

CRS Report for Congress

China's Sovereign Wealth Fund

Updated May 5, 2008

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Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

China's Sovereign Wealth Fund

Summary

China established its major sovereign wealth fund, the China Investment Corporation (CIC) on September 29, 2007 — six months after it first announced its intention to create such a fund. Financed with \$200 billion in initial capital, the CIC is one of the largest sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) in the world.

Although some of the CIC's initial investments were apparently political in nature, the CIC's top management have repeatedly asserted that future investments will be commercially based, seeking to maximize the return on investment. Since its creation, the CIC and its subsidiaries have already made several investments, including the purchase of 9.9% of the U.S. financial firm, Morgan Stanley, on December 19, 2007.

According to top Chinese officials, the CIC was created to improve the rate of return on China's \$1.7 trillion in foreign exchange reserves and to “sterilize” some of the nation's excess financial liquidity. Depending on its performance with the initial allotment of \$200 billion, the CIC may be allocated more of China's growing stock of foreign exchange reserves. At the same time, other government-owned financial entities in China — including the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) — have started to act like sovereign wealth funds and are making sizable overseas investments.

A number of experts in international finance have expressed some concern about the recent growth in SWFs and China's creation of the CIC. Analysts have cautioned that major shifts in SWF investments could potentially disrupt global financial markets and harm the U.S. economy. Other experts are less concerned about SWFs and the CIC, and welcome their participation in international investment markets. China has responded by maintaining that the CIC will prove to be a source of market stability. China has also stated that it has no intention of using its SWF to disrupt the U.S. economy or global financial markets.

Despite China's reassurances, there have been calls for greater oversight and regulation of the activities of SWFs. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in consultation with many of the leading SWFs, is developing a set of voluntary “best practices” for the operation of SWFs. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is drafting policy guidelines for countries that are recipients of SWF investments. Some international financial experts have suggested elements to be included in such guidelines, including standards for transparency, governance, and reciprocity. Other experts have suggested that the United States should review its current laws and regulations governing foreign investments in the United States, and possibly implement special procedures or restrictions on proposed investments by SWFs. These include financial reporting requirement, limits on SWF ownership of U.S. companies, and restrictions on the types of equity investments SWFs can make in U.S. companies.

This report will be updated as circumstances warrant.

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China's Sovereign Wealth Fund

Introduction

China announced in March 2007 that it would be creating a sovereign wealth fund (SWF) to invest its accumulated foreign exchange reserves more profitably.¹ In May 2007, China Jiayin Investment Company, a government agency that was designated to manage any asset purchases until the SWF was set up, bought a \$3 billion nonvoting stake in Blackstone Group, a U.S. private equity firm. After a few delays, China's new sovereign wealth fund — the China Investment Corporation (CIC) — officially started operations on September 29, 2007.

The CIC has proven to be of interest to Congress for several reasons. First, some observers are concerned that its investment activities might have adverse effects on certain financial markets and possibly the U.S. economy. Second, its creation signals China's intention to diversify its foreign exchange holdings away from U.S. government securities into other forms of investment. Third, specific proposed investments by the CIC may raise national security concerns. Fourth, some see the possibility that China could use the CIC as a mechanism to pursue geopolitical objectives.

With an initial capital fund of \$200 billion, the CIC is a significant new addition to the existing pool of SWFs (see **Table 1**). The CIC augments the \$2 to \$3 trillion under management by SWFs worldwide. In addition, the SWF provides China with another avenue by which it can invest its growing foreign exchange reserves, which totaled \$1.7 trillion as of March 2008.² Also, the conversion of the foreign exchange reserves into capital for the CIC may help “sterilize” some of the excess financial

¹ According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, a sovereign wealth fund is a “government investment vehicle which is funded by foreign exchange assets, and which manages those assets separately from the official reserves of the monetary authorities.” (U.S. Department of the Treasury, *Semiannual Report on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies*, June 2007.) For more information on sovereign wealth funds in general, see CRS Report RL34336, *Sovereign Wealth Funds: Background and Policy Issues for Congress*, by Martin Weiss.

² According to China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE), its foreign exchange reserves as of the end of March 2008 totaled \$1.68 trillion; monthly data are provided on SAFE's webpage — [<http://www.safe.gov.cn>].

liquidity in China that is reportedly contributing to China's recent inflationary pressures.³

Table 1. Leading Sovereign Wealth Funds

Country	Fund	Size (\$ Billion)	Year Created
United Arab Emirates	Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA)	500 - 875	1976
Norway	Government Pension Fund - Global	375	1990
Singapore	Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC)	200 - 330	1981
Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency	270	1952
Kuwait	Kuwait Investment Authority	213	1953
China	China Investment Corporation, Ltd. (CIC)	200	2007
Hong Kong	Exchange Fund Investment Portfolio	139	1993
Russia	Reserve Fund	128	2008
Singapore	Temasek Holdings	110	1974

Source: CRS summary of Table in Edwin Truman, "A Blueprint for Sovereign Wealth Fund Best Practices," *Peterson Institute for International Economics*, No. PB08-3, April 2008.

However, China's decision to create the CIC has reawakened some concerns about the impact of SWFs on global financial markets and engendered new misgivings about China's involvement in the international equity markets. David R. Francis, columnist for the *Christian Science Monitor*, started his November 26, 2007 article, "Will Sovereign Wealth Funds Rule the World?," with the words, "Sovereign wealth funds are huge scarily big."⁴ During a November 30, 2007 interview on National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, Brad Setser of the Council on Foreign Relations stated, "The rise of sovereign wealth funds represents a shift in power from the U.S. to a group of countries that aren't transparent, aren't democracies, and aren't necessarily U.S. allies."⁵ In June 2007, Clay Lowery, U.S. Treasury's acting Undersecretary for International Affairs, indicated in an interview that the rise in government-owned investment funds could cause major changes in global markets and bring about "financial protectionism."⁶

Although the current value of CIC's working capital is small when compared to global capital flows, China could increase the size of CIC to over \$1 trillion if it makes more of its foreign exchange reserves available. The growth potential of CIC

³ For more on the possible role of the CIC in solving China's excess liquidity problem and inflationary pressures, see the World Bank's Beijing Office's *Quarterly Update*, September 2007; and Michael Pettis, "China's Sovereign Wealth Fund," September 24, 2007, available at [<http://www.piaohaoreport.sampasite.com/blog/Guest-blog-2.htm>].

⁴ David R. Francis, "Will Sovereign Wealth Funds Rule the World?," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 26, 2007.

⁵ Adam Davidson, "U.S. Watches Nervously as Oil-Rich Nations Invest," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, November 30, 2007.

⁶ David J. Lynch, "U.S.: Secretive Global Funds May Hurt Treasuries Market," *USA Today*, June 21, 2007.

may prove important because, according to Setser, somebody with a working capital of \$1 trillion (such as the CIC) would have the ability to push the U.S. economy into a recession.⁷

There are also concerns about how China (and other nations) will invest the capital of their SWFs. Before the creation of the CIC, China had invested much of its foreign exchange reserves in U.S. government debt, such as U.S. Treasury bills (T-bills), that were relatively risk-free, but offered relatively low rates of return on the investment. Kenneth Rogoff, former chief economist for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), indicated in a recent interview, “Countries like China just don’t need to hold any more T-bills. There’s just no point.”⁸ As a result, most analysts expect the CIC to invest in equities and/or acquisitions in order to obtain higher rates of return on their investments. One financial expert’s analysis of China’s foreign exchange reserve holdings from 2000 to 2007 shows a slight shift away from U.S. dollar denominated assets.⁹

With its current capital stock, the CIC has the theoretical ability to purchase controlling interests in or acquire major corporations, raising potential national security concerns. According to financial journalist James Surowiecki, “Were China so inclined, it could buy Ford, G.M., Volkswagen, and Honda, and still have a little money left over for ice cream.”¹⁰ Surowiecki’s observation was echoed by well-known investor Warren Buffett, who added that the annual U.S. trade deficit of approximately \$700 billion means the United States has to “give away a little part of the country” every year.¹¹ Buffet continued by auguring that if these trade deficits continue the United States could wind up as a “sharecropper economy,” in which U.S. citizens largely work for foreign-owned firms.¹² In the opinion of Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Christopher Cox, “the fundamental question presented by state-owned public companies and sovereign wealth funds does not so much concern the advisability of foreign ownership, but rather of government ownership.”¹³

However, others are less apprehensive about the potential impact of SWFs on the global economy. Rogoff thinks the SWFs will do “more good than bad.”¹⁴ Surowiecki maintains that “some of the worries about the dangers posed by sovereign wealth funds are overstated,” and that the SWFs “will act much like other investors,

⁷ Davidson, op. cit.

