

# **Domestic Politics and the International Community**

## **A Case Study of China's SARS Policy in 2003**

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(Abstract)

A distinct feature of contemporary politics is the involvement of international forces in a state's domestic politics, and vice versa. Despite the plethora of literature on the international system and comparative state politics, relatively little addresses the interpenetration of international and domestic systems in intermestic issues. This thesis explores intermestic processes. It argues that states' domestic policies are increasingly formed in an intermestic context and such intermesticity has brought states a dilemma between maintaining effective domestic control and achieving integration into the global economy. This thesis examines China's SARS policy formation in 2003 as a case study. How did the internal health problem come to be addressed in an intermestic context in a country noted for its tight domestic control and long-term aversion to foreign intervention? The question is approached through a textual analysis of the story of China's SARS policy development. This study also identifies the patterns of international influence on China's domestic politics, particularly in the SARS crisis. I interpret the intermestic dynamic as a learning process through which China has chosen to embrace international institutions in its pursuit of national interests in a globalized world.

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## **List of Abbreviated Words**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CCP</b>	Chinese Communist Party
<b>CDC</b>	Center for Disease Control
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic Committee
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>PLA</b>	People's Liberation Army
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China
<b>SARS</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
<b>UNAIDS</b>	United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

# Chapter One Introduction

## Overview

A distinct feature of contemporary politics is the involvement of international forces in domestic politics, and vice versa. In fact, economic globalization and interdependence among states are making many policy issues borderless. Given the blurring of the international and domestic fronts, I argue that domestic policies are increasingly formed in an *intermestic* context. Evidence abounds and covers all kinds of issues, such as agricultural subsidies, environmental degradation, drug abuse, and health. The intermesticity of internal affairs has also brought states an unprecedented challenge: how can they harmonize their domestic political control, in many cases an authoritarian or even totalitarian rule, with international expectations or regimes that favor fairness, human rights, transparency, and responsibility, such that economic growth can be accelerated and political stability continued? Moreover, the intermestic dynamics between states and the international community on specific policy issues is a learning process for states to better embrace international institutions in their pursuit of national interests in a globalized world.

The Chinese case is particularly instructive for this dilemma. Ever since the late 1970s, when China opened its doors to the outside world, bargaining over political control and economic development with the international community has been critical to the survival of the one party system and the success of China's economic reforms. Policy making in China is increasingly an "intermestic" process that affects both China's internal stability and the mode of China's integration into the global economy.

To examine the intermestic features of policymaking in China, this research uses a case study of China's Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) policy formation in 2003. The politics in China's SARS crisis demonstrates the process through which a Chinese domestic health policy was shaped in an "intermestic" context. It suggests that China is learning from these dynamics that there are advantages to being responsive to international institutions in its domestic governance.

### **Intermesticity: An Analytical Framework**

The study of things "international" and the study of things "domestic" have long been distinguished from one another. In the field of political science, they are given different names to distinguish one from the other. The former area is called international politics while the latter is integrated into the study of comparative politics or public policy analysis. In some cases, the well-defined sphere of "international politics" and that of "domestic politics" overlap to produce "intermestic politics."<sup>1</sup> I do not mean to deny the boundary between an individual state and the international community at large, nor to emphasize it. My argument is that globalization as a process has made more and more policy issues "intermestic" ones rather than purely domestic or international. By "intermesticity," I refer to the interaction between the two spheres. As Cha notes, globalization processes "are not just about linkages but about interpenetration."<sup>2</sup> To set the context properly for the study of real-world intermestic politics, it is necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> Please see: Franz Gress, "Interstate Cooperation and Territorial Representation in Intermestic Politics," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 26 (1996): 53-71; Victor D. Cha, "Globalization and the Study of International Security," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no.3 (2000): 391-403; Peter F. Trumbore and Mark A. Boyer, "International Crisis Decisionmaking as a Two-Level Process," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no.6 (2000): 679-697; James M. Lindsay, "Congress and Foreign Policy: Why the Hill Matters," *Political Science Quarterly* 107, no.4 (1992-1993): 607-628.

<sup>2</sup> Cha, 392.

briefly review the major academic contributions made so far, including their portrayal of the interrelationship between the international and domestic realms and their main problems in grasping the intermestic dimension.

International Relations (IR) scholars increasingly agree that international and domestic affairs are interconnected in contemporary world politics. For example, in 1978, Gourevitch called on scholars to study the whole picture of domestic and international politics.<sup>3</sup> Robert Cox interrelates “forms of state,” “social forces,” and “world orders” in a way that each element not only “contains” the other two, but also is influenced by them.<sup>4</sup> Many incisive theses and academic findings apply here. It has been recognized that since international forces have deeply changed the political, military, economic, and normative aspects of state structures, any analysis of things domestic, such as internal policy formation, is not sufficient if it omits the connections to things international, and vice versa.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, most dominant IR theories like neorealism and neoliberalism provide a fixed model of the relationship between international and domestic spheres, with fixed structure, fixed process, and fixed outcome. Moreover, several theoretical approaches put an overriding emphasis on either “international” or “domestic.”<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Waltz develops a neorealist systemic theory, holding that international structure explains state behavior.<sup>7</sup> To develop a concept of structure, Waltz first defines the state as a unitary rational agent

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32, no.4 (1978): 881-911.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Cox, “Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” In *Approaches to World Order*, edited by Robert Cox and Timothy Sinclair (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 85-124.

<sup>5</sup> Georg Sørensen, *Changes in Statehood: The Transformation of International Relations* (Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

in order to make it comparable with other units. He then defines the international system as an anarchic self-help system so that the individual systemic unit—the state—will behave logically for the sake of survival. In this scientific theory, there are only two variables: international structure and state behavior. The relationship is such that international structure determines state behavior. Neorealism by no means treats the international-domestic relationship as uncertain dynamics, but instead it highlights the role of the international in world politics and neglects the domestic elements.

While emphasizing domestic elements and international systemic forces, classic liberalism presents a different account of the relationship between the two. Drawing on Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, and Joseph Schumpeter, Michael Doyle examines the phenomenon of democratic peace, in which democracies do not fight with each other but instead they form a peaceful union. Such a union is built on a basis of common moral values, economic cooperation, and interdependence. The thing that binds the union together is what Kant calls “the spirit of commerce,” i.e., participation in international commerce that benefits all.<sup>8</sup> Contrary to realists, liberals stress the influence of domestic factors, such as a democratic political system, on the international sphere.

The development of liberal theory can go in another direction. Under the influence of Waltz and his powerful systemic theory, Robert Keohane, widely known as a liberal institutionalist, developed a neoliberal theory.<sup>9</sup> He redefined core concepts and redesigned the liberal research agenda by borrowing basic assumptions from neorealism: that states are rational units with given identities and interests, and that international

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 230-300.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 1984).



anarchy is the ordering principle of the international system. He defined the states as agents and international institutions as the process-level attribute of the international system.<sup>10</sup> According to Keohane, there are two variables: international institutions and state behavior. In his perspective, international institutions affect state behavior. Like neorealism, neoliberalism puts an overriding emphasis on the international level.

The recent influential approach of constructivism tries to deliver a whole picture of the international-domestic dynamics rather than a fixed model. Constructivists hold that international structure is “what states make of it,” not given.<sup>11</sup> States and non-state-actors such as international organizations interact with each other to construct the international structure, while international structure further constitutes state identities and interests.<sup>12</sup> According to Alexander Wendt, state identity is “sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others.”<sup>13</sup> Worthy of mentioning is that Wendtian constructivism is also a “systemic” theory, with major concerns placed on state interactions rather than domestic affairs. In this sense, it underemphasizes the domestic dimension. Nevertheless, constructivism has developed some pioneering perspectives that inspire intermestic analysis. First, as I mentioned above, national identity is a dynamic element constructed through interactions among states and the international community at large. It may change as a result of intermestic dynamics. Second, some constructivists urge a normative turn by claiming that internationally recognized norms play a more and more important role in defining national interests and thus influence international practice

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<sup>10</sup> John M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 95-104.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46 (1992): 391-425.

<sup>12</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no.2 (1994): 384-396.

as well as state behavior.<sup>14</sup> This perspective encourages a reexamination, in my case study, of the degree to which international norms are changing states' domestic performances. Finally, Wendt brings in social learning as "a dynamic element"<sup>15</sup> that rationalist models lack. Constructivists like Wendt regard international structure as shared ideas, as culture, or as rules, which are in a continual process of building and rebuilding through agential interaction. In this process, learning has not only behavioral effects, but also formative effects on national identity and interests. In other words, national identity and interest are learned through interaction.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, although the above theories recognize the interconnectedness of the international and the domestic, they give weight to one side over the other and more or less fail to appreciate the interpenetrating dynamics between the two sides through conflict, compromise, or cooperation. Moreover, the mainstream theories like neorealism have failed to see globalization as a process of interaction that is more than a set of linkages. To counter this, the first goal of this thesis is to apply the concept of "intermesticity" to study the bargaining process between states and the international community in a specific domestic policy making process. The premise here is that states strive to maintain political control domestically and at the same time try to benefit from international trade, investment, and other economic activities. This gives rise to the dilemma that modern states face between effective domestic control and successful integration into the international market based on liberal ideologies. As a country noted for a long tradition of authoritarian rule domestically and a policy of opening up to the

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<sup>14</sup> Martha Finnemore, *National Interest in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no.4 (1998): 887-917.

<sup>15</sup> Wendt (1999), 326.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 331.

outside of only twenty years, China is a particularly instructive case for this issue. China's key challenge is to harmonize its authoritarian domestic control with international expectations or regimes that put emphasis on human rights and government credibility; the challenge for the international community is how to use benefits from the global economy as the binding force of international regimes and norms to influence China's internal policy.

### **The China Dilemma**

After over twenty years of reform and opening up to the outside world, China is now on the threshold of membership in the international community, which has been built on economic globalization and state interconnectedness. Here lies the dilemma that China faces. On the one hand it is still unclear that China's ruling party, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), will allow a gradual transition from authoritarian domestic control, while on the other hand China is flinging itself into campaigns to join the global economy based on marketization and political liberalization.

A knowledge of Chinese political history, which can be dated back to as early as 2500 BC,<sup>17</sup> is critical to understand China's contemporary dilemma. Traditional Chinese politics was characterized by a strong, authoritarian rule and a political culture that centered on Confucian Orthodoxy, which advocated a "mandate of heaven," political and economic centralization, and elitism. Emperors of successive dynasties from 1523 BC to 1911 AD claimed their legitimacy through the mandate of heaven, while citizens were to show their obedience and serve their emperor with minimal civil rights.

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<sup>17</sup> Kwang-chih Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Yale University Press, 1986).

The well-established legitimacy of imperial state control over the past three thousand years led to a continued, if not strengthened, authoritarian rule in the nationalist government (1911-1949) and the subsequent communist era. From the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, its founding father Mao Zedong, who was also the supreme commander for nearly thirty years, had two basic concerns: insistence on noninterventionist sovereignty as a guiding principle for China's foreign policy and strict controls over everyday life in the domestic sphere. After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping succeeded to power and tried to maintain the legitimacy of communist rule through economic development. Since then, the government has gradually loosened its control over people's personal lives on the one hand, while on the other hand it has engaged in economic reforms and transformed its stagnant planned economy to a market-based one. Nevertheless, the government has still put top priority on maintaining the CCP's political control over Chinese society and has retained a strong hand toward groups that threaten its political domination, as is evidenced by the 1989 Tian'anmen student protest and 1999 Falun Gong crackdowns.

China's opening-up policy initiated in the late 1970s reveals its willingness to join the world, especially to be integrated into the global economy through industrialization and international trade. Although China's leaders remain cautious over keeping the integration process from generating any harmful effects on China's sovereignty and communist rule, there arise many uncontrollable factors from the international level with which the Chinese government has to deal. By entering the world economy, China has to accept international trade regimes that are consistent with the liberal concepts of free trade. Yet, freedom from government intervention as the basic principle of free trade is

still a forbidden topic in Chinese politics. Furthermore, given the interconnectedness of the global economy and global socio-political life, members of the international community resist allowing a state to enjoy the benefits of international trade without commitments to live up to international expectations on human rights, arms control, and so forth. That is to say, meeting these expectations is a necessary condition for a country's integration into the global economy. To benefit from the world economy, China has long been under pressures to commit itself to international human rights regimes and arms control institutions. These circumstances directly affect China's internal policy making.

### **SARS and Its Policy Formation**

China's SARS policy is a typically "intermestic" one in that its formation falls into the overlapping area between domestic and international spheres. In some senses, it is hard to tell which has exerted more influence on the formation of SARS policy, the Chinese government or the international community. The case study shows the bargaining process between the two. My second goal in this thesis is to interpret the dynamics of this process so as to identify the patterns of international influence on Chinese politics.

SARS first emerged in China's Guangdong province in late 2002 and was quickly spread by persons who traveled from Southeast Asia to North China and other countries. The Chinese authorities underestimated the severity of the disease in the beginning and, therefore, did not make an adequate response. When the disease developed into a large-scale epidemic that threatened the country's social stability and economic development,

local governments misinformed or even covered up the epidemic while the central government was reluctant to take decisive actions. But things changed dramatically in April 2003. Early that month, the Chinese Center for Disease Control (CDC) made an official apology to the world for its inaction to the SARS epidemic, which was “a rare public admission of failure” that never occurred in the history of Communist China.<sup>18</sup> On April 20, the Chinese new leadership took resolute action to end a cover-up of the SARS epidemic by revealing 14 new deaths and hundreds of cases, removing two senior officials, and canceling the May Day vacation as the worldwide death toll climbed to 204. The move followed the international criticism of China’s handling of SARS as well as increasing domestic pressures, because the formidable disease was spreading nationwide at a fast speed and even the safety of political elites in the capital, Beijing, was threatened.<sup>19</sup>

China’s SARS policy after April 20 took on a totally new look. Given China’s high degree of media control, the central government was able to mobilize and coordinate the whole nation to combat the SARS epidemic. Main changes from the initial SARS policy were made in four general areas: governmental responsiveness, social support, information transparency, and international cooperation. Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao ordered full disclosure and threatened harsh punishment for officials caught covering up cases or delaying reporting. Hospitals were required to provide prompt and free treatment to the infected. The Ministry of Health updated the number of

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<sup>18</sup> Erik Eckholm, “The SARS Epidemic: Epidemic; China Admits Underreporting Its SARS Cases,” *New York Times*, 21 April 2003, <<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9900E5D9133AF932A15757C0A9659C8B63>> (5 April 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Kahn, “The SARS epidemic: the elite; the contagion reaches near the top of the Chinese Communist hierarchy,” *New York Times*, 30 April 2003, sec. A, p.11.

newly infected cases as well as death toll each day. And foreign investigations on the SARS epidemic inside China also became possible.

### **Research Questions and Methodology**

In light of the above-mentioned circumstances, I have developed several questions to guide this case study: Is the process of policymaking in China becoming intermestic? How did the process of handling SARS in China become intermestic? How was China's SARS policy reached in such an intermestic context? What form does the international involvement in Chinese politics take, particularly in this SARS crisis? What are the political implications of this event for both states and the international community?

These questions are explored in two steps: First, I conduct a review of Chinese political history to identify whether Chinese politics has become intermestic. China's experiences during the past 200 years reflect the vicissitudes of global politics and the evolving patterns of international involvement in domestic politics. Readers will gain a contextual understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between the international community and China. Second, in Chapters 3 through 5, I introduce and analyze the process of how China's SARS crisis became an intermestic policy issue. Specifically, Chapter 3 focuses on China's SARS policy in its early stage, when the virus spread across borders yet the government still tried to preserve it as a domestic issue by keeping information about the disease rather than the disease itself under control. Chapter 4 introduces the overnight policy reversal and explores the underlying reasons for it. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses in detail the most significant reason for the SARS policy reversal—international involvement—and identifies the patterns of international

influence on China's domestic politics, particularly in this SARS policymaking process. Chapter 6 concludes with what this research illustrates about intermestic processes. Each chapter responds to one of the research questions mentioned above.

