

# 关于“韬光养晦、有所作为”外交方略的思考

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**【内容提要】**中国近年倡导的和谐理念，是向国际社会提供的一项公共产品。中国在确立推动建设和谐世界、和谐地区的目标的同时，也在反复强调“韬光养晦、有所作为”的外交方针。中国未能公开、充分地围绕“韬光养晦、有所作为”这一外交方略进行相关研究和宣传工作，引起国际社会特别是西方大国的曲解和误解，加深了周边国家和西方大国对我战略意图的疑虑，造成了构建战略互信的障碍。因此，深入解读“韬光养晦、有所作为”的内涵，已成为一项不容回避的严肃任务。

**【关键词】**韬光养晦 有所作为 外交方略

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在国际体系转型和重建的今天，中国外交已成为国际关系学界和外交界关注的重点之一。我国领导人近年倡导的和谐理念，是中国向国际社会提供的一项公共产品，意义十分重大。在确立了推动建设和谐世界、和谐地区的目标，高举起和平、发展、合作的旗帜的同时，我国也在反复强调韬光养晦、有所作为的外交方针。也许是为了避免引起国际社会特别是西方大国的曲解和误解，围绕“韬光养晦、有所作为”这一外交方略的相关研究和宣传工作尚未能公开、充分地展开，而这又加深了周边国家和西方大国对我战略意图的疑虑，造成了构建战略互信的障碍。因此，深入解读“韬光养晦、有所作为”的内涵，实际上已是一项不容回避的严肃任务。

## 一、正本清源：“韬光养晦”的文化蕴含

“韬光养晦”是上世纪 90 年代初邓小平同志在国际格局发生剧变、中

国遭受西方国家制裁的严峻形势下提出的重要外交战略方针。它一直被西方国家视为中国战略的“核心”。美国国防部在《2002年中国军力报告》中，将“韬光养晦”说成是中国“在国际上进行战略欺骗”的手段；《2005年中国军力报告》收录了邓小平关于“韬光养晦”外交战略的完整表述；2006年5月25日公布的当年《中国军力报告》仍将“韬光养晦”译成“hide capacities and bide time”，即“隐藏能力，等待时机”。可以说，美国军方的这种解读，不仅对美国国内舆论，而且对整个国际社会都有很大的导向性作用。从苏联解体后至小布什当政时期，在处于美国对立面的伊斯兰、阿拉伯国家，主流舆论一直指望中国能取代苏联，成为对抗美国的另一超级大国。曾任叙利亚驻华大使暨阿拉伯国家使团长的穆罕默德·海尔·瓦迪，在他的《中国外交政策探视》一书中，把“韬光养晦”译成“拖延、规避，以等待合适的反扑时机”。<sup>①</sup>他对这种“反扑”的诠释是“并不必然具有军事色彩，而是集中在外交手段和经济成就上”。由此可见，包括东西方在内的外部世界都深受美国影响，对“韬光养晦”内涵的认识基本一致，即“等待时机，以求一逞”，最终目的似乎都是要同美国“对决”、“摊牌”。

在我国学术界内，对“韬光养晦”也有颇多争论，如有观点认为，尽管它的本意是“隐藏才能，不使外露”，但还是常常使人联想到越王勾践“卧薪尝胆”、“韬光养晦”的故事，使人联想到刘备在与曹操煮酒论英雄时的那种心态，因此“容易让人产生误解，最好不再使用”；<sup>②</sup>另有学者认为“美国遏制中国崛起的独霸天下的战略是一种客观存在，无法回避。树欲静而风不止，继续奉行‘韬光养晦’战略，实际上是‘苟且偷安’和‘鸵鸟政策’。应适时调整政策，以‘有所作为’为主”；<sup>③</sup>等等。

由此看来，无论是国外的误解，还是国内的争议，固然都与特定的政治考虑相关，但是，种种误解与争议的产生，还与对“韬光养晦”这一成语本意理解不够深刻密切相关，尤其是缺乏从中国的人文传统与核心价值出发，准确理解其内涵。其实，“韬光养晦”作为成语，乃源于清代郑观应（1842年至1921

<sup>①</sup> 穆·海·瓦迪：《中国外交政策探视》，叙利亚艾哈利出版社，2005年。

<sup>②</sup> 叶自成：“关于韬光养晦和有所作为——再谈中国的大国心态”，《太平洋学报》，2002年第1期。

<sup>③</sup> 王嵎生：“中国‘韬光养晦’战略的再思考”，《环球》，2004年第7期。

年)于1893年出版的《盛世危言·自序》,“自顾年老才庸,粗知《易》理,亦急拟独善潜修,韬光养晦”。<sup>①</sup>其义类同“晦迹韬光”,亦即主张隐藏才华,不使外露。用于积极入世一面,是“晦迹韬光德自长”,“如同美玉,藏于泥土之中,一旦出世……始成器”;用于消极出世一面,是为了“避祸”、“避仇”、“隐居”、“绝名利”。因此,韬光养晦本质上反映的是中国人在做人、做事、做学问方面的价值取向,告诫人们即便再有声名、有才华,在待人接物的行为举止上,仍应收敛、低调,不要锋芒毕露,动辄张扬。

