu and Lansdowne highlight an interesting observation about China in the UNSC. Amongst the P5 states, China has not only positioned itself to be of equal stature to the four other members, but also holds three unique characteristics as well: the only developing, non-European heritage, and non-democratic country.⁴¹ Through these three interesting characteristics, it may be pointed out that China can be seen as an outlier and a weaker figure amongst the P5. However, Wu and Lansdowne argue that this distinctive position allows China to utilize it to their advantage. In other words, these three characteristics helps China obtain strong support from other developing nations. In turn, this empowers China to not have to necessarily compromise with the other P5 members, but to stand strong and firm in its own views within the Security Council.

Overall, the pragmatism has become a recent interest in applying China’s foreign policy amongst Chinese leaders and academia. Therefore, I will mainly evaluate my case

³⁸ Jing Gu, John Humphrey and Dirk Messner, “Global Governance and Developing Countries: The Implications of the Rise of China,” *World Development* 36, no. 2 (2008): 274.

³⁹ David Shorr and Thomas Wright, “Forum: The G20 and Global Governance: An Exchange,” *Survival* 52, no. 2 (2010): 192.

⁴⁰ Gregory Chin and Ramesh Thakur, “Will China Change the Rules of Global Order?” *Washington Quarterly*, 33 4 (2010): 120.

⁴¹ 1. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne, “International Multilateralism with Chinese Characteristics: Attitude changes, Policy Imperatives, and Regional Impacts,” in *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, ed. Guoguang Wu and Helen Lansdowne (Oxon: Routledge, 2008): 6-8.

studies through the lens of pragmatism and the noteworthy UNSC assessment made by Wu and Lansdowne.

IV. China as a UNSC P5 Member: 1971-1999

The development of China's role in the UNSC can be observed through four distinct periods.⁴² As a newcomer to the United Nations, the first ten years (1971-1981) involved China still adjusting to the UNSC's institutional framework and struggling with peacekeeping decisions. This phase was characterized with numerous non-participation votes, and building its relationship with the other P5 members and fellow developing nation-states. The second phase was from 1982-1985 whereby China "fitted in more with the other permanent and non-permanent members."⁴³ During the third phase of 1986-1990, China had more or less adjusted to the end of the Cold War and was willing to work more closely with other permanent members by help shaping "the 1987 Chapter VII resolution which tried to find a way of resolving the Iran-Iraq war."⁴⁴ During the final post-Cold War phase leading up to 1999, China provided a distinctive view through abstentions than vetoes. China abstained on several Chapter VII resolutions — delivery of humanitarian assistance; the setting up of the tribunal on Rwanda; a call for ceasefire in Kosovo; and the creation of the Human Rights Office. These four phases portray how China's main concerns were centered towards human rights and peacekeeping enforcement operations, suggesting that the notion of state sovereignty was most important. Morphet argues that China most likely normally abstains rather than vetoes because it wishes to keep the Security Council intact. I argue against Morphet's findings by highlighting the 1997 and 1999 vetoes as strong examples.

⁴² Sally Morphet, "China as a Permanent Member of the Security Council: October 1971-December 1999," *Security Dialogue*, 31 (2000): 154-8.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 154.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 165.

Nigel Thalakada focuses on a more limited time frame, from 1990 to 1995. 1990 was immediately after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and the Gulf War was a prominent issue. The author analyzes the following voting patterns of China: (1) abstentions on resolutions invoking Chapter VII enforcement powers, (2) abstentions on non-Chapter VII resolutions, and (3) Chapter VII resolutions that China affirmed, with or without reservations.⁴⁵ Thalakada echoes Morphet's findings, but provides more concrete evidence. From 1990 to 1995, China was reluctant to support Chapter VII resolutions as it abstained to retain a neutral status on sensitive issues regarding threats to international peace and security. Most of China's voting behavior aimed to promote its internal economic goals. Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, China needed to rebuild relationships with its trade partners. China supported all ten resolutions for the Gulf War, ultimately helping China regain the international community's approval. Since then, China has often abstained on the United States' unilateral adventurist resolutions that recommended the use of force. These cases specifically refer to Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, and Rwanda. Thalakada emphasizes that China valued the Westphalian notion of absolute state sovereignty, and in some cases threatened UNSC members with the hidden vetoes. In response to Thalakada's analysis, I am interested in China's use of the hidden veto from 1997 to 2008, and also, I highlight the similarities of the 199-2003 and 1990-1995 voting record.

⁴⁵ 5. Nigel Thalakada, "China's Voting Pattern in the Security Council, 1990-1995," in *The Once and Future Security Council*, ed. Bruce M. Russett (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997): 83-117.

FIVE

THE SELFISH VETOES: 1997 AND 1999 VETOES

I. Guatemala

Known as the longest civil war in Latin American history, the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996) was fought between the Guatemalan government and various leftist insurgent groups. During the 36 years of warfare, not only were 200,000 people killed, but also innumerable human rights violations were caused. In 1994, the GA initiated a ten-year humanitarian mission called the UN Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in order to facilitate the peace process. This in turn led to the signing of peace agreements between the Guatemalan government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in December 1996.

