

CHAPTER 6

Noninterference in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy: Fact or Fiction?

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The principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries has played an influential role in Chinese foreign policy since the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The principle was first announced as an official guideline for Chinese foreign policy behavior at a gathering of nonaligned regional players in 1955.¹ As Mao Zedong articulated in 1954, noninterference implies that "a country handles its internal issues itself, other countries must not inquire about it, and must not take advantage of the internal issue. A country can only recognize the government that the people themselves chose."² As one of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, it remained a declared pillar of foreign policy during the reform period and the basis for the new security concept articulated by Jiang Zemin at the 16th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress in 2002.³ In June 2004, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao declared that China had systematically upheld this principle in the past and that its future adherence would be "firm, sincere, and *innovative*."⁴ In late 2009, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) declared, "China unswervingly upholds the principle of noninterference in others' internal affairs."⁵

China's proclaimed adherence to the noninterference principle has not been without its difficulties. China often invokes it to shield problematic states like Zimbabwe, Sudan, North Korea (DPRK), and Iran from foreign pressure, which creates tension with many countries, including the United States. In Sudan, China was accused of complicity in the Darfur

genocide for "not using its undoubted economic (oil) and military supply leverage to end the massacres and mayhem."⁶ Outside observers have criticized China, arguing Beijing uses the excuse of noninterference "merely as a cynical cloak for the pursuit of China's national self-interest regardless of human rights and good governance issues."⁷

While some criticize China, other observers question whether Beijing is as committed to the principle as claimed.⁸ In 2006, Chinese embassy officials became directly involved in an election in Zambia, warning the country that China would sever important economic ties if the anti-China candidate won the presidency.⁹ In June 2009, China supported UN resolution 1874, which condemned the DPRK's May 25 nuclear test and called for targeted sanctions and inspection of cargo vessels suspected to be transporting items in violation of the resolution.¹⁰ During the NATO-led military campaign to support the rebellion against Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's forces, Beijing sent \$7.6 million in aid and supplies to the rebel stronghold of Benghazi.¹¹ China also voted in favor of UN resolution 1970, which imposed sanctions against the Qaddafi-led regime and which included referring Qaddafi to the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes against humanity.¹² For the first time in modern history, the PRC sent a frigate to the waters near Libya to support and protect the evacuation of Chinese citizens in February 2011.¹³ More recently, Chinese leaders "have started to inch from their longstanding doctrine of non-interference in imbroglions in far-flung places" to ensure peace, and consequently access to oil, in Sudan.¹⁴

The reality lies somewhere in the middle. China has clearly transitioned from making rigid statements of principle to more moderate statements and even employing limited amounts of pressure in its foreign policy.¹⁵ Most experts agree that "China's interpretation of its noninterference doctrine is changing to fit its status as a superpower"¹⁶ in that a relatively hands-off approach is no longer viable. However, scholarship has failed to specify how China's rise affects the noninterference principle and vice-versa. Some have assumed that China has preferred noninterference only because it was a weak country, implying that China will abandon the principle as its power and interests grows.¹⁷ Evan Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel argue that China's relatively active role in resolving the DPRK nuclear issue demonstrates that China "has begun to take a less confrontational, more sophisticated, more confident, and, at times, more constructive approach toward regional and global affairs."¹⁸ Medeiros and Fravel bring attention to China's new flexibility in some foreign policy areas but fail to capture how noninterference may impact preferred Chinese tactics.¹⁹ While relative power and the expansion of global interests do have an impact, this explanation of the basis of the principle is overly simplified; Sudan was one case in which China relaxed the

principle to a *limited* degree, but there are dozens of other cases in which China did not do so.²⁰

China's increasingly intrusive foreign policy coupled with its consistent vocal support of noninterference raises a fundamental question this chapter seeks to address: What is the contemporary role and interpretation of the noninterference principle in Chinese foreign policy, and how has it evolved historically? In this chapter, the author will argue that the principle is evolving as Chinese resources and influence grow, but it continues to influence how and when China is active in its foreign policy. Currently, the source of change in interpretation is external, such as international pressure and the need to promote a peaceful, positive national image. However, domestic issues, such as pressure to protect Chinese citizens and interests overseas, will play a significant role in future deviations in practice.²¹ When China does get involved in the domestic affairs of other countries, its mode of interference, best described as private persuasion, is distinct from U.S. foreign policy, which is more public, direct, and accepting of the use of force.

The plan for this chapter is as follows. First, the author outlines the historical basis of noninterference and how its interpretation has evolved over time, and assesses the conditions under which China is flexible about its application. The author then identifies the pressures for change that have shaped its historical evolution. Finally, the chapter will address the more intrusive Chinese foreign policy behavior of the contemporary period, or interference with Chinese characteristics, the factors that shape it, and implications for U.S. interests. Admittedly, Chinese foreign policy behavior is influenced by multiple factors, such as its desire for internal stability and continued economic growth, its role in international and regional institutions, growing energy needs, the Taiwan issue, as well as numerous competing principles, of which noninterference is only one. But understanding the contemporary role and interpretation of the noninterference principle is critical to any assessment of how the rise of China will affect its foreign policy behavior over time.

