CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Adaptation and Self-Consciousness

CHINA FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVIEW

Series Editors: Zhao Jinjun (*China Foreign Affairs University, China*)
Chen Zhirui (*China Foreign Affairs University, China*)

Vol. 1 China and the International Society: Adaption and Self-Consciousness
edited by Zhao Jinjun and Chen Zhirui

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Adaptation and Self-Consciousness

Editors

Zhao Jinjun | Chen Zhirui

China Foreign Affairs University, China

World Century

Published by

World Century Publishing Corporation

27 Warren Street, Suite 401-402, Hackensack, NJ 07601

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

China and the international society : adaptation and self-consciousness / edited by Jinjun Zhao and Zhirui Chen.

pages cm. -- (China foreign affairs review, ISSN 2334-4210 ; Vol. 1)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-938134-50-0 (alk. paper)

1. China--Foreign relations--1949-- I. Zhao, Jinjun, editor of compilation. II. Chen, Zhirui.
DS777.8.C447 2014
327.51--dc23

2014014495

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Typeset by Stallion Press

Email: enquiries@stallionpress.com

Printed in Singapore

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Preface

What is the relationship between China and the international society? For both China and the world, this is a long historical question, which has been gaining even greater theoretical value and practical significance, since China's reform and opening up. In this process, China adopted "changing itself and impacting the world" as the major mode of interaction with the international society.

However, it is contended by the people who feel unease at China's rapid development and eager quest for markets, resources and other national interests, that this mode of interaction is being changed. With China's global influence expanding fast, the international society has renewed its perception of this country, and elevated expectation and request of China's global responsibilities. China's perception upon its own identities in the international system, as they maintained, may also have been changed, which would definitely impact China's understanding and behavior in dealing with foreign relations. According to their logicism, confidence from its newly-acquired strength, self-consciousness of its own national interests and aspiration for national rejuvenation, all these are mingled together to have been altering China's mode of interaction with the international society.

At the backdrop of a transiting and reshuffling international system, people acknowledged China's tremendous contribution to stabilizing the

global economy against volatile fluctuations and readjustments, but unavoidably rebuked China, and even defiled China's image and reputation for its growing military strength, territorial and maritime disputes, greenhouse gas emission and climate change policies, etc.

This seemingly paradoxical reality reveals, to some extent, the actual relationship between China and the international society. Some of the concerns and skepticism get right to the point. However, to see a complete China, people need to take different perspectives and frameworks. China's basic facts that preset its current development and the future, such as geographic conditions, historical traditions, political and social institutions and cultural ideas, should have been taken as the starting point to get to know China. From there, people could truly appreciate the tremendous progress China has made in political, economic, social and diplomatic areas.

More importantly, "changing itself and impacting the world", as the mode of China's interaction with the international society has not gone through any fundamental changes, despite of problems, challenges and even setbacks it met. So, we can safely draw upon it as the key to understand the theme, ideas and academic views in this volume. The authors have a deep understanding of these basic facts and China's foreign relations. They enquired the relationship between China and the international society from different perspectives with different problem awareness. Based upon China's national interests and identities, these scholars conscientiously explored their research questions according to the trend, concepts and logics of the evolution of the international society. They tried to make an ideational and theoretical innovation, and put forth recommendations for China's diplomatic practice. These articles reflect their understanding and respect of the widely accepted concepts, norms and institutions, and express a hope that China's foreign strategies, ideas, policies and behavior can also be understood and respected by the international society. In one word, they made exploration, explanation and self-reflection out of critical consciousness, with an intention to seek understanding and consensus.

At this moment, China's reform and opening up is at a new start and will get embarked on one more course. The blueprint of its strategies and policies attract attention extensively from the international society, and its

basic positions and attitudes are being understood and appreciated by the world. Obviously, China takes a road of its own. Its global interests and influence will definitely expand wider. Since China is integrated deeper, and its future and destiny linked more closely with the world, the international society can retain a cautious optimism upon China's relationship with the world, and its development and the future.

Zhao Jinjun and Chen Zhirui
December, 2013

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Acknowledgments

This book has benefited enormously from hard work of many people. First of all, as the editor-in-charge, I would like to express my gratitude to all the authors for their great efforts in the rigorous studies and writings. Without their contributions, there would be no this book at all.

I am grateful to Prof. Qin Yaqing of China Foreign Affairs University for his tremendous support to this translation and publishing project. As an established IR scholar with remarkable attainments and international reputation, Prof. Qin has long focused his studies upon China's relationship with the international society. His perceptive understanding on this grand theme enlightened our early design of this project, especially for the priorities and the direction. This book also benefits greatly from Prof. Zhu Liqun, who is both a contributor of an insightful article and an organizer of this project. She is in fight with a serious disease now, and we wish her be well soon.

I would particularly like to acknowledge invaluable work of Prof. Sun Jisheng for organizing and leading a competent translation team, whose proficient English ability and good knowledge of international relations guarantee accurate translation of those originally Chinese-written articles. Also, Prof. Li Anshan, Mr Liao Lei and Ms Ma Mengli provided with English versions of their articles; Ms Che Weichang of American Friends

Service Committee translated Prof. Li Dongyan's article into English; Mr Chris Janiec of China Foreign Affairs University proofread and polished the English translation of the whole book; Dr Han Zhili also made his efforts in this regard. I appreciate them all.

I am grateful to the team of World Century Publishing Corporation, especially to Mr Ho Yi Kai, Ms Dong Lixi and editor of this book, Ms Chitrlekha Elumalai. Their enthusiasm and strong sense of responsibility through early discussion, contract signing, editing and publishing have been exceedingly important to make this book published in time.

Finally, I am indebted to my colleagues in *Foreign Affairs Review*, Dr Wu Wencheng, Ms Li Dan and Ms Guo Hong, who offered excellent editing assistance when these articles were originally published by the journal.

All in all, these invaluable support and assistance will keep motivating us to work hard for future projects. Thank you all!

Chen Zhirui

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