On 10 January 1997, China was the only member that vetoed the draft resolution concerning peace efforts in Guatemala.⁴⁶ If passed, the draft resolution would have authorized the three-month deployment of 155 UN military observers to verify the 4 December 1996 cease-fire agreement between the Guatemalan Government and the URNG. The designated observers would have formed a military constituent of MINUGUA to verify the following: (1) the separation of forces, (2) the demobilization of 3,000 URNG combatants, (3) the constitutional and electoral reforms agreed upon in the 7 December 1996 Stockholm Agreement, and (4) the integration of the URNG members into Guatemala's political life as agreed in the 12 December 1996 Madrid Pact. Sponsored by twelve states, the draft resolution sought to successfully end the 35-year armed conflict between the Guatemalan Government and the URNG.

⁴⁶ U.N. Security Council, 3732nd Meeting. "Resolution 1094 (1997) [Central America: efforts towards peace]" (S/RES/1094). January 20, 1997. (Mimeo).

China opposed the resolution for one major reason – Guatemala’s friendly relationship with Taiwan. China specifically raised two recent instances that caused it to object the draft resolution. First, the Guatemalan Government supported Taiwan diplomatically for four consecutive years, disregarding China’s repeated warnings. Second, Guatemala invited Taiwanese authorities to the Peace Agreement signing ceremony in Guatemala. Explaining China’s veto, China was very explicit and candid about its veto position, stating, “the Guatemalan authorities cannot expect to have the cooperation of China in the Security Council while taking actions to infringe upon China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”⁴⁷ According to China, these two actions disregarded the UN Charter’s purpose and principles, infringed upon China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and impeded its internal affairs. China’s representative emphasized that any country’s peace process should never be at the expense of another state’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Mr. Qin Huasun, China’s representative to the UNSC, then elaborated on the question of Taiwan:

There is but one China in the world and the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal Government representing the entire Chinese people. The question of Taiwan is a major question of principle that bears upon China’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and the cause of national reunification. It falls entirely within China’s internal affairs and brooks no outside interference whatsoever. The Chinese Government has no room for compromise on this question.⁴⁸

The statement concluded with the possibility of reconsideration if the Government of Guatemala were more sincere in its relations with China. China’s national interest regarding Taiwan made a bold warning, not only to Guatemala, but also to the world.

Guatemala was fully aware that China would most likely veto, and so the Guatemalan representative was the meeting’s first speaker. The representative acknowledged the bilateral relationship with Taiwan as an example of Guatemala’s constructive motivation to engage

⁴⁷ U.N. Security Council, 52nd Year. *Summary Report of the 3730th Meeting*. January 10, 1997 (S/PV.3730). Official Record.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

with friendly countries. Guatemala clarified that its bilateral relationship had never intended to interfere in the internal affairs of any other state, and its friendly conduct followed the Charter's principles. He concluded the speech by urging the UNSC members to fulfill their responsibilities accordingly to the Charter, and not allow unrelated bilateral issues hinder their decisions.

After the vote, the US, Costa Rica, Russia, and China made a few remarks regarding the vote. The US representative, Mr. Gnehm, expressed disappointment with China's failure to acknowledge the needs for regional peace in Central America over some unrelated matters. Costa Rica strongly condemned China's veto stating that the non-deployment of the UN military observers would not damage Guatemala or Central America, but instead would cause damage to the United Nations' integrity. Russia and the United States publicized their intent to continue contributing towards consolidating peace in Guatemala. Russia regretted the draft had been hastily brought to a vote, not spending enough time for further negotiations that may have led to a unanimous vote.

China's first veto in 25 years was solely based on the question of Taiwan. China took this opportunity to make a strong statement to the world. No state can expect to have the cooperation of China if it diplomatically supported Taiwan. The question of internal affairs of a sovereign state remains as the important foundation of China's fixed position in the UNSC.

II. Macedonia

The 1999 Kosovo War highly destabilized the region as 360,000 ethnic Albanians fled from Kosovo to seek refuge in Macedonia. Established on 31 March 1995, the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP)'s mandate was to report developments in the border areas to ensure stability in the region. Satisfied with the success, the UNSC continued to extend the UNPREDEP mandate up to five times until 28 February 1999.

The 25 February 1999 draft resolution concerning the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia saw 13 voting in favor, China voting against, and Russia abstaining. China's veto impeded the UNSC authorization of extending the UNPREDEP in Macedonia for an extra six months until 31 August 1999. The UNPREDEP had successfully prevented the conflicts from spreading elsewhere in the region, thus the Secretary-General had recommended the UNSC to authorize an extension. He was concerned that Kosovo's violence could possibly escalate to an all-out civil war, which could cause undesired consequences, especially for Macedonia, given the large ethnic Albanian population. The eight-Power draft resolution aimed to extend the UNPREDEP's mission of stabilization and prevention of spillover conflicts. Russia abstained because it felt that the UNPREDEP's function should focus on monitoring the arms embargo, and its suggested amendments that were not incorporated in the draft resolution.

