

# A Historical Overview of China–UN Relations

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The United Nations (UN) is the most important international organization of the world, which is also the most important platform for China's multilateral diplomacy. However, China had been excluded from the UN for quite a long time, so China's attitude towards the UN changed from denying and doubting the role of UN to recognizing and valuing it. As China's reform deepened and its international interactions increased, China's engagement with the UN has undergone a process from selective participation to comprehensive and in-depth participation. This process reflects that China has been progressing as a member of the international community, and has become more and more active in its multilateral diplomacy.

**Key Words:** United Nations, recognition, participation

As one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China holds special international place that allows it to play an important role in the UN. However, during the Cold War, the People's Republic of China was excluded from the UN for 22 years until its return in 1971. And China had taken a passive approach towards the UN for a long time after it returned to it, during which China used the UN only as a tool to publicize its foreign policy and to gain economic benefits. After the adoption of its Reform and Opening up Policy, and especially after the end of the Cold War, China became more engaged with the international community. Learning from its diplomatic experience with the outside world, China began to recognize the value of the UN and set its goal of acting as "a responsible power." In particular, since the beginning of the 21st century, China has continuously increased its support and investment to the United Nations. It has developed a comprehensive relationship with UN organizations, and has become one of the most determined supporters of the UN. Therefore, the pattern for China's participation in the UN reflects its relationship with the outside world, which is of great significance for understanding the changes of China's diplomatic relations and foreign policy.

## 1. China–UN relationship during the Cold War

After the People's Republic of China was founded, it hoped to obtain international recognition and develop relations with other countries as soon as possible. China held high hopes that she could restore its legal representation in the UN and take the UN as a stage where she could fight against the imperialism. For example, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, sent there letters to the UN, on November 15, 1949, January 8, 1950 and January 19, 1950 respectively, to describe the changes of Chinese political institutions and request to restore its legal representation in the UN.<sup>1</sup> As HE Fang, who served as the assistant of China's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, recalled the new Chinese government desig-

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<sup>1</sup> Li Tiecheng, "Lianheguo wushinian" [*Fifty Years of the United Nations*], (China Book Publishing House, 1996), p. 410.

nated Zhang Wentian to form a delegation to the UN in January, 1950, to replace the delegation of the Kuomintang government. But the Korean War broke out soon afterwards and China-UN relations went into a period of stalemate. It became unlikely for China to join the UN in a short time. That's why Zhang Wentian (and his secretary He Fang) didn't go to UN but became the ambassador to the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> Considering the preparatory work done by the PRC to join the UN, it was obvious that China held an optimistic view towards restoring its lawful rights. On March 3rd, 1950, when Premier Zhou Enlai met with the Indian ambassador to China, he advocated that the Korean Peninsula issue should be solved peacefully, and all involved countries should work on a peaceful solution within the UN framework.<sup>3</sup> From his words, we can see that Chinese government didn't completely deny the role of the UN even during the Korean War.

However, the reality quickly made China realize that it would be much more difficult and complex to handle the UN relations as the new Red China. China's attitude towards UN then became more critical and confrontational. The UN was believed to be used as a tool by the imperialist countries. There were two reasons for China to hold such a view. First, the China seat in the UN had been occupied by the Kuomintang government for a long time, which was supported by the US-led Western countries. The PRC government wanted to become a member of the UN, but it became disappointed when this goal couldn't be achieved in a short period. Second, the UN, dominated by US and its western friends, adopted a series of resolutions which posed interference in China's internal affairs. PRC government and Chinese people wouldn't tolerate such interference from any foreign countries; the UN couldn't be an exception. As China stated, "the UN could and should play an essential role in international affairs. Once the UN made great contribution to ensure the security of all peoples in the world, it would win respect and rising prestige. However, the UN, for now, didn't fulfill such a role on many occasions."<sup>4</sup> Under the control of US and the Soviet Union, "the UN is like a forum for the capitalist politicians, used as a tool to advance hegemony by the two super powers of the US and the Soviet Union", and "a bureaucratic organization where they drink coffee, chat and haggle."<sup>5</sup> "The UN is manipulated by American imperialists, therefore it can only do evil instead of good."<sup>6</sup>

