

## Chapter 5: “China’s Peaceful Rise” or “China Threat”

In a speech in Singapore years ago, Bih-Jaw Lin (林碧炤), Vice President of National Chengchi University (NCCU), addressed the diversity of opinions and analyses vis-à-vis the issue of “China’s rise” in academia. Different opinions include:<sup>12</sup>

- With tremendous success in economic development, China will not deteriorate its status and national interest by revoking its current foreign policy and threatening other countries.
  - In the long term, China’s rise will be limited by the inevitable economic difficulties resulting from foreseeable problems, such as impoverishment in the rural areas, the bad debts in the banking industry, the environmental pollution, and the enormous population. Meanwhile, the military modernization by the Beijing government is prone to imply its willingness of further expansion, especially against Taiwan, and possibilities of posing a serious threat to other countries in the region.
  - The viewpoint in regard to “China’s rise” shall be neither optimistic nor pessimistic as the future development of China is full of uncertain factors and needs continuous observation.
- In light of the “China threat”, three phrases will be mentioned by the Western academy: first, China’s more competitive power with its economic growth; second, the environmental threat stemmed from the benign environment in China; and, third, the possible action in gaining too many resources to secure its economic development and national interests.

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<sup>12</sup> 「中國崛起引發經濟磁吸超過軍事威脅」，中央社，2005年7月9日專電，  
<<http://epochtimes.com/b5/5/7/9/n980289.htm>>.

## 5.1 China's Perception of "China's Peaceful Rise"

Scholars in mainland China apparently have a different view. Jian-Min Wu, Dean of China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU), views "China's rise" as a way for the world to renew their stereotype towards China, and the theory of the "China threat" is a side effect inevitably incidental to China's rise at all times. With ideological prejudice, Jian-Min Wu explained, people tend to presume the cause-effect relationship of an event in a simplistic way. As for the "China threat", people might presume that, since the Communist Soviet Union had invaded outside territory after increasing its armed forces that Communist China will invade outside territory as well, after developing a strong military power.<sup>13</sup>

A similar argument is held by Dr. Xiu-Xing, the associate dean of CFAU. He thinks that it is appropriate for China to participate in the resource allocation among other countries in the world, as China's economic development significantly contributes to the world economy. China might have room to improve its efficiency of energy utilization, yet it can be profoundly improved as long as China starts to proactively work on environmental protections. At a very preliminary stage, "China's rise" is concomitant with "Asia's rise" in the past decades, making it impossible to be a potential threat to other countries. Meanwhile, from the perspective of global economic growth, China's rise is part of the global economic development. In 2004, China contributed 23.6% to the world economy, compared to the US's 35.7%, as the total trade volume in the US is seven times larger than that in China. Scholars in China concluded that, in lieu of constituting a potential threat, China's rise contributes to the world in every aspect.

Apparently, scholars and experts in China attempt to proclaim that "China's rise" means the tendency toward peaceful development and cooperation, replacing the obsolete Cold War ideology with which the West used to be obsessed.

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<sup>13</sup> 新浪網，2005年12月22日。<[news.sina.com/102-000-101-101/2005-12-22/1355183018.html](http://news.sina.com/102-000-101-101/2005-12-22/1355183018.html)>.

## 5.2 The US Perception of “China’s Peaceful Rise”

The “2005 Military Power of the People’s Republic of China,” published by the Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States describes how the United States welcomes the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China, but they also observe that China is facing a strategic crossroads. Questions remain about the basic choices China’s leaders will make as China’s power and influence grows, particularly its military power. The US government perceives that “China’s rise” is a fact, but it still cannot make sure whether it is “peaceful” or not. Continuous observation is necessary for the US. For some US experts on China, the so-called “China’s peaceful rise” trumpeted by the Beijing government a synonym for the “China threat”. In this case, Sino-US rapprochement in the future partly depends upon China’s next step, and also partly depends upon the interpretation of that step by the US.<sup>14</sup>

The 2005 report also indicated that, in consideration of protecting the steep economic growth, the deployment of China’s armed forces is aiming at the deterrence of Taiwan’s independence, rather than the provocation of any military attack. Such indication seems to coincide with China’s official standpoint, illustrated in the National Defense Report published by China in 2004, stating that China will invoke military operations against Taiwan only if Taiwan declares its independence. Basically, the US government agrees that China will adopt military action in the event that Taiwan declares its independence; moreover, the US also perceives that China’s military development has been the potential threat for regional security and even an impact on the security situations across the world.<sup>15</sup>

