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Focused Leadership: China's New Role in Global Economic Governance

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Summary
China's rise in global politics and economics has further fueled perceptions of an East Asian dominance of global institutions. From a power-shift perspective, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) provides a window of opportunity for a rising power to change existing norms and organizations and to push for the creation of new ones. Although the PRC reluctantly took center stage in the global efforts to contain the crisis and provide better institutions for future crisis prevention and management, its contributions to the G20 have been rather limited. This gap between high expectations due to a fundamental shift in opportunities and relatively low policy outcomes can be explained through an analysis of domestic expectations, intra-elite role prescriptions, and the difficulty in agreeing on a new national role conception in China. At the same time, the PRC has become very active in specific policy areas. The country follows its own pattern of incrementally extending its influence and building up long-term resources. Bearing all this in mind, we argue that the PRC has adopted the role of providing focused leadership in a new era of global economic governance.

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Introduction

The economic, social, and political crises following the property bubbles in the US, Spain, Ireland, and elsewhere since 2007 have added to the dynamics of a global power shift between the trans-Atlantic and the Asian-Pacific powers. This has had profound implications for global governance in two fundamental ways: it challenges the notion of global governance being dominated by a hegemonic power, viz., the United States of America (US); and it challenges the basic norms and values which have been developed under the umbrella of trans-Atlantic dominance. When looking

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for new initiatives, new leadership, and new sources of funding, most observers turn to Asia's largest rising power, the People's Republic of China (PRC).

When the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) first struck in 2007/08, the Chinese economy was in extraordinarily good shape (Sun 2009; Schmidt 2009). China's socialist market economy suffered from a sharp yet short decrease in exports, but recovered within a few months. The severity of the crisis and the way in which the Communist Party of China (CPC) managed the situation, however, brought core imbalances and structural weaknesses to the fore in an economic order heavily reliant on public investment, foreign technology, and access to export markets (Schüller and Schüler-Zhou 2009). As a consequence, the crisis reinforced the need to change the dominant development pattern at home at the same time as foreign expectations about China's international role became more demanding.

A gap between foreign and domestic perceptions emerged. Observers abroad wondered how China would seize this "Bretton Woods moment" (Helleiner 2010: 636) of "rising influence [and] rising challenges" (Overholt 2010: 21). Yet the main representatives of the PRC leadership begged to differ, as did China's increasingly pluralist public elites. They were caught between pride and a certain degree of *Schadenfreude* about the failure of US-style capitalism and high global expectations regarding China's contribution to crisis management and post-crisis governance.

Again, domestic and foreign views differed significantly. The Chinese leadership responded cautiously, even amongst outbursts of national pride about the nation's strong economic performance. Only a few Chinese officials called for a comprehensive rewriting of the rules of global capitalism when China's partners asked for more than just "part-time leadership" (Alexandroff 2010: 45). Instead, the Chinese leadership rejected revisionist strategies and did not produce any comprehensive proposals of its own for a reform of global economic governance (Duchatel et al. 2010: 2). It did, however, increase China's representation in leading international organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and it took an interest in specific areas of global economic governance.

After developing a conceptual framework for analyzing China's behavior in the G20, we will discuss two key policy fields here, taking the G20 summits from Washington 2008 to Los Cabos 2012 into consideration. We will compare China's leadership behavior with key aspects of the country's traditional role conceptions and with the lines of intra-elite conflict within the Chinese foreign-policy community regarding the national role China should play. In doing this, we seek to explain China's rather selective support of reform efforts in the G20. We aim to identify basic components of competing narratives regarding the new and potentially central role of emerging China. Building upon the works of Acharya (2011) and Chan, Lee, and Chan (2008; 2011), we see China taking on a new role in global governance, which we call "focused leadership." The analysis of internal debates that shape China's role behavior helps us to understand the gap between high expectations and low policy outcomes regarding China's contributions to global economic governance.