To examine the interaction between China and the international community about the SARS epidemic, I rely on textual analysis. Major information sources include China's Ministry of Health, investigations and reports released by international organizations, and news and reports from mass media inside and outside China. Because World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations specialized agency for health, played a key role in changing China's SARS policy in 2003, I choose it as the major information outlet for China's SARS policy study. Mass media present the most timely reports, criticism, and announcements about the development of state policy, along with the positions of other states toward Chinese policy. I select *Xinhua News Agency (Xinhua)* as the major media outlet inside China, since it is the state news agency of China and the largest news and information gathering and release center in China. Its complete news gathering and release system consists of three parts, namely, the head office, domestic branches and overseas branches. It is the major medium through which people outside China can access news and reports about the land and learn about the Chinese authorities' positions and policy on a certain issue. Besides the domestic news service, I select several key news agencies including *The Times (London)*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* as major external news media to examine the speech acts and rule-practices of the international community, both other states and international organizations. As my research reveals, these newspapers have played a crucial role in uncovering China's



SARS epidemic and in urging the Chinese government to take action to deal with SARS and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) issues.

This study, however, has limited sources of China's health policy information. Since I live outside China, the only way I can access information is through Internet resources. From the websites of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Xinhua*, Human Rights Watch, and WHO, I have gathered information for this research. In doing so, I rely on investigations and surveys about China's SARS and AIDS issues made by news agencies outside China and by international organizations. This, however, gives rise to another validity problem—did the interviewees in China tell the truth? Were they influenced by interviewers' expectations and use of language? That is also to say, is the information gathered from these surveys reliable for outside researchers to use, to quote, and to convince the readers? I have no certain answers to these questions. Finally, critics may say my study of one health policy in one country is only one case that illustrates my interpretation of the intermestic policy making. My response is that the case here offers a window onto a process that may turn out to be the main characteristic of evolving, more complicated, world political trends.

## **Chapter Two A Historical Review of Intermestic Forces in Modern Chinese politics**

Having briefly introduced the global context of intermesticity and its impact on domestic politics, this chapter seeks to review the historical transformation of intermestic forces in Chinese politics in the modern era. The imperial political tradition of two thousand years and the growing contemporary international influences intertwine in the process of China's socio-political transformation. This research reviews three periods in the modern Chinese history: the late imperial period, the Mao era, and the post-Mao time, in terms of their intermesticity.

Imperial China since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD) had gradually adopted a closed-door policy, which was brutally breached by world capitalist powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. China was forced to integrate into the system of capitalist production as a vast consumer and raw materials market. The Qing court, which was the last imperial government, had to follow foreign advice over its own domestic affairs. The Chinese politics became intermestic to some extent as a result of foreign imposition instead of interaction. The history of the late imperial period planted a "victim mentality"<sup>20</sup> among the Chinese population, who shared a strong aversion to foreign involvement.

The mighty ideological orientation in Chinese diplomacy of the Mao era directly influenced domestic constructions in the newly established PRC. Closing China's door to so-called "capitalist countries," Mao relied solely on "the Soviet model" to guide China's political and economic constructions. When the Sino-Soviet relationship worsened in the

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<sup>20</sup> Please see: Chen Jian, *Mao's China & the Cold War* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2003, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20031101faessay82604/evan-s-medeiros-m-taylor-fravel/china-s-new-diplomacy.html>> (1 May 2004).

1960s, Mao's attention turned inward onto domestic politics and called for self-reliance in Chinese construction of socialism. There was no breeding ground for intermesticity during the Mao era.

Finally, the post-Mao time has witnessed a reopening of China to the West, the leading force in the global economy and politics. The intermestic politics has reached the point of interpenetration between China and the international community. The PRC leaders have aimed at integrating China into the global economy, but they have also trapped themselves in a dilemma as to whether to maintain strict control domestically or to provide more clement and free political circumstances demanded by the international community. The CCP's domestic policy guidelines have fluctuated from being tight to a little looser and then backward during this period. But the Party leaders have not hesitated to assume rigid domestic control when they believe that social stability and particularly the political legitimacy of China's one party rule are threatened.

Treatment of each period will begin with a general introduction of the domestic political features, and proceed to a discussion of whether and to what extent the relationship between the international and the domestic is an intermestic one.

### **Intermestic Politics in the Late Imperial Period**

The long developed Chinese imperial political system guaranteed all power would be centralized in one person's hand. To maintain their absolute dominance domestically, emperors in the late imperial period resorted to a closed-door policy to resist foreign influence. The globalization of capitalism, however, put an end to that self-protective policy. Strictly speaking, the interaction between China and the international environment

was not an intermestic one because it was for the most part a unidirectionally imposed influence of the international on the domestic rather than interpenetration.

***The Domestic: Confucian Orthodoxy and Conservative Bureaucracy***

China's imperial rule was built on the foundations of Confucian Orthodoxy and a sophisticated bureaucracy. As maybe the most successful conservative system, Confucianism provided the ideological basis for the legitimacy of imperial power. "Its esteem for age over youth, for the past over the present, for established authority over innovation," in John K. Fairbank's words, could account for China's social stability for most of the two thousand years.<sup>21</sup>

Confucianism, as the core ideology of the Chinese imperial political system, was "more fundamental in China than nationalism."<sup>22</sup> Emperors, Han or alien, gained their political legitimacy from the Confucian pattern: "quoting Confucius, conducting the rites, maintaining the examination, appointing officials, and issuing edicts in the manner of preceding Sons of Heaven."<sup>23</sup> By respecting and maintaining political traditions, they won acceptance and loyalty from their administrators and citizens.

The ideal Confucian government was one of "benevolent despotism," with emperors behaving according to the "Confucian Code" and keeping their firm hand on power. The long-term domination of Confucianism in China, whether under a Han regime or foreign regime (referred to by the Chinese as the minority regime), led to a belief among the population that China was a unified empire, superior to all outsiders.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Harvard University Press, 1979), 53.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 98-99.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

Chinese official political tradition was characterized by the absolute power of the imperial autocratic bureaucracy over the whole of Chinese life. The state imposed an official ideology—Confucianism—while society was totally subordinated to the state. Power was concentrated in the hands of a few people, often one person. The one at the top, the “emperor,” ruled by the “mandate of heaven” instead of law. The emperor was the law, or even beyond the law.

This tradition can be traced back over two thousand years. Ever since the first imperial system of the Ch’in (221 BC) and Han, which unified China under one centralized political authority, successive dynasties had established different ministries (for example, revenue, ceremonies, law, public works) responsible for civil administration and territorial jurisdictions at various levels (province, city, town, country). The local officials were responsible for all public affairs in their divisions.<sup>25</sup>

Fairbank introduced the bureaucratic system of the Qing Dynasty as an example of Chinese imperial political structure. Qing was the last dynastic empire in Chinese history. The hierarchy of local officials in Qing Dynasty was precisely defined and the provincial administrators, whose position was at the top of the hierarchy, stood between the central and the local governments.<sup>26</sup>

Official documents flowed from the capital to province, then to city, finally to the countryside and vice versa, maintaining the normal functioning in the vast empire.<sup>27</sup> One can imagine that the smooth flow of information within the Qing hierarchy hinged on local officials’ personal will, given the dominance they had in their areas. Such dominance, together with low salaries, also provided the breeding ground for “systemized

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 107-110.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 111.

corruption” as “an accepted institution” of interpersonal relationships in the bureaucracy.<sup>28</sup>

How to effectively control local officials while at the same time motivate them to fulfill their functions was one of the main challenges facing the central government.<sup>29</sup> Though in most cases emperors relied on provincial administrators to recommend talents for official positions, they themselves appointed all officials down to the local level. This system made officials aware of their responsibility to be loyal to the emperor, the Son of the Heaven.<sup>30</sup>

The problems of inefficiency, as Fairbank has stated, were very obvious in such a bureaucracy. Everything was initiated from the bottom level, then passed to the upper levels and finally reached the capital for the decisions made by the emperor. The superiors could determine the appropriateness of the reports or proposals made by the subordinates and decide whether or not to submit them to the capital. Since creativity meant both difficulty and risk to lower officials, the best and safest way to remain in the huge bureaucratic system was conformity to superiors. All business within the vast territory relied on the emperor to make final decisions. Whatever the emperor said was considered correct and had to be performed.<sup>31</sup> As the “bottleneck” of the whole bureaucratic system, however, the emperor often made blind and inefficient decisions that brought suffering to the common people with whom he had had little direct contact.

The above characteristics of the domestic political structure in imperial China, designed mainly for social stability, were the precondition of a smooth monarchic rule. In

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 115-117.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 114.

the Chinese context, social stability has meant no social unrest or major disruptions, changes of the population, economy, society, or politics. It has enjoyed top priority in Chinese domestic policy making till today.

China's social stability in most of the imperial years resulted in a highly conservative society and population, and it was reinforced by an official Confucian orthodoxy, an agrarian economy, and bureaucratic traditions. This conservatism, together with an increasing rejection of foreign influences, made China gradually turn inward from the middle of the Ming dynasty. The Qing dynasty, which succeeded it, implemented a real closed-door policy and prohibited foreign merchants from landing on Chinese soil except at the seaport of Guangzhou.<sup>32</sup>

### ***The Intermestic Dynamics: A Forced Start***

During the entire 18th century and the early 19th century, the Qing court adopted a closed-door policy toward the western world while the latter was experiencing modernization through the industrial revolution and the growth of capitalism. To make China an overseas market, the capitalist powers launched several wars that marked the beginning of foreign involvement in modern Chinese politics.

### ***Breaking down the Door***

The industrial revolution dramatically improved productivity of both light and heavy industries in Britain and other major capitalist countries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the eagerness for markets and raw materials drove these countries to break down the isolation of traditional, closed societies like China. Their agenda was facilitated by the period's most advanced gunfire and military forces. In 1840, Britain initiated the Opium War with

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<sup>32</sup> "The Closed-door Policy," *Qian Ye Li Shi Wang* (Qian Ye History Net), <<http://history.1001n.cn/info.asp?id=4196>> (14 April 2004).

China as a response to the Qing court's policy of eliminating opium imports from Britain. Again and again the Qing army retreated in defeat, which forced the government to sue for peace and sign its first unequal treaty with a western power. Britain got 21 million silver taels, opened five trade ports and was ceded Hong Kong. This treaty, the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, marked the beginning of China's concessions to foreign involvement in its domestic affairs that would continue over the following 100 years.<sup>33</sup>

Coveting what Britain gained from the war, France, Prussia, Russia, Portugal, the United States, and some other European powers pressed the Qing court with threats of warfare to grant them privileges. In the wake of the Opium War, the Qing court had to enter wars with France, Britain, Russia, Spain, and Japan. As a result, a series of unequal treaties were imposed on China, which looted China's wealth. Moreover, China's national sovereignty was threatened by foreign armed forces and warships, which forcibly opened more and more lands for foreign trade and settlement.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Foreign Domination in the Domestic Sphere*

After the 1840 Opium War, China was forced to participate in the global capitalist market as a consumer of goods produced by the capitalist powers and as a supplier of cheap raw materials. Meanwhile, foreign forces encroached on China's domestic affairs in three ways. First, in the administrative sphere, the Qing court had to employ foreigners to administer highly profitable departments, including customs and posts. In 1861, an Englishman Horatio N. Lay was appointed Inspector General of Customs in charge of "all things pertaining to the customs revenue and to foreign trade."<sup>35</sup> From 1896 to 1911,

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<sup>33</sup> Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 131-146.

<sup>34</sup> William L. Tung, *China and the Foreign Powers: The Impact of and Reaction to Unequal Treaties* (Oceana Publications, Inc., 1970), 19-90.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108.



the British and French supervised the Chinese postal service. For a whole century, Chinese tariffs had to be “low-rate” and “uniform.”<sup>36</sup> Second, in the judicial sphere, foreign powers enjoyed a unilateral extraterritoriality in the Chinese territories. When disputes or crimes involved foreigners, the Chinese government could not exercise jurisdiction over them.<sup>37</sup> Third, foreign powers widened their economic benefits and control over the Chinese economy through “acquiring railway and mining concessions” and by offering high-interest loans to the Chinese government.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, foreign involvement in China’s domestic politics in the late imperial period was detrimental to both China’s national sovereignty and economic prosperity, and it typified the effects of colonialism and imperialism on traditional societies in the early stage of globalization. Foreign powers imposed a large number of unequal treaties on China for their own benefit. This unidirectionally-imposed influence made the relationship between China and the international environment a non-intermestic one, if intermesticity means, as I define in Chapter One, the interpenetration between the two sides.

Moreover, the Chinese experience of this influence led to a strong “victim mentality” among the population and subsequently an official disengagement between China and the major western powers in the Mao era.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 109-110.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 112-114.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 116-125.

<sup>39</sup> Jian, 2003.

## **Intermestic Politics in the Mao Era**

With the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Mao Zedong sought to bring back the “central-kingdom mentality” that China had lost for one hundred years through domestic reconstruction and unyielding diplomacy.<sup>40</sup> History and ideology served as twin standards for Mao to tell friends from enemies in the international arena. The Mao era is noted for an insistence on the priority of national sovereignty over internal affairs and China’s conflictual relationship with the major western powers, particularly the United States. The intermesticity of Chinese politics during this period actually was suspended due to Mao’s radical resistance to foreign involvement in his domestic control.

### ***The Domestic: Social Transformation and Economic Reconstruction***

On October 1, 1949 at Tian’anmen in the heart of Beijing, Mao Zedong declared to the world the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, which marked the end of the foreign intrusions and civil wars of the previous century. Mao told the Chinese people that they had “stood up” and become the owner of the country.<sup>41</sup>

As maybe one of the most powerful men in human history, Mao probably had greater control over more people for a longer time than earlier leaders. He was the heir of the “mandate of heaven.” In the name of “social transformation,” Mao reconsolidated a strong state over society and built a vast new bureaucracy that blended the old imperial pattern with the Soviet Leninist political system. Mao sought a Chinese road to socialism. His transformation of Chinese society began with the transformation of people’s minds. He engineered several political movements to strengthen his personal influence over

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<sup>40</sup> Please see: Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Roderick MacFarquhar, “Introduction,” in *The Politics of China 1949-1989*, edited by Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1.

domestic affairs, especially over intellectuals who usually were independent thinkers and considered hard to control. The Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 marked the beginning of a series of political movements launched to purge the intellectual community, as Mao was less convinced that he needed the unreserved commitment of the intellectuals to advance national construction. In 1966, he plunged China into the Cultural Revolution in order to rear a young generation of revolutionary successors, who would be extremely loyal to him and who could be used to humiliate, torture, and even execute intellectuals, officeholders, and dissidents.<sup>42</sup> Fu Zhengyuan sees several similarities and continuities between China's old imperial politics and the new communist rule under Mao: imposition of an official ideology; the personal cult of the top leader; state domination over society; political mobilization and persecution; and centralization of power in economic ministries, the judiciary, and the military.<sup>43</sup>

Mao stressed all along the importance of "politics in command" in directing economic development. In this context, the Party rather than the government played a decisive role in new China's domestic construction. Even though he had great interest in economic administration, Mao lacked knowledge and experience in this area.<sup>44</sup> For example, he believed that through mounting campaigns and mobilizing the populace, he could unleash productive energies so that the state could modernize fast. As a result, he launched the Great Leap Forward movement in 1957, mobilizing 650 million people nationwide to build factories and dams, to make steel even in one's backyard, and to

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<sup>42</sup> Fairbank, 401-404, 417-421, 436-440.

<sup>43</sup> Zhengyuan Fu, *Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> Ezra Vogel, *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968* (Harvard University Press, 1969).

bring small-scale industry into the rural area. Unsurprisingly, the results were uneconomic and disappointing.<sup>45</sup>

Mao's era was an extension of Chinese traditional political control as well as a creation of a new socialist society under the guidance of imported Marxism-Leninism. This continuity is similar to the case of Russia. If Stalinism is "a product of the distinctive Russian political tradition,"<sup>46</sup> Maoism is a product of the unique Chinese political tradition. In a sense, Mao's Chinese Communist revolution was a revival of longstanding state domination over society. Despite his willingness to quickly make China a socialist power, Mao's arbitrary decisions led to one economic tragedy after another.

