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CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY PERCEPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China (hereafter China) is often viewed as an 'enigmatic power' and an array of contradictions is perceived in its foreign policy postures and its security undertakings, both of which are believed to betray 'rational analysis'¹. Beijing articulates positive doctrines of international relations; nevertheless it has a strong negative image as an actor in

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1. A simmering debate persists among the analysts and scholars regarding China's strategic vision, the contending perception of the Chinese leadership, and the pace and depth of China's involvement in development process and its ramification in foreign policy and security decision making. Mao Zedong, the founding-father of the Chinese revolution, is often regarded as anti-foreign, more specifically anti-US who ignored the realities of postwar economic trends and political realities, and persistently insisted on self-reliance which reflected a single-minded focus on power politics. Mao, it is suggested, had more faith on social neutrality of science and technology than the technologically determining notion of socialism, who emphasized a revolutionary process, involving a strategy of permanent revolution and matching revolutionary tactics over various phases. Accordingly, he kept up revolutionary momentum and had launched movements after movements which would enable China to develop itself as a 'self-reliant' nation [see R.F. Miller and F. Feher (eds.), *Khrushchev and the Communist World* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 145; Steven Goldestein, "Sino-American Relations: Building a New Consensus", *Current*

the milieu of international politics and its status is also seen 'anomalous'². While China itself is at a relatively low stage of development, it has been an aid-giver to the fellow countries of the third world; yet it has also been a prominent aid-recipient. China projected itself as a 'bulwark of socialism', with an assertion of fraternal solidarity with the third world, being committed to promote a symmetrical order of international relations; yet the historical legacies of 'hegemonic' aspirations or at least some elements of power consciousness seem to guide the broad thrust of its contemporary foreign policy and security endeavour.

It is widely known that China is an exponent of 'panchsheel' or the doctrine of Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence³, but it has also been a weapons supplier to 'class war' exponents and potential revolutionaries as well as to contentious parties in conflict; at the same time it had been bent on demolishing the existing frame of international power structure and establishing itself as an independent global centre of power. It had been an opponent and also a supporter of *detente*. China is acclaimed both as a champion of world revolution and as an advocate of harmonious state-to-state relations, with a seeming commitment to advance diplomatic solidarity among the emerging countries of the third world; yet it is also sometimes condemned as an aggressor⁴. It is sometimes viewed as a loyal adherent and a

History, (September 1984, Vol. 83, No. 494, p. 242]. Despite the overwhelming commitment of the subsequent set of Chinese decision makers to modernization and open market economy, Beijing nevertheless emphasized its ultimate commitment to uphold socialistic ideals in running of the country and management of the state.

2. Robert North, *The Foreign Relations of China* (Belmont, Calif.: Dickenson, 1969), p. 15
3. See, for instance, "News Briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 38, No. 17 (24-30 April 1995), p. 21
4. Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui, for instance, calls the Chinese Communist regime as 'the most aggressive' in the Asia-Pacific region; for it poses 'a severe threat to Taiwan and heightens unease in countries around the South China Sea'. "Chinese regime most aggressive in Asia-Pacific arms race: Taiwan", *The Daily Star* (28 July 1995), p. 5.

steadfast friend, but at others it also found itself condemned as an 'ungrateful ally' and perhaps a potential enemy. Finally, Beijing stands for "complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons"; nevertheless, it has been continuing to develop and perfect its nuclear weaponry system, offering at the same breath a 'positive security assurance' undertaking "not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances" and "not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states"⁵.

Thus Beijing's international image has been of varied type, one of shifting nature. Such a constantly changing nature of its image as well as its ever shifting behavioural manifestations may perhaps be linked to periods of alliance and independence, active involvement and isolation, dogmatism and *realpolitik*, radicalism and moderation or de-radicalization, ideologically-guided foreign policy formulations and of de-ideologisation⁶. A mix of contentious territorial disputes over the Paracels and Spratly Islands or over maritime areas such as the Senkaku islands are also currently causing unease in the region about China's intentions⁷. It seems apparent that it would be very difficult to offer any generalization on China's external behaviour, for the country has experienced some unpredictable shifts in its diplomatic postures in every decade since its liberation.

Now that China has increasingly emerged as 'the central preoccupation' of the Asia-Pacific region, one needs to understand how its policy dilemmas manifest themselves and its security

5. "China's National Statement on Security Assurances (April 5, 1995)", *Beijing Review*, vol. 38, No. 17 (24-30 April 1995), p. 20.
6. Mizanur Rahman Khan, "Foreign Policy of China: Continuity and Change" (mimeo), p. 2
7. For such a view see, Paul Dibb, *Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia. Adelphi Paper* 295. (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1995), p. 28.

dynamics are transformed by its emergence as a major world power⁸. How can one explain the bewildering aspect of China's external linkages and its international behaviour? Is Beijing truly an enigma or an irrational actor or there is perhaps some rational explanation for the seeming contradictory manifestations of its external relations and foreign policy outlook? And finally, how did China conceive of foreign and security policies in theoretical terms and how did she seek to apply her conceptual ideas to concrete areas of decision making? Is China likely to upset the power equilibrium in Asia or the world in the coming century⁹?

The article does not specifically address these questions in any individual or composite format, but does offer perspectives on them utilizing an analytical format, as outlined below. It suggests that, despite a seeming discordance in China's international conduct and the concomitant anomalies, contradictions or negative bias of its foreign policy and security behaviour, there is a mixture of idealism and realism guiding Chinese foreign policy. In essence, this means that there are ideological predilections conditioning Chinese foreign policy initiatives, providing the thread of conceptual linkage and, at the same time, there are realistic concerns or concrete issue areas of decision making which tend to serve as the underpinnings, affecting matters of vital national interests and motivating the Chinese leadership in the formulation of their security policies. The foregoing argument may perhaps be better understood if the entire historical context of Chinese foreign policy decision making and its overall international behaviour are placed in their proper perspective.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 29. For an exposition of the earlier phases of the Chinese foreign policy preoccupation, see, Abul Kalam, *The Communist Struggle: Foreign Policy Interactions* (New Delhi and Dhaka: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, and The University Press Limited, 1987).

9. For such a view, see, Dibb, *op. cit.*, p. 70

A FRAMEWORK OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CRITERIA

An essential ingredient of the process of foreign policy making is the environment, both internal and external, within which policy operates, provides context and brings input. Part of this environment may be tangible and be termed 'objective', involving the physical factors such as territory, accessibility and material development; part may be intangible and be termed 'subjective' i.e. the factors which are influenced by the way in which historical trends are experienced and perceived by the decision makers. It is generally viewed that the objective factors remain constant, while the subjective factors are likely to change.

