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*Working paper n° 60
Programa Asia-Pacífico*

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During these last thirty years, the foreign policy of People's Republic of China has been carried on through the country's stabilising and accomodating vision to international affairs and respective rules, its leaders being aware of those (rules) having had been defined by others. China appears as a conservative power, *statu quo* friendly, rather in- than outward, concerned with domestic affairs such as internal stability, progress and development, political control over the center, harmony (thus obedience)¹. These traits are attuned with the ancient Confucian culture, which took a long-lasting stand after Maoism's ideological turbulence and its aim to undermine an international order dominated by both United States and Soviet Union (up to 1989). A nation too focused on its own image, probably due to its former narcissistic self-perception as Middle Kingdom, or as a crucible of an ancient civilization or even as author of several inventions left as legacy to humanity. Exception made to the Maoist period, China always regarded itself rather as a regional power than a global one, bound to meet its dignity lost throughout decades of compromise or surrendering before western powers, these being the root of all evil and humiliations.

China under Deng

Deng Xiao Ping's leading concept as "to patiently wait for our time, build our own abilities" is rooted on China's ambition to regain power among the Great Powers. Founding its international standing within domestic power, yet doing it steadily, on a step-by-step basis, consolidating each step and not hesitating in correcting what was proven to be wrong. As the Small Helmsman put it "keeping a cool head and a *low profile*; never taking the lead yet targeting something big"². More recently, under Hu Jintao (as both President and Party leader) China restrengthened its international profile and reputation, by taking part in the debate and solutions concerning international affairs, having abandoned its rather defensive and responsive attitude as a result of the country's opening to the wider world³. Zooming this thirty years' period, allows us to conclude that Deng Xiaoping initiated the so-called pattern of "peace and development" within the Chinese foreign policy of the 80's, the country having thereafter become one of the main beneficiaries of the post-Cold War era, a time featuring the decrease of inter-state violence. The rapid Chinese economical growth has significantly contributed to the growth of worldwide GDP, pushing China to appear as a capitalism motor. Whereas, in the past,

¹ In an opposite sense, regarding China as a revisionist power (although moderate) of the international order, see Patrick, Steward M., "China's Role in the "New Era of Engagement", Council of Foreign Relations, *Expert Brief*, 10th of November 2009, in www.cfr.org

² Quoted namely by Quansheng Zhao, "Chinese Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era", World Affairs, 2009, in www.janeliunas.lt/

³ Medeiros, Evans S., "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability", *The Washington Quarterly*, 29:1 in http://www.twq.com/06winter/docs/06winter_medeiros.pdf



the rise and fall of nations was followed by crises and instability, China's intense economical reform relies rather on the idea of a “peaceful rising” towards a status of greatness. A status held up to the XVIII century, when the maritime European nations overcame it.

Whereas the communist revolution conducted by Mao had resulted both in a redefinition of domestic powers and in the setting of an alternative political model (together with the rejection of another); the process of economical reforms led by Deng rather focused on the global economy and on economy's priority over politics, envisioning China within the regional picture⁴. Under a watchful eye⁵, the genesis of this novel foreign policy may be found in Deng's foresight on the *war and peace prospects*. As he stated, a new world war (namely nuclear) was unlikely to happen, once the international system entailed a “peaceful economical development”, China holding a leading role in it, as a developing country⁶.

Recalling Deng's words at the United Nations General Assembly back in 1974: “We maintain that the safeguarding of political independence is the first prerequisite for a Third World country to develop its economy. In achieving political independence, the people of a country have only taken the first step, and they must proceed to consolidate this independence, for there still exist remnant forces of colonialism at home and there is still the danger of subversion and aggression by imperialism and hegemonism.”⁷.

Such independence is shaped by the 5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence put forward by China at the Bandung Conference, hereby recalled by Deng Xiaoping himself at the United Nations:

We hold that in both political and economic relations, countries should base themselves on the Five Principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. We are opposed to the establishment of hegemony and spheres of influence by any country in any part of the world in violation of these principles. (...) We

⁴ Xiudian Dai, “Understanding EU-China Relations: An Uncertain Partnership in the Making”, Research Paper 1/2006, University of Hull, Hull, Great-Britain.

