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Muddle or march: China and the 21st century Concert of Powers

*Desordem ou protesto:
China e o Concerto de Poderes no século 21*

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Introduction

Inspired by the achievements of “Concert of Europe” on international stability, scholars and practitioners started to deliberate the feasibility of applying “Concert of Powers” (CoP) in global governance in the 21st century (e.g. Müller 2011). The optimists underscore its effectiveness in keeping international stability as “the best example of a security regime” (Jervis 1982, 362; Miller 1992; Schroeder 1994; Lindley 2007, 12; Rauch and Wurm 2011). In contrast, pessimists claim rare evidence could support this institutional argument (Haas 1955; Kagan 1997; Lindley 2007, 12).

In practice, a few “G” organizations are key vectors to implement the Concert function (Lebow 2008, 560–561), in which some countries, “not alliances or even treaty partners,” are involved (Slaughter 2004, 37–38). CoP seems to be a most feasible model for global governance. This modality accepts the existence of realpolitik but goes beyond, “made power politics work more quickly and peacefully” (Lindley 2007, 12–13). CoP has its typical advantages in “making the world safe for power transition” via integrating emerging powers (Rauch and Wurm 2011). Compared with other governance models in a multipolar world like Western Liberal Order and Regional governance, CoP shows its specific competitiveness (Chen 2013). Additionally, tricky global issues like financial crisis indicate the failure of current global governance (Dixon and Dogan 2003; Goldin 2013).

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In this case, as an emerging power and self-imagined “largest developing country,” China has to thoroughly consider CoP in global politics. How would Chinese perceive CoP proposal? To what extent would China accept CoP? What dynamics promote China’s involvement into CoP while what factors constrain its participation? Accordingly, this paper will discuss China’s incentives and uncertainties to participate in Concert Model by showing its history memory, its intellectual endeavors, and China’s evolving preference on official discourse.

It is arranged as follows. It firstly retrospects China’s historical experiences of CoP and analyzes the memory impacts on China’s perception of CoP. Next, it reviews key findings and ongoing debates in Chinese studies on CoP as one kind of “Thought Experiment.” Thirdly, Chinese official discourses from *People’s Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*) are analyzed to show its preference evolution. Furthermore, it argues China could be a capable and rightful actor in CoP with higher willingness. The fifth part discusses the uncertainties of China’s participation into CoP. In the end, all findings are concluded.

Historical memory as prologue

Concert of Europe made remarkable achievements in maintaining interstate peace and avoiding wars among Great Powers in the 19th century. It established a prominent paradigm on security management and conflict resolution (e.g. Jervis 1985; Kupchan and Kupchan 1991). Henry Kissinger once proposed a new Concert of Great Powers to keep international peace (Skidelsky 2002, 47).

However, the delicate Concert design is far from a paradise for China. Taking three Concert episodes (Jervis 1985, 58) as example, China’s experience is misery and humiliated until 1940s, which bred China’s negative attitudes on CoP. In China, Concert of Europe was perceived as “an instrument of the Great Game played by the Imperial powers” (Schulz 2011). Before World War I (WWI), China, as a semi-colonial country, was mostly treated as the “concerted” target by European Powers and US. During this period, China suffered from various humiliations, namely “the scramble for China,” such as the Second Opium War, colonization and “spheres of influence,” losing of sovereignty, and joint invasion by Great Powers in 1900, etc. All actions were conducted by western powers “to think along similar lines, to act in concert” until 1914 (Bickers 2011, 173, 373). One famous Chinese cartoon (see Figure 1) vividly depicted that China was concerted by different powers.¹ (Feng 1936) It was illustrated in history textbooks from primary to high schools, and affected almost every educated Chinese.

1 Its original author is believed to be Tse Tsan-tai in 1899. The animals represented Western powers, i.e. Bear (Russia), Eagle (US), Frog (France), Tiger (Britain), Sun (Japan), and Snake (Germany), as well as some animals waiting for entry.



Figure 1. Picture on current situation in Far East.

Sometimes, certain Concert actions might do good for China's national interest. For example, Germany, Russia, and France concerted to force Japanese to return Liaodong Peninsula to China in 1890s (Bickers 2011, 326). However, the fundamental nature of Chinese "concerted" fate did not change. Concert of Europe kept general peace in Europe while imposed humiliations to China.

Robert Jervis (1985, 58) argued the interstate exchange after WWI, mostly from 1919 to 1920, was a second CoP. Unfortunately, China, in the name of victory camp, was again "carved-up" by major powers, which triggered Chinese unsatisfactory emotions and rising nationalism. CoP was accused to be a chaos root and "dancing on the volcano" (Zhuang 1933).