### ***Intermestic Processes in the Mao Era***

The establishment of the PRC marked the collapse of western involvement in Chinese life. Deep hostility existed between Mao's new China and the west, because on one hand, the west, particularly the United States, had a close relationship with the previous nationalist government, which was the CCP's mortal enemy, while on the other hand Mao was determined to lean to the Soviet Union, whose totalitarian socialism had scared the western world.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the Chinese diplomacy under Mao was noted for its sharp ideological orientation.

In the wake of the 1949 liberation, Mao sought to completely change China's humiliating relationship with the outside world. China disengaged from the West and began to strengthen its ties with other socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. In

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<sup>45</sup> Fairbank, 408-411.

<sup>46</sup> Robert V. Daniels, "Russian Political Culture and the Post-Revolutionary Impasse," *Russian Review* 46, no. 2 (1987): 165-175.

<sup>47</sup> Fairbank, 405.

addition, the Chinese government revived its dominant influences alongside its borders as the imperial dynasties had done in their golden age. In 1950, China participated in the Korean War and provided military support to the Viet Minh in Indochina. Mao tried to make China a leader in the “socialist camp” that fought against the “capitalist camp.” Yet Mao did not mean to challenge the leadership of the Soviet Union. In praising Stalin, he asked, “If we did not have a Stalin, who would give the orders?”<sup>48</sup>

The increased influence China had alongside its borders in the 1950s and the aid from its “elder brother” the Soviet Union encouraged Mao to carry out the domestic change at a faster pace. In 1957, as mentioned above, Mao initiated the Great Leap Forward and the Communes movements with the goal of achieving industrialization and agricultural collectivization within several years.

China relied heavily on Soviet assistance to advance socialist construction. The Soviet unidirectional influence on China in the 1950s, as Fairbank put it, can be “compared to [that of] the British after 1840, the Japanese after 1900, and the Americans in the 1930s and 1940s.”<sup>49</sup> China’s bureaucratic political system, the science establishment, social life, and agricultural-industrial production, followed the “Soviet Model.”<sup>50</sup> The Sino-Soviet honeymoon, however, ended with Stalin’s death in 1953. Under Krushchev, the Soviet Union tried to change the Sino-Soviet comradeship so that Russia would have greater control of this big country and its leaders. From the late 1950s to the end of 1960s, the Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated. The two former socialist brothers even had armed clashes in 1969 in China’s northeast and northwest borders.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Fairbank, 419.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 425.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 388-390.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 424.

The Sino-Soviet split led to a competition between the two communist giants over the leadership of the world socialist revolution. Unfortunately, Mao experienced “a time of setback” in his foreign policy in the year 1965. Beginning in February, the U.S. continuously bombed North Vietnam, China’s “neighboring ally.” In June, Beijing tried to arrange an Afro-Asian Conference keeping out the Soviet Union, but the effort was in vain. In October, the pro-Beijing Indonesian Communist Party was slaughtered.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Khrushchev’s criticism and denial of Stalinist policies brought Mao an unprecedented sense of crisis in his domestic control.<sup>53</sup> For all these reasons, Mao turned his attention inward. To rear loyal revolutionary successors, in 1966, Mao started the Cultural Revolution, pushing his totalitarian control to an extreme.

In sum, due to China’s humiliating history of the past century and with socialism as the official ideology, Mao carried out a consistent closed-door policy vis-à-vis the “capitalist camp” and only allowed the involvement of the Soviet Union in his demesne during the early years of the PRC. Finally, the Sino-Soviet split drove Mao to be even more wary of foreign powers. Although the politics in this period by no means became intermestic, the widening schism between socialist countries, particularly China and the Soviet Union, brought forth an opportunity for China to end its isolation in the international community.

Since Mao knew clearly that China could not simultaneously stand alone against both superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, after the Sino-Soviet brotherly alliance disintegrated, he reestablished diplomatic relations with the United States in the 1970s to contain the Soviet threat. The renewal of Sino-US relations ended the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 425-426.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 423-424.

bifurcation that had existed between China and the western world since 1949, setting the stage for Deng Xiaoping's reforms and opening up to the West after the death of Mao.

### **Intermestic Politics in the Post-Mao Time**

In order to solve the crisis of the CCP's political rule in the wake of the ten-year Cultural Revolution, the Chinese post-Mao leadership carried out policies of reform and opening up. In addition to the introduction of foreign goods, technology, and culture, international human rights, intellectual property, and arms control conventions are exerting increased influence over Chinese domestic policymaking. As a result, China now faces the dilemma of maintaining effective domestic control while it becomes more fully integrated into the global economy, as explained in Chapter One. Meanwhile, China has gradually come to be recognized as a member of the international community and an integral part of the global economy. It is becoming an influential actor in the international arena. In this sense, politics has reached the point of interpenetration of domestic and international realms and can therefore be considered "intermestic."

#### ***The Domestic: Economic Reform and Political Conservatism***

The chaos of the Cultural Revolution led to a crisis of the CCP's political legitimacy after Mao's death in 1976. When Deng Xiaoping took over the leadership of China in December 1978, he sought to restore the party's legitimacy through economic reforms. In the long course of Chinese history, reforms were often seen as an attempt to save the existing political and social order. Reformers in late Qing Dynasty, for example, proposed a pragmatic idea of "Chinese studies for the base; Western studies for use"<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms* (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1999), 3.

with the purpose of easing the tension between conservatives who resisted change and those who advocated learning from the west on the one hand, while restoring China's greatness on the other. Like the late Qing efforts, Deng's reform of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" that began at the end of 1978 tried to bring western-style economic practices into the centralized Maoist party-state.<sup>55</sup>

The post-Mao approach to reform is self-contradictory. Ding, drawing on earlier works, neatly characterizes it as a "dual traffic policy" in which economic reform is "anti-left" and runs counter to Maoist socialism while Chinese politics is "anti-right" and pro-Maoist.<sup>56</sup> As Ding noted, this contradictory approach results from the post-Mao leadership's determination to maintain the one-party system and protect its political legitimacy. Deng Xiaoping, however, knew the negative impact on Chinese citizens of the failures of the Mao era, such as the Great Leap Forward, the 1959-1961 famine, and the ten-year Cultural Revolution. He believed that "the only way for the party to hold on to its weakened mandate was to improve the standards of living for the majority of the population."<sup>57</sup> Provided the party authority stayed unchallenged, he spared no efforts in diminishing poverty: the cat could be any color as long as it caught mice.<sup>58</sup>

At the beginning of the reform, China followed the East Asian and Southeast Asian models found in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea as it had earlier followed the Soviet Model.<sup>59</sup> Deng and other open-minded party leaders sought to regain a mandate by introducing rural reforms, a market economy, and international trade and

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>56</sup> X. L. Ding, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> Goldman and MacFarquhar, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 5.



investment. Although the huge state apparatus kept alert to any political challenges that might threaten communist rule, they allowed some limited political reforms, which “not only made China more open to the outside world than at any other time in the twentieth century, but also decentralized both political and economic power as China moved toward a market economy.”<sup>60</sup> These somewhat radical solutions, however, irritated the conservative party leaders, who insisted on limiting the reform solely to the economic area because they feared that loosening internal control would endanger rather than save the party-state.<sup>61</sup> Here emerged the dilemma reformers had to face: how to integrate China into the world economy to be “rich and powerful” while at the same time maintain effective political control domestically.

The 1989 Tian’anmen Square pro-democracy protest gave the conservative leaders a chance to testify their warnings and to reassert their authority. By cracking down on the student protests in Tiananmen Square, the authorities in Beijing not only put a halt to domestic political reform, but also again turned Chinese politics inward for “introspection.” The CCP leadership shifted from economic reforms and opening up back to Marxism-Leninism’s “spiritual construction” in order to reassert the central authority over domestic affairs. Because of this shift, together with the sanctions the international community imposed on China for its human rights abuses in the June 4 Tian’anmen event, China’s export-oriented economy virtually stopped.<sup>62</sup>

The combination of domestic control and economic reform, however, never came to an end. With the conservatives having the advantage only for three years, Deng launched

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32-38.

a highly publicized tour of South China to revive economic reforms in early 1992. Deng realized that the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was caused by its long-term economic failures rather than the perestroika reforms initiated by Gorbachev. He feared that China would follow in the Soviet Union's steps if the national leadership adhered to Mao's "politics in command" instead of "economics in command."<sup>63</sup>

With the rapid development of China's socialist market economy, under the endorsement of the CCP, since the 1990s it has become more and more obvious that the old political structure cannot catch up with the pace of the economic reforms and on some occasions even holds back the latter. China has many problems that have arisen in conjunction with the economic reforms, such as bureaucratic inefficiency, rule by person instead of law, lack of personal freedom and rights, and increasing corruption and economic crimes. Obviously, sporadic efforts to deal with crises when they occur do not address systemic conditions. To wrestle with these problems requires political reforms.

Since reforms were instituted, Beijing's position as the country's decision making center has also declined. The party-state has loosened its control over the domestic economy, society, and culture and no longer dominates all aspects of life as it did in the Mao era. Meanwhile, traditional official values and behaviors face a challenge from the influx of international influences in politics and culture.<sup>64</sup>

Although economic reforms have proceeded rather smoothly since the early 1990s, the dilemma continues to bother the CCP leadership. While Deng and his followers tried to maintain the political legitimacy of the party-state through economic reforms and opening to foreign trade & investment, these reforms have adversely challenged the

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<sup>63</sup> Goldman and MacFarquhar, 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 6.

legitimacy of the one party system.<sup>65</sup> As China has sped up its integration into the global economy, it has faced more and more criticism and international involvement in its handling of domestic affairs. Relations between China and the international community have become truly “intermestic,” affecting both China’s internal policymaking and its integration into the global economy.

### ***Intermestic Politics with Positive Consequences***

China’s post-Mao time has been characterized by a gradual interpenetration between the domestic and the international in both economic and noneconomic spheres. As international capital, technologies, and goods flow in, great changes have taken place in Chinese living conditions, political culture, and education. Simultaneously, China has become an integral part of world economy.

Despite China’s resistance to international involvement in its domestic politics, the international community has kept trying to change the government’s hesitancy to abide by international institutions, norms, and regulations with respect to human rights, intellectual property, and arms control. For example, the United States has tried to employ a normal Sino-US relationship and use economic benefits as the sources of a binding power over China’s human rights performance. Yet, the George H. W. Bush administration and its successor the Clinton administration displayed different strategies of foreign influence on Chinese politics: the former used containment and the latter engagement, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 5. The Bush administration resorted to an ironhanded policy toward China’s domestic control in the wake of the Tian’anmen crackdown. On June 6, 1989, the Bush administration took sanctions against China, including “a suspension of sales of military items, suspension of visits between US and

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<sup>65</sup> Goldman and MacFarquhar.

Chinese military leaders; a ‘sympathetic review’ of requests from Chinese students for asylum.”<sup>66</sup> On June 20, the Bush administration publicly opposed the World Bank’s and other international financial institutions’ decisions to lend to China. Meanwhile, high-level official exchange between the two countries was suspended. On January 30, 1990, Bush approved a China sanctions bill “that includes a ban on Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) insurance for US investment in China, a suspension of export licenses for the sale of munitions, crime control equipment and satellites, and a prohibition on the liberalization of COCOM controls on the sale of high technology goods.”<sup>67</sup> In October 1990, the U.S. House of Representatives first revoked China's Most Favored Nation status by a vote of 247 to 174, though it later resolved to resume MFN with “strict human rights conditions” by a vote of 383 to 30.<sup>68</sup>

Beginning in 1993, the Clinton Administration continued such a conditioned MFN approach to China as a way to exert pressure on China’s human rights situation. But in May 1994, Clinton applied a new strategy of soft pressure by de-linking human rights and MFN. Although “China had not made significant progress on many of the issues outlined in Clinton’s 1993 Executive Order,” Clinton believed that “a tough human rights policy was hampering the ability of the U.S. to pursue other interests.”<sup>69</sup> His new human rights policy included “an effort to get U.S. businesses in China to adhere to a *voluntary* set of principles for protecting human rights, increased support of broadcasting to China, expanded multilateral efforts on human rights and support for nongovernmental

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<sup>66</sup> Human Rights Watch, “President Clinton's Visit To China In Context,” 1998, <<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/china-98/visit.htm>> (8 April 2004).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

organizations in China – although none existed at the time.”<sup>70</sup> From the year 1995, Clinton took the strategic step of beginning frequent high-level exchange visits. The political impasse between the two countries began to melt away. In June 1998, Clinton's official trip to China signaled a turning point in Sino-US relations. It marked not only an end of the political impasse between the two powers since 1989 , but also a milestone in the development of the bilateral relationship by establishing "constructive engagement."<sup>71</sup> After the normalization of the Sino-US relationship, China speeded up its pace to meet requirements for entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), as a crucial step toward China's integration into the global economy. China's accession into the global trading body was approved on November 10, 2001.<sup>72</sup>

Clinton's strategy of engaging China as a member of the international community gradually had an impact on China's internal politics. Although China does not accept the international standard of human rights based on western enlightenment, Beijing has begun to respond positively to external pressures over its domestic political control. For example, central party members drafted an amendment to include protection of human rights in the national constitution in the fall of 2003.<sup>73</sup>

With enhanced economic power, China has been playing a more and more critical role in the global economy and politics. More importantly, Beijing has shown a sign of constructing a more responsive image domestically and internationally. In the 1997-1998 Asian economic disaster, China sacrificed its national interests to regional growth and

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> "China becomes formal WTO member," *People's Daily Online*, 11 December 2001, <[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200112/11/eng20011211\\_86339.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200112/11/eng20011211_86339.shtml)> (12 April 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Kathleen Hwang, "Analysis: Pressure mounts on China rights," *United Press International*, 27 February 2004, <<http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20040227-080751-5152r>> (23 June 2004).

stability by promptly contributing to the “Thai bailout package,” supporting the Hong Kong currency, and stimulating “the domestic economy through increased government infrastructure and accelerated enterprise and banking reforms.”<sup>74</sup> Domestically, researchers also find that “in fostering economic success since 1989, China’s rulers have unleashed social forces that significantly weaken their control.”<sup>75</sup> The Chinese people are experiencing greater freedom than ever since 1949. But all these improvements do not mean Beijing will tolerate direct threats to its rule. As the study in Chapter Three of China’s SARS policy in its early stage shows, when the SARS virus spread in South China and could have produced social unrest and economic stagnation, the Chinese government chose not to tell the truth and instead keep it a secret from its own people and the world.

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<sup>74</sup> Michel Oksenberg and Elizabeth Economy, “Introduction: China Joins the World,” In *China Joins the World*, edited by Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg (The Council of Foreign Relations, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “China: A World Power Again,” *The Atlantic Online*. August 1999, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99aug/9908china.htm>> (17 June 2004).

## **Chapter Three China's SARS Policy: The First Stage (November 16, 2002-April 16, 2003)**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how China's SARS issue became intermestic. Although SARS is not a disease caused by humans, government inaction and misinformation produced a contagious disaster. The first stage of the epidemic witnessed an "inside-out" spread of the SARS virus, from South China to almost every continent on earth. In the history of the PRC since 1949, no other domestic health issue has had more international impact than the SARS policy of early 2003. Policy making in this stage exhibits the country's political tradition of government's trying to exert absolute control over internal bad news. Moreover, the central-local administrative system, the previous practices dealing with other health crises, and the manipulation of information, particularly during the 16<sup>th</sup> People's Congress, all led to SARS reaching epidemic proportions.

### **The Disease**

SARS—severe acute respiratory syndrome—is a coronavirus-caused respiratory illness. The first known case of SARS was discovered in China's Guangdong province on November 16, 2002 and this "mysterious pneumonia" did not gain wide attention until February 2003 when it spread to over twenty countries in almost all continents. According to the WHO, in the 2003 epidemic a total of 8,098 people became infected, of whom 774 died from that disease.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Basic information about SARS," 13 January 2004, <<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/factsheet.htm>> (6 May 2004).