⁸ Lynch, op. cit.

⁹ Brad Setser, “Has China been diversifying away from the dollar?,” *RGE Monitor*, April 9, 2008.

¹⁰ James Surowiecki, “Sovereign Wealth World,” *The New Yorker*, November 26, 2007.

¹¹ Francis, op. cit.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Christopher Cox, “The Role of Government in Markets,” Keynote Address and Robert R. Glauber Lecture at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, October 24, 2007.

¹⁴ Ibid.

and focus primarily on the bottom line.”¹⁵ Preston Keat of the global risk consulting firm Eurasia Group echoes Surowiecki’s assessment, pointing out, “It’s a context of mutual dependence. Blowing somebody else up does you at least as much financial damage.”¹⁶

The investment activities of several SWFs, including the CIC, since the outbreak of the subprime-mortgage crisis tend to support the views of Rogoff, Surowiecki and Keat. Struggling major financial firms have received much needed injections of capital from SWFs. On December 19, 2007, CIC invested \$5 billion in Morgan Stanley not long after the financial firm announced it was writing off \$9.4 billion of loss-making mortgage investments.¹⁷ On January 15, 2008, SWFs from Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Singapore, and South Korea provided a \$21 billion infusion of capital to Citigroup and Merrill Lynch.¹⁸ During a period of global market uncertainty, SWFs appeared to be providing a source of stability.¹⁹

Administrative Details of the China Investment Corporation

The China Investment Corporation, Ltd. (CIC) is a semi-independent, quasi-governmental investment firm established by the Chinese government to invest a portion of the nation’s foreign exchange reserves. The CIC reports directly to China’s State Council,²⁰ conferring it with the equivalent standing of a ministry, and the State Council’s leader, Premier Wen Jiabao. According to one source, the CIC will have three major departments for its investment functions — 1. Central Huijin Investment Company (CHIC), which will provide capital to domestic financial firms;

¹⁵ Surowiecki, op. cit.

¹⁶ Davidson, op. cit.

¹⁷ “China Fund Grabs Big Stake in Morgan Stanley,” *AFP*, December 19, 2007

¹⁸ Aaron Kirchfeld, “Sovereign Funds Beat Buffett with Stakes in Citigroup, Merrill,” *Bloomberg*, January 22, 2008.

¹⁹ There are indications that CIC and other Chinese investors have been reluctant to invest in more financial firms because of the perceived criticism of and discrimination against Chinese investments in U.S. companies. For example, CITIC Securities cancelled a planned \$1 billion investment and joint venture in Bear Stearns on March 14, 2008 — the same day the Federal Reserve announced its plan to bailout the ailing U.S. financial firm. For more details, see Ma Wenluo, “Crisis and Opportunity in CIC’s ‘Fire Sale’ Acquisitions,” *China Stakes*, March 17, 2008. Similarly, China Development Bank’s planned investment in Citigroup failed to receive the required government approval in January 2008. For more details, see “Surprise: No CDB Funds for Citi,” *China Stakes*, January 12, 2008.

²⁰ China’s State Council is the nation’s highest executive and administrative body, consisting of Premier Wen Jiabao, four Vice Premiers, five State Councilors, Secretary General Hua Jianmin, and the heads of China’s various ministries and special commissions. There are approximately 50 members of China’s State Council.

2. China Jianyin Investment, which will manage domestic assets and the disposal of nonperforming loans; and 3. A new department to manage overseas investments.²¹

CIC's Management

The investment activities of the CIC is to be directed by an 11-member board of directors. The chairman of the CIC's board is Lou Jiwei, China's former deputy finance minister and former State Council deputy secretary general. The CIC's general manager and president is Gao Xiqing, vice chairman of China's national pension fund and also one of CIC's executive directors. Other people serving in CIC's top management include:

- Zhang Hongli, another of CIC's executive directors and vice minister of finance;
- Fu Ziying, assistant minister of commerce;
- Hu Xiaolian, deputy governor of the People's Bank of China (PBC) and Administrator of SAFE;
- Li Yong, vice minister of finance;
- Liu Shiyu, deputy governor of the People's Bank of China ;
- Wang Chunzheng, ex-vice minister of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC);
- Liu Zhongli, former minister of finance; and
- Zhang Xiaoqiang, vice minister of NDRC.²²

The final member of the board is to be elected by the company's employees. Initial reports indicate the CIC is to have a staff of about 1,000 employees, including 100 to 200 investment specialists.²³ Many of CIC's workers will come from the absorption of CHIC and China Jianyin Investment. In the first few months following the formation of the CIC, its chief spokespeople were Lou Jiwei and Li Yong. More recently, Gao Xiqing has been more prominent, including an extensive interview on CBS's "60 Minutes" on April 6, 2008.

There have also been reports that CIC is considering hiring several independent financial consultants to manage its investments. On April 3, 2008, Reuters reported that CIC had signed a deal with J.C. Flowers & Company, a U.S.-based investment firm, launching a \$4 billion private equity investment fund that would focus on investments in U.S. financial assets.²⁴ Neither CIC nor J.C. Flowers would confirm the deal. If the new report is true, J.C. Flowers would be the first overseas fund manager CIC has hired.

²¹ Pettis, *op. cit.*

²² "China's Trillion-dollar Kitty is Ready," *Asia Times*, October 2, 2007.

²³ "China's Forex Investment Company May Debut this Week," *Xinhua*, September 10, 2007.

²⁴ George Chen, "China's CIC to Launch \$4 Billion Fund with JC Flowers," *Reuters*, April 3, 2008.

CIC's Working Capital

The working capital for the CIC is coming indirectly from China's approximately \$1.5 trillion in foreign exchange reserves. Under a plan approved by the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress in June 2007, the Ministry of Finance was to issue up to 1.55 trillion yuan (\$200 billion) in special treasury bonds to provide the CIC with capital to purchase foreign exchange from China's central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBoC). The CIC is to be responsible for servicing the newly created debt — at an estimated cost of \$40 million per day.²⁵

The first tranche of the special treasury bonds — worth 600 billion yuan (\$77 billion) — was sold on August 28, 2007, to the PBoC, using the Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) as an intermediary.²⁶ The 10-year bonds had a coupon value of 4.3%.²⁷ A second tranche of bonds worth 103 billion yuan (\$13 billion) was sold to the Chinese public in mid-September. The September bonds were a mixture of 10- and 15-year bonds with coupon rates ranging from 4.46% to 4.68%.²⁸ A third tranche worth 96 billion yuan (\$12 billion) was sold to the public during November and December, again with varying maturation periods of 10 and 15 years, with coupon rates of 4.5%.²⁹ The remaining 750 billion yuan (\$97 billion) was sold to PBoC on December 10, again using the ABC as an intermediary, with 15-year maturations and a coupon rate of 4.45%.³⁰

In converting 1.55 trillion yuan of foreign exchange reserves into \$200 billion in capital for the newly created CIC, China limited the amount of new debt issued to the public to 199 billion yuan (\$26 billion). Most of the newly issued bonds ended up in the hands of the PBoC, effectively sterilizing some of the perceived excess liquidity in China's money markets.

Investment Activities of China's Sovereign Wealth Fund

The investment objectives of the CIC are gradually being revealed by CIC's leadership. Just prior to the creation of China's sovereign wealth fund, Jesse Wang Jianxi, a member of the CIC's preparatory group, stated, "The mission for this

²⁵ Cost of debt estimate based on a statement by CIC Chairman Lou.

²⁶ The PBoC cannot directly purchase bonds from China's Ministry of Finance, so it used the ABC as an intermediary in the financial transaction.