上世纪90年代冷战结束,国际格局处于转型、重建之初,邓小平同志提出了包括“韬光养晦”在内的外交思想,显然是要用“韬光养晦”积极入世的一面,强调在“冷静观察”、“沉着应付”急剧变幻的国际风云之时,“不当头”,“不扛旗”,低调行事,趋利避害,以期首先把自己的事情做好。

“韬光养晦”之所以引起西方大国疑虑,在于我国至今也还未作公开宣示和阐述,主要是因为解读上存在误区,其中最突出的是不少中外学者都把它与越王勾践的“卧薪尝胆”混为一谈所致。春秋末年的越王勾践因被吴国打败,入臣于吴,尔后刻苦自励,才得以转弱为强,最后灭亡吴国并被诸侯推举为霸主。用这样的典故来诠释我国当前倡导的韬光养晦,不仅时空不对,而且行为模式的出发点和诉求目标更是大相径庭。勾践的“卧薪尝胆”,目的是用战争手段报仇雪耻,称霸天下;而我们遵循的“韬光养晦”,是从中国人文理念出发,为谋求和平与发展,通过交流、合作,实现互利共赢,共同发展,推动构建和谐世界、和谐地区。两者相去甚远,明显不是一回事。

## 二、理解与沟通:“韬光养晦”是世界主流文明的共有观念

要让“韬光养晦”作为中国外交方针在政策宣示中站住脚,赢得国际社会的认同,进而推动构建我国与世界大国之间的战略互信,就有必要厘清它在中外历史文化中的渊源,并准确阐明其文化蕴含。

客观地看,“韬光养晦”既是中国人的价值取向,也是中国人的一种行为模式,它是把“适中”规定为行为的尺度和分寸。因为“韬光养晦”内涵中的

<sup>①</sup> 《中国成语大辞典》,上海辞书出版社,1987年,第1235页。

积极面同儒释文化中的中庸、中道关联度十分紧密。被列为儒家经典之一的《中庸》指出，“中庸”是道德行为的最高标准，是与人生的最高境界“诚”直接联系在一起的，即“诚者不勉而中，不思而得，从容中道，圣人也”。《论语·雍也》中说：“中庸之为德也，其至矣乎！”这是把处理事情的不偏不倚，无过无不及的态度，看成是最高的道德标准。对中国人来说，中庸从来就非贬词，而是一种美德，这是它的历史真实面貌。佛教东渐后，中国传统文化中吸收了大量佛教概念。其中，佛教主张的“中道”，即不赞成“断见”（认为事物灭后不能再生）和“常见”（认为事物常住不变），而强调要行“中道”，指出“行中道，是为般若波罗蜜（智慧）”，这就与中土传统文化融为一体了。

在西方文化的源头古希腊哲学中，亚里士多德（公元前384年至公元前322年）也提倡中道，认为行为包括过度、不足与适中三种情况，适中是美德的特性，亦即中道。伊斯兰文化的经典《古兰经》中，同样明确反对过分、过度，而主张中间主义，强调阿拉伯民族应是中正的民族，<sup>①</sup>伊斯兰文明是中正的文明。可见，对中外主流文化而言，中庸、中道、中正、中间主义……都是褒词，都处于伦理道德的高端，在理性、道义层面决不会遭人诟病。

进入21世纪以来，挑战国际关系民主化，阻碍建立一个更加公正、合理的国际政治经济新秩序，干扰推动构建和谐世界的消极力量，乃是来自东西方的两股极端主义思潮和势力。一是急欲改变现状的伊斯兰极端主义、恐怖主义甚嚣尘上，它的跨境袭击活动不仅严重威胁主权国家和地区的安全、稳定，而且对整个人类社会造成了危害；二是以新保守主义强硬派为支撑的美国布什政府公然藐视并违反道义和国际法准则，奉行单边黠武的极端主义。但近年来，中东伊斯兰核心国家正在提倡“伊斯兰中间主义”，将其与公正、宽容并列作为政策主张，以期与极端主义、恐怖主义划清界限；而美国的新保守主义的骨干分子也大多已被迫退出政坛，奥巴马政府的对外政策正在进行大幅调整，单边黠武的极端主义有所收敛，应对全球治理问题过程中注重对话、谈判的倾向也有所上升。因此，当前公开倡导以中庸、中道文化为底蕴的“韬光养晦”，既与中国外交的和谐世界理念一脉相承，并行不悖，对中国外交形象有利无弊，又与东西方国家理性的主流思潮相接近，因而也应能得到国际舆论的认同。