In 1940s, Chinese dramatically became one of four Concert members (with US, Soviet Union and UK). It brought great glories for Chinese and was taken as an indicator of Chinese Big/Great Powers status. Subsequently, CoP and "International Concert" (*guoji xietiao*) became one popular however temporary topic in Chinese IR literature during Republic era. The possibility of CoP was explored in details in 1940s (Yi 1946). However, as one member of "Grand Alliance," China was "a somewhat distant fourth" in CoP (Skidelsky 2002, 46–47).

After 1949, "Concert" (*xietiao*) was mostly a negative term in earlier period. It was often used in "counter-revolutionary" actions or US imperialism (He 1950).

Long-year ideology propaganda further aggravated this feeling. Till 1990s, “Concert and Cooperation” (*xietiao yu hezuo*) were still mainly used to describe the relations of western countries (Li 1996). But in 1990s the term was initially used to depict new relations within developing countries (Bing, Ouyang, and Yang 1992). However, Chinese vigilance persisted in early 2000s, like key concert institutions like G8 were criticized as instruments dominated by “Western powers” (Wang and Wu 2006).

Chinese thought experiment on CoP

China recently demonstrated a growing interest in CoP through pragmatic approach. It participated in most important international organizations or informal Concert platforms at regional and international levels. It was also actively involved into a list of global issues together with other big powers. With the progress of China’s involvement, Chinese researchers rapidly shed their lights on CoP². A series of thought experiments have been initiated to design CoP in global governance and China’s diplomacy (see Figure 2). CoP was recommended as “Crux” (*guanjian*) of global governance (Zheng 2010), the “main channel” (*zhu qudao*) of international security management (Chen 2009), or the “legitimate source” of collective actions and the methods to solve collective dilemma in international politics (Yu 2007).

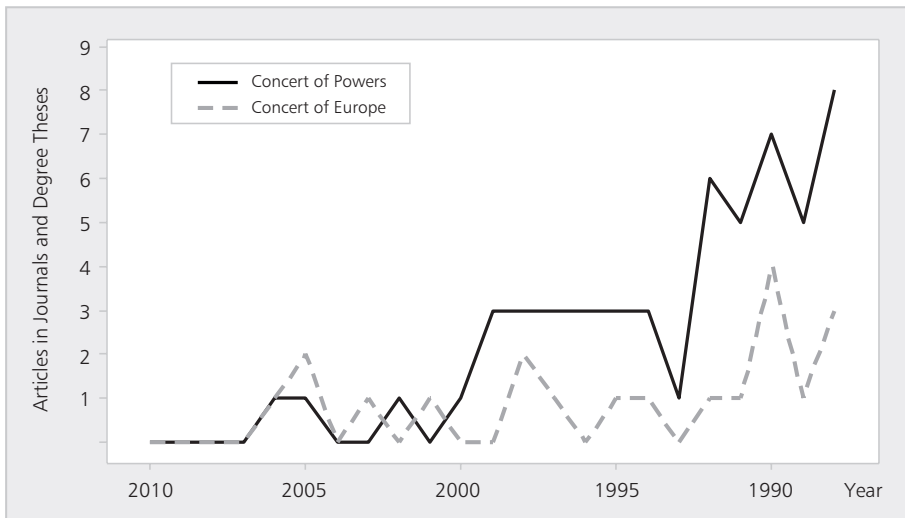


Figure 2. Chinese articles on concert studies (1990–2012).

Source: CNKI Scholar, <http://scholar.cnki.net/Default.aspx>

² Chinese use “concert” and “coordinate” interchangeably with the translation of “*xietiao*” in Chinese, particularly in early years. This paper takes both words into account. Similarly, Benjamin Miller (2007) use concert, coordinate, and even cooperate indiscriminately.

The first wave of Chinese IR discussion on CoP could trace back to middle 1990s. After the occurrence of Asian Financial Crisis, Chinese scholars advised to apply Concert in regional level in order to reduce crisis shock and maintain East Asia security (Zhu 1998). The second wave clarified basic CoP functions as “strong security regimes” (Zheng 2005) in smoothing Great Powers relations and maintaining international security. “Concert” was applied to indicate security relations among Great Powers (Li 2000; Shen 2006), or regarded as one type of regional multilateral security regimes with alliance, cooperative security, and collective security, etc. (Chen 2003).