What is known about SARS? First of all, SARS is an unexpected disease arising from natural sources. The first known SARS case occurred in a chef who used to cook certain wild animals served as local delicacies. Scientists have found from tests of animals that “the SARS strain of coronavirus is present in masked palm civets, Chinese ferret badgers, and raccoon dogs.” The virus probably moved from these animals to humans.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, one can hardly blame any country or any government for the emergence of the SARS virus. Second, the SARS virus is highly contagious and mainly spread through “close person-to-person contact,” including “kissing or hugging, sharing eating or drinking utensils, talking to someone within 3 feet, and touching someone directly.”<sup>78</sup> Third, SARS is a formidable disease unseen in medical history. Even today, one year after the outbreak, scientists all over the world have not developed effective antivirus solutions beyond the treatment methods used in the 2003 outbreak.<sup>79</sup>

Although SARS is not a man made disease, the swift development of policies to handle it could have led to different results. Without prompt response and action from the Chinese government, SARS soon evolved into a national and international crisis.

### **The Policy**

SARS policy in early 2003 showed an old face of the Chinese politics: the authorities controlled the flow of information for the sake of political stability and economic development. Due to its slow response to the SARS disease, China missed the best timing

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<sup>77</sup> Marian Koshland Science Museum of the National Academy of Sciences, “Where did SARS come from?” <<http://www.koshlandscience.org/exhibitdna/inf04.jsp>> (6 May 2004).

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>79</sup> “Virus: SARS-treating SARS,” *Schoolscience Website*, <<http://www.schoolscience.co.uk/content/4/biology/abpi/diseases/disease8.html>> (7 May 2004).



to contain the epidemic. Based on the degree of the government's responsiveness to the epidemic, this stage can be divided into three periods.

***Period 1: Nonresponsiveness & Misinformation***

Early in mid-December, doctors in Guangdong noticed this mysterious and virulent disease, but provincial officials, while waiting for Beijing's instructions, did little to deal with it until February.<sup>80</sup> January was the time of China's biggest holiday—the Spring Festival, during which hundreds of thousands of migrant workers left the more industrialized Guangdong province to return home to different parts of China for traditional family celebrations. Such home visits by infected travelers carried the SARS virus throughout China. An infected Guangdong resident visited Hong Kong on February 21, 2003, initiating spread of the disease from Hong Kong to other Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, and subsequently to North America.<sup>81</sup> It was not until mid-February 2003 that the Chinese Ministry of Health reported that there had been 300 cases, including five deaths in Guangdong, from a mysterious “atypical pneumonia.”<sup>82</sup>

Chinese media also failed to release information about SARS during this period. As the *Asian Wall Street Journal* criticized, “Chinese newspapers carry almost no articles shedding light on the disease.”<sup>83</sup> Despite the fact that the epidemic peaked in February in

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<sup>80</sup> Matthew Forney, “Stalking a Killer,” *Time Online Edition*, 14 April 2003, <<http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030421/tictoc.html>> (15 April 2004).

<sup>81</sup> John Gittings, “Hong Kong SARS Outbreak Ends,” *Guardian*, 24 June 2003, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sars/story/0,13036,983874,00.html>> (15 April 2004).

<sup>82</sup> “SARS Timeline,” *CBC News (Canada) Online*, <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/sars/timeline.html>> (15 April 2004).

<sup>83</sup> Karen Richardson, Leslie Chang, and Richard Borsuk, “Deadly Illness Keeps Its Grip On Parts of Asia--- Hong Kong Cases Increase; Despite Strct Measures, Singapore Adds a Fatality,” *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 31 March 2003, sec. A, p.1.

Guangdong province<sup>84</sup> and had already spread quickly to northern China, *Xinhua News Agency*, the biggest official media outlet, did not mention anything about the disease in its daily news until February. From February to mid-April, there were three types of report in the Chinese media. One type of report denied the existence of the disease. For example, three months after the first emergence of the SARS case in Guangdong, *Xinhua* said on February 13 that there was no sign of any abnormal pneumonia in Hong Kong, which neighbored Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong and one of the worst hit areas in the entire epidemic.<sup>85</sup> The second type of report claimed that the disease was curable, before there was scientific evidence. An April 19 report was an interview with recovered patients, who conveyed the information to the public that SARS was not incurable.<sup>86</sup> Once the epidemic could no longer be ignored, *Xinhua* published the third type of reports to reflect good news or “progress” achieved in treating SARS patients. An April 4 report announced “WHO experts value Guangdong’s experience of curing hundreds of SARS patients.”<sup>87</sup> In that report, *Xinhua* claimed that the number of the infected cases had dropped in Guangdong, but failed to mention that Guangdong as one of the most prosperous areas in China has a better health care system than most other provinces.

Despite a news blackout, what the government could not control was the rapid spread of the deadly SARS virus into countries neighboring South China. Once doctors and

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<sup>84</sup> “Uncompromising Doctor,” *China Daily*, 2 May 2003, <<http://test.china.org.cn/english/NM-e/63794.htm>> (15 April 2004).

<sup>85</sup> “No Unusual Pneumonia Observed in HK – officials,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 13 February 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (16 April 2004).

<sup>86</sup> “SARS is not incurable: recovered patients,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (16 April 2004).

<sup>87</sup> Chaoxiang Zhang and Yang Xia, “WHO Experts Value Guangdong's Experience of Curing Hundreds of SARS Patients,” *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service in Chinese*, 4 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (16 April 2004).

governments of those infected areas, as well as the WHO, identified this new mysterious disease and traced its origin back to Guangdong province,<sup>88</sup> China's SARS problem was no longer a domestic health issue, but an intermestic one. That is to say, the Chinese government would now face increasing international attention over its handling of SARS.

***Period 2: Attempts to Define SARS as a Locally-contained Problem***

On March 12, 2003, the WHO issued its first global alert about SARS<sup>89</sup> and warned on April 2 against travel to Hong Kong and Guangdong province.<sup>90</sup> The emergence of international concerns pressured the Chinese government to pay more attention to the SARS epidemic. Upon international request, the Chinese Ministry of Health began to release data on SARS cases and deaths on April 2 and promised to comply with the WHO standard to issue daily reports. Almost 400 new cases were reported for the month of March, bringing the total number of cases in the province of Guangdong to 1,153.<sup>91</sup> In addition to releasing data, Chinese officials granted the request made nearly a week earlier by the WHO team to visit Guangdong to try to pinpoint the origin of the virus as well as its transmission routes.<sup>92</sup>

The WHO recommended postponement of all non-essential travel to Hong Kong and to Guangdong. In quick response, the Chinese government held a press conference to question this recommendation, instead of working out an effective policy against the

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<sup>88</sup> Lawrence K. Altman, "China Provides Information on Deadly Health Threat," *New York Times*, 17 March 2003, sec. A, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> World Health Organization, "Chapter 5: SARS: lessons from a new disease," *The World Health Report*, <<http://www.who.int/whr/2003/chapter5/en/index1.html>> (16 April 2004); Lawrence K. Altman and Keith Bradsher, "Rare Health Alert Is Issued by W.H.O. for Mystery Illness," *New York Times*, 16 March 2003, <<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9D01E7D61F3EF935A25750C0A9659C8B63>> (16 April 2004).

<sup>90</sup> Keith Bradsher, "Travel Advisory: Correspondent's Report; Hong Kong Tourism Battered by Outbreak," *New York Times*, 13 April 2003, sec. Travel Desk.

<sup>91</sup> The data were confined mainly to the situation in Guangdong province where the peak of the epidemic had been over, and they indicated that there were only a few cases and deaths in the neighboring provinces like Guangxi, Hunan, and Sichuan, let alone the northerner part, such as the Beijing area.

<sup>92</sup> *CBC News (Canada) Online*.

epidemic through international cooperation. Only one day after the report of 400 new cases, China's Minister of Health Zhang Wenkang asserted that the epidemic was under control. Travel to China was safe, he claimed, because there had been a 48 percent drop in the infection rate in Guangdong. Zhang raised three points to defend China from external criticism and to challenge the international warnings against travel to China. First, he denied SARS was a Chinese export because there was "no conclusive evidence that the new virus originated in China, even if the first reported cases appeared there." Second, he stressed that China had made "effective" efforts to "diagnose, treat and contain" the disease due to the *fact* that the new infection rate had dramatically declined in Guangdong and fewer cases had appeared in China's other provinces. Third, he contended there was nothing unusual about "the paucity of news about the epidemic in China's government-controlled press" because it was consistent with national traditions and laws that the government decided the proper time to give public notices. He further explained the "national traditions" as the belief that the ordinary people had in the government and as a result of this trust, the Chinese people did not need "alarming" daily reports to "keep them informed."<sup>93</sup> Zhang's "defense" of the Chinese government's actions against the disease conveyed two goals: (a) internally to diminish rumors about a deadly contagious disease and (b) externally to recover foreign confidence in the safety of living, traveling, and doing business inside China.

After WHO investigators pinpointed the world's first known SARS victim in Foshan, a city of Guangdong province, it became more difficult for the Chinese government to claim its lack of connection to the quick spread of the deadly disease. Just two days after

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<sup>93</sup> Michael Dorgan, "Despite 400 New Cases of Deadly SARS, China Says Epidemic Under Control," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, 4 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (17 April 2004).

a WHO team was allowed for the first time into Guangdong and one day after Zhang's defense of the government's slow response to the SARS epidemic, Li Liming, director of the Chinese CDC, announced to the world: "Today, we apologize to everyone" for not revealing the deadly epidemic for four months before its global outbreak.<sup>94</sup> Although Li did not clarify what he meant by the vague word "we" here, it was a formal apology that Li as a high-level officer in Beijing made on behalf of the central government and an extraordinary action of a type the government had never taken since its establishment in 1949. This apology confirmed the suspicions of the international community: China's health officials had had access to the real information about SARS from the very beginning. Moreover, it showed that the government's inaction had led, not away from, but into trouble.

In sum, during this period, the Chinese government tried to deny its responsibility for the global SARS epidemic while attempting to define the SARS epidemic as a locally contained problem. As long as SARS was remained a domestic issue, the government could claim that the problem was "under control" in response to increasing international criticism. By spending precious time and energy in defending itself against international warnings and travel advisories, the government missed the most critical opportunity to curb the spread of the SARS virus across the nation. Even when the epidemic endangered the capital Beijing, the government was still hesitant to take resolute actions.

### ***Period 3: Policy Responses to International Criticisms***

From mid-April 2003, China's SARS epidemic was no longer a secret to the country's own population and the world. The international community zeroed in on the

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<sup>94</sup> "China Says Sorry for Slow SARS Response," *HON News* (Health On the Net Foundation), 4 April 2003, <<http://www.hon.ch/News/HSN/512587.html>> (17 April 2004).

government's inactive response to, as well as misinformation of, the epidemic. As a *New York Times* article mentioned, "China's restrictions on information about a highly infectious respiratory illness has undermined five years of diplomacy intended to alter its image as a prickly regional power and to improve relations with neighboring countries, Asian politicians and analysts..."<sup>95</sup> Even though the underreporting of the real incidence of SARS had damaged China's international image and rumors among the Chinese population were threatening domestic stability, Chinese authorities were still uncertain about how open or transparent its SARS policy should become. After all, the state was accustomed to hiding bad news for fear of upsetting the public or alarming foreign tourists and investors. What citizens could know from Beijing was still good news that could have alleviated public fears and worries. On April 7, it was announced that the outbreak was slowing down in China. But in Hong Kong the number of suspected and probable cases was still climbing. Forty-five new cases were reported there, bringing its total up to 928.<sup>96</sup>

The epidemic situation worsened faster than the government expected. In April, more and more inland provinces began to report cases of infection and quarantine the suspected ones. On April 14, China's Ministry of Health announced 47 new patients and 3 deaths in Shanxi province, 7 new cases and one death in Inner Mongolia, two new cases in Beijing, and 18 new cases in Guangdong. Meanwhile, medical authorities insisted that most SARS cases in China outside Guangdong province were "imported" rather than "bred" in

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<sup>95</sup> Kahn, "A Reticent China Undercuts Its Milder New Image," *New York Times*, 18 April 2003, sec. A, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> *CBC News (Canada) Online*.

cities like Beijing and Shanghai.<sup>97</sup> The international community, however, doubted the accuracy of such data and statements, especially those for the capital, Beijing.

Irritated by Zhang Wenkang's press conference on April 3 as well as China's official report of only 12 new SARS cases and three deaths in Beijing, Dr. Jiang Yanyong, a famous retired military surgeon and a CCP member, publicly questioned the official reports in a letter to three media agencies, including one influential Chinese newspaper, *Phoenix Hong Kong*, and *Time Magazine*. Jiang said that just one of the military hospitals, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) No.309 Hospital, had already had "60 patients and seven deaths from the disease" by then.<sup>98</sup> His letter disclosed that health workers at military hospitals had been ordered to keep silent about the disease. He also provided several examples of how and when SARS had been transmitted in Beijing, as opposed to the official explanation that the disease had been imported from elsewhere into the city. Only *Time Magazine* published Jiang's letter on its website on April 8 and *The New York Times* published a subsequent interview with Jiang in its newspaper on April 10.<sup>99</sup> Based on his disclosure, the WHO issued a travel advisory, warning foreigners not to go to certain parts of China, including Beijing. Other doctors in Beijing came forward to corroborate and elaborate on the details of Jiang's letter and described how SARS patients had been deliberately hidden from the WHO inspectors.<sup>100</sup> A local official from Shenzhen told *Time Magazine* that in his city where zero cases were reported, a health officer once announced at least six deaths in an internal meeting in early April. In

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<sup>97</sup> Hannah Beech, "Unmasking A Crisis," *Time Online Edition*, 14 April 2003, <<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,443226-1,00.html>> (18 April 2004).

<sup>98</sup> Dorgan, "China SARS cases may be 5 times official estimate," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, 17 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (18 April 2004).

<sup>99</sup> Elisabeth Rosenthal, "A Beijing Doctor Questions Data on Illness," *New York Times*, 10 April 2003, sec. A, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> John Pomfret, "Beijing Told Doctors to Hide SARS Victims," *Washington Post*, 20 April 2003, sec. A, p. 10.

Shanghai, despite the claim the city authority made that no foreigners had been infected there, Dr. Li Aiwu of the Shanghai Pulmonary Hospital confirmed that he had treated seven foreign SARS patients.<sup>101</sup>

Dr. Jiang's letter greatly embarrassed the health authorities. The official number of SARS cases in Beijing increased to 22 on April 10. In response to questions about the accuracy of the letter, however, Vice Minister of Health Ma Xiaowei dismissed Jiang's allegation of a cover-up at a press conference and stated explicitly that the official number included the totals from both civilian and military hospitals. A week after the number of Beijing cases had raised to 22, Ma reiterated the official claim that SARS was under control across China, despite the fact that only Guangdong province had reported a decline in the number of new cases.<sup>102</sup> The same day, the newly appointed Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong also claimed that Chinese health officials had "full control over atypical pneumonia."<sup>103</sup>

In late March, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial recommended that the world "quarantine China,"<sup>104</sup> reflecting the attitude of the international community toward China's handling of the SARS epidemic. The Chinese government leaders, who were newly elected in March and widely known as "the fourth generation," could no longer keep silent over the epidemic that had already developed into the first crisis of their administration. Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao finally expressed their concerns about the situation, signaling the top leaders' determination to change the

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<sup>101</sup> Beech, "Hiding The Patients: The Chinese government attempts to cover up cases of SARS," *Time Online Edition*, 28 April 2003, <[http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/from\\_search/0,10987,1101030428-444980,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/from_search/0,10987,1101030428-444980,00.html)> (18 April 2004).

<sup>102</sup> Dorgan, 17 April 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.

<sup>104</sup> "Quarantine China," *Wall Street Journal*, 31 March 2003, sec. A, p. 10.



SARS policy in the near future. As Xinhua reported, on April 12, Hu met in the southern port city of Shenzhen with Hong Kong's chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, to discuss especially the issues of SARS. The next day, Wen publicly admitted that "the overall situation (of the SARS epidemic) remains grave" and urged officials at all levels of government to assume "overall responsibility" to prevent SARS by spotting, reporting, isolating and treating cases as early as possible.<sup>105</sup> Hu inspected Guangzhou, the worst-hit area in China then, after his meeting with Tung. In this highly publicized trip, Hu manifested the manner of a leader of a responsive government. He visited 23 hospitals engaging in SARS control and talked with medical workers. He even walked in the downtown area of Guangzhou, which was a very brave action given that there were still 18 new cases reported on the same day. Hu clearly specified that SARS control should be regarded as "an important task" because he had seen its "strong impact on China's overall process of reform and opening up and on the health and lives of people." Hu called for "continuous and all-out efforts in the prevention and treatment of the disease."<sup>106</sup> On April 13, Premier Wen told a national conference organized especially for the control of SARS that China was facing a great challenge to fight SARS and that the control efforts enjoyed priority in the government's policy agenda. According to Wen, the State Council would mobilize the whole country to combat the disease.<sup>107</sup>

In such circumstances, the central government began to take some compulsory measures to deal with the national spread of SARS. On April 14, the State Council issued

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<sup>105</sup> "Situation in SARS-threatened China remains 'grave', premier warns," *Agence France Presse*, 14 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (19 April 2004).