China's record in global economic governance: high expectations, but poor outcomes

After China's accession to the WTO in 2001, Deng Xiaoping's famous strategy of *taoguang yanghui*, i.e., keeping a low profile to develop under the radar of too much global interest, proved valuable, but could not prevent the PRC from coming under heavy pressure to redefine its role in the global economy (Noesselt 2012b). The financial crisis of 2008 exposed severe shortcomings in the global financial architecture and raised the issue of the perception of global governance and transnational and interregional crisis response by the Chinese leadership and its compatibility with established Western thinking (Bersick and van der Velde 2011; Wang and Rosenau 2009; Beeson 2009). The skepticism of the Chinese decision-making elite toward global governance is gradually being replaced by a more proactive attitude seeking to change the current institutions of global governance (Buzan 2010; Chan et al. 2011: 3–4). How does this add up to a new role for China in global economic governance, though? Which role is China's, and how is it to be understood in the context of the G20?

Role theory and China's contribution to global economic governance

From a theoretical perspective, one of the key challenges in coming to terms with the Global Financial Crisis and with the impact of China's rise in power on a changing global order is the simultaneous over-abundance of approaches and lack of a clear-cut theoretical framework. Most studies on China's role in global governance have distinguished the policies of the PRC from their general role in international relations, the key preferences of the Chinese government regarding international politics, or the different norms and values China has regarding global governance. To overcome these gaps in existing research and to explore a viable theoretical framework for the study of China's contribution to the multilateral attempt to establish a post-crisis order, we propose using role theory, as it offers a pragmatic linkage between structure and actor as well as between domestic and transnational policies. In existing research on individual member states' roles and actions in international institutions in a comparative perspective, there is usually little room for the differences within a national polity regarding a country's position on general and specific policy issues (Gnath and Schmucker 2011; Schirm 2010, 2011). Building on recent work on the more socio-constructivist interpretations of role theory (Harnisch et al. 2011; Thies and Breuning 2012), we have explored the sources and limitations of China's contributions to the G20 and a new global order.

Roles incorporate sets of diplomatic actions, approaches, and behavior (Holsti 1970). They "are social positions […] that are constituted by ego and alter expectations regarding the purpose of an actor in an organized group" (Harnisch 2011: 8). States take on different roles in the global arena, which need to be matched by the roles of their counterparts (Harnisch 2012: 48–50). In democratic states, a growing number of "organized" or "specific" others express different expectations regarding the role a state should take in international politics, thereby adding more complexity to policy formulation and implementation. The Chinese leadership is thus not autonomous in defining the national role that China "should play on the world stage" and in its decisions regarding foreign-policy action (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012: 6). The resulting role conflicts have the potential to shape foreign policies as well as global institutions (Harnisch 2012: 49–50). Research on Chinese foreign policy-making (Shih 2012; Shih and Yin 2013) and the role of think-tanks (Jacobson and Knox 2010) as well as several series of interviews with members of the Chinese foreign-policy elite have all stressed the significance of public opinion in the decision-making of the PRC's political leadership. Responsiveness as a substitute for democratic participation has gained substantial ground in China's adaptive authoritarianism (Weller 2008; Liu and Yang 2010).

Accepting the mainstream observations, one would expect the Chinese leadership to take the much more proactive and self-assertive role of an "ego state" in global economic governance. According to Shih, "[t]he *role state* cares about its image and conforms to international norms, while the *ego state* enacts a role reflecting the internal identity to the effect of reforming or even defying existing international norms" (Shih 2012: 72; our italics). While the former role is linked to dependence and "group belonging," the latter is linked to dominance and "self-centrism." China's emerging new role in global economic governance is a function of a vibrant domestic debate. It highlights the conflict between role conceptions of "ego state" and "role state." Different ideas regarding China's international role can be identified along major fault lines of this conflict by contrasting representative examples of key positions of the central leadership and China's foreign-policy community. This allows us to assess and explain the room for maneuver and the limitations of choices for China's leadership.

We thus argue that China's contribution to global economic governance is the result of conflicts regarding the dominant conception of its role — contested by the Chinese leadership and by China's foreign-policy elite. Both groups have developed their new conceptions against the backdrop of traditional role conceptions and the GFC. This may be of considerable relevance to China's behavior in global economic governance. As Cantir and Kaarbo argue, changing global conditions create the environment where contested role conceptions can lead to a revision of foreign policies or to foreign-policy dysfunctions (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012: 10–11).