From 2008, the third wave arrived. In fact, academic elaboration on CoP is not only a reflection of intentionally utilizing western resources in global governance, but also a demonstration of China’s rise in the world. In this case, Chinese scholars showed attentive attitude to China’s role in CoP and advised China, as a country aiming at revival with historical significance, should actively attend and construct new Concert, and build “harmonious world” (Zhu 2010). Furthermore, they continued to deepen their understanding in dynamics, institutions, issues, and initiatives. Firstly, a list of crucial dynamics for a successful CoP was identified from history, including decision-making procedure, major rules, responsibility, and common norms (Zheng 2010a, 2010b); as well as border principle, multilateral congress institution, and European collective security regimes, etc. (Cong and Huang 2012) Next, some institutions were defined as key platform to conduct Concert in global governance, such as United Nations (UN), G7, G8, G8+5, and G20, etc. and some other informal or regional forums, etc.³ The inner institutions within emerging powers were particularly emphasized. (Wang and Wu 2006; Chen 2009; Zhu 2009; Wei 2010; Wang and Zheng 2012) The focal issues within CoP extended from traditional security (such as peace and conflicts) to non-traditional security like economy, finance, and climate change, etc. (Yu and Wang 2008; Zhu 2009; Zheng 2010) Most importantly, Chinese scholars designed a few initiatives via applying Concert in global and regional governance, like a US-led G7 framework, Concert in East Asia with Japan, and Indian Ocean Concert with India, etc. (Qiu 2011; Lou 2011; Yu 2011; Zheng 2013; Wang and Zheng 2012) Lastly, CoP seems more significant in Chinese foreign policy. It is regarded as a necessary strategy to respond foreign obstacle of rising China and containment strategy of other powers like US’ eastward shift (Men 2004; Yu 2011; Liu 2012; Sun 2012).

However, CoP is not a panacea at all. It was neither able to solve nuclear crisis in Iran and North Korea nor sufficient to satisfy China’s own security demands at individual level (Zou and Yang 2007; Ouyang and Wu 2006; Sun 2012). The findings are summarized in Table 1.

3 G7/G8 spawned a few informal groups like G22, G15, G19, G20, and G34, etc. (Slaughter 2004, 37–38).

Table 1. Designing Concert of Powers by Chinese scholars.

Significance	“Key Theme” of Great Powers relations; “Crux” of global governance; “Mainstream” of Great Powers relations; “Legitimate Source” of international collective actions; “Main Channel” of international security governance.	
Issues	Traditional Security: Great Powers Relations, Nuclear Crisis and Proliferation (Iran and North Korea), Power Transition, Arm Control, Security Regime, etc. Non-Traditional Security: Climate Change, Financial Crisis, Environmental Cooperation, Economic Governance, Global Public Goods, Global Governance, etc.	
Institutions	UN, G7/G8, G8+5, G20, ISBA, BRICs, C2/G2, Six-Party Talk, etc.	
Functions	International Level	To handle international security crisis; To reform and improve global governance; To respond power transition and rise of emergent powers (with confrontation and fuzzy strategy); To provide global public goods; To solve dilemma of global public goods.
	Regional Level	To act as one “strong” security regime; To act as multilateral security regime at regional level; To propose a Concert framework in Northeast Asia, Asia-Pacific, and Indian Ocean in order to harmonize the Great Powers relations and keep regional stability.
	National Level	To deal with US’ eastward shift; To rise and gain ownership; To construct a “harmonious world”; To deal with relations with rising and Great Powers;
China’s Ownership	China’s contribution in negotiating international climate regime (responsibility, equity, and efficiency); China’s role in Asia-Pacific, Northeast Asia, and Indian Ocean; China’s Rise and the subsequent change in international politics; China’s contribution to C2 with USA; Concert Great Powers economy using “Chinese way”; Relating with China’s national revival and the design of “harmonious world.”	
Competitive Alternatives	Balance of Powers, Alliance, Hegemonic Stability, Regionalism, Unilateralism, Cooperative Security, Collective, Security, Liberal Order.	
Limitations of Concert	Criticism on the unequal nature of Concert of Powers; Difficult to solve the conflicts of vital interest; Unable to solve the Rise problem as a diplomatic strategy; Relatively weak compared with alternative governance proposals.	

Official discourses speak louder

As the most authoritative newspaper, *People's Daily* records most public details on China's foreign activities like its changing preference on CoP. It prefers to use International Concert rather than Great Powers Concert.⁴ Due to its invaded and colonized experience, Chinese emotionally called "Great Powers" as "*lieqiang*," a term to describe powers with imperial and aggressive characteristics (e.g. He 1950). China's official discourse on CoP was almost blank before 1980s (see Figure 3). A handful of reports accuse Concert as instrument of US and Soviet Union expanding imperialism and destroying international peace. In the escalating phase of Cold War, China's antagonistic attitude made it trapped in long isolation.