Hence China held such denying and doubting attitude to the international institutions represented by the United Nations. China believed that it is a system featuring unreasonable and unfair exploitation where the developed countries benefit from developing countries. China didn't want to acknowledge its legitimacy, nor did it want build a close relationship with the UN. Actually China even

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<sup>2</sup> He Fang, "Hefang Tanshi yiren: Jinian Zhangwentian he qitashiyu" [*In Remembrance of Zhang Wentian and Others*] (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2010), pp. 105-6.

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Party Literature Research Center of CPC Central Committee*, "Zhou Enlai Waijiao Wenxuan" [*Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Anthology*] (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *People's Daily*, September 20th, 1959, Section 5.

<sup>5</sup> Fu Hao and Li Tongcheng, "Waijiaoguan zai Lianheguo" [*Chinese Diplomats in the UN*], (Beijing: The Chinese Overseas Publishing House, 1955), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Mao Zedong, "Mao Zedong Waijiao Wenxuan" [*Mao Zedong's Diplomatic Anthology*] (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 1994), p. 554.

thought about revolting against it. Chairman Mao Zedong even proposed in early 1960, “for the coming three years, five years or ten years, we don’t care about all international organizations; we will not compromise but make the US compromise, ultimately we will make the United States yield to us.”<sup>7</sup> China even proposed to build a new UN to fight against imperialism and hegemony. So when Sukarno asked Chairman Mao Zedong why China was not eager to restore its UN seat, he replied, “in the United Nations, the United States, Britain and France are imperialist and colonial countries, and China should fight against them from outside of the UN.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, China didn’t stop its efforts in restoring its legal rights in the United Nations. The contradiction reflected in China’s attitude towards UN was the true portrayal of China’s international situation at the time. One hand, China had a strong desire to participate in the UN; on the other hand, it became hostile and confrontational when Chinese national interests could not be achieved and secured.

In 1971, the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly made a turning point for China-UN relations. With the support of developing countries, especially African countries, the Assembly adopted Resolution 2758 with an overwhelming majority of votes (76 votes for, 35 votes against and 17 abstentions), which restored the lawful seat of the People’s Republic of China in the UN. Meanwhile, the representative of Kuomintang got expelled from the UN. Thus PRC finally became a formal member of the United Nations. This restoration was both expected and unexpected for China. With the rise of the developing countries and their increasing influence in the United Nations, the restoration of China’s UN seat was only a matter of time, but China did not expect it to come this fast. Mao Zedong once said, “even I did not expect the victory at the UN General Assembly.”<sup>9</sup> This success also made China further realize the strength of the third world countries and send a delegation to the UN in the fastest speed. As Mao Zedong said, “It was our African brothers, the small and medium-sized countries that carried us into the United Nations with a sedan chair. if we do not go, then we are separated from the masses. We should immediately send a delegation to the General Assembly.”<sup>10</sup>

As China has long been separated from United Nations, the long-term isolation and lack of exchanges caused difficulties on China’s side to participate in the United Nations. China was not familiar with operation of the UN organizations. It took some time for China to learn how to work with international organizations. At first, China adopted an observation-practice approach, and treated UN matters with caution. At the UN meetings or with various multilateral institutions, China mainly just declared its positions and stated its policies on key international issues. United Nations still served as a

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<sup>7</sup> Mao Zedong, “Zai Guanyu Guojiqingkuang de Yiqijianxun shngde Piyu [Remarks on a Piece of International News],” “Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao” [*Mao Zedong Anthology since 1949*], Vol. 9 (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Mao Zedong, “Guanyu huifu Zhongguo zai Lianheguo de Hefaxiwei Wenti [About Restoring China’s Lawful Seat at the UN],” “Mao Zedong Waijiao Wengao” [*Mao Zedong Anthology*], (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, World Affairs Press, 1994), pp. 263–74.