The findings presented in this chapter rely heavily on Chinese sources as well as information gathered through over 25 hours of interviews the author conducted with scholars and officials in Washington, DC, and Beijing, China.²² Two-thirds of these interviews were with Chinese nationals, including high-level MFA officials, key political thinkers, and scholars. This research has considerable policy implications given that China's cooperation is now needed on a variety of issues from crises involving Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, and Burma to global issues like climate change and piracy. It is therefore important to understand the conditions under which cooperation may be forthcoming and whether a change in adherence to the noninterference principle would be beneficial or detrimental for U.S. interests.

THE HISTORICAL MEANING OF NONINTERFERENCE: AN ADAPTION TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Noninterference in the internal affairs of other states has always been vaguely defined to allow for flexibility in interpretation and application.²³ At the time of its establishment, the principle of noninterference was intimately connected to China's concerns about territorial integrity, specifically the ability of the Kuomintang (KMT) to receive external support to facilitate its overthrow of the CCP. Additionally, unwanted Indian support for Tibetan independence was a major catalyst for establishing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the basis for Sino-Indian relations.²⁴ For these reasons, state-sponsored actions with the intention to undermine the government in power are considered interference, while propping up a government under domestic attack is not.²⁵ However, there have been significant departures from the principle throughout modern Chinese history. A frequently cited example is Chinese support for world efforts to sanction South Africa during the apartheid. Under Mao Zedong, China supported revolutions and movements for national liberation that would lead eventually to Communism.²⁶ China also completely abandoned the principle during the Cultural Revolution when it actively supported subversive groups in non-Communist countries, especially in Southeast Asia.

As China has become more concerned about its international interests over the last decade, the political elite has identified interference more by the means employed rather than whether China impacts a particular outcome. Specifically, the guiding principle is that China should interact politically and economically only with the legitimate government in power; providing monetary and political support for political actors or political parties besides the ruling government in a way that legitimizes or delegitimizes is the epitome of interference.²⁷ Within this line of reasoning, arms sales are not considered to be a violation of the principle if conducted only with the official government of the country.²⁸ Chinese scholars also argue that there is an important distinction between hard and soft interference.²⁹ Hard interference involves the employment of political pressure, explicit threats, or military force to coerce a state into changing its behavior; it demonstrates an unequal relationship in which one state gives an order to another.³⁰ Tools of statecraft often employed in Africa such as tied loans or trade relations, however, are categorized as cooperation, not interference, because they stem from an agreement between two willing partners, even if the arrangement influences domestic politics in the end.³¹ However, forces opposed to the regime being assisted or neighboring countries concerned with spill over destabilization may see this pure "non-interference" stance as highly disruptive interference. However, this evolution away from an outcome-oriented

approach toward focusing on the tools employed is easier to implement and helps China promote positive long-term relationships with countries, even as their governments change over time.³²

Because the principle advises against only interference in *internal* affairs, the shift in the understanding of what constitutes external and internal affairs has also been a great source of change. In the Marxist-Leninist state, there was no distinction between domestic and foreign affairs; both were an extension of the domestic polity. However, Beijing now perceives many aspects of relations with other countries through the lens of external affairs, which allows for more flexibility in foreign policy. The DPRK nuclear issue, for example, goes beyond internal affairs because it affects regional security; the DPRK's voluntary participation in the Six-Party Talks also implies China's involvement is not a type of interference.³³ Another example is the deployment of a naval fleet to the Gulf of Aden as part of the international effort to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. China characterized this deployment as adhering to noninterference given that the actions were occurring in the commons.³⁴

China's changing attitudes toward peacekeeping operations (PKO) since 2002 are a good example of the evolution of the principle driven by the need to adapt to contemporary challenges.³⁵ The first sign of changing tides was Chinese support for the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which arguably infringed on the sovereignty of the state by taking over many government functions.³⁶ Subsequently, China's participation in UN PKO increased six-fold from 2004 to 2010. China now contributes more troops to these operations than any other permanent member of the Security Council; in January 2010, China had 2,131 peacekeepers (all noncombat) supporting 10 UN missions with five separate contingents of more than 200 troops.³⁷ China resisted the change, as demonstrated by its lack of support for missions in Kosovo and Iraq, but failure to support humanitarian missions was becoming prohibitively costly for China's national image. While the cause of this shift is still hotly debated, it is clear that it has also affected the interpretation of the noninterference principle.³⁸ The conventional wisdom is that an action is not considered to be a violation of the noninterference principle as long as the United Nations sanctions the intervention and the targeted state accepts the peacekeeping force.³⁹

These points clarify that noninterference does not imply passive foreign policy. The evolving interpretation may also just be part of a process of rationalizing practices that deviate further and further from principle. However, the fact that there is still a need to justify exceptions demonstrates the principle's continued influence on Chinese foreign policy.⁴⁰ The next section assesses particular circumstances under which China tends to be more flexible; the identification of such patterns is useful for

policymakers who hope to encourage China to use its leverage to gain favorable outcomes to international political and humanitarian crises.