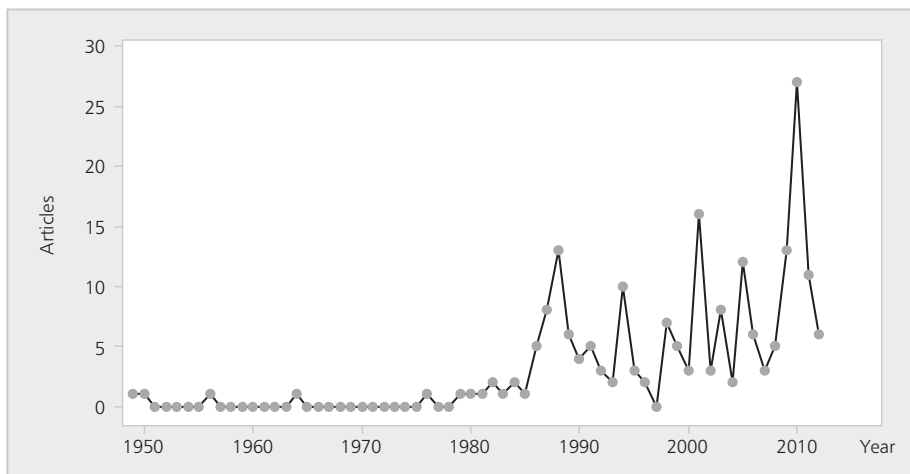


Figure 3. Official discourse about concert (1949–2012).

Sources: *People's Daily*, <http://202.112.118.67:900/web/index.htm>

From mid 1980s, China started to consider CoP in a consistently positive manner. The relevance of using CoP in contemporary international politics was reclaimed. *People's Daily* declared every international issue should be resolved through International Concert rather than direct military intervention (Xinhua 1983). It was further underscored in international economics, as the key "adapter" to keep stability of world economy (Guo 1989). It subsequently realized the experience of Concert for developed countries getting rid of economic crises and decline (Chen 1986; Li 1996). Accordingly, Concert was seen as China's opportunity in the world (Li 1994). China both planned to apply Concert in the low-politics area like international trade and finance (Wang and Fu 1999; Cheng

4 There was a single exception. *People's Daily* published a US civil report which called for a Great Powers Concert and a peace agreement among five big powers (Xinhua 1952).

2000), and started to pursue a comprehensive Concert framework on high politics with some given state like Russia (Shi 1996). This preference turned more obvious from 2000, when Chinese high-level diplomat recommended “broad and effective” Concert in international community with the spirit of “responsibility and risk-sharing” (Wang and Fu 1999). They changed cautious attitude and emphasized the role of Great Powers Concert during financial crisis in 1990s (Zhai 1998).

Almost half of the Concert-related discourses in *People's Daily* appeared after 2000. This trend echoed China's rise in both economic and political area. CoP accounted larger prominence and got popular acceptance in Chinese official discourse. Chinese State Council Information Office (2006) insisted each state should underscore the functions of Concert to solve global development and security problem. In respect to potential Concert partners, China selected Russia its priority partner, namely “International Concert of Strategic Cooperation” (Xinhua 2007). Meanwhile, in spite of US unilateral threat, Sino-US Concert or later “C2” was officially advocated by Chinese President Hu Jintao and US President Obama (Wu, Wen, and Xi 2011; Huang 2012). Furthermore, China once proposed a Concert with Japan in 1998 in spite of historical disputes (Xinhua 2005). Recently, Brazil was recommended to be China's significant Concert partner, as Chinese ambassador in Brazil claimed, there is a Sino-Brazil Concert “fever.” To be exact, China and Brazil have similar common interest on key issues; both usually negotiate and cooperate on these issues in order to protect the interests of developing countries and maintain international peace (Yan 2012).

A variety of issues were integrated into Chinese official discourse on CoP, like traditional security issues (Great Power relations, Middle East Peace, Iraq post-conflict reconstruction, and Afghanistan situation) and emerging issues such as counter-pirate, preventing avian influenza, anti-money laundering, natural disasters response, protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage, and controlling terrorist finance, respectively. Recent financial crisis provided a strong incentive for China reconsider CoP. With its prominent role, China has been involved into several important formal or informal institutions on “unprecedented” Concert from 2008 to 2012, i.e. “China in action in global economic governance” (Zhong 2012; Wu 2012).