Before the vote, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia representative reminded that the UNSC under the UN Charter must act on behalf of the member states, not of an individual state. Like Guatemala who supported Taiwan, Macedonia anticipated a possible veto by China and so pronounced, "in the case of UNPREDEP ... the extension of its mandate is supported by all — I repeat, all — Member States except one, and that because of bilateral considerations, something that we all consider to be in full contradiction of the Charter of our Organization."⁴⁹

China vetoed the resolution for a number of reasons as expressed after the vote. First, China insisted that the UN peacekeeping operations should never be open-ended. Second, the Secretary-General's words indicated that the original goal of the UNSC in establishing the preventive mission in Macedonia has already been fulfilled since the situation in Macedonia "has apparently stabilized in the past few years," which made the extension of UNPREDEP

⁴⁹ U.N. Security Council, 54th Year. *Summary Report of the 3982nd Meeting*. February 23, 1999 (S/PV.3982). Official Record.

mandate no longer necessary.⁵⁰ Third, China diverted attention to other regions such as Africa that are plagued by similar conflicts, and stressed that the already insufficient UN resources should be more dedicated to these areas. The fourth and most important reason was not explicitly vocalized by China but mentioned by other member states; Macedonia had diplomatic bilateral ties with Taiwan. For instance, during the meeting, Canada strongly asserted that China's action appeared to be "compelled by bilateral concerns unrelated to UNPREDEP."⁵¹

Member states, notably the United States, Slovenia, Canada, Germany, and Bulgaria harshly criticized China's veto. Slovenia was convinced that there was a genuine need to reform the Council and the veto because it was abused once again by China. Canada denounced China's veto, which was obviously compelled by bilateral concerns entirely unrelated to the UNPREDEP's mission. Germany and Bulgaria reiterated the ultimate responsibility of the UNSC, which is to serve the international interest, as opposed to the national interest, in stability in the region to which Macedonia belonged.

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Overall, from the two cases above, it can be stated that the vetoes exercised during the meetings regarding Guatemala and Macedonia were made solely to China's national interests. China's voting behavior during this time can simply be understood in the context of deteriorating cross-strait relations in the mid-1990s. During this period, Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, adopted his 'two states theory' (两国论 liǎng guó lùn) of making pro-independence remarks on trips to the United States, and seeking a more visible profile within

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the international community, including the United Nations.⁵² Thus, enraged China went so far as to cast solo vetoes on otherwise controversial subjects in the UNSC just to punish states that welcomed Lee's proposal for closer diplomatic relationships.

⁵² Lee Teng-hui, "Understanding Taiwan: Bridging the Perception Gap," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (1999): 9-14.

SIX

REBUILDING ITS REPUTATION: BETWEEN 1999 AND 2006

After the humiliating 1999 veto, China focused on rebuilding its reputation, and refrained from using the veto for seven years. Within this second phase, there is a distinct pattern in China's voting pattern. First, from May 1999 to December 2000, China abstained in six resolutions, which primarily concerned Kosovo and the admission of new members to the UN. Second, China constantly voted in favor on various draft resolutions from January 2001 to June 2004. The first two stages highly resemble China's UNSC actions from 1990 to 1995, a period of occasional abstentions and repeated positive votes to rebuild international support. Third, from July 2004 to 2006, China abstained six times on Sudan, and two times when Middle Eastern conflict was the agenda item. In this third stage, China also boldly used the hidden veto to oppose adding India and Japan as additional permanent members to the UNSC.

China boldly used its veto against Guatemala and Macedonia in 1997 and 1999, primarily because of their diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The disappointed international community harshly criticized China's vetoes that were based on the question of Taiwan. For instance, in harsh criticism, US ambassador to the UN told the Council that China had "sided with horrible regimes and its brutal suppression" in their own national interest.⁵³ In response, China changed to a more lenient strategy. On 25 June 1999, the UNSC admitted Nauru to UN membership, and on 14 February 2000, it welcomed Tuvalu as a new UN member. Both Nauru and Tuvalu had diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and if China had not changed its policy, China would have vetoed both draft

⁵³ Ibid.

Table 3. China's abstention record since 1997

YEAR	DATE	AGENDA ITEM	VOTING RECORD
1997	3/28	Albania	14-0-1
	6/19	Albania	14-0-1
	10/23	Iraq-Kuwait	10-0-5
	7/11	Zimbabwe	9-5-1
1998	3/31	Kosovo	14-0-1
	9/23	Kosovo	14-0-1
	10/24	Kosovo	13-0-2
	11/17	Int'l Tribunal – Yugoslavia	14-0-1
	11/25	Haiti	13-0-2
1999	5/14	Kosovo	13-0-2
	6/10	Kosovo	14-0-1
	6/25	Admission of Nauru to UN	14-0-1
	12/17	Iraq-Kuwait	11-0-4
2000	2/14	Admission of Tuvalu to UN	14-0-1
	12/19	Afghanistan	13-0-2
-----No abstentions in 2001, 2002, and 2003-----			
2004	7/30	Sudan	13-0-2
	9/2	Middle East – Lebanon	9-0-6
	9/18	Sudan	11-0-4
2005	3/29	Sudan	12-0-3
	3/31	Sudan	11-0-4
2006	4/25	Sudan	12-0-3
	5/17	Middle East situation	13-0-2
	8/31	Sudan	12-0-3
2007	5/30	Middle East situation	10-0-5
-----No abstentions in 2008-----			
2009	12/23	Peace & Security in Africa	13-1-1
2010	10/14	Sudan	14-0-1
2011	3/17	Libya	10-0-5
	12/5	Peace & Security in Africa	13-0-2

resolutions. However, China decided to abstain in both cases. I argue that there are two reasons for this. First, China was rebuilding its image to a more responsible global player. If

China vetoed against Nauru and Tuvalu, it would have only reinforced an image of China as a selfish P5 member only concerned with national interests. Second, China realized that it is not worth the effort of rejecting Nauru and Tuvalu's membership to the UN. Although they had diplomatic ties with Taiwan, they are such small and insignificant countries to China that it was better to abstain and save face.