<sup>①</sup> “我这样以你们作为中正的民族，以便你们作证世人，而使者作证你们。”《古兰经》2:143，中国社会科学出版社，1981年，第16页。

我国近年倡导的构建和谐世界理念，是一个符合全人类利益的理想目标，落实到具体领域，是“政治上相互尊重、平等协商，共同推进国际关系民主化；经济上相互合作、优势互补，共同推动经济全球化朝着均衡、普惠、共赢方向发展；文化上相互借鉴、求同存异，尊重世界多样性，共同促进人类文明繁荣进步；安全上相互信任、加强合作，坚持用和平方式而不是战争手段解决国际争端，共同维护世界和平稳定；环保上相互帮助、协力推进，共同呵护人类赖以生存的地球家园”。<sup>①</sup>而“韬光养晦、有所作为”作为中国的外交方针，或中国对外交往的一种行为模式，也是以中国优秀的传统文化和道德标准为依据的，亦即以自强内敛、中道和平的方式谋求中华民族的复兴和世界的持久和平、共同繁荣。因此，“和谐世界”与“韬光养晦、有所作为”两者不但都符合中国实际、具有中国特色，而且内在逻辑关系合理，因果关系紧密。

再说，“韬光养晦”与“有所作为”并非对立关系，而是互为表里、相辅相成的一个整体。在语义上，“有所作为”凸显了“韬光养晦”的积极含义，是指应“做出成绩”，以避免造成对“韬光养晦”作消极解读，为隐藏才华而不作为，推卸一个新兴大国应负的责任。事实上，即便是提出“韬光养晦”的郑观应本人，也曾“历任上海机器织布局、轮船招商局、上海电报局、汉阳铁厂、粤汉铁路公司的总办或会办。关心时务、热心西学。主张改变专制，设立议院。提出以‘商战为主，兵战为末’。要求发展机器制造工业，实行护商政策，并提出采取保护关税、海关不用洋人、裁撤厘金、允许商人自由投资等护商措施”。<sup>②</sup>可见，他也是一位颇有作为的维新改良人物。晚年，他感悟到应“韬光养晦”，是承袭了中国传统的“圣人韬光，贤人遁世”思想，内心深处依然有追求，且自视甚高，仍怀有强烈的入世观念，只是在待人处事的方式上，认为当以低调不张扬为妥。当然，“有所作为”也不是无所不为或大有作为，什么都能做或都该做，而是强调要从中国的实际情况和现实能力出发，作贡献、出成绩；必须实事求是，把握适度，量力而行，尽力而为；要按照中国的国家利益和核心价值观有所为，有所不为。

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<sup>①</sup> 胡锦涛：《高举中国特色社会主义伟大旗帜，为夺取全面建设小康社会新胜利而奋斗——在中国共产党第十七次全国代表大会上的报告》，  
[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/25/content\\_6205616.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/25/content_6205616.htm)。

<sup>②</sup> 《辞海》，上海辞书出版社，2001年，第553页。

### 三、“韬光养晦、有所作为”： 中国外交的长期方针及其走向世界的可能性

“韬光养晦，有所作为”究竟是战略方针、外交策略还是一种外交行为模式？应该说，邓小平同志在冷战结束之初、中国遭受西方国家制裁时提出“冷静观察，稳住阵脚，沉着应对，韬光养晦，善于守拙，决不当头，有所作为”的完整表述，毫无疑问是针对国内外严峻形势所确定的战略方针。1991年7月江泽民主席在对此进行阐释时指出：“实行这个方针，决不是表明我们软弱、退让，更不是放弃原则，而是考虑到我们面临的错综复杂的国际形势，不要四面出击，到处树敌，同时又坚持我们的原则立场和独立自主、自力更生、奋发图强的精神。我们对外工作的战略部署要造成一个有利于我国现代化建设和改革开放的国际和平环境。”<sup>①</sup>到了1995年，他在谈到贯彻邓小平同志的韬光养晦方针时，又突出强调了“要有所作为，中国不能无所作为”，“在对外工作和国际斗争中，我们任何时候都要坚持原则，但也不能没有一点妥协。必要时作出妥协，是为了更好地实现和坚持我们的原则，是原则所允许的”；“要讲究斗争艺术，讲究斗争策略，注意分寸，掌握火候，要有理、有利、有节，要有利于维护自己的利益和发展自己的力量，我们要沉着、冷静、不急不躁地妥善处理问题”。<sup>②</sup>由此来看，“韬光养晦、有所作为”，也是一种策略，一种中国特色的外交行为模式。因此，总的来说，“韬光养晦，有所作为”的内涵十分丰富，应用的面也很广泛，它既根植于深厚的中国传统优秀文化，又适应处于社会主义初级阶段的中国国情，符合一个发展中大国的身份和能力，因而应当是我国当前乃至相当长历史时期内配合和谐世界理念，开展对外交往工作时必须坚持的外交思想理念和行为规范。

