



Dialogue on Globalization

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China's Foreign Policy in Transition

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China plays an increasingly important role in the international community, one that holds growing responsibility. President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao have initiated change in their country's foreign- and security policy in order to aid China's development into an active and confident actor in the international arena.

Security Perceptions

China's foreign policy is driven by a domestic agenda. The Chinese leadership continues to focus on the economic and political transformation of the country. All Chinese foreign policy aims in securing the country's economic development and territorial integrity. In addition, the Chinese Communist Party hopes to strengthen its legitimacy through a sophisticated foreign policy, putting on the world stage China as an influential player and creating stability for the nation. Political developments contradicting or hampering these goals are perceived as threats. In this sense, North Korean nuclear brinkmanship is a headache to China's foreign policy. Traditional balance of power politics continue to influence foreign- and security policy thought of many decision-makers, because sovereignty and territorial integrity have to be guarded. This line

of thinking is most clearly seen in the organization of Chinese foreign policy around the concept of the so-called multi-polarized world. Because of the uneasiness with the supremacy of the last remaining superpower, especially after the American-lead war in Iraq, many Chinese foreign policy thinkers hope that other poles like Europe or China itself will counterbalance the hegemon. But this concept is not put into political action. In fact, China does accept the supremacy of the U.S., because good relations with Washington have strategic value for the general transformation process. The deadlocked conflict across the Taiwan Strait is all about sovereignty and legitimacy. Because of the increasing militarization of cross-strait relations and mutual exclusive claims by both sides the conflict poses a dangerous threat to peace and stability in Asia. However, this conflict could be defused with patience and good statesmanship because of the cultural nexus and the strong economic integration of both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The spread of infectious diseases such as SARS and AIDS highlights the fact that China is exposed to transnational risks. The drug trade from Central Asia and from across the Burmese border is another example. Due to these develop-

ments, Chinese experts from various foreign policy advisory institutes have started to utilize comprehensive security concepts. Securing energy and water resources is of geostrategic importance because China's economic growth depends on rising energy imports. The degradation of the environment could lead to scarcity of clean water for parts of the population. Chinese policy makers hope to develop proactive and preventive strategies against such security risks.

September 11 has highlighted globalized terrorism as threat in China as well. China joined the global fight against terrorism and utilized the opportunity to crack down on local separatists in the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. Generally speaking, China stresses the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism rather than fighting it solely via military means.

Lately China has become sensitive to the proliferation of nuclear weapons as threat to its own security and would possibly support a more effective global regime of arms control in the field of missiles and weapons of mass destruction. As China has more nuclear-armed neighbors (Russia, India, Pakistan and North Korea) than any other country, this is an important topic.

Multilateral Answers?

China supports the multilateral approach which has become part of Chinese foreign policy, although there are many reservations regarding questions on topics that could have an effect on Chinese sovereignty.

China backs both the strengthening of international organizations and adherence to international law, taking on increasing responsibility in regional crisis management and the avoidance of violent conflict. The preventive Shuttle-Diplomacy and the multilateral arbitration efforts on China's part in the rising nuclear crisis in North Korea, as well as the country's deployment of troops for technical and medical support in UN peace-securing missions are both examples of this policy. Though in the past China concentrated on the development of bilateral relations, the country's leaders now focus on a multilateral approach. Even the fixation on the last remaining superpower is decreasing. Chinese foreign policy no longer focuses solely on the USA, a practice formerly worked to the bone, but rather takes a pragmatic approach towards Chinese-American relations with the goal of

conflict management in mind. At the same time, ties with the EU are being fortified. In this spirit, Beijing published a policy paper on the EU for the first time in October 2003. During his visit to Europe in May 2004 the Prime Minister worked hard to further develop this relationship. Talk about a strategic partnership has entered the political jargon of Beijing and some European capitals. But the concept still needs to be crafted in greater detail.