<sup>9</sup> Chen Dunde, “Shenglizai 1971—Xinzhongguo Chongfan Lianheguo Jishi” [*Victory in 1971: New China to Return to the United States*], (Beijing People’s Liberation Army Literature and Art Publishing House, 2004), p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> Xiong Xianghui, “Wode Qingbao yu Waijiao Shengya” [*My Information and Diplomacy*], (Beijing: China Communist Party History Press, 1999), p. 347.

“forum”, a place where developing countries could also voice their opinions. “The United Nations is an important forum, because when you speak here, the world can hear you.”<sup>11</sup> During that period, China was more concerned about the political issues, and less in the economic and social fields.

In the 1980s, China’s ideas about the UN started to change gradually. In May, 1984, when Deng Xiaoping met with the Brazilian President, he put forward the new concept of “peace and development” for the first time. He said, “Currently, there are different issues in the world, but I’d like to point out the two most important ones. One is peace, and the other is the North-South problem.”<sup>12</sup> According to Deng, the danger of war was decreasing, and the importance of economic development was increasing, so China should contribute to the world peace through developing its economy. As China became more familiar with the UN affairs and conducted better multilateral diplomacy, a better understanding of the UN has been achieved. Although the UN still had its weaknesses, it was irreplaceable in terms of its historic mission and global influence. “The world needs the UN, just as the UN needs the support of the world.”<sup>13</sup> The importance of multilateral diplomacy was marked by the Report of the 7th Five-year Plan on the National Economy and Social Development in 1986, which pointed out, “China upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and supports the work of UN organizations in accordance with the spirit of the Charter, including the activities carried out by the UN and its agencies for the benefits of the world peace and development. China is in extensive support of the active multilateral diplomatic activities, and works hard to enhance the cooperation with other nations in all fields.”<sup>14</sup> It is for the first time that the Chinese government clearly listed multilateral diplomacy as an important issue of its foreign policy in official government report.

It is this change of attitude towards multilateral diplomacy that signals China’s change from selective participation to full engagement in UN activities in various fields. During this period, China strengthened its economic and technological ties with the United Nations, which greatly sped up China’s integration into the world. Following its joining the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1980, China abandoned its longstanding position as the only developing country who didn’t accept multilateral aids, becoming the largest beneficiary among developing countries which received the biggest number of multilateral technical assistance projects. The economic and functional inter-governmental organizations within the United Nations system, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP) and WB, all

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<sup>11</sup> Chen Hongqing, “Zhongguo Duobianwaijiao de Licheng [The Course of China’s Multilateral Diplomacy],” *New Vision*, July 2009, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> “Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan” [*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*], Volume 3, (Beijing People’s Publishing House, 1993), p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> “Zhao Ziyang Zongli zai Lianda Juxing Jinian Lianheguo Chengli SishizhounianTebiehuiyi shangde Jianghua [Speech by Premier Zhao Ziyang at the UN General Assembly to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the United Nations],” *People’s Daily*, October 25th, 1985, Section 1.

<sup>14</sup> “Guanyu Guominjingji he Shehuifazhan Diqige Wunianjihua de Baogao” [*Report on the Seventh Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development*], (People’s Publishing House, 1986), p. 21.

became effective financing channels for China to achieve economic development and prosperity.<sup>15</sup> China was part of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea for 9 years, from beginning to the end, and was active in drafting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. China has been attending United Nations Conferences on Disarmament since February 1980. In 1983, China sent its first resident envoy for Disarmament Affairs to Geneva. China even changed its previous attitudes toward UN human rights cooperation, and was elected to be one of the member states of United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1981, and remained this seat ever-since. Despite its increasing involvement in United Nations affairs, China by large kept a relatively low profile and limited engagement in this period. While China gradually adapted to the UN, it also exerted its influence over this international organization.