新中国建立60年特别是经过改革开放这30年的发展，综合国力和国际地位都有明显提升。尽管从人均国民收入、环保、缩小城乡和东西部差距等方面看，中国到本世纪中期要达到中等发达国家水平，还要作出艰苦卓绝的努力，仍需继续抓发展、抓建设。但中国毕竟已经积累起了一定的经济实力并形成了

<sup>①</sup> 《江泽民论有中国特色社会主义》，中央文献出版社，2002年，第527-528页。

<sup>②</sup> 同上，第529-530页。

巨大的市场潜力，作为联合国的常任理事国和世界上最大的发展中国家，对国际事务可以发挥一些重要的影响和作用。因此，胡锦涛主席在2009年的驻外使节会议上明确提出了“坚持韬光养晦，积极有所作为”的方针，进一步肯定了“韬光养晦”原则，并与时俱进地提高了“有所作为”的要求和力度，从而凸显了这项已成国策的外交方针所具有的重要性和长期性。

在中国的前途命运已日益紧密地同世界的前途命运紧密结合在一起的今天，中国外交的各种决策、举措和表态无不受到国际社会的高度关注。“韬光养晦、有所作为”实际上已不可能继续停留在“内部掌握”或“只做不说”的层面，而必须转向“既做也说”，并逐步在政策宣示层面公开予以阐述。这不仅仅是为了消释美欧国家的疑虑和曲解，而且希望能更进一步，争取使之成为我国向国际社会提供的又一公共产品。

随着对外依存度的不断上升，中国处身于一个相互依赖的世界中，在理解和对待全球公共问题或国际社会整体利益时，必须关注国际公共产品（亦称“公共物品”、“公共财货”）的问题。这种公共产品可以是有形的，如作为人类共有物的陆地（如极地的利用与保护）与海洋资源（如国际公海与海底资源）的分享，也可以是无形的，如知识、安全、信息的共享等。就其中不具有对抗性和排斥性的文化观念、价值观念等涉及软实力的产品而言，当今国际社会流行的几乎都是西方提供的，如民主、自由、人权、市场准入等。但自进入新世纪以来，随着我国坚定不移地走中国特色的社会主义道路，也已经开始提出了一系列中国品牌的公共产品，如“和平发展道路”、“以人为本”、“科学发展观”、“和谐社会”、“和谐亚洲”和“和谐世界”等，这些都是在消费过程中不具占有性和排斥性，可以为别人、别国分享的。这实际上既是中国特色的具体表现，也是中国在历史上的“四大发明”之后对国际社会的新贡献。

就此而言，“韬光养晦、有所作为”及其深厚的中国中庸文化底蕴，也是可以与别国分享的公共产品。因为国际社会的成员，事实上能力、贫富、强弱都不相同，再大、再富、再强的国家都不可能包揽所有的国际事务，也不可能由它一家说了算。中国提倡的“韬光养晦、有所作为”作为外交理念，反映的是中国有自知之明；有与各国真诚合作、同舟共济的诚意；采取的是尽心尽力、恪守职责的态度。别国如愿效仿，中国自然欢迎、支持，因为和谐世界的构建，实有赖于有更多国家秉持中道而不是极端的理念。

# On Diplomatic Strategy of “Keeping a Low Profile and Taking a Proactive Role When Feasible”

*ZHU Weilie*

Chinese diplomacy has become one of the concerns to the IR theorists and diplomatic circle in that the international system is being transformed and reconstructed in this day and age. Harmony, a concept initiated by Chinese leadership in recent years, is a piece of public goods with which China provides the international community, extraordinarily significant in its own right. China has set up the goal of pushing for building up a harmonious world and harmonious regions and hoisters the banner of peace, development and cooperation, albeit repeatedly stresses the diplomatic strategy of “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible”. Little has been publicized about the relevant research of this strategy lest the international community misinterpret or misunderstand the strategy, though it actually aggravates China’s peripheries’ and Western powers’ suspicion about China’s strategic intention, obstructing the building-up of strategic mutual confidence. Therefore, it is in fact a solemn and unavoidable task to reexamine the concept of “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible”.

