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“The Changing Dynamics of the Foreign Policy of China in Contemporary Time”

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Abstract

Thirty years of unparalleled economic growth has made China a potential superpower, whose power is likely to grow. Despite immense concentration of the Chinese leadership on the economic affairs, China's foreign policy has also marked an era of great success. China, in essence, is going global, while forging warm relations with its trading partners in Asia and the outside world. It has abandoned low profile foreign policy and is looking to get a greater share in economic and diplomatic engagements throughout the world. This change may pose a threat to some states, but China's rise is peaceful and it is likely to integrate itself further into the liberal economic order while continuously endeavoring to change the balance of power in its favor.

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Introduction

A careful analysis of China's foreign policy depicted that multiple segments have been prioritized in these four phases in the past but China's priorities have been changed in the contemporary era where the 'look-west' approach seems anachronistic and appears to be replaced by a 'go-global' paradigm.

Mao Zedong's era has been of pivotal importance for China as it consists of making the country a nuclear power, opening up with the US and gaining a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). However, the story of contemporary China's foreign policy dates back to Deng's era, who stated that China should pursue a foreign policy course based on "hiding its talent, biding its time and seeking concrete achievements."⁴ Deng brought in radical changes in the foreign policy making process and abandoned Mao's 'look-Soviet Union' course and normalized relations with the western world. Chinese foreign policy in the post-Maoist era can be divided into four phases:

1. 1978 to Tiananmen Incident
2. Post-Tiananmen Incident era
3. New Century
4. Rising China

In the wake of the global financial crunch in 2008, China has expanded its sphere of reach. It has started the search for energy resources and potential partners throughout the world, especially within the developing world. In addition, China has emerged as a potential contender of the US in Asia-Pacific region. The leadership of China seems ready to fill the global power vacuum. However, these endeavors have inevitably made China a threat for the regional actors.

The leadership seems to be deviating from Deng's low-profile foreign policy. The incumbent Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) has shown more interest in going global and asserting China's strength in regional issues. In addition to bringing confidence into the socialist republic, China's new course of

⁴ Mitsuru Kitano, "China's Foreign Strategy," *Asia-Pacific Review* 18, no.2 (2011),pp. 37-59.

foreign policy is likely to make China a new powerhouse in the world.

This paper aims to highlight the fundamental changes in China's foreign policy priorities and attempts explain how the incumbent PSC has been changing its interaction with the whole world. It argues that the socialist republic has adopted 'China-centric order' as its future strategy, where China will be likely to assert its power in global political affairs.

Patterns in China's Foreign Policy in the Post-Maoist Era

The rise of reformers in China changed the worldview of China. One of the most important reasons for changing the choices was anti-Soviet sentiments in China. The Sino-Soviet border skirmishes and the Soviet attempts to sideline China in Vietnam eventually convinced the leadership of China to broaden its sphere of reach. Another reason was the need of modern industry and availability of human capital which could have utilized for economic growth of the country. Fragile economy, less than expected cooperation from the Soviet Union and modernization of the West especially the US, appeared lucrative. This course of foreign policy was perhaps the only possible way to bolster the living standards. As a result, the leadership kept its focus on two courses: an opening course and a one-nation course.⁵

In addition to its opening towards the US, China gave great significance to its relations with Japan despite historical animosity between the two states. China sought cooperation with the US and Japan, as later was far more industrialized than China. Having forged cordial ties with these two countries, China brought in capital and technology. Stable international environment, supportive to sustainable economic development, became a priority for China. However, the CPC leadership cautiously adopted economic values of advanced nations and remained cautious in political matters. China received modern technology from Japan and adopted its successful economic

5 Ibid.

model which had put Japan in the spotlight with industrial modernization and economic development.⁶ Although the sentiments of animosity remained alive between China and Japan, China did not concentrate on the contentious issues in order to avoid any impediment in its way to economic development. This trend remained a priority until the Tiananmen incident.