We argue that in the case of the G20, a revision of China's national role conception can be observed. This revision can be explained by China taking up a new role in global economic governance in response to domestic and foreign expectations. China does not provide overall leadership in the G20 (Acharya 2011; Chan et al. 2011) and has not become a leading proponent of "system change" (Speyer 2012: 33); it actively pushes for substantial reforms only in specific G20 areas, namely, in the area of global development and the reform of Bretton Woods governance, albeit to a different degree and with different patterns of behavior. Regarding the reform of Bretton Woods and global development, China demonstrates selective ego-state role behavior in specific issue areas. We call this "focused leadership." It marks a departure from China's previous behavior: traditionally, China did not provide leadership, but displayed "followership," i.e., the behavior of a role state (*taoyang guanghui*). In this respect, the changing global environment has triggered the revision of China's concept of its national role from followership to focused leadership.

The G20 as a challenge to China's traditional role conception

Before the outbreak of the GFC, the Chinese government had taken a long-term functional approach to global governance. China had watched from the outside and not actively contributed from within (Liu 2012b). Global governance became instrumental in providing a positive environment for domestic reforms, studying global best practices to determine their value to China's own reform policies, preparing Chinese experts and enterprises for leading positions in the long term, and improving China's global image (Chan 2008; Wang 2011). Traditionally, China thus qualifies as a role state. The establishment of the G20 as a reaction to the GFC challenges China's traditional position as a skeptical role-taker in global economic governance, as both foreign and domestic expectations call upon the Chinese leadership to act in a new manner. In its capacity as a role-taker, the PRC adopted international norms and standards inconsistently according to internal preferences (Walter 2010: 161–162), and it limited its own involvement. When the G20 was set up, the Chinese leadership voiced its support for global coordination of national responses to the GFC, but did not call for any new kind of global governance itself. In fact, it tried to keep its own involvement relatively low-key.

In the eyes of the Chinese leadership, the GFC was expected to further strengthen the PRC's integration into the world economy and into the existing structure of global governance (Hu 2008, Sina.com 2009). Its seriousness in supporting global efforts was highlighted by the announcement that crisis management was the number one priority of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2009 (Yang 2009). Soon it became obvious that global efforts were putting pressure on China's traditional policy. In a first departure from the state's traditional role, President Hu stressed the need for close cooperation and a fundamental review of global rules in a speech he held at the Washington G20 Summit (Hu 2008). He called for fast and decisive action by national governments, but within their own scope and according to their individual circumstances. Hu emphasized the special responsibility that the more advanced economies bore, warned against any premature moves, and stressed the need for the advanced economies to provide special support for low-income countries (Hu 2008). Thus, he did not see China's position as being at the center of the new G20, but emphasized the key role to be played by the established leading economic powers. President Hu also responded to substantial external expectations: the US, the EU, and fellow emerging markets like Brazil and India had all been calling upon the Chinese leadership to get strongly involved in crisis response and to support their reactions to the crisis through "responsible investment" abroad. Yet Hu described China's role as being far more detached from crisis response than external expectations would have it.

The Chinese domestic audience, on the other hand, discussed intensively whether and how China's global role would change through the GFC and the G20. One line of argument emphasized China's potential new dominance on the world stage and its economic preferences in the newly evolving world order (Chu 2009; Fan and Xiong 2009). The idea of joint leadership by China and the US (i.e., a "G2") as an alternative to the current G20 approach gained ground, but was not taken up by the Chinese government (Yuan 2010; Lin 2010). Some Chinese scholars interpreted the G20 as a historical opportunity to improve China's international status (Yang 2011; Liu 2012b). More critical Chinese observers interpreted the G20 as yet another attempt by Washington to preserve US dominance in global economic governance, however. Overenthusiastic participation in the G20 could thus even become an obstacle for China, stopping it from gaining a fair position in global governance (Zhu 2011). China needed to be very careful in its participation as long as it was still a developing country (Jian 2011). The views of Western observers who interpret the G20 as a major revision of global structures by leading powers (Chin 2010) are therefore regarded very critically in the PRC. In view of the dominance of the G7 economies within the G20, some voices even emphasized the potential for cooperation between emerging countries within the G20 (Yang 2011; Pang 2011; Huang 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