## 2. China-UN relationship after the Cold War

China's international and domestic situation has undergone profound changes since the end of the cold war and the Tiananmen Incident. On one hand, western countries' sanctions on China didn't leave much room for China to conduct its diplomacy. On the other hand, a range of global problems reflected the trend of globalization, as well as its breadth, intensity and depth. All countries became more aware of the advantages of multilateralism. The international community intended to take collective actions to solve global issues through multilateral diplomacy and multilateral cooperation. After Tiananmen Incident, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping brought up the idea of "keeping a low profile and then making a difference," which served as China's diplomatic strategy.<sup>16</sup> Under such strategy, China adjusted its policy towards the United Nations and began to pay more attention to the role of the United Nations. And China's diplomacy also set "cooperation, dialogue, avoiding confrontation" as its new principles. China's UN diplomacy became more flexible and pragmatic, which emphasized the international cooperation and dialogue. It also advocated taking collective actions and adopting multilateral methods to respond to threats and challenges effectively. As the best platform for multilateral diplomacy, the role of the United Nations had to be strengthened and the authority of the United Nations must be maintained. Strengthening the United Nations' functions through reform had become the common aspiration and demands of the member states.<sup>17</sup> In order to "make a difference," China began to integrate more into the international community and take more active and in-depth participation in the United Nations. By integrating into the existing international system and helping to reform the current system and resolve the shared problems faced by the people of all countries, China

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<sup>15</sup> [US] Elizabeth Ecknowi and Michel Oksenberg, eds., *China to Participate in the World*, (Xinhua Publishing House, 2001), p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> Wang Taiping, Ed., "Deng Xiaoping Waijiaosixiang Yanjiu Lunwenji" [*Research papers of Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic thoughts*], (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1996), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Li Zhaoxing, "Jinian Lianheguo Chengli Liushizhounian:Weiuhuaping Tuidongfazhan [In Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of United Nations: Preserving Peace and Promoting Developmen]t", *People's Daily*, September 13th, 2005, Section 7.

found a more effective way to be responsible to the international society.<sup>18</sup>

Under the guidance of the new direction in diplomacy, the year of 1992 was of significance to China in its relations with the United Nations. It was then that China played a comparatively important role in the UN peace efforts for Cambodia, the Middle East and Yugoslavia issues. It was also then that China attended the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Brazil, and contributed ideas on environmental protection and economic development. In 1992, China became the observer state of the Non-Aligned Movement, which strengthened its cooperation with the Group 77 and thus formed the “77 countries plus China” group. China formally acceded to *the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* and later in 1993, joined the Convention of Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Moreover, with the Chinese Premier Li Peng attending the UN Security Council summit in New York in 2001, Chinese leaders started to actively attend the UN high-level meetings and give speeches. As it is well known that in 1974 Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping went to New York to attend the sixth special session of the United Nations General Assembly. Along with these developments, multilateral diplomacy has become increasingly important for China and even the main way for China to achieve its international interests. Reflected in government work reports, the content on “multilateral diplomacy” accounted a bigger share of the section on diplomacy. From 1986 to 1992, the proportion was less than 6% (0% in 1987), but after 1993, there was a dramatic raise to above 10%. In 1993, 1998 and 2003, it was as high as 32.99%, 32.71% and 32.24%, respectively.<sup>19</sup> It is thus clear that China valued multilateral diplomacy more, and consciously used it to develop relations with other countries, especially UN diplomacy.

In 1997, the Asian financial crisis broke out. China resisted the pressure and didn't depreciate RMB, which strongly supported the East Asian countries in recovering their economies from the crisis. At the same time, China attached great importance to establishing a new, fair and just international political and economic order. China signed the United Nations *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which also promoted the diversity of the world. To build a diverse world, China set a diplomatic goal of being a “responsible state.” It was also an effort to form a good international image.” With this idea in mind, China's involvement with the United Nations and international organizations has been increased in a constructive way. China's diplomacy opened up a new emphasis. China became more proactive about multilateral diplomacy within the framework of the United Nations and treated it as a core element in China's foreign policy.