Post-Tiananmen Incident Era

The success of the “Opening Course” led to a phase of modernization and industrial development in China. The wave of democracy in the late 1980s, however, resulted in the infamous Tiananmen Square incident and left the country in dire straits. This incident had a two-fold impact. On the one hand, international hostility and domestic instability were going to derail the process of modernization while, on the other hand, this period was crucial for the socialist ideology itself. The majority of the Eastern European states, which previously had socialist economies, were already aligned with the West and struggling to adapt themselves into the capitalist system and liberal democracy after abandoning socialism.⁷

The use of force against the pro-democracy protesters resulted in a great deal of criticism. Notwithstanding the international pressure and massive criticism, the Chinese government continued its intended foreign policy course. Many states, notably the EU countries, sanctioned China on various commodities such as weapons, and some of those sanctions would remain intact in years to come.⁸ Nevertheless, China continued the “opening policy course” and “one nation course” as the key pillars of its foreign policy.

As it is stated above that the collapse of the former Soviet Union and global wave of democracy resulted in massive protests inside

6 Christopher Howe ed., *China and Japan: History, Trends, and Prospects*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 14.

7 Kitano, “China’s Foreign Strategy,” p. 40.

8 Henry Kissinger, *On China*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2011, pp. 426-7.

China, Deng turned his focus more towards the one nation course. He stated, “The nation should watch dispassionately, guard against peaceful evolution inspired by the West and keep a low profile foreign policy.”⁹ Although the opening course was continued since China’s opening to the world, he emphasized the internationalization of the country’s foreign policy and regarded joining the international community as something inevitable to keep the state intact.¹⁰ However, with the passage of time, areas of attention for the leadership kept growing and they included numerous other policy preferences.

China started preparing grounds to place itself in the club of great powers by the mid 1990s. It started negotiating disputes with the neighbors bilaterally and successfully resolved long-standing border disputes with them. As a result, the previous disputants accepted many of the demarcations as international borders. Meanwhile, US President Clinton ended China’s diplomatic isolation by announcing his policy of “comprehensive engagement towards China.”¹¹ Emi Mifune argues that the latter had emerged as a necessity for the former at that time, because the former found it inevitable to accommodate an emerging economy in the international economic order and needed its cooperation in the region and nuclear non-proliferation campaign.¹² The second half of the decade witnessed a substantial shift in the China’s foreign policy.

By the mid 1990s, China started looking for other options besides Japan. It forged cordial ties with the Newly Independent States

9 Kitano, “China’s Foreign Strategy,” p. 42.

10 Ezra F. Voge, “China under Deng Xiaoping’s Leadership,” East Asia Forum, 27 September 2011, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/09/27/china-under-deng-xiaopings-leadership/>>, (access date: 23 February 2013).

11 James Mann, *About Face: A History of America’s Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton*, New York: Vintage Books, 199 8, pp. 412–438.

12 James MacHaffie, “China’s Role in Central Asia: Security Implications for Russia and the United States,” Taylor and Francis Online (4 October 2010): pp. 368-380.

(NIS) in Central Asia¹³ and revived its bilateral economic partnership with Russia.¹⁴ In 1996, China and Russia inaugurated the “Shanghai Five” in Central Asia to enhance cooperation.¹⁵ In East Asia, China forged cordial ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and played a key role in the Asian Currency Crisis in 1997.¹⁶ This event was probably a milestone for the leadership of China and assured them of their ability to handle a regional crisis without the presence of the US. This in part led to the rise of the ‘sleeping dragon’ which had come out to enhance its sway and play a leading role in the political and economic affairs of the region and the world.

New Century

The new century (later named as Asian-century) started with China’s integration into the liberal economic order. China streamlined its foreign policy priorities after the September 11 terrorist episode in the US. The terrorist incident on the mainland of America after Pearl Harbor and the subsequent War on Terror resulted in a higher level of change in the course of global politics. Besides decentralizing the US force posture, it provided an opportunity to China to strengthen its respective position in the absence of the US on multiple fronts. Meanwhile, the notions of “responsible great power” and China-centric world also started diminishing the importance of the one-nation course.¹⁷

In 2001, China successfully secured membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and continued expanding its role as a great power in regional and extra-regional affairs. In the same year, after the entry of a new member (Uzbekistan), the Shanghai

13 *Niklas Swanstrom*, “China’s Role in Central Asia: Soft and Hard Power,” Centre for World Dialogue 9, no. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2007).

14 Richard Weitz, “China’s Current and Emerging Foreign Policy Priorities,” Center for a New American Security, 13 April 2011.