Reflecting the domestic debate Chen Dongxiao (2010) outlined four dilemmas regarding China's role in the G20: (1) A perception gap exists between how China views itself (as a low-income developing country) and how the rest of the world would view it (i.e., as a new global power). (2) While the G20 is perceived as relatively legitimate and potentially effective, it is in conflict with China's independence over its domestic economic policies. (3) In the interest of efficiency, China should facilitate forming a new G4 bloc within the G20 by promoting pre-summit consultation and coordination with the US, the EU, and Japan, resulting in G20 agenda-setting. At the same time, China should not pay any less heed to its ties with other G20 members, particularly with new emerging economies. (As a result, China has found itself more often than not sandwiched between the two groups.)

Finally, the variety of Chinese domestic expectations makes it nearly impossible to separate domestic from external policies.

These dilemmas are representative of a domestic debate that causes contested role conceptions among the Chinese foreign-policy elite vis-à-vis the G20: on the one hand, China is considered to be a leading representative of the Global South within the G20, while on the other, it is considered to be entrepreneurial, creating a counterweight to a G7-dominated G20. Both role conceptions, however, share the basic observation that the GFC and the G20 call for a more active contribution to and a more visible profile for China in global economic governance. The Chinese leadership is achieving this by playing a role that is more decisive than skeptical. In short, the Chinese domestic debate has given further momentum to the idea of revising the traditional conception of China as a role state.

This process is forcefully captured in an official outlook for the Toronto Summit, in which the Chinese government described the relationship between China and the G20. According to Beijing, the G20 evolved from a "silent, obscure, and loose international organization [...] into an 'important platform for international economic cooperation'" (Ming 2010). This officially endorsed text by Xinhua emphasizes the new quality of the G20, which results from the G20's new membership structure. The Summit in Washington on November 15, 2008 was described as being the first time that emerging and advanced economies were negotiating at eye level and jointly seeking to address global issues. China, "the largest developing country, the fastest-growing economy, and the emerging country with the most vivid economy, has joined the advanced world in overcoming hard times" (Ming 2010).

This (intra-elite) conflict about the definition of China's national role helps to explain why the Chinese leadership continues to stress the need to rebalance North-South differences as part of the G20's core tasks — even in the face of the EU's sovereign debt crisis (Ma 2011; Cui 2011). As a consequence, and in response to the domestic debates about China's potential dominance on the world stage, China has played a national role that is more ego role-oriented now.

From following to focused leadership in the reform of Bretton Woods institutions

Despite there being different interpretations of the Global Financial Crisis, a strong consensus has emerged about the inadequacy of the current form of global financial governance. The issue of how to improve the existing institutions of global economic governance in order to ensure better protection from future crises moved the reorganization of the World Bank and the IMF into the focus of the G20. China had long called for a reform of IMF governance and voting rights, but it emphasizes that its own position is one of a group of emerging economies (Chin 2010b: 106–107; 2010b: 702). "For China, the issue of IMF reform held the highest priority on the G20's agenda: China required a fast implementation of the voting rights reform"

(Gnath and Schmucker 2011: 14). High-ranking Chinese officials repeatedly stressed the crucial importance of IMF reform to the Chinese leadership in the context of global crisis management (Wu 2010). With the intermediate agreement on reform in 2010 — and its delayed implementation — Chinese representatives, over time, grew more outspoken about the need to achieve both continuous and more substantial reform of Bretton Woods institutions of governance.

China acceded to the World Bank and the IMF as a late member, drawing upon its expertise in the formulation of its reform policies in the 1980s. The PRC joined as a rule-taker, which after years of isolation linked itself to a well-established set of norms, ideas, and policies again. The IMF, however, suffered from an "identity crisis" (Truman 2005: 201), as emerging countries grew increasingly frustrated with the US and European refusal to significantly improve their voting rights and board representation (Lindblad 2011). As late as 2006, China still had fewer voting rights than the Netherlands and Belgium combined. This underpinned Chinese claims about the IMF being "dominated by the US, Europe, and Japan" (*Xinhua* 2006). Even after a careful reform proposal was made in 2006, Chinese officials still criticized the weak voice of poor and transition countries (*Xinhua* 2007).

