

## *The Difficult Road to “Peaceful Development”*

— *Fulfilling International Responsibilities and Promises* —

— *Political Reform Needs to Be Actively Promoted* —

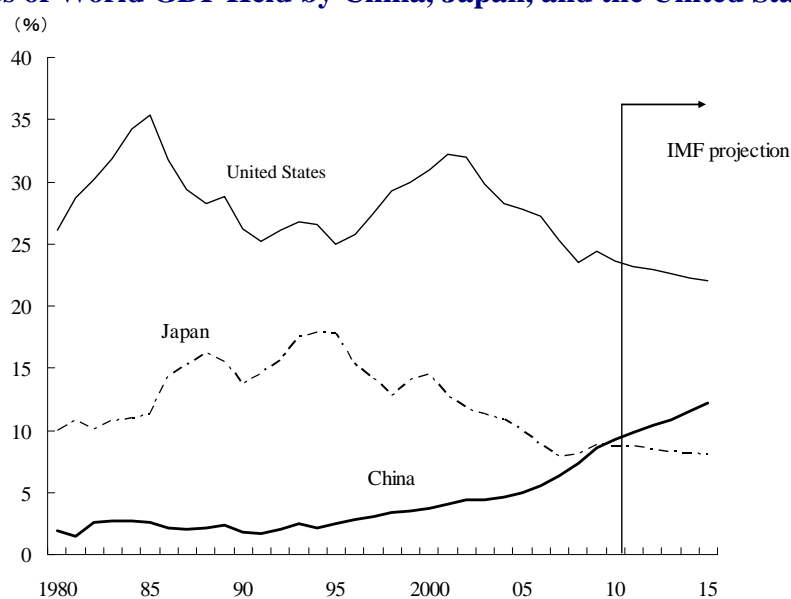
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- The “China’s responsibility” argument has prompted a major shift in US policy toward China
- Beijing has its own views on the extent of China’s “international responsibilities”
- A gap exists between “Chinese characteristics” and “universal values”

In 2010 China replaced Japan as the world’s second-largest economic power after the United States, measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). Its influence has grown in a variety of fields. How is the rise of China affecting the world order? What is expected of China in the arena of international cooperation? With questions like these in mind, the China Research Group of the Japan Center for Economic Research (JCER) recently completed a report entitled “Chugoku ga kaeru sekai chitsujo” (China Refashions the World Order). Professor Jian Rong Zhu of Toyo Gakuen University and I act as co-chairs of the group. A brief summary of the report follows below.

### **Shares of World GDP Held by China, Japan, and the United States**



Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2010.

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There are two main schools of thought when considering how the existing major powers ought to deal with China as its position rises in the world. The so-called “realist” approach follows a mainly adversarial line, while the “liberalist” approach looks to pursue a more cooperative path.

Realists focus on military might and other elements of the power structure in international relations. It sees clashes between competing national interests as inevitable and perceives relations among the major powers to be a zero-sum game. Realists argue that a rising China is maneuvering to dominate first Asia and then the world, and therefore constitutes a real threat to the United States and other powers. Needless to say, the United States would never allow such a challenge to go unanswered. Realists in the United States worry in particular that China’s ascent will alter the balance of military power and cause instability in the Asian region. They claim that maintaining the balance of power by acting to contain China’s growing might is vital to preserve peace. This would see the United States employing a policy similar to that adopted toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Proponents of the liberalist argument, on the other hand, believe that peace can be maintained through deepening economic interdependence and strengthening the international regime and international cooperation. They also believe that wars become less likely as more countries adopt democratic systems of government. American liberalists assume that if China can be drawn into the US-led international regime and turned into a democratic and affluent country, a clash between China and the United States can be averted. One expression representative of this stance is the conventional “peaceful evolution” theory, which seeks to encourage the democratization of China as a socialist country and overturn the existing regime through the use of three tools: political promotion, economic assistance, and cultural exchange. Another is the “China’s responsibility” argument, which rose to prominence following a September 2005 statement by then US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick.

Taking it for granted that China’s influence on the international system will grow, Zoellick argued that the time had come “to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system.” He cited several specific international contributions expected of China. These included (1) achieving denuclearization in North Korea, (2) preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, (3) resolving the problem of Iran’s nuclear program, (4) pursuing the fight against terrorism, and (5) preserving peace in East Asia. As Chinese influence on the global economy has continued to grow in the years since, discussion about China’s responsibility has moved beyond calls for China to behave as a responsible stakeholder, arriving at the so-called “Group of Two” concept, which proposes that Beijing should shoulder international responsibilities as an equal

partner with Washington.