15 Alyson Bailes *et al.*, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, pp. 1-5.

16 David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 4.

17 Kitano, “China’s Foreign Strategy,” pp. 44-45.

Cooperation Organisation (hereafter, SCO) replaced the Shanghai Five.¹⁸ It also changed its previous position on the North Korean nuclear program and became a chair in six party talks in 2003.¹⁹ In this way, its representation in the world as a great power started becoming explicit, though the leadership kept waiting to “seek concrete achievements.” Deng’s words probably proved the key reason which kept China away from disrupting its bilateral relations with the US after embassy bombings²⁰ and an aircraft collision.²¹ The US, however, responded by supporting the former in its bid for hosting the Olympics in 2008. However, the opening course remained a priority of China, because the republic has started looking outside the region to satisfy its growing demand of energy and other natural resources.²²

The Sino-Japanese bilateral relations witnessed negative developments in the new century. The US-Japan mutual Security Pact (MTS), Japan’s reluctance on initiating formal apology on war crimes during World War II and rising nationalism inside China were probably the most important reasons for the growing enmity between the neighboring countries. But the leadership in both countries tried to revisit their relations and to overcome mutual difference through peaceful means in 2006 and 2008.²³ Nevertheless, the mutual trust and friendship could not be ensured despite reiterated rhetoric of the leadership on both

18 Bailes et al, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” p. 5.

19 Jayshree Bajoria, “The Six-Party Talks on North Korea’s Nuclear Program,” Council on Foreign Relations, 8 March 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program/p13593?cid=rss-analysisbriefbackgroundsexp-the_six_party_talks_on_north_k-030813>, (access date: 15 April 2013).

20 Kissinger, “On China,” p. 477.

21 Ibid, p. 482.

22 Brock Tessman and Wojtek Wolfe, “Great Power Strategic Hedging: the Case of Chinese Energy Security,” *International Studies Review* (2011), pp. 214-40.

23 “Chinese President Says 4th Political Document Represents New Consensus in China-Japan Relations,” *China View*, 7 May 2008, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-05/07/content_8123093.htm>, (access date: 19 April 2013).

sides. At that time, however, China's reliance on Japan for foreign investment and technological advancement was reduced to a great extent. In fact, it had an upper hand on its neighbor mainly because of its unprecedented economic growth and growing self-sufficiency in modern technology.

As far as the US was concerned, the Chinese leadership was clear about its future status for newly elected Republican administration of President George Bush. However, the war on terror increased its importance for the US in combating global terrorist networks. China assured the US of its support in the war against terror.²⁴ At the same time, it kept increasing avenues for trade and forged economic partnership with countries in Latin America and Africa.²⁵ As a result of China's continued economic growth, the developing world also started shifting their focus from west to east and sought the "Beijing Consensus" as a successful economic model of sustained economic growth.

Once China's rise and waning American strength started becoming explicit, the international relations scholarship and policy makers across the world started discussing the would-be world in the era of post-'Washington Consensus'. Fareed Zakaria (a CNN-based analyst) focused on 'rise of the rest' in his thesis, where he argued that multiple actors would play a role and enjoy the influence in international politics despite strong presence of the US. China also started yearning for a new global world order whilst claiming its rise as peaceful.²⁶

Rising China

The inception of the term 'rising China' stretches back to 2005 when Zheng Bijian (Hu Jintao's policy pundit) coined this term to

24 Jacques DeLisle,"9 11 and US-China Relations," *Eurasia Review*, 27 September 2011.

25 Sheng Ding, "Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: a New Look at China's Rise to the Status Quo Power," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 64 (March 2010), pp. 255-272.

26 Randall L. Schweller and XiaoyuPu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of US Decline," *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011), pp. 41-72.

explain the peaceful rise of the country. For some, rather than being a representation of amity for other states, it was a response to the newly emerged 'China Threat Theory'.²⁷ President Hu surfaced his idea of a 'harmonious world' that his country would seek 'more appropriate world order' rather than complete integration into the existing global order.²⁸ Although the realists still perceive this idea in a revisionist connotation, it seems inevitable that the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) would eventually bring in several changes in the global political and economic order.