Despite being the world's second-largest economy, under the current IMF voting system, China has 4 percent of the overall voting quotas compared to Japan's 6.56 percent and the US's 17.69 percent (IMF 2013). Most Chinese observers agreed on the need to increase China's voice in the Bretton Woods institutions as a prerequisite for any strong support by China. Economist and blogger Xu Hongcai emphasized the increased significance of the IMF for the preservation of global financial stability in the crisis, but this would also foster the need to change the members' voting rights and would thus require US and European dominance of the organization to be broken (Xu 2011). Xu also called for a stronger and more representative role on the part of the World Bank and for better protection of the interests of the developing and emerging economies in a post-crisis order (Xu 2011). A research report by the People's Bank of China (PBC) identified the excessive belief in the functions of the market as the primary deficit of Western financial market regulation (Li 2009). According to Yuan Zengting from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the innovative capacity of financial markets poses a major challenge to supervision, as their new products continue to produce new risks. As some Chinese observers saw it, a fundamental reform of the global financial markets was therefore needed (Li 2009). In this context, the international currency system was compared to an imperial system that needed to be republicanized (Yu 2009). Xiao Geng (2011) implicitly accused the USA of cheating the holders of their sovereign debt by following a monetary policy of quantitative easing and allowing the inflation rate to decrease the value of the US dollar.

Engaging in the debate, China's then vice premier, Wang Qishan, said that his country would support increasing IMF resources through the quota-based system and voluntary contributions, thereby striking a balance between the rights and obligations of the contributing countries. Secondly, he said, the scale of increase ought to reflect the countries' stages of development and foreign-exchange reserves. Thirdly, a quota increase should be prioritized. If quota-based contributions fell short of immediate needs, the IMF could issue bonds, some of which China would buy. Bilateral borrowing arrangements should be discussed separately between the countries concerned and the IMF; the increase in resources should be achieved within the IMF framework and in various flexible ways. Finally, regarding the use of the resources, Wang pointed out that the IMF needed to enhance capacity-building, reform the governance structure, and ensure that the resources played a significant role in easing the international financial crisis as well as in countering the global economic downturn. The use of resources should be subject to scientific assessment, careful planning, and rigorous oversight to ensure that it was fair, just, transparent, and effective, he said (Wang 2009).

China's representatives have become increasingly outspoken regarding the implementation of Bretton Woods reforms. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "China expects timely and effective implementation of the 2010 quota and governance reform package of the International Monetary Fund" (*Xinhua* 2013). This decisiveness is a marked change from China's role in the IMF during the 1980s when the PRC played a low-profile role and made little attempt to change the format or structure of the Fund. China's new role within the IMF is one of a proactive actor that promotes reform. It not only promotes its own interests in the process, but also those of other developing nations.

The Chinese government sought cooperation with other emerging countries like Brazil and India in demanding a recalibration of voting rights to reflect the changed share in global economic activity (Liu and Wang 2009). In 2009, G20 finance ministers had agreed to take a six-percent share of the total number of voting rights from established markets and redistribute it among emerging economies. This decision met with only limited enthusiasm among the emerging countries, however, especially from China. Even so, the Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of the G20 called it "obvious progress" toward real reform of the IMF. Cui Tiankai (2011) furthermore indicated a certain detachment from the G20 by stressing the need for China not to attempt to maximize its interests in the context of IMF reforms, which might include the way voting rights are calculated and how the organization is governed. Pointing to the delays in implementing the reforms in spite of recurrent pledges in the summit declarations to do so (G20 2009a, 2009b; 2010; 2012) became a *ceterum censeo* in Chinese official statements (Hu 2012; Cui 2013). China, however, only agreed to provide an additional 40 billion US dollars to the IMF in April 2009 after consultation with other emerging markets (*Xinhua* 2009) — and long after Japan had raised its contributions (see Dobson in this special issue). China's leadership preferred to stay within the emerging economies grouping and used this as a basis for exerting further pressure to implement and continue IMF reform. The volatile character of this cooperation among emerging economies became apparent, however, when China chose not to support the BRICS push for a non-European candidate to succeed Dominique Strauss-Kahn as head of the IMF; it supported French candidate Christine Lagarde instead — and managed to get Zhu Min promoted in the process. China did not take the approach adopted by the other BRICS members, but exhibited ego-role behavior. After these developments, the PRC continued to push for quick implementation of the first set of Bretton Woods reforms and started to increase the pressure for further changes to the organizational setup of the Bretton Woods institutions. While its representation in these institutions was perceived as important, China nonetheless avoided any unilateral behavior, carefully built up a group of supporters, and acted as if it were one of several key members in this area.