SOURCES OF FLEXIBILITY

The noninterference principle has never been absolute in its application. Instead, it has been a decision-making rule of thumb, more instrumental than determinative.⁴¹ While noninterference is still the default response, Chinese foreign policy has exhibited enhanced flexibility in recent years. A study published by the Academy of Social Sciences in China concludes that China is "highly selective in choosing the sorts of responsibilities it is willing to accept. Subscribing to a traditional definition of sovereignty, China has consistently opposed international interventions unless requested by the state under scrutiny and authorized by the United Nations."⁴²

Beijing's flexibility varies based on the geographic location of the country in question. Over the past several centuries, Chinese leaders have exhibited "a general reluctance to intervene beyond a geographically limited area adjacent or close to China's strategic core region" and are much less likely to approve of international interference close to its borders.⁴³ Beijing is more resistant to interference if it involves a neighboring country whose reaction could have repercussions within China (such as potential for spillover from the DPRK or Burma).⁴⁴ China is therefore the most flexible globally, then regionally, but the weariest about multilateral interference in countries along its periphery.⁴⁵ This implies that scholars should be careful in assuming that what China is willing to do in one case, like North Korea, serves as a guide for what China would do in another, like Iran.

There are cases, however, in which interference is the norm. For example, to protect its position on Taiwan, China will interfere to support governments or groups that recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of China and do not support Taiwan's attempts to gain more international space.⁴⁶ Generally, China is more likely to interfere to tell a country *not* to do something it perceives to be against its domestic interests than pressure them to take a specific action.⁴⁷ For example, China urged Japan not to issue a visa to Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer, demanded that the Melbourne film festival not screen a movie about Kadeer, and requested that the organizers of the Frankfurt book festival ban two Chinese writers.⁴⁸

PRESSURES FOR CHANGE

Three factors will further encourage China to deviate from a strict adherence to the principle: expanding interests, national image, and international pressure.

More Interests, More Problems

The greatest challenges to the principle of noninterference are globalization and the expansion of China's interests beyond its own borders during the past decade. For the majority of PRC history, China was not a player in the international arena; without interests beyond its borders or sufficient resources to protect them, the principle of noninterference was relatively uncontroversial.⁴⁹ But with the growth of Chinese comprehensive national power, adherence to the principle has become constraining, "like a silkworm bound up in its cocoon."⁵⁰ In particular, "the Chinese government faces the challenge of reconciling its formal, established policy of non-interference with the more substantive Chinese economic involvement" in countries such as the Sudans.⁵¹ On the other hand, China's desire for positive trade relations and access to natural resources has reinforced aspects of the traditional principle due to its popularity with developing countries, especially in resource-rich Africa. MFA officials commented unofficially that in the near future, China will be forced to further re-evaluate and adapt the interpretation of noninterference to allow China the greatest flexibility in protecting its expanding overseas interests.

National Image

China's concern for its national image creates more incentives for change than continuity. Specifically, Beijing is attempting to both reassure smaller powers, especially regional players, that China will not use its newfound power to their detriment while simultaneously promoting great power relationships.⁵² The challenge for China is that the noninterference principle is compatible with the preferences of small weaker nations but is often seen as a source of anxiety among developed nations. The principle was first espoused in the 1950s to reassure neighboring countries that China would not support revolution and that the PRC was willing to establish relations with any country, regardless of domestic political system. As Zhou Enlai articulated, "We must admit that different ideologies and social systems do exist among the Asian and African countries, but this does not constitute an obstacle for us to seek common ground and unity."⁵³

The principle also creates a positive view of China in the eyes of many countries in Latin America and Africa, giving them hope that their experiences with China will be better than those with the United States and Europe.⁵⁴ China's "rhetoric of equality, mutual respect, and noninterference, coupled with first-class hospitality, has won over African elites from across the political spectrum."⁵⁵ As Premier Wen Jiabao articulated, "We believe that people in different regions and countries, including those in

Africa, have the right and ability to handle their own issues."⁵⁶ Solidarity with the developing world has been important to China ever since their votes played a critical role in China gaining its UN seat in 1972.⁵⁷

Though it cares deeply about its relations with the Third World, as China continues to grow, it will have more in common with developed nations.⁵⁸ As Medeiros and Fravel argue, "Chinese strategists increasingly see their interests as more akin to major powers and less associated with those of developing nations, which have been downgraded to a lesser priority."⁵⁹ Developing nations may already no longer accept China as one of them, with or without the principle.⁶⁰ The fact that protests in developing countries against China are increasing in size and frequency suggests that the balance of conflicting concerns about national image is tilting toward changing the principle to promote positive relations with the developed world.⁶¹ Already, Chinese actions with respect to Somalia, Sudan, and the DPRK have weakened the noninterference principle, even according to its contemporary understanding.⁶² Since 2006, "China has moved from outright obstructionism and a defensive insistence on solidarity with the developing world to an attempt to balance its material needs with its acknowledged responsibilities as a major power."⁶³

International Pressure

When there is an international or regional consensus that interference is necessary and legitimate, China tends not to oppose it. For example, China became more flexible on Sudan when American director Steven Spielberg resigned as artistic adviser for the Beijing Olympics, creating a public image issue.⁶⁴ Also, "the [African Union's] tough position on Sudan (it denied Khartoum the organization's chairmanship in 2007) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' growing exasperation with Burma were critical factors in China's decision to shift its policy" toward pressuring both countries.⁶⁵ China's transformed views on non-proliferation are another example of how consensus on an international norm pushed China to be more willing to interfere under particular conditions.⁶⁶ In November 2002, China voted for Resolution 1441 on weapons inspections in Iraq, one of the few times China has supported a Chapter VII resolution since it joined the United Nations in 1971.⁶⁷ As one Chinese scholar admits, "these activities perhaps already go beyond the traditional scope of advocating the noninterference principle."⁶⁸ However, it is rare that the international community reaches a consensus on a given issue. As long as there is another major power that opposes interference, China tends to be less anxious that opposition will have international reputational effects. For example, China had the company of Russia in vetoing a UN resolution for further sanctions on Syria.