<sup>106</sup> "Chinese president inspects SARS control work," *Xinhua*, 12 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (19 April 2004).

<sup>107</sup> "Premier Wen Jiabao: Control of SARS virus vital," *Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN Website*, 14 April 2003, <<http://un.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/46882.html>> (19 April 2004).

new rules under which force was allowed for Chinese police to isolate suspected SARS carriers. Medical stations were set up throughout China to check passengers traveling by bus, railway, plane and boat.<sup>108</sup> Different governmental departments, like the Ministry of Railway,<sup>109</sup> made plans for prevention of SARS in their respective areas. Meanwhile, citizens developed their own strategies to save themselves from the deadly disease. Some began to wear masks in the hope of filtering out the virus, and some believed smoking, drinking alcohol, cold tea, and Banlangen (a herbal root), or distilling white vinegar at home could help to ward off SARS.

In the Beijing area, there still existed a war over the accurate number of SARS cases. After making sure that medical authorities in Guangdong had been able to contain the spread of SARS in early April, the WHO began to zero in on the number of SARS cases in Beijing, estimating there were 100 to 200 infected patients as opposed to the official figure 37, including four deaths,<sup>110</sup> since “well over 1,000 people” were under medical observation.<sup>111</sup> Based on Dr. Jiang’s letter and a four-day investigation, the WHO team found that the numbers of SARS cases in Beijing military hospitals was being kept secret. Chinese officials asked the team not to give away the real situation there unless permitted by the Ministry of Defense.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Simon Pollock, “Chinese police to isolate possible SARS carriers,” *Japanese Economic Newswire*, 15 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (20 April 2004).

<sup>109</sup> “China strengthens sanitation on railway network, XINHUA,” *Xinhua*, 15 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (20 April 2004).

<sup>110</sup> Pollock, “China underplaying SARS patient numbers, WHO says,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, 16 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (20 April 2004).

<sup>111</sup> Dorgan, 17 April 2003.

<sup>112</sup> Ed Lanfranco, “WHO says Chinese SARS numbers inaccurate,” *United Press International*, 17 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (20 April 2004).

## **The Context**

China underreported the incidence and severity of SARS after its outbreak in Guangdong. Such misinformation, together with government inaction, led to a geographical expansion of the disease, followed by a decline in world confidence in China as a responsible member of the international community. For a couple of weeks, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao had been preaching transparency and collaboration with the WHO. However, WHO officials did not stop complaining about a lack of accurate information and cooperation from their Chinese counterparts. To interpret such contradictory phenomena, much attention should be paid to the political context when the epidemic occurred.

### ***Context 1: Structure of Institutional Incentives***

The current structure of Chinese institutions is designed to prevent dictatorship, that is, concentration of power in one person's hand. Reforms made under Deng attempts to correct problems of the Mao era, when Mao dominated the nation without government checks. With an overriding emphasis on bureaucratic consensus and political stability, however, the present structure can hardly swiftly react to emergencies. In such a cumbersome system, policies set by the top leaders are not implemented smoothly throughout the hierarchy. Consequently, there were conflicting messages coming from Beijing: President Hu and Premier Wen preached collaboration with the WHO while WHO's Chinese counterparts—the central and local health ministries—stonewalled. China's health departments stuck to a calculation of 60 SARS deaths and 1,300 cases on April 12, even after Premier Wen visited SARS patients in You'an Hospital, where

medical staff told reporters the full caseload there was not incorporated into the figures.<sup>113</sup>

The structure of Chinese institutions also enabled local health authorities not to take seriously the ministerial policies from above, which could partly account for why the numbers of SARS cases released by the Health Ministry were much lower than outside estimates. In the political hierarchy, the Ministry of Health is actually “bureaucratically weak”<sup>114</sup> in two respects: first, the Ministry does not have power over all health institutions, for instance, the military hospitals;<sup>115</sup> second, its minister ranks even lower than some party secretaries in several important provinces and municipalities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong.<sup>116</sup> As I mentioned before, provincial administrators in imperial China enjoyed the power to control the flow of information, as well as the appointment and removal of local officials. They could recommend local department heads, but the emperor was the final decision maker. Comparatively speaking, regional party bosses of today have even more powers than their ancient counterparts because they can directly appoint and remove local health bureau heads and control medical policy formation in their domains. Due to such an institutional relationship, the local health department is more directly responsible to the local government than to the Ministry of Health. In the SARS crisis, local CDCs reported updated SARS data first to the local cadre and then to the Ministry of Health.<sup>117</sup> Local bosses, like the provincial administrators in Qing dynasty, could determine what was proper to be reported to

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<sup>113</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.

<sup>114</sup> Yanzhong Huang, “Implications of SARS Epidemic for China's Public Health Infrastructure and Political System,” Paper as Testimony before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Roundtable on SARS, 2003, <[http://diplomacy.shu.edu/5\\_12\\_2003\\_Huang.htm](http://diplomacy.shu.edu/5_12_2003_Huang.htm)> (6 June 2004).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Beijing in order to protect local interests, to avoid responsibility, and to maintain a good record of one's political performance, as evidenced by the local cover-up of AIDS scandal in China's Henan province.

***Context 2: Cover-up of AIDS in China***

Local cover-up of SARS in this stage replicated the earlier AIDS cover-up in the 1990s. There was a longer and severer cover-up of one of the world's greatest AIDS scandals in China's Henan province prior to SARS. It took ten years for Beijing to admit an AIDS problem to the international community, yet even today not all Chinese actually know the crisis. It was not until 2002 that the leadership in Beijing increased its Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) estimate from 30,000 cases to up to 1 million under pressures from the foreign press and the U.N.. According to the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimate, there were 800,000 to 1.5 million Chinese infected by December 2001, and the number could reach 10 million by 2010.<sup>118</sup> Whether or not Beijing's revised estimate is accurate remains to be seen, just as we cannot know with any great certainty the real extent of the SARS epidemic in this first stage. Although AIDS as a disease was imported into China two decades ago, its nationwide spread has "Chinese characteristics": the transmission of HIV through unsafe blood collection practices encouraged by local officials.<sup>119</sup>

In 1992 after Deng Xiaoping's trip to South China, the whole country was stirred up by his slogan "to get rich is glorious."<sup>120</sup> Liu Quanxi, the new director of Henan Provincial Department of Health at that time, focused on developing the service sector in

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<sup>118</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Locked Doors: The Human Rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS in China," September 2003, <<http://hrw.org/reports/2003/china0803/>> (18 January 2004).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Goldman and MacFarquhar, 8.

the poor agricultural province mainly through setting up blood collection stations. The motive, as the Human Rights Watch report points out, was financial because local governments and officials could “take advantage of the highly profitable global demand for blood plasma.”<sup>121</sup> In Henan, one of the seven provinces in Central China where the AIDS epidemic spread rapidly through similar blood collection practices, perhaps one million villagers were infected through unsanitary practices at blood collection stations run by the local health departments as well as underground illegal collection centers. People got infected when their remaining blood returned to their body from the virus polluted extraction machine after extraction of the plasma.<sup>122</sup>

According to He Aifang, who disclosed the Henan blood tragedy in his well-circulated article “The Blood Wound,” the AIDS epidemic in Henan had alarmed some health experts and they tried to warn of the coming provincial disaster ever since 1995. However, Liu replied in an unquestioning manner that there was no AIDS in Henan. The five to ten year latency period of AIDS may be the reason why Liu could cover up the blood scandal for many years.<sup>123</sup> Experts, doctors, AIDS activists and journalists who were trying to report the real situation in Henan were harassed, oppressed, expelled from the province, or even arrested by local police.<sup>124</sup> Independent investigations were

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>122</sup> According to “Locked Doors,” China submitted an application to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in 2003, which estimates HIV prevalence rates among rural blood donors ranging from 4 to 40% across the seven central provinces that have a combined population of 420 million; and for most villagers in these provinces, “blood donation was a common source of supplemental income.” (p. 3)

<sup>123</sup> Aifang He, “The Blood Wound,” 28 November 2000, <<http://www.usembassy-china.org.cn/english/sandt/henan-hiv.htm>> (January 2004).

<sup>124</sup> Reporters without Borders, “Foreign and Chinese journalists banned from investigating the AIDS epidemic in Henan province,” 14 January 2002, <[http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=331](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=331)> (18 January 2004).

prohibited in Henan, and local governments ignored the call for treatment and compensation for the victims.<sup>125</sup>

Although since 1997 the Chinese central government has gradually shown a positive attitude in participating in the international anti-AIDS campaign by making some AIDS prevention and treatment plans, to date it has not taken any resolute action to end the cover-up in provinces such as Henan, and no government officials have been prosecuted or punished for their handling of AIDS. On the contrary, Liu Quanxi was promoted. “This impunity for local officials’ cover-up of the AIDS epidemic” led to “the lack of accurate epidemiological information nationwide.”<sup>126</sup> Moreover, it established a precedent for local officials to cover up the later SARS epidemic perhaps to avoid responsibility. The success of such cover-ups hinged on China’s effective policy of censorship.

### ***Context 3: The Longstanding Policy of Censorship***

According to Mao, the gun and the pen are two major sources of power.<sup>127</sup> That is why he insisted on keeping a tight grip on the pen throughout his leadership. The CCP manipulation of information, or censorship, has so far worked effectively throughout its 50-year rule until the sudden and unforeseen advent of SARS. According to the worldwide press freedom index published by Reporters Without Borders, a media watchdog based in Paris, China ranks No. 138 in the world above only North Korea.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2003.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>127</sup> Guo Liang, as quoted in “The Great Firewall,” by A. Lin Neumann, 2001, <[http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2001/China\\_jan01/China\\_jan01.html](http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2001/China_jan01/China_jan01.html)> (29 March 2004).

<sup>128</sup> Reporters without Borders, “Reporters without Borders publishes the first worldwide press freedom index,” October 2002, <[http://www.rsf.fr/article.php3?id\\_article=4116](http://www.rsf.fr/article.php3?id_article=4116)> (29 March 2004).

Crucial to its identity and survival, the CCP has made control of information a significant tool to construct the people's perception of reality.

As I mentioned before, *Asian Wall Street Journal* reporters were surprised at Chinese media's neglect of the fast spreading SARS epidemic in its early stage. But it was a familiar story in the PRC's medical history. Negative health information in China is often treated as a state secret,<sup>129</sup> particularly in the capital Beijing. In most cases, cover-up as well as underreporting has enabled the central and local government to avoid social instability as well as international intervention. By keeping a firm hand on information and a policy of effective censorship, officials may be able to control public sentiment and sustain a good image of the Party and the government. Take AIDS as an example. Villagers in Henan by no means knew the risk of contracting AIDS when they sold their blood. During 1992-1995, the golden age of the blood industry, one could hardly find any reports about the failure to sterilize medical equipment to forestall further contamination.

Doctors faced political interference in the SARS epidemic during its early stage. Many were so scared of being laid off for "betraying national secrets" that they either refused interviews from external media or agreed only under anonymity. Dr. Jiang, in his letter, mentioned that "medical officials told physicians they were 'forbidden to publicize' the SARS deaths 'in order to ensure stability.'"<sup>130</sup> Dr. Zhang Hanwei, director of the Shanxi Provincial People's Hospital in Taiyuan, related what he called "the 'three nos' disseminated by China's Ministry of Central Publicity: no talking to the media about

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<sup>129</sup> Huang.

<sup>130</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.



SARS, no talking to the public about treating the disease and no talking to WHO if its experts come calling.”<sup>131</sup>

Social stability was the most frequently mentioned explanation for the government’s early cover-up of the SARS epidemic, as had been the case for many other diseases in the past. *Time Magazine* quoted a Shanghai-based respiratory specialist, who sits on an advisory committee dealing with epidemic diseases, “Our primary concern is social stability, and if a few people’s deaths are kept secret, it’s worth it to keep things stable.”<sup>132</sup> Following this logic, the Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and the mayor of Beijing Meng Xuenong publicly announced that infection of SARS on a “small” scale and a few deaths did not affect the safety of traveling, living, and doing business in China and its capital Beijing. But this time, they were not as lucky as Liu Quanxi, who produced the AIDS scandal in Henan province yet was later promoted. To appease the WHO and the international community, the central government removed Zhang and Meng from their positions for their inadequate response to the outbreak and mishandling of information, although officials in their positions did not have the power to tell any truth that might cause social instability.

Worthy of mentioning is that the outbreak of SARS in Guangdong coincided with one of the country’s biggest political events. In preparation for the politically sensitive 16th People’s Congress held in November 2002, China’s Ministry of Central Publicity as usual informed the media of the proper limits for reports. Topics were forbidden if they could possibly negatively influence social stability or the party’s political image both domestically and internationally. According to Dr. Jiang’s letter, the first case of SARS in

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<sup>131</sup> Beech, 28 April 2003.

<sup>132</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.

Beijing actually occurred during the annual meeting of National People's Congress in March 2003 and the patient infected ten doctors and nurses at the Army's No. 302 hospital.<sup>133</sup> But no reporters dared to truthfully address the topic of a formidable epidemic at that time.

In conclusion, this chapter reviews the early story of the SARS epidemic in China—the government's evolving responses toward the disease as it became more and more intermestic. This chapter also describes the efforts of the Chinese government to keep the epidemic a domestic policy issue that could be handled in accordance with the Chinese logic. The focus of this logic is a claim of protecting social stability and economic development, which could be legitimately fulfilled even through manipulation of information. Finally, I interpret the contexts in which the early SARS policy came into being. China's institutional structure, the precedent of AIDS handling, and the long-existing censorship all provide explanations for the political behaviors of the local and central governments during this period. China's early SARS policy reflects the ruling party's desire to maintain an effective domestic control over affairs inside the national borders.

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<sup>133</sup> Rosenthal, 10 April 2003.

## **Chapter Four China's SARS Policy: The Second Stage (April 17, 2003- July 2003)**

This chapter will continue the story of China's SARS policy, which was achieved in an intermestic context. As the SARS epidemic became an intermestic issue, the second stage witnessed an "outside-in" influence of the international community on China's SARS policy. When the Chinese government admitted its misinformation about the infectious disease SARS, it had to face maybe the most serious political shake-up since the 1989 Tian'anmen Square crackdown. The government made an abrupt policy reversal by displacing two high-level officials and by launching a nationwide anti-SARS campaign. SARS policy making in this stage put an overriding emphasis on international expectations and cooperation, although the previous political control efforts, such as restrictions on information, did not disappear totally. The forces that propelled this policy change included both domestic and international factors.

### **The Policy Change**

In mid-April, the Chinese government began to modify its handling of the SARS epidemic and on April 20 it announced to the world its new SARS policy. Again, I will examine three time periods in this stage—before, during, and after the policy change—in order to depict a whole picture of how the Chinese government responded to the new intermestic situation in its firmly controlled health realm.

#### ***The Eve of Policy Change: A Change in Attitude***

Between April 17 and 19, a series of events taking place in Beijing revealed the government's changing attitude toward its SARS policy. First, the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs began to be involved in the SARS epidemic, which indicated the intermestic character of this event. On April 17, foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao claimed that China was “willing and ready to work with the international community to control the spread of SARS.”<sup>134</sup>

The same day, the working group on SARS control in Beijing was established. Liu Qi, a member of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee and secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the CCP, was named director of the working group, and the deputy directors included Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong, Health Minister Zhang Wenkang, and an official from the General Logistics Department of the Chinese PLA. Liu Qi called a meeting of hospital administrators in Beijing on April 19, at which he announced that hospitals in Beijing should not “turn away” suspected SARS cases and violation of this order would “be subject to punishment.”<sup>135</sup> According to Liu, the group would first work to “improve information flow and optimize the allocation of resources.” And Meng Xuenong reminded officials in different municipal jurisdictions of their responsibilities for SARS control.<sup>136</sup>

On April 18, during his highly publicized inspections of the anti-epidemic measures at schools, Chinese Premier Wen ordered a full disclosure of all SARS cases in China. For the first time, this new leader, who is famous for his mild personality, used some strong language in his statement. Quoting the *China Daily*, *Xinhua* reported that Wen “forbade” withholding any information on SARS and any violator would be “harshly

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<sup>134</sup> “SARS-China says it is working to make figures ‘accurate,’” *AFX - Asia*, 18 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (20 April 2004).