In China the objective factors include such tangible elements as territory and the requirements of national unification or survival, accessibility and material development, the preservation of national security and culture as well as that of cultural bonds and historical possession, the maintenance of its sphere of interest and influence. Irrespective of whether China is ruled by communists or non-communists such factors are hardly likely to change. The subjective factors, on the other hand, include such intangibles or trends as experienced and perceived by the decision makers. Post-liberation Chinese foreign policy is, in essence, defined by its ideological content i.e. by the canons of Marx and Lenin as well as Mao Zedong thoughts, for the Chinese foreign policy makers viewed environment through communist lenses involving interpretation or even re-interpretation of a highly articulated ideology¹⁰.

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10. Looking at Chinese foreign policy from the subjective point of view it would not be proper to suggest that there has been a smooth evolution of decision making in China's external affairs. Rather there existed a divergent approach to that of Mao Zedong or at least there was a visible political alternative to Mao's strategic vision, which has been put forward by a group of Chinese leaders led first by Liu Shaoqi, and then by Deng

While Chinese foreign policy represents a complex mixture of realism and idealism the above framework may help a better understanding of the apparently contradictory nature of its international behaviour. There has indeed been a rigidity in China's international outlook in the post-liberation years, much of which had been influenced by objective requirements of national interest and national power, although there has also been an element of perceptual preoccupation or even obsession with ideological purity in the sense that Marxism-Leninism has been seen as a revolutionary scientific thought or a basic crystallizing element which would be used to advance world proletarian revolution. Such an ideological orientation of foreign policy again was conditioned by requirements of domestic politics as well as external environment.

China is no doubt a relatively new comer in the complex milieu of post-war international politics. Hence, unlike any other established actor in the arena of international diplomacy China may appear unique, as its diplomatic conduct can hardly be expected to follow a predictable pattern or even rarely project a 'symbolic sign-post' of behaviour responding to the shifting dynamics of international relations. Nevertheless, China carries a

Xiaoping. Both, while shared Mao's policy vision regarding greatness of China, differed on strategy and tactics, having laid a great deal of faith in the deterministic conception of socialism. Both of them rejected, what they perceived, Mao's efforts to quarantine China through closed-door 'self-reliance'; both preferred accommodation and cooperation with leading external powers, communist as well as non-communist. Both also advocated planned growth for China's domestic development. Mao, in his turn, at least for tactical reasons, since the early 1970s certainly favoured strategic cooperation with the West, specifically with the US, to contain the threatening international environment around China posed by the Soviet actions and attitude; but he was not favourably disposed towards having economic ties with the US, which to his mind, would invite alien influences into China's polity and might perhaps hamper socialist development domestically.

vast historical legacy of a central actor as a civilization maker as well as a regional 'hegemon' of sorts. In contemporary times the sheer size of China in terms of population as well as of geography assigns her certain roles in regional and international politics; yet not until the last couple of decades China was an 'object' or target of international diplomacy and had seldom been a 'subject' or actor of international relations as an equal participant¹¹.

Chinese foreign policy is determined by a mixture of objective elements of nationalism as well as subjective considerations of ideology and traditional Chinese thought. Conceptually, nationalism has varied meanings, but in Chinese context it has three components: (i) national independence and unity; (ii) involvement of the people or the masses as well for national reconstruction; (iii) expansion of national power and influence¹². All these may be seen as the objective base of Chinese foreign policy initiatives. China's nationalism is also influenced by Beijing's traditional thought, national characteristics derived from historical past and known as 'Sinocentric thought', reinterpreted in the subjective context of the nation's politics. It has two essential ingredients: (i) cosmopolitanism; and (ii) the idea of utopia. The first is derived from the period of history when China had ruled not only its own territory but also had control, even if nominal, over the neighbouring lands and hence developed a feeling of self-confidence as a leading player of a community, if not a sense of superiority; the second contained the belief that international society would be peaceful and harmonious if a community of relations is built up under a 'virtuous' ruler. The notion of 'united front', developed by Mao, has its roots to this idea of utopia¹³.

11. Allen S. Whiting, "Foreign Policy of Communist China", in Roy C. Macridis (ed.), *Foreign Policy in World Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1967).

12. *Adelphi Paper*, No. 172, op. cit., pp. 1-2

13. *Ibid.*, p. 4

In this context one may mention a number of specific issues which feature prominently in China's foreign policy and security debate. The first issue of overriding concern relates to reunification, especially the issue of Taiwan, which has been in simmering dispute with the main-land over authority as well as ideology. The second concerns the role of the neighbouring countries, especially the erstwhile USSR, currently Russia, and Beijing's perception of threat originating from any other neighbouring country. The third relates to the ties with the West, the United States (US) in particular. The fourth involves China's own military forces and doctrines, both conventional and nuclear, and the equipment and technology needed to upgrade them. Last, but not the least, concerns China's modernization and development - whether to capitulate in the process to the West or adapt itself to the global trend consistent with the requirements of Chinese national interests.

IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

It seems appropriate to point out that there has been a major shift of emphasis in China's foreign policy and security debate on the ideological prism, as there had been a visible element of rigidity in Beijing's international outlook until 1976. Afterwards it has emerged as a forceful international player with a programmed and flexible policy, as she had extricated herself from her apparent obsession with ideological purity¹⁴.

As a revolutionary country China itself underwent at the domestic front a process of class struggle and 'people's war' strategy, 'united front' tactics with an urban-rural frame of struggle, in which revolutionary bases were set up first in the rural areas through a three-stage protracted struggle and eventually in the final offensive phase the cities were surrounded and captured.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 1

All these represent the components of a revolutionary war theory which it expounded during the anti-Japanese and anti-Koumintang struggle.

Later on, in the post-liberation period, Beijing proclaimed a strategy of permanent war i.e. of continuous or uninterrupted revolution for attaining the objectives of the liberation, a strategy which found its manifestation in the socialist education and re-education campaigns, in the 'Great Leap Forward' and in the much-heralded 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution'.

In the spheres of foreign policy and security postures, the new strategic outlook represented a blend of theory and lines of action for class struggle or revolution on a global scale. Such an articulation of China's strategic outlook may be seen as an extension of Mao's original strategic vision involving a rural-urban thesis i.e. of encircling the world's urban centres or the capitalist world by the world's rural areas or the countries of the developing world of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Consistent with the people's war strategy, Beijing had initiated in the international arena since the 1950s an active programme of people's diplomacy', a kind of non-official relations with different political groups and organizations abroad. The 'united front' tactics had been based on China's deep-rooted norm of *Yin* and *Yang* i.e., alliance and struggle, combining both in a united front, and eventually forming a complete whole¹⁵.

Even addressing the ideological concerns of the earlier decades, it would not be proper to suggest that China adhered to a 'devil theory of imperialism'¹⁶ merely for the sake of it. It seemed that Mao Zedong was not content with the overthrow of imperialism in China. As a father-figure of the Chinese revolution

15. Khan, *op. cit.*

16. See, for such a viewpoint, Whiting, *op. cit.*,

and a champion of the world revolution, he had an apparent commitment to advance communism throughout the world and did in fact uphold conflict as an universal dialectic process¹⁷, which he saw being omnipresent in human relations; he also perceived imperialism being engaged in a "death struggle to stave off the inevitable victory of the world revolution"¹⁸.