In another instance, China's attempt to rebuild its image is well highlighted in the UN Security Council Resolution 1333.⁵⁴ This resolution enforced wide measures against Taliban authorities in Afghanistan by calling on them to stop providing sanctuary and training camps for international terrorists, and to turn over Osama bin Laden.⁵⁵ China defended its abstention by comparing the continued use of sanctions to a double-edged sword — the possibility of harming innocent people and aggravating their plight. However, underneath the surface, I argue that China in reality did not want to undermine its improving relations with Afghanistan and offend the Taliban by supporting the resolution, nor antagonize the United States and other Western countries by vetoing the resolution.

From January 2001 to June 2004, China did not veto or abstain, and maintained a record of positive votes. This is similar to the phenomenon Thalakada observed when China supported most resolutions to gain the support of the international community. During a time of its highest economic boom, China focused on building strong economic relationships with trade partners.

After July 2004, China became bolder with abstentions and the hidden vetoes. During this period, China repeatedly abstained on draft resolutions regarding Sudan and the Middle East. For example, China boldly abstained on two draft resolutions on the withdrawal of

⁵⁴ U.N. Security Council, 4251st Meeting, "Resolution 1333 (2000) [Afghanistan]" (S/RES/1333). December 19, 2000. (Mimeo).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Syria's forces from Lebanon.⁵⁶⁵⁷ Here, China defended its abstention by claiming that the situation in Lebanon manifested from the nation's internal affairs and thus should be settled internally without any interference from the UN. On the contrary, there was an obvious hidden agenda of rebuilding its image within the international community while at the same time, regaining its confidence and support from fellow nations. Either way, China refused to take a stand. Furthermore, China abstained in matters regarding issues in Darfur (ex. Resolutions 1556, 1564, 1591, 1593, and 1672). Generally, the draft resolutions listed above called for mandating travel and financial sanctions on Sudan under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Again, China employed its usual defense statement, that Darfur was another case like that of Lebanon's and should be resolved internally within the Sudanese government with assistance from its respective regional organizations like the African Union. Through its abstention strategy, China was able to save its relationships with Sudan, as well as rebuilding its image by appeasing the disappointed international community.

In all of these abstentions, I must note that China was not a solo abstainer, implying that China won support from other non-permanent member states. The most notable ones concerned the Middle East situation. On 2 September 2004, nine voted in favor while six abstained, and on 20 May 2007, ten voted in favor while five abstained to pass the draft resolution.⁵⁸ This is a striking difference when compared to the abstention records from 1997 to 2000, in which China was the single abstaining voter in eight out of fourteen cases. The most notable hidden veto was in spring 2005, when China signaled that it would veto any resolution that recommended adding Japan and India as UNSC permanent members. This is a significant example of the hidden veto that ultimately prevented adopting the UNSC reform

⁵⁶ U.N. Security Council, 5028th Meeting. "Resolution 1559 (2004) [The situation in the Middle East]" (S/RES/1559). September 2, 2004. (Mimeo).

⁵⁷ U.N. Security Council, 5440th Meeting. "Resolution 1680 (2006) [The situation in the Middle East]" (S/RES/1680). May 17, 2006. (Mimeo).

⁵⁸ U.N. Security Council, 59th Year. *Summary Report of the 5028th Meeting*. September 2, 2004 (S/PV.5028). Official Record.

as an agenda item. China was also aware that other P5 members were wary about expanding the UNSC, so it confidently publicized the hidden veto to control the UNSC agenda.

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The second phase (May 1999-2006) can be divided into three stages of rebuilding China's self-image in the international community. First, China loosened its policy when dealing with Taiwan-friendly nations (May 1999-December 2000). Second, China did not cast any vetoes and abstentions to fully support the international community's consensus (January 2001-June 2004). Third, China was more confident and strongly supported by other nations and so began abstaining again in July 2004. This regained confidence eventually led to an assertive veto in January 2007.

SEVEN

THE CONFIDENT VETOES: 2007 AND 2009 VETOES

I. Myanmar

For the first time in 30 years, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) government held a free election in May of 1990. Although the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by DawAung San SuuKywi won by an 80% majority vote, SLORC abrogated the results and stayed in control. Since then, the military junta imprisoned NLD supporters and leaders including Kyi. According to the International Labor Organization, an estimated 800,000 citizens are forced to labor in Myanmar.⁵⁹ By 2007, the per capita GDP was less than half of its value in 1989 of about \$237. Additionally, inflation had risen more than five-fold between 2000 and 2007.⁶⁰ Furthermore, with the raft of political and economic challenges catalyzed from the state-sponsored violence, the HIV/AIDS rates had risen to 1.3% of the population in 2005, and malnutrition affected about 20% of the children.⁶¹

On 12 January 2007, the UNSC voted on the draft resolution concerning the situation in Myanmar. The draft resolution, sponsored by the US and UK, failed to pass as nine voted in favor, three voted against (China, Russia, and South Africa), and three abstained (Congo, Indonesia, and Qatar). If adopted, the resolution would have urged Myanmar's Government to end military attacks against citizens in ethnic minority regions and commence a constructive political dialogue for a peaceful democratic transition. The draft also would have called on Myanmar to make concrete progress on the following: (1) allow freedom of

⁵⁹ International Labour Organization, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (Geneva: ILO, 2005).

