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China's International Education Initiatives and View of Its Role in Global Governance

Abstract China is becoming an increasingly important actor in global governance. This paper contends that China participates by promoting its own global governance concepts on the one hand and by complying with the established global norms on the other. The paper introduces several key global governance concepts of the Chinese government and argues that they are likely to persist due to their roots in traditional Chinese Daoist and Confucian philosophies. It then focuses on China's initiatives in education—the creation of Confucius Institutes and China's involvement in United Nations (UN) educational initiatives—as examples of the Chinese approach. Finally, the paper discusses China's educational profile in relation to its broader role in global governance.

Keywords global governance, international education initiatives, global norms, China

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the concept of global governance has gained increasing attention in the Western academic literature as a result of the end of the Cold War, the trend towards globalization, and the growing concern over pressing issues that require coordinated efforts from the international community (Griffiths, O'Callaghan, & Roach, 2008). Broadly speaking, global governance means “more than the formal institutions and organizations through which the management of international affairs is or is not sustained” (Rosenau, 1995, p. 13). It operates through three main types of sponsorship body: nation states, transnational or subnational actors such as multinational corporations or ethnic minorities, and jointly-sponsored actors such as cross-border coalitions (Rosenau, 1995). That is to say, the relationships and interactions among actors—both

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within each type of body and among them—will have an impact on world order. Perhaps that is why there has been considerable speculation about China, an emerging world power, regarding how China may seek to influence or change the world order.

It is not surprising that China is in the spotlight now. When its reform and opening up policy was first introduced in 1978, China's gross domestic product (GDP) accounted for only 1.8% of gross global output and it was ranked 10th in the world (Xinhua News Agency, 2008, October 28). In 2010, China became the world's second largest economy, with 9.5% of global GDP. This was up from 5% in 2005 (Xinhua News Agency, 2011, March 25). With the rise of China as an economic power, in addition to its massive population of over 1.3 billion, the international community is expecting China to take on more responsibility and contribute to the world's sustainable development (United Nations, 2010). At the same time, concerns are being expressed that China may challenge the status quo in ways that bring world peace into question (Foot, 2001; Time, 2005, December 12; Zoellick, 2005). The Chinese government has, on various occasions, reiterated its commitment to peaceful intentions; nevertheless, some skepticism still lingers in the international community.

With regard to China's role in global governance, there are generally two views on how China's role will play out. Some consider China to be a revisionist power and others believe China is following an integrationist path. Foot (2001) and Kirshner (2010) contend that a revisionist China is likely to challenge existing international norms. According to Foot, a big obstacle to China following international norms lies in its insistence on the dichotomy between domestic and international affairs; in other words, for China, state sovereignty overrides universal values as applied to individuals. From a slightly different perspective, Kirshner emphasizes the likelihood of China expanding its ambition as its capacities keep growing; thus he thinks China is likely to challenge the status quo. An integrationist China, by contrast, is likely to be subsumed under the existing world order, due to its increased dependence on the world economy. Contrary to Kirshner's classical realist view that rising powers are prone to wage wars, S. Chan (2008) suggests that rising powers are less likely than declining powers to resort to wars; only in the case of stagnation in growth may a rising power be pushed into war. In Chan's view, China is likely to integrate because, as a latecomer in global governance, it lacks the experience needed to take on a leadership role. Another important factor is that China has not been able to convince other nations, including developed and developing democracies, that its economic growth can be sustained (Chan, Lee, & Chan, 2008).

There is a third view, which might be seen as a compromise between the above-mentioned perspectives. Chin and Thakur (2010) believe that China will selectively integrate itself into global norms while striving to present and

implement its own distinctive global governance concepts and practices. This paper adopts this third view. It argues that China is joining the global governance structure through two approaches, both promoting its own global governance concepts on the one hand and conceding to the established global norms on the other. The paper first introduces several key global governance concepts that the Chinese government has introduced to demonstrate China's approach. It then traces those concepts back to traditional Daoist and Confucian philosophies, contending that the two approaches are likely to be sustained over time because they are closely linked to China's long-prevailing philosophical traditions. Since education has become a multifaceted phenomenon in a globalized world, and has been increasingly used as a means of advancing diplomacy and trade (Mundy, 2011), the paper then focuses on China's initiatives in education—the creation of Confucius Institutes and China's involvement in United Nations (UN) educational initiatives—as examples of the Chinese approach. Finally, the paper discusses China's educational profile in relation to its broader role in global governance and anticipates the role that China may assume in the future.

