

PRC Foreign Policy and Its Recent Development

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PRC FOREIGN POLICY

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has explicitly or implicitly constructed a couple of basic principles as the basis for its foreign policy behavior. In general, there are six basic principles directing or affecting its foreign policy behavior. The very first basic principle is **the maintenance of national security, state sovereignty and territorial integrity**. For Beijing, security issues are most important for survival. It is evident that protecting the Chinese mainland from foreign aggressions and warding off attempts at encirclement have been Beijing's most vital foreign policy goal since the establishment of the Chinese communist regime in 1949. To defend its sovereignty, Beijing appears to be interested in delimitating disputed borders on acceptable terms, recovering lost territories, and having a voice in the discussion and settlement of the most important international issues. The sovereignty issue is in fact tied to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party regime on mainland China.

As a result, Beijing's claim of sovereignty over overlapping territories with other countries, for example, the South China Sea and the boundaries with India, involves the intention of maintaining regime legitimacy.

The second basic principle concerns **the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence**—mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence—this was adopted by the First Session of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in September, 1949 and first raised to a foreign government (India) in December, 1953. The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence have been upheld firmly by the communist leaders in Beijing, who view them as the basis for the reconstruction of the new world order and the cornerstone of international politics.

The third basic principle is associated with the emphasis on independence and autonomy, especially after the Twelfth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in September, 1982. The call for independence and autonomy, based on the Marxism-Leninism and Maoist theories, is a long-term and multidimensional foreign strategy which can hardly be altered or ceased.

The fourth basic principle deals with **the manipulation of nationalism (or patriotism)** as a means or an excuse of resisting foreign pressures, forming domestic consensus, and

inducing loyalty whenever leaders in Beijing find it difficult to cope with certain specific issues, particularly issues dealing with territory and sovereignty. Hence, on the one hand, Beijing is using nationalism to promote the desire for independence and unity of the Chinese people; on the other hand, Beijing's nationalist perspective of foreign policy and international relations results in some countries' suspicion of Chinese power expansion—that is, the “China threat” theory popular and wide-spread among a few China watchers.

The fifth basic principle has to do with **the “Three World Theory”** that was put forward in the 1970s and still has an impact on the PRC's foreign policy output. The Chinese communist leaders seem to keep perceiving and conducting foreign policy in a divided global framework, and it is certain that they always treat the PRC as a Third World country and oblige themselves to unite the other Third World countries to confront the “hegemons” (*Baqun*). Although the “Three World Theory” does not necessarily ensure positive and friendly relationships between the PRC and the developing countries, it still remains influential implicitly.

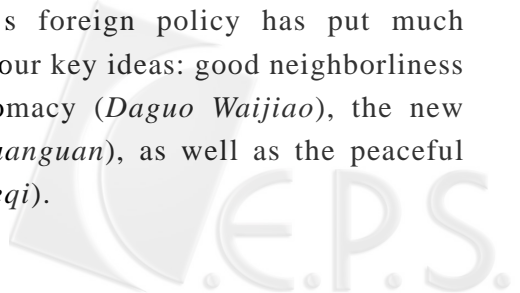
The last, but not least, basic principle that directs or influences the basis for the PRC's foreign policy is **the extraordinary priority of domestic considerations**. This is particularly salient in the PRC's modernization and economic development programs from after 1978, in which Deng Xiaoping was the general architect of this scheme. Under Deng, economic modernization was the most urgent on the national agenda, which required a peaceful and stable

external environment and foreign relations. In addition, certain domestic considerations, normally out of political struggle and nationalism, sometimes make the foreign policy of the PRC a bit rigid. It is thus undeniable that the making of the PRC's foreign policy must hinge largely on domestic needs and politics.