The ministers of finance and heads of the central banks started to coordinate their positions in the G20 meetings from 2009 onwards by having a BRICS meeting prior to the G20 meetings of finance ministers. This coordination of positions was anything but smooth, but it allowed for the BRICS to jointly push for an implementation of the agreed reforms of the Bretton Woods institutions and to call for reforms that would fully reflect the changes in the global economy, i.e., the increased significance of the BRICS (*Diyi Caijing Ribao* 2011; *China Daily* 2009). After China joined a BRICS initiative and contributed to the provision of additional funding for the IMF in 2012, Chinese media quoted academics who had emphasized the link between increasing contributions and increased influence in the IMF (Wu and Zhou 2012).

In addition, China also sought a reform of the voting structure of the World Bank through the G20 in order to increase the voting power of developing countries. At the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh in 2010, it called for developing nations to be given a greater percentage of the voting quota (*Xinhua* 2010a). The World Bank member states subsequently reached an agreement in 2012 on a 3.13-percent shift in voting power to give emerging and developing nations greater influence in the global institution. The shift will eventually increase the votes of the developing world from 44.06 percent to 47.19 percent. China's stake at the World Bank in terms of voting power will grow from 2.78 to 4.42 percent as a result (*Xinhua* 2010b). This will make the PRC the third-biggest voting power after the United States and Japan (*Xinhua* 2010c). Overall, however, China and other emerging economies remain substantially under-represented in the World Bank (Horton 2010: 1). Xie Xuren, China's finance minister at the time, said the achievement was "only part of the on-going process," noting that China supported a periodic review of International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) shareholding in the future. (The IBRD is the original institution of the World Bank Group and normally represents the group.) Xie added: "The future shareholding principles should continue to be based on economic weight, give full consideration to developing countries' contribution to the IBRD as development partners, and aim to achieve the ultimate goal of equitable voting power between developing countries and developed ones" (*Xinhua* 2010b). Consequently, the reform of the World Bank is considered to be an important step in achieving a fair balance between emerging and advanced countries (*Xinhua* 2010c).

This case also sheds light on the importance that the Chinese leadership puts on the reform of the representation of emerging countries within the management and decision-making structures of the Bretton Woods institutions. Unlike its behavior with regard to the reform of the voting rights system, Beijing is far more decisive when it comes to the promotion of top Chinese executives. Acknowledging the need to foster expertise on global governance, China reformed its strategy of elite recruitment for international organizations; Chinese candidates are carefully prepared for their posts now. Candidates for top positions with the IMF are first transferred to the central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBC), and candidates for the World Bank to the Ministry of Finance. Zhu Min, who assumed the position of Special Advisor to the Managing Director of the IMF in February 2010, was first promoted Deputy Governor of the PBC. His appointment was interpreted by Chinese observers as a "significant step toward breaking up the US and Europe's dominant position on the international financial stage" and as a symbol of China's growing weight in international institutions (*China Daily*, October 14, 2009). Earlier on, Justin Yifu Lin had already been appointed Chief Economist of the IMF.

Development — the key to addressing global imbalances

The connection between the issue of global institutional reform and China's role as a representative of the Global South became apparent in the reform of the World Bank. The issue of development plays a significant role in various contexts: firstly, as a key driver of global imbalances, which is often used as a term to criticize Chinese state support for its exports; secondly, development needs the preserving of global trade, again an interest China shares with other developing countries; and thirdly, development calls for accurate representation of poor countries in global institutions and that the overall support for the poorest is not cut back in addressing the GFC. The gap between the developing and developed countries establishes an unequal distribution of influence not only on material matters, but also in the new global governance. Hence the gap in development is an important instrument in the hands of the advanced nations in dominating the restructuring of the global economy and the global order. Yet even during the heyday of the GFC when the high growth rates of certain emerging economies pulled the global economy out of its slump, their influence on global matters remained limited (Liu 2012a).