In short, these countervailing forces suggest that the principle will not be abandoned nor will Chinese foreign policies adhere dogmatically to it.⁶⁹ Instead, the principle will adapt in concept and practical application to constantly changing circumstances such as the increase in Chinese power. It will become increasingly flexible, balancing the pressures for change, which are predominantly external, with the pressures for continuity, which are primarily internal. In the next section, the author will discuss these internal pressures and how they shape China's preferred mode of interference, private persuasion.

INTERFERENCE WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

While pressures for change push for a more active foreign policy, pressures for continuity define the actions and rhetoric that will represent a more intrusive foreign policy. China will consistently declare adherence to the principle by maintaining its opposition to sanctions, regime change, and military intervention as tools of influence even as its power grows.⁷⁰ Additionally, China will likely continue to insist on a country's invitation to intervene or provide guidance, approval of the relevant international organization, and support only for the government in power. If these conditions are met, and China possesses leverage that can be employed to achieve the desired outcome, Beijing may relax the principle.

Even so, Beijing will interfere in distinct ways best described as private persuasion.⁷¹ Chinese leaders like to think of themselves as playing more of a mediator role, persuading and advising, instead of coercing and demanding another country to change its behavior.⁷² In these mediation activities, for example with Burma, China will often use the threat of UN involvement to convince the leadership of the country in question to concede privately, while protecting that country in the United Nations at the same time.⁷³ Unlike the United States, China avoids public comment on private dialogues and prefers to engage countries bilaterally.⁷⁴ To an impartial observer, acts of Chinese persuasion can often be construed as coercion. But even if the line between persuasion and coercion is ambiguous, it is clear that the Chinese government does not have any interest in supporting clear violations of the principle, such as protecting its interests through puppet governments or sending troops overseas.⁷⁵

This difference in tactics is captured in the evolution of Chinese foreign policy toward Sudan. As late as February 2007, Hu Jintao continued to publically emphasize China's economic ties with Sudan and argued that noninterference should serve as the basis for the international approach to Darfur. But in private, Hu reportedly intervened to pressure Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir to abide by his commitments.⁷⁶ In 2007, China began to "quietly push" Sudan to accept a large peacekeeping

contingency, doing so through its special envoy Liu Guijin.⁷⁷ In June 2007, Liu reportedly stated that Beijing had been using “very direct language” as well as its “own wisdom” to persuade Sudan to accept the hybrid AU/UN peacekeeping force.⁷⁸ The same month, a CCP newspaper, *Qiushi*, reiterated that “China’s policy [in the Sudan] is characterized by its policy of non-interference in each other’s internal affairs and non-attachment of any conditions.”⁷⁹ The U.S. special envoy to Sudan, Andrew Natsios, captured the Chinese role as follows:

We have evidence at this point that the Chinese are now taking a more aggressive role than in the past . . . I think the Chinese actually may be the critical factor that led to the Sudanese reversing their position on the Kofi Annan plan . . . If every country behaved the way we [the United States] did, I am not sure we could always get done what we need to get done. And my sense is that the Chinese are taking a more subtle approach and that is really affecting the behavior of the Sudanese government.⁸⁰

China’s preferred mode of private persuasion has been apparent in other cases as well. After Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in 2008, through private deliberations, China encouraged ruling General Than Shwe to receive UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon and allow for outside assistance.⁸¹ Whether Hu Jintao took an accommodating approach or expressed a willingness to exert pressure on North Korea to resolve the nuclear crisis during Kim Jung-Il’s initially secret visit to China in January 2006 is also unknown publicly.⁸² China has become more involved in the domestic affairs of North Korea in the past 10 years. Specifically, “Chinese leaders repeatedly encouraged North Korean counterparts to follow some of the guidelines of Chinese economic reforms and to open more to international economic contact.”⁸³ Chinese interlocutors encouraged such reforms during Kim Jong-Il’s seven visits to China during the decade before his death, and China will likely maintain this focus when Kim Jung-Un visits.⁸⁴

One reason China prefers the reputation of mediator is its victim mentality (*shouhaizhe xintai*). Chinese officials and the Chinese people “have long been conditioned through the education system and government-sponsored media coverage to think of China as having been victimized by international powers since the early nineteenth century.”⁸⁵ Though the basis of the victim mentality stems back to the First Opium War (1839–1842), foreign involvement in China’s civil war as well as China’s collective memory of dealing with the Soviet Union before the Sino-Soviet split strengthened the view that outsiders should not be involved in Chinese internal affairs.⁸⁶ More recently, the sanctions placed on China after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre were perceived as interference in China’s internal affairs, “the latest in a long series of foreign efforts to

abuse and victimize China."⁸⁷ China's enormous economic success has reduced this psychological emphasis in Chinese newspapers and journals, which have begun to advocate for China "to put aside past negative views of international affairs."⁸⁸ The Chinese public's "perception of China's growing status is producing popular demands for a more assertive pursuit of China's international interests."⁸⁹ Chinese leaders, however, are still concerned that abandoning the principle will invite interference in China's domestic affairs with regard to Taiwan.⁹⁰ For these reasons, when "interfering," Chinese government officials will mostly likely continue to shy away from supporting opposition parties or rebel groups even if their positions seem to favor Chinese interests.

