

# **P** China's Philosophy on Foreign Affairs in the 21st Century

**China in  
Peaceful  
Development**

**Links between Philosophical  
Thinking and Foreign Affairs**

**Key Words of China's Philosophy  
on Foreign Affairs**

**The Ideological Source of China's  
Philosophy on Foreign Affairs**

**New Practice of Philosophy on  
Foreign Affairs in China**



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# China's Philosophy on Foreign Affairs in the 21st Century

Liu Binjie



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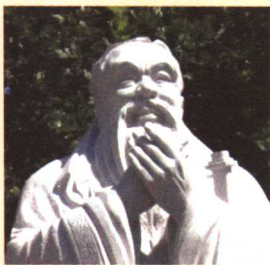
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I.

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**Links between Philosophical  
Thinking and Foreign Affairs**

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A story spread far and wide goes like this: One day several spacemen suddenly invaded into a certain metropolitan city on Earth where mankind lived. It caused a sensation. How to deal with them? Different people had different ideas. The Americans said, "Definitely wipe them out — they are not allowed to invade our territory, let alone are they permitted to go in for terrorist activities." The French said, "Let them stay because they will add to the diversity in the world and, besides, they will bring with them extra-terrestrial culture." The Chinese said, "Treat them with politeness and try to find out if they need any assistance which will also show humanitarianism of the civilized world." A theologian said, "They are envoys sent by God. You should never offend them." A philosopher said, "They are objective existence and need mankind to understand." A scientist said, "It is necessary to do a dissection to find out what chemical molecules differ from those of mankind on earth." It is not hard for us to see from this fictional story that each country has a different approach to thinking and to the principle of handling matters, and everyone has his own value judgments and special ways. What is the factor that determines the difference in their subjective consciousness? It is the viewpoint on values, world outlook and methodology, in other words, philosophy.



Philosophy means science about wisdom and is the best achievement of humankind in its recognition, practice and thinking. Thinking, the most beautiful flower on the earth, bears the fruit of human intelligence and unlimited wisdom. Through a long period of accumulation and sublimation, the highest thought systems — epistemology, methodology and world outlook — have taken shape, having an imperceptible influence on human activities.

Philosophy, the highest achievement of mankind, is the soul of any thinking culture. A county, a nation or a rationale person in a given historical period and cultural environment has conscious understanding and knows what to do and why to do it. This pre-thinking and awareness enables him to determine the significance and goal of his actions. Any country and its leaders will certainly consider its world outlook and methodology in handling international affairs and foreign relations, and in following a certain logic in terms of political thought. Philosophy provides the theoretical guidance for foreign relations while activities of foreign affairs are a practice under the guidance of philosophical theory.

As a matter of fact, any nation and any country, in its exchanges with other nations and countries, makes analyses and judgments from the perspective of philosophical thinking, handles complicated relations and determines the direction of its policies by proceeding from an analysis of the major contradictions and the main factors of the contradictions. A modern country, without such a philosophical foundation, will not be able to stand independently amongst the nations



☪ ☪  
KONRAD VON G'ZLIUS  
(ca. 1170-1249 v. Chr.)

WAS DU NICHT WILLST,  
DAS MACH DIR TU',  
DAS KÖNIG' AUCH KEINEM

of the world, but will find it hard to be independent and will have to drift with the tide.

Therefore, different countries will have different philosophical foundations for their foreign affairs and will make different judgments and adopt different policies on world situations and international relations at the same time.

The United States of America, which worships pragmatism and cherishes the values of freedom, proclaims that the current world is in a complicated time of challenges, and it will not acquire security if it retreats to within its own borders. “We will choose to act confidently in pursuing the enemies of freedom.... We seek the end of tyranny in our world... the future security of America depends on it. We will choose to build our prosperity by leading the world economy.... The only way to protect our people, the only way to secure the peace, the only way to control our destiny is by our leadership — so the United States of America will continue to lead.... Every step toward freedom in the world makes our country safer — so we will act boldly in freedom’s cause.... Yet we also choose to lead because it is a privilege to serve the values that gave us birth. American leaders... knew that America is always more secure when freedom is on the march (Excerpts from the State of the Union by President Bush from the Website of the White House of the United States of

■ Mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit (left) and Shi Mingde (right), charge d’affaires of the People’s Republic of China in Germany, participate in the unveiling of a statue of Confucius in Berlin on July 30, 2004.

America). This is America's philosophy on foreign affairs, logic and America's language — America above all, super-power theory and unilateralism.