China's media and leaders have persistently called for the interests of the developing countries to be dealt with adequately in the G20 (Hu 2008; 2012; Cui 2010; *Xinhua* 2010b). In line with its traditional role as representative of the developing world, the PRC has pushed for the inclusion of development on the G20 agenda, linking the issue of unequal development with an unfair institutional framework in global economic governance. Even in the run-up to the 2008 Washington Summit, Chinese observers stressed the role of "China as the largest developing country […] to give voice to and to fight with authority on behalf of the poorest countries at the Washington Summit" (Qi 2008). According to Hu Jintao, "[a]mong the various imbalances in the world economy, the most prominent [one] is the serious development of imbalance [...]. The underlying reason is that the international order is unfair [...]" (Hu 2010). At the Pittsburgh Summit in 2009, G20 leaders agreed on a set of steps to institutionalize the G20 as a global steering committee. They failed to follow Hu Jintao's calls to address the "yawning development gap" between the North and South, however — one of the fundamental imbalances of the global economy (Wintour and Clark 2009). China had brought a package of proposed measures to the Summit that should have supported the developing and emerging countries and which it considered to be an adequate way of correcting global economic imbalances (*Xinhua* 2009). On the occasion of the 2010 G20 Summit in Seoul, Hu called the obstacles to development for the South "the most serious bottleneck in world economic development," leading to "a vicious circle where underdevelopment leads to backwardness, and backwardness hinders development" (Hu 2010).

Taking on the role of a leading representative and speaker of the Global South increases China's prestige and status. It addresses external expectations, as it helps to deflect criticism of China's own contributions to global imbalances and creates the impression of even more weight being behind China's voice in global economic governance. It furthermore addresses the domestic audience's expectation that China should provide leadership in the global arena. This is reflected in the debate on the dominance of the US in issues of global governance (see Pang 2011: 1) and of the global economic order (Zhu 2011: 43; Huang 2010, 2011a). The G20 is perceived as a positive change to the global order as long as it promotes representation of the Global South (Huang 2011b: 2; Zhu 2011: 43). Following the Chinese debate, the G20 supports the idea of a bigger role for the emerging countries (Yang 2011: 53; Huang 2011b: 26), especially the BRICS nations, which in spite of their great differences in developmental model, GDP, and developmental objectives all pursue a more democratic and multilateral global economic system than the current one (Huang 2011b: 27). The common ground between the BRICS members is a result of joint opposition to the dominance of the G7/G8 (Yang 2011; Pang 2011; Liu 2012b).

While the emerging countries played a rather passive role at the first two G20 Summits in Washington and Pittsburgh, observers saw a united front evolving among the emerging economies for the first time during the 2009 Summit in Pittsburgh, where these participants called for a reform of the global financial institutions (Börgmann 2009). It was only after the Toronto and Seoul Summits in 2009 and 2010, however, that the head of the Chinese delegation was able to express his appreciation that the G20 had endorsed a development agenda (*Xinhua* 2010a): the G20 had set up various working groups, agreed on the Seoul Development Consensus on Shared Growth, and pledged to seek the implementation of a multiyear development action plan under the guidance of a Development Working Group (G20 2010). China had succeeded in linking the issues of financial crisis and development and achieved a first step toward the institutionalization of development as a core theme in the G20 at a time when the euro zone's sovereign debt crisis dominated the G20's agenda. During the Los Cabos Summit held in Mexico in 2012, Hu Jintao furthermore linked the issue of reform of the global institutions and the outcomes of the policies to counter the negative effects of the GFC with the question of development and the need to close the North-South gap.

In view of the G20 Summit in Mexico, Chinese observers feared that the euro-zone crisis would overshadow the equally important issue of development and global imbalances at the Los Cabos Summit and emphasized China's role in keeping up the issues of importance to the emerging economies (Li Qiaoyi 2012). While Cui Tiankai again criticized the fact that China's role in the Bretton Woods institutions would not reflect its contributions to the crisis response, Huang Wei, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, expressed skepticism as to whether this would change any time soon. According to his assessment, developed nations were still dominating the institutions of global economic governance, and developing countries could not match their experience and skills (Li Qiaoyi 2012).