The early years of the 21st century paved grounds for rising China. It adopted new foreign policy practices and focused on enhancing cooperation with the regional actors. In addition to resolving issues related to border demarcation, mutual security, trade enhancement and economic integration, it held ASEAN+1 and ASEAN+3 talks to enhance regional cooperation. The ASEAN states, in turn, integrated and welcomed China, David C. Kang argues.²⁹

Since the start of the new century, it was clear that China was robust enough to manage regional issues such as the Asian Currency Crisis. In 2003, it initiated a partnership with ASEAN along with South Korea and Japan through ASEAN+3 and signed the 'Treaty of Amity and Cooperation' with the ASEAN nations.³⁰ Although the three Northeast Asian neighbors were almost at the same stage before signing the treaty, China left the other two far behind in building and financing new development projects and thus enhanced its importance as a regional powerhouse. Indeed, it was a result of China's skillful diplomacy that China and Vietnam announced that they reached a treaty to solve their three

27 Ross Grainger, "What is 'China threat' theory," China Daily, 9 September 2010.

28 Cui Liru, "Peaceful Rise: China's Modernisation Trajectory," The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs, (2012), pp. 14-17.

29 Kang, "China Rising...", pp. 4-7.

30 Ding, "Analyzing Rising...", p. 268.

decades-long border dispute.³¹ Although maritime issues related to Spratly Island in South China Sea still remain unresolved, China's diplomatic record suggests a bright future in years to come.

Along with the ASEAN nations, China continued to enhance economic cooperation and trade with the American allies and the cornerstone of regional security structure, Japan and South Korea. Notwithstanding the fact that maritime issues between China and Japan are still unresolved, both countries have continued bilateral negotiation until this day. After the eruption of the conflict in 2010, the conflict reemerged after Japan's decision to nationalize the Senkaku/Diyaou islands. Both countries have substantial naval and air presence near the disputed islands, yet none of them has tried to initiate even a low-intensity conflict. One possible reason for cautious behavior on the part of both neighbors is their economic interdependence. Trade has increased substantially over the period of three decades. In fact, a large number of Japanese-owned firms are operating in China and have employed thousands of Chinese workers. In 2012, their mutual trade was approximately \$329 billion³² which probably made clear to both states that even a minor military conflict would have a disastrous impact on their economies.

Chinese-South Korean trade has also increased over the years. In 2012, their mutual trade was worth \$256.3 billion.³³ South Korea's conflict with Japan regarding WWII issues and historical rivalry with North Korea has also impacted its views on regional security. Although it is an American ally and provides bases to thousands of the US soldiers, it also shares China's view on regional security. The new generation of the CPC leadership has made its desire for peace and conciliation in the Korean

31 Ibid.

32 "What's at Stake in China-Japan Spat: \$345 Billion to Start," *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 September 2013, <<http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/09/17/whats-at-stake-in-china-japan-spat-345-billion-to-start/>>, (access date: 2 December 2013).

33 Li Jiabao, "Move Faster' on South Korean Trade Pact," *China Daily*, 20 June 2013, <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2013/06/20/content_16638730.htm>, (access date: 29 March 2014).

peninsula clear in addition to supporting the UN-proposed sanctions on the North Korean nuclear program.³⁴

Unlike the lone superpower, the US, China has maintained a low profile foreign policy in the regional disputes and avoided invasions of the neighbors. In this regard, Hu Jintao's proposal to ensure peace in Asia appears working. His formula included:

- Enhance mutual trust
- Deepen economic cooperation
- Meet challenges
- Increase cultural exchanges
- Policy of openness³⁵

This approach has already made China an economic superpower, which is likely to surpass the US in the next two decades. In addition to economic development, China has also built its image as a peaceful nation, which does not want to interfere in domestic affairs of partner nations. As far as extra-regional foreign policy affairs are concerned, China has marked a great success especially in dealing with great powers.

China's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Extra-Regional Powers: US and Russia

Foreign policy pundits such as Michael D. Swine opine that China has been becoming assertive since the start of this decade, because it has become assertive in territorial and maritime disputes and shows aggression on its self-claimed core interests.³⁶ For them (hereinafter referred as pessimists), the

34 "China Says Xi Jinping Willing to Help Korea Reconciliation," AFP, 20 March 2013, <<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/zUIRp7r7S82dQV9k2K9yVO/China-says-Xi-Jinping-willing-to-help-Korea-reconciliation.html>>, (access date: 30 March 2014).