In the future China could act as an intermediary in diminishing the widening gulf between industrial and developing countries. In 2003 China has already took part in the G-8 Summit, though consciously as a developing country. During the world trade round in Cancun in the same year the G-20 presented themselves as an articulate group with the potential to block multilateral trade negotiations if it is decided that the industrialized countries neglect the interests of the developing world. The further development of the cooperation between India, China and Brazil, the defining countries of the G-20, is not only going to shape the multilateral trading system but also the future of global governance in general.

Regional Arrangements

The main themes of Chinese foreign policy are peace and development, which also secure China's own development. A peaceful and stable environment is necessary for China in order to reach its goal as a "modestly well-off society"; the Chinese foreign ministry therefore strives to build up productive multi- or bilateral relations with countries in the region. Reform-oriented Chinese politicians and their advisors support advanced economic integration and the development of new forms of cooperative security.

China presents its economic and political rise as advantageous for all of Asia and hopes to dispel the current fears of its neighbors. The Chinese government is successfully working towards acquiring the reputation as a responsible regional power as well as a motor for growth, supporting among other things stronger economic integration. In October 2003 China and ASEAN signed a contract on friendship and cooperation, bringing them one big step closer together – the prospect of a free trade zone by 2010 is in sight. Involvement is growing stronger in Central Asia as well, mainly through further development of

the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This regional organization, which aside from China and Russia also handles four Central Asian republics, has a secretary's office in Beijing with the former Chinese ambassador in Moscow as General Secretary. The development of a political infrastructure is financed by Chinese and Russian funds. Tapping into Central Asia's energy resources is part of this strategy. More intensive economic and political cooperation has also been arranged with former friend and rival India, and remaining border conflicts are settled via negotiation. Relations with Pakistan remain good.

Despite many obstacles, regional economic cooperation also pushed forward the development of regional security architecture. Regional cooperation is necessary in confronting security policy challenges; this applies to the struggle against causes of security risks as well as to warding off serious threats. Regional security architecture in Asia should be understood not as a fixed institution but rather as a security policy process or the coexistence of several processes. Institutionalization can slowly be implemented starting with security policy dialogue and through confidence-building measures. The outcome of the process leads to a transformation in the relations between countries and simultaneously changes the conditions within countries themselves, as shown in the OSCE and also in the European integration process. Regional security architecture in Asia could also develop in this way. But unlike Europe where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) remain the backbone of the security system, Asia does not yet have its own region-wide organization. There is a notable amount of interest in China vis-à-vis Europe's regional security system as well as its corresponding process. China has already taken up cautious contact with NATO, whose planes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and wishes to initiate dialogue.

Even if a functioning cooperative or fully collective security system is still lacking, ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have at least taken the first

steps to push this process forward. The planned economic integration of a large part of East Asia is considered an important prerequisite for closer political cooperation. But there are further conditions for an effective cooperative security arrangement:

- Regional norms and rules based on internationally recognized principles must be created and implemented. This is a very difficult step for Asian countries. Lack of trust and large cultural differences are significant causes of this problem. The complex and conflict-filled relationship between China and Japan is a further hurdle in the path to a cooperative security architecture in Asia.
- Initiatives and structures that promote adherence to laws should be implemented.
- Participating nations that have difficulty adhering to or implementing the necessary measures should receive support.
- Tension and problems between countries should be approached in a problem-oriented and pragmatic manner. Additionally, the security needs of all participating nations should be taken into serious consideration.

Common Perspectives?

From China's point of view, an extension of security policy dialogues between Asia and Europe is necessary for tackling certain problems together in the future. A call for action is seen right in Central Asia. Drug trafficking, organized crime, oppression and exclusion of most of the population's participation in economy and politics makes the area explosive. In addition, rich energy sources evoke the desire of many. Central Asia presents a security policy risk for both Europe and China. Here lies the possibility for concrete cooperation, perhaps with Russia, to stabilize the region and especially to ward off the danger of possible failed states.

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The focus of the program „Security in a Globalized World“ lies on the specific perceptions and processes of security and security policies in the regions of the South. The program is part of the international work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and contributes through conferences, workshops and publications to the debates on cooperative security structures.

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