²⁷ Rachel Ziemba, "How is China Funding the Chinese Investment Corporation (CIC)?" *RGE Analysts' Economonitor*, December 5, 2007.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

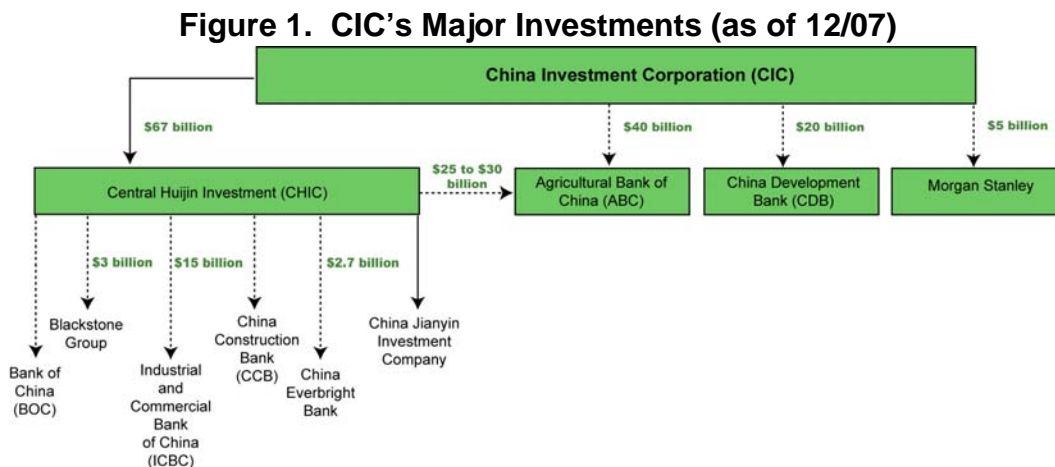
²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ "China Central Bank Takes Up 750 Bln Yuan in T-bonds to Fund CIC," *AFX News Limited*, December 10, 2007.

company [CIC] is purely investment-return driven.”³¹ However, the actual meaning of “purely investment-return driven” is open to interpretation. In April 2008, Wang, in his new role as CIC’s executive vice president and chief risk officer, provided a more specific statement of CIC’s investment goals, indicating that the company was “quite conservative at this time,” seeking a rate of return on its investments of “about mid-one-digit or slightly above one digit.”³²

CIC’s Existing Investments

A fair amount of information is available about the existing investments of the CIC. However, because of the manner by which China is publicizing CIC-related activities, it is often difficult to obtain specific information about investment transactions. In particular, China frequently announces planned investments shortly before the financial transaction is to take place and subsequently mentions in passing that the planned investment has occurred, but rarely reports on the investment the day the actual transaction happens. While this pattern demonstrates some relative transparency about CIC activities, it also indicates an apparent reluctance to be completely forthcoming about the details of the CIC’s investments. **Figure 1** provides an overview of CIC’s current direct and indirect investments as of the end of 2007, based on available news reports.



Source: CRS research.

The investment options of the CIC are constrained in part by previous commitments made before the formal start of its operations. On May 20, 2007, China Jianyin Investment Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Central Huijin Investment Company (CHIC), signed an agreement to purchase a less than 10% stake

³¹ Jason Dean and Andrew Batson, “Beijing to Take Passive Investment Approach,” *Wall Street Journal* (Europe), September 10, 2007.

³² Michael Flaherty and Dominic Whiting, “China’s CIC Defends Transparency, Eyes Modest Returns,” *Reuters*, April 2, 2008.

in Blackstone Group in non-voting shares worth \$3 billion.³³ The decision to purchase less than 10% of Blackstone's shares, and to purchase nonvoting shares, was apparently not an arbitrary one. According to Blackstone's CEO and Chairman Stephen A. Schwarzman, "The deal is 'purely commercial' and do [sic] not need the U.S. government approval as the stake is less than 10 percent."³⁴ According to executive vice president Wang, CIC will hold onto its Blackstone stock for five to seven years, or longer.³⁵

In November 2007, the newly formed CIC assumed responsibility for the assets and liabilities of the CHIC, which was previously owned by the PBoC. It is reported that the PBoC obtained about 500 billion yuan (\$67 billion) in compensation for the CHIC.³⁶ This transaction utilized approximately one third of the CIC's working capital. As a result, the CIC became the parent company for CHIC and China Jianyin Investment Company, plus owner of \$3 billion in Blackstone Group stock. In addition, CIC indirectly became a major stock holder in China Construction Bank (CCB) and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) by way of the investments of CHIC and China Jianyin Investment Company in those two banks.³⁷

Also in November 2007, a decision was made that the CIC was to provide capital totaling a reported \$67 billion to two of China's state-owned banks, the Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) and the China Development Bank (CDB).³⁸ After its investment in the ABC, the CIC would supposedly own one-third of the bank with another third owned by China's Ministry of Finance.³⁹ Other sources reported that a financial restructuring plan for the ABC submitted to the State Council for approval was to be announced in late 2007, and the plan would include \$40 billion from the CIC, possibly through the newly acquired CHIC.⁴⁰ However, on December 5, 2007, a representative of the ABC stated that "overseas media reports concerning the bank's shareholding reforms were false," but did not indicate which aspects of those

³³ "China to Invest \$3 Bln in Equity Giant Blackstone," *Xinhua*, May 21, 2007.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Shangguan Zhoudong, "CIC May Hold Blackstone Stake for 5 to 7 Years," *China Daily*, March 6, 2008.

³⁶ "\$200 Billion Investment Firm Starts Operation," by Xin Zhiming, *China Daily*, October, 1, 2007.

³⁷ According to CCB's webpage [<http://www.ccb.com>], the CHIC owns 70.69% of CCB's shares, including 9.21% owned by its subsidiary, Central Jianyin Investment Company. According to the ICBC's webpage [<http://www.icbc.com.cn>], the CHIC owns 35.33% of ICBC's shares.

³⁸ "China Investment Co to Invest a Third of Its 200 Bln USD 'Cautiously' — Official," *AFX News Limited*, November 7, 2007.

³⁹ Yidi Zhao and Janet Ong, "Chinese Banks to get \$67 Billion from Sovereign Wealth Fund," *International Herald Tribune*, November 8, 2007.

⁴⁰ "Agricultural Bank of China to Announce Financial Restructuring Plan Soon," *AFX News Limited*, December 3, 2007, and "Agricultural Bank of China Sets Up Investment Banking Operations," *AFP*, December 4, 2007.

reports were incorrect.⁴¹ A news article in March 2008 cited an ABC spokesman as saying that reports of CIC's investment in ABC were "not true."⁴² As a result, it is uncertain if, when and how much the CIC has invested in the ABC.

More details of the CIC's investment in the CDB were announced on the final day of 2007. CIC's subsidiary, the CHIC, signed an agreement on December 31, 2007, to invest \$20 billion into the CDB.⁴³ A separate source reported on January 2, 2008, that the investment had already occurred and confirmed both the amount of the investment and the use of CHIC to make the investment.⁴⁴

The CIC has reportedly made three other major investments since its establishment. On November 21, 2007, the CIC announced plans for its first post-inaugural investment — the purchase of \$100 million in shares of Hong Kong's initial public offering for the new China Railway Group (CRG).⁴⁵ China Railway Group is a railway construction company in China, and reportedly one of the largest construction companies in the world. The Government of Singapore Investment Corporation, another SWF, reportedly also bought shares in CRG.⁴⁶

The second major investment took place on December 19, 2007, when the CIC purchased "around 9.9%" of Morgan Stanley, one of the largest U.S. investment banks.⁴⁷ The CIC investment in Morgan Stanley reportedly amounted to \$5 billion. At the time of the investment, Morgan Stanley stressed that the CIC will have "no special" rights of ownership and no role in corporate management.⁴⁸ The third major CIC investment occurred on March 24, 2008, when China's SWF invested "more than \$100 million" in Visa's initial public offering (IPO).⁴⁹

CIC's newly acquired subsidiary, the CHIC, also has been making investments. In addition to its investment in CDB, the CHIC announced on November 8, 2007, it intended to purchase a 70.92% stake in China Everbright Bank, a Beijing-based joint-equity commercial bank founded in August 1992.⁵⁰ On November 28, 2007, the shareholders of China Everbright Bank agreed to accept a 20 billion yuan (\$2.7

⁴¹ "Agricultural Bank of China Denies Shareholding Reform Approval Rumor," *Xinhua*, December 5, 2007.

⁴² "Agricultural Bank of China Says Report on CIC Unit's Investment Plan Not True," *AFX News*, March 2, 2008.

⁴³ Xin Zhiming, Huijin to Inject \$20b into China Development Bank," *China Daily*, December 31, 2007.

⁴⁴ "China Investment Corp Injects \$20 Bln in CDB," *China Business News*, January 2, 2008

⁴⁵ Jamil Anderlini, "CIC to Buy Stake in HK Rail Group Float," *The Financial Times*, November 21, 2007.

⁴⁶ "CIC Invests in China Railway IPO," *China Economic Review*, November 21, 2007.

⁴⁷ "China Fund Grabs Big Stake in Morgan Stanley," *AFP*, December 19, 2007.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "China Wealth Fund Invests \$100 Mln in Visa IPO," *Reuters*, March 24, 2008.