35 "President Hu Makes five-point Proposal for Asian Countries," Xinhua, 12 April 2008, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-04/12/content_7965854.htm>, (access date: 9 March 2013).

36 Michael D. Swine, "China's Assertive Behaviour (Part One: On Core Interests)," China Leadership Monitor, No. 34, p. 1.

events of 2010 –when Chinese and Japanese forces exchanged warnings and conducted regular patrols near the disputed islands– have transformed the regional political situation.

China claims exclusive rights of fishing, mining and exploration in its EEZ though it almost claims the rest of the South China Sea as its EEZ. However, other claimants (some of them are American allies) and the US support the notion of free navigation in the sea. These developments have ultimately exacerbated the conflict. If China accuses the US of supporting the disputants, then the US accuses it of violating the law of seas. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s statement that South China Sea is an area of core interest for the US has also intensified the maritime conflict. Along with apparent maneuvering of the US and its allies against China, President Obama’s “Rebalancing Strategy” has made the Chinese decision makers perceive this as American containment of China.

American Rebalancing (previously Pivot) is aimed to maintain the US military superiority in the Asia Pacific region. It includes the concentration of sixty percent of American submarines and surface ships in the region by the end of this decade.³⁷ In addition, the US is expected to deploy its troops, aircraft and warships in the allied countries on rotational bases. Rebalancing also includes deployment of more troops in Japan, South Korea and Australia and comprises a new plan for military bases. In addition to enhancing cooperation with traditional allies, American partnership with Vietnam and India, rotational visits of its aircraft carriers on the Vietnamese and Singaporean ports are also part of the rebalancing strategy.³⁸

At first sight, this situation appears dreadful and gloomy. Avery Goldstein argues that the US and China are not likely to go for war with each other in the near future. The South China Sea conflict is not likely to lead towards a full-fledged war in the region. For him, the only dispute which can cause a war between the great powers is Taiwan because the US has stated time and

³⁷ “US Rebalancing to Asia-Pacific: More Clamours, Less Actions,” People’s Daily Online, 18 June 2012, <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90777/7848942.html>>, (access date: 20 January 2014).

³⁸ Ibid.

again that it would not bear any unilateral change in the status quo while China claims it as its permanent territory. In other words, both states' credibility is attached to Taiwan. The CPC leadership is likely to use the Taiwan card to boost nationalism, and any sign of weakness on Taiwan may damage its credibility at home whose domestic stability is already under threat due to growing economic inequality and pervasive corruption.³⁹ The Chinese leaders, therefore, have relied on trade and soft power to normalize and enhance relations with other major powers, especially Russia and US.

Russia and China, once major allies, have remained distant since the border skirmishes in 1969. And this relation has taken a long time to become normal because there was a minor improvement in this relationship until the demise of the former USSR. President Putin has been the first Russian president to transform this relationship from disenchanted neighbors to allies. Beijing and Moscow have also forged alliances with their Central Asian neighbors after creation of the Shanghai Five in 1996.⁴⁰ President Hu and President Putin have further strengthened this relation by increasing mutual trade and trust. In 2012, mutual trade between both countries was worth \$88 billion.⁴¹ After the change in regime in China in 2013, the new leadership in China also has had cordial ties with Russia. Although their cultures and ideologies are different, they share an interest on an anti-hegemony agenda and Central Asia in spite of tolerated competition.

39 Avery Goldstein, "Power Transitions, Institutions, and China's Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4-5 (2007), pp. 639-82.

40 Shanghai Five was founded by five states including Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 1996. Later, it became Shanghai Cooperation Organization after the entry of Uzbekistan in 2001. It is aimed to enhance economic, military, security and cultural cooperation among the member states. For details, browse <<http://www.sectsco.org/EN123/>>.

41 "China-Russia Trade Up 11% to \$88 Bln in 2012," RIANOVOSTI, 1 January 2013, <<http://en.rian.ru/business/20130110/178687770.html>>, (access date: 2 May 2013).