Remindful of foreign incursions into China during the last century, the gunboat diplomacy and the humiliations that followed, the concessions and the imposition of the extraterritorial law, the stationing of foreign troops in Chinese cities and the punitive expeditions, acts of sabotage and subversion by the imperialists and hegemonists--all cut Chinese pride deeply and had conditioning effects on Chinese view of the outside world. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) had little option but to remain on a "combat-ready alert"¹⁹.

Indeed, Beijing's assumption of conflict as an omnipresent process was reinforced by the actions and attitudes of the non-communist world, in particular the behaviour of the US in terms of its support for Chiang Kai-shek in the Chinese civil war, its promulgation of an economic embargo or blockade against the mainland government in Beijing and the obstruction of the latter's representation at the UN. All these exacerbated relations between the two countries and conditioned its attitude towards the Soviet-led communist bloc²⁰.

17. Back in 1937 Mao advanced the theory on the universality of contradiction' which was re-emphasized in the 1950s. Contradictions, he asserted, do exist in a socialist society: "To deny the existence of contradictions is to deny dialectics". *ibid.*, p. 326

18. *Ibid.*, p. 323

19. *Ibid.*, p. 323; also Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China: Arms Control and Disarmament", *Beijing Review*, vol. 38, No. 48 (27 November-3 December 1995), p. 13

20. *Ibid.*, p. 325

Mao Zedong had already declared (30 June 1949) that new China's foreign policy would 'lean to one side' i.e. the Soviet side. The resulting period of Sino-Soviet romance that followed the signing of the 30-year treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance had been directed against the US-led Western alliance system. This was the period of Sino-Soviet ideological solidarity, marked by expressions of monolithic unity, of communist bloc cohesion when Moscow came to render help in a major way in Beijing's war effort in Korea, offered technical assistance toward China's industrialization and the USSR emerged as a major trade partner of China.

However, the struggle in the international plane between the 'world revolution' and 'world imperialism', as Mao posited, merely represented a tactical objective of gaining either the maximum i.e. keep up communist pressure, wage war against imperialism and promote world revolution or preserving the minimum i.e. survival of the communist republic. The underlying principle would be "exploiting the contradiction among the imperialists in order to win over the majority, oppose the minority, and crush the enemies separately"²¹. It seems obvious that behind the shadow of an apparently offensive strategy for attaining the maximum through his ideological outburst Mao merely sought at least to ensure the preservation of the minimum, that is the survival of his own People's Republic. Thus the maximum goal of world conquest was the only the guarantee for achieving the minimum goal of communist survival in the Chinese mainland²².

Such an ideological parlance was also consistent with the notions of 'people's war' and the 'united front' and the 'theory of universality of contradiction' advanced during the time of the civil war against both the Koumintang and the foreign imperialist

21. *Ibid.*, p. 323

22. *Ibid.*, p. 323

powers. In the early years after liberation Beijing had upheld both the 'two camps' theory, 'leaning to one side' i.e. the side of world revolution or world socialism, declared by Mao on 1 July 1949 apparently showing its allegiance to a 'monolithic unity' of the socialist camp as against world capitalism²³. This itself was reflected in the signing of the 30-year Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Aid (14 February 1950). However, behind this mask of 'monolithic unity' the Chinese communist leadership remained principally Chinese. Being in almost total diplomatic isolation in the early 1950s and the target of American strategic offensives during the period the Chinese had little option but to side with the USSR which was also treated by the West as an international pariah of sort as much as China itself. It was only natural that a proliferation of Sino-Soviet agreements would regulate Moscow's trade, economic assistance, technical support, cultural exchange etc. with Beijing. Most importantly, Moscow also came to render help in Beijing's war effort in Korea.

However, the new China could hardly ignore the historical trend of Chinese foreign policy objective criteria of international environment within which Chinese diplomacy had to operate. Hence it was inevitable that China would change the foregoing tactical principle of its foreign policy whenever national interests so demanded.

OBJECTIVE TRENDS IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES

Indeed, 'the lean to one side' doctrine, excluding assistance from or alliance with, non-communist countries, was antithetical to traditional Chinese policies of playing off one country against another ('barbarians against barbarians') and can only be explai-

23. *Ibid.*, p. 325

ned in terms of communist component of Chinese foreign policy. This trend stemming from ideological allegiance to communism continued only until the death and demise of Stalin in 1953.

It may be mentioned that except for the Korean war episode China's anti-Americanism remained largely a paper exercise i.e. reflecting essentially an outburst of political propaganda, and the Chinese leadership remained hard-headed politicians; while anti-American campaign was carried on the Chinese policy makers remained keen to open diplomatic links with all, including the US, subject to one condition i.e. acceptance of 'one China' principle and withdrawal of diplomatic recognition extended to Taiwan. In the early 1950s as China was encircled by a 'capitalist ring' under the US-sponsored anti-communist global 'containment' network, Beijing changed its ideological stance and modified its 'lean to one side' posture, decided to build bridges in Asia and Africa. It then became a loyal adherent or rather emerged as one of the sponsors of the "panchsheel", apparently committed to the internationally acclaimed five principles of peaceful co-existence and even agreed to have dialogue with the US. The result was the *modus vivendi* worked out at Geneva maintaining the *status quo* in Korea and the Indochinese peninsula.

The entire conceptual context of the "Panchsheel" and its implications in Chinese foreign policy manifestations perhaps needs to be exposed a little more. The doctrine was first enunciated in the Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibet in April 1954. Later the underlying principles of the doctrine came to be adopted as the common diplomatic parlance in state-to-state relations among the developing countries. In the Bandung conference of April 1955 China first made use of its notion of 'people's diplomacy' or non-official relations with different groups and organizations and building up a 'united front'; such a notional interpretation enabled China to make real diplomatic breakthrough in its effort to bring

the Afro-Asian nations to a common platform based on anti-colonialism.

China thus spearheaded the most profound 'Bandung spirit', which propagated mutual good will, consolidation of peace, unity of Afro-Asian nations and anti-colonialism. The underlying goal of Chinese foreign policy in terms of its national interests was to break-out of isolationism and create a 'united front' with the Afro-Asian nations against the US-led imperialism. It was no mere coincidence that the years 1954-1958 witnessed Beijing's establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and 13 more non-communist countries, including Great Britain. An extensive exchange of visits had also been made during the period 1954-59 between the Chinese and the Afro-Asian leaders. China thus began to rebuild her image and assume her traditional leadership role.

Sino-Soviet Schism : Reappraisal of Ideology in the 1960s

By mid-1950s Sino-Soviet dispute surfaced itself over the ideological argument centering on Nikita Khrushchev's policies of 'de-Stalinisation' and Moscow's newly articulated doctrine of 'peaceful co-existence' with the capitalist states (1956). De-Stalinisation itself was to demonstrate the validity of Mao's theory of 'universality of contradiction', proclaimed back in 1937; but the doctrine of 'peaceful co-existence' indicated how hollow was Moscow's commitment to socialist solidarity with Beijing, as the former with its 'revisionist' stance was bent to work out rapprochement with the West while China itself had remained internationally isolated.