Conclusion

Since the onset of the GFC, notions of ego state have increasingly challenged the traditional national role conception of *taoguang yanghui*. The examples of IMF elite recruitment and of global development demonstrate Beijing's new resolve to provide decisive and focused leadership, thereby leading system reform in specific G20 issue areas.

In the case of development, China clearly provides leadership to the G20 as an agenda-setter. By taking on this role, it has displayed leadership and ego-state role behavior. Yet the Chinese leadership has been highly selective in taking the lead in Bretton Woods-related reform issues; it has only done so with regard to board representation/recruitment and the larger field of development. It has thus rather safeguarded its long-term strategy to study, learn, and adapt inside the institutions of global governance. By doing so, China enacted the traditional national role concept of *taoguang yanghui*, i.e., that of a role state. While the national debate in China calls for a much more self-centered role, the country still displays role-state behavior and tends to conform to international norms rather than defy them. China does not seek system change by displaying ego-state behavior when it comes to global economic governance within the G20. Rather, the PRC's approach to the reform of global economic governance in this setting is characterized by a hybrid behavior pattern that combines a general tendency to follow decisions that others make with leadership of its own. Depending on the issue area in question, China may selectively display ego-state role behavior and provide focused leadership.

As far as its roles are concerned as a promoter of the non-Western, non-developed world and a nation that wants to sit directly at the negotiating table when important decisions are to be made, China faces a largely skeptical domestic audience. Without committing itself too much to any new global governance mechanisms so far, China has called for an orderly and systematic reform of the global financial system, which strengthens the involvement of emerging markets and developing countries. The Chinese leadership sees the need to balance a careful re-orientation toward non-Western countries over the next five to ten years while preserving good relations with Europe and the United States (Lin 2013). This clearly adds a specifically Chinese quality to the G20. As a role state that conforms to international norms, the PRC benefits from the international order. At the same time, however, it displays ego-state role behavior by trying to reform the international system, even though it has no coherent alternative concept to offer at present. While China's economic development has triggered an intensive debate at home and abroad about the "China model" or "Beijing consensus," there has been no indication so far that Chinese leadership would result in the implementation of a Chinese model of regulatory governance and thus of system change or defiance.

In the issue area of Bretton Woods reform, the PRC has followed the traditional role-state pattern of behavior; it has joined with others in calling for a reform of voting rights and internal governance. It has acted in accordance with its traditional role and is willing to adopt international norms and standards. Over time, the PRC has become more outspoken in its demands that Bretton Woods reforms need to continue, that increased firepower on the part of the IMF must not be absorbed by European countries, and that the G20 summits must not be dominated by the issue of euro-zone sovereign debt. In this respect, it has started to exhibit ego-state behavior in an area where it is still predominantly acting like a role state. More specifically, it provides focused leadership by selectively displaying ego-state behavior in the context of Bretton Woods reforms.

As exemplified in the two speeches made by Hu Jintao, the Chinese view of the development of the early G20 summits identifies the move away from crisis response — Washington Summit 2008 — to more attention being paid to global imbalances and sustainable development at the London and Pittsburgh Summits. This revision of priorities changed the context for China's participation in the G20: the role as the representative of the developing world was much closer to their traditional role conceptions than the role as reform-driver in issues of international finance and financial services regulation where the PRC had less experience and less exposure. By implementing policies to stimulate domestic demand and support the move from export-driven to demand-driven growth, China has met global expectations in a field of key significance for its leaders. The positive external perception of China's policies reinforced the revision of China's role in the G20. Role-taking by the Chinese leadership — a promoter of global growth — fitted in with external role expectations. In the words of Xinhua, China took the role of a "responsible stakeholder" in the global economy (*Xinhua* 2010c).

In revising its role in global economic governance, the PRC links up with two different traditions: that of *taoguang yanghui* and that of the Global South's representative. What is more, China does so by affirmatively promoting the legitimacy of what is considered to be a fair representation of the Global South. Furthermore, China's selective display of leadership is even more observable in the case of global development. Closely linked with its traditional role conception as the representative of the Global South, the PRC has pushed for this issue to be set and kept on the agenda ever since the beginning of the G20 summits.

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