⁵ Yahuda, Michael, “China's Foreign Policy Comes of Age”, *The International Spectator*, No. 42, 3, p. 342

⁶ According to Mao's analysis, third world war was inevitable, given the weapons of mass destruction being concentrated in the hands of superpowers; hence China's role was to unite the Third World against those superpowers as to avoid the war's hatching. The Three World Theory that he put forward back in February 1974 aimed at giving ideological grounds to that (alternative) vision, placing both United States and Soviet Union as First World; Japan, Europe, Australia and Canada as Second World and China together with the remaining countries as Third World. In a way, this vision was already multilateralist. Cf. Jiang Shixue, “The Chinese Foreign Policy Perspective” in *China and Latin America*, 11.07.2009, in <http://blog.china.com.cn/jiangshixue/art/867982.html> and Wang Jisi, “Multipolarity versus Hegemonism: Chinese views of International Politics”, *China Strategy and Management Research Contact*, undated, via www.cssm.org.cn.

⁷ Foreign Languages Press, “Speech By Chairman of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Deng Xiaoping, At the Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly”, as of 10th of April 1974, in www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1974/04/10.htm



hold that the affairs of each country should be managed by its own people. The people of the developing countries have the right to choose and decide on their own social and economic systems.⁸

This picture of an independent China within an international frame, far from the superpowers on the one hand, yet close to the Third World's "outcasts", on the other, ended, later on, being embraced again and developed during the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (August, 1977), chaired by Deng himself. According to his decisions, along with the market forces' effects China should adapt to the features of international economy; both by reducing the State's intervention (in Economy) and by using on its benefit an international scenario with no military conflicts nor serious security issues⁹. The sequence of events that once led to Soviet Unions' implosion, to the destruction of the European communist block and also to the end of the bipolar system prompted the need to readjust the foreign policy's "periscope" to a significantly changed scenario. Thus the reformist leader's definition of a *Policy of Peace and Development* built on four foundations¹⁰:

1st – Peace and Development are both the standard and the rule within international life¹¹;

2nd – Following Soviet Union's collapse, the bipolar world order shall be replaced by a multipolar one, China being one of the main five cores;

3rd – Hegemonic trends will continue among the Great Powers, namely United States¹²;

4th – China and other developing countries (DC) will seek to unite aiming at fighting against an unfair international order, in which the game rules have been determined by developed countries¹³.

The repression operated on the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen exposed China to a strong international censorship along with several sanctions. Hence, Deng had to put forward the so-called guiding principle of the *24 characters*, in order to take a stand for both the Chinese position and socialist regime, expressed in the following ideas: a) observing smoothly worldwide events; b) standing strong; c) approaching difficulties with confidence; d) keeping a low profile; e) never taking the leading role ;f) acting. This policy

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Jiang Shixue, "The Chinese Foreign Policy....", *ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works*, vol. 3, Beijing, 1993, pp. 96-97.

¹² China has avoided to point United States as its enemy or as a major threat to national security; Chinese media uses the expressions "hostile foreign forces", "hostile Western forces". It is not in the best interest of China to antagonise the former international order's remaining superpower nor to promote ideological disputes. Cf Wang Jisi, "Multipolarity versus Hegemonism..." *ibid*.

¹³ In a way, this last *foot* is a foresight picking up on Mao's vision about the role of the Third World, although with a significant difference: the role (of the Third World) is now reformist, bargained and no longer subversive, as it was within maoism's revolutionary foreign policy.



would put a halt to all Deng's speeches between the end of the 80's and the beginning of the 90's¹⁴. This guideline is also known as the policy of the four *bu* and the two *chao*: a) do not rise socialism's flag (to replace Soviet Union); b) do not become the Third World leader; c) do not get involved in disputes; d) do not make enemies by avoiding intervention in other countries' affairs; e) go beyond ideological considerations; f) pick up on specific issues¹⁵.