In particular, China put great emphasis on the Concert of international institutions (see Table 2). In general, China is unsatisfactory with key Concert platforms like United Nations (UN), World Trade Organizations (WTO), and financial regulation regimes. Chinese government accused that US' unilateralist actions undermined UN's reputation and made international concert in continuous crisis. Yet, China still insists UN's legitimacy and authority in world affairs (Xiao 1999; Gu 2005). In face of WTO deficiencies, China advocated to apply further international concert to establish an “equal, safe, non-discriminable, and predictable trade system” through decreasing inequality gap between rich and poor countries and reforming current international economic order (Wang and Fu 1999; Cheng 2000).

Table 2. Chinese preferred Concert Institutions.

Level	Institutions	Issues
International Concert Platform	UN	International Security
	WTO	International trade; reforming global economic order
	G7/G8	Global governance from initially economic issues to more political and security issues
	G20	Financial crisis; improving global economic governance
Regional Concert Platform	Asia-Europe Forum	General issues (trade, finance, security, etc.) in Asia and Europe
	APEC	Economic development and political stability in Asia-Pacific
	ASEAN+3	International peace in Asia
	SCO	International security in Middle Asia (like anti-terrorism, energy cooperation, and strategic cooperation)
	6-Party Meeting	Nuclear proliferation in North Korea

In conclusion, as the indicator of Chinese official discourse, *People's Daily* has demonstrated China's transforming characteristics on Concert, from a negative attitude to a positive preference in general. However, there are still some problems about in-depth analysis on *People's Daily*. First, *People's Daily* used "Concert" in a quite broad sense, from international institutions to China's foreign policies. As a "fashionable" term, it is not clearly elaborated in official discourses yet. Next, Concert was more regarded as one instrument to resolve problems and deal with China's rise rather than a proposed governance type. Moreover, Concert took a weaker priority compared with other kinds of alternatives in global governance and diplomatic strategies. Till now, "Concert" was still blank in China's *Governmental Working Reports* (State Council 2012).

Dragon's "CLAW" in 21st-century Concert of Powers

This part will analyze China's **C**hance to participate in a Concert, its **L**egitimacy to take a Concert, the **A**bility to conduct a Concert, as well as its own **W**illingness to be a Concert partner, which is summarized as China's "CLAW" in current and future Concert system.

Chance

The changing international structure provides China chances to be involved into new CoP. The chance firstly means the changed competition tension of great

powers. After Cold War, the world became not tense as usual and moved from bipolarity to multipolarity. Major Powers normalized the relations with former enemies and the risk of major wars was greatly reduced (Mandelbaum 1998; Jervis 2002). The improved situation provides a precondition of peaceful cooperation among big powers. In a multipolar world, CoP will be a most competitive approach in future (Chen 2013).

Next, the chance indicates the transformation of international structure especially the rise of emerging powers in the multipolar world. With its rise, China was accepted as a core stakeholder in international community and encouraged to play more active role in supplying global public goods (Nye 2013; Slaughter 2004; Wang and French 2013; Zoellick 2005). In particular, the world has recently been in the shadow of economic decline and prevailing financial crisis, which also provided a good opportunity for China, as the most promising engine of world economy, to attend Concert system like G20. As Shaun Breslin (2011, 185–186) put it, China's success in global crisis has "helped propel China to the center of global politics."

Legitimacy

In general, International legitimacy is composed of rightful membership and rightful conduct. From a structural logic, legitimacy is from three sources, i.e. problem solving (efficiency), values (identity), and rights (justice), etc. (Eriksen and Fossum 2004; Clark 2005, 25–30). As Richard Ned Lebow (2008, 556) indicates, Great Powers' claim and exercise have to be built on "the share conception of justice."

In this case, China is legitimate enough to be a key CoP member. China is one permanent member of UNSC in current UN-based international order since 1970s. It also acts as important pillars in a series of international and regional organizations on diverse issues. China's official statistics in 2009 shows it has participated in more than 130 international organizations while signed more than 300 multilateral treaties and agreement.⁵ (Zhang 2009) In addition, as an emerging power and with its close ties with Third World countries, China usually acted as the representative and protector of developing countries in international affairs.

Furthermore, China demonstrates special contribution in solving tricky issues both at international and regional levels. In order to solve nuclear problem in North Korea, China hosted a series of relevant dialogues and meetings like the six-party meetings since 2003, as a pivot and irreplaceable role. In Asia finance

5 By 2009, China has participated in 4,541 international organizations in a broad definition counted by Union of International Associations (2010, 43–54). In respect to Intergovernmental organizations, China is involved into 170 international organizations in a strict sense meanwhile signed roughly 186 multilateral treaties and agreements.

crises in 1998, China kept its exchange rate stable at its own costs in order to reduce the pressure of Southeast Asian countries rather than “looting a burning house.” On other issues like climate change, development aid, peace keeping, and disaster response, China also took its responsibility and tried to resolve the problems with its typical manner. Hence, with the UNSC membership and representative of developing countries as well as efficient problem-solving experience and justice pursuit in the world, China has legitimacy to attend CoP.