The Sino-Soviet differences over the Albanian issue, Sino-Indian border conflict, and the growing East-West detente as evidenced in the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963) pushed Moscow-Beijing relations to a point of no return. Hence-

forth Beijing began to voice complaints against Moscow's acquisition of about 500,000 square miles of Chinese borderlands through the 'unequal treaties' of the Czars. It also began to project the USSR as an 'enemy'.

During the period China also had to confront an increasing isolation as a result of isolation caused by the Vietnam war being fought by the US, which was committed to demonstrate its determination to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Thus China saw itself faced by the two hostile superpowers on two sides of its territory.

Under the circumstances Beijing had little option but to combat the machination of both the superpowers. In 1964 China had exploded its first atomic bomb, signalling that it had attained the stature of an 'independent power'. Beijing then propounded a new strategic theory. The new theory held that there were two camps led by the two superpowers and that there were two 'intermediate zones' too: the first consisted of the developing world and the second included Western Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Obviously, China sought by diplomatic visits as well as by economic aid to rally the support of the developing countries of the world against the dominance of the superpowers.

The theory had been broadened by Lin Biao in 1965 as a strategic tool in line with Mao's classic concept of 'people's war' doctrine, expounded during the anti-Japanese and anti-Kuomintang struggle in China. It represented a blend of theory and line of action for permanent world revolution, an extension of Mao's original strategic vision i.e. rural-urban thesis, of encircling the world's urban centres or the capitalist societies by the world's rural areas or the countries of the developing world of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Alongside this theoretical articulation and as part of its proclaimed strategy of permanent revolution or of continuous

class struggle under socialism on a global scale China also began the much heralded Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, while continuing its effort to build up its nuclear arsenal. Both owed their origin to Beijing's perceived concern for security emanating from within and without against a combination of domestic and external forces of imperialism and revisionism.

During the period the US increasingly escalated its war in Vietnam, with an intensified air attack to the north, areas nearer to the Chinese border. Meanwhile, the USSR also had enunciated the doctrine of 'limited sovereignty' for the socialist countries, with an assertion of its right of interference in the internal affairs of those countries. Such an assertion came to focus in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and emerged more sinister than ever before when Moscow projected an Asian security system, which, as seen in Beijing, was designed to 'encircle' China. The growing Soviet influence in Hanoi, together with Sino-Soviet border clash of 1969 brought home to Beijing the viciousness of Moscow's hegemonic intentions.

Meanwhile, there were few other events and developments which had significant ramifications for China. These include the communist Tet Offensive in South Vietnam (1968), the US peace offer and the de-escalation of its involvement in Vietnam, together with the proclamation of the Nixon Doctrine (1969), which sought to change American global role from world 'policemanship' to one of 'partnership'.

All these interlocking and shifting world trends and domestic events radically changed the Chinese threat perception *vis-a-vis* the superpowers. While the USSR was seen as the global hegemonic power, the US was perceived as the 'declining' power. Mao's strategic formulation of using contradictions among the enemies to one's own advantage then formed the ideological basis of Chinese policy. The Sino-American secret talks and communi-

cations for about two years finally paved the way for Kissinger-Nixon's historic trips to China and the signing of the celebrated Shanghai communique of February 1972. The communique itself contained a Sino-American rapprochement and strategic consensus opposed to perceived Soviet 'hegemony', but more importantly, the Sino-American understanding ended China's international isolation and enabled her to reclaim her global power status.

Theoretical Articulations of the 1970s

The mid-1970s witnessed further theoretical articulation of China's foreign policy. The 'intermediate zone' concept was extended in February 1974 to embrace a 'three world theory': the superpowers formed the 'first world'; Canada, Japan, Europe, Australia and New Zealand were to form the 'second world'; the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, with the exception of Japan, belonged to the 'third world'. Officially enunciated by Deng Xiaoping in the United Nations General Assembly's sixth special session China's new strategic doctrine seems to have totally discarded the old two camps theory as dated and had emphasized the need to form a 'united front' of the second and third worlds based on their common interests to confront hegemonism of both the superpowers. In support of such a strategic doctrine, henceforward China emphasized the tactics of both 'alliance' and 'struggle', being in tactical alliance with Washington while confronting Moscow in positional struggle for advantage--thus seeking benefits both for itself as well as for the third world.

Consistent with the appearance of such a foreign policy approach, Sino-American relations were back on rail following a strategic re-assessment on the part of the US of its China policy. As China itself was bent on economic modernization, it sought not only to exact concessions from Washington on three big T's that

strained their mutual relations--Taiwan, Textile, Technology, --but both the erstwhile protagonists appeared to be bent on strengthening the three main pillars on which their relationship rested: their commercial ties, defence relationship and building up of a dense network of cultural-scientific relationship which were of immense benefit to China.

Meanwhile, China also repaired its relations with Japan, restoring full-fledged diplomatic relationship and signing the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which contained an 'anti-hegemony' clause (1979). Such a policy of building a strategic consensus enabled Beijing both to distance itself from hegemonic behaviour of the superpowers and project itself as an independent centre of power in the global strategic triangle, with an enhanced image in the third world.

Mixture of Idealism and Realism in the 1980s

The early 1980s saw the return of a more independent posture in China's foreign policy behaviour, with a theoretical adherence to, and re-assertion of, the three world theory, formally endorsed by the 12th Party Congress (1982). However, China's return to a more neutral and independent stance towards the superpowers was preceded by new anti-communist propaganda drive in Washington under the Republican Administration and the latter's preference for an increased arms sale to Taiwan. Beijing's new independent policy stance manifested itself in the modernization of the military, more specifically in the development of missile technology and the delivery systems and an acquisition of an increasing number of sophisticated system of weaponry into its arsenals²⁴.

24. China, for instance, tested intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in May 1980, has allocated an increased amount of resources to the development of space technology and is also known to be working on the development of the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. For background of Chinese nuclear policy see, Harry Gelber, "Nuclear Weapon and Chinese Policy", *Adelphi Paper*, No. 99 (1973).

Beijing also resumed negotiations with the Soviets in 1982, suspended after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. However, Sino-Soviet reconciliation gained momentum only after Mikhail Gorbachev inducted 'new thinking' in Soviet internal-external policies.

Since the mid-1980s Beijing also advanced the new idealistic concept of a 'socialist commodity economy', repudiating, in essence, the Marxist-Leninist conception of capitalism as inherently doomed. Domestically, in terms of operational management, it entailed a blend of central planning and market forces, and in international relations it emphasized a 'new era' based on growing 'interdependence' and the system of 'one world market', putting more focus on economic cooperation with Japan and the West. China's domestic and external policies were thus once again intertwined, marked by the principle of 'co-existence' between socialism and capitalism, both at home and abroad. Thus a 'peace paradigm' began to emerge in China's strategic posture and international outlook based on superpower detente, disarmament and Panchsheel.