Following Tiananmen disaster, Deng realised a moment had come for China to act prudently, to check which type of order would overcome the bipolar model and, most of all, to make time in order to avoid a U-turn to international isolation. The Chinese leader's pragmatism and intuition allowed not only international criticism to calm down, but also the sanctions to be withdrawn¹⁶ along with China getting gradually ready for a change within the international system. Issues regarding domestic economical development became the core of the Chinese agenda and the country's share within multilateral organisations was sat-in, entailing a so-called "subtle diplomacy"¹⁷.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China as of 1982 reflects this concept of foreign policy. Its preamble states that "China consistently develops an *independent* foreign policy and joins the five principles of mutual respect for both sovereignty and territorial integrity, for non-aggression, for non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs, for equality and mutual benefit and for peaceful coexistence within the development of economical and cultural relations (with other countries)"¹⁸. This "independent" policy complies with the legal framework determined by the document "An Independent Foreign Policy towards Peace" or policy of the 7 Topics, already approved under Jiang Zemin as President of China¹⁹.

The document "An Independent Policy" states that China "tenaciously pursues an independent policy towards peace", focused on the "protection of either independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, therein setting an international environment favourable to reform and opening itself to the outside world, granting peace and promoting global development". This independence is shown on the fact that "as far as international affairs are concerned (China) determines both its position and policies according to its people's core interests along with other countries' people and making decisions in it's own right. (China) will never humiliate itself to any great power or group of countries"²⁰.

¹⁴ Jiang Shixue, "The Chinese Foreign Policy....", *ibidem*.

¹⁵ Quansheng Zhao, "Chinese Foreign Policy...", *ibidem*.

¹⁶ Exception made to China arms embargo.

¹⁷ Shen Wei, "In the Mood for Multilateralism? China's Evolving Global View", *Centre Asie Ifri, Working Paper*, July 2008, in www.ifri.org

¹⁸ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 2004, 5th edition, p. 6.

¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples' República of China, "China's Independent Foreign Policy of Peace", 18.08.2003, Beijing in <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/wjzc/t24881.htm>

²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples' Republic of China, "China's Independent Foreign Policy of Peace", 18.08.2003, Beijing in <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/wjzc/t24881.htm>



The document foresees a *multilateralist vision* of China as opposed to “hegemonism and struggle for the safeguard of worldwide peace”, advocating that “every country is equal within the international community independent of being big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor”. Based on this claimed equality “every country should settle their disputes through peaceful consultations rather than using force or threatening to use it”. No country should interfere in another country's domestic affairs “whether the pretext being to invade or to subvert other countries”. The document states that China “promotes the setting of an international order (political and economical) fair and rational”, being based upon the *5 Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*²¹. Moreover it states that China will be engaged in friendship and cooperation relations with all countries, promoting good relations with neighbor countries as well as with developing countries, thus proceeding with a policy of multidimensional opening, worldwide, on grounds of equality and mutual benefit²². The document assures that Beijing plays an active role within “multilateral diplomatic activities, appearing as a determined force in maintaining peace and stability”.

Academics and observers debate about the meaning of this “multilateralism” as opposed to an identical act of political faith on Europe's side. The answer is not indifferent to the way Chinese leaders analyze the world after the fall of Berlin Wall and, thus, they reply to the question as to whether the United States' hegemonic position, as superpower, is consistent and long-lasting or if the world is rather heading for any kind of multipolarism²³. In 1990, Deng stated that the old international structure had been suffering changes, although a new orientation regarding the international system was yet to happen, that meaning that the multipolar model might be rather tripolar, quadripolar or five polar, China being one of the poles and Soviet Union being another, yet much weakened²⁴. Multilateralism entails an international system encompassing not only a profusion of Nation-States but also relevant international organizations together with other non-state actors²⁵. Among Chinese academics and observers, there is a huge diversity of opinions about the prevalence of a multipolar world; whereas ones advocate that there is already a multipolar structure in the field, with Europe, China and Japan reducing its power differential as opposed to United States; others take the view, instead, that is taking place a transition period towards the establishment of a multipolar system²⁶.