China's Views of Its Role in Global Governance

The term global governance became a buzz word in the early 1990s in the Western academic literature. There are basically two schools of thought on approaches to global governance. Realists maintain that the sovereign independence of nation states must be preserved and this must be the case within the framework of an international society. By contrast, liberals and compensatory liberals in particular are in favor of intervention. They think intervention can support less developed countries economically, prevent human disasters such as genocide, and thus benefit the world community (McKinlay & Little, 1986).

The Chinese government remains a strong advocate of state sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs. Remembering its own past suffering and humiliation at the hands of Western powers and Japan, China has written five principles of peaceful coexistence into its foreign policy: "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2003, para. 5). First introduced in 1953, these principles have been held as foundations of China's international relations policy. In his New Year Address on December 31, 2010, Chinese President Hu Jintao reiterated that "China will develop friendly cooperation with all other countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful co-existence" (Xinhua News Agency, 2010, December 31, para. 15).

Although this independent and peaceful foreign policy reflects China's realist views on global governance, the Chinese government has nonetheless accepted and engaged in some liberal practices in a context where globalization of the world economy is an increasing reality. China has signed a number of international treaties and become a member state of the World Trade Organization, indicative concessions to international norms (Foot, 2001). By its involvement in the UN system, China has shown a willingness to participate in UN-led humanitarian and development missions, providing peace-keeping troops in a number of countries, revising laws to fight corruption, protecting the disabled in accordance with UN conventions, and acknowledging the need for responsibility to protect (R2P), albeit with a somewhat narrow scope of understanding of R2P (Chin & Thakur, 2010). On February 28, 2011, in reaction to Muammar Qaddafi's killing of protesters in his country, the 15-member UN Security Council unanimously passed sanctions against Libya that included a freeze on assets, a travel ban, and an arms embargo. China joined other members in backing the UN resolution condemning human rights violations in a member country, thus acknowledging R2P and demonstrating "China's new role at the UN" (Monitor's Editorial Board, 2011, February 28). China abstained, however, from voting for a no-fly zone resolution over Libya, urging the world to "respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Libya and resolve through peaceful means the current crisis in Libya" (Xinhua News Agency, 2011, March 18, para. 5).

China is complying with international norms in some specific instances (Foot, 2001). In the meantime, it is advocating its own distinctive views on global governance and the role it will play in global affairs. Over the past decade, the Chinese government has introduced a series of concepts to express its stance. In 2003, at the Bo'ao Forum for Asia, Mr. Zheng Bijian, the then executive Vice-president of the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China, delivered a speech explaining China's "peaceful rise," which marked the official debut of the term. Later in that year, "peaceful rise," seen by some as a threatening slogan, was replaced by "peaceful development." This has become the most consistently used concept in the government's foreign policy today.¹ In 2005, at the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, President Hu Jintao proposed the idea of building a "harmonious world" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会) in cooperation with other countries. Another concept, "keeping a low profile" (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦), was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1992 (Xiao, 2010) and was then adopted by former President Jiang Zemin and subsequent Chinese leaders. In March 2011, at a press conference on China's

¹ For a detailed explanation on the origins and developments of the two concepts, peaceful rise and peaceful development, please see Glaser and Medeiros (2007).

public diplomacy at the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Mr. Zhao Qizheng, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC, emphasized that China would stick to the long term policy of keeping a low profile even if it gained greater economic and political power in the future.

The pursuit of a harmonious world is explicitly written into China's foreign policy documents. The most recent high-level policy is the CCP Central Committee's Proposal for Formulating the 12th Five-Year Plan for China's Economic and Social Development. This proposal was approved by the Fifth Plenary Session of the 17th CCP Central Committee in October 2010. It pledges that China will promote a harmonious world of long-lasting peace and common prosperity (Xinhua News Agency, 2010, October 27). The same ideas were expressed in Premier Wen Jiabao's Government Work Report delivered at the annual National People's Congress parliamentary session in March 2011 (Xinhua News Agency, 2011a, March). The adherence to keeping a low profile internationally is regularly acknowledged by government officials, such as in speeches by State Councilor Dai Bingguo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2010c), and China's ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2011).

