A rising China is often viewed with awe and apprehension as a new force for change in international politics. Too often, the focus of scholarly and policy debates has been on how the world can, and should, cope with China’s rise; far too little attention is paid to how China is struggling to come to terms with its own rise. It is hardly comforting to think that major current national policies are devised based on a circumscribed view of Chinese international behavior. Indeed, for years now, China itself has been constantly engaging in soul-searching to define its relation with the current international order. How does the world look from the Chinese point of view? How does this relate to the views often depicted by “the world outside”? In this volume, the contributors look at the domestic sources of China’s international behavior. Chapters explore the key concepts of nationalism, sovereignty, and identities, as well as multilateralism, regionalism, international entitlement, and global governance. The volume also explores the development of international relations studies in the Chinese scholarly and policy circles to offer a glimpse of the resulting Chinese perception of the order within which it resides. It brings out the highly interactive relationship between China and the outside world: whether China can reshape the international order will eventually come down to its ability to manage domestic developments, not just economically, but politically and socially as well; and whether the world can reshape China depends heavily on China’s domestic forces’ acceptance of external influences.

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Wang Gungwu
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Introduction

Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian

In 1991, immediately after the liberation of Kuwait from a belligerent Iraq, a triumphant President George Bush announced the emergence of a “New World Order.” But Bush’s declaration was more political than consensual; there was no agreement in academic and policy circles about the world order, and most scholars seemed reluctant to endorse Bush’s declaration. After the end of the Cold War, “disorder,” instead of “order,” became the key word when describing international affairs. For Samuel Huntington, it was a “Clash of Civilizations”; for Zbigniew Brzezinski, it was “a new geopolitical game on the global chessboard”; for Robert Kaplan, it was “The Coming Anarchy.” More than a decade has now passed since Bush’s declaration, and extensive transformations to the international political landscape have occurred: the rise of China, the economic revival of Russia, the expansion and consolidation of the European Union, the emergence of an ‘Asian Community’, accelerated globalization, the information revolution, and the intensification of “global terrorism.”

Needless to say, drastic changes in world politics have caused an identity crisis in the international community, and there is no longer a hegemonic understanding of the international order. However, the growing public concern about world affairs reflects a popular expectation that there should be an international order. Certainly, the world is not completely anarchic; despite the fact that interstate and civil conflicts often break out, it is generally felt that an international order is emerging. What needs to be asked is exactly what kind of “order” it is, and how this new order is shaped by other, emerging factors. With so many drastic changes, the international order is certainly facing a great transformation. As a matter of fact, the understanding of such a great transformation of the international order has been a key agenda of the scholarly community ever since the end of the Cold War.

However, for a group of scholars who study China, and who have focused on the place of China in this new international order, the interest is not only in understanding such an order, but also in asking more China-related questions: How and where does China fit into the bigger picture of the transformation of the international order? What role is China playing in reshaping the new world order? And in what way has China reshaped this order? Furthermore, the world has come
to an age of globalization and interdependence in which different international actors, be they nation-states, governmental organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), interact with one another. Within this structure, China and the new world order are mutually transformative. Therefore, we also need to ask: How has China been transformed and reshaped by this new international order? How has China’s role in international affairs been redefined? In this volume, we attempt to answer these questions in different ways.

**Rising China and the new international order**

Thanks to the late Deng Xiaoping’s push for reforms and the open door policy, China has attained rapid economic growth in recent decades. Today, the once-reclusive country is knocking on the doors of the league of Great Powers; but the idiosyncrasy of China’s communist regime appears to be all too strong an influence on the manner in which others view China. Added to this, the pace of China’s rise has caught many by surprise. In little more than a quarter of a century, the country’s GDP has leapt from a mere US$144 billion in 1978 to US$1.6 trillion in 2004. This is a staggering achievement, comparable only to the postwar rebuilding of Japan and Germany. These twin factors have generated many ways of interpreting China’s rise, from one end of the spectrum, at which China is regarded as a threat, to the other end, where it is seen as an opportunity.

With its growing economy, China has increasingly expanded its external influence. The country has become the world’s top consumer of a wide variety of natural resources and primary commodities, such as steel, aluminum, oil, and gas, and its rising demand for these products has driven up world prices. China’s growing economic “clout” is reflected in the issue of the currency, renminbi (RMB), being debated across the world’s capital markets, a situation with a marked resemblance to that of the Japanese yen in the 1980s. In the meantime, Chinese companies have emerged as new players in the global business of mergers and acquisitions. The acquisition in December 2004 of IBM’s PC division by China’s computer giant Lenovo, and the more recent attempt by the China National Offshore Oil Co. (CNOOC) to acquire America’s Unocal Corporation, have given rise to great controversy, and even fears in the USA over the sudden rise of China’s economic might. Some in Asia are also concerned about China’s potential displacement effect on their economies.

For the international community, the biggest question lies in whether China will use its newly acquired economic strength to become a strong military power, a fear that has surfaced in recent years as a major theme in the “China threat” discourse in different parts of the world. Without doubt, the country’s rapid military modernization – one of Deng Xiaoping’s Four Modernizations, which additionally include agriculture, industry, and science and technology – has made the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) a more credible force. China’s recent advances in space and telecommunications technologies have also colored the perceptions of threat of many countries in East Asia, in particular across the Taiwan Strait and the Sea of Japan (East China Sea).

Concerns over China’s growing military strength have thus captured the atten-