⁵⁰ Mao Lijun, "Central Huijin Bails Out Everbright Bank," *China Daily*, November 8, 2007.

billion) capital injection from the CHIC.⁵¹ The CHIC's financial support to China Everbright Bank reportedly will be sufficient for it to go ahead with its planned initial public offering (IPO) on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (HKSE) and China's A-share stock market.⁵² On December 5, 2007, China Everbright Bank announced that it is planning on holding its IPO in June or July of 2008.⁵³

Overall, the reported existing direct and indirect investments of the CIC total about two-thirds of its total working capital, leaving about \$70 billion available for future investments. So far, most of CIC's investments have apparently been made based on noncommercial criteria. For example, there are indications that the State Council, the PBoC and the NDRC insisted that the CIC provide help in the restructuring of these two state-owned banks as a condition of the CIC's establishment.⁵⁴ Similarly, the payment to the PBoC for the CIC's acquisition of CHIC and its subsidiary, China Jianyin Investment Company, may have been driven more by political considerations than economic ones. The noncommercial character of the CIC's existing investments may lead to increased interest and surveillance on its future investments.

CIC's Future Investments

Since the day China announced the formation of the CIC, senior representatives of the new corporation and various government agencies have been actively publicizing that China's SWF would operate with a high degree of transparency utilizing an investment strategy based on commercial principles. China has also shown some sensitivity to existing apprehensions about the possible overseas investments the CIC might make, and CIC representatives have publicly announced that the new SWF will not invest in certain sensitive sectors and markets. However, the Chinese government has also made it known that it is concerned about undue criticism or scrutiny of the CIC, and in particular, is worried that other nations (including the United States) may try to use the creation of China's SWF as an opportunity to implement protectionist measures targeted at the Chinese economy. In sum, China has handled the creation of the CIC in a fairly common Chinese fashion of combining reassuring statements with veiled warnings.

Investment Strategy. Prior to the creation of the CIC, Chinese officials were already making statements indicating that its investment strategy would be to maximize the rate of return on its investments. Jesse Wang, a member of the CIC's preparatory group, stated on September 10, 2007, "The mission for this company is purely investment-return driven."⁵⁵ On the day the CIC was created, CIC deputy general manager Yang Qingwei stated, "The company's principal purpose is to make

⁵¹ "China Everbright Agrees to Capital Injection Plan," *China Daily*, November 28, 2007.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "China Everbright Bank Reportedly Plans IPO Next Summer," *Xinhua*, December 5, 2007.

⁵⁴ Pettis, *op cit.*

⁵⁵ Jason Dean and Andrew Batson, *op. cit.*

profits.”⁵⁶ More recently, during his first overseas trip as CIC’s chairman, Lou provided a more nuanced explanation of the company’s investment strategy, “We will adopt a long-term and prudent investment principle and a safe, professional portfolio strategy that adapts to market changes, which will put emphasis on a rational match of returns and risks.”⁵⁷

The CIC’s need for relatively high rates of return on their investments is partially being driven by the manner in which the company has received access to China’s foreign exchange reserves. According to one of the CIC’s top managers, the company is responsible for servicing the interest on the 1.55 trillion-yuan of bonds issued by the PBoC (see above). According to CIC Chairman Lou, the interest cost on the outstanding bonds amounts to 300 million yuan (\$40 million) per day.⁵⁸ With a minimum return of \$40 million per day, the CIC will need to earn at least \$14.6 billion per year in profits — or at least 7.3% on its total capital of \$200 billion. There was a report that CIC was late in making its first interest payment to the PBoC, despite the receipt of a dividend payment from Blackstone.⁵⁹

Also, as Lou points out, the CIC’s ability to obtain access to more of China’s foreign exchange reserves will depend on its profitability. There has been some domestic criticism of CIC’s investment in Blackstone, which as of April 15, 2008, was down 41% from its purchase price. Similarly, CIC’s other major U.S. purchase — Morgan Stanley — was trading about 10% below the lower range of the agreed transaction price.⁶⁰ “If I am making losses every day, how can I face asking the government for more money?” asked Lou.⁶¹

There have also been some indications on the actual types of investments the CIC will be making and where it will be making investments. A CIC representative reportedly stated that it will focus its international investments on a “portfolio of financial products.”⁶² CIC Chairman Lou told a group of financial experts in Beijing that most of the CIC’s investments would be in publicly traded securities, but that it would also make some direct investments.⁶³

Officials with the CIC have indicated that it is considering making investments in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and it is talking with stock exchange officials in London.

⁵⁶ “China’s Trillion-dollar Kitty is Ready,” *Asian Times*, October 2, 2007.

⁵⁷ “CIC to be Stable Force in Global Financial Market,” *Xinhua*, December 11, 2007.

⁵⁸ “China’s Sovereign Wealth Fund Seeks to be a Stabilizing Presence in Global Markets,” *Xinhua*, November 30, 2007.

⁵⁹ “China’s Sovereign Wealth Fund in Interest Troubles,” *China Stakes*, March 5, 2008.

⁶⁰ In their agreement, CIC and Morgan Stanley set a transaction price range for Morgan Stanley stock of between \$48.07 and \$57.684 per share.

⁶¹ “China Wealth Fund Aims for Stability, Openness,” *China Daily*, October 16, 2007.

⁶² Xin Zhiming, “China’s State Forex Investment Company Debuts,” *China Daily*, September 29, 2007.

⁶³ “China’s Sovereign Wealth Fund Seeks to be a Stabilizing Presence in Global Markets,” *Xinhua*, November 30, 2007.

The CIC is also expected to set up branches overseas, but the locations of its overseas branches are still to be determined.

At the same time, China has also been providing reassuring statements about the types of investments the CIC would *not* be making. Chinese officials reportedly told German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit to China in August 2007 that the future CIC “had no intention of buying strategic stakes in big western companies.”⁶⁴ CIC Chairman Lou has indicated that the CIC will not invest in infrastructure.⁶⁵ China’s Vice Minister of Finance Li Yong also dismissed “rumors that China would try to buy out European and American companies in large numbers.”⁶⁶ Vice Minister Li has stated that the CIC would not buy into overseas airlines, telecommunications or oil companies.⁶⁷ An unnamed contact at CIC indicated that the SWF also will not make investments in foreign technology companies as a means of obtaining advanced technology, pointing out, “That’s political, and we don’t do that.”⁶⁸

Despite the reassurances provided by the CIC, some observers are unconvinced that China’s SWF has a clear investment strategy that is free from political influences. Setser gave a negative answer to his own rhetorical question, “Does the China Investment Corporation (CIC) have a coherent investment strategy?”⁶⁹ According to Setser, “There clearly isn’t a consensus inside China on what the CIC should be doing.”⁷⁰ A reporter for the *Financial Times* mirrored Setser’s appraisal, writing, “Such a concentration of the country’s wealth in one entity has inevitably drawn intense interest ... from powerful forces within the state bureaucracy. Each of these groups has its own ideas on how the money can best be spent.”⁷¹

Transparency. CIC officials and other leading economic figures in China have also been making reassuring statements about the transparency of the CIC’s operations and management, but often with a caveat or two. For example, on the day the CIC was launched, Chairman Lou said, “We will adopt a prudent accounting system ... adhere to commercial lines and improve the transparent [sic] on the

⁶⁴ Pettis, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ “China’s Sovereign Wealth Fund Seeks to be a Stabilizing Presence in Global Markets,” *Xinhua*, November 30, 2007.

⁶⁶ “Investment Fund Announces Strategic Plans,” *Xinhua*, November 9, 2007.

⁶⁷ “China Investment Corporation Unveils Investment Plan,” *Xinhua*, November 7, 2007.

⁶⁸ Keith Bradsher, “\$200 Billion to Invest, But in China,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2007.

⁶⁹ Brad Setser, “Does the China Investment Corporation (CIC) Have a Coherent Investment Strategy?” online blog #234551, available at [<http://www.rgemonitor.com/blog/setser/234551/>].

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Jamil Anderlini, “China Wealth Fund’s Early Coming of Age,” *Financial Times*, December 21, 2007.

condition that company interest will not be jeopardized.”⁷² In April 2008, CIC’s Wang contrasted CIC’s operations to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) indicating that while CIC discloses its investments in the United States, the GIC does not.⁷³ According to Wang, “CIC is one of the most transparent sovereign funds in the world.”⁷⁴

However, the degree and pace at which China will make the CIC transparent is uncertain. During a dinner at the mayor of London (England)’s mansion, Lou expanded on his previous statement, “We will increase transparency without harming the commercial interests of CIC. That is to say, it will be a gradual process... If we are transparent on everything, the wolves will eat us up.”⁷⁵

Reciprocity. The creation of the CIC is not being done in isolation from China’s overall policy on inward and outward capital movements. However, while much of the rest of the world would apparently prefer that China focus on liberalizing various aspects of its inward capital flow policies, much of its recent effort has been on laws and regulations governing its outward capital flows. At present, more foreign direct investments (FDIs) are flowing into China than are flowing out of China. The combination of China’s net FDI inflows and overall trade surplus is financing the growth of its foreign exchange reserves.

