Contemporary Chinese Foreign Affairs and International Relations

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Acknowledgments

The major purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to contemporary Chinese foreign affairs and international relations. However, it also provides an overview of Chinese security environment and current trend of international politics. The specific content of the book naturally reflects my own methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical convictions. I believe that good foreign policy analysis combines the objectives and the methods of both the scientific and the humanistic approaches to political analysis. I have given some attention to normative analysis as well.

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QIU Huafei

Contents

Introduction ·····	(1)
PART ONE: THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY	
Chapter One China and World	(21)
Historical Legacy and Worldview	(22)
Lean to One Side(1949—1959)	(28)
Revolutionary Self-Reliance (1960—1969) ·····	(34)
Triangular Diplomacy(1970—1989) ······	(37)
Influence of ideology	(39)
Chapter Two China's Decision-Making	
Institutions ·····	(47)
Government and Party Organizations	(50)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	(54)
Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade ·······	(56)
Ministry of National Defense ·····	(58)
The Decision-Making Process ·····	(60)
PART TWO: CHINA'S INDEPENDENT	
FOREIGN POLICY	
Chapter Three Five Principles and Peaceful Coexistence	(67)

The Bandung Conference · · · · · · · Fundamental Norms Guiding International Relations · · · · · ·	
Chapter Four China and International	
Organizations	· (79)
The History of China in International Organizations	(81)
China and the United Nations	
China's Role in the United Nations	(86)
Recent Events with Respect to Taiwan	• (92)
China and WTO	
Classic Fire China Dall's Dislaman	(105)
Chapter Five China's Public Diplomacy	
"People to People" Diplomacy	
Public Diplomacy and China's Image in the World	
The Significance of Public Diplomacy	(111)
PART THREE: CHINA AND POWERS	
	(117)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship	
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship	(119)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship	(119) (128)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split	(119) (128) (134)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict	(119) (128) (134) (141)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship Sino-Russian Economic Relations	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148) (152)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship Sino-Russian Economic Relations Issues for Sino-Russian Economic Relations	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148) (152) (155)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship Sino-Russian Economic Relations Issues for Sino-Russian Economic Relations Russian-Chinese Military Cooperation	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148) (152) (155) (159)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship Sino-Russian Economic Relations Issues for Sino-Russian Economic Relations Russian-Chinese Military Cooperation The Shanghai Cooperation Organization	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148) (152) (155) (159) (167)
Chapter Six Sino-Soviet Relationship Sino-Soviet Split From Split to Confrontation Return to Normality Views for the Sources of Sino-Soviet Conflict Chapter Seven Sino-Russian Relationship Sino-Russian Economic Relations Issues for Sino-Russian Economic Relations Russian-Chinese Military Cooperation	(119) (128) (134) (141) (148) (152) (155) (159) (167)

Chapter Eight Sino-US Relationship	(185)
The Historical Background of Sino-US Relations	
Sino-US Strategic Relations	
Sino-US-EU Triangular Relations in the 21st Century	
Sino-US-Japan Strategic Triangular Relations	,
Taiwan Issue and the Sino-US Relations	
Conclusion ·····	
	(/
Chapter Nine The Relations between China and	
Japan ····	(227)
Sino-Japanese Relations in the Cold War: Normalization	
and Strategic Structure	(228)
Sino-Japanese Economic Relations	(239)
China and Japan in the New Century	(243)
Sino-Japanese Relations: Comparative Studies	
Conclusion ·····	(266)
Chapter Ten Sino-EU Relationship	(268)
China's Relations with East and West Europe	
Sino-EU Relations in Retrospect ·····	
Concurrent Situation of Sino-EU Relations	
Main Features of Sino-EU Relations	(283)
Conclusion	(289)
DADT FOUR CHIMA ON THE CLORAL	
PART FOUR: CHINA ON THE GLOBAL	_
SETTINGS	
Chapter Eleven China's Peaceful Rise and Its	
Foreign Policy ·····	
Globalization and China's Peaceful Rise	150
Cooperative Mechanism of Regional Security	
The Recognition of Regional Culture	(311)