Since these concepts have been made public, there has been considerable speculation in the international community as to their meaning and how they are to be fulfilled. The pessimistic view is that they are merely a temporary effort to dispel fears about China's rise; there is also the view that these concepts are welcome but should be taken with great caution. Whatever reactions these concepts may have aroused, a better understanding is possible when they are viewed in light of traditional Chinese values. Ideas such as "harmony" and keeping a low profile reflect traditional Chinese wisdom, especially Confucian ideas, on the relationship between human beings and nature, between individuals and various social groups, and among individual human beings themselves. The next section of this paper will delve into the thinking behind these concepts and give reasons why they are likely to persist.

Confucian Influences on China's View of Global Governance

The idiom *taoguang yanghui* reflects China's view of its position in global governance, and suggests that China will not overtly challenge existing global norms. It literally means to put brightness into the quiver, or to use an English idiom, to hide one's light under a bushel, and flourish in obscurity, and not show off one's capabilities. A more or less comparable English translation of the term is to keep a low profile. This manner of dealing with other countries is in line

with the traditional Chinese value of being modest and avoiding arrogance. In Book 13 of *The Analects*, a collection of Confucius's conversations with his students, modesty is depicted as a desirable quality in conduct. For example, Zi Lu, a student of Confucius, remarked: "the firm, the enduring, the simple, and the modest are near to virtue" (Legge, 1960, p. 274).

Unfortunately, misunderstanding of the term *taoguang yanghui* arises when it is translated into English because it is construed out of the context in which the term was introduced and applied in China's foreign policy. According to Xiong Guangkai (2010), former Deputy Chief of the Chinese People's Liberation Army General Staff, Deng Xiaoping used the term as a strategy in foreign relations. However, when the term is translated into English as "to hide our capabilities and bide our time" (United States Department of Defense, 2002, p. 7), its meaning is twisted, and has the connotation of disguising potential aggression, something which cannot be found in the original expression. Moreover, the translation has an additional element of "time" in it, which implies that this strategy is only temporary. As a matter of fact, *taoguang yanghui* is a long-term strategy (Xiao, 2010) and the Chinese government has pledged to comply with it in the long-run (Xinhua News Agency, 2011b, March). Further misunderstanding arises when the term is quoted in isolation without being followed by "in order to accomplish something" (*yousuo zuowei* 有所作为). Construed in isolation, it could be read that China was only focusing on building its own capacities, avoiding its international responsibilities. This may not be the case, as President Hu Jintao remarked, "[China will] continue to actively participate in international cooperation on global issues" (Xinhua News Agency, 2010, December 31, para. 15).

As for the concept of harmony (*he* 和), traditional Chinese philosophies, both Daoism and Confucianism, regard it as one of their core values. Daoism, for example, proposes that human beings be in harmony with nature (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一) and that "to know the harmony is called the constant; to know the constant is called discernment" (*Zhi he yue chang, zhi chang yue ming* 知和曰常, 知常曰明; Lao-Tzu, 2001, p. 81). Harmony is also valued in Confucianism. In Book 1 of *The Analects*, You Zi, a disciple of Confucius, said, "in practicing the rules of propriety, a natural ease is to be prized" (*Li zhi yong he wei gui* 礼之用和为贵; Legge, 1960, p. 143).² *Heweigui* is a popular saying in China, often used when people are trying to settle disputes. Another popular saying, which means "the family will prosper if there is harmony in the family" (*jia he wanshi xing* 家和万事兴) identifies the positive correlation between harmony and prosperity. Obviously, this idea can be applied to global development and peace. Harmony

² The English translations of *heweigui* vary, but they more or less connote a sense of harmony. Legge (1960) translated *he* as "natural ease." D. C. Lau, a distinguished Chinese scholar, translated *heweigui* as "harmony is regarded as the most valuable" (Confucius, 1979, p. 61).

represents the traditional Chinese view on how to maintain relationships with others.

The idea of harmony reflects the overall Confucian ideology of “great harmony of all under heaven” (*tianxia datong* 天下大同), which is the ultimate ideal of humanity, according to Yu Keping (2007, May 10), Director of the China Center for Comparative Politics & Economics. *Datong* describes an ideal society in which moral and capable persons are elected to take the lead and people adhere to the principle of harmony. *Tianxia*, meaning all under heaven, the world or the globe, indicates that *datong* transcends national boundaries and that harmony has a global dimension. The Confucian wisdom also suggests that harmony does not suppress differences, a quality that also characterizes virtuous persons. This could explain China's version of a world where people of different cultures coexist harmoniously.