<sup>135</sup> “Beijing hospitals asked to cooperate in SARS control,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (20 April 2004).

<sup>136</sup> “Beijing establishes SARS control working group,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 18 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (20 April 2004).

punished.” According to Wen, the Chinese central government had already sent supervision teams to monitor local work on SARS control in the infected areas.<sup>137</sup>

***From Attitude to Action: Policy Change on April 20, 2003***

With the changed attitude of Chinese leadership toward the SARS epidemic, decisive actions were taken on April 20, 2003. The Health Minister Zhang Wankang and the Beijing Mayor Meng Xuenong were displaced from their positions and became the first high-ranking officials in the PRC removed just for negligence of duty. The official number of infected cases reported for Beijing increased “tenfold from 37 to 339.”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, Beijing also reported 402 suspected SARS cases, 18 deaths, and 5 foreigners who were diagnosed to have SARS.<sup>139</sup> Following the publicization of this information, Beijing became a deserted city almost overnight, as migrant workers and rich people fled. Within a short period, Beijing quarantined more than 20,000 people, closed government offices and entertainment facilities, shut down schools, and ordered college students not to leave campus. From April 21, the municipal government of Beijing began to give televised press briefings to Chinese and foreign media twice a week, providing detailed information on SARS in the capital. In an important press conference hosted by the State Council Information Office on April 20, Vice-Minister of Health Gao Qiang presented the whole situation of the SARS epidemic in China including that of the total 1,807 cases

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<sup>137</sup> “Chinese Premier urges honesty over SARS,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (20 April 2004).

<sup>138</sup> Eckholm, 21 April 2003.

<sup>139</sup> “Wrap-up: China reports 1,807 SARS cases,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (20 April 2004).

in China's 10 provinces and its autonomous regions, 79 had died while 1,165 had recovered and left hospital.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, Gao introduced new measures the central government was taking to halt the spread of SARS. For the SARS data released by the local governments in the infected Guangdong, Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Henan, and Ningxia provinces, the central government had already sent supervisory groups to "scrutinize and confirm" them. If found covering up the SARS situation, local officials would face severe punishment.<sup>141</sup> For densely populated areas including schools, government institutions, and barracks, efforts had "been redoubled to monitor and prevent the development of SARS." For foreigners as well as compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, measures included "popularizing knowledge of SARS and ways to prevent it, formulating detailed emergency plans, opening a 24-hour English service hotline, and designating two hospitals for them." For hospitals, it was forbidden to reject SARS patients "under *any* circumstances, including financial reasons."<sup>142</sup> Moreover, people in Beijing were informed of the addresses and contact information of six designated hospitals for SARS patients. For rural areas, measures included disinfecting all vehicles, providing equal medical service, and giving financial support to farmers who were infected. According to Gao, there were several "will-dos" by the government: first, to "mobilize the elite from medical and research circles to develop treatment methods and reduce deaths"; second, to "provide medical aid and subsidies to the poor people" who got infected and to offer

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<sup>140</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 April 2003; Pomfret, "SARS Coverup Spurs A Shake-Up in Beijing," *Washington Post*, 21 April 2003, sec. A, p. 01.

<sup>141</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 April 2003.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

“health-care subsidies to medical workers treating the disease”; and finally, to “timely adjust its program” dealing with SARS.<sup>143</sup>

Although the Chinese government promised severe punishment for cover-up in SARS handling and did punish two high-ranking officials, it still denied any previous cover-up of the SARS situation by any localities on the mainland. Gao said in the press conference that “inaccuracy of figures” was different from “intentional cover-up.”<sup>144</sup> China presented inaccurate SARS data in Beijing for two reasons: first, “the difficulty in diagnosing SARS”; second, ineffective communication and information exchange among the hospitals in Beijing, which were under the jurisdiction of different government divisions. Gao ascribed the sharp rise (ten-fold within three days) of SARS cases to China’s weak epidemic control system.<sup>145</sup> All these explanations showed the government’s efforts to save its “face” in the international community, which had challenged China’s credibility.

Another major concern of the government was to preserve normal social order and stability in this special period. Gao even encouraged local travel despite the fact that the central government decided to cancel the week-long May Day holiday to discourage large-scale traveling. Though not the safest place in the world, China would not be a dangerous place to visit, Gao reiterated.<sup>146</sup>

Besides introducing strides toward greater public accountability in handling the SARS epidemic, Gao expressed the central government’s will to “maintain normal international exchanges.” In other words, Beijing wanted international recognition of its new SARS policy to ward off embarrassment from a roar of worldwide criticism. As a

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> As quoted in “Wrap-up: China reports 1,807 SARS cases.”

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

result, WHO experts got permission to inspect the prevention efforts and the treatment of SARS patients in Shanghai, China's biggest business center, and some western areas. Zhu Qingsheng, another Vice-Minister of Health, even publicly asserted that the cooperation between China and the WHO had been "vigorous, successful and gratifying" since the WHO experts "spoke positively of China's contribution to the world in SARS diagnosis and treatment."<sup>147</sup>

Another remarkable stride toward political transparency and accountability was made the next day. Liu Qi<sup>148</sup> released a rare admission of responsibility and stated that he had failed to keep people informed about the SARS epidemic. Given that the actions of politburo members in China were "usually treated as state secrets and above public scrutiny," Liu's acknowledgement and self-criticism surprised the country and the world.<sup>149</sup> In late April, acting Mayor of Beijing Wang Qishan, who replaced Meng's position, publicly admitted that Beijing hospitals were "ill-prepared in terms of the ability of doctors and nurses, as well as medical equipment and facilities." And he considered it "too early to predict when the epidemic would peak in Beijing."<sup>150</sup>

More adjustments were gradually made in the wake of the abrupt changes of April 20. For example, just one day after Gao's encouragement of local traveling, China's National Tourism Administration prohibited travel agencies from organizing tours in local regions.<sup>151</sup> Stopping the spread of the SARS virus to rural areas soon became the major

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<sup>147</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 April 2003.

<sup>148</sup> As mentioned before, Liu Qi is a politburo member and the CCP secretary in charge of Beijing.

<sup>149</sup> James Kynge, "Admission on SARS fractures Beijing's wall of secrecy: rare apology from top official could herald new openness," *Financial Times*, 22 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (25 April 2004).

<sup>150</sup> Dorgan, "Economic fallout of SARS hits billions of dollars," *Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*, 30 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (25 April 2004).

<sup>151</sup> "China's tourist industry fights SARS," *People's Daily Online*, 22 April 2003, <[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200304/22/eng20030422\\_115572.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200304/22/eng20030422_115572.shtml)> (25 April 2004).



domestic policy concern for the Chinese government, because if the capital could suffer such a grim SARS crisis, other parts of China with poorer health care conditions would fare worse once the epidemic exploded nationwide.<sup>152</sup> From early June, only one month after China's SARS policy reversal, the government's anti-SARS measures began to take effect. June 2 marked the first day that Mainland China recorded no new SARS cases since the beginning of daily reporting about SARS in late April.<sup>153</sup>

### ***Salvaging International Image: China's New Role in the Global Anti-SARS Campaign***

With the epidemic inside the national boundaries basically controlled, China then sought to play an active and even leading role in the global anti-SARS campaign. Its efforts to restore a reliable image started with the so-called "Hu-Wen new deal." China's new President and Party Chief Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao had personally established a public image of being more open to the outside world and having more compassion toward people's sufferings, although they had remained silent at the beginning of the epidemic. When meeting with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders to address the SARS crisis at the end of April, Chinese premier Wen agreed to promote information exchange and pledged RMB10 million yuan (1.2 million dollars) for a joint fund for the SARS control.<sup>154</sup> Wen also confessed at the ASEAN-China leaders emergency summit that China's SARS situation was "still grave."<sup>155</sup>

In the SARS symposium held on June 3 attended by more than 100 health officials and experts from 13 east and southeast Asian nations, China not only recommended its

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<sup>152</sup> *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 April 2003.

<sup>153</sup> "China's mainland reports no new SARS cases for first time," *Xinhua News Agency*, 2 June 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (26 April 2004).

<sup>154</sup> "Full text of statement of ASEAN, China leaders," *Japanese Economic Newswire*, 29 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (1 May 2004).

<sup>155</sup> "SARS-ASEAN, Chinese leaders announce joint measures to combat epidemic," *AFX - Asia*, 30 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (1 May 2004).

ways of fighting SARS by “improving the organization of SARS prevention and treatment, integrating SARS prevention and control into the legal system and intensifying scientific research,” but also called on Asian governments to “enhance the sharing of information about SARS” so as to “push forward international efforts to develop a vaccine.”<sup>156</sup> All these measure indicated a huge change in the Chinese government’s attitudes and actions toward SARS control and regional security. These changes were pushed forward by both international and domestic forces.

### **Forces Behind the Policy Change**

As the SARS epidemic became an intermestic issue, the Chinese leadership had to face pressures from both the domestic society and the international community. Given that China’s handling of SARS in the earlier stage had created “a crisis of confidence” in China’s newly installed leaders, the so-called “fourth generation,” it was very possible that such a crisis of confidence could quickly evolve into “a crisis of governance” if the leaders let things go.<sup>157</sup> To avoid this possibility, the new leadership took decisive actions on April 20 to contain the epidemic. Several intermestic forces underlay this shift.

### ***Economic Decline and Social Instability***

For years, China has relied on high economic growth rate promoted by its export-oriented economy to generate new job positions for its rapidly increasing population. The spread of SARS, however, had led to a stagnation in the flow of people and goods across the world. This not only damaged the economy of China, a growth center of the world economy, but it also affected that of other states, particularly in Southeast Asia. SARS

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<sup>156</sup> “China urges better international information sharing to beat SARS,” *Japanese Economic Newswire*, 3 June 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (1 May 2004).

<sup>157</sup> Dorgan, 30 April 2003.

has both direct and indirect economic effects.<sup>158</sup> For example, the medical expenditures to diagnose and cure patients directly used up funds intended for many economic projects, while the decline of normal economic activities such as tourism, consumption, trade, and investment indirectly blocked the progress of economic development. Moreover, according to professor Jeffery Sachs from Columbia University, losses caused by the indirect aspects were much larger than the direct ones.<sup>159</sup> Here I focus my discussion of China's economic decline and social instability during the SARS outbreak on four aspects: trade, tourism, employment, and panic.

### 1. Trade

When the international community zeroed in on China's lack of response toward SARS and manipulation of information, which led to a wide spread of the epidemic domestically and internationally, China's economic cooperation and trade with foreign countries virtually stopped and as a result, China's economic growth slowed. As the CCP's biggest newspaper the *People's Daily* described, "senior commercial and economic exchanges were delayed or canceled in fear of SARS. Undergoing foreign-funded projects were postponed. International finance and foreign government loans on programs in China were suspended. Outsourcing engineering projects and labor cooperation got limited."<sup>160</sup> Moreover, the Ministry of Commerce reported that "the contract value of foreign capital and its growth in April declined by 33 percent and 37

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<sup>158</sup> China Academy of Health Policy (CAHP) at Peking University, "SARS Impacts on Chinese Economy, Health and Macroeconomic Situation, International Experience and Enlightenment, —'SARS Challenges China—Cross-Pacific Dialogues Between Chinese and Foreign Scholars' Bulletin 1," Newsletter(15), <<http://www.cahp.org.cn/uploadfile/2003118219699589.doc>> (3 May 2004).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> "Report: China's Employment Hit Hard by SARS." *People's Daily Online*, 20 June 2003, <[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200306/20/eng20030620\\_118620.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200306/20/eng20030620_118620.shtml)> (3 May 2004).

percent than in the first quarter respectively.” By late April, new foreign-funded enterprises had declined 5 percent.<sup>161</sup>

## 2. Tourism

China’s booming domestic and international tourism industry suffered a great loss as a result of the SARS epidemic in 2003. In late April, the central government cancelled the May Day holiday—one of the three “golden week” national holidays, each of which previously generated an average of RMB30 billion yuan (3.6 billion US dollars) as tourism revenue—in order to discourage travel and prevent the potential spread of the SARS virus to non-affected areas. Furthermore, cities adopted policies to slow down the epidemic, which also worsened economic stagnation. For example, the Beijing municipal government closed “all movie theaters, Internet cafes, discos and other places of entertainment” after April 28; the Guangdong provincial government told tour groups not to enter or leave.<sup>162</sup>

After the WHO announced its travel advisory for the SARS-affected areas, travel to China almost ended. Regular flights from and to China were cancelled because of insufficient demand. Tourism and its related industries like travel agencies, hotels, and restaurants were facing possible financial ruin. Even in Hong Kong, one of the world’s financial centers, hotels experienced less than 5 percent occupancy during the outbreak of SARS.<sup>163</sup>

## 3. Employment

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Bradsher, “The SARS Epidemic: Economy; Outbreak of Disease Brings Big Drop-off in China’s Economy,” *New York Times*, 28 April 2003, <<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9C04E5DA133DF93BA15757C0A9659C8B63>> (4 May 2004).

<sup>163</sup> Bradsher, “Single Occupancy Indeed,” *New York Times*, 18 May 2003, <<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9C00E2DA1E3FF93BA25756C0A9659C8B63>> (4 May 2004).

According to a report released by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the SARS crisis had greater negative impacts on employment than on the general economy. Due to economic stagnation, the number of job listings declined and long-term employment prospects were gloomy. More than two million college graduates of 2003 had to face an unpromising job market. Labor-intensive industries were the worst-hit economic sector, as enterprises laid off employees to counter “a sharp decline or suspension in business and revenue.”<sup>164</sup> Part-time workers were also hard-hit because they were not protected by labor contracts. Statistics from the National Tourism Administration showed that among the 6 million tourism industry employees, part-time workers were “the most vulnerable to be laid off,” and job opportunities were greatly reduced in tourism-related sectors.<sup>165</sup>

The urban services sector also suffered high unemployment. In most cities that reported diagnosed SARS cases, employees in entertainment, catering, and transportation services “were on ‘shutout’ or semi-‘shutout.’” Likewise, part-time workers in the service sector, a large percent of whom were migrant villagers, had to go back home or stay unemployed.<sup>166</sup>

#### 4. Panic

When the death toll caused by the “mysterious pneumonia” kept rising in several major cities, panic pervaded the whole nation, especially the vulnerable communities like villages. Beijing residents began to store lots of food in fear of “compulsory quarantines”

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<sup>164</sup> *People's Daily Online*, 20 June 2003.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

in their living areas.<sup>167</sup> Migrant workers fled the capital, spreading the virus as well as rumors. In late April, thousands of people in Chagugang, a rural town near the two municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin, rioted because they heard that SARS patients would be transferred from Tianjin to one of their local schools. As well, for the first time, residents of Beijing experienced hostility and discrimination wherever they went. Farmers living on the outskirts of Beijing even set up roadblocks to prevent them from entering the villages.<sup>168</sup>

Although the government improved its handling of SARS, it was hard to ease the public panic that spread faster than the SARS virus. People relied more on Internet and cell phone messages than the *People's Daily*. Such panic brought even greater damages to China's economy than the medical expenditures, according to the nationally renowned economist Mao Yushi. "In economic terms, the real loss comes not from the disease itself but from the suspicion among people" because "no one knows who is bearing the virus. It prevents people from having contact with each other."<sup>169</sup> In such circumstances, panic could threaten the social stability upon which the CCP's political legitimacy rested because of loss of the people's confidence in the government's ability to contain the disease and save them from disaster.