Ability

China's capacity is the most crucial factor for China to participate and even construct future CoP. Firstly, China's faster economy growth and its 2nd largest economy are the key compositions of its power. Currently, it is predicted that China would catch up with US in the world economy early from 2020s (Economist 2011; The Washington Post 2011; OECD 2012). Meanwhile, China leadership declared that China should double its 2010 GDP and incomes by 2020 (Hu 2012).

In addition, China's military power has been strengthened both on military spending and military technology upgrading. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2012) shows China's military expenditure took the 2nd place with 143 billion dollars in 2011 compared with US (711 billion dollars) and Russia (72 billion dollars). According to Chinese official statistics, China had a budget of 601.1 billion RMB, about US\$ 91.5 billion (Du 2011). Therefore, China's military power was regarded as its “New Teeth” (Economist 2012). In 2012, China decided to “strengthen the development of new- and high-technology weapons and equipment and enhance the capacity for innovation in defense-oriented research and industries.” (Hu 2012) Furthermore, China has made significant progress on the technologies of carrier-borne fighter jet, artificial satellites, manned space program, Intercontinental Missile Capabilities, and missile interceptor, etc. Therefore, both components (military expenditures and technology) upgraded China's growing military power.

Foreign policy also relies on following factors, like credit, honor, prestige, leadership, influence, and reputation, etc. (Henkin 1979, 46–56). Soft power is a third pillar to construct China's ability on CoP. A recent survey shows China took top position on soft power among emerging powers followed by India and Russia. The survey predicts China has been offered an opportunity “to expand its soft power in the coming years and decades.” (Arnst and Young 2012, 10–14) However, in this regard, China's significant soft power is still relatively weaker than that of developed countries like US and EU members as well as Japan and South Korea (Whitney and Shambaugh 2009, 8; McClory 2010, 5). In summary, with the increasingly powerful capacity, China is capable of attending Concert institution and playing its roles within Concert system.

Willingness

With growing emphasis on “Community of Common Destiny” (*mingyun gongtongti*) (Xinhua 2013), China demonstrated its higher willingness in attending CoP and even building a new Concert institution, by utilizing the attractive chance, showing its international legitimacy, displaying its national power, and providing its share on global public goods.

With other emerging powers, rising China is inevitable to challenge current international structure. Shadowed by historical lessons that rising would usually engage international wars, other countries fear a strong China would bring wars (Nye 2006; Kaplan 2012; Mearsheimer 2005, 2006); while China itself worries its revival might be interrupted by external factors (Ma 2013). Involvement into Concert may bring China back to peaceful track and meanwhile provide a higher status as a core co-manager in global governance. The win-win situation can avoid dramatic change in international order and prevent inter-state wars between China and other powers. It can also satisfy China’s increasing demands as a global leader and promote China’s incentive to fulfill its international responsibility rather than engaging wars. Recently, Chinese government officially declared to upgrade its diplomacy by “striving for achievement” (*fenfa youwei*) (Xinhua 2013). As a result, Concert can be a wise and flexible way for China to break the rising dilemma in history, continue its way of revival, and avoid a warring situation to the largest extent.

In conclusion, according to current recognized criterion, China can be evaluated to be capable and legitimate enough to act as a concert partnership. The changing international structure and prevailing crises also require taking China into Concert framework. On China itself, China also has strong incentive to attend in CoP.

Promise or peril? Uncertainties on China’s CoP

In spite of plausible prospect of CoP and China’s growing interests, there are still a few uncertainties for China to adopt this approach. This part discusses the uncertainties from the “substitution effect” of alternative models, the CoP’s shortcomings, unresolved disputes among possible Concert actors, restriction from China’s own orthodox foreign ideology, and China’s domestic problem, etc. As Wang and French (2013) observed, owing to its reluctant interest and limited capacity, China’s past contribution to global governance was still low. In addition, other countries demonstrate low demand towards China’s global governance with their continuous ambivalence. China’s interest in CoP will finally depend on the dynamics of supply and demand aspects.

Firstly, there are at least four strands of approaches in global governance. The first is liberal-globalist approach, which holds strong belief of globalism and liberal

market with a reduced nation-state role. The second group is called “parochial medievalism” and focuses on the vicious side of globalization. The third relies on international community with emphasis on nation-states, which contains assertive multilateralism (an UN-focused order) and plurilateralism (a great power concert). The last one underscore the role of civil society and pay attention to regional governance, namely global cosmopolitanism combined with new regionalism (Hettne 2002, 18–22). Every strand has many fans in China. However, Concert approach is still a less-explored selection for Chinese in such a world filled with Balance of Power, Hegemony Stability, and Cooperative Security, etc.