The Bush administration has been pressuring China to make its stock and bond markets more open to foreign investors, matching the comparative openness of its inward FDI policies.⁷⁶ However, of late, China has been more concerned about increasing the avenues by which it can redirect more of its domestic foreign exchange holdings towards investments outside of China. Some have advocated that China push to the United States to make the U.S. financial industry more open to foreign investment.⁷⁷ In addition, the Chinese government is gradually introducing reforms to its outward FDI laws and regulations.

⁷² Xin, *op cit.*.

⁷³ Michael Flaherty and Dominic Whiting, “China’s CIC Defends Transparency, Eyes Modest Returns,” *Reuters*, April 2, 2008.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “China Investment Corp Warns Western Governments Against Protectionism,” *AFX News Limited*, December 10, 2007.

⁷⁶ China does restrict inward FDI in what it considers economic sectors related to national and economic security, including certain agricultural and fishing industries, selected mining industries, traditional Chinese medicine processing, nonferrous metal industry, electric machinery manufacturing, postal services, geological surveying, news agencies, publications industry, and radio and televisions stations and networks. For a complete list of “prohibited foreign investment industries,” see “Decree of the State Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, No. 57,” Department of Foreign Investment, November 22, 2007, available online at [<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/column/print.shtml?/policyrelease/announcement/200711/20071105241195>].

⁷⁷ Ma Wenluo, “China Should Press for Wider Openness to US Financial Industry,” *China Stakes*, April 15, 2008.

For example, China rolled out a program in April 2006 creating “qualified domestic institutional investors” (QDIIs) that would allow Chinese nationals to invest in global investment funds offered by the QDIIs.⁷⁸ China has already approved a number of QDIIs — Bank of Communications Schroder, China AMC, China International, China Southern Fund, Fortis Haitong, Fortune SGAM, Harvest Fund, Yinhua — and reportedly plans on approving more QDIIs in the future. As part of China’s controls on foreign exchange, each fund is provided a quota limiting the size of its fund by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE). China has also placed restrictions on the overseas markets in which the funds may invest. It has already approved Hong Kong and London, and is considering the United States. By the end of September 2007, just under \$11 billion had been invested in the existing QDIIs.⁷⁹ JP Morgan estimates that about \$90 billion will be invested in QDIIs by the end of 2008.⁸⁰ The goals of the QDII program are to offer Chinese investors new options, and to soak up some of China’s excess liquidity by moving funds overseas.

China’s apparent efforts to improve the reciprocity of its investment policies have been accompanied by warnings to other nations about using the creation of the CIC and the possible rise in Chinese overseas investments as an excuse to raise inward investment barriers, especially on the ground of “national security.” On December 10, 2007, CIC Chairman Lou cautioned during a dinner at the mayor of London’s mansion, “If an economy will use national security as a criteria for entry of sovereign wealth funds, we will be reluctant to tap the market because you are not sure what will happen.”⁸¹ Lou continued by stating that “any protectionist backlash” against SWFs could “change the stability and security of global financial markets.”⁸²

During the December 2007 Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) in Beijing, Zhang Xiaoliang, Vice Minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, made an apparent indirect comment on the recently passed Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-49), “We hope U.S. policies and regulations do not become a barrier for Chinese investors.”⁸³ According to Zhang, “Investors both from the U.S. and China have shown a strong desire to invest in each other, and it’s necessary for both countries to create a sound investment environment for them.”⁸⁴ Zhang specifically cited China’s concerns about U.S. use of national security as a barrier to Chinese investors, and greater scrutiny and

⁷⁸ China has also created a “qualified foreign institutional investors” (QFIIs) program that allows foreigners to invest in Chinese companies via funds offered by the QFIIs. In May 2007, China pledged to increase the limit on QFIIs to \$30 billion during the Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) held in Washington, but did not officially raise the limit until just before the SED held in Beijing in December 2007.

⁷⁹ “China’s CIC Wins \$5 Bln Investment Quota - Paper,” *Reuters*, December 17, 2007.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “China Investment Corp Warns Western Governments Against Protectionism,” *AFX News Limited*, December 10, 2007.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Fu Jing, “US Policies May Deter Investors from China,” *China Daily*, December 12, 2007.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

possible discrimination against China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that wish to invest in the United States.

Market Stability. China has also indicated that they see sovereign wealth funds (like the CIC) being a “stabilizing force in the international market,” in contrast to hedge funds, which are “a source of market instability.”⁸⁵ For example, at a conference in Beijing, CIC Chairman Lou noted that SWFs have been injecting capital into financial institutions “that suffer from the subprime crisis; they are stabilizing the market. CIC will also do the same thing.”⁸⁶

According to CIC Chairman Lou, “Judging from our investment strategy and scale, we are unlikely to present a major impact on the international market.”⁸⁷ As a precaution, China's Vice Minister of Finance, Li Yong, has indicated that the CIC's investments will be made “gradually” and “cautiously.”⁸⁸

China's Quasi-Sovereign Wealth Funds

In addition to the CIC, China has other government entities that act as quasi-sovereign wealth funds. The key entities are the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE), the State Development and Investment Corporation (SDIC), and the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). Each of these entities has recently taken actions indicating a greater willingness to invest overseas.

State Administration of Foreign Exchange

The State Administration of Foreign Exchange, or SAFE, reports directly to China's State Council and the PBoC.⁸⁹ Its main function is to manage China's foreign exchange, including the maintenance of balance of payments statistics, regulating and monitoring foreign exchange transactions, and managing China's foreign exchange reserves. It is in this last capacity that SAFE has the ability to operate like a SWF.

SAFE generally invests China's foreign exchange reserves in traditional items, such as U.S. treasury bonds. According to one source, 70% of SAFE's assets are in U.S.-dollar denominated bonds.⁹⁰ However, there are signs that SAFE is diversifying its investment portfolio. Late in 2007, SAFE purchased minority stakes of less than 1% in three of Australia's larger banks — ANZ Bank, Commonwealth Bank of

⁸⁵ “China Wealth Fund Aims for Stability, Openness,” *China Daily*, October 16, 2007.

⁸⁶ Xin Zhiming, “CIC Aims for Overseas,” *China Daily*, November 30, 2007.

⁸⁷ “CIC to be Stable Force in Global Financial Market,” *Xinhua*, December 11, 2007.

⁸⁸ “China Investment Co to Invest a Third of its 200 Bln USD ‘Cautiously’ — Official,” *AFX News Limited*, November 7, 2007.

⁸⁹ SAFE's webpage in English is: [http://www.safe.gov.cn/model_safe_en/index.jsp].

⁹⁰ Leona Chen, “Will China Buy into BHP Billiton?” *China Stakes*, April 13, 2008.

Australia, and National Australia Bank — for \$176 million per bank.⁹¹ A spokesman for ANZ Bank indicated that SAFE had stated that SAFE’s share purchase was a “portfolio investment” and “a better way of managing their exposure to the Australian dollar.”⁹²

In April 2008, SAFE made two major investments in the petroleum industry. On April 4, 2008, the *Financial Times* reported that SAFE had accumulated 1.6% of France’s Total for \$2.8 billion in a series of smaller purchases spread over several months.⁹³ Eleven days later, *Reuters* reported that SAFE had also accumulated “just less than 1%” of the British oil company, BP, through a similar process involving a total investment of approximately \$2 billion.⁹⁴

SAFE’s recent forays into overseas equity investments have raised two major issues among market analysts. First, some people are wondering if SAFE’s overseas investments are a sign of dissatisfaction among China’s leadership with the performance of CIC, or alternatively, an indication of institutional competition between the PBoC and CIC.⁹⁵ There is a report that the leadership of CIC is “furious” about SAFE’s purchases of overseas equities.⁹⁶ According to one analyst, SAFE’s recent investments have blurred the distinction of responsibility between itself and CIC.⁹⁷

Second, there is uncertainty on how to interpret SAFE’s willingness to invest in petroleum companies, given CIC’s previous assurances that it would not invest in this potentially politically sensitive industry. Rumors that SAFE may be considering an investment in BHP Billiton have given a modicum of credence to claims that SAFE is willing to make more politically-charged investments that CIC has forsworn.⁹⁸ In November 2007, CIC denied market rumors that it was considering making a bid to buy Rio Tinto to block BHP Billiton’s takeover bid.⁹⁹

State Development and Investment Corporation

The State Development and Investment Corporation (SDIC) was established by the State Council in May 1995 to function as a government-owned holding company

⁹¹ Tim Johnston, “Beijing Buys into Australian Banks,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 4, 2008.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Richard McGregor, Peggy Hollinger, and Henny Sender, “China Uses Foreign Reserves to Buy 1.6% Stake in France’s Total,” *Financial Times*, April 4, 2008.