The Chinese government draws upon ancient philosophies to present its approach in the arena of global governance. However, there is a common sense of skepticism in academia and in the international community as to whether the Chinese government can fulfill its expressed commitments to keeping a low profile and building a harmonious world. Some of this apprehension may be legitimate because China is a relative newcomer in global power circles and its role over time has yet to be seen. Some criticism such as that of Deng (1998), however, may not be so well-founded. Deng makes the criticism that some Chinese scholars “simply list a host of well-known ancient Chinese mottoes about ‘harmony,’ ‘peace,’ ‘benevolence,’ and ‘kingly ways’” without offering further historical and contemporary connections (p. 325). Employing ancient wisdom to deal with contemporary issues is logical because traditional values continue to have an influence in modern times. Most importantly, because these concepts are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, they are likely to persist. In this sense, it is not surprising when Dai Bingguo, a Chinese State councilor, said that these policies “will not change in 100 years or 1,000 years” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2010c, para. 8). Deng, however, raises the legitimate issue that substantial work needs to be done on the part of Chinese leaders to show how these ideals can be translated into practice. If substantive policies and strategies are not made known to the world, confusion about China's intentions is likely to arise.

The Chinese government is making efforts in the meantime to communicate its visions and concepts to the wider world. Not only is it reaching out in its own way to enhance others' understanding of its cultural legacies and social development. It is also bringing in existing world norms and becoming actively engaged in international missions and initiatives, both on a global and national scale. This paper will now consider two initiatives in the field of education as

examples: the development of Confucius Institutes as a form of cultural diplomacy, and China's participation in UN educational projects. It will then discuss what can be learned from these examples in terms of China's global role.

Confucius Institutes as a Way of Showcasing China's Global Governance Ideas

In recent years, the Chinese government has made considerable effort to establish an image compatible with its discourse. Two prominent examples that illustrate these efforts are the creation of Confucius Institutes and China's involvement in UN educational initiatives. This paper has chosen these examples for two main reasons. First, they both demonstrate China's participation in activities on a global scale. Confucius Institutes have now been established in 91 countries and regions around the world. Many UN educational initiatives involve a contribution from China in both initiation and implementation phases. Second, in the case of Confucius Institutes, China is the main actor and sets the terms. The Office of Chinese Language Council International (also known as *Han Ban*) acts as the central agency, sponsoring and overseeing operations together with its foreign partners. The Confucius Institute initiative can be seen as embodying China's views and concepts in an explicit and direct way. The UN educational initiatives, on the other hand, usually represent the will and action of multiple actors; hence, they tend to result in cases where China must fit in with global norms.

In reflecting on how the Confucius Institute initiative represents China's concepts of global governance, three questions arise: why did the Chinese government chose to establish Confucius Institutes; how have they been promoted; and what has their impact been. Primarily serving as Chinese cultural and language learning hubs, Confucius Institutes are also regarded as a means by which the government expands China's soft power (Nye, 2006, April; Paradise, 2009). The Chinese government recognizes the importance of soft power in enhancing its national and international status and in giving legitimacy to its global role. For example, President Hu Jintao, also general secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, explicitly positioned culture as "an important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength," and he called for strengthening culture as an element of China's soft power (Xinhua News Agency, 2007, October 24, "VII. Promoting Vigorous Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture"). Chinese scholars, such as Luo (2006) and Men (2007), also advocate exerting influence through language and culture if China wants others to understand its global role and its harmonious core. Choosing the

name “Confucius Institute” is clearly a strategic choice. The association of the institute’s name with Confucius is “a branding issue,” since Confucius “is the figure nearest to a global brand from traditional Chinese history” (Starr, 2009, p. 69). A second reason for choosing this name would be that promoting Confucian heritage may lead to better understanding of China’s advocacy of global governance. Confucian ideas such as great harmony of all under heaven and “harmony within diversity” (*he er bu tong* 和而不同) demonstrate China’s need to reach out and share its cultural heritage with others. The previous section of this paper showed how China’s concepts of global governance, such as harmony and peaceful development, are based on Confucian ideas. With the expanding presence of Confucius Institutes around the world and thus of Chinese cultural ideas, it is hoped that the world can “find out that harmony is an essential part of Chinese tradition and a country that values harmony poses absolutely no threat to the rest of the world” (Du, as cited in Starr, 2009, p. 66).