Furthermore, its success is also related with other countries’ choice on Concert or not. If major powers like US will not take Concert as its choice, it is difficult for China to participate into Concert institutions by itself. In face of China’s rise, US have three choices i.e. withdrawing from Asia, competing with China and preparing a war, and sharing power with China in a Concert of Asia (White 2010, 41). China must alertly watch US’ choice and make its own relevant selection with higher benefits.

Secondly, Concert has its own shortcomings (Schulz 2011), which may decrease its effectiveness in global governance and further reduce China’s confidence in selecting this approach. Lack of equality between strong and lesser states is one obvious feature in historical Concert. In this vein, to grant the powers “co-equal status” should be “a further necessary dimension” of moderation in a Concert (Miller 1994, 340). Moreover, its effectiveness and efficiency are also criticized. The Concert is usually companied by higher transaction and information costs than leadership and mediation that are more efficacious (Miller 2007, 217). In addition, Concert has difficulties in similarity and moderation. There are other four obstacles of CoP at different levels of analysis, including relative power difference among great powers at system level, regime difference among Concert members at state level, negative images among Concert actors at individual level, and possible disinclination for engagement in regional conflicts, etc. (Miller 1994). In particular, domestic regime matters in Concert (Miller 2007, 218). Therefore, “Concert of Democracies” was especially advocated (Miller 2007, 79; Lindsay 2009). However, the emphasis on democracy would heavily cause the exclusion and trigger the disputes on regime natures among possible Concert partners. In such situation, Concert designer has to handle their difference on relative power, regime nature, and negative images within a given scale. Otherwise, the Concert will follow the old way and move to failure. And the 21st-century Concert proposal will be an approach that uses “wrong methods” to revise “wrongdoings.” Furthermore, CoP needs a “major stimulus” to start. War usually acts as stimulus in history. At present, spreading global issues are regarded as stimulus. However, some scholars have doubted and argued global issues like transnational threat of terrorism cannot justify a Concert (Morini 2011, 99–100; Acharya 2010). Lastly, there already existed a lot of regional Concert settings around the whole world

(Caceres 2011; Acharya 1999). How to incorporate the regional Concert in the 21st century Concert and coordinate the inherent conflicts is also a difficult question.

The third risk is on tough interest conflicts among key Concert actors and concert candidates. National interest is the standpoint for a country to decide its foreign policy and strategy. One precondition of successful CoP is “all parties perceive their interest as being in line” (Morini 2011, 99). In the White Book “China’s Peaceful Development” in 2011, China put forward its “Vital Interests (*hexin liyi*),” i.e. “state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, China’s political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic and social development.” (Xinhua 2011) At present, China has a list of disputes in all five aspects with US, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea and Southeast Asian countries. The hottest disputes include South China Sea and Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku Islands). Continuous fear to US’ containment is also Chinese crucial concerns. A dataset (Yan and Zhou 2004) shows China has kept an overall good and stably increasing relationship with other powers in general, except USA and Japan since 1990 (see Figure 4).

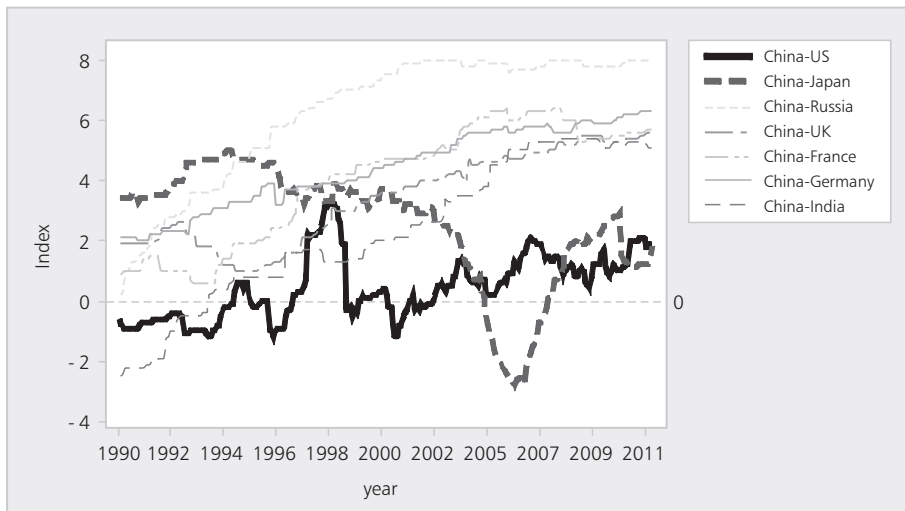


Figure 4. Chinese foreign relations with major powers (1990–2011).