In a broader sense, United Nations are regarded as the core of multilateralism or of the set of multilateral relations, given that the international decision process results of several contributions, no one having the last and definite word. Taking another view (additional) multilateralism entails a negotiation shape within international domains, such

²¹ FAM-PRC, “China's Independent...”, *ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Huan Xiang, Deng's National Security Adviser, had launched the debate on multipolarity back in 1986 identifying the weaknesses of superpowers (in military terms) and that the strategic triangle China-United States-Soviet Union would be the grounds for a multipolarism in progress. Cf. Kai He, “Neoclassical Realism and China's Foreign Policy”, Arizona State University, March 2006.

²⁴ Deng Xiaoping, *Chosen Works*, vol. 3, Beijing, 1993.

²⁵ Shen Wei, “In the Mood for Multilateralism?...”, *op. cit.*, p 7.

²⁶ Positions summed up by Wang Jisi, “Multipolarity versus Hegemonism...”, *ibidem*.



as the World Trade Organization, since we are allowed to conclude that western countries were interested in pulling China into their created²⁷ trade multilateralism.

Jiang Zemin leadership

“Multipolarism” appears as a cane for the Chinese rhetoric, following Jiang Zemin's visit to Moscow 1997, as to represent the relations between the two countries; since then, it has thereafter been used to explain China's analysis of the desired international order, as a multipolarized world together with the authority of restrengthened United Nations²⁸. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, for instance, that “multipolarity helps to both weaken and restrain hegemonism and power policy, focused on bringing a fair/equitative international order; one that promotes worldwide peace and development²⁹. There is not, however, among any official documents (today) a clear correlation between the promotion of an active multipolarism and the desired weakening of United States (as hegemonic power), although the majority of observers tend to be clear when associating one thing to the other.³⁰

Bearing in mind the framework set as starting point, it is possible to outline a continuity within (Chinese) reformist leaders on this matter, as it points towards an inorganic or flexible multilateralism, meaning that world problems cannot be solved through the efforts of a single power alone, but rather through the joint action of the overall. In his report to the 15th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (1997) Jiang Zemin reaffirmed the idea of a changing world, wherein “relations between great powers are being subject to deep and significant adjustments”, “both international and intercontinental organizations are appearing as more active” and the “developing countries' situation is coming to consolidate³¹. Hence, according to Zemin, “the development of the multipolarity trend contributes towards worldwide peace, stability and prosperity”; in effect, “the wish for peace, the search for cooperation and the promotion of development, all together, appear as a prevailing sign of the times, given that it is possible “for a long period, to avoid a new worldwide war and to ensure a favourable international environment, peacefully, keeping a good relation with neighbour countries”. Notwithstanding these positive signs, the President of China pointed out that

²⁷ Wei Ling, “China's WTO Negotiations Process and its Implications”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2002, 11, 33, p. 683-719,

²⁸ Cheong Li, “Limited Defensive Strategic Partnership: Sino-Russian rapprochement and the driving forces”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 16, no. 52, p. 483 and Yong Deng, “China's Strategic Partnerships with Russia, the European Union and India”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 30, No. 4-5, August-October 2007, p. 882.

²⁹ Declaration no longer available on the Internet yet cited by Jing Men in “EU-China Relations: Problems and Promise”, Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series, vol. 8, No. 13, June 2008, in <http://www6.miami.edu/eucenter/publications/MenEUchinaLong08edi.pdf>

³⁰ Some Chinese observers insist that United States are popular for diplomatic failures, political tension and trade wars with other great powers and that, United States will end up losing. Yang Jiemin, “China-US strategic partnership against the background of multipolarisation”, *International Review*, no. 1, 1998, article written in mandarin, quoted by Wang Jisi, “Multipolarity versus hegemonism...”, *ibidem*.