China’s distinctive global concepts also find expression in the way Confucius Institutes were created and promoted. First of all, the most prominent expression of China’s global concepts would be an emphasis on the state government as the main actor in global governance. It is the Chinese leaders who have openly called for promotion of China’s cultural soft power. Echoing the call from China’s leaders, the State Council approved the initiative to establish Confucius Institutes overseas. Han Ban, which is also the Confucius Institute headquarters, is directly affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education and a major funding partner for overseas Confucius Institutes. Secondly, Confucius Institutes communicate the Chinese vision of global multiculturalism and world harmony to the world. The Constitutions and By-laws of Confucius Institutes stipulate that Confucius Institutes are devoted “to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multi-culturalism, and to constructing a harmonious world” (Han Ban, n.d., para. 1). The third embodiment of China’s global governance concept is the emphasis on collaboration, rather than a one-way flow of resources. This approach chimes with the principle of China’s educational aid programs overseas (Nordtveit, 2009). The creation and running of Confucius Institutes is a collaborative activity, rather than just one of giving and receiving, between the Chinese and foreign partners. It involves Han Ban, Chinese participating universities, and foreign host institutions.

As a collaborative venture, the Confucius Institute is a unique approach to building up cultural soft power, as compared with the former United States Information Agency (USIA), the British Council, the German Goethe Institute, and the Japan Foundation. These institutions share the common feature that individual governments are behind the initiatives. They all function as an arms-length body of their governments. For example, the USIA (now abolished and integrated into the Department of State) was strategically set up by the US

government as a vehicle for public diplomacy in the Cold War. It was staffed with foreign and civil service personnel with the objective of supporting US foreign policy and promoting mutual understanding (United States Information Agency, 1999). Independent corporations as they are, the three other institutions—the British Council, the Goethe Institute and the Japan Foundation—all receive much of their overall budget from and report to their respective governments. Confucius Institutes, on the other hand, are more like franchises (Hayhoe & Liu, 2010). The Confucius Institute headquarters (i.e., Han Ban) provide start-up and annual funding that matches host institution funding. Designated as not-for-profit educational institutions, Confucius Institutes may charge fees for language courses or educational activities. They vary in terms of their focus and the way they are established and operated, taking specific local needs and circumstances into account. Typically, they operate as partnerships between a Chinese university that provides some teaching staff and a host university that provides a location abroad and administrative oversight. In actual fact, there is considerable variation in terms of host institutions. They may be universities (e.g., Rhodes University, South Africa), colleges (e.g., Community College of Denver, U.S.), two or more institutions in partnership (e.g., Dawson College and the University of Sherbrooke, Canada), municipalities (Betong Municipality, Thailand), government agencies (e.g., Learning and Teaching Scotland), or holding companies (e.g., Talal Abu-Gazaleh Organization, Jordan), to name a few. This innovative approach is in sharp contrast to the USIA or the Japan Foundation and that of most other major countries which control their cultural diplomacy directly by sending government personnel to work in their overseas offices.

Innovative as they are, Confucius Institutes have aroused concern over whether they may jeopardize the academic freedom of their host institutions (Brady, 2008; Schmidt, 2010, October), an issue that has seldom arisen with institutions promoting other languages and cultures. According to the Constitutions and By-laws issued by Han Ban, Confucius Institutes “shall not contravene (...) the laws and regulations of China” (n.d., para 6). Such a condition placed on those running Confucius Institutes, and the fact that financing is provided by the Chinese government, may explain why few elite universities have embraced the idea of establishing a Confucius Institute on their campuses and the few that do have a Confucius Institute were late-comers. Take the U.S. for example. Both the contracts for Confucius Institutes at Stanford University and Columbia University were signed in late 2009, more than four years after the University of Maryland opened the first Confucius Institute in the U.S. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the terms written into contracts between Han Ban and host institutions, but such a look at the contracts might help address this controversial issue.