The proposition that China has a “responsibility” to the international community has brought about a major shift in Washington’s strategy toward Beijing. Instead of seeing China as a threat and acting to constrain its development, US authorities began pushing for China to participate as a responsible stakeholder in the international regime under American leadership.

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China’s view of its own international responsibilities differs significantly from the view in the United States. The Chinese position emphasizes the following points.

First, the Chinese authorities argue that Americans are seeking to escape blame for the failures of their own country’s policies by thrusting responsibility on China. They argue that American discussions about China’s “responsibility” rest on an assumption that China has not been fulfilling its duties as a major power. But in fact, they claim, China has been performing a wide range of international duties commensurate with its present strength. It participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations, for example, and serves as chair of the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

Next, China insists that assessments of the level of international responsibility that China assumes should not be tailored to suit the convenience of the developed countries alone. Instead, they must take into account China’s status as a developing country. With respect to global warming and other issues relating to the global commons, for example, China insists that the main responsibility should be assumed not by developing countries but by the developed countries of the West.

Beijing has articulated its own policy of “peaceful development,” which includes a consideration of China’s international responsibilities, as a way of taking the edge off the “China’s responsibility” argument advanced by people in the United States. Toward this end, in an April 2006 address in Australia, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao spoke proudly of what China has undertaken to do and what it has already accomplished. His main points were as follows.

(1) China attaches importance to developing society’s productive power and improving the material and cultural life of its people, and is striving to promote human progress. (2) Drawing on its practices and experiences, China has embarked on the road of scientific development. (3) It is pursuing an independent, peaceful foreign policy and adopts positions on issues based on their respective merits. (4) China is firmly committed to safeguarding world peace and is actively involved in preserving and building the international system. (5) China continues to foster good-neighborliness and

partnership with adjacent countries and will continue to be a good neighbor and partner for them. (6) China supports peaceful settlement of disputes and plays a constructive role in addressing hot-spot issues. (7) China is actively participating in counter-terrorism and nuclear nonproliferation efforts and is striving to maintain global security and stability. (8) China honors its accession commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and is actively working to build an equitable and free international trade regime. (9) China is committed to realizing the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations and providing sincere and selfless assistance to other developing countries. And (10) China pursues a defensive military strategy and works with other countries to promote arms reduction.

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In order to win the trust and respect of the international community and realize its program of peaceful development, China needs to treat this declaration as a pledge and move firmly forward on all of these endeavors. It also needs to check the rise of extreme nationalism and undertake constructive political reform.

China had occupied a dominant position in the world for much of its long history, until its power dwindled rapidly in the face of Western aggression during and after the Opium Wars of the nineteenth century. China was reduced to semi-colonial status, its very existence threatened. It was under these circumstances that Chinese nationalism took shape. This nationalism can sometimes take radical forms, given widespread Chinese confidence in themselves and the superiority of their traditional culture on one hand, and a keen sense of victimization that often leads to strongly xenophobic sentiments on the other. Nationalism is, however, a double-edged sword. When it is healthy, it can power social progress, but when it veers off in extreme directions, it can lead a country in the direction of war and other destructive actions.

The end of the Cold War left China as the only major socialist one-party dictatorship in the world. This status has served to set China further apart from other countries in the international community. To avoid becoming isolated, China should review its thinking on these “Chinese characteristics” and embrace the concepts regarded as universal values, including democracy, the rule of law, freedom, and human rights.

In an attempt to bring about recognition of these universal values in China, a group of Chinese intellectuals and other dissidents selected December 2008—the 100th anniversary of China’s first Constitution—for the publication of “Charter 08.” This enshrines the fundamental principles of freedom, human rights, equality, republicanism, democracy, and constitutional rule. But the pro-democracy activist Liu Xiaobo, one of the charter’s main authors, was arrested on charges of “inciting subversion of state

power” and sentenced to 11 years in prison. As this incident suggests, a wide gap continues to exist between the reality of Chinese characteristics and the universal values China ought to be aiming for.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee, hoping to give a boost to political reform in China, awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, who remains in prison. The gesture was symbolic of the international community’s hope that China will come to embrace universal values.

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