⁶⁰ Using a base of 100 in 2000, the consumer price index as tabulated by the International Monetary Fund had risen to 527.4 in 2007. "World Economic Outlook Database." Data from: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2008).

⁶¹ International Crisis Group, "Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid," *Asia Briefing 58* (2006), accessed September 11, 2012, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/b58_myanmar__new_threats_to_humanitarian_aid.ashx.

expression, (2) release political prisoners including DawAung San SuuKyi, (3) lift all constraints on political leaders and citizens, (4) allow political parties such as the National League for Democracy to operate freely, and (5) support the Secretary-General's efforts to fully enable his "good offices" mission. The representative from Myanmar was delighted with the failed resolution.

China departed from its normal pattern of avoiding the use of the veto within this draft resolution.⁶² While it supported the Secretary-General's good offices under the General Assembly's mandate, China voted against this resolution for three main reasons. First, the matter was an internal affair of a sovereign state. Second, it did not threaten international peace and security. Third, UNSC's involvement in Myanmar would exceed its mandate and also hinder other relevant UN agencies' operations in Myanmar.

On 15 September 2006, China strongly argued against placing the issue of Myanmar on the Security Council's agenda. China claimed that it was "contrary to logic" to consider problems such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, drug trafficking, and refugee issues as threats, since doing so "not only exceeds the mandate given by the Charter to the Council, but will also undermine the Council's authority and legitimacy."⁶³ China also contended that the role of the international community was to "encourage Myanmar" and "create a favorable environment in the country," which it posited could best be accomplished through the "good offices" visits of Ibrahim Gambari.⁶⁴

Again, on 12 January 2007, China made similar arguments and defended its veto use by stating that despite Myanmar's shortcomings, "similar problems exist in many other countries." Instead, China added that the UN should play a facilitator role of political

⁶² To recall, China had the lowest rate of veto use among the P5 between 1971 and 2012. In nearly forty years, the nation exercised its veto rights on only eight occasions.

⁶³ U.N. Security Council, 61st Year. *Summary Report of the 5526th Meeting*. September 15, 2006 (S/PV.5526). Official Record.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

reconciliation through “a process of dialogue and engagement, which needs time and patience.”⁶⁵

Russia and South Africa also voted against the draft resolution for this third reason. In their position statement, they voiced that the issues raised by the draft would be best left to the Human Rights Council and emphasized that it was beyond the UNSC’s mandate. South Africa also added that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ministers agreed on 11 January 2007 that Myanmar was indeed not a threat to regional peace and security. Three other countries abstained in the voting process. Indonesia, Qatar, and Congo fully acknowledged Myanmar’s critical issue, but were hesitant about the UNSC’s effectiveness and appropriateness in addressing the issue. They also similarly believed that the internal issue was not a threat to international peace and security. The representative from Myanmar was highly satisfied with the outcome. He said Russia and China’s vetoes were completely justifiable, and further expressed appreciation to the four member states that had either voted against the draft or abstained.

After refraining from use of the veto for eight years, China voted against a draft resolution. Unlike the vetoes in 1997 and 1999, China’s negative vote was accompanied by abstentions and negative votes by other elected member states and Russia. This is a dramatic change compared to its last veto, and shows the substantive support for China by other African and Southeast Asian states. A year and a half later China and Russia, vetoed a resolution together, again.

II. Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe experienced a similar decline to that of Myanmar. Throughout the late 1990s, Zimbabwe was not only a middle-ranked developing country with GDP numbers

⁶⁵ U.N. Security Council, 62nd Year. *Summary Report of the 5619th Meeting*. January 12, 2007 (S/PV.5619). Official Record.

ranking between Honduras and Latvia, but also had the highest education level per capita in Africa and showcased a strong agricultural and tourism sectors.⁶⁶ Zimbabwe's leader, Robert Mugabe had ruled the state as Prime Minister and President since 1980. However, as Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe Africa National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) grew increasingly corrupt and hostile towards its people, Zimbabwe increasingly began to suffer from a myriad of problems including hyperinflation, human rights abuses, the spreading of HIV/AIDS epidemic, increasing infant mortality rate, diminishing life expectancy rate, and failing land reforms. On 29 March 2008, Zimbabwe held a presidential election, but results were disclosed weeks later. It was generally acknowledged that Morgan Tsvangiri of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party won, but Robert Mugabe and his party the ZANU-PF continued to maintain control. For instance, Mugabe responded by electoral intimidation, intermittent arrests of Tsvangiri and his supporters, and a policy of land annexation from white farmers.⁶⁷

As political strife within the nation led to severe humanitarian conditions, by 2006, Zimbabwe faced 1000% inflation, an unemployment rate of 85%, a poverty rate higher than 90%, one of the world's highest infant mortality rates, and an HIV/AIDS rate of about one-fifth of the adult population.⁶⁸ Thus, the UNSC convened to discuss the crux of the matter – the 2008 presidential election dispute of Zimbabwe.