Nontraditional Security Issues	(315)
China vs ASEAN: Cooperative Diplomacy	
ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreements	
Future Outlook ·····	
Tutale outlook	(001)
Chapter Twelve China's Multilateral Diplomacy	(336)
China and Northeast Asia Security Dilemma	(339)
China and South Asia: Seeking Common Interests	
China and Brazil: Strategic Relationship	
China and Central Asia: Strategic Partnership	
Chapter Thirteen Contemporary Sino-African	
Relations	(371)
Sino-African Relationships from Historical Perspective	
	(373)
Sino-African Relations from the Global Level	(375)
Sino-African Relations from the Nation Level	
Sino-African Economic Relations	
Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Aid China-Africa	,
Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges	(389)
Conclusion ·····	(395)
	(0)0)
Prospects: China's Position in International Order	(397)
	,
Selected Bibliography	(401)
	, ,
Index ····	(416)
	. 20
List of Abbreviations	(426)

Introduction

China was traditionally described as the land "within the four seas". The views about the origins of China, of the "Middle Kingdom", even of mankind itself have been surrounded by myths and legends. ¹ It was historically one of several dozen vast, powerful, and wealthy empires built during pre-modern history. In terms of longevity, size, and brilliance of its achievements, it was arguably one of the greatest. ² Along with the Nile, Mesopotamian, and Indus river valleys, the middle valley of the Yellow River was one of the earliest cradles of human civilization as well as the symbol of Chinese spirit and strength. According to the westerner records, the Chinese emperor's preternatural wisdom and benevolence was matched by the wealth and well-being of the people, whose living standard as a matter of fact still compared quite will with that of Europeans. ³

China holds a long rich culture. Under Confucian orthodoxy, China's superiority was based primarily on virtue rather than on material strength. The most important

① Harry G. Gelber, The Dragon and the Foreign Devils: China and the World, 1100 B. C. to the Present, (New York: Walker & Company 2007), p. 5.

② John W. Garver, Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1993), p. 9.

³ John K. Fairbbank, *China Watch*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 3.

aspect of human existence, according to Confucianism, was to understand and live in accordance with the principles of correct conduct. People of all stations in society ought to strive to live in accordance with the precepts of the five cardinal relationships: between father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, friend and friend, and emperor and subject. If everyone acted as they should, society would be orderly and prosperous. The heaviest responsibility of all fell on the emperor, the Son of Heaven or tian zi, whose outstanding moral example was the linchpin of the entire social, and indeed cosmological order. [®] When the emperor was virtuous, his officials would be virtuous. When the officials were virtuous, the people would be virtuous. When the people were virtuous, there would be harmony in human affairs, and between human affairs and the cosmos.

China was not unique in developing notions about its own superiority. Many other countries, modern as well as ancient, have done likewise. The United States, for example, has typically seen itself as the promoter of liberty and democracy around the world.

The British, the Russians, and the rest of Europe and the United States discovered China and, beginning in the eighteenth century, demanded free access and free trade. China had tea, spices, silk, and porcelain, which the people in Europe and North and South Americas

① John W. Garver, Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China,, p. 11.

wanted to buy, however, the Chinese people had no particular desire to buy anything from abroad.

But a phase of disillusionment set in from more direct contact in the early 19th century, coupled with the Western material progress at home. When piped water and the water closet came into vogue in the west, China was left behind. By the time the China trade gave Westerners direct contact with the steamy ordure of Canton, China was rapidly becoming "backward", lacking in steam engines, artillery, and other sinews of civilization. ^①



Source: China: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China

Indeed, the Chinese authorities found it difficult to understand at first that the conquering Westerners who had

¹ John K. Fairbbank, China Watch, p. 3.

come by sea in the 19th century, nominally to seek trade, were fundamentally different from foreigners from Central Asia who also sought trading privileges. ^①And to Chinese emperors, the notion that emissaries from foreign monarchs should be treated as equals was even more absurd. Unless Westerners in China became sinicized, the Qing dynasty court believed they should not be in China. European demands for establishment of diplomatic relations and exchange of ambassadors were therefore repeatedly denied. ^②

The Chinese did not understand the Western system of sovereign states jockeying for power within the international system. The West did not understand the Chinese system of a political system shaped by natural forces. The result was a battle between two civilizations, each equally convinced of its own superiority. Unfortunately for the Chinese people, by the nineteenth century Western nations had become more dynamic and more powerful than China. During the Opium War, with much greater professional strategy, relatively tiny British forces defeated Chinese troops. The Chinese forces though sometimes suicidally brave, suffered from several decisive handicaps. They were no match for British discipline, training, tactics, arms or equipment. ³ With the British

① Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (London: Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 162-164.