Although the PRC occasionally adopts a policy of strategic ambiguity, explicitly or implicitly, in order to deal with foreign relations—for example, its ambiguous and speculative attitude toward the aggression of the United States in Iraq in 2003, such a policy still can not and should not deviate from the baseline or essential principles provided by “regular” or “normal” foreign policy. For Beijing, a strategically ambiguous policy, on the one hand, may effectively protect a country's national interest from being violated; on the other hand, it may facilitate a violent resolution to a specific problem if misunderstood or misperceived by others concerned. In other words, the afore-mentioned principles are of great help to depict a clear picture of the foreign policy strategy and options of the PRC.

LEADING IDEAS OF PRC FOREIGN POLICY

In recent years the PRC's foreign policy has put much emphasis on the following four key ideas: good neighborliness (*Mulin*), great power diplomacy (*Daguo Waijiao*), the new security concept (*Xin Anquanguan*), as well as the peaceful rise of China (*Heping Jueqi*).



The time-honored **good neighbor policy** of the PRC has been reiterated since the early 1980s by the Chinese Communist Party and its leaders, particularly when relations between the PRC and major powers turn sour. By paying more attention to peripheral countries the PRC can garner more regional support and deal effectively with the diplomatic challenge that mostly comes from the United States. It is now obvious that the PRC's good neighbor policy has been fruitful, but whether or not the PRC's growing need for energy and raw materials will undo its good neighbor policy is still debatable among practitioners and scholars.

Occasionally in contradiction to the good neighbor policy, the **great power diplomacy** of the PRC indicates the change of "victim mentality" into "great power mentality." Geopolitical realities also help the PRC maintain the major power status. Consequently, the PRC with the active willingness and adequate capacity to act has been confident in participating in world affairs and voicing its opinions about international disputes.

The **new security concept** enunciated by the PRC in the late 1990s calls for the rejection of the outdated Cold War mentality and the pursuit of common security through mutually beneficial cooperation. According to *China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept* (issued on June 8, 2002), the new security concept includes mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, in which the Five Peaceful Principles of Co-existence, the peaceful resolution of international disputes, the reformation and im-

provement of current international economic order, the emphasis on non-traditional security issues and the effective arms control and disarmament play a key role.

The **peaceful rise of China** from a positive perspective is sometimes interpreted as the rejuvenation of China. From a negative point of view, it would stand for a transition of regional power in which the PRC is turning to a threat to the region of the Asia Pacific. It seems that with the increased development of the political, economic and military capabilities of the PRC, the international status of the PRC is being improved. Most major powers have recognized the growth of the PRC, but are not unanimous on the future direction of the PRC's development. In addition, given the fact that the domestic social and economic basis has not been stable enough and that the United States remains the unchallengeable power in the world, the rational calculation would help explain why leaders in Beijing would like to adopt an approach of peaceful ascendancy by creating a well-to-do society and the good neighbor policy and the new security concept.

These four leading ideas are frequently mentioned in the foreign policy statements of the PRC. Nowadays, it appears that good neighborliness, great power diplomacy and the new security concept are aimed at negating the "China threat theory" and paving the way for the approach towards the peaceful rise of China. The majority of diplomatic activities can be viewed as the consequence of changing ideas about the foreign policy behavior in the aftermath of

the Cold War. Besides, with the accession of the fourth generation of the PRC leaders, the PRC has been very assertive-in a peaceful way-in foreign affairs and is ready to serve as a great power in world politics.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN PRC FOREIGN POLICY

It is not surprising at all to argue that the recent development in the PRC's foreign policy is in line with the foregoing basic principles and leading ideas. To facilitate one's understanding about the recent development in the PRC's foreign policy, the paragraphs that follow will focus on some major events and practices in foreign relations of the PRC from late May to early August, 2004 and explore the possible effects and outcomes of these events and practices. These events and practices can be categorized into five issue areas-foreign policy towards the United States, policy towards the Republic of China (hereafter, Taiwan), foreign policy behavior in important international regimes, attitudes towards territorial disputes, and foreign policy towards the Korean Peninsula nuclear crisis.