Into the 21st century, the “911” Incident, happened in 2001, and the following anti-terrorism war brought about new changes to international affairs. In the economic field, China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, which had negative impact on China's bilateral rela-

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<sup>18</sup> Yu Zhengliang, “Daguo Zhanlue Yanjiu” [*the Research on the Strategy of Great Power*], (Beijing: Central Press of Compilation and Translation, 1998), p. 350.

<sup>19</sup> Peng Qing: “On China's Multilateral Foreign Policy Viewed from Reports on the Work of the Government: 1986-2005,” (Beijing: Foreign Affairs Review, 2005), No. 4, p. 52.

tions with other countries. China's multilateral diplomacy entered a new stage. During this period, China became even more active towards the UN participation. In September 2000, President Jiang Zemin delivered an important speech at the United Nations Millennium Summit, who stressed that "the positive role of the United Nations can only be strengthened and cannot be weakened. The authority of the United Nations must be maintained without damage."<sup>20</sup> On September 14, 2005, the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations summit opened in New York, and Chinese President Hu Jintao delivered a speech, in which he introduced to the world the concept of "harmonious world" and its rich meaning. "Now it is a time full of opportunities and challenges. Only all countries work together to seize the opportunity and meet the challenges, can we have a bright future of a developed human society featuring lasting peace and common prosperity and a harmonious world."<sup>21</sup> The significance of the "harmonious world" concept is that it addressed some important challenges that all countries faced for world peace and economic development. It also set an ultimate goal of global governance, and more importantly it was consistent with the United Nations view of the current world.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the United Nations reform, the Chinese government issued the *the "Document of China's Position on the United Nations Reform"* in 2005. It was for the first time that Chinese government issued an official document to comprehensively state China's position on the United Nations reform. This document emphasized that the reform should promote multilateralism, authority of the UN and efficiency of the organization, as well as its ability to respond to new threats and challenges. It also proposed that the principle of geographical balance be followed in the reform of the security Council, and the representation of developing countries be maintained and strengthened.<sup>23</sup>

The global financial crisis originated from the United States in 2008 exposed the lack of equality of the current international order, effectiveness of the current international governance, and representation of the current international mechanisms. This set higher demands for China's United Nations diplomacy. There came the question of how to balance the needs to develop its own economy and fulfill its international responsibilities, and how to build a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity under the premise of advancing China's own national interests for China's diplomacy. In September 2015, President Xi Jinping attended the General Debate of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and delivered a speech. It was the first time that Xi Jinping, as the President of the People's Republic of China, gave his policy speech at the United Nations forum. He stressed that countries are more interdependent in today's world, and we must inherit and carry forward the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations to build a new

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<sup>20</sup> Jiang Zemin, "Jiang Zemin Zai Lianhguo Qiannianshounao Huiyi Shangde Jianshua [Jiang Zemin's Speech on the UN New Millennium Summit]," *People's Daily*, September 7th, 2000, Section 1.

<sup>21</sup> Hu Jintao, "Nuli Jianshe Chijiuheping Gongtongfarong de Hexieshijie—Lianheguo Chengli Liushizhounian Shounaohuiyi Shangde Jianshua [Hu Jintao's Speech at the UN Summit: Efforts to Build a Harmonious World of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity]," *People's Daily*, September 15th, 2005, Section 2.