## **I. The Origin of the Maxim “Keeping a Low Profile and Taking a Proactive Role When Feasible”**

The maxim “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role

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when feasible" was an important diplomatic strategy first put forward by comrade Deng Xiaoping in early 1990 when dramatic change occurred to the international configuration and Western countries imposed economic sanction against China. The maxim has been deemed by the Western countries as the "core" strategy of China. In its Annual Report on the Military Power of China 2002, the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense depicted Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic strategy of "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" as strategic deception. Annual Report on the Military Power of China released in 2005 had a complete account on Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic strategy of "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible". Annual Report on the Military Power of China released on May 25, 2006 again translated the maxim into "hide capacities and bide time". So to speak, the U.S. military interpretation of the maxim will direct the public opinions to a large extent not only inside the United States, but also within the international society at large. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and up to the Bush junior administration, the mainstream public opinions of the Islam and Arab world, oppositional to the United States, had expected China to substitute for the Soviet Union as another superpower against the United States. In his book on China's foreign policy published in 2005, Mr. Mhd Kheir Al-wadi, the former Syrian ambassador and Arab Ambassadors missions to China, translated the maxim into "to procrastinate and to stay away for the opportunity to counterattack". The counterattack, he explained, does not necessarily contain military color, but is preoccupied with diplomatic means and economic achievement. All in all, the outside world, the West and the East alike, is deeply impacted by the United States, which leads to a basically agreeable understanding of "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible", i.e., "to bide time for counterattack" with the ultimate goal of an Armageddon or showdown with the United States.

Controversies emerge in Chinese academics on the definition of the maxim "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" as well. Some argue that despite "hide capacities and not to demonstrate", the real meaning of the maxim, it reminds people of the Chinese history of "sleep on brushwood and

taste gall", meaning to undergo self-imposed hardships or to nurse vengeance, which may lead to misunderstanding and thus should not be used anymore.<sup>①</sup> Others argue: the U.S. hegemonic strategy to contain China is an objective and unavoidable reality. The tree prefers calm but the wind blows nevertheless: "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible", a strategy to be further pursued, is actually trying to live in a fool's paradise or an ostrich policy. Thus, they advice to make a timely policy adjustment that centers on "taking a proactive role when feasible", and so on.<sup>②</sup>

The above-mentioned external misunderstandings and internal controversies do admittedly have much to do with respective political backgrounds, but they have more to do with a lack of understanding of the semantics of the maxim "keeping a low profile", especially with the lack of understanding precisely the connotation of the maxim in terms of Chinese traditional humanities and core values. In fact, "keeping a low profile" as a maxim dated back in Qing dynasty when Zheng Guanying wrote in his book published in 1893, "I am well aware of my oldness, incompetence and preliminary knowledge of *I Ching* (book of changes), hence I am only more earnest of my own moral uplift and keeping a low profile", meaning to hide capacities and not to demonstrate.<sup>③</sup> The maxim thus entails positive and negative explanations. With the positive and participative sense, "keeping a low profile" is like burying jade under earth only to see its day to come one day in the future. With the negative and secluded sense, "keeping a low profile" is to "avoid calamity", "avoid enmity", "seclude" and "wall off fame and wealth". Thus, the maxim implies the value orientation of the Chinese people in their social life, career and academic approaches and prescribes restraint, low profile, and lie low in social life of those that even enjoy remarkable fame and talent.

In the wake of the end of Cold War that followed up by the transformation and rebuilding of the international configuration in 1990s, Comrade Deng Xiaoping put forward diplomatic

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<sup>①</sup> Ye Zicheng, "On Keeping a Low Profile and Taking a Proactive Role When Feasible--Revisit to China's Great Power Mentality", *Pacific Journal*, 2002, No.1.

<sup>②</sup> Wang Yusheng, "Rethinking on Keeping a Low Profile", *Globe*(huan qiu), 2004, No.7.

<sup>③</sup> *Dictionary of Chinese Idioms*, Shanghai Dictionary Press, 1987, p.1235.

thoughts including "keeping a low profile", obviously with the positive sense of the maxim, highlighting that China should not seek a leadership role in the international arena, but take a low profile and concentrate on China's own affairs in the first place while observing and coping with international affairs calmly in the dramatically changing world and making full use of advantages while avoiding disadvantages.