Interviews with Chinese government officials reveal that one of the beliefs underlying the preference for private persuasion is that direct interference—and its extreme, armed intervention—is ineffective if not detrimental to a state's long-term interests. This rationale was reinforced by the consequences of Maoist China's attempts to subvert neighboring non-Communist governments, especially in Southeast Asia. Chinese leaders such as Deng Xiaoping recognized that this behavior served only to marginalize China from other regional actors.⁹¹ The occasions when China deviated from the principle, like the 1979 war with Vietnam over their occupation of Cambodia, served only as a reminder of the consequences of interference.⁹² It is likely that China will continue to exhibit a bias against armed intervention even as its power grows because "deep in the Chinese foreign policy philosophy there is a strong belief that conflict resolution is primarily realized through domestic dynamics, and that foreign interventions are less decisive, do not really work, and are often counterproductive."⁹³ The Chinese leadership does not want to subject itself to domestic criticism for not standing up to foreign pressure and consequently prefers private communication. For example, in 1997, when holding a summit with President Clinton was conditional on stopping Chinese arms sales to Iran, China preferred to deliberate and implement the subsequent change in policy privately.⁹⁴

China prefers this subtle and indirect method of private persuasion because it reinforces the belief that China is a different type of global power that maintains equal relations with other countries. China currently has a dual identity as both a developing country and global player.⁹⁵ During the Maoist era, the principle of noninterference was a tool of soft power, a way to credibly signal to the world and to its domestic public that China is against hegemony and would be a different type of global power than the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union), or contemporary powers such as the United States or Europe.⁹⁶ Both Chinese and American scholars posit that Chinese leaders truly want to believe that China will be a different type of global power. This is not a given, as Zhou Enlai warned: "Because we are a big country, it is

easy for us to disrespect small countries. We need to be vigilant about great power thinking among our people."⁹⁷ Private persuasion allows China to balance its preference for noninterference and maintenance of bilateral relationships as well as its concerns about how its foreign policy decisions impact its national image, especially in the eyes of other developing countries with which it is building diplomatic and trade relations.⁹⁸

NONINTERFERENCE: ARE ITS DAYS LIMITED?

Though China has been more flexible in the application of the noninterference principle, Beijing is unlikely to abandon it altogether for a number of reasons. China's desire to avoid international responsibility and conserve resources during its ascendancy is an additional rationale to maintain a rhetorical emphasis on noninterference and use private persuasion. As one Chinese scholar articulated, "China does not have the necessary resources, time and skills to live up to the expectations of the outside world [in terms of becoming an active contributor to global governance]."⁹⁹ To some degree, the continued emphasis on noninterference is a tacit recognition of the limitations China faces in terms of economic and political capital, knowledge about other countries, and experience with international negotiations.¹⁰⁰ Noninterference is a useful rhetorical tool for avoiding increased international responsibility; it allows China to abdicate its role in dealing with problem areas like Iran and climate change while focusing exclusively on the economic, political, and informational dimensions of international affairs.¹⁰¹

To a degree, the principle may persist because of a lack of agreement at the highest levels about what role China should have in global affairs. Even though there is some "new thinking" in Chinese foreign policy, the old thinking that emphasizes the noninterference principle and avoiding international commitments still has great influence. This is partly due to the fact that there is consensus in the old thinking, while the new thinking proponents are divided into many different factions.¹⁰² Also, the old thinking is reinforced by other powerful factors, such as nationalism and China's self-espoused national image, which are disseminated through state propaganda.¹⁰³ Moreover, the Chinese decision-making process makes it especially unlikely that China will make an explicit strategic change in its foreign policy. The process is slow because no leader wants to waste political capital pushing a change in foreign policy strategy, and there is a need for consensus among leaders.¹⁰⁴ Finally, most countries—and especially China given the dramatic changes it is currently undergoing—value a degree of continuity in foreign policy. As one Chinese official articulated, "[I]f you jeopardize the principle, you shake things up, and China needs a great degree of stability to rise successfully and peacefully."¹⁰⁵

The real wild card, however, involves the increasing number of Chinese nationals living and traveling overseas, especially in developing nations.¹⁰⁶ In 2012, over 60 million PRC citizens traveled abroad, a six-fold increase since 2000. An additional 5 million citizens live abroad, a figure projected to reach 100 million by 2020.¹⁰⁷ There has also been a marked increase in Chinese domestic pressure to protect citizens while abroad, which could push China to take a hard-line stance with foreign countries when Chinese lives and interests are at stake. Between 2006 and 2010, there were 6,000 PRC citizens evacuated from countries in upheaval, and another 48,000 were evacuated from Egypt, Libya, and Japan in 2011.¹⁰⁸ When civil war broke out in Sudan, China was faced with a difficult choice. It could abandon its oil investments, send security personnel to protect its workers and managers there, or provide assistance to the Sudanese army so that they could better quell the opposition forces. Though most of the details remain secret, it seems that China chose a combination of the latter two.¹⁰⁹ Sudan is not the only case of Chinese interference on behalf of its citizens; in Libya, China conducted a noncombatant evacuation operation, sending one frigate and four military transport planes to evacuate over 35,000 Chinese nationals.¹¹⁰ China's embassies overseas have become much more responsive because "in the face of the challenges that globalization brings every day, China's need to protect its overseas interests . . . [and] this necessarily demands that it be responsive to the interests of Chinese citizens overseas."¹¹¹