### ***International Criticism***

The pressures from the international community played a critical role in China's SARS policy change. In an era of globalization, when people and goods flow freely across national borders, the SARS virus spread in the same way. The inaction toward and

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<sup>167</sup> Eckholm, "The SARS Epidemic: Beijing; Illness's Psychological Impact in China Exceeds its Actual Numbers," *New York Times*, 24 April 2003, <<http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9D01E2DC1F3AF937A15757C0A9659C8B63>> (6 May 2004).

<sup>168</sup> Dorgan, 30 April 2003.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

misinformation about the epidemic only served to delay the timely response to deal with the disease, thus bringing about fatalities and economic stagnation. According to the WHO, by late April, an estimated \$30 billion had already had “been shaved off the economies of countries affected by SARS” due to “stalled tourism, less consumer spending and disruption in trade and investment.”<sup>170</sup> Unsurprisingly, China as the center of the epidemic had to bear a great loss from it. It was “totally mistaken,” the Japanese press commented, if the Chinese government thought its previous handling of SARS would “minimize the possibility of damage to its trade and tourism industry.”<sup>171</sup>

Worthy of mentioning is that the abrupt reversal of SARS policy on April 20 resulted from intermestic efforts that combined active foreign involvement and truth-telling from inside China. As we know from Chapter Three, Dr. Jiang Yanyong revealed to foreign media that the number of SARS cases in the military hospitals was omitted in official reports. Other medical workers followed his example, telling reporters that they had been told to hide SARS patients in hotels or ambulances that were driven around the city while WHO investigators conducted visits. These disclosures induced “mounting” criticism from the international community over China’s SARS policy, which will be introduced in detail in the next chapter.

In sum, this chapter first reviews the process of the SARS policy reversal in China, from the leadership’s attitude change to specific actions taken, from the domestic strides toward greater public accountability to China’s strategies for a better international image. The next half of this chapter focuses on an analysis of the intermestic factors that promoted the unprecedented changes in China’s health policy. Due to the great damage to

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> “Japanese editorial excerpts,” *Japanese Economic Newswire*, 21 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (10 May 2004).

China's international image and to its economic growth and social stability on which the CCP relied heavily "in trying to preserve its political legitimacy,"<sup>172</sup> the Chinese government had to bring the epidemic under effective control if it wished to avoid "the equivalent of a national train wreck."<sup>173</sup> The handling of the epidemic after April 20 to a large extent took international expectations and regulations into account. Promoting international cooperation was also touted in China's new SARS policy agenda.

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<sup>172</sup> Bradsher, 28 April 2003.

<sup>173</sup> Eckholm, "SARS trips up the Chinese leadership," *International Herald Tribune*, 13 May 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (10 May 2004).



## Chapter Five The International Involvement

Having reviewed China's inconsistent SARS policies and analyzed the major reasons for the change, this chapter seeks to identify the patterns of international influence on Chinese politics, particularly in this SARS crisis. Perhaps the most crucial factor that stimulated the abrupt policy reversal was the international involvement in China's handling of the SARS epidemic. How the international community was involved in China's SARS crisis, and why the Chinese government made positive changes in response to international pressures—as a signal of its acceptance of the legitimacy of such pressures—are of great significance to this study of intermesticity. Before answering these questions, we need to gain a general idea of both what the international community is and the character of interaction between the international community and China in the past twenty years.

Although China has become the growth engine of the Asian regional economy and one of the world's economic centers, it retains its traditional aversion to foreign involvement in its political realm, as it tries to protect the current one party system. Such aversion also results, as mentioned in Chapter Two, from the long-held “victim mentality” among the Chinese population. At the same time, China still maintains its age-old “central kingdom mentality”<sup>174</sup> by cherishing an ambition to be admitted into the society of modern nations as a significant figure and to have a voice in world affairs so as to better promote its economic interest and enhance its security. That is to say, China

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<sup>174</sup> Jian, “The China Challenge in the Twenty-First Century: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy,” *United States Institute of Peace Website*, June 1998, <<http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/chen21/chenpwk21.html>> (20 May 2004).

chooses to rebuild its identity as an active member of the international community rather than continue the isolation of the Mao era.

Historically, the international community has pressured China to improve its domestic policies related to human rights, the AIDS cover-up, and repression of the democracy movement. This kind of pressure has implications for Chinese identity, however, and China used to refute such accusations with its traditional diplomatic principle of nonintervention in one's domestic affairs. China's human rights record has become a major obstacle for the country's entry into the mainstream international community.

In the SARS crisis of the year 2003, the international community emphasized the identity issue as it continued urging China to modify its passive policy. Their pressures employed the two mechanisms of containment and engagement. The intermestic dynamics in this event have engaged China in a learning process through which abiding by international institutions, rules and norms is not necessarily a challenge or a threat to the one-party system, and instead could help promote China's national interests.

### **Defining “International Community”**

Although the term “international community” is in danger of becoming a cliché, few seriously try to specify what it means and incorporates. According to Webster's 1913 Dictionary, community means “common possession or enjoyment,” e.g., a community of goods. It also refers to “a body of people having common rights, privileges, or interests, or living in the same place under the same laws and regulations.”<sup>175</sup> Therefore, international community can be defined as international society at large wherein people

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<sup>175</sup> Hyperdictionary, <<http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/community>> (17 February 2004).

in general have *shared* knowledge that induces them to comply with rules of the society in order to enjoy public goods and common rights and interests. Constructivists call the active participants in a society agents.<sup>176</sup> Internationally speaking, states are agents, and non-state-actors such as international organizations and regimes are also agents. The first principles of an international community, according to Sutch, are the “priority of shared human rights,” or the “moral standing of states.”<sup>177</sup> The international community forms through agent (states and non-state-actors) interaction and provides the social context for states’ collective identity. It is “itself a form of institutionalization, the embodiment of deeper and more profound shared practices and expectations about the organization of political life on the planet.”<sup>178</sup> For example, to Karl Deutsch and his colleagues, “there is real assurance that the members of the [potential international security] community will not fight each other physically” but instead settle their disputes peacefully.<sup>179</sup> Charles Beitz also envisions an international community where members are interconnected by moral relations and state boundaries have “...merely derivative significance. There are no reasons of basic principle for exempting the internal affairs of states from external moral scrutiny.”<sup>180</sup> The international community is borderless, but states have boundaries in which they establish rules for their citizens to follow. A state’s rules may or may not be

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<sup>176</sup> Nicholas Onuf, “Constructivism: A User’s Manual,” In *International Relations in a Constructed World*, edited by Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf, and Paul Kowert (NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 58-78.

<sup>177</sup> Peter Sutch, *Ethics, Justice and International Relations: Constructing an International Community* (Routledge, 2001), 2.

<sup>178</sup> John G. Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (London: Routledge, 1998), 131.

<sup>179</sup> Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North-Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 5.

<sup>180</sup> Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 182.

consistent with the rules of the international community. Therefore, contemporary politics is characterized by an international-domestic dynamic.<sup>181</sup>

### **The Patterns: The Identity Dimension and Two Mechanisms of Influence**

The social identities of states are, according to Wendt, “sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others.”<sup>182</sup> In other words as we mentioned in Chapter One, national identity is constructed as well as learned through interaction. The patterns of international influence on the domestic have an identity dimension. China’s evolving identity in the international community after 1949 reflects the vicissitudes of its relationship with the outside world.

Chinese leaders were long seen by “many strategists and Sinologists” to have a “mostly passive approach” toward international affairs, yet remain sensitive to the influence of superpowers, or in the Chinese term “hegemonies”—the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>183</sup> Mao’s China viewed itself as a victimized developing nation. Mao denied “the rules of the international system,” which in his eyes were working for capitalism and colonialism, and he even “sought to overthrow it” with international proletariat revolutions. Since foreign policy making at that time was highly centralized under Mao’s own will, China was noted for both its close relationship with developing countries and relative isolation from international organizations. Economically, China stuck to autarky instead of entering the global capitalist economy.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Sørensen, 12-18.

<sup>182</sup> Wendt (1994).

<sup>183</sup> Medeiros and Fravel.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

Though Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping gave China "an opposite direction" by carrying out reform and opening up policy that "promoted engagement with the international community" to realize domestic modernization. Gradually, China broke away from the Mao-era isolation and increased its participation in international organizations. Beijing's interests, however, focused on the privileges and benefits to which a member of those organizations was entitled rather than the responsibilities and rules that also applied to each member. Meanwhile, foreign policy making was still "highly centralized" under Deng, who was internationally known for his flexible yet unyielding diplomatic style.<sup>185</sup>

In the 1990s when China's third generation of leaders took office, they attempted to put an end to isolation and the international sanctions for the 1989 Tian'anmen crackdown, revive China's economic development, and enhance national security.<sup>186</sup> All these required a rebuilding of China's image or identity as an active international participant.

China has intensified its role in the international community over the past ten years. Beijing's first strategic step was to expand China's bilateral political and economic relationships with more and more countries. In the 1990s, China worked on developing these relationships into various kinds of "partnership" to ensure security and economic alliance. A famous example is the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation signed between China and Russia in the year 2001.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

The second big step was Beijing's access to multilateral institutions, which was previously viewed by Chinese leaders as something to "punish or constrain China."<sup>188</sup> China expanded its influence in Southeast Asia by holding annual meetings with senior ASEAN officials from 1995. In 1996, China co-founded the Asia-Europe Meeting in an effort to hold regular conversation with Europe and even NATO.<sup>189</sup> In 2001, China hosted the ninth leaders' summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Shanghai.<sup>190</sup> The same year, China and five Central Asian countries Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzatan, Tadzhiistan, and Uzbekistan established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the first multilateral group in the region, to strengthen mutual trust, settle disputes, and facilitate regional trade.<sup>191</sup>

Meanwhile, China showed a much more open attitude toward international collective security issues by increasing its engagement with the UN Security Council, discussing regional security issues with ASEAN, and issuing weapons export controls. China usually opposed the UN Security Council's resolution of using force to intervene in a state's domestic affairs for fear of the erosion of the principle of nonintervention associated with sovereignty.<sup>192</sup> But since the mid-1990s, China has begun to say yes to such resolutions. For instance, in late 2002, China supported Resolution 1441 on continued weapons inspections in Iraq.<sup>193</sup> In 2003, China also proposed to establish a

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 7 January 2004, <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/t57970.htm>> (8 May 2004).

<sup>192</sup> Medeiros and Fravel.

<sup>193</sup> "China's position on Iraq issue clear-cut: article," *Xinhua News Agency*, 8 March 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (9 May 2004).

security mechanism in ASEAN to enable communications among Asian militaries.<sup>194</sup> China changed its position on international arms control and the nonproliferation regime from a constraint over China's performance to a necessity for each country with nuclear power. Although still continuing its efforts to modernize its nuclear weapons, China has committed to several major arms control and nonproliferation accords. In 1994, China expressed its willingness to "abide by the parameter of the Missile Technology Control Regime"<sup>195</sup> and signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1996.<sup>196</sup>

All these policy shifts demonstrate that China has tried to break away from the persistent victim mentality of 100 years of shame and embarrassment and begun to participate actively in the international community. The most evident example is China's rock-like leadership performance in the 1997-1998 Asian economic crisis. China played a decisive role in promoting regional economic stability and growth by firmly contributing to the "Thai bailout package" and supporting the Hong Kong currency, as well as stimulating the domestic economy through increased government input and accelerated banking reforms.<sup>197</sup> Since the mid-1990s, China has demonstrated its expectation that its identity as a competent state be recognized by the international community. The clearest goals for China have included an Olympic status and the WTO membership, which in many Chinese eyes stood for China's formal entry into the mainstream of the international community.

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<sup>194</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Promoting Peace and Prosperity by Deepening Cooperation in All-round Way: Speech by Premier Wen Jiabao of the People's Republic of China at the Seventh China-ASEAN Summit," 8 October 2003, <<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/zgcydyhz/dqc/t27714.htm>> (9 May 2004).

<sup>195</sup> Office of the Historian, U.S. Bureau of Public Affairs. "History of the Department of State During the Clinton Presidency (1993-2001)." <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/8520.htm>> (9 May 2004).

<sup>196</sup> Medeiros and Fravel.

<sup>197</sup> Oksenberg and Economy.

The international community has employed mainly two mechanisms to affect Chinese politics, particularly during its applications for staging the Olympic Games and for entry into the WTO. One is “containment,” and the other is “engagement.” The former denies China’s identity as a member of the international community, while the latter is just the opposite. When Beijing submitted its bid to bring home its first ever Olympic Games in 1993, people who advocated a strategy of containment kept reminding the world of Chinese repression of the 1989 Tian’anmen movement. They even warned of “a repeat of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, which catapulted Adolf Hitler onto the international stage, improved the Nazi Party’s image both at home and abroad and, in a way, encouraged the militaristic nation’s march toward war.”<sup>198</sup> In 1993, just before the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected the host country for the 2000 Olympics, the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament clearly showed their positions by passing resolutions against China hosting the Olympics.<sup>199</sup> Ultimately, Beijing lost to Sydney by two votes.<sup>200</sup> In 2001, Beijing faced the same international criticism in its bid for the 2008 Olympics, because of China’s human rights record, especially the most recent crackdown on Falun Gong practitioners. This time those who advocated a strategy of engagement gained the upper hand. They believed hosting the Olympics would encourage China to behave in accordance with international norms. An example they frequently cited was “South Korea’s release of 2,000 political prisoners,” including then President Kim Dae-jung, in order to host the 1988 Seoul Olympics.<sup>201</sup> By the same token, China would learn “the spirit and regulations of the games” through playing host. Encouraged by an Olympic

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<sup>198</sup> “Beijing’s quest for the Olympic torch,” *China Post*, 21 February 2001, <<http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20010221/20010221o1.html>> (9 May 2004).

<sup>199</sup> Human Rights Watch, 1998.

<sup>200</sup> *China Post*, 21 February 2001.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*



status, Beijing was expected to provide a more clement political environment and deepen its reforms and opening up.<sup>202</sup> Therefore, although the 2008 bid seemed to have raised no less concern about the human rights record in China, Beijing still won a landslide victory for the 2008 Olympics.

China's entry into the WTO was an even longer and more difficult process, a learning process about international rules, regulations, and norms. China pursued its membership in the WTO from the 1980s. China's entry depended on its compliance with several conditions, including the degree and level of tariffs, financial services, and agricultural market access, which required rapid internal changes and external opening, as well as great commitments to other WTO members. By entering the WTO, China would have to agree to international monitoring of its trade measures and the liberalization of its market. Moreover, Chinese political and economic transactions would need to become more transparent. Ultimately, China needed to meet its commitments to the international community.<sup>203</sup> China's successful entry into the WTO in 2001 demonstrates its willingness to embrace more international institutions, rules, and norms as a means to integrate itself into global economy. It also marks wide recognition of a more responsive China in the international arena.

### **The International Involvement in China's SARS Crisis**

The global SARS crisis alerted the international community that a government's responsiveness and competency domestically should be of equal concern as its

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Allan Zhang, "China Joins the WTO: The Impact on Foreign Trade," *PricewaterhouseCoopers*, <<http://www.pwc.com/extweb/newcolth.nsf/docid/937DE2886742FD3E85256AD3006DC049>>(17 May 2004).

international conduct, given that the world is tightly connected. In spite of international recognition China had gained through its Olympic status and WTO membership, China had to make positive response toward international pressure over its inaction on a domestic epidemic crisis.

Unlike the military invasion into Beijing by an alliance of eight imperial nations against the Boxers in the late Qing dynasty, the international involvement in China's handling of SARS sought to affect Chinese leadership through language and concrete self-protective actions, with news, reports, announcements, and press conferences as major channels. Such external pressures not only have brought about direct economic impacts, but also have negative political implications for China's credibility. China's newly recognized identity in the international community faced a huge risk of being questioned and even denied.