The policy of the PRC towards the United States lies at the core of the PRC's multidimensional foreign policy. The year of 2004 denotes the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the United States. The mutual interest between these two countries is increasing, whereas the idea of "harmony without uniformity" is flimsy because of some incidents where these two countries have a clash of interests. Although issues such

as the unification with Taiwan, bilateral trade, human rights, and so on slow down the pace of confidence and security building between the PRC and the United States, the attacks of the United States on Afghanistan and Iraq and the North Korean nuclear crisis have brought these two countries back to the adherence to the idea of “harmony without uniformity.”

In principal, when Washington is trying to express its good will and enthusiasm for friendship and cooperation, Beijing seizes the moment to reiterate its hopes as to how to improve bilateral relations, create a stable and prosperous environment, and solve the problems in Beijing’s way.

From late May to early August, 2004, both the PRC and the United States made some constructive moves of help to enhance bilateral relations between these two countries. On May 31, June 7 and July 26, 2004, PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing held phone conversations with United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell. On July 2, 2004, Li met with Powell in Jakarta after the informal ministerial meeting between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners. On July 8, 2004, Li held talks with the visiting US Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Condoleezza Rice. On July 9, 2004 Chairman of the Chinese Community Party Central Military Commission Jiang Zemin and PRC President Hu Jintao each met with Rice respectively. At the Fifth Sino-US Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, cosponsored by the Chinese Arms Control and Disarmament Association and the Monterey Institute of International Studies on July 20, 2004, PRC

Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui attended and delivered a speech.

Other than these moves, some actions inside the United States possibly generated a negative impact on contemporary Beijing-Washington relations. They included the **Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China** of the Pentagon, issued on May 28, 2004, and the **2004 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission** of an *ad hoc* nonpartisan group of senators, congressmen and experts on June 16. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs contended that the former exaggerated the annual military expenditure of the PRC on purpose and advocated the "China threat" theory with the Cold War mentality, and that the latter was antagonistic toward the PRC through the Cold War mentality and aimed to intervene in Chinese domestic affairs such as economics and trade, the Taiwan issue, as well as the Hong Kong issue.

The PRC realizes that these reports do not represent the ultimate view of the United States government, but they do suggest that in Washington there exists an anti-Beijing sentiment inside the beltway. The PRC thus urges the United States government to be in opposition to these reports in order to sustain cooperative relations between them, because both sides acknowledge and respect each other's differences and continuously seek and expand common interests.

The policy of the PRC towards Taiwan has always been

the uncompromised part of the PRC's foreign policy. What makes the Taiwan issue intricate is the intervention of the United States. Despite the three communiqués that serve as the basis for Beijing-Washington interactions, the United States must comply with the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) to manage its relations with Taiwan. The TRA is a domestic law of the United States, considering "any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States." In response, the United States President "is directed to inform the Congress promptly of any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan and any danger to the interests of the United States arising therefrom. The President and the Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger."

Although Beijing opposes any arms sale of the United States to Taiwan, it has come to realize that the shortest route to Taipei is via Washington, because of the very deep involvement of Washington in cross-Taiwan strait relations. To offset American support for Taiwan, leaders in Beijing have restated to officials of the United States on every occasion that the Taiwan issue concerns the PRC's national sovereignty and territorial integrity and that the appropriate handling of this issue is the key to the positive and long-standing development of relations between the PRC and the United States.

To isolate Taiwan from the international community, the PRC has mobilized its allies to boycott Taiwan's admission into inter-governmental organizations and attempted to signify that Taiwan is subordinate to the mainland Chinese government by expelling or downgrading Taiwan's representation in international organizations. This is evident in particular from when Taiwan attempted to apply for observer status at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in mid-May, 2004 and to participate in the United Nations for the 12th time in 2004. On August 10, 2004, Zhang Yishan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Acting Permanent Representative of the PRC to the United States, wrote to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to request a supplementary item entitled "Question of the representation of 23 million Taiwan people in the United Nations" be included in the agenda of the 59th session of the General Assembly. In his letter addressed to Annan, Zhang claimed that those who requested Taiwan's participation in the United Nations are trying to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" in the United Nations, which is in defiance of General Assembly resolution 2758.