In 11 July 2008, China and Russia vetoed a Chapter VII resolution regarding the conflict in Zimbabwe. Nine members voted in favor, five against (China, Libya, Russia, South Africa, and Vietnam), and Indonesia abstained. The resolution intended to impose sanctions, arms embargoes, a travel ban, and a financial freeze against Zimbabwe's President

⁶⁶ World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (Washington, DC: WB, 2012).

⁶⁷ 7. Robert I. Rotberg, "Winning the African Prize for Repression: Zimbabwe," in *Worst of the Worst: Dealing with Repressive and Rogue Nations*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007): 167-9.

⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, "Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction," *Asia Briefing* 38 (2006), accessed September 11, 2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/B038%20Zimbabwes%20Continuing%20Self-Destruction.ashx>.

and his 13 senior government officials deemed responsible for the country's violence. If passed, the draft text would have declared Zimbabwe's situation as a threat to international peace and security, and would have called the Government of Zimbabwe to immediately cease its violence against opposition members. By encouraging a comprehensive dialogue between the parties, the twelve-power draft resolution aimed to bring a peaceful solution that reflects the true will of the Zimbabwean citizens.

The representative of Zimbabwe spoke first and called for member states to reject the draft resolution. He made three simple arguments. First, he argued that the UK and their allies had distorted the image of Zimbabwe as "a lawless, disorderly and undemocratic country (Press Release 8). Second, the situation in Zimbabwe is not a security threat to the region as agreed by the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. Third, sanctions and arms embargoes would only discourage political dialogue, causing the situation to be possibly worse. After this speech, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Libya expressed their inability to support the resolution, and Burkina Faso conveyed their support for the draft. The permanent members did not speak until the vote revealed the failure of the draft due to two vetoes.

Russia and China together again voted against the resolution with two main justifications. First, yet again, it was an interference of another sovereign state's internal affairs. Second, it was another attempt to take the UNSC beyond its Charter mandate and mission of focusing solely on international peace and security. China further noted that mediation efforts sponsored by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were continuing, and said that the Council should "respect the position of African countries" in favor of further talks and against the use of outside pressure.⁶⁹ In other words, China emphasized that by voting against the resolution, they were fully respecting the Africa's

⁶⁹ U.N. Security Council, 63rd Year. *Summary Report of the 5933rd Meeting*. July 11, 2008 (S/PV.5933). Official Record.

regional position of encouraging more constructive dialogue and not pressuring Zimbabwe into a critical situation. China also mentioned that most African leaders had clearly stated their position against any sanction on Zimbabwe at the previous G-8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, thereby criticizing that “lightly using or threatening to use sanctions is not conducive to solving problems.”⁷⁰ China received no direct criticism, whereas Russia was criticized by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France for making a U-turn decision against what was supposedly “agreed at the G-8 summit.” Russia denied this accusation underlining that, at the G-8, there had been no reference to the UNSC actions.

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In sum, the political dynamics of the two cases went in favor of China. Compared to the 2007 case of Myanmar, the Zimbabwe situation saw a larger number of negative votes and fewer abstention votes. This implied that more member states are confidently saying “No” to a resolution they were against. Interestingly, the United States did not exert significant pressure on China on during both issues regarding Myanmar and Zimbabwe. This is because the United States required China’s undue cooperation on a range of strategically important issues, thereby not exerting high-level pressure on China’s support for the Western initiatives. Additionally, with Russia’s position aligned with China, it may also be evidence that China and Russia’s relationship is further maturing. Furthermore, with major regional stakeholders — grouped respectively within ASEAN and SADC — offered no support for Western efforts in applying sanctions to Myanmar and Zimbabwe, China may well be building a stronger diplomatic alliance with other countries, especially the developing countries in Southeast

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Asia and Africa. This in turn not only highlights China's affinity with regional organizations, but also showcases a way to build confidence in Southeast Asia and southern Africa. Also, compared to the two vetoes of the late 1990s, the question of Taiwan was never raised in 2007 and 2008 cases. Yet, the idea of China confidently placing vetoes plays out at even a larger scale for the crisis in Syria.

EIGHT

THE STUBBORN VETOES: THRICE ON SYRIA

The revolutionary wave of the Arab Spring inundated Syria on 15 March 2011. With protestors demanding both the end of the five-decade long Ba'ath Party rule and the resignation of Bashar al-Assad, Syria's nationwide uprising has led to today's ongoing internal armed conflict now known as the Syrian Civil War. By responding to the anti-government protests with overwhelming military force, the Syrian authorities have resorted to mass killings. According to the UN, approximately 19,105 – 26,700 civilians and armed combatants have been killed, while 500,000 to 1.0 million Syrians have been displaced within the country.⁷¹ This ongoing civil war-like manifestation is posing the greatest challenge to the dictatorial Assad family rule.