② Judith F. Kornberg & John R. Faust, China in World Politics: Policies, Processes, Prospects, (London, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p. 10.

³ Harry G. Gelber, The Dragon and the Foreign Devils: China and the World, 1100 B. C. to the Present, p. 189.

on the brink of storming it, Qing Dynasty had to sign the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing. Later, like Opium War, China was defeated by one after another western countries, signed many unequal treaties with these powers and lost a large number of territories from the middle of 19th century.

By the early 20th century, the foreign powers in China had as much and perhaps more political, military, and economic power than did the remnants of the Qing dynasty. The last Qing dynasty emperors and empresses cooperated with the foreign powers to prolong their own rule, which could easily have been ended by foreign military forces, but the dynasty had lost the Mandate of Heaven. In Tokyo in 1905, Chinese reformers established a secret revolutionary league that was the antecedent to the Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party. Even the Qing government itself favored a reform initiative, but it was a case of too little too late, and in 1911 the Qing Dynasty collapsed. ^① The mandate had passed on to a new generation.

The impact of Russian October Revolution exported world revolution to China. Anti-Western and anti-Japanese demonstration erupted in China to protest the terms of the treaty that ended World War I. The European powers, meeting in the Versailles Palace in France, had agreed that German enclaves in China would be handed over to the Japanese rather than returned to China. Inspired by the desire to force the victorious powers in World War I to redress the insults heaped on China and spearheaded by

① Judith F. Kornberg & John R. Faust, China in World Politics: Policies, Processes, Prospects, p. 12.

students and intellectuals, the May 4 movement of 1919 spawned many political organizations dedicated to strengthening China and driving the foreigners out.

The Comintern, Lenin's International of Communist Parties was also founded in 1919, and it was supposed to foment anti-capitalist revolutions in Europe; in the colonial world, it aimed at provoking anti-imperialist insurgencies, designed to overthrow imperialism and thereby contribute to anti-capitalist revolutions in Europe. For that purpose, the Comintern sponsored the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. [®] But in 1920s, Stalin refashioned the Comintern from a revolutionary international organization into a tool for Soviet security, its offshoot parties throughout the world fell victim to narrow Soviet interests or outright indifference. In China, the CCP gradually developed its own brand of ideology. [®]

During the early 1920s, both the Nationalists and the Communist were committed to unifying and strengthening China in order to get rid of foreigners and resist further foreign incursions. The two parties had irreconcilable visions of a strong, nationalist movement in China, however, and their united front lasted only through the mid – 1920s. From the late 1930s through the late 1940s, the Communist Party's nationalism came to be more

① The official documents usually argued that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was one political organization that had its roots in the May 4 movement.

② Lorenz M. Lüthi, The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2008), p. 19.

attractive to the Chinese people than that of the ruling Nationalist Party. Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the Communist Party used the desire for a proud and independent China nation to recruit supporters throughout the fight against Japan during World War II.

When the communists achieved victory over the nationalists in 1949, the development of the foreign policy has been characterized by some major shifts and changes in the country's role in world affairs. These changes were made in accordance with the domestic situation in China and in the context of changes in the international system in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) found itself after its emergence in 1949. When Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of New China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, one of his foremost goals was the establishment of a Chinese nation-state that was independent of foreign influence. ^① This historical background is essential to understanding China's foreign policy in the period of Chinese Communist rule.

New China was established in a world unlike any other in history, the United States and the USSR had developed their power and resources to the point where they had emerged as superpowers in a rivalry that affected the whole world. ^② Both countries armed with sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy themselves and everybody else,

① Judith F. Kornberg & John R. Faust, China in World Politics: Policies, Processes, Prospects, p. 13.

② See Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Survey of International Affairs, 1947 - 48, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 1 - 2.