The PRC's foreign policy behavior in important international regimes is pragmatic and flexible so long as the maintenance of national security, state sovereignty and territorial integrity are not infringed. In the United Nations, the PRC agrees on the Security Council reform by the principle of equitable geographical distribution and increasing representation of the developing countries as a priority. It also supports the proposals and suggestions of the High-level Panel on Threats,

Challenges and Change initiated by Annan. In terms of countering international terrorism, including the “Eastern Turkistan” terrorists the PRC has long been fighting, the PRC welcomes the upcoming Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. At last, the PRC hopes that the United Nations can play a leading role in the Iraq issue, while the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq should be protected and the wish and choice of the Iraqi people should be respected.

In the World Trade Organization (WTO), although the PRC welcomed the framework agreement between developed and developing countries on July 31, 2004 to salvage the Doha round talks that almost stalled, PRC ambassador to WTO Sun Zhenyu expressed his dissatisfaction towards cuts in tariffs and subsidy cuts in the various areas within the framework agreement. Sun actually spoke for the Third World countries in general. The entry into the WTO is very helpful for the economic performance of the PRC. It is worth noticing that the PRC is expected to be one of the global dominants in textiles and clothing when the United States and other developed countries have to lift restrictions on textile and clothing imports in 2005, but the PRC has lots of old commitments to fulfill and more new commitments will phase in under the WTO framework.

On June 21, 2004, at an informal dialogue meeting with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN),

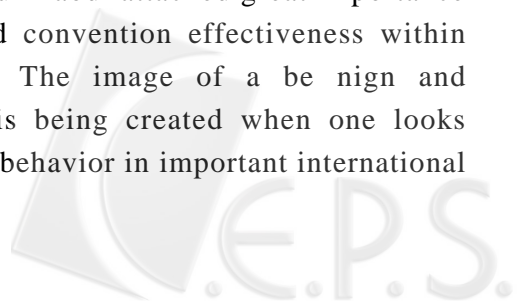
followed by the third Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) hosted by the PRC the next day in Qingdao, foreign ministers of both sides and ASEAN Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong concurred with many regional and sub-regional issues, such as the respect for the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the peaceful settlement of the South China Sea issue, the admission of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the establishment of the ASEAN Community.

On July 2, 2004, Li spoke at the 11th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and put forward four points for further consideration: first, rethinking the relationship between confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy on the basis of the respect for state sovereignty; second, reinforcing channels of exchange between foreign affairs and defense officials; third, enhancing the role of the ARF chairperson and the inter-sessional meetings via an incremental and consultative approach; and last, augmenting communication with other international organizations while keeping the distinct features and advantages of ARF itself.

In the PRC-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Hu was in Uzbekistan to attend the SCO Tashkent Summit on June 17, 2004. The Tashkent Summit was the first meeting for individual national leaders of the SCO members since the SCO concluded its initial stage to a full-range cooperation one. In addition to specific measures for the security (anti-terrorism measures included) of the SCO

member states, a number of pragmatic cooperations in the economic and trading spheres were to be launched. Interim President Hamid Karzai of the Afghan Transitional Administration was invited as special guest, and as an observer, Mongolian external relations minister Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun participated in the Tashkent Summit and formally made the request to join the SCO.

In the regimes concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the PRC was admitted to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) on May 28, 2004. The PRC pledges its adherence to the principles and list of nuclear export controls. For example, the PRC has promulgated the Catalogue of Sensitive Items and Technologies Subject to Export Licenses Administration and penalized a couple of companies violating the non-proliferation export controls in order to maintain and strengthen international non-proliferation regimes. The second round of PRC-Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) Dialogue was held on June 1, 2004 in Beijing. No salient progress was made, but a certain extent of mutual trust has been established. On July 19, 2004, at Meetings of Experts and States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in Geneva, PRC Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs, Hu Xiaodi attached great importance to disease surveillance and convention effectiveness within a multilateral framework. The image of a benign and cooperative rising power is being created when one looks at the PRC's foreign policy behavior in important international regimes.