China has yet to make public explanation due mainly to the dubious interpretation of the maxim "keeping a low profile", which to some extent caused suspicion to Western powers. As the most outstanding example, quite a number of scholars, home and abroad, confuse the maxim with the proverb "the king Gou Jian that slept on firewood and ate a gall-bladder". During the Spring and Autumn period (770—476BC), the State of Wu defeated the State of Yue and caught its king Gou Jian. Fu took him to the State of Wu. In order to make himself tougher Gou slept on firewood and ate a gall-bladder before having dinner and going to bed every night. After a few years, Gou seized a favorable opportunity to wipe out the State of Wu. It is irrelevant in terms of time or space to parallel this literary quotation with the maxim "keeping a low profile" now China is promoting, let alone that they are totally different in terms of the mode of conduct and the object of implication. Gou slept on firewood and ate a gall-bladder was aimed at revenging by resort to war and seeking hegemony, whereas China follows the strategy of "keeping a low profile" for the purpose of seeking peace and development, pursuing communication and cooperation in order to realize mutual benefit, win-win outcome and co-development, and pushing for harmonious world and harmonious regions. The two quotations have absolutely nothing to do with one another.

## **II. Comprehension and Communication: "Keeping a Low Profile" Is a Shared Concept of the World's Mainstream Culture**

It is necessary to trace the origins of the maxim "keeping a low profile" in both Chinese and foreign histories and to scrutinize the cultural essence of the maxim before the concept can stand up as a diplomatic strategy, can be acceptable to international

community and can advance strategic confidence between China and other world powers.

To perceive objectively, "taking low profile" is a mode of value and conduct of the Chinese people. The mode regards eclecticism as the criterion of conduct in that the positive aspect of "taking low profile" associates very closely with the eclecticism in the Confucius culture. The Doctrine of Mean, one of the Confucius classics, regards eclecticism as the highest criterion of the ethical conduct, which immediately links to the highest state of human life, i.e., He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. The master said in his book *the Analects: Yong Ye*, "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the constant mean!" The Doctrine of Mean views even-handedness and mediocre as the highest moral criterion. To the Chinese, mediocre has never been a derogatory term, but rather a virtue, the true historical face of the term mediocre. A great deal of Buddhist ideas have been absorbed to Chinese traditional culture as Buddhism were introduced eastward to China. The middle way (*madhyamapratipad*) denotes the mean between two extremes, particularly between realism and nihilism, eternal substantial existence and annihilation. This doctrine opposes the rigid categories of existence and non-existence in the interest of a middle way. This is the ultimate truth of Buddhism, or the *Prajna Paramita*, which has integrated with the Chinese traditional culture.

In Greek philosophy, the source of Western culture, Aristotle (384 BC--322 BC) believed that every ethical virtue is an intermediate condition between excess and deficiency, which is also the middle way. *Qur'an*, the classical literature of the Islamic culture, also clearly prefers middle-way to excess and emphasizes that Arabs should be a balanced nation and Islamic culture is a justly balanced culture. "Thus, have We made of you an *Ummat* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."<sup>①</sup> In sum, mediocre, middle way, and justly balanced are commendatory words that lie at the top of ethics and free of rational and ethical denounces.

Since the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the negative forces that

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<sup>①</sup> *Qur'an*, 2:143, China Social Science Press, 1981, p.16.

have challenge democratization of international relations, hampered the construction of a more just and fairer international political and economic new order and interfered with promoting a harmonious world have been the two extremist ideas and forces stemming from both the East and West. One of them is the Islamic extremism that is anxious to change the status quo and resort to rampant terrorism with cross-border inroads not only threatening security and stability of sovereign states and regions, but also inflicting danger to the entire human society. The other is the Bush administration backed up by neoconservative hardliners that publicly defies morality and international criteria while pursues unilateralism, militarism and the Christian fundamentalism. Since recent years, nevertheless, the core Islamic states in the Middle East have been advancing "Islamic moderatism" and turning the moderatism, just and tolerance into policy lines, making a clear distinction from extremism and terrorism. Likewise, the U.S. neoconservative hardliners are forced to retreat from office, while the Obama administration is making remarkable adjustment to the U.S. foreign policy. At least, the unilateral, military extremism is contracted to a large extent and more dialogues and negotiations emerge as a trend in the course of global governance. Therefore, publicizing the policy of "keeping a low profile", which is vindicated by the doctrine of mean and moderate culture, not only agrees with the harmonious world sponsored by Chinese diplomacy and helps to step up China's diplomatic image, but also approximates with the mainstream, rational thoughts of Eastern and Western countries and thus acceptable to international opinions.

Building harmonious world promoted by China in recent years is an ideal goal in the interest of the whole mankind. The concept of harmonious world can be practiced in concrete areas such as: "Politically, all countries should respect each other and conduct consultations on an equal footing in a common endeavor to promote democracy in international relations. Economically, they should cooperate with each other, draw on each other's strengths and work together to advance economic globalization in the direction of balanced development, shared benefits and win-win progress. Culturally, they should learn from each other in the spirit of seeking common ground while shelving differences,

respect the diversity of the world, and make joint efforts to advance human civilization. In the area of security, they should trust each other, strengthen cooperation, settle international disputes by peaceful means rather than by war, and work together to safeguard peace and stability in the world. On environmental issues, they should assist and cooperate with each other in conservation efforts to take good care of the Earth, the only home of human beings."<sup>①</sup> "Keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" as China's diplomatic strategy or as the mode of conduct of Chinese diplomacy is also based on China's outstanding cultural heritage and ethical criteria, i.e., to bring about a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the lasting peace of the world via self-strengthening, perseverance, mediocre and peaceful means. Therefore, the two concepts of "harmonious world" and "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" not only is consistent to Chinese reality and take on Chinese characteristics, but also share reasonable, innate, logical relations and close causalities with each other.