Moscow has the potential in the energy sector and weapons industry, while Beijing needs both. After the signing of the “Russian-Chinese Friendship and Cooperation Treaty” in 2001, which has proven to be a platform for cooperation in the security sector, Moscow has provided the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) with sophisticated weaponry with confidence that the latter would not use them against it. “Mutual respect of state sovereignty, mutual non-interference, mutual non-aggression, peaceful coexistence and equality and mutual benefit” are the core principles of the treaty.⁴²

The principle of no-interference can be witnessed best in the foreign policies of Moscow and Beijing towards each other. Officials on both sides are reluctant to criticize each other’s domestic and foreign politics. They have rather issued several agreed statements on the need for a multipolar world order. Both have criticized the US for mismanagement of the global economic recession, opposed its space militarization and missile defense system in addition to accusing it of trying to promote liberal democracy in Russia and China.⁴³ It might be a reason for cooperation between both countries’ representatives in the UN on global issues such as Syria, the Middle Eastern Crisis and disarmament and space militarization. They have vetoed a US-proposed resolution in the UN against Syria three times.⁴⁴ Even the aftermaths of the Syrian deal make the position of both states clear, because both have shown interest in a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In Central Asia, the Russo-China alliance appears to be winning over the US in expanding influence. One example of this development is the growing strength of SCO. All regional actors except Turkmenistan are members of the organization. In addition to this, several states have shown their intention to join in. Since the start of the rising China phase, China has been

42 Weitz, “China’s Current ...”, pp. 3-5.

43 Ibid.

44 Rick Gladstone, “Friction at the U.N. as Russia and China Veto another Resolution on Syria Sanctions,” *The New York Times*, 19 July 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/middleeast/russia-and-china-veto-un-sanctions-against-syria.html?_r=0>, (access date: 29 March 2014).

investing its capital, financing energy exploration-related projects and constructing oil and gas pipelines to reduce its overwhelming reliance upon the Malacca Strait as a transportation route. The Chinese partnership with the Central Asian states is understood in terms of shared interests. In the case of this region, however, Russia also perceives China as a competitor. And perhaps this is a major reason behind the reluctance on the part of the Russian officials in providing China with their latest weapons despite the fact both countries have resolved their entire border issues in 2008.⁴⁵

The Sino-Russian partnership has been successful over the years in Central Asia though there remains a lower level of mistrust. However, recent trends in regional and global politics have shown that this partnership is likely to perpetuate. President Xi's first foreign visit to Russia shows that China considers Russia as one of the most important partner states.⁴⁶ This strategic partnership has, however, not damaged the US-China relation, rather the latter has emerged equivalent to the former on many grounds.⁴⁷

Since the Sino-US opening, especially after the Mao era, Chinese foreign policy towards the US has been focused on economy and industrial development. At the early stages, the US proved to be an industrial development model for China. The latter prioritized economic development and brought in domestic stability through the one nation course. President Clinton's comprehensive engagement with China proved China's first major achievement vis-à-vis the US after gaining a permanent seat in the UN. There were numerous incidents, such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, which could have disrupted the US-China relation. The Chinese leadership avoided a confrontationalist

45 Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross, "Contemporary Sino-Russian Security Partnership: Challenges and Options for the United States," <<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA535878>>, (access date: 19 October 2013).

46 Zhu Lei, Yang Qingchuan, "China, Russia Move Toward full-fledged Strategic Partnership," People's Daily Online, , 21 March 2013, <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/8177905.html>>, (access date: 29 March 2013).

47 Weitz, "China's Current ...", p. 5.

approach and focused more on integration into liberal institutions such as the World Trade Organization and succeeded to gain Most Favorite Nations status from the US in the early years of the 21st century.⁴⁸

Massive protests were witnessed in China after the bombing of the Chinese embassy in 1999 and the collision of an American reconnaissance aircraft with a Chinese fighter jet in 2001. Beijing's representative officially protested on both incidents. However, after the collision, China let the twenty four American crew members free to go back.⁴⁹ Later on, the 9/11 bombings and the following American war on terror further brought both countries closer. In addition to offering its condolences over the tragic incident, China voted in favor of a resolution condemning the anti-terror regimes in the UN. In 2006, China became the second largest trading partner of the US after surpassing Mexico.⁵⁰

The notion of rising China succeeded in attracting the US in 2005 when US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick suggested initiation of bilateral strategic dialogue with China. He called on the socialist republic to play its role as a great power. China's success in bringing North Korea to the negotiation table with other regional actors boosted the morale of the leadership in their dealing with diverse and complex diplomatic problems. However, the recent economic stalemate in the US and the continued growth of China has exacerbated pessimism in this relationship. US officials accuse China of its deliberate currency manipulation, economic malpractices, growing defense budget, human rights and climate and export policies.⁵¹

The US officials have been constantly accusing China of its growing defense budget and point out that the continued rise in the defense budget is inconsistent with the notion of a peaceful

48 June Teufel Dreyer, "US-China Relations: Engagement or Talking Past Each Other?," *Journal of Contemporary China* (November 2008), pp. 591-609.