³¹ Jiang Zemin, “Report at the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China”, 12th September 1997, in www.fas.org/news/china/1997/970912-prc.htm



“cold war's mentality is still present and both hegemonism and the policy of power keep appearing as a major threat to peace and international stability; therefore, the expansion of military blocks along with the restrengthening of military alliances will not allow to defend peace nor security”. On the other hand, says Zemin “the gap between rich and poor countries keeps widening” and local conflicts either deriving out of “ethnic, religious or territorial tensions, keep happening from time to time”, thus the world is far from tranquility³². On the 16th Congress of CCP, back in 2002, Zemin restressed the country's ability to adapt to a scenario going through a rapid change, stating that “China responded confidently to a series of unexpected international events, standing up for the country's sovereignty and security and having overcome both the difficulties and risks arising from either economical or political spheres³³”. Jiang Zemin definitely inherited Deng's vision of a multipolar world, arising out of the tail of North-American decline, China therein acting as a pole in its capacity of maintaining the economical growth³⁴.

Let us dwell on the issue of hegemonism, a concept present in all leaders' political declarations as well as in Summit's joint-communications. It appears as a slogan, a landmark, an anchor point in speeches, allowing to engage both policies and attitudes with proclaimed (ideological) principles. It is arguable whether or not is the accusation (of hegemonism) pointing towards a specific country, given that Mao's foreign policy clearly demonized United States and Soviet Union. According with a certain view, that accusation rather than meant for a particular country targets “a certain policy”; therefore, independent of the country practicing it, “China will oppose”³⁵. On this matter, for instance, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia by the end of 70's, China accused Vietnam of being hegemonist over the South of Asia³⁶.

Within Chinese vocabulary, circa the 70's and 80's, hegemonism appeared as a behaviour of powerful States, which were trying to dominate a region or the world in a military way. Following the implosion of Soviet Union, the concept was aimed at United States (and its led block) as well as to their attempt to “westernize or divide China”, mine the Communist Party's legitimacy, or separate Taiwan from China³⁷. More recently, the word has been used less assertively, appearing in a correlation with two core points of China's foreign speech: on the one hand, “non-interference in domestic affairs”, a principle relating to the (multilateral) subject of respect by other political and social systems³⁸; on the other hand, the issue of the international order's reform together with

³² Jiang Zemin, *ibidem*.

³³ China Daily, “16th CPC Party Congress Opens in Beijing”, 8.11.2002, in <http://english.people.com.cn>

³⁴ Cf. on this subject, Christopher Layne “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers will Rise”, *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4, Spring, 1993, pp. 5-51.

³⁵ Gao Jindian, “A study of Deng Xiaoping's International Strategic Thinking”, National University Press, Beijing, 1992, published in mandarin and quoted by Wang Jisi, “Multipolarity versus Hegemonism..”, *ibidem*.

³⁶ Or back in May 1998, when India performed a nuclear test, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs having said that this country “pursued hegemony within the South of Asia.

³⁷ Kai He, “Neoclassical Realism and China's Foreign Policy”, *ibidem*.

³⁸ Deng Xiaoping had already spoken about this on his quoted United Nations' speech “each country's affairs should be managed by its own people” and “the developing countries' people has the right to choose and



the creation of a new one rather fairer and more equitable. Bearing in mind the speech strategy of the Fourth Generation of Leaders (Hu Jintao, Wen Jiabao and Wu Bangguo), it is also curious to see the concept of “democracy” engaging with the international situation, as to identify an order wherein every country (independent of its strength or dimension) is treated as “equal”³⁹. China appears as a kind of spokesman for the Third World⁴⁰, that meaning a rather ambitious posture, a more interventive one, far from the tactical defense role imposed by Deng Xiaoping⁴¹.