CONCLUSION

All two dozen interviewees agreed that at least in the foreseeable future, Chinese foreign policy will continue to demonstrate a bias toward noninterference but will become increasingly issue-driven in that decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.¹¹² The big question is whether Chinese leaders are "biding their time to exert great pressure and force to achieve Chinese goals when future circumstances are more advantageous."¹¹³ While resource constraints are one reason China exhibits a bias toward noninterference, there are other factors associated with China's rise that both advance and undermine the principle. For example, declared adherence to noninterference has given China leverage in its reassurance strategy, according to which China presents itself as a different, less intrusive great power. Those with government experience have commented that Chinese policymakers are not quite as dogmatic in that decisions are made without explicitly considering the impact of the principle.¹¹⁴ But this transformation of Chinese foreign policy, which has arguably accelerated since 2004, does not mean that the principle does not have great influence.¹¹⁵ Pressures for continuity, such as the belief that interference is ineffective, the desire to promote China's leadership in the

developing world, and the deep-rooted desire to be a different type of great power than the United States or former colonial powers, affect calculations of costs, benefits, and appropriate responses. In other words, there will not be a strategic shift away from the principle, but there will be changes in Chinese diplomacy. The current period is one of transition and debate in the Chinese foreign policy community, but no one within the government will admit that the principle is problematic. Instead, officials are "doing more and saying less," which will further the gap between policy and practice.¹¹⁶

Should the United States encourage China to move away from the non-interference principle? Admittedly, the principle provides China with justification to avoid more international responsibility in policy areas in which the United States would prefer greater Chinese cooperation, such as energy security, stability in the Middle East, and climate change. One possible future scenario is that China relaxes the principle as its global interests expand and overlap with those of the United States, leading to coordination between the two superpowers on global issues.¹¹⁷ But there are three reasons to question the feasibility of this ideal outcome. First, as the DPRK nuclear issue has demonstrated, even when Chinese and American interests overlap, divergence in preferred tactics can inhibit progress on the issue at hand. Second, China defines its core interests narrowly in domestic terms while U.S. interests are defined globally. The United States has historically attempted to influence the outside world to ensure its safety, but Chinese leaders believe strengthening the country internally enhances its national security.¹¹⁸ This difference in strategic thinking can lead to different preference rankings for the types of international issues that need to be addressed and which aspect of an issue is the most disconcerting. For example, China prioritizes stability in the DPRK over denuclearization, while the United States considers denuclearization to be of greater importance.

Finally, abandonment of the principle would mean the potential for Chinese interference where the United States may prefer China's traditional hands-off approach. To capture the benefits of the principle but encourage China to use its leverage in certain areas of U.S. interest, the United States should not push China to abandon the noninterference principle altogether. Instead, Washington should work to encourage China to adjust its interpretation of noninterference when beneficial to the international community. When China deviates from the principle at the behest of the international community, the United States should offer positive reinforcement, even if China employs its different mode of private persuasion. The problem with interference with Chinese characteristics is that its private nature precludes U.S. involvement; in other words, it does not allow for U.S.-China cooperation on pressing security issues. Furthermore, because Chinese actions are not transparent, Washington

has a limited sense about what exactly China is doing, which makes it difficult for the United States to make the necessary adjustments to its policy to take advantage of the leverage China is employing to achieve its foreign policy goals. The noninterference principle and its underlying logic will continue to have an impact on Chinese foreign policy for the foreseeable future; it is time that the United States leveraged this reality to shape China's choices and consequently better manage China's rise.

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NOTES

1. For more on the history of the principle, see Pan Zhenqiang, "Promoting Peace and Development in Asia under the Guidance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," <http://irchina.org/en/xueren/china/view.asp?id=818>.

2. Wu Shijian, "Mao Zedong hu bu ganshe neizheng sixiang yu juxing duli zizhu de heping waijiao zhengce" [Mao Zedong Thinking on Mutual Noninterference in Internal Affairs and Conducting Independent Peaceful Foreign Policies], *Heilongjiang Shizhi (Heilongjiang Chronicle)* 18 (2009): 6. This is known hereafter as "Mao Zedong Thinking."

3. Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 4–5.

4. Emphasis added. Wen Jiabao, "Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the Promotion of Peace and Development," Speech given at a rally commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, June 28, 2004, http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-06/28/content_1551422.htm.

5. "MFA Regular Press Conference on October 27, 2009," <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t623133.htm>.

6. Robert I. Rotberg, "China's Quest for Resources, Opportunities, and Influence in Africa," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008), 12.