In realistic terms, the new peace image was intended to bring about rich dividends, reducing the need for heavy defence expenditure, modernizing the various sectors of the economy through foreign investment and technology. The new foreign policy posture thus would not only was intended to ensure China's modernization at a rapid pace and attain progress in negotiations over national reunification, but also help create a non-threatening environment around China and enhance its international role and great power status.

China's foreign policy underwent major transformation during the internal upheavals of May-June 1989 following the pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square. During the period Beijing, provoked by alleged Western interference in the

internal affairs of China, re-emphasized that China would not forsake socialism and for that matter the leading role of the communist party. While the Chinese leadership have had differing notions about Gorbachev reforms²⁵, Beijing regarded them as Soviet internal affairs and saw Sino-Soviet relationship as 'the major development since the normalization' of their mutual relations. Having incurred major losses as a result of Western and Japanese sanctions²⁶, Beijing then gave renewed importance toward better relations with the neighbouring as well as third world countries for bolstering up its political image as well as gaining economic advantage.

Post-Cold War Trends

China's foreign policy imperatives in the post-Cold War era includes: i) the continuing emphasis on economic cooperation in the security calculations of the major powers, including the US; ii) the downgrading of ideology and an increasing recognition of the virtues of pragmatic approaches to foreign policy issues; and iii) a renewed emphasis on "peaceful reunification of the motherland". In China the operating principle has turned from class struggle and self-reliance to the famous saying of Deng Xiaoping: "It does not matter if the cat is white or black as long as it catches mice. Use every means to raise production"²⁷.

25. China's early reaction to the Soviet reform was one of concern and even viewed them in Maoist terms as 'revisionist', but Sino-Soviet normalization remained unhampered, with top-level exchange of visits and wide-ranging cooperative accords encompassing sensitive areas such as military deployment to aid, trade and space research. Later indeed the Gorbachev reforms were viewed as of 'socialist orientation'.
26. The US-led Western alliance, including Japan, strongly condemned the violent repression of the pro-democracy demonstration at the Tiananmen Square and imposed harsh economic sanctions. The US even suspended all sorts of military cooperation with China.
27. Quoted in Zagoria, 1991. p. 5, *op. cit.* in Nilufar Chowdhury, "Dynamics as Dilemmas of Reform in Deng's China", *BIISS Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1987.

There is an overriding economic consciousness guiding contemporary Chinese security and foreign policies. It is perceived that the world values China because,

on the one hand it is a big country with a population of 1.2 billion, and because it has the largest booming market in the world. On the other hand, China's economy is growing at an annual rate in excess of 9 per cent, a rare occurrence in history of world economic development²⁸.

Such an average annual growth rate over the next 15 years is projected to rank China among the economic powers of the world²⁹.

It is thus explained that China's important position as an economic power, and its influence on world trade determine the international significance of Chinese economic policy. It is also suggested that most

of the world's nations and regions are adjusting their China policies in order to obtain niches in China's evolving markets. The challenge lying ahead of China is also a challenge facing the whole world because the success or failure of China in formulating its development strategy will have an influence on other nations³⁰.

Similarly, China sees its basic security policy goals as consolidation of national defence, resisting foreign aggression, defending nation's sovereignty over its land, sea and air as well as its maritime rights and interests, and safeguard national unity and security. In the realm of military strategy, while adhering to a policy of positive defence and to the idea of people's war, China sees its national defence work in China as being subordinate to and in service of the nation's overall economic construction, upholding

28. Hang Zeyu, "Opportunity and Challenge", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1-7 January 1996)

29. Xuetong, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2

30. Zeyu, *op. cit.*, p. 4

the principles of "combining peacetime with wartime" and "integrating the army with the people." To attain such strategic ends, Beijing candidly views that it "needs a peaceful environment in order to be able to devote itself completely to its socialist modernization programme"³¹.

Moreover, consistent with the post-Cold War global trend, China also sought to develop an effective strategy to safeguard its economic security so as to broaden its channels to absorb more advanced foreign technologies in order to accelerate its technological development, for both military and civilian use³².

As is explained in negative terms: China does not seek world or regional hegemony, nor does it station any troops or set up any bases in any foreign country. Its "national defence construction is

31. Information Bulletin, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11

32. Xueting, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Towards the end of the 1970s, China began a planned and a comprehensive transfer of defence technologies to civilian use. During the course of this transfer, China has effected a major readjustment in military products research and production capacity, converting two thirds to serving economic construction. Over the last dozen year, more than 2,500 defence technologies have been released for civilian use, greatly promoting technological progress and development in relevant fields.

The defence industry has cooperated extensively with foreign partners in developing products for civilian use. By 1994, over 300 such joint ventures had been established in China. The transfer of military technology to civilian use has thus contributed to national economic construction in China and moreover provided various countries in the world with successful experience for such conversion in peacetime.

With regard to the transfer of military equipment and related technology, while China is concerned about the adverse effects on world security and regional stability arising from excessive accumulation of weaponry, it respects the right of every country to self-defence (be it Pakistan or Iran) aimed at safeguarding its own security in accordance with the relevant principles contained in the UN Charter (see, *Information Bulletin, op. cit.*, p. 15-19)

not directed against any country, and thus does not pose a threat to any country"³³.

Thus the rapid strides towards economic development and an adoption of an open market approach in recent years by a 'socialist' country such as China, now known to be more open than the most liberal democracies such as the U.S. and Japan, speak of high sense of dynamism and pragmatism of the Chinese leadership. Nevertheless, China remains vigilant as ever in matters of military security. Reports published in May 1995 suggest that China has test fired an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and will probably continue to test launch them to complete development of new type of ICBM, believed to be a Dong Feng (East Wind) 31, using solid fuel as propellant and a mobile launcher, the first such Chinese ICBM³⁴.

The security concern in Beijing seems to be in this case is that it has to be treated as an equal major power actor in the international system - "as a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations", and not to be pushed around by others. For the perception in Beijing is that "the world is still amid complex and profound change and to preserve and promote peace is still an arduous task" and the "norms of international relations" are yet to be firmly established. Firm in its opposition to what is perceived as 'international oligarchies' indulging in power politics or 'arms twisting', Beijing is inclined to believe that the world was moving towards multipolarity and that developing countries in the third world should stand together so that they do not get bullied³⁵. Hence while continuing with experiments of nuclear weapon devices, China insistently "calls for the early

33. Information Office, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

34. *The Daily Star* (1st and 3rd June 1995), p. 5

35. S. Viswam, "President's China Visit - A 'Landmark' Development", *India Perspectives*, Vol. V, No.2 (August 1992), p. 9

conclusion of an international convention on no-first-use of nuclear weapons as well as an international legal instrument on assuring the non-nuclear weapon states and nuclear-weapon-free zones against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons"³⁶.