Source: Yan and Zhou 2004

This situation will surely affect China’s willingness of participation in CoP. As Chinese new leadership strongly claimed its “bottom line,” i.e. “China will not abandon our legitimate rights (*zhengdang quan*) and will not sacrifice the national vital interest” (Xinhua 2013). Violent resolution on the vital interest conflicts will make CoP untenable, even when new Concert institution is built. It will absolutely undermine China’s commitment in a Concert framework. Even

worse, the consensus on Concert will probably be broken and move to a more hostile situation.

The fourth uncertainty sources from China's orthodox foreign ideology. It constrains China's choice and involving extent on CoP. With strong but diminishing revolutionary characteristic, China has been advocating to overwhelm or reform key international orders for years. When Chinese nationalism is triggered to embrace its orthodox foreign ideology, the revolutionary aspect will rise again. In this case, China will become a possible instability origin, exaggerate other countries' fears, and worsen international and regional situation.

In addition, China's Five Principles of Co-existence is incompatible with the unequal status between big powers and small powers in CoP. China's *National Defense White Book* underscored the value of equality and fairness about ten times. In 2010, China Premier Wen Jiabao regarded "fair treatment of friendly nations" as "most important starting point of Chinese foreign policies" (Xinhua 2010). In addition, Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic guidance in 1990s, like "no-leading" (*bu dangtou*) and "hide our abilities and bide our time" (*taoguang yanghui*), is in debate (Chen and Wang 2011) but still has great influence on Chinese foreign policy.

The fifth factor is on domestic dynamics. Domestic change may greatly affect the success of Concert. China faces serious domestic problems, which was regarded as a "Fragile Superpower" (Shirk 2007). The list includes the quick spread of contentious issues, uncontrolled corruption, the dominance of interest groups in China's policy making, difficulties of China's political system reform, the rise of nationalism, the negative approach of Chinese economic growth, and environmental crises, etc. Most problems root from China current policies, like the GDP-first strategy, stability-maintaining policy, and the constraint of Chinese political system, etc. Every single problem may be ignited if it is solved through a wrong way, which will finally ruin Chinese Communist regime.

Concluding remarks

Concert of Powers is only one possible choice for China among diverse prescriptions. In respect to the relevance, China's experience of active participation in global governance after 1990s, intellectual design on Concert for China, the inclusion of Concert in China's official discourse, and China's CLAW (chance, legitimacy, ability and willingness), etc. all have positive influence on China's selection in Concert. CoP is a relevant and flexible approach not only for China to participate in international affairs with dignity and honor in its rising process, but also for the world to keep stability and peace in power transition. If China is included while prefers to be included into a Concert system with other powers, it will probably have positive effects on international security and the peaceful transformation of international structures.

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Abstract

Concert of Powers has emerged as an attractive modality in global governance. As an emerging power, China must seriously take this template into account. This article seeks to analyze the incentives, possibilities, and uncertainties for China to participate in Concert with reference to China's history memory on Concert, China's intellectual endeavors, as well as China's evolving foreign preferences. It concludes that China is generally qualified and capable of being a key participant in Concert of Powers with increasing willingness. Yet, China's involvement depends on 1) if Concert template can overcome its own deficiencies; 2) if Concert have competitive advantages compared with other governance alternatives for China; and 3) if China can keep its momentum on both willingness and capacity in power transition.

Keywords: China; CLAW (Chance, Legitimacy, Ability, Willingness); Concert of Powers.

Resumo

O Concerto de Poderes surgiu como uma modalidade atraente na governança global. Como potência emergente, a China deve levar seriamente em consideração esse modelo. Este artigo procura analisar os incentivos, possibilidades e incertezas para a participação da China no Concerto com referência a memória da história da China em Concertos, seus esforços intelectuais, bem como a evolução das suas preferências estrangeiras. Conclui-se que a China é geralmente qualificada e capaz de ser um participante chave no Concerto de Poderes com o aumento da vontade. No entanto, o envolvimento da China depende de 1) se o modelo do Concerto pode superar suas próprias deficiências; 2) se o Concerto têm vantagens competitivas em comparação com outras alternativas de governança para a China; e 3) se a China pode manter a sua dinâmica de vontade e capacidade de transição de poder.

Palavras-chave: China; PLCV (Possibilidade, Legitimidade, Capacidade, Vontade); Concerto de Poderes.