A third perspective on the association between Confucius Institutes and China's global governance views is the impact Confucius Institutes have had on the world. In terms of their impact on learning Chinese language and culture, Confucius Institutes have had positive outcomes. A number of studies (e.g., Ding & Saunders, 2006; Starr, 2009; Yang, 2010; Zhao & Huang, 2010) confirm that Confucius Institutes have helped to accommodate the increasing demand for learning the Chinese language and have promoted Chinese culture through their curriculum and cultural activities such as Chinese festivals, celebrations and arts performances. As far as friendship and multiculturalism is concerned, Confucius Institutes help to connect people of different cultures, and the teaching of the Chinese language exemplifies the Chinese philosophy of coexistence and harmony among different cultures and languages (Zhao & Huang, 2010). Confucian ideas such as unity and harmony are taught and promoted, according to Zhao and Huang's discourse analysis. It should be noted, however, that these assertions are mainly based on statements from Han Ban and the websites of individual Confucius Institutes. These statements sound more like normative descriptions than empirical proof. More rigorous evidence, based on empirical studies, is needed to assess the impact of Confucius Institutes. As Paradise (2009) puts it, whether language and cultural promotion activities have an impact on how China is perceived by other peoples and nations remains an issue to be further investigated.

By promoting Confucius Institutes around the world, China is "reaching out" in its own way to peoples of different cultures and languages in the hope that by doing so, its distinctive global views will be better understood. On another front, China is "bringing in" UN norms and educational initiatives to its domestic and international educational practices. The next section of the paper will take a look at China's involvement in UN educational initiatives and argue that China is gradually accommodating global norms in this area.

China's Adoption of Global Norms in UN Educational Initiatives

Since becoming officially recognized by the UN in 1971, China has been gradually integrated into the international community, a process that has accelerated as a result of intensified globalization. Even though its intentions are largely pragmatic, China has been complying with international norms set out by the UN and other international organizations. Its participation is "deeper, more meaningful" (Kent, 2007, p. 4). Much of the existing academic literature on China's integration has focused on issues related to politics, economics, security, and human rights (e.g., G. Chan, 2008; Kent, 1999, 2007; Kerr, Harris, & Qin,

2008; Medeiros, 2009). Less discussion is, however, focused on China's integration into the UN system in the realm of education, which is a key aspect of the UN's mandate. Therefore, it is worthwhile investigating this process with regard to both domestic and global dimensions. This section of the paper will briefly comment on China's increasing engagement with the UN and then focus on its educational support, nationally and internationally, for the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared during the UN Millennium Summit in New York in 2000.

Compared with the past when it insulated itself from the influence of international organizations, China has made enormous progress in integrating itself into the world, especially with the UN as a key platform. Its recent engagement in UN management at senior administrative levels illustrates this change well. In October 2005, Mr. Zhang Xinsheng, former Chinese Vice Minister of Education, was elected Chairman of UNESCO's Executive Board. One year later, Dr. Margaret Chan Fung Fu-Chun, from China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, was elected Director-General of the World Health Organization, an arm of the UN. In April 2010, Dr. Tang Qian, a Chinese scholar and diplomat, was appointed UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education. The involvement of Chinese professionals in senior leadership roles at the UN reflects the fact that China recognizes the UN as "the most universal, representative and authoritative inter-governmental organization" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2010a, para. 2). It is thus not surprising that China's integration within the world community often takes the form of joining and supporting UN initiatives. In the integration process, China imports certain international norms into its domestic policies and its compliance with international norms is an incremental process as well as a matter of learning and adjustment.

In terms of bringing international norms into domestic practices, UN-led initiatives can be seen to have influenced China for a long period of time. Over the past decade, China has appeared to be more open to international scrutiny and has shown greater willingness to adopt international norms with regard to the MDGs. A classic example is the government's changing attitudes towards health issues such as HIV/AIDS and AIDS education. Emphasizing its sovereignty over health matters, the Chinese government used to treat health as a strictly domestic affair and denounced any intervention from international organizations. China rejected a UN 2002 report that AIDS could turn into an epidemic among the general population in China (Settle, 2003). The government also detained Wan Yanhai, an AIDS activist, on the charge of leaking state secrets. Yet over time, China's government has become more cooperative with the UN and the World Health Organization, sharing data with them, publicly promoting AIDS education programs, and introducing laws and mechanisms to protect the rights of the

AIDS-affected (Kaufman, 2010; Kutcher, 2003). Wan Yanhai was later released and allowed to register his non-governmental organization Aizhixing with the government.³ Admittedly, international pressure was a factor in the government's changing attitude. Nonetheless, China has also shown its own initiative in dealing with HIV/AIDS and AIDS education and has demonstrated increased transparency (Huang, 2010; Kaufman, 2010).