As to the issue of reunification, there are wide perceptual differences across the Taiwan Strait, dividing the contending sides. Taiwan sees itself as "a world-class economic power", perhaps capable of asserting and preserving its democracy as well as independence; it is also believed that China's bellicose nationalism vis-a-vis Taiwan "has become the safest policy option for the insecure new generation of leaders around President Jiang Zemin."³⁷ China continues to view Taiwan as "an inalienable part of the Chinese territory, and opposes any country selling weapons, especially high-tech and sophisticated ones, to Taiwan. It views peaceful reunification of China as the "shared aspiration of the entire Chinese people, and suggests the "one country, two systems" formula as the most practical and feasible way toward reunification. It repeatedly warned the Taiwanese leader Lee Teng-hui, who is blamed for carrying out separatist activities aimed at creating "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan--violating seriously the "one China" principle, thus undermining the basis for cross-Straits relations, and creating tension and retrogression between the two sides--which is perceived as a very dangerous course"³⁸.

It is, therefore, emphasized that whether China can hold on to its security strategy objective of peaceful reunification will mainly

36. "China's National Statement on Security Assurances", *op. cit.*, p. 20; "News Briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 38, No. 17 (24-30 April 1995), p. 21

37. Andrew Higgins, "China threat mounts against Taiwan", *The Guardian Weekly* (4 February 1996), p. 3

38. "News Briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 38, No. 48 (27 November-3 December 1995), p. 9

hinge upon the policies to be pursued by the Taiwan authorities, and some other countries, especially the US attitudes and its arms sales to Taiwan. If the US is to equip the Taiwanese army with theatre missile and defence-system (MADS), the military balance between the two sides of the Straits would be severely undermined, which would mean a tremendous political support to the advocates of Taiwan independence³⁹.

Yet, perception is also strong that if a war breaks out across the Taiwan Straits, it would bring about disastrous damages to people on two sides of the Straits, both in material wealth and human lives⁴⁰. However, its priority of reunification is of such critical importance that, while Beijing's declared policy is one of "Chinese not to fight against Chinese", it has also absolutely refused to commit itself to non-use of force, a policy directed against external interferences and the separatist activities in Taiwan⁴¹.

Therefore, as is suggested, for years China adopted a "carrot-and-stick strategy" on Taiwan, but recently it has appeared to be all stick and no carrot. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily indicate China's intention to escalate conflicts across the Taiwan Strait, making it a "Strait of Uncertainty"⁴². Beijing staged three rounds of provocative "missile-launching training" from March 8 to 25 in the East and South China Seas that almost rattled the Pacific region⁴³. The signal was to reiterate Beijing's resolve to invade Taiwan if reunification becomes impossible otherwise.

39. Yan Xuetong, "Orientation of China's Security Strategy", *Contemporary International Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (February 1996), pp. 3-4

40. *Ibid.*, p. 3

41. *Ibid.*

42. Julian Baum and Matt Forney, "Strait of Uncertainty: Taiwan braves increased pressure from China", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (8 February 1996), pp. 19-20

43. "India signals displeasure over Chinese missile tests off Taiwan", *The Daily Star* (5 April 1996), p. 5

There was also warnings to the US to stay out of China's "internal" dispute with Taiwan⁴⁴.

Beijing had built up its muscle-flexing and pressure-building tactics or what the Taiwanese President Lee sees as "intimidation tactics", having moved from rhetoric to rocket attacks to tame Taiwan and painted a picture of an imminent conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Most foreign analysts, however, have played down these scary scenarios, maintaining that the military and political consequences for China would be horrendous, though most analysts readily agreed that Beijing will continue to build up its psychological warfare so as to influence the Taiwanese public opinion on the issue of reunification⁴⁵. Beijing's core objective seems to be to halt Taiwan's drift towards independence under President Lee Teng-hui, while repeating China's customary refusal to rule out the use of force⁴⁶. Indeed, Li Peng said that the current batch of Taiwan's leaders, who have emerged as no more than 'regional leaders', have no right to change the longstanding national policy on unification on either side of the Taiwan Straits, a policy consistently upheld by both the communist and non-communist leadership⁴⁷.

However, the Taiwanese leader Lee Teng-hui viewed that the two sides are not in a "time of killing each other", though he admitted that by using intimidation tactics China can make Taiwan's Republic feel insecure, destabilise financial markets, send signals to international shipping agencies about the risks of doing business with Taiwan, while telling its Western supporters, especi-

44. Matt Forney, "China: Louder Than Words", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (14 March 1996), pp. 14-15

45. China's strategy traditionally seems to rely heavily on psychological warfare.

46. Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 3

47. Baum and Forney, *op. cit.*, p. 21

ally the US to keep off. Affirming Taipei's commitment to reunification in a democratic framework, he called on China to abandon its rigid ideology and establish a new framework for cross-Strait relations and peaceful reunification⁴⁸.

Beijing's post-Cold War security strategy pays much attention to establishing friendly and good-neighbourly relations with surrounding countries, as China sees itself as an Asia-Pacific country and hence is especially concerned with the security, stability, peace and development in this region. It has underlined three basic objectives for the region's security: maintenance of stability and prosperity in China, safeguarding long-term peace and stability in the surrounding environment, and initiating dialogues and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and equality⁴⁹. Accordingly, Beijing has modified its earlier strategy of "luring the enemy in deep" and formulated its present strategy of positive defence, adhering to the principle of self-defence. Therefore, while safeguarding the country's territorial integrity has always been one of China's objectives for national security, it is also committed to the principle of non-first-use of force in settling boundary differences. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, China has respectively reached boundary-related agreements of various types with a number of countries, namely, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgystan, India, Laos, and Vietnam⁵⁰. It has also placed a priority on developing bilateral security cooperation with its neighbouring countries, at the same time pursuing a more active and energetic policy of multilateral security cooperation, with mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), committing itself to a cooperative security strategy⁵¹.

48. See V.G. Kulkarni and Julian Baum, "Taiwan: Biting the Ballot", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (14 March 1996), pp. 18-21

49. Information Office, *op. cit.*, p. 24

50. Xuetong, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, 7

51. *Ibid.* pp. 7-8

However, Chinese policy of good-neighbourliness has been constrained by Beijing's claims to the Paracels and the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. While China has agreed to resolve the South China Sea dispute with the neighbouring ASEAN countries in accordance with the Law of the Sea, it remains torn between two contentious positions: "continental claims" to the waters off their mainland coast and differently measured "archipelagic claims" jutting from islands that they claim to be theirs⁵².

A REAPPRAISAL OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY THINKING

From the ideological point of view, China has been and remains, a 'socialist' country. Hence to the Chinese leadership communism invariably continues to be a highly articulated ideology which they consciously adhere to and necessarily serve as a basis of China's international behaviour. In realistic terms socialism provides the only ideological basis, even though somewhat a thin thread, binding China as a nation-state.