<sup>22</sup> Pang Zhongying, "Globalization and 'Harmonious World'," *World Affairs*, 2006, No. 1, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> "Zhongguozhengfu Fabu Guanyu Lianheguo Gaige Wenti de Lichangwenjian [Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on the United Nations Reforms]" *People's Daily*, June 8th, 2005, Section 15.

type of international relations with cooperation and win-win spirit, and a human societal community sharing the same future. In his speech, Xi Jinping announced that China had decided to set up a peace and development fund that lasts ten years and worth US\$ 1 billion, to support the work of the United Nations and to promote multilateral cooperation. China would support the new standby mechanism for United Nations peacekeeping capacity, and planned to set up an organized peacekeeping force, and to have another 8,000 people ready to act in peacekeeping capacity. China was going to provide the African Union (AU) with military assistance of a total value of US\$ 100 million over the next five years and to help build military forces and rapid response forces for crisis.<sup>24</sup>

On the frontier of development, China actively supported the efforts made by the United Nations to promote North-South dialogues, deepen South-South cooperation through development assistance. China also enthusiastically supported UN endeavors in the areas of sustainable development, climate change, humanitarian relief, disaster recovery and prevention. Particularly on 26th September 2015, President Xi Jinping attended the United Nations Development Summit and delivered a speech titled “*Seeking a Win-Win Partnership for Sustainable Development*.” Xi pointed out that we should strive for fair development and make opportunities equal for all countries and their development. We should pursue a balanced development and drive the development with innovation to its fullest potential. Premier Li Keqiang also said that China was willing to take its own responsibility that is appropriate for developing countries and would add US\$ 100 million more in humanitarian assistance to help the countries and international organizations that need it.<sup>25</sup>

Another manifestation of China’s engagement in UN affairs is the increased number of Chinese people elected as United Nations senior officials, especially in the new century. Before this there were some Deputy Secretary-Generals who were Chinese, but those were because China is permanent member of Security Council. In October 2005, China’s Vice Minister of Education Zhang Xinsheng was elected as the chairman of the Executive Board of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). From then on, more and more Chinese became senior officials at UN. On November 9th, 2006, Ms. Chen-Feng Fuzhen from Hong Kong, was appointed as the seventh Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). This was the first time that a Chinese served the highest position in a United Nations specialized agency. This is a break through. On the second day of the appointment of Ms. Chen-Feng Fuzhen, another Chinese, Zhao Houlin, was elected as the Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). On February 4th, 2008, the World Bank President Zoellick officially appointed the Chinese economist Lin Yifu as the World Bank vice president and chief economist. This was the first time the World Bank appointed a person from a developing country to take this important position. Other Chinese people who hold

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<sup>24</sup> Xi Jinping’s speech at the United Nations, “China’s Power to Charge for Common Development of Mankind,” people.com.cn, Sept 29, 2015, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n/2015/0929/c385474-27646713.html>

<sup>25</sup> The Institute of world politics, Chinese Academy of Modern International Relations: “Chinese Characteristic Diplomacy Steadily Progresses,” *International Studies*, 2017, No. 1, p. 10.



the United Nations's senior positions include Liu Zhenmin, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Xu Haoliang, the UNDP Director of the Asia-Pacific Bureau, Xue Hanqin, the International Court of Justice (ICJ); Li Yong, the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Liu Fang, Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Hao Ping, Chairman of UNESCO, Yi Xiaozhun, Deputy Director-General of WHO, and Zhu Min, Vice President of IMF. They are all part of China's image presented at the UN and in the international community.

### 3. Case Study: China's Participation in UNPKO

The United Nations Peacekeeping Operation (UNPKO) is one of UN's major component for keeping peace and security. After the World War II, it became a critical measure for peace and stability. Since the UN Ceasefire Supervision Organization sent its first dispatch to the Middle East in 1948, UN has conducted more than 60 PKOs. Thousands of people took part in these peacekeeping operations, and they played important roles in the peace processes in Cambodia, Macedonia, Namibia, Mozambique, Timor-Leste, etc. As part of China's UN diplomacy, China's attitude towards UNPKO also experienced a shift from refusal to cooperation, which makes UNPKO a good case for understanding China's relations with the UN.