China also demonstrates openness and flexibility with the MDGs in a number of other domestic educational initiatives. Following the UN's initiative on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) introduced at the UN General Assembly in 2002, China has been keen to share ideas and practices with other nations. In 2003, it initiated an international forum on ESD: Towards the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). China showcased its ESD model to forum participants and stimulated considerable exchange and communication among them. The forum is now held on a biennial basis and China's ESD is integrated into the international DESD framework (Zhang, 2010). China's close collaboration with UNESCO and other international organizations is manifest in the Education for All (EFA) initiative as well. As Zhou (2007) points out, China has recognized education as a human right and has carried out educational reforms in consultation with and aided by international organizations, including the UN and UNESCO.

At the regional level, China is actively engaged in initiatives of the UNESCO regional office in Bangkok and other coordinated initiatives involving UNESCO. For example, China is a participating country for a number of strategies and activities that were aimed to improve EFA and life-long education through non-formal education (UNESCO Bangkok, 2004). These strategies included building community learning centers, introducing life skills programs, empowering communities through information and communication technology, and launching bilingual literacy programs for ethnic minorities. In March 2006, together with representatives from international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, China participated in the 4th Donor Coordination Meeting organized by the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan. The objective of the meeting was to better coordinate educational aid operations in Uzbekistan. In addition, as one of the donors to Vanuatu, China joined the donor consultation meetings convened by the ADB in an effort to improve aid effectiveness (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2010).

From a global perspective, China has begun to take on significant international responsibilities as its economy has developed apace. Bringing in elements of international norms to its domestic practices, it has also increased its foreign aid

³ Wan Yanhai left China for the U.S. in 2010 (Ford, 2010, May 10).

to other developing countries in order to improve their education capacity. According to the 2010 report on China's progress towards the MDGs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, & United Nations System in China, 2010), since 2000, China has built over 1,000 rural schools in other developing countries, offered 14,000 scholarships, and trained 52,280 people in 159 developing countries. Admittedly, the Chinese approach to educational aid differs from that of traditional aid donors. Take China's aid to African countries for example. In Kenya, the extent of China's aid to the formal education system has been quite small compared with the United States, another major bilateral donor (King, 2010). Rather, most of its aid has gone towards building infrastructure and training personnel. The same is true in Cameroon (Nordtveit, 2011). The Chinese government prefers to put aid into the hands of national governments which then decide how to apply it, rather than give direct budgetary or program support, which contrasts with traditional donors of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (Davies, 2010). China tends to use aid to foster relationships and advance trade and commerce with recipient countries, deviating from the approach of many traditional donors that demand policy change. Another distinctive feature of China's approach has been its emphasis on bilateral relationships, and its lack of attention to coordinating efforts with other donors and organizations in the region. Nonetheless, the bilateral approach seems to be moving incrementally and selectively towards greater interaction with international organizations and other donors. As Nordtveit (2009, 2011) observes, China has recently begun to participate in UNESCO and World Bank coordination meetings and expressed its interest in sharing information with other donors.

China has recently pledged to push for international development cooperation in an effort to reach consensus and achieve the MDGs in the international community (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2010b). On September 22, 2010, the Chinese government signed a new agreement with the UN Development Program (UNDP). As the UNDP Administrator Helen Clark commented, "this agreement heralds China's expanding role as a global development partner in helping MDG achievement, a key focus of our programmes around the world" (United Nations Development Program, 2010, para. 4).

Discussion

This paper has analyzed China's views on its global role and argued that China has joined the global governance structure through promoting its own global governance concepts on the one hand, and through conceding to established

global norms on the other. These two approaches are mutually inclusive rather than exclusive. That is to say, while making a distinctive mark of its own, China has also followed global norms; while embracing the existing world order, China may also be attempting to alter it in certain ways. For example, the idea of establishing a worldwide institution to promote a national language and culture was nothing new; the British Council, the German Goethe Institute and the Japan Foundation were established and developed long years before China's Confucius Institutes came into being. In a sense, China was following an existing norm. However, it did so in its own way, through supporting collaborative institutional ties between Chinese universities and their counterparts or other organizations in many countries around the world. As long as they adhere to the broadly established aims of this cultural initiative, Confucius Institutes are independent institutions funded with some Chinese government money rather than being branches of the Chinese government. On the other hand, China's strong state involvement in the economy and its dramatic increase in economic power may have prompted the World Bank to review its neo-liberal approach and acknowledge the value of a strategic state role in economic development (Robertson et al., 2007).