⁹⁴ “China Takes Stake in BP,” *Reuters*, April 15, 2008.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Alan Wheatley, “Tuft Wars Hobble China’s Financial Markets,” *Reuters*, April 28, 2008.

⁹⁷ “SAFE, not CIC, Makes Strategic Move on France’s Total,” *China Stakes*, April 8, 2008

⁹⁸ Leona Chen, *op. cit.*

⁹⁹ “China Investment Denies Rio Tinto Bid,” *Xinhua*, November 27, 2007.

to invest in basic economic infrastructure.¹⁰⁰ According to SDIC's annual report for 2006, SDIC had 62 wholly-owned subsidiaries and holding companies with over 50,000 employees, 113.8 billion yuan (\$16.3 billion) of total assets, making SDIC's the largest state-owned investment company in China. Up until recently, much of SDIC's investment was in power projects, especially electricity-generation facilities. SDIC also has investments in port facilities, fertilizer production and financial services.

On March 5, 2008, SDIC announced that it intended to "focus on overseas investment and the financial sector in the next five years."¹⁰¹ According to SDIC's general manager, Wang Huisheng, the company's planned overseas investment in 2008 was 7 billion yuan (\$1 billion), mostly in infrastructure construction and resources-fueled industries.¹⁰²

National Social Security Fund

In August 2000, China's State Council and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) created the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) "as a strategic reserve fund accumulated by the central government to support future social security expenditures."¹⁰³ The National Council for the Social Security Fund (NCSSF) was also created to manage the NSSF's assets. Capital for the NSSF is derived from the proceeds from reduction of state-owned shares, fiscal outlays, allocations made by the State Council, and returns on NSSF investments. Outlays for social security purposes are jointly determined with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Labor and Social Security. The NCSSF currently uses a number of external fund managers to manage the NSSF's investment decisions. The NSSF had assets worth 516 billion yuan (\$73.7 billion) as of the end of 2007, including \$1.66 billion in overseas investments.¹⁰⁴

In February 2008, Zheng Bingwen, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), one of China's premier thinktanks, suggested that China create a fund similar to Norway's Government Pension Fund.¹⁰⁵ According to Zheng, "CIC has sparked a new round of the China investment threat theory and a new wave of financial protectionism. We may hear fewer of those kinds of voices if we set up a sovereign pension fund to make investments in developed countries."¹⁰⁶ While Zheng's comments were unclear about the relationship between his proposed

¹⁰⁰ SDIC's webpage in English is: [<http://www.sdic.cn/en/index.htm>].

¹⁰¹ "China's SDIC Plans Overseas Investment," *Xinhua*, March 5, 2008.

¹⁰² "SDIC Eyes Overseas Investment," *China Business News*, March 6, 2008.

¹⁰³ Quote from NSSF's webpage: [<http://www.ssf.gov.cn/enweb/Column.asp?ColumnId=35>].

¹⁰⁴ Charlie Zhu and David Lin, "China Needs Sovereign Pension Fund - Govt Scholar," *Reuters*, February 28, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

sovereign pension fund and the existing NSSF, he did suggest that the NSSF should increase its overseas investments, with a focus on neighboring nations.¹⁰⁷

Implications for China

Besides offering a new vehicle for managing its foreign exchange reserves, the CIC is expected to help China sterilize some of its excess liquidity. In 2007, China experienced a major inflow of foreign exchange due to its merchandise trade surplus and the continuing stream of foreign direct investment. If the net inflow of foreign exchange is not “sterilized,” the excess liquidity in China’s money supply may contribute to domestic inflation or a speculative bubble in China’s domestic asset markets (principally the real estate and stock markets).¹⁰⁸

Prior to the creation of the CIC, China had been absorbing some of the excess foreign exchange by issuing government bonds, and then purchasing foreign government debt — much of it U.S. treasury bills — with the accumulated foreign exchange.¹⁰⁹ However, this was generating two economic forces considered undesirable by the Chinese government. First, to attract the foreign exchange away from its citizens, China was offering a relatively high rate of return on the government bonds, raising the cost of “sterilization.” Second, because the rate of return was relatively high, overseas investors were attracted to the Chinese bonds, fostering an additional influx of foreign exchange. This influx of so-called “hot money” placed more pressure on China to appreciate its currency when there were already widespread claims that China’s renminbi was undervalued.¹¹⁰ Ironically, the expectation that the renminbi would appreciate would tend to foster the inflow of even more “hot money,” creating a potentially unstable speculative spiral.

In addition, China’s accumulation of U.S. debt in 2007 was not very profitable given the appreciation of the renminbi (RMB) against the U.S. dollar. The yield on 10-year U.S. treasury bills fluctuated between 4.5% and 5.0% throughout the year. However, since the beginning of 2007, the RMB has appreciated 6.0% relative to the U.S. dollar. As a result, the effective rate of return on U.S. treasury bills valued in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Sterilization” is a process by which a government absorbs excess foreign exchange in circulation. One common method is by issuing government debt instruments in exchange for the foreign exchange.

¹⁰⁹ For more information on China’s accumulation of U.S. debt, see CRS Report RL34314, *China’s Holdings of U.S. Securities: Implications for the U.S. Economy*, by Wayne Morrison.

¹¹⁰ The name of China’s currency is the “renminbi,” or “people’s currency.” It is denominated in units called “yuan.” On October 10, 2007, the exchange rate between the renminbi and the U.S. dollar was 7.51188 yuan = \$1.

Chinese currency was negative in 2007.¹¹¹ When evaluated in its domestic currency, China lost money on its investments in U.S. government debt in 2007.

The CIC offers a new avenue for the government to utilize the accumulated foreign exchange and possibly earn a positive rate of return on its investments. The sale of the “special treasury bonds” places the foreign exchange in the hands of the CIC’s investors, who can then invest the capital in domestic assets other than real estate or stocks, as well as foreign assets. In theory, this could reduce upward pressures on China’s real estate and stock prices, lower China’s investments in U.S. government debt, and generate positive yields on its investments in foreign assets.

Implications for Global Financial Markets and the U.S. Economy

From a macroeconomic perspective, it is unclear how the arrival of the CIC will affect global financial markets. From a microeconomic perspective, the critical issue will be the types of investments the CIC makes. Furthermore, the entrance of CIC has invigorated discussion of how sovereign wealth funds are regulated, and what standards, or codes of procedure guide their operations.

Implicit in the creation of the CIC is a shift in China’s overseas portfolio away from U.S. treasury debt into other assets. There has been some speculation that China may be considering shifting most of its \$1.5 trillion in reserves to the CIC — if it manages its investments well.

According to some analysts, a shift in China’s portfolio away from U.S. debt could put upward pressure on U.S. interest rates at a time when the Federal Reserve is trying to lower interest rates to prevent a possible economic recession.¹¹² With a reported daily trade volume of existing U.S. debt of \$600 billion,¹¹³ a large divestment of U.S. treasury holdings by China might also cause more severe market disruptions. However, there would be little impact on the exchange rate between the renminbi and

¹¹¹ For example, on January 1, 2007, the exchange rate was 1 yuan of RMB = 12.82 cents of U.S. dollars. If China had invested 100 billion yuan in one-year U.S. treasury bills on January 2, 2007, it would have been offered a return of 5.0%. After conversion into U.S. dollars, China would have invested \$12.82 billion. At the end of the year, China would have been paid \$13.461 billion by the U.S. Treasury for its investment. However, the exchange rate at the end of 2007 was 1 yuan = 13.59 cents. So, after converting the U.S. dollars back into RMB, China would have received the equivalent of 99.051 billion yuan for its investment — a loss of 949 million yuan, or a -0.9% return on its investment.

¹¹² For an analysis of the potential impact of a shift in foreign holdings of U.S. debt on the U.S. economy, see CRS Report RL32462, *Foreign Investment in U.S. Securities*, by James K. Jackson.

¹¹³ Liz Moyer, “Cornering the Bond Market?,” *Forbes*, September 28, 2006.

the U.S. dollar because China's policy of keeping the exchange rate within a narrow band.¹¹⁴

The arrival of a new investor with over \$70 billion to invest is attracting the interest of many major financial markets around the world. On October 26, 2007, Mayor of London (England) John Stuttard met with CIC Chairman Lou in China to lobby for the new SWF to set up a branch office in the City of London.¹¹⁵ On November 22, 2007, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Donald Tsang met with representatives of the CIC in Beijing for similar discussions.¹¹⁶ In early December 2007, Lou traveled to London, Paris, and Singapore for additional talks about possible CIC activity in those financial centers.