49 *Ibid*, p. 593.

50 Kitano, "China's Foreign Strategy," p. 44.

51 Dreyer, "US-China Relations ...", pp. 594-598.

rise.⁵² However, in order to avoid a confrontation with the US, China has apparently relied on the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), which has been broadened under the Obama administration. During first S&ED, after the change in regime in China, Obama administration's focus has remained on the economic crisis, nuclear arms and global warming.⁵³

The global financial crunch and waning American power has strengthened the notion of a China-centric order. China has identified its core interests and seems committed to increasing its hard power. Although its core interests are expanding and new issues are becoming part of this elite category, the Chinese officials have only named safeguarding sovereignty, security and development of China as the country's core interests during a briefing to President Obama on his tour to the country.⁵⁴ Realists assume that China's threat to sanction US companies on arms sales to Taiwan in 2010 and its protests on Obama's visits to Tibet are indication of China's growing assertiveness.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding the growing hostilities in the South China Sea, leadership in both countries have reiterated their commitment to peaceful coexistence between China and the US in years to come.⁵⁶

Conclusion

China has become a potential superpower, and its foreign policy is a depiction of the nation's strength. China's foreign policy making patterns have been changing, especially after the rise of

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue," US Department of the Treasury, <[http://www.treasury.gov/initiatives /Pages/china.aspx](http://www.treasury.gov/initiatives/Pages/china.aspx)>, (access date: 29 March 2013).

⁵⁴ Swaine, "China's Assertive ...", p. 2.

⁵⁵ Suisheng Zhao, "China's New Foreign Policy Assertiveness.Motivations and Implications," ISPI, no 54 (May 2011), <<http://www.ispionline.it/it/documents/ISPI%20STUDIES%20CINA%20rivisto.html>>, (access date: 9 February 2013).

⁵⁶ Michael S. Chase, "Chinese Suspicion and US Intentions," Survival 53, no. 3 (27 May 2011), pp.133-150.

Xi Jinping to power who has already worked for increasing China's recognition as a global power with global reach.

The socialist republic is, to some extent, facing a dilemma. There are still many factions within the society that favor low profile foreign policy; however, the majority seems in favor of going global. The nationalists are even ahead in this debate, and they support confrontation with the neighboring countries on territorial disputes. But this growing nationalism in China might hinder in the country's pursuit of a peaceful rise and can make it a superpower without alliances, which is unprecedented in history.

Furthermore, China's rise is in essence peaceful. It has no territorial ambition; rather, it only wants to regain the lost glory after a century of humiliation. Having understood the Chinese sense of cultural superiority and exceptionalism, one might argue that China would not go for global policing in the future. However, as a nation-state, every generation of the CPC leadership would keep endeavoring to get more favorable terms for trade and investment in addition to reducing China's reliance over the western world. Conversely, China is likely to go for partnership with the developing nations to further strengthen bilateral and multilateral treaties as bonds of friendship in those parts of the world where huge amounts of minerals have not been tapped yet.

As far as China's defense budget is concerned, it has been spending a substantial amount of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) on its defense budget since 2002. However, the Defense White Paper 2013 names internal threats as a priority of the republic. Despite retaining the largest military force in the world, China has not intervened in any neighboring country since 1979, which assures the world of the China's intentions. Growth in the military budget can be better understood in comparison with the population, territory, nature of problems and rapid economic rise of China. The nation needs a strong navy to protect its ships from pirates and guard its vast waters. In addition, China is the only great power which has a small stockpile of nuclear weapons and believes in minimum credible nuclear deterrence and active defense. As a result, it does not seem unreasonable to argue that it remains unlikely that it would follow the path of rising Germany of the early 20th century; after all, China's modern day economic strength comes from the existing liberal economic order.