After China restored its lawful seat in the UN in 1971, China was busy at UN's daily operations and worked around the tight schedule during the UN General Assembly. The experience fighting the U.S.-led UN forces during the Korean War made China cautious about UN's action solving regional problems and sending troops to build peace. China was consistent in being against interference in others' domestic affairs. During this period, China didn't see UNPKO as the appropriate solution for solving regional disputes and held reservations about PKOs. The expenses for PKOs were included in UN's budget, thus the member states shared PKO expenses proportionally when paying their membership dues. Consistent with its stance on non-interference, China refused to pay for PKOs. At the Security Council, China opposed openly the United Nations sending peacekeeping troops by voting vetoes or abstains.<sup>26</sup> Because China would not pay its membership fees, it even affected its rights to vote at the Security Council. This lasted till the late 70's which constantly put China in an awkward position. From November 1971 to December 1976, China refused to vote 46 times out of 158 times in total, the highest among permanent members at the Security Council.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of 1980s, China's attitude towards UN peacekeeping operations witnessed a major change and China adjusted its policy stance on PKO accordingly. In 1981, China stated clear support, "China will actively support PKOs, and take into serious consideration of all PKOs as long as they are in accordance with UN Charter's purpose and principle and are beneficial to the peace and security of

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<sup>26</sup> "Zhongguodaibiao Chuxi Lianheguo Youguanhuayi Wenjianji" [*The document collection of China's Delegations to the UN Conferences*], (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel S. Kim, *China, the United Nations and World Order*, Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 209.

international community.”<sup>28</sup> In the same year, China voted in favor of UN Security Council’s resolution that extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which became a clear sign of China’s changed attitude.<sup>29</sup> Not all PKOs were viewed as intervention to other nations’ domestic affairs.

At the same time, China adopted a practical approach to PKOs. China sought to be flexible when it came to supporting certain peacekeeping missions. In 1982, China started to share costs that the UN Disengagement Observer Troops and the UN temporary troops to Lebanon. In 1986, invited by the UN, China sent an observer mission to the Middle East for an on-site inspection of the UN’s peacekeeping work. China also paid off dues unprecedentedly this year for the related PKOs expenses. China voted in favor of the Security Council’s PKO resolutions only with a few exceptions. In 1988, China officially applied to join the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. As China’s UN representative Li Luye said, “since UN peacekeeping operations have become an important way to safeguard international peace and security, and are indeed effective in helping resolve conflicts and maintain peace, China is willing to join the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, to contribute to peace.”<sup>30</sup> In December 1988, The UN General Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution accepting China as the 34th member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

In January 1989, China officially requested sending five military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). This request was immediately embraced by the UN and was authorized in November. This marked China’s factual participation in UNPKO. In December 1988, the Security Council passed the resolution on sending a transition assistant group to Namibia in order to end the racist regime and illegal occupation in South Africa, and to push for Namibia’s independence. In May 1989, China sent an observation group to Namibia to assist with its independence process and twenty civilian officials to join the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) to oversee the Namibian election. After that, China not only voted in favor of the Security Council’s resolutions on sending troops to Cyprus, interim forces to Lebanon, the disengagement observer force to the Golan Heights, the observer group to El Salvador, the military observer group to Iraq and Kuwait, and the extension of military observer group to Angola, but also contributed five, twenty and fifteen military observers to UNTSO, MINURSO and Iraq–Kuwait observer groups respectively. On February 11st 1990, five permanent members of the Security Council held a meeting in New York and reached a consensus that Cambodia could hold elections under UN supervision upon a complete

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<sup>28</sup> “Zhongguodaibiao Chuxi Lianheguo Youguanhuayi Wenjianji” [*The document collection of China’s Delegations to the UN Conferences*], (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1981), p. 130.