7. Stephen Marks, "Understanding China's Strategy: Beyond 'Non-interference,'" *Pambazuka*, November 5, 2008.

8. Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Andrew Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008; Nyein Chan Aye, "The Myth of Chinese Non-interference," *Irrawaddy*, August 18, 2006; "U.S. Journalist James L. McGregor: Goodbye Non-Interference," *Caijing Magazine*, August 20, 2008; Pan Zhongying, "China's Nonintervention Question," *Global Responsibility to Protect* 1, no. 2 (March 2009): 237–252.

9. Joshua Kurlantzick, "Manchurian Candidate," *New Republic*, October 5, 2006.
10. "Security Council, Acting Unanimously, Condemns in Strongest Terms Democratic People's Republic of Korea Nuclear Test, Toughens Sanctions," *United Nations Department of Public Information*, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9679.doc.htm>.
11. "China Political Memo: Beijing's Noninterference Policy and Post-Gadhafi Libya," *Stratfor*, September 9, 2011.
12. Hu Ping, "China's Paradoxical UN Vote to Sanction the Gadhafi Regime," *Epoch Times*, March 3, 2011.
13. See Gabe Collins and Andrew S. Erickson, "Implications of China's Military Evacuation of Citizens from Libya," *China Brief* 11, no. 4 (March 10, 2011), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bswords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=georgia&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=15&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37633&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=b0ab54d4a9dba5588a6c841987296b27.
14. "Africa's Next Big War?" *Economist*, April 28, 2012. For a discussion of how the principle has shaped Chinese behavior in Africa, see Erica S. Downs, "The Fact and Fiction of Sino-African Energy Relations," *China Security* 3 (Summer 2007): 58–62; Linda Jakobson, "The Burden of 'Non-Interference,'" *China Economic Quarterly* 2 (2007): 14–18.
15. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
16. Henry Lee and Dan Shalman, "Searching for Oil: China's Oil Strategies in Africa," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China and Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 30.
17. Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," 5.
18. Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2003): 22.
19. Furthermore, because they broadly address many issue areas, constituting both domestic and external affairs, it is difficult to deduce any conclusions these authors may reach about changes in the interpretation and role of the noninterference principle.
20. Roundtable discussion with fellows, Beijing-based think tank.
21. Some argue that the source of change is internal. See Niu Jun, "Gaige kaifang 30 nian zhongguo guojia anquan zhanglue zai sikao" [A Rethinking of Chinese National Security Strategy during the 30 Years Reform Period], *Guoji Zhengzhi Yanjiu Jikan (International Politics Quarterly)* 4 (2009), hereafter known as "A Rethinking." Also Zhang Baijia, "Zhongguo neizheng yu waijiao lishi sikao" [Chinese Internal Politics and Foreign Policy: An Historical Perspective], *Guojia Zhengzhi Yanjiu (National Political Studies)* 1 (2006).
22. Names of the Chinese interviewees will remain anonymous. However, I do provide a general description of the commentator. All interviews were conducted in February 2009.
23. For more on the distinction between noninterference, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, see Allen Carlson, *Unifying China, Integrating with the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 16.

24. Zhang Yanxia, "Mao Zedong lun shehuizhuyi heping waijiao zhengce de jiben yuanze" [Mao Zedong Theory's Basic Principle of Socialist Peaceful Foreign Policy], *Shijiqiao (The Millennium Bridge)* 7 (2008). Hereafter known as "Mao Zedong Theory."

25. Mao Zedong clearly delineated that moving beyond government-to-government relations constituted interference with intervening in disputes among ethnicities or political parties as interference to the greatest degree. See Wu, "Mao Zedong Thinking," 6.

26. For a complete history of Chinese support of national revolutions, see Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy: Peking's Support of Wars of National Liberation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970).

27. Interview with Chinese academic, Beijing-based university.

28. From 2003 to 2006, Chinese arms sales to African nations constituted a little over 15 percent of all sales to the continent. See Stephanie Hanson, "China, Africa and Oil," *Council on Foreign Relations Background*, June 6, 2008, 4.

29. Interview with Chinese academic, Beijing-based university.

30. This position was articulated by a former Chinese ambassador to the European Union. Author's interview, Beijing, February 2009.

31. This refers to the tying of loans to the export of commodities to China. Rotberg, "China's Quest," 7–8.

32. Interview with MFA officials, Washington, DC.

33. *Ibid.* It is unclear how Chinese officials justify the use of pressure and coercive methods to achieve such consent.

34. Interview with fellow, Beijing-based think tank. See also "China Navy 'Confident, Capable' in Somalia Piracy Mission," *Xinhua News Agency*, December 23, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/23/content_10547472.htm.

35. For more on China's participation in PKOs and its relationship with non-interference, see Zhu Shilong and Liu Xuanyou, "Zhongguo waijiao bu ganshe neizheng yuanze tanjiu" [An Investigation of Chinese Foreign Policy Principle of Noninterference], *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu (Teaching and Research)* 8, (2009): 40. Hereafter known as "An Investigation."

36. Jing Chen, "Explaining the Change in China's Attitude toward UN Peacekeeping: A Norm Change Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2010, 159.

37. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011*, Annual Report to Congress, May 2012, 66.

38. See Chen, "Explaining the Change"; Pan Zhongying, "China's Changing Attitude toward UN Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 1 (2005): 87–104.