Moreover, "keeping a low profile" and "taking a proactive role when feasible" are not antithetical with each other, but rather mutually supplement each other. In semantics, "taking a proactive role when feasible" highlights the positive aspect of "keeping a low profile", referring to making accomplishment to prevent negative reading of "keeping a low profile", such as to stay away for sake of concealing talent and to shirk the responsibility of an emerging power. In fact, Zheng Guanying, the vary originator of the maxim "keeping a low profile" himself successively held the posts of chief superintendent or assistant chief superintendent of Shanghai Machine Weaving Bureau, China merchant steamship navigation company, the shanghai Telegraph Office, Hanyang Iron Works, and Canton-Hankow Railway Co. He kept up with current affairs and was enthusiastic about Western ideas. He called for change of despotism and for establishment of a House of Representatives. He put forward the idea of "preferring commercial battle to military battle". He called for

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<sup>①</sup> Hu Jintao, "Hold High The Great Banner Of Socialism With Chinese Characteristics and Strive For New Victories In Building A Moderately Prosperous Society In All Respects - Report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China", October 15, 2007, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/25/content\\_6205616.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-10/25/content_6205616.htm).

machinery-building industry, pursuing policy of business protection, tariff protection, no foreign employees in Chinese custom house, abolishing tax (lijin) system, and free investment policy.<sup>①</sup> Surely, he is an important figure of Hundred Days of Reform. In his later years, he felt about “keeping a low profile”, which followed the Chinese heritage of “The saints keep a low profile, while the sages take a seclusion”, though he cherishes aspiration in his inner heart, thinks high of himself, and strongly harbors mundane life in spite of “keep a low profile” in public relations. However, “taking a proactive role when feasible” does not amount to taking a proactive role in whatsoever businesses or taking an extraordinary role when feasible. “Taking a proactive role when feasible” means starting from the real conditions and capabilities of China to make contributions, achievement in a fashion of seeking truth from facts rather than doing beyond one’s means. And it means taking a proactive role selectively in light of Chinese national interest and core values.

### **III. “Keeping a Low Profile and Taking a Proactive Role When Feasible”: China’s Long-term Foreign Policy and Its Internationalization**

Whether is “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible” a strategic guideline, a diplomatic tactics or a mode of diplomatic conduct exactly? Deng Xiaoping put forward a complete comment of “keep cool-headed to observe, stand firmly, be composed to make reactions, keep a low profile, never try to take the lead, and take a proactive role when feasible”, which was undoubtedly a strategic guideline that directed against the urgent situation at home and abroad in the early post-Cold War years when the West imposed sanctions on China. As Jiang Zemin put it in July 1991, “Following this guideline does not indicate our weakness, nor indicates compromise, let alone discarding principles. Rather, we want at once to take into account the international situation that is too complicated for us to make attacks in all directions and make enemies indiscriminately and we want adhere to our principles and the spirits of independence, self-reliance and work hard for the prosperity of the country. The

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<sup>①</sup> *Word Ocean*, Shanghai Word Ocean Press, 2001, p.553.

strategic plan of our work of foreign affairs is to create a peaceful international environment in favor of China's modernization effort and the effort of reform and opening-up.<sup>①</sup> In talking about carrying out Deng's policy of "taking a low profile" Jiang stressed again in 1995, "We should take a proactive role, China should not do nothing", and "For the work of foreign affairs and international struggles, we should stick to principle at any time though not without some compromise. To make compromise if necessary is to better fulfill and adhere to our principle, hence is allowed by principle"; "The struggle must waged with tactics, with propriety, with timing, on just grounds, to our advantage, with restraint and to the advantage of maintaining our interest and developing our strength. We should be steady, calm and take time in handling problems."<sup>②</sup> In this view, "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" is also a tactics, a diplomatic mode with Chinese characteristics. Thus, "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" is by and large rich in connotations and broad in application. It is deeply rooted in Chinese excellent traditional culture as well as adaptable to the Chinese national condition in the primary stage of socialism and in consistent with the identity and capacity of a developing big power and thus it can be applied in tandem with the idea of harmonious world and serve as concept of diplomatic thinking and norms of diplomatic conduct that China must persist in the work of foreign affairs at the present stage and over a considerably long historical period as well.