However, CIC's Blackstone Group investment has made some observers wary about the specific types of investments the new SWF will make. There is concern that China may use the CIC to secure energy resources or purchase strategic assets for geopolitical purposes. There are also market apprehensions that the CIC could seek to increase its market share in important industries via targeted acquisitions or takeovers. Others are concerned that CIC might make investments in particular companies in order to obtain access to sensitive technology or information. These various forms of possible strategic investments are fueling the calls for international guidelines for SWFs, including China's CIC.

Even if the investments of the CIC remain "purely commercial," there are already indications that the global financial markets may be ill-prepared for the introduction of its \$70 billion into the marketplace. Shares in the Hong Kong stock market rose in October 2007 in response to rumors that the CIC had secretly invested in Hong Kong stocks. There was a similar jump in the Tokyo stock market following rumors that the CIC was considering investing in undisclosed Japanese companies.¹¹⁷ Plus, rumors in November 2007 that the CIC was a party to a consortium of Chinese companies planning to bid on Australia's mining company, Rio Tinto, led to a one-day 7.5% rise in the share price of Rio Tinto and a 4.5% rise in the share price of its other alleged suitor, BHP Billiton, despite repeated denials by CIC representatives.¹¹⁸ CIC continues to be mentioned as a possible party in rumored investments, including stories linking CIC with possible investments in Australia's Fortescue Metals Group,

¹¹⁴ For more information on China's exchange rate policy, see CRS Report RL32165, *China's Currency: Economic Issues and Options for U.S. Trade Policy*, by Wayne M. Morrison and Marc Labonte.

¹¹⁵ Mao Jilun and Li Weitao, "City of London Woos China Investment Corp," *China Daily*, October 26, 2007.

¹¹⁶ Carol Chung and Carrie Chan, "Stock Scheme on Agenda at Tsang Chat with PBOC," *The Hong Kong Standard*, November 22, 2007.

¹¹⁷ "Shares Rally on Signs of US Retail Strength," *Reuters*, November 27, 2007.

¹¹⁸ "China Investment Denies Involvement in Alleged Rio Tinto Bid," *CNN*, November 26, 2007; "China Investment Denies Rio Tinto Bid," *Xinhua*, November 27, 2007.

Germany's Dresdner Bank, and Sweden's Nordea, a major financial services group.¹¹⁹

There are also apprehensions about the potential for abuse or corruption created by the greater proximity SWFs create between governments and the private sector. As the existing investments of the CIC reveal, there is a growing network of interlinked investments between banks and other financial firms within China and overseas. Some U.S. financial analysts have expressed concern that CIC's investment in Morgan Stanley will provide the U.S. financial firm unfair preferential access to China's domestic financial markets. Others are worried that China will place pressure on overseas financial firms in which it has invested to provide more positive and optimistic assessments of China's economic prospects and the financial status of major Chinese companies courting international investors.

Multilateral Responses to SWFs

Misgivings about the potential impact of the CIC and other SWFs on financial markets and local economies are fostering calls for multilateral organizations to develop greater monitoring procedures and regulations of SWF investments. In June 2007, U.S. Treasury's Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, Clay Lowery, called on the IMF and the World Bank to develop guidelines for sovereign wealth funds.¹²⁰ Soon thereafter, the United States was joined by other G-7 nations¹²¹ in asking the IMF to develop a set of "best practices" for SWFs to follow. In addition, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is working on a parallel project to provide recipient countries with suggested guidelines for handling SWF investments as part of their ongoing "Freedom of Investment" project.¹²² Also, individual nations are considering implementing laws and regulations governing SWFs. For example, the Indian government is examining the need for a special investment framework for SWFs because "even a trickle from these funds could have huge ramifications for the Indian stock markets and the economy on the whole."¹²³

¹¹⁹ "CIC, China Shenhua Plan to Buy 15.85% of Australia's Fortesque," *China Business News*, February 11, 2008; "China Sovereign Fund Denies Report on Dresdner Bank Acquisition," *MarketWatch*, March 27, 2008; and "CIC Interested in Buying Nordea's Stake," *China Business News*, March 7, 2008.

¹²⁰ Lynch, *op. cit.*

¹²¹ The G-7 nations are Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and the United States.

¹²² For more information on the OECD's "Freedom of Investment" project, see [http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en_2649_33783766_38760254_1_1_1_1,00.html].

¹²³ "Government Wakes Up after China Floats \$200 Bn Fund," *The Economic Times*, November 22, 2007.

IMF “Best Practices” Project

The IMF has responded to the calls of Lowery and others, initiating “a dialogue among and with SWFs, with the goal of identifying best practices.”¹²⁴ In November 2007, the IMF held a roundtable discussion on SWFs involving representatives of key IMF members (including the United States) and several major SWFs (including CIC). On February 29, 2008, the IMF released a “Work Agenda” on SWFs that “set out ways to improve the Fund’s surveillance over the operations of SWFs” and examines “the issues surrounding the development of a set of best practices which would provide guidance on how to improve institutional arrangements, organizational structures and risk management, and information dissemination practices.”¹²⁵ The report concludes with recommended “next steps” for the IMF including the establishment of an international working group of SWFs to meet in April 2008 to began drafting a set of best practices, with the goal of completing the first draft by August 2008.¹²⁶ On May 1, 2008, the IMF announced the formation of the International Working Group of Sovereign Wealth Funds, comprised of representatives of 25 IMF member countries, including China and the United States.¹²⁷ The OECD and the World Bank will participate as permanent observers to the Working Group.

Chinese officials and CIC representatives of the CIC have been somewhat critical of the IMF project and its implicit motivations. In January 2008, deputy administrator for China’s State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) Wei Benhua contrasted the financial arrangements of SWFs to those of hedge funds, stating, “SWFs rarely make investment with leverage, and thus will not cause the imbalance of the international financial system.”¹²⁸ Wei went on to say, “The newly-formed CIC, since its birth, has attracted lots of attention from the international community. A few nations, on purpose, disseminate the argument of China’s investment threat. The international community should clearly oppose different forms of investment protectionism and financial protectionism.”¹²⁹ In March 2008, CIC executive vice president Wang referred to the G-7 proposal as “unfair.”¹³⁰ Wang went on to say, “The claim that sovereign wealth funds are causing threats to state security and economic security is groundless. We don’t need outsiders to come tell us how

¹²⁴ “Sovereign Wealth Funds — A Work Agenda,” *International Monetary Fund*, February 29, 2008.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ “International Working Group of Sovereign Wealth Funds is Established to Facilitate Work on Voluntary Principles,” IMF Press Release No. 08/97, May 1, 2008.

¹²⁸ “China SWF: We Behave Better than Hedge Funds,” *China Stakes*, January 9, 2008.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Victoria Ruan, “China’s Investment Fund Pushes Back,” *Financial Times*, March 7, 2008.

we should act.”¹³¹ During an interview on CBS’s “60 Minutes,” CIC president Gao said that the proposed IMF guidelines were “stupid” and would lead to “hurt feelings.”¹³²

Despite their apparent misgivings about the IMF project, China and the CIC has indicated an interest in participating in the development of the “best practices.” In addition to attending the November 2007 roundtable, China has also made public statements supportive of the development of international standards for SWFs. Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi recently stated that “the good use of SWF according to all international regulations should benefit all parties involved,” but also noted that “all stakeholders should work together to make the rules.”¹³³

OECD Guidelines for Recipient Countries

The OECD’s Investment Committee recently released its report, “Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) and Recipient Country Policies,” spelling out principles and policy guidelines for “fair treatment of SWFs.”¹³⁴ The report recommends that recipient countries abide by five investment policy principles: (1) Non-discrimination; (2) Transparency; (3) Progressive liberalization; (4) “Standstill”; and (5) Unilateral liberalization. The report also contained a list of investment policy guidelines for recipient countries, including:

- Similar treatment for similarly situated investors;
- Codification and publication of investment laws and regulations;
- Prior notification to changes in investment policies;
- Consultation on possible investment policy changes;
- Procedural fairness and predictability; and
- Disclosure of investment policy actions.

On the issue of “national security” concerns, the OECD Investment Committee recognized that “each country has a right to determine what is necessary to protect its national security,” but recommended that in making this determination, countries should keep a “narrow focus” in their investment restrictions, use appropriate expertise to make national security determinations, tailor their responses to the specific risks posed by a proposed investment, and block investments only as a “last resort” when national security-related concerns cannot be eliminated. The OECD intends to release a final report on guidelines for investment policies for recipient countries by mid-2009. The final report is to include a list of “best practices,” and “if appropriate, suggestions for clarifications to existing OECD instruments.”