In Germany, where rational and technical philosophy are upheld, some people, drawing upon Western philosophy, recently designed an ideal global scenario for humankind in the interests of Europe. They believed that globalization is pushing American democracy and European civilization together with Western philosophy, values, economic, social and political system to every other country and nation in every corner of the world. At the recent 42nd Munich Security Policy Conference, Germany held that NATO should prevail over the world order in the 21st century. With the ardent support of the United States, it insisted that Germany unequivocally come back to the center of the world's political arena after over 60 years. Germany emphasized that, in face of all challenges, NATO must play a key role in the world order of the 21st century. Leaders of Germany proclaimed that NATO has become a global alliance of public interests and the old NATO which was purely an alliance for defense, is history. NATO must be now regarded as a political instrument for making the world a secure environment. They also stressed that NATO must be a venue for political consultation over new conflicts in the world and Germany held that it should be the venue of political coordination and military actions.... To achieve this, they must have political will and naturally must have the corresponding military strength to act. They issued a shocking statement, that NATO could take

# 文明的和谐与共同繁荣

## The Harmony of Civilizations and Prosperity for All



The opening ceremony of the 2005 Beijing Forum was held in the Great Hall of People in Beijing on November 16, 2005.

action within the framework of peacekeeping under the United Nations, but it is by no means a mere regional organization. NATO should be in such a position: it could independently take action to curb threats to world peace (Excerpts from documents on the website of the NATO Conference of February 20, 2006). This is the German philosophy of foreign affairs.

Russian leaders put forward that, in dealing with foreign relations, Russia was returning to “realism from idealism,” giving more consideration to the interests of Russia and its international image. French leaders adhered to the idea of more diversity in international exchanges and insisted that multilateralism must be defended. The Australian Prime Min-

ister recently expressed that he did not believe in “China threat” preached in the United States and that the development of Australia-China relations is conducive to Australia and that Australia has been clearly telling the United States that Australian foreign relations are being handled pragmatically. From these official statements, we can see that different philosophical approaches — an embodiment of pragmatism, multilateralism, protectionism and realism, influence their recognition and modes of thinking and actions in dealing with international affairs or bilateral or multilateral relations.

As the height of man’s thought process, philosophical thinking affects the world outlook and methodology of a country or nation in its foreign relations. Its strong cultural background is long, invisible and stable, and is more powerful and influential than a decision or action of the leader of any country or any particular administration.

The same is true for China. For thousands of years, China has had the reputation of a civilized country honoring propriety. Currently, China upholds the banner of peace, development and cooperation, adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace in order to properly handle international affairs and foreign relations and is becoming increasingly an important force for the progress of mankind. An important ideological foundation is the cultural tradition centering on “harmony and conformity” of past generations and today’s scientific world outlook. This is the Chinese philosophical ideological foundation for foreign affairs.



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II.

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**Key Words of China's  
Philosophy on Foreign Affairs**

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No matter how beautiful are the beehives made by the best bees, they have no blueprint but are made from heredity and instinct. The worst house built by the least skilled workers is built using serious designs. The fundamental difference between man and animal lies in this. Man's capability for thinking and subjective motivation finds expression in conscious activities. Consciousness is the accumulation of cognition while cognition leads practice. Before conducting any social activities, man will always first make the necessary analysis and assessment of the object and rules and then he will put forward outlines, goals, plans and a road map and measures for the actions.

The handling of complicated international relations and the establishment of foreign policies is a huge and complex project of systems engineering, and all the links, such as cognition, analysis, judgment, decision-making and enforcement, require scientific deliberations and the power of wisdom. They need information, data and computers as much as method and mode of thinking. Of course, the false information on Iraq misled the decision-makers of the United States, but the unilateralism and superpower policy guided by the American pragmatist philosophy would have inevitably lead them to a war without just cause in disregard of the opposition from the international community. That is to say that different philosophies lead to different



consequences.

The Chinese government adheres to viewing international contradictions and relations among countries in a historical and objective way and handles foreign relations with a long-term point of view of development, changes, interrelations and interaction. The philosophy is materialistic and dialectic. Hence, in the 21st century, China will continue to implement its independent foreign policy of peace with the goal of maintaining world peace and promoting common development and encouraging cooperation in order to build a harmonious world. The thinking on foreign affairs distinctly manifests the philosophical foundation and values of China's diplomacy in the 21st century and shows that China will never pose threat to any country. The reading of the key words will help the general readership to better understand the expectations and goals of China's diplomacy.

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## 1.

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### 21st Century

It is a concept of a specific time and China has a sober understanding and clear assessment of the international situation and China's domestic development in the coming hundred years. The foreign policy is based on understanding of