Hu Jintao's greater proactiveness

When Hu Jintao took the helm of the Party, back in 2002, that clearly denoted a transition towards a rather “nationalist” identity, into an approach more attuned with the traditional humanist Confucianism, where the ancient Chinese cultural heritage is rooted⁴². The approach focuses on the concept of *he*, meaning peace, harmony and union, extended to (China's) foreign policy's drive, in order to signify the projection of traditional Chinese values into a contemporary and cosmopolitan environment. At home, the duo Hu-Wen have been building the grounds for their legitimacy based upon another concept *minben*, that is, the people at the core of all concerns along with the edification of a *hexie shehui* (a harmonious society), assuming tensions to be minimized through dialogue⁴³. At the external level, such a reformulation resulted in an accomodating cultural posture, armed by a rhetoric of “harmonious yet different”, in order to promote China as an emergent power yet “peaceful”, as opposed to those who talk about a “Chinese threat” in progress. In Hu Jintao's report to the 17th Congress, this concern with harmony and peace is put forward through an elaborate language with clear Confucian connotations, wherein is stated that “setting the thinking free appears as a magical instrument towards the development of socialism featuring Chinese characteristics; reforming and opening to the wider world, along with the scientific development and social harmony are essential to accomplish it”⁴⁴. Hu Jintao therefore clearly engaged (the concept) not only with an international scenario facing major changes, but also to a China thriving to adapt and taking advantage of that (scenario):

decide its social and economic system”. Cf. Deng Xiaoping, “Speech By Chairman of the Delegation...”, *ibidem*.

³⁹ Cf. People's Daily Online, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's speech at U.N. High-Level Meeting on MDGs, 26.09.2208, in <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6507164.html>

⁴⁰ China, nevertheless, refuses to admit it.

⁴¹ Qing Cao, “Confucian Vision of a New World Order?: Culturalist Discourse, Foreign Policy and the Press in Contemporary China”, *International Communication Gazette*, 2007; 69; pp. 431-450.

⁴² Cf. Qing Cao, *ibidem*. In William Callahan's words it is designated “nativism”, that is, the idea of a territorial Nation-State (*zhongguo*) looking inwards and pursuing a defensive sovereignty. Callahan, William, “Nationalism, Civilization and Transnational Relations: the discourse of Greater China”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, May 2005, 14 (43); pp. 269–289.

⁴³ Qing Cao, *ibid*, p. 435.

⁴⁴ Hu Jintao, “Report to the 17th CPC Congress: Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for new Victories in Building a Moderality Prosperous Society in all respects”, 15th October 2007, in <http://dfl.fjzs.edu.cn/bencandy-htm-fid-23-id-101-page-1.htm>



The world today is going through extensive and profound changes and China has gone through a wide and profound transformation. That brings both opportunities and challenges without precedents, the first outcoming the latter (...) progress towards a multipolar world is irreversible, economical globalization has developed profoundly and the scientific and technological revolution is gaining the upper hand. Global and regional cooperation is more and more present and the countries are becoming increasingly interdependent. The balance of international powers is shifting towards maintaining worldwide peace and the overall international situation is stable.

In a very detailed manner, Hu Jintao approached China's foreign policy, in two dense pages of his report, putting forward seven guidelines:

1st Harmonious world - “people around the world should join hands and walk towards a harmonious world of long-lasting peace and common prosperity”;

2nd International Society featuring United Nations and International Law at its core – “countries should stand up for their targets and United Nations' principles, preserving international law and promoting democracy, harmony and cooperation, together with winning solutions within international relations”;

3rd Relational respect and equity – “taking a political view, countries should respect each other, leading consultations on an equal basis, with the common target of promoting democracy within international relations”;

4th Cooperating and working together – “taking an economical view, they should cooperate with one another, supporting themselves within each others' capacities, and working together in order to make way to the economical globalization towards a balanced development, sharing benefits and mutually advantageous progress;

5th Learning from one another and respecting diversity – “culturally they should learn from one another, in the spirit of reaching a common ground while overcoming their differences, they respect the world diversity, building a common effort so that human civilization may evolve”;

6th Trusting, restrengthening cooperation and fighting for peace and stability – “taking a security view, they should trust each other, restrengthening cooperation, overcoming international disputes through peaceful means instead of war and working together in order to safeguard peace and stability”;

7th Helping each other within environmental issues – “within these issues, they should help each other in an effort to protect the planet, this being the only address for the human race”⁴⁵.

The briefly elaborated table below allows a broad vision of Chinese leaders' fundamental options, either in positive or negative variables, attuned with the main

⁴⁵ Hu Jintao, “Report to the 17th CPC Congress...”, *ibidem*.



trends of international life. According to their respective totals, whereas Mao is far more distant from those patterns (55 points), Hu appears as the closest (86 points).