The PRC's attitudes towards territorial disputes have become assertive but cautious. Recently, the PRC has had some achievements on the boundary issues with Vietnam, Japan and India, correspondingly. In its boundary issue with Vietnam, the demarcation agreement on the Beibu Bay (also known as Gulf of Tonkin) and the Agreement on Fishery Cooperation were signed on December 25, 2000. Before the latter is to take effect, the Complementary Protocol on the Agreement on Fishery Cooperation in Beibu Bay was signed on June 24, 2004 in Beijing. The protocol detailed the transitional management of waters as defined in the agreement. According to the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the signing of these agreements is a win-win situation and has nothing to do with the sovereignty over the islands.

On July 7, 2004, Japan conducted its seabed survey in the disputed sea area to the east of "medium line" of the East China Sea it proposed unilaterally. PRC Vice Foreign Minister, Wang Yi immediately summoned Koreshige Anami, Japanese Ambassador to the PRC, and made solemn representations to Japan over this matter.

The PRC contends that India controls some 90,000 sq km of Chinese territory, including the whole of Arunachal Pradesh. On the other hand, India argues that the PRC illicitly occupies some 43,000 sq km of Jammu and Kashmir, including some 5,100 sq km illegally ceded to the PRC by Pakistan in the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement in the 1960s. On July 27, 2004, the 3rd Round of Sino-India

meeting on the boundary issue was held in New Delhi. Dai Bingguo, Special Representative of China on the Boundary Issue between China and India and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, met with Indian Minister of External Affairs Natwar Singh. On July 30, 2004, Dai was interviewed by mainland Chinese media and felt positive towards the future development of political and economic relations between these two countries.

The PRC's foreign policy towards the Korean Peninsula nuclear crisis appears extremely instrumental and necessary. With the gradual institutionalization of the six-party talks, the PRC is using the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue as a bargaining chip to deal with the United States. Yet, both the PRC and the United States have shared interest in this crisis-that is, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to the working relationship with the United States, the PRC also works with its East Asian neighbors to find a solution to the problem. On June 21, 2004, the PRC-Japan-ROK Tripartite Committee held the first meeting in Qingdao. Foreign ministers from these three countries issued a joint statement for the first meeting of the Tripartite Committee. In addition to exchanging views on the East Asia regional cooperation, they also discussed the Korean Peninsula situation and the Iraq issue.

Beginning on June 23, 2004, the third round of the six-party talks was held in Beijing. Later, with the sponsorship of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, an informal, track one-and-a-half five-party (no Russia) talk was

held on August 10, 2004 in New York. Governmental officials and scholars fully exchanged their views on the future evolution of the Korean Peninsula situation. At both meetings, no decisive breakthroughs were made. Overall, mutual respect and the enlargement of consensus are the major spirit that guides the progress of the six-party talks.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The foreign relations of the PRC have long followed some basic principles-i.e., the maintenance of national security, state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, the emphasis on independence and autonomy, the manipulation of nationalism, the “Three World Theory,” and the extraordinary priority of domestic considerations. In accordance with these principles, such attractive ideas as good neighborliness, great power diplomacy, the new security concept, and China’s peaceful rise are being put into practice. As a result, although the PRC still has many international disputes, most notably the boundary issues, the recent development of the PRC’s foreign relations indicates a more cooperative and self-confident role of the PRC in the world community.

The PRC’s foreign policy towards the United States, important international regimes, and the Korean Peninsula nuclear standoff all demonstrate the PRC’s “softness” or flexibility derived from the foregoing principles and ideas, whereas on the territorial disputes and the Taiwan issue, the PRC has its own insistence because the maintenance

of national security, state sovereignty and territorial integrity remains the key factor influencing the decision-making of the PRC's foreign policy. At least in the near future, the direction of the PRC's foreign policy will not deviate from the existing path, and the PRC will be a major driving force for the growth of East Asian regionalism-if the status quo in the cross-Taiwan strait relations can be maintained.