John Negroponte, Director of the US National Intelligence, testified to the US Senate Intelligence Committee in February 2006 that “China is a rapidly rising power with a steadily expanding global reach that may become a peer competitor to the United States at some

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<sup>14</sup> 聯合報(Lien He Bao), 2005年7月22日, 第3版。

<sup>15</sup> “The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2005: Annual Report to Congress.” *United States Department of Defense*. (Accessed 10 June 2007) <<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/dod-2005.pdf>>.

point.” If China continues its rapid economic growth, he said, China will increase its sphere of influence in international politics and pursue its military modernization. Even though he indicated the potential threat by China, Negroponte also pointed out a fact that China has strengthened its economic and diplomatic relations with Russia, the EU, Africa, and Latin America, and adopted a moderate stance on the Taiwan issue.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Michael Hayden also testified before the committee. He said that the CIA is still uncertain of China’s ultimate intentions. Proven by China’s military modernization, it seems that China’s intent is to challenge the status of US as a superpower, regardless of whether accomplished via military operations. Another official in US National Intelligence, Michael Maples, testified that the steady economic growth, the military modernization, and the increase of global influence, all of which are a series of strategies adopted by China for the purpose of unifying Taiwan. Maples admitted that, in global affairs, the US still needs assistance from China, especially in the resolution of the nuclear weapon issue in North Korea.

In addition, Robert B. Zoellick, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, whose speech before the “National Committee on US-China Relations” talked about the topic “Whither China—From Membership to Responsibility”.<sup>16</sup> “For fifty years, our policy was to fence in the Soviet Union while its own internal contradictions undermined it. For thirty years, our policy has been to draw out the People’s Republic of China. As a result, the China of today is not simply the Soviet Union of the late 1940s:

- It does not seek to spread radical, anti-American ideologies.
- While not yet democratic, it does not see itself in a twilight conflict against democracy around the globe.
- While at times mercantilist, it does not see itself in a death struggle with capitalism.

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<sup>16</sup> See Robert Zoellick. “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility.”  
<<http://www.ait.org.tw/zh/news/officialtext/>>.

- And most importantly, China does not believe that its future depends on overturning the fundamental order of the international system. In fact, quite the reverse: Chinese leaders have decided that their success depends on being networked with the modern world.”<sup>17</sup>

What Zollick talked about was no doubt an attempt to put China in a responsible position for taking efforts to police its own behavior through new export controls on sensitive technology, and to urge China to play a role in punishing the violators (especial terrorists within legal means in cooperation with the US).

### 5.3 Russia’s Perception of “China’s Peaceful Rise”

After years of adjustment since the collapse of USSR, Russia’s current foreign policy is apparently based upon the maintenance of Russia’s national security and economic development. According to “The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation,”<sup>18</sup> approved by President Putin on June 28, 2000, in attaining the fundamental objectives of its foreign policy, Russia calls for the intensive participation in international economic and political institutions and mechanisms, especially those in Europe and Asia, so as to establish the new, equitable and mutually advantageous partnerships between Russia and the rest of the world, accompanied with it’s own national security and economy.

Diplomatic rhetoric aside, however, in urgent need of hard currency to keep the military-industrial complex floating in the face of a declining domestic demand, Russia intentionally developed closer military cooperation with China, together with Russia’s needs in keeping its former satellite states within its orbit and away from Western influence. Oleg Arin, a famous Russia expert specializing in Asian issues, indicates that, in order to keep its influence in East Asia, Russia needs to strengthen its strategic partnership with China against the US. China is prone to militarily cooperate with Russia because, in spite of PLA’s military

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Putin. "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation." 28 June 2000 <<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>>.

modernization incidental to the rapid economic growth, China is still not capable of raising its military power to the level of the US in the next 10 to 20 years. Therefore, the reconciliation between China and Russia in military development implies these two countries' efforts to turn the power balance of armed forces in East Asia away from the US.<sup>19</sup>

Russia is seeking to recreate Russian national strength and retain international respect. Believing that economic power is the foundation of the state strength, Russia highly relies upon its 2<sup>nd</sup> world ranked military power in maintaining its sphere of influence while plummeting economically, and is interested in boosting cooperation between the Chinese and the Russian military-economic complexes. Considering the historical animosity against the western world, Russia rationally acts on its perception of national interests to revive its domestic economy by seeking funds from the West and by cooperating with China in military and economic terms. Russia is in dire need of reviving its economy before China's threat becomes imminent.

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<sup>19</sup>Oleg Arin, *Rossiya v strategicheskom kapkane* (俄羅斯在戰略的夾縫中), M: K, 1994.