On 4 October 2011, China and Russia, again, double-vetoed a Chapter VII resolution regarding the situation in Syria. Nine members voted in favor, two against, and four abstained (Brazil, India, Lebanon, and South Africa). The resolution would have issued an official admonishment of “the continued grave and systematic human rights violations and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities,” as well as financial sanctions for the ongoing oppression and corruption.⁷² If passed, the draft text would have declared Syria's situation as a threat to international peace and security, and would have called on the Syrian Government to immediately cease its violence and mass killings.

As leaders globally have expressed outrage and horror over the mass killings in Syria, within four months, another draft resolution was placed upon the UNSC members on 4 February 2012. Even though the resolution had been watered down to accede to Russian

⁷¹ “Syrian Uprising,” *The Washington Post*, last modified March 14, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/syrian-uprising-one-year-of-bloodshed/index.html>.

⁷² U.N. Security Council, 66th Year. *Summary Report of the 6627th Meeting*. October 4, 2011 (S/PV.6627). Official Record.

demands to cut a voluntary arms embargo and an estimated 3,000 civilians were added to the total death toll, Russia and China once again double-vetoed. If passed, the resolution would have called for “all parties in Syria — both Government forces and armed opposition groups — to [immediately] stop all violence and reprisals.”⁷³ China firmly defended its vote by claiming that the international community should provide “constructive assistance” and support the Arab League’s “good office” efforts to restore stability in Syria, “rather than complicate the [Syrian] issue.”⁷⁴

Even though both Russia and China vetoed twice against resolutions dealing with the crisis in Syria, other members of the UNSC denounced the previous votes made by the two nations and recently tried for a third time. On 19 July 2012, the UNSC held another meeting to discuss a British-sponsored resolution chastising the Syrian government with economic sanctions for failing to execute a peace plan. However, diplomatic efforts to address the Syrian situation once again suffered a fatal blow as China and Russia vetoed the resolution for the third time. Many around the world were disappointed that the UNSC could not unite and take a strong concerted action during this critical time.

All three times, although China stated that they were very concerned with the developments in Syria and hoped for various parties within the nation to exercise restraint to avoid further bloodshed, China stubbornly voted against the resolutions for four main reasons. First, the central reason behind the veto on Syria seems to have been from what has been renowned as the “Libya hangover effect.” China was very displeased with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) overstepping the mandate stated in the Libyan resolution during the execution of its Libya operation.⁷⁵ Drawing a parallel between the Libyan and Syrian

⁷³ U.N. Security Council, 67th Year. *Summary Report of the 6711th Meeting*. February 4, 2011 (S/PV.6711). Official Record.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Edith Lederer. “NATO bombing in Libya added to Syria vetoes,” *Associated Press*, last modified October 6, 2011, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5i2YMIXLmiLHjFpqLyy4a-W71RCWQ?docId=3eaa9ac48c98482590b3ff7f646ebb2c>.

situations, China, therefore, expressed fears in intervention leading to a full-fledged war for Syria.

Second, China firmly values the concepts of “state sovereignty” and “non-intervention” and often criticizes any diplomatic statements regarding interference in domestic affairs made by the West. Thus, China has frequently stubbornly refused to authorize international action in many cases.⁷⁶ In this case, the veto was therefore in line with China’s general beliefs on non-interventionism.

Third, though never officially stated, China does have strong interests in Syria and could have very well been protecting an ally from spiteful international measures. Unlike Russia’s strong political ties to Syria, China’s relationship with Syria is more economically-based. This is because China has significant investments in the Syrian oil fields. Perhaps due to reasons of investments and a newfound ally in the Middle East, China likely viewed the possibility of sanctions as unacceptable.⁷⁷ Although Russia heavily emphasized the possibility of repeating the Libyan intervention in Syria as its reason for vetoing the Syrian resolution, China was more concerned with the possible sanctions, claiming that these measures would add to further hurting Syria.⁷⁸

Lastly, China’s stance against the Syria resolution is without a doubt tied to the nation’s domestic concerns. In other words, a strong attitude against intervention in another nation’s internal unrest is a reflection of opposition to foreign interference in any of their own domestic affairs. It is highly possible that any reluctance for becoming involved in another’s “internal affairs” may stem from “a fear of attracting international attention to its own

⁷⁶ Eddie Walsh. “China in Syria Series: III,” *The Diplomat*, last modified August 29, 2011, <http://the-diplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2011/08/29/china-in-syria-series-iii/>.

⁷⁷ Jeremy M. Sharp and Christopher M. Blanchard, *Armed Conflict in Syria: U.S. and International Response*, ed. Congressional Research Service (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, 2012).

⁷⁸ “Russia and China veto Syria sanctions threat,” *The Independent*, last modified October 5, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/russia-and-china-veto-syria-sanctions-threat-2365794.html>.

conflicts in Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang.”⁷⁹ Evidently, China’s own internal unrest is not one for which wants to be criticized by the international community. This is because China is well-known for taking quick action and subduing protests by dispatching as many security forces as there are protestors. Especially with overseas activists planning to launch a Jasmine Revolution (茉莉花革命 mòlìhuā géming)⁸⁰ following the Arab Spring, China has especially been hypersensitive to any sort of domestic remonstrance towards the government. Therefore, it does not want the UN to ever interfere in its own governance and sovereignty.