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Video of Gao’s interview available at “60 Minute’s webpage: [<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/04/04/60minutes/main3993933.shtml>].

¹³³ “China Wants to Help Draft the SWF Investment Rules,” *China Stakes*, March 13, 2008.

¹³⁴ “Sovereign Wealth Funds and Recipient Country Policies,” *OECD Investment Committee Report*, April 4, 2008.

In addition to developing investment policy principles and guidelines, the OECD is holding regular meetings among its members to conduct peer reviews of their investment policies.¹³⁵ While the group does not have the authority to alter or amend member investment policies, the presentations are subject to what Ervin referred to as the “red face” test. In response to a question on the OECD’s understanding of the meaning of “national security,” Ervin indicated that there is a clear consensus that it included military risks, government procurement and “critical infrastructure,” but also recognized that each OECD member had to make the determination of what constituted a risk to national security. Ervin also stated that the OECD thinks that members should strive to keep their definitions of national security as narrow as possible.

Congressional Initiatives

Congress has already taken action regarding the monitoring and regulation of foreign investment in the United States. The “Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007” (P.L. 110-49) requires that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) investigate any foreign investment transaction (including mergers, acquisitions, or takeovers) which results in “foreign control of any person engaged in interstate commerce in the United States” or if the transaction would result in foreign control of “critical infrastructure that could impair the national security.”¹³⁶ The new law also adds new criteria for CFIUS to use when determining if an investigation is warranted, including whether the transaction is a “foreign government-controlled transaction.”¹³⁷ In addition, P.L. 110-49 increases congressional oversight of CFIUS by requiring more detailed reports on its operations and the results of its investigations. However, the authority to suspend or prohibit foreign investments in the United States remains with the President.

Even with the passage of P.L. 110-49, some Members of Congress are concerned that the new law may not sufficiently protect the United States from the risks posed by the emerging SWFs. In a February 2008 letter to their fellow Senate Banking Committee members, Chairman Christopher Dodd and Ranking Member Richard Shelby indicated their willingness to consider appropriate legislation.¹³⁸ In an editorial opinion published in the Wall Street Journal, Senator Evan Bayh wrote,

¹³⁵ Information obtained from an OECD Breakfast Series presentation by Carolyn Ervin, Director for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD, on April 11, 2008.

¹³⁶ For more information about the Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007 and CFIUS, see CRS Report RL33388, *The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS)*, by James K. Jackson.

¹³⁷ According to Section 2 of P.L. 110-49, “The term ‘foreign government-controlled transaction’ means any covered transaction that could result in the control of any person engaged in interstate commerce in the United States by a foreign government or an entity controlled by or acting on behalf of a foreign government.”

¹³⁸ Christopher G. Kelley and Robert J. Burns, “Sovereign Wealth Funds, Corporate Liquidity Problems, and the Foreign Investment and National Security Act of 2007,” *The Metropolitan Corporate Council*, March 2008, page 22.

“... China’s drive for economic advantage — including rampant intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, and subsidies for manufacture and export — raise serious concerns about how sovereign wealth funds might be used.”¹³⁹ Senator Bayh also suggests that the CFIUS 10% review threshold may not be a sufficient standard, and calls for the United States to implement a “passive investment” requirement on SWF investments.¹⁴⁰

Some commentators maintain that while P.L. 110-49 effectively dealt with the *national security risks* posed by foreign investments, it did not adequately mitigate against the *economic security risks*. In his November 14, 2007 testimony before Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Truman mentioned that “some observers” are concerned about the stability implications for the U.S. economy and financial systems of SWF investments in “private equity firms, hedge funds, and regulated financial institutions.”¹⁴¹ There have been suggestions that the United States should prohibit a SWF from investing in the United States unless its home nation meets certain criteria, such as those proposed by Truman and Garten.

On September 5, 2007, the House of Representatives passed H.Res. 552 (110th Congress) by a vote of 401 to 4, which included a reciprocity requirement that “United States financial service regulators, in assessing whether applications from Chinese financial institutions meet comprehensive consolidated supervision standards, should consider whether the applications are for operations and activities in the United States that are currently prohibited for United States financial institutions in China ...” However, others warn that such restrictions could lead to a wave of financial protectionism that would cause undue damage to the U.S. economy.

Since the creation of the CIC, Congressional committees have held several hearings the SWFs in general. These include:

- Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs hearing, “Sovereign Wealth Fund Acquisitions and Other Foreign Government Investments in the U.S.: Assessing the Economic and National Security Implications,” November 14, 2007;
- Joint Economic Committee hearing, “Do Sovereign Wealth Funds Make the U.S. Economy Stronger or Pose National Security Risks?,” February 13, 2008; and
- House Financial Services Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy, Trade and Technology, and the Subcommittee on Capital Markets, Insurance, and Government Sponsored Enterprises hearing, “Foreign Government Investment in the U.S. Economy and Financial Sector,” March 5, 2008.

¹³⁹ Evan Bayh, “Time for Sovereign Wealth Rules,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2008.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Edwin M. Truman, “Sovereign Wealth Fund Acquisitions and Other Foreign Government Investments in the United States: Assessing the Economic and National Security Implications,” Testimony before the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate, November 14, 2007.

In addition, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission¹⁴² held a hearing, “The Implications of Sovereign Wealth Fund Investments for National Security,” on February 7, 2008.

On February 27, 2008, Representatives Jim Moran and Tom Davis announced the formation of a “new bipartisan task force to explore sovereign wealth funds (SWF).”¹⁴³ According to a press release from Representative Moran’s office, the SWF task force “will study issues surrounding SWFs including their potential to affect geopolitics, and the U.S. and international economy.” The SWF task force includes designated members from the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Financial Services Committee.

Congressional Considerations

The initial reaction of the Bush administration to the CIC’s creation was generally favorable. President Bush reportedly said that he was “fine” with foreign investors buying shareholdings in U.S. banks and financial firms.¹⁴⁴ U.S. Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs David McCormick commented the investments of SWFs have “largely been long-term, very commercially focused, and very stable,” but also indicated that more transparency and governance was needed.¹⁴⁵ To that end, the Bush administration has been pushing the IMF to develop a system of best practices for SWFs.¹⁴⁶

As previously mentioned, P.L. 110-49 broadened the investigatory authority of CFIUS in cases of national security risk, and increased the committee’s reporting requirements to Congress. However, there have been suggestions that the recent changes do not adequately protect the United States from economic risks posed by SWFs. These potential economic risks are seen as including financial market instability, undesirable foreign control or influence over key industries or companies, access to sensitive technology, and other forms of unfair competitive advantages. Among the regulatory changes being suggested are:

¹⁴² The Commission was created on October 30, 2000 by the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for 2001 (P. L. 106-398, as amended by P.L.109-108). The commission is to focus its work and study on eight areas: proliferation practices, economic transfers, energy, U.S. capital markets, regional economic and security impacts, U.S.-China bilateral programs, WTO compliance, and the implications of restrictions on speech and access to information in the People’s Republic of China.

¹⁴³ “Moran Unveils Sovereign Wealth Funds Task Force,” press release, Office of Representative Jim Moran, February 27, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Richardson, “Barriers to Trust: Sovereign Wealth Funds Must Become More Transparent to Avoid Causing Alarm,” *South China Morning Post*, December 29, 2007.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Francis, *op. cit.*, and Lynch, *op. cit.*

- Requirements that any SWF interested in investing in the United States publicly release audited financial statements that follow international accounting standards on a regular basis;
- Restrictions on the percentage of a U.S. company an SWF may own — other nations have such limits; for example, Hong Kong may withdraw the authority of Standard Chartered Bank to issue Hong Kong currency if the share of its stock owned by a Singaporean SWF exceeds 20%; and
- Restrictions on the type of investment SWFs may make in U.S. companies — alternatives include restricting SWFs to the purchase of nonvoting shares, banning SWFs from negotiating a seat on the company's board of directors or representation in the company's senior management.

In addition, there have been suggestions that access to U.S. financial markets should be contingent on the successful conclusion of a reciprocity agreement that would allow U.S. banks and financial institutions comparable access to the other nation's investment and financial markets.

However, some commentators are concerned that increasing the regulatory review of SWFs will precipitate a period of financial protectionism.¹⁴⁷ The issue is whether the value of protection obtained outweighs the forgone benefits of investments prevented in a more restrictive global financial market.

¹⁴⁷ Truman, *op. cit.*