Nevertheless, traditionally there has been a strong motivation arising from power realism and pursuit of national interests, and from the beginning China's foreign policy posture had been constrained by the bipolar structure of the postwar international system. Therefore China had to 'lean' one side or the other in a balance-of-power diplomacy with a meticulous distinction made between 'principal contradiction' (principal enemy) and 'secondary contradiction' (secondary enemy). However, the determinants of Chinese foreign policy withstood the vicissitudes of time. Beijing's principal enemy from 1930s to 1945 was Japan, the US from 1949 to the late 1960s, and the USSR from the early 1970s to the early 1980s.

52. Nayan Chandra, "Security: Long Shadow, Southeast Asians have China on their mind", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (28 December 1995 and 4 January 1996), pp. 17-18

Indeed, from the very beginning both ideology and national interests have served as China's foreign policy and security determinants. The Chinese foreign policy postures have always tended to be rationalized in ideological terms. The cycles of cooperation-confrontation, involvement and isolation, strategic-tactical shifts have always found their ideological backup. Since the mid-1980s the edge of ideology in foreign policy decision making has been somewhat blurred.

Yet it seems proper to suggest that China consistently based its foreign policy posture in solidarity with the world's revolutionary forces, forging unity of the Afro-Asian and Latin American peoples with those of the socialist world against hegemonic and imperialist forces. The 'united front' tactics it had used went through a process of transition in a re-definition of strategic matrix as outlined in the postulate of the two 'intermediate zones', which in the 1960s was intended to unite the world's 'rural areas' against the world's 'cities'. The 'united front' tactics in the 1970s went through subtle transformation, having manifested itself in the much heralded 'three world theory', and later underwent further modification, bringing a combination of forces of the second and third worlds, even the US of the first world, into a tentative grouping pitted against perceived 'Soviet hegemonism'.

Similarly, Beijing's conception of conflict and war has undergone major transformation. Mao as a Marxist had laid firm faith on the notion of 'inevitability of war' between imperialism and socialism, and hence unequivocally repudiated Khrushchev's much publicized doctrine of peaceful co-existence between the two competitive systems as inevitable. Deng Xiaoping took a different theoretical line from Mao in the broad spectrum of strategy as on the notion of war. The former seems inclined to the view that war can not only be avoided but it should be avoided. Abandoning the traditional Chinese revolutionary concepts of 'people's war' in its various manifestations, the Chinese leadership

seemed to view that a major nuclear war is unlikely, that for quick realization of specific goals the notion of 'limited war' seem feasible, and that China needs to catch up and achieve decisive results and acquire high military technology and attain military modernization. This represented what may be viewed as political realism on the part of the Chinese leadership.

In the last few years, however, the international system has been undergoing an unprecedented change. The wind of change precipitated by systemic reforms in the erstwhile USSR and Eastern Europe resulted in the ending of the Cold War and general cooperation between the East and the West. As a corollary to these changes there has been a relative diminution of importance of strategic factors in international relations and concomitant re-evaluation of economic strength as component of national power.

Despite the Western anger over violent tactics used by the Chinese leadership against the pro-democracy demonstrators at the Tiananmen Square, the calculus of the realistic drive of market forces seem to work in China's favour. Notwithstanding the political sensitivities in Beijing's relations with the Western powers, the focus of their relations will remain on economics, aid, trade, technology and investment. The Western reaction to the Tiananmen Square events is now a matter of the past: China has got her the most-favoured-nation status back in the US, the European Union, and Japan. Similar changes have occurred in its credit relations with them as well as with the West-dominated international financial institutions, companies and corporations.

Given the global context of the complex pre-requisites of the transition from the capitalist to the socialist system and then passing through 'socialist modernization' to 'international socialist market economy', China's global strategic outlook was bound to involve "a very long and tortuous process, full of complicated

struggles, and it is inevitable that in the process there will be different alignments of the world's political forces in the different periods". Currently, having dedicated "itself to the lofty cause of peace and development", it is difficult to readily identify any country as China's 'principal enemy', for Beijing has expressed its readiness to work with all countries in making unremitting efforts to usher "in a new world of peace, stability, prosperity and happiness into the 21st century"⁵³.

One may, however, suggest that a potential rivalry looms large between China and Japan for spheres of interest and influence in the Asia-Pacific region. With Hongkong and Macao returning to the mainland in 1997 and 1999 respectively and a speedily growing business relationship between the mainland and Taiwan, China already perceives 'South China economic sphere' a reality, which has become "the hot area with the world's fastest economic growth". Rich in natural resources and situated in the middle of the western coast of the Pacific and bestriding Northeast and Southeast Asia, it joins the Pacific and the Atlantic with the railways network system linking itself with distant ports like Rotterdam in Europe. It also has a multi-level scientific and technological force working on various sectors of industry, swiftly catching up with the newly developing economies, making it attractive enough for forging cooperation. Thus China can confidently look toward an 'extended influence' competing in economic strength with Japan which would be 'expanding further'⁵⁴.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

China's international posture in the entire post-liberation period had swung back and forth between international isolation-

53. "News Briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry", *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22

54. Ji Chongwei, "Enhance the Economic Cooperation between China and the Asia-Pacific Economies", *Asia-Pacific Studies* (Beijing: Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1992), pp. 5-6

nism and integration. However, its basic preoccupation had always been its national development (despite some internal debates and differences on appropriate strategy and tactics) and its somewhat obsession of self-preservation i.e. defence of its socio-economic fabric against what it perceived alien influences. In the tearing down of 'Democracy Wall' of 1979, in the drive against 'spiritual pollution' of 1983, in the 'anti-bourgeois liberalization' campaign, and in the violent suppression of the 'pro-democracy' campaign of May-June 1989, Beijing not only sought to contain domestic turmoil, but also to deter or stamp out unsettling (alien or subversive) influences so that a sustained and the record high level growth of the economy can be ensured.

A realistic projection of China's future foreign policy course or direction of its international behaviour can hardly be made on the basis of its historical manifestation of its foreign policy at a time when "transition to the post-Deng era might begin at any moment"⁵⁵. Everything indeed turns on the future state of China itself. For over a decade and a half Deng provided the thread of legitimacy holding China together. Now the question arises whether China would continue on its present course of reforms; follow a liberalized system of macro-economic management, remain calm and promote stability in the 'new era' after Deng's departure and demise; or whether it will be led to a pathway to Soviet-type break-up or collapse. The recent history of China is replete with examples of a swing between postures of radicalism and moderation, violence and harmony. The question pertains to China's international outlook whether Beijing will continue its onward-looking development strategy or revert back to a restricted relationship with the outside world. There are even suggestions that there is a 'high likelihood' of China becoming

55. Nigel Holloway, "China: For Whom the Bell Tolls", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (2 February 1995), p. 15

more assertive in the region, leading to clashes with neighbours such as Vietnam, Taiwan and even with the U.S.⁵⁶.