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Be that as it may, China claims to have vetoed in order to help Syria ensure peace and order. Had the resolution passed, China feared that there would be further riots and more killings within Syria. The three consecutive vetoes on Syria have reopened the question on the value of UN as an international diplomat and peacemaker. Although putting whatever interests aside and taking a mutual stance along with the United States and Britain may have won China greater respectability from the international community, China stubbornly stuck to its veto.

⁷⁹ Eddie Walsh. “China in Syria Series: III,” *The Diplomat*, last modified August 29, 2011, <http://the-diplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2011/08/29/china-in-syria-series-iii/>.

⁸⁰ Named after the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, the Jasmine Revolution refers to the 2011 Chinese Pro-Democracy Protests on 20 February 2011. With the first post on Boxun.com, the anonymous call for a Jasmine Revolution in China spread like wildfire throughout all SNS portals in China. The protests were held in over a dozen cities in mainland China to denounce the government’s lack of accountability and transparency that exists under the current one-party system. Kathrin Hille, “Jasmine revolutionaries’ call for weekly China protests,” *The Financial Times*, last modified February 23, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3ac349d0-3efe-11e0-834e-00144feabdc0.html>.

NINE

CONCLUSION

I. Summing Up

China's participation in the UN reflects its increasingly engaging and active foreign policy. Since the 1990s, China's involvement in the UN has continued to increase. For instance, President Hu Jintao expressed his support for the UN in solving security issues,⁸¹ while Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing noted, "the hope of the world rests on a strong UN."⁸² This change demonstrates a transition from being a "suspicious and non-participatory" nation, to "passively involved with reservations," to being a "more active and conscious advocate of multilateralism."⁸³

Throughout this paper, I have distinctively outlined China's four phases in the UNSC through its voting records from 1997 to 2012. During the first phase of the 1997 and 1999 vetoes, China legitimized the issue of Taiwan as its reason to veto. At this time, the international community severely condemned China for employing selfish reasons for its veto and questioned China's role as a P5 member. During the second phase, China attempted to regain its image as a responsible global leader by abstaining its veto power between 1999 and 2006. Not only did China become a bit more lenient on the issue of Taiwan, but China also gradually became more assertive in its voting and manipulation of the hidden veto. In this phase, based on the voting records, China's use of abstentions was casted along with fellow UNSC members — clearly indicating China's gradual support and acceptance from the other members. Moreover, at this time of rebuilding its reputation, China started establishing

⁸¹ "He Urges More Support for UN," *CNN World*, October 24, 2003, http://articles.cnn.com/2003-10-24/world/apec.special.hu_1_australia-and-china-china-s-president-hu-jintao-taiwan?_s=PM:WORLD.

⁸² 7. Jianwei Wang, "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the New Millennium," in *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005): 165.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

powerful relationships through various regional multilateral organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU). Through the strong support and newfound relationships made during the second phase, in the third and fourth phases, China regained its confidence and began to cast vetoes through justifiable means; for example, emphasizing each nation's right to sovereignty. But were the resolutions regarding Syria gained from confidence? Did too much confidence bring back selfish means?

The analyses of various Chinese veto case studies delineated above showcased strong evidence to support the pragmatist views of China's role in the UNSC. The case studies illustrated above suggest that unlike what the realists think, China does not harbor grandiose objectives of overthrowing the current international framework. Rather, China has played a big role and blended well within the existing international order. Over the years, China has shown confidence in the use of its veto for pragmatic objectives, for instance, balancing the predominant power of the West with the voices from the developing countries, having a strong stance on key international crises, increasing its authority in the international political scene, constantly developing its global image, and striving to increase cooperation in global matters that serves its own interests.

Still in its early stages of participation in the UN, China is undergoing an intense debate on whether it should modify or completely abandon Deng Xiaoping's '*Bide our Time, Build our Capacities*' (韬光养晦 tāo guāng yǎng huì), also known as 'low profile' international strategy. Until this question of possible reform is resolved, China's multilateral policy is likely to some extent be influenced by this low profile foreign policy. However, this does not necessarily mean that China's pragmatic means of foreign diplomacy will be absent. On the contrary, various cases within its recent years in the UNSC indicate that China has been attempting to play a bigger role in its multilateral diplomacy. Although the overly cautious pessimist school of thought has argued that China's involvement within the

international arena tends to be highly selective, the nation still treats the UN as the most vital international organization in the area of international security and global governance.

As a firm believer in China's pragmatic rise within the international system, the ultimate goal for China is to secure the Chinese interests and compete for more decision-making power upon the global stage. The various case studies delineated throughout this paper provide strong support to assert the following argument: China's voting behavior in the UNSC strongly support China's pragmatism in multilateralism; to continue high economic growth and relationship building, China has become highly sensitive to the changing international norms and constraints of multilateralism, while gaining international support especially from the developing countries of Africa and Southeast Asia. China is consistently aware of the UNSC mandate, and will continue to vote with firm positions on state sovereignty and internal affairs, clearly because China has a strong interest and desire to avoid foreign intervention in its own affairs.

II. What's next?

A deeper analysis of China's 1997-2008 abstention records would benefit this paper. This paper still leaves unanswered questions such as: Is this a result of China successfully gaining genuine support from other states, or has China gained enough power to manipulate other states' votes? These are questions I would like to explore in future research.

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