In order to demonstrate how the two approaches discussed above are possible, this paper has also introduced two key governance concepts proposed by China: harmony and keeping a low profile. Both concepts are used by the Chinese government to reassure the world that a rising China is not antagonist to the existing world order, but at the same time, they also signal to the world that China has its own distinctive views on global governance and wants to promote them. These concepts are "organic" in the sense that they originated from traditional Chinese philosophical principles on how to deal with the natural world and with other people. Therefore, they are likely to be long-lasting. It is worth noting, however, that although Confucianism and Taoism advocate harmony, harmony to them is dynamic and not static. This means harmony is the ideal state but harmony and conflict tend to coexist (Cheng, 1991). Hence, how to reduce conflict while aiming for harmony is an ongoing challenge for the Chinese government.

Another concern over the advocacy of harmony lies in exactly what it constitutes. In addition to living in peace, the Confucian idea of harmony connotes obedience of the inferior to the superior in a hierarchical order (Fu, Wu, Yang, & Ye, 2007). It tends to promote collectivity at the cost of individuality, hegemony at the cost of diversity, and authority at the cost of democracy. In order to be more convincing and credible, the Chinese government needs to elaborate in more explicit ways what it sees as the components of harmony for both the international order and the domestic order. While internationally, China has advocated a multicultural and democratic world order (Chan et al., 2008), its

promotion of harmony in appealing to the international community would be undermined if it became evident that domestic harmony was a façade hiding various kinds of suppression at home.

That being said, a better understanding of these Chinese concepts could be facilitated by an understanding of the Chinese language and culture. Confucius Institutes, therefore, may serve to help the world to understand China. As Professor Ge Jianxiong, Chief Librarian of Fudan University, expressed it, “we or Han Ban wants to introduce our culture. Our goal is not to force foreigners to accept our culture. Nor do we want to replace their cultures with ours” (Xinhua News Agency, 2011b, March, p. 4). The issue here is whether Confucius Institutes are effective enough to achieve the goal of promoting understanding. Because of their close connection to the Chinese government, Confucius Institutes are sometimes perceived as highly ideological and there is the fear that they may compromise academic freedom (Paradise, 2009). If similar programs of other countries, such as the German Goethe Institute or the Japan Foundation, are not arousing parallel suspicion, then this is something that the Chinese government may need to ponder over. Would an impressive statue of Confucius right on Tiananmen Square help to improve China’s image? Would a Confucius Peace Prize help? If Nye (2004) is right in saying that people are drawn to a country’s culture and ideology, then how could China bring that culture and ideology to the world? The Confucius Institute, the Beijing Olympic Games, the Shanghai Expo, and the 60-second-long “national image” promo shown on the screens in Times Square, 15 times an hour, from 6am to 2am, seven days a week, for a consecutive four weeks, have all been used to promote China’s public diplomacy and enhance its national branding. It is commendable that the Chinese government has learned to create these ways of showcasing the country’s soft power. Yet these showcases may still be more like the “hardware” part of soft power. The legitimacy of the government to govern domestically and to gain status globally also depends on the “software” part, such as the political system, the satisfaction of its people, and the ethos of the society. These aspects also warrant attention.

China’s increased efforts to cooperate with the UN and its affiliated bodies in achieving the MDGs demonstrate China’s gradual integration into the world system and adoption of international norms. They indicate that China wants to prove itself to be a responsible state. One crucial point here is to what extent the integration and compliance is acceptable to the Chinese government. As for AIDS education, China has become much more transparent and cooperative with the WTO, and international and domestic NGOs (Kaufman, 2010). However, its attitude towards NGOs can still be ambiguous and inconsistent. The government has reportedly restricted the access of domestic grass-root NGOs to foreign funding despite increased cooperation with international AIDs organization such

as UNAIDS (the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS) and the Global Fund (Ford, 2010, May 10). In May 2011, the Global Fund decided to temporarily freeze grants to China due to lack of participation from grass-root societies and suspected misuse of funds (Shan, & He, 2011, June). The government is thus faced with the issue of how to strike a balance between the government as a main actor and citizen groups as legitimate actors. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that it nurtures a caring culture and a sense of security among its people. In this way, it can establish a legitimate national image if it wants to play an important and constructive role in global governance. As Cai (2004) points out, China has raised its awareness of global norms and yet it may still have some way to go towards what is required for it to have a respected and well understood global role.

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