Despite the tumultuous events of 1989 and sharp Western response to Beijing's suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square, China has currently kept open its channels of communication with the outside world, re-committed itself to the course of development, reforms and modernization. It remains eager to attract foreign capital, technology and know-how, seeking to maintain opportunities for trade and investment. Given its commitment to modernization and open market, China is likely to continue the present effort to widen its contacts with the outside world. It has developed a special interest to broaden its contacts with the neighbouring regions of South, East and Southeast Asia, despite the existence of contentious issues of varied nature with many countries of these regions. This should provide as an example for other countries in the third world.

In this sense China has so far acted with responsibility as a sanguine regional leader and stabilizer, whether it involves the volatility of the Korean contention or the sensitivities involved in its Indochinese relations. Relations with neighbouring non-communist Russia has been steadily improving and has been much better than what was with communist USSR to the extent that Moscow now seems willing to provide an alternative or 'emergency backup system' until the West feel inclined to swing back to the linkage that bound China to the international system during the decade and a half of modernization. Relations with neighbouring India and even with Vietnam have been developing with such an amount of rapidity which seems to surprise analysts.

Despite occasional diplomatic outburst, political rumbling or even military gaming, Beijing is most likely to look for peaceful

56. Pentagon Study quoted in Holloway, *op. cit.*, p. 15

means for reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. Indeed, "peaceful reunification of the Motherland" remains a major strategic objective, for China is quite acutely aware that "the cost of reunification by peaceful means will be lower than that by unpeaceful means"⁵⁷.

So long as economic construction remains the Beijing's central task, the fundamental objective of its security strategy will continue to be safeguarding a peaceful security environment for its economic construction. Whether China will be able to attain the objective is fundamentally determined by its ability to avoid military conflicts; for any recrudescence of violence, within or outside China, will seriously damage its modernization process. With the ultimate aim of maintaining a favourable security environment for its economic construction, China will naturally place prevention of military conflicts at the top of its security objectives.

However, Beijing candidly views that since the ending of the Cold War, international relations has become somewhat complicated, and the distinctions between friends and foes have become somewhat blurred⁵⁸. While the strategic links that bound China with the West *vis-a-vis* Moscow have currently lost their relevance, yet Beijing is most likely to "continue to attempt to divide potential adversaries"--such as the US, no longer seen as a global leader with major interest in Asian regional security, India, provokes suspicion in Beijing⁵⁹, and as both Japan and Russia are

57. Xuetong, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3

58. *Ibid.*, p. 1

59. Very recently, for instance, China reacted quite sharply against what it called the arrest of the so-called three "Chinese spies" in India, and called it a "sheer fabrication, and a farce orchestrated intentionally... with ulterior motives of slandering China and sabotaging China's relations with other countries." See "News Briefing by Chinese Foreign Ministry", *Beijing Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1-7 January 1996), p. 13

also greatly distrusted⁶⁰. Therefore, China is likely to maintain its past tactical approach of using 'barbarians against barbarians' i.e., playing balance-of-power diplomacy in the pursuit of its national interests at both regional and international levels, thus avoiding a countervailing coalition directed against her⁶¹.

In such an interplay of diplomatic scenario, as 'the world's largest emerging market', China may, for instance, hope to lure the major European powers such as France or Germany, or create a sense of solidarity with Japan, since both countries have experienced bitter trade dispute with the US. Beijing thus may test Washington's resolve over Taiwan. But relations between China and Japan are characterized by both mistrust and shared culture. Currently their relationship is undergoing fundamental period of change and hence, as is already suggested, the dyadic linkage promises to be the key strategic uncertainty in the regional balance of power, as both may seek regional dominance and have potential for intense strategic competition.

In South Asia, China is likely to be more cautious in pursuing its traditional balance-of-power diplomacy i.e. a policy of enticing the smaller countries with aid and diplomatic leverage *vis-a-vis* India, with which it has been forging closer links in recent years; but because of the strategic uncertainty in the Asia-Pacific regional balance of power Beijing is most unlikely to forsake its friendly relations with the smaller countries of South Asia⁶². At

60. Dibb, *op. cit.*, p. 29

61. "What, no kow-tow?", *The Economist* (27 May-2 June 1995), pp. 27-28; Dibb, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

62. For an analytical view on China's traditional balance of power diplomacy in South Asia, see, Abul Kalam, "China, South Asia and Independence of Bangladesh: The Chinese Perspective", *Itihash Parishat Patrika* (Bengali), Nos. 1-3, (1398), pp. 5-19. For a contrary view on China's recent policy overtures see, G.W. Chowdhury, "Post-Cold War Era: China's Strategic Role in Asia", *Dhaka Courier*, vol. 11, No. 27 (27 February 1995)

any rate, the sheer size of the country would assign her very powerful roles in regional and international affairs. Regionally, the economic partnership between Japan and China, which proved to be beneficial to both, is likely to continue, but both must come to terms if a stable regional order is to be ensured. Globally, when its current growth rate and the future potential, its vast territorial base, a huge population, the unsettled question of its reunification, updating its 3 million-strong army and a developing nuclear arsenal are taken into consideration, China can hardly be projected as a *status quo* power which would automatically sanction the legitimacy of the present international order⁶³. It is in this context one may agree with the view that China, with its starkly realist approach and evidently being a state in transition, may indeed herald the emergence of a new international hierarchy, with a remarkable shift in the international distribution of power⁶⁴.

All this represent a realistic picture of the future of China's foreign policy drive and security preoccupations. As for idealistic concerns any kind of ideological rigidity in China's international outlook seems a matter of past. China has not only extricated herself from her obsession with ideological purity, her very emergence as a forceful international player coincides with the very pragmatic and flexible shift in her foreign policy, which, again, is closely bound up with an irreversible course of modernization and an open-door policy. Hence one may suggest that as China continues to embrace both economic reform and open-door, with the passing away of the old-guard revolutionaries,

63. It is especially in the context of problems facing China in its aspiration for national reunification Beijing views the complete eradication of the disaster of war and the realization of a complete and lasting peace as a "highly complex and difficult task" in the post-Cold War era. Information Office, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

64. See, for such a view, Dibb, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 26-27, 32

the upcoming political generation of China may before long decide to introduce systemic changes which may penetrate all the way, touching upon both the domestic socialist system and the country's external outlook⁶⁵.

Whatever may be the changes in leadership in Beijing the traditional policy drive of China, seeking its national unification as well as a great power status--with a commensurate position in the international security hierarchy--is likely to continue to serve as basis in Beijing's foreign policy initiatives and security outlook. But Beijing is unlikely to introduce any element of volatility which would upset the stability of the international order, despite its firm commitment to national unification and its continuing interest in power-projection forces, including an improvement of its strategic nuclear arsenal.

65. For somewhat similar view, see Yinhy Ahn, "Vying Influence: Reform in China", *The Korean Journal of National Unification* (Seoul, Research Institute for National Unification), Special Edition, 1993, p. 195. Indeed, domestic compulsions, in particular modernizing the economy continues to influence China's foreign and security policies, as China needs both peaceful international environment as well as continued international support toward a sustained effort, fulfilling the developmental aspirations of its people.