<sup>29</sup> Jianwei Wang, “Managing Conflict: Chinese Perspectives on Multilateral Democracy and Collective Security,” in Yong Deng and Fei Ling Wang, eds., *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & little field Publisher, 1999), p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> Xie Qimei, Wang Xingfang as chief editors, “Zhongguo yu Lianhguo—Lianhguo Chengli wushizhounian” [*China and the United Nations—the 50th Anniversary of UN Establishment*], (Beijing:World Affairs Press, 1995), p. 88.

ceased-fire and the end of foreign military assistance. Two days later, China attended the UN conferences on Cambodia, during which the Chinese representative pointed out that UN should play its role in producing a solution for the Cambodia issue. China supported a quadripartite coalition government led by Norodom Sihanouk and offered to send an engineering troop to help with Cambodia's post-war reconstruction. In 1992, China send such an engineering troop of 400 people and 47 military observers to Cambodia, which was the first Chinese Blue Helmet troop.<sup>31</sup> They helped with construction of 4 airports and 4 roads of 640 kilometers in total length, building and repairing 47 bridges along with many other hard projects. Two soldiers died and more than ten got injured in these operations.

In May 1997, China joined the standby mechanism of UNPKOs, which means it would send military observers, civilian policemen, and logistics supports including engineers, medical staff and transportation forces when needed. In August 1998, Chinese government approved "civilian policeman selection for UNPKO" proposed by the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In January 2000, Chinese government dispatched 15 civilian policemen to the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor. It was the first time China sent civilian policemen to a UN peacekeeping operation. In January 2001, China sent civilian policemen to Bosnia-Herzegovina on a peacekeeping mission, which was the first time they were sent outside Asia. One year later, China officially joined UNPKO's first-class standby mechanism while sending one construction battalion barrack, one medical squad and two transportation companies. In April 2003, an engineering company of 175 people and a medical group of 43 people joined the United Nation's Mission in Congo. A peace-keeping force of 550 soldiers joined the United Nations Mission in Liberia in the same year. A riot squad of 125 people was also sent to join the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which was the first PKO China participated in the western hemisphere.

According to UNPKO's monthly statistics, before 2002, the total number of Chinese nationals in peace keeping operations was around a hundred, much less than the US, UK, France, Russia and some other countries. But the number jumped to around 300 in 2003 and reached more than a thousand in 2004. The soaring number and growth rate amazed the world. Currently, 2654 Chinese nationals are on the peace keeping missions in countries like South Sudan, Lebanon, and Mali, etc.<sup>32</sup> China has contributed the largest number of peacekeeping forces among the five permanent members of UN's Security Council. From 1990 till now, 18 Chinese soldiers and policemen have sacrificed their lives for the UN peace keeping endeavors.<sup>33</sup> The outstanding performance of Chinese peacekeepers has gained China world-wide recognition for its willingness to contribute to the world peace and security.

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<sup>31</sup> Liu Ying, "China's First Peace-keeping Troop—China's Military Engineering Unit to Cambodia," *Martial Historical Facts*, 1993, No. 1, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> UN's website: [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2017/aug17\\_1.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2017/aug17_1.pdf), August 2017.

<sup>33</sup> UNPKO and China's Great Contribution, *Global Times*, June 3rd, 2016, <http://world.huanqiu.com/hot/2016-06/9007419.html>

### **Concluding Remarks**

As discussed above, the United Nation's function was constrained during the Cold War. And for historical reasons, People's Republic of China had been excluded from the UN for a long time, before its UN seat got restored. Therefore, China's position in the United Nations underwent a big shift from denying and doubting its value to recognizing its roles and supporting activities. After the end of the Cold War, international environment changed greatly, and China also changed in new directions. Driven by such domestic and international factors, China soon adjusted its UN policy based on its national interests. China started to participate in UN activities, then increased its engagement, playing a more and more important role. China sees itself as a "responsible and peace-loving country," and this self-imposed image also made China to support UN's peace keeping work. China not only benefits from the UN, but also makes significant contribution to the UN. The interaction between China and the United Nations proves that this relationship is mutually beneficial, because "the UN needs China, and China needs the UN as well."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Qin Huasun: "Lianhguo xuyao Zhongguo Zhongguo xuyao Lianheguo [The United Nations needs China, and China also needs the United Nations]," *People's Daily*, December 17, 1999, Sec. 7