39. Interviews with David Lampton and Richard Bush; fellow, Beijing-based think tank.

40. Interview with Richard Bush.

41. Interview with David Lampton.

42. Shiping Tang and Yunling Zhang, "China's Regional Strategy," in David Shambaugh (ed.), *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 50–51.

43. Gill, *Rising Star*, 105.

44. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
45. Interview with Richard Bush.
46. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
47. Interview with Michael Swaine.
48. Michael Bristow, "China Looks to Export Censorship," *BBC News*, November 2, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8329217.stm>.
49. As one Chinese scholar commented, with no intention to interfere, nor the ability to do so, a principle of noninterference just made sense. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
50. Interview with Chinese MFA officials, Washington, DC.
51. Daniel Large, "China and the Contradictions of 'Non-Interference' in Sudan," *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 115 (2008): 93.
52. See Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
53. Pan, "Promoting Peace and Development in Asia," 2.
54. Wenran Jiang, "China's Emerging Strategic Partnerships in Africa," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 59.
55. Joshua Eisenman, "China's Political Outreach to Africa," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 236.
56. Jiang, "China's Emerging Strategic Partnerships in Africa," 55.
57. Stephanie Rupp, "Africa and China: Engaging Postcolonial Dependencies," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 68.
58. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
59. Medeiros and Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," 23.
60. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
61. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
62. Interview with fellow, Beijing-based think tank.
63. Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," 10.
64. Interview with prominent Chinese scholar, former official. See also Helene Cooper, "Spielberg Drops Out as Adviser to Beijing Olympics in Dispute over Darfur Conflict," *New York Times*, February 13, 2008.
65. Kleine-Ahlbrandt and Small, "China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy," 10.
66. See Evan S. Medeiros, *Reluctant Restraint: The Evolution of China's Nonproliferation Policies and Practices* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
67. Medeiros and Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," 27. Chapter VII of the UN Charter allows the UN Security Council to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and to take military and nonmilitary action to "restore international peace and security."
68. Zhu and Liu, "An Investigation," 40.
69. *Ibid.*, 39.
70. Interview with Chinese scholar.
71. This characterization was provided by a prominent Chinese official.
72. There was consensus among all interviewees on this point in response to a question on the ways in which China would interfere.

73. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
74. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
75. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
76. Bates Gill, Chin-Hao Huang, and J. Stephen Morrison, "Assessing China's Growing Influence in Africa," *China Security* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 13-14.
77. Rotberg, "China's Quest," 13.
78. Gill, Huang, and Morrison, "Assessing China's Growing Influence in Africa," 15.
79. Lee and Shalmon, "Searching for Oil," 129.
80. Andrew Nasios, "Darfur: A Plan B to Stop Genocide," Testimony given before Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 11, 2007.
81. Rotberg, "China's Quest," 13.
82. Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 43.
83. *Ibid.*, 203.
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*, 49. Niu Jun argues that this history is what drives Chinese suspicion of the international order. See also Niu Jun, "A Rethinking."
86. Interview with prominent Chinese scholar; interview with American scholar on China.
87. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 49.
88. *Ibid.*, 48. See also Medeiros and Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," 32.
89. "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2011," 14.
90. Interview with David Lampton.
91. David Shambaugh, "The Rise of China and Asia's New Dynamics," in David Shambaugh (ed.), *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1-22.
92. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
93. Jiang, "China's Emerging Strategic Partnerships in Africa," 56.
94. Interview with Robert Sutter.
95. Susan Shirk, *Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
96. For Mao, the principle was a way for him to promote a world order unique to that presented by the USSR. See Wu Shijian, "Mao Zedong Thinking," 7.
97. Zhao Jianwen, "Zhou Enlai guanyu hu bu ganshe neizheng yuanze de sixiang" [Zhou Enlai Thinking on the Principle of Mutual Noninterference in Internal Affairs], *Zhengzhou Daxue Xuebao (Journal of Zhengzhou University)* 2 (1998): 49.
98. Henry Lee and Dan Shalmon, "Searching for Oil: China's Oil Strategies in Africa," in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *China in Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 130.
99. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
100. Interviews with professors, Beijing-based university.
101. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university. Foreign and domestic expectations for Chinese participation make this strategy increasingly difficult. See Office of the Secretary of Defense, 14.
102. See Jeffrey Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (September 2007): 515-534.

103. Interview with Robert Sutter.
104. Interview with professor, Beijing-based university.
105. Interview with MFA officials, Washington, DC.
106. Point made by most interviewees, U.S. and Chinese.
107. Michieu Duchatel and Bates Gill, "Overseas Citizen Protection: A Growing Challenge for China," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, February 12, 2012, <http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/february12>.
108. Ibid.
109. Lee and Shalmon, "Searching for Oil," 68.
110. Jonas Parello-Plesner, "Civis Sinicus Sum: China's Great Power Burdens in Libya," *World Politics Review* (online), March 3, 2011, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/8072/civis-sinicus-sum-chinas-great-power-burdens-in-libya>.
111. Zhu and Liu, "An Investigation," 41.
112. Interviewees articulated different time periods for this prediction, from 10 to 50 years. See also Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, 59.
113. Ibid.
114. Interview with high-level Chinese official, Washington, DC.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Interview with David Lampton.