CHINESE LEADERS' PRIORITIES				
Variables²	MAO	DENG	JIANG	HU
Unilateralism	10	1	1	2
Multilateralism	0	7	8	8
Priority to economy	1	8	8	8
Priority to politics	10	4	2	5
Proactive Policy	10	3	5	5
Responsive Policy	1	8	5	5
Independent Policy	10	7	7	7
Policy of partnerships	0	0	7	7
Internationalism	8	5	4	3
Nationalism	5	5	5	8
Isolationism	10	0	0	0
Opening to the wider world	0	10	10	8
Demonization of the West	10	3	3	3
Unwinding towards the West	0	10	10	10
Regional integration	0	3	7	9
Total	55	77	82	86

² Table of points: 1 to 10, representing less and more.

Findings

It would be rather difficult to find such a range of “great principles” consensual enough that could be adopted by any European leader. Appearing as a nation structurally

peaceful⁴⁶ China claims its contribution towards regional and global development, through its own development process, settling to other countries' interests, especially to developing ones. China wants to be an “active partner regarding multilateral issues, taking responsibility for its international obligations, playing a constructive role and working actively towards making way for a fairer and more equitable international order”. China, Hu Jintao concluded, “cannot afford to develop itself isolated from the rest of the world, nor can the world afford to enjoy prosperity and stability without China”⁴⁷.

This range of considerations and features nevertheless makes us wonder how much of truth and sincerity is there in the words of the Chinese elite? And how much of proclamatory rhetoric? It is difficult to say but there have been no evident contradictions between the stated principles and the behaviour shown throughout the three reformist leaderships under analysis (Deng, Zemin and Hu). China's international record is impressive: in 1998, China had fifty people involved within United Nations' Peace Operations, nowadays there are a thousand people engaged with these same operations; it is the seventeenth net contributor to those Peace Operations, inputting more people such as experts (even military) and random personnel than any other member of the United Nations Security Council⁴⁸. China signed a relevant number of international conventions in the domains of defense and security⁴⁹ and it has moreover been a valid correspondent within regional conflicts such as the Korean Peninsula, nuclear weapons in Iran or the acting of rogue regimes such as Sudan. In essence, it is being possible to articulate its interest with the international community's global one, minding no great upsets, although it seems there is always someone guessing reasons for greater fears⁵⁰.

Under a diplomatic point of view, China has been developing its external action at two different levels (or two fronts): a) the so-called *multilateral diplomacy*, shown on China's accession to conventions, international treaties, global or regional organisations⁵¹; b) the *partnership diplomacy*, through which China has come to develop

⁴⁶ Hu Jintao stresses that following a road towards a peaceful development was a “strategic choice” by the government along with the Chinese people, bearing in mind their actual core interests (both government's and people's). Chinese people (Hu Jintao states) is a “Peace lover and China will always stand strong in safeguarding worldwide peace”. Cf. “Report to the 17th CPC Congress...”, *ibidem*.

⁴⁷ Still Hu Jintao, “Report to the 17th Congress...”, *ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Cf. report by Bates Gill in CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies), “China-Europe Relations. A Report of the CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies Implications and Policy Responses for the United States”, www.csis.org

⁴⁹ Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT], Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Inhumane Weapons Convention and several others, *Chinese Outpost*, “China's Major International Treaties”, in <http://www.chinese-outpost.com/chinapedia/government-and-politics/major-international-treaties.asp>

⁵⁰ Cf. Kaplan, Robert, “How we would fight China”, *The Atlantic*, June 2005, in <http://www.theatlantic.com> or *Foreign Affairs*, “Q & A with Robert Kaplan on China”, 7th May 2010, in <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/discussions/interviews/qa-with-robert-kaplan-on-china?page=show>