In checking news stories about SARS from early 2003 to June 2003 when the Chinese government's new SARS policy began to take effect, one may find that most of them mentioned two distinct entities—"international community" and "China." China was placed in opposition to the international community. For example, Henk Bekedam, head of the WHO team in Beijing, told China, "We have very clearly said you have an international community over there that does not trust your figures."<sup>204</sup> Meanwhile, China, although considering itself a recognized key figure in the international community with its Olympic status and WTO membership, had realized the widening gap between itself and the international community. Despite its assuring the safety of travel and work in China, promising to release correct numbers of SARS cases, or expressing its willingness

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<sup>204</sup> Pomfret, "Underreporting, Secrecy Fuel SARS in Beijing, WHO Says," *Washington Post*, 17 April 2003, sec. A, p. 16.

to “strengthen cooperation with the international community,”<sup>205</sup> the Chinese government seemed to understand tacitly the threatening hint of *containment* from other nations and international organizations, which would possibly deny its membership in the international community.

Although problems like bureaucratic inertia and cover-up of national “shames” exist everywhere in the world, international organizations and other states zeroed in on the Chinese government because its slow response to the SARS epidemic led to great economic loss and panic across borders. Foreign governments took on self-protective measures. For example, prominent visitors like British Prime Minister Tony Blair postponed their trips to China.<sup>206</sup> The Rolling Stones cancelled their Hong Kong concerts.<sup>207</sup> Business and tourist travel in many badly-hit regions fell off. Many countries issued travel warnings or even travel bans against travel to China. From March 17, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued four travel advisories, and on April 3, the level was raised from an advisory to a warning.<sup>208</sup> The U.S. also issued a travel advisory warning against nonessential trips to China. At about the same time, Malaysia barred all tourists from Mainland China and Hong Kong.<sup>209</sup>

Moreover, the foreign press carried out a furious criticism of the Chinese government. As mentioned before, early on March 31, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial called for “quarantining China.” The London-based *Times* described the Chinese Communist Party

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<sup>205</sup> “Highlights of major Beijing-based newspapers-April 27,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 27 April 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (18 May 2004).

<sup>206</sup> “China: British Prime Minister Blair postpones trip,” *Associated Press World stream*, 1 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (18 May 2004).

<sup>207</sup> “Rolling Stones scrap weekend concerts in Hong Kong,” *Agence France Presse*, 27 March 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (18 May 2004).

<sup>208</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Press Conference 3 April 2003,” 3 April 2003, <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2003/4/0403.html>> (18 May 2004).

<sup>209</sup> Beech, 14 April 2003.

in its editorial as “parochial” and strongly urged China to understand one thing that “the benefits of international cooperation, whether tourism or trade, are complemented by responsibility.”<sup>210</sup>

On the verge of being labeled as an “irresponsible” or “unqualified” member of the international community, China’s newly-elected leadership made an abrupt policy reversal by launching a nationwide anti-SARS campaign in mid-April. This change demonstrated the effectiveness of the international pressures over China’s domestic SARS policy, if the effectiveness of such pressures relies on the positive responses that China made.

The international community appeared quite sensitive to China’s changing attitude and its contextual story. It noticed that Chinese president Hu Jintao and premier Wen Jiabao had not yet consolidated their power since they succeeded to their positions months earlier. In the complicated Chinese politics, they had to satisfy both conservative elders and radical reformers. The international community revealed its willingness to encourage China to be an accountable power and support China’s new leadership by singing high praise of Hu’s and Wen’s performance in taking bold steps to end a cover-up of the SARS epidemic and further launch a national anti-SARS campaign.<sup>211</sup> Here, the mechanism of engagement was resumed. When the epidemic was over in mid-July, the success of the campaign was ascribed to the competence of China’s new leadership while the previous cover-up was due to the party’s “long and hardly honorable tradition of dishonesty” that made “the medical bureaucracy” think it “wise to fiddle the figures and

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<sup>210</sup> “China’s chernobyl - A belated response to the spread of Sars - Leading Article,” *Times (London)*, 21 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (18 May 2004).

<sup>211</sup> Oliver August, “New leaders struggle to restore credibility,” *Times (London)*, 21 April 2003, <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>> (19 May 2004).

to claim weeks ago that the problem was ‘under control’.”<sup>212</sup> Although the United States often takes the lead in criticizing China for its lack of transparency and neglect of human rights, Washington appeared relatively sympathetic and supportive about the new leadership by giving credit to Chinese President Hu Jintao. Soon after the April 20 reversal, American Senate Majority Leader Frist told Hu that he was “encouraged” by the new leadership’s ouster of China’s health minister and Beijing mayor. One month later, when U.S. President Bush met with Chinese President Hu in France, he had nothing negative to say about China’s SARS calamity. Instead, Bush “specifically praised President Hu’s leadership in addressing this problem.”<sup>213</sup> The April 21 editorial of the *Times (London)* predicted “China will be a better place for the Chinese people and a more constructive member of the international community,” if Hu’s “new-found emphasis on honesty and transparency is characteristic of his rule.”<sup>214</sup>

The international community showed great interest and expectations toward China’s new leadership, who also were strengthened in dealing with the crisis. Under these highly political circumstances, the WHO still continued its exposure of and criticism over some aspects suggesting lack of operation that remained in various levels of Chinese governments, such as flawed data about SARS, but the intensity of such criticisms was greatly lowered.

In sum, this chapter reviews the ways in which the international community influences Chinese politics. I first define the international community, which is characteristic of intermestic dynamics in today’s global context. By manipulating the

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<sup>212</sup> *Times (London)*, 21 April 2003.

<sup>213</sup> William Foreman, “China’s SARS disaster arouses little international anger,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 2 June 2003, <[http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss\\_hl.asp](http://global.factiva.com/en/eSrch/ss_hl.asp)> (19 May 2004).

<sup>214</sup> “China’s Chernobyl.”

identity dimension, the international community uses the two mechanisms of “containment” and “engagement” to exert pressures on China’s domestic performances, including its handling of SARS in 2003. While there still existed some defects in China’s implementation of its new SARS policy, the government’s policy reversal and the success of China’s anti-SARS campaign achieved within three months can be attributed to the effectiveness of the international involvement in China’s intermestic politics.

## Chapter Six Conclusion and Prospect

### Intermesticity as the Context for Global Governance

The world has witnessed in the SARS crisis a high level of intermestic coordination and cooperation between states and states, international organizations and states, international organizations and international organizations, medical practitioners and health officials, research teams and hospitals. It may become a characteristic of our time that the domestic and the international intertwine through communication, cooperation, and perhaps conflict, to deal with the challenges we face that have “a global impact” and thus demand “a global response.”<sup>215</sup>

The advance of globalization has succeeded in connecting the world into a village-like entity with shrunken distances, broken barriers, and interdependent peoples, yet it does not alleviate the enduring worldwide disparity between the so-called developed and developing countries. But diseases, which usually find poverty an ideal breeding ground, can easily jump over the widening gap between the healthy, affluent world and the sick, impoverished world in the same way that capital flows and email transmissions do.<sup>216</sup>

The SARS crisis clearly reminds people of what a devastating impact a disease, if not under effective control where it originates, can have on the global economy and the international community. It has led to a rethinking of the usual insulation of domestic policy from the international. A state’s performance in its traditional areas of sovereign control, including economy, health, and military issues, is increasingly having global impacts. By the same token, more challenges that states encounter require global

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<sup>215</sup> Gro Harlem Brundtland, “The Globalization of Health,” *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* IV, no. 2, Summer/Fall (2003), 7-12.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

solutions. As the SARS epidemic shows, “the line separating domestic and international health problems is fast losing its meaning.”<sup>217</sup> West Nile virus, SARS, and avian flu can be everyone’s problem overnight. Therefore, cross-border coordination and cooperation become necessary for states and non-state-actors like international organizations to share information, expertise, and resources.<sup>218</sup> That is the general context for global governance.

The SARS crisis also reminds us of the high degree to which not only countries but also peoples and issues are interdependent upon one another. One people’s suffering of, for example, poverty, disease, or warfare, will quickly affect the other’s living conditions. Likewise, a failed or failing issue like an epidemic can exert negative influences on other issues, as evidenced by the SARS crisis and its impact on domestic and international economy, politics, and social stability. The SARS epidemic has triggered a global sense of risk even in countries that were not hard hit by SARS. “While the proponents of global economic integration have focused public attention on cheap tennis shoes and expanding markets,” according to Jean-Pierre Cabestan of the Hong Kong-based French Center for Research on Contemporary China, “the threats that can arise from mixing poverty, population density and disease with porous borders and modern transportation have been ignored.”<sup>219</sup> These problems, as the SARS epidemic shows, are not only China’s alone, but also belong to the whole world. Therefore, the focus of the international agenda should be shifted from an economy-centered strategy to a broadened one with more emphasis on global health security and poverty alleviation. This new focus requires a higher level of intermestic coordination and cooperation.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Dorgan, 30 April 2003.



The challenge for the international community is to unite states and non-state-actors so as to coordinate global actions. It is urgent to build effective global governance through setting international institutions and rules, allocating limited resources, improving information sharing, enhancing financial support, and promoting intermestic efforts in order to “head off crises before they happen.”<sup>220</sup> In the case of the SARS epidemic, raising awareness of international risks is only the first step, while a well-functioning global health system requires a lot of interregional and international cooperation. Today, some American think tanks and policy experts have begun to advance a new concept of health diplomacy through international cooperation. For instance, Bates Gill, Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, suggests “a dramatic increase of US financial support” in the coming fiscal years to aid China against its upcoming AIDS crisis. This support, as Gill believes, would help to improve China’s health surveillance and data collection.<sup>221</sup>

The intermestic issues, particularly in the health dimension, have provoked an advocacy of global cooperation to forestall a wide spread crisis like SARS. This, however, has posed an equally serious challenge for state governments.

### **Intermesticity as the Context of the State’s Dilemma**

What the trend of intermesticity has brought to domestic politics and how states respond to this challenge are two major questions for this research. I use the case of China to explore them. The world is wondering whether China’s SARS policy reversal

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<sup>220</sup> Grundtland.

<sup>221</sup> The Nixon Center, “China’s Health Calamity: Causes and Consequences: A panel discussion with Bates Gill, Myron Cohen and David M. Lampton,” 4 June 2003, <<http://www.nixoncenter.org/publications/Program%20Briefs/PBrief%202003/060403SARS.htm>> (23 May 2004)

under intense international pressure is a watershed that signals greater political reform and opening up. As important as the trend of intermestic coordination and global governance is, China still has difficulties in becoming a high-profile actor in the international community. Unquestionably, the survival of the current political system is of utmost importance to Chinese leaders, and this survival requires a continued, if no longer harsh, control of various aspects of the Chinese society. For China specially, as we see in this crisis, strong government institutional incentives remain to “obstruct” the flow of bad news or even “distort” that information.<sup>222</sup>

China’s contemporary dilemma of maintaining effective internal control internally while being integrated into the global economy is not unique in the international community. Sovereignty is a sacred word and a belief in every nation, poor or rich, old or young. It deserves respect. Yet it is always in danger of serving to exculpate a regime’s misconduct toward its own people, including covering up a deadly disease, as can occur anywhere in the world. On such occasions, the international community is expected to become involved in the domestic, to influence and cooperate with state governments to bring change.

My study of China’s SARS crisis shows that during the whole process of the epidemic, the Chinese government did not give up its efforts to keep its grip on the information about SARS. The underlying concerns were China’s core national interests: a fast-growing economy and social stability. This research also finds the international involvement in China’s SARS epidemic *effective* in pressing the Chinese government to make an abrupt domestic policy reversal, something peculiar that had never occurred in the history of communist China. The effectiveness resulted from a new idea of which the

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<sup>222</sup> Huang.

international community successfully reminded Chinese leaders: that building a credible identity in the international community through abiding by international institutions and norms contributes to the protection of China's national interests. That is the way the international community changed and is still changing Chinese politics.

There soon appeared a wave of openness and accountability after April 20 in Chinese politics. In early May, for example, China surprised the world by announcing a submarine accident.<sup>223</sup> This new openness also potentially demonstrates a deeper change in Chinese elites' political philosophy that facing problems is a much better solution for sustaining their control than ignoring them. Now the elites have been forced to see that they may lose their legitimacy if they fail to protect people's well-being. Meanwhile, a number of local officials have already been punished because of their failure to perform their duties in the campaign against SARS. What is more, the central government has begun its efforts to make up the mistakes in the long neglected health system.

In the wake of the SARS policy reversal, some policies dealing with SARS were also applied to the even severer AIDS epidemic. According to Mao Qunan, deputy director of the Chinese health ministry's department of general administration, the ministry was drafting tough regulations on HIV/AIDS in August 2003. According to these rules, local authorities have legal responsibility to help people living with HIV get medical treatment and prevent cover-ups. China also began to carry out "a low-profile trial in rural AIDS-affected area" by giving patients free locally produced antiretroviral medications.<sup>224</sup> Moreover, Chinese leaders so far have made significant strides in publicizing the government's new position on the AIDS problem. On December 1, 2003, the World

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<sup>223</sup> Eckholm, "China reports 70 sailors die in submarine accident in Yellow Sea," *New York Times*, 3 May 2003, sec. A, p. 4.

<sup>224</sup> Mure Dickie, "Stringent new rules on Aids proposed by China," *Financial Times*, 15 August 2003, p. 7.

AIDS Day, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao and Health Minister Wu Yi visited AIDS patients in Beijing. Wu also visited those “AIDS villages” in Henan province, some of which have an infection rate as high as the world’s hardest-hit area—sub-Saharan Africa. In the highly publicized activity in Beijing, Wen shook hands with AIDS patients, which signified the central government’s unprecedented move toward decisive AIDS control and more care for its victims. He announced a “Four Free” policy: “free testing; free treatment; free school for ‘AIDS orphans;’ and free treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.”<sup>225</sup> Wen also urged governments at all levels to extend public education about AIDS, strengthen supervision and accurately report epidemic situations with a more responsible and open attitude. He said China would enhance international cooperation for solutions to AIDS treatment and prevention.<sup>226</sup> If this new AIDS policy can become a reality, China will have one of the best such policies in the world.

Internationally, China has also tried to act positively in world affairs since its SARS policy reversal. Despite its previously “passive” attitude toward international criticism on the North Korea nuclear issues, Beijing surprised the world in the summer of 2003 by effectively intervening in the crisis over North Korea’s nuclear weapons. China stepped into the friction with several bold measures, including “suspending crucial oil shipments to North Korea, sending high-level envoys to Pyongyang, and shifting troops around the Sino-Korean border.”<sup>227</sup> This “steady diplomacy” shows that a profound change is taking root in China’s attitude about its role in the international arena.

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<sup>225</sup> Odilon Couzin, “China can lead new fight in war on AIDS,” *China Daily*, 18 May 2003, <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-05/18/content\\_331466.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-05/18/content_331466.htm)> (20 May 2004).

<sup>226</sup> “Premier Wen spearheads crusade to dispel discrimination against AIDS victims,” *People’s Daily Online*, 2 December 2003, <[http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200312/02/eng20031202\\_129462.shtml](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200312/02/eng20031202_129462.shtml)> (20 May 2004).

<sup>227</sup> Medeiros and Fravel.

Evidently, China has learned something from this intermestic public health crisis and made appropriate policy adjustments in accordance with the international expectations. Although it is still early to predict a dramatic political reform by the Chinese leadership in terms of its political transparency, public accountability, and international responsiveness, we do see from this study some step-by-step modifications in the country's domestic health performances and foreign diplomacy in the post-SARS age. More importantly, the new leadership shows an unprecedented enthusiasm for actively embracing international rules in its policy reforms, which in return won attention and support from the international community. Now allowing more space for topics related to freedom of information, political reform, and global governance, the Chinese government seems to be taking strides toward greater openness and political responsibility. Facing the trend of globalization, not only China but other countries as well will unavoidably learn to adjust their domestic control to fit the more and more intermestic context, either through their own painstaking experiences or from others' failures.

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## **Vita**

Lin Li, an only child of her parents, was born in a family that has fostered several natural scientists. She enjoyed her childhood and teenage years in reading a wide variety of books and earning her travel funds through publishing essays. The experiences during this period planted in her a deep love for the Chinese civilization as well as a curiosity about distant lands. Later, she became the first one, in her family, to choose the liberal arts and social science. In 2001, she graduated from Nanjing University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Business Communication. Then she was offered a position of Assistant to the President in a transnational wireless company, where she gained one year of working experience at the managerial level. Lin pursued her Master of Arts degree in political science between August 2002 and 2004 at Virginia Tech. Her research interests include international relations, comparative politics, state transformation, and global governance.