With 60 years since the founding of the new China, especially with the development over 30 years of reform and opening-up, China has remarkably increased its comprehensive national strength and international status. Yes, China has to make strenuous, patient and painstaking effort and concentrate in development and economic construction to reach the level of the moderately developed countries by the mid-21st century in terms of per capita income, environment and narrowing the gaps between urban and rural areas and between eastern and western

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<sup>①</sup> Jiang Zemin, *Theory on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, Central Documentary Press, 2002, pp.527-528.

<sup>②</sup> Jiang Zemin, *Theory on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, Central Documentary Press, 2002, pp.529-530.

areas. But as China has built up a considerable economic prowess and a tremendous market potential and as a permanent member state of the UN Security Council and the largest developing countries in the world, China can play an important role and exert an important impact on international affairs. Therefore President Hu Jintao clearly put forward the guideline of "adhere to keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" on the Diplomatic Envoy Session in 2009, which further confirmed the principle of "adhere to keeping a low profile" and kept in pace with the time by calling for higher demand and vigor to pursue the strategy "taking a proactive role when feasible", hence highlighted the importance and durability of the strategy that has already become a basic national policy.

Now that China's fate is increasingly closer to the fate of the world today, every decision-making, act and statement of Chinese diplomacy will surely draw great attention to the international community. In fact, "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" can no longer be confined to "de facto implementation" or "to implement silently". It must shift to "to at once implement and speak out" and make public elaboration on the level of policy announcement. This is not only aimed at dissolving the U.S. and European suspicions, but also looking forward to it becoming another public good China provides the international society with.

Along with the deepening globalization and with the rising of both China's dependence on the outside world and the interdependence within the world, we are more concerned with the issue of international public goods in dealing with the global issues and the overall interest of international society. Public goods can be visible, such as lands, e.g., exploitation and protection of Polar Regions, and maritime resources, such as sharing of international waters and seabed resources. They can also be invisible, such as sharing of knowledge, security and information, etc. All the public goods prevalent and popular in the present world, which consist of soft powers and involve no antagonistic and exclusive cultures/values, are unexceptionally provided by the West, such as democracy, freedom, human rights, market entry and so on. With the advent of the new century and as China is unswervingly taking the socialist road, a series of

public goods with Chinese brand emerge, such as "peaceful development road", "people oriented", "scientific outlook on development", "harmonious society", "harmonious Asia" and "harmonious world". Those public goods involve no domination and exclusiveness, thus can be shared by other peoples and countries. Actually, it is not only an incarnation of Chinese characteristics, but also China's new contribution to the international society after the Four Great Inventions of ancient China.

In this respect, "keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" and its profound Chinese cultural deposit about the philosophy of middle course are the public goods that can also be shared by other countries. Members of international society vary in terms of capability, wealth and strength. No country, however large, rich and strong, will be not able to monopoly all the international affairs, nor can it call the shots alone. "Keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible" as a diplomatic concept indicates that China is sober of its own ability and sincere to cooperate with all countries by trying its best and living up to its responsibility without any reservation. China will surely welcome those countries that want to follow the model; because the building of a harmonious world depends on more countries emerge to pursue the middle course instead of extremist concept.

# Abstracts

## **On Diplomatic Strategy of “Keeping a Low Profile and Taking a Proactive Role When Feasible”**

ZHU Weilie

*China has set up the goal of pushing for harmonious world and harmonious regions, while repeatedly stresses the diplomatic strategy of “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible”. Little has been publicized about the relevant research of this strategy lest the international community misinterpret or misunderstand the strategy, though it actually aggravates China’s peripheries’ and Western powers’ suspicion about China’s strategic intention, obstructing the building-up of strategic mutual confidence. Therefore, it is in fact a solemn and unavoidable task to reexamine the concept of “keeping a low profile and taking a proactive role when feasible”.*

## **G20 Mechanization and Global Governance Reform**

WANG Guoxing and CHENG Jing

*Financial crisis reflects the deficiency of the current global economic governance framework. G20 summit provides an important platform of global cooperation against the crisis. Therefore, G20 mechanization presents a new starting point and path for global economic governance reform. However, the prospect of the mechanized G20 should not be granted too much optimism, for it is only a technical correction to the current global economic governance framework. The direction of the reform, notwithstanding, should be adhered, for it has increased the weight of developing countries, especially the newly emerging countries, in the global economic governance framework. In the course of G20 participation in global economic governance reform, China should not only take a proactive attitude, but also persist in gradualist approach and in the principle of conducting the reform in the original framework. China should be cautious in evaluating Chinese role and responsibility, which will help China to meet the challenge appropriately.*