⁵¹ China holds memberships in most of the specialized agencies within United Nations and also within regional agencies such as Asian Development Bank, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); holds a partnership within the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a membership in the Regional Forum of ASEAN, being also a founding-member of Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Cf. Chinese



its relations with Great Powers (*daguo guanxi*) elevating bilateral relations to the level of Partnerships⁵². In 1996, China and Russia agreed on a Strategic Partnership of Cooperation; in 1997, China and European Union established a similar Partnership, so-called “Encompassing and Strategic”; during the same year, China celebrated an identical Partnership with Japan⁵³. According to a certain view, it is expected that these Partnerships with Great Powers improve China's ability to balance the dominant hegemonic power, thus preparing itself to the challenges of a multipolar world⁵⁴. Some see them (partnerships) as pure rhetoric exercises, with no consequences whatsoever⁵⁵; others find them rather close to an alliance involving a dimension of cooperation within the realm of security, mainly when the adjective “strategic” is put to use⁵⁶.

A wiser interpretation goes beyond these partnerships, noting on the one hand a projection of China's “soft power” similar to Japan during the 60's and 70's, when its products started to “invade” western markets and introducing new consumption habits; on the other hand, regarded as narrow bilateral relations, multidimensional and long-lasting, in a constructive way (a *work in progress*), the relation of communion being legitimated by the performance rather than the phrasing.

The interdependence generated by the economical globalization process (and its economical strength) conducted China to restrengthen its diplomatic relations with western powers and its region; PRC came to adjust to that relation of interdependence with the world (and naturally with the Asia-Pacific Region), resulting in an important effect: it won't be easy to withdraw from that interdependence and work as if being autonomous from the international system's trends⁵⁷.

China projects its power, not only through the use of its “hard” power (including security and economy), but also using its “smooth” power, by supplying financial aid to Asian countries (or African) in need, by opening up Confucius Institutes practically everywhere or by allowing thousands of Asian and European students to come to its universities. A Chinese paradigm is gaining momentum (as opposed to the western liberal

Outpost, “China's Membership in International organisations”, in <http://www.chinese-outpost.com/chinapedia/government-and-politics/membership-in-international-organisations.asp>

⁵² According to Chinese authors, this “diplomacy of great powers” aims at presenting China not only as an emergent power, but also as a Great Power, which earns both respect and trust from the world making use of a compliance posture (with the assumed rules). Cf. Chih-Yu Shih, “Breeding a reluctant dragon: can China rise into partnership and away from antagonism?”, *Review of International Studies*, 2005, 31, pp. 755–774.

⁵³ For an updated table containing over thirty partnerships with China since the 90's see Evan Medeiros, “China's International Behavior...”, p. 38.

⁵⁴ Kai He, “Neoclassical Realism...”, pp. 33-34 and Jiang Shixue, “The Chinese Foreign Policy Perspective...” *ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Callahan, William, “Future Imperfect...”, *ibidem*, p. 781 and Goldstein, Avery, “Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy: A Rising Power's Emerging”, *The China Quarterly*, no. 168, December 2001, pp. 848 and 851.

⁵⁶ Cf. Evan Medeiros, *ibidem*, p. 37.

⁵⁷ That is the conditioning deriving from a system analysis on both individual and domestic levels of analysis if we want to use the neorealist view or the political economy's school, in order to rate the interaction between an “independent” leading of the Chinese foreign policy and its restrictions (upon it) arising out of the system.



model), China seeking to export it within its region, to start with, and thereafter to the wider world, as its own civilizational and successful experience⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Zhang Wei-Wei presents a structure for that Confucian model, based on eight main ideas: a) seeking the truth of the facts (Deng Xiaoping's renown motto and stamp for his pragmatism); b) giving priority to the people's well being (instead of focusing on human rights as the West does); c) thinking in a holistic way (not losing sight of the global issue); d) a government as an essential virtue (a strong government leading the country's modernization and building consensus); e) a good governance is more important than democracy (China rejects the stereotype autocracy versus democracy); f) political legitimacy is attained through performance (the Confucian criteria of own right, of acting through *ren*); g) learning in a selective way and adapting to new challenges (learn from the others and testing it on the specific field); h) harmony within diversity (a complex and much diverse society, where interests can come to conciliate and tensions restrained). Cf. Zhang Wei-Wei, "Eight Ideas behind China's Success", *The New York Times*, 1st October 2009.

