

REGIONAL POLICY

**EVOLUTION OF
CONTEMPORARY CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY:
LEGACY AND INNOVATION****Konstantin SYROYEZHKIN**

*D.Sc. (Political Science), Leading Research Fellow,
Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies (KISI)
under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

Svetlana KOZHIROVA

*D.Sc. (Political Science), Professor,
Institute of Diplomacy, Academy of Public Administration (APA)
under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
(Astana, Kazakhstan)*

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the conceptual foundations of China's international policy. It traces the phases of establishment and evolution of the PRC's foreign policy agenda under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. A note is made of the fact that in the early 1990s the taoguang yanghui strategic principle (stay in the shadows, keep a low

profile, avoid being in the forefront) determined the foreign policy agenda of the PRC in the period of reforms and openness, associated with the implementation of "four modernizations" and "the open-door policy." The legacy of the foreign policy agenda is examined, with emphasis on concepts of a peaceful development path, protection of essential interests, and the soft power poli-

cy. The third generation of PRC leaders had proposed the “new security system doctrine,” which carried over to the next generation’s policy, where PCR security was considered directly dependent on the peaceful development principles. The issue of developing harmonious diplomacy as the foundation of the PRC’s soft power emerged. The foreign policy was not meant to be limited to passive support of external conditions favorable to Chinese reforms, but aimed to actively counteract the U.S. and other states in their attempts to thwart the rise of China. Western researchers refer to this policy as “the global prevention of external threats.” The concepts of “China’s peaceful rise” and “China expanding beyond its borders” were based on the idea of development models’ variability, support of global stability and the creation of conditions for “universal prosperity,” which is, first and foremost, in the best interests of developing countries. According to Xi Jinping, strengthening and develop-

ment of relations with developing countries is the initial and the final points of PRC’s foreign policy.

The paper notes the distinctive features of the foreign policy pursued by the “fifth generation” of PRC leaders, their proposals on creating a new model of international relations, which is based on mutually rewarding cooperation. The practical realization of this agenda took shape in China’s design and implementation of a far-reaching strategy called One Belt, One Road, which integrates major geopolitical infrastructural projects, namely, Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. It has been observed that the basic premise of contemporary foreign policy is China’s eagerness to share its success with other countries, particularly with China’s regional neighbors. One of the seminal principles, namely, cooperation, has to be implemented on the basis of positive interaction, mutual rewards, and collective benefits.

KEYWORDS: *PRC’s foreign policy, soft power, new security system doctrine, One Belt, One Road, new international relations model.*

Introduction

Deng Xiaoping’s modernization concept, which comprised the notion of an independent and self-reliant foreign policy, has for a long time remained at the core of China’s foreign policy doctrine, aiming principally for China’s accelerated economic development. The *taoguang yanghui* strategic principle (*stay in the shadows, keep a low profile, avoid being in the forefront*), proposed by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1990s, has determined PRC’s foreign policy agenda during the period of reforms and openness, which was associated with the implementation of “four modernizations” and “the open-door policy.” In the early 2000s, this agenda was augmented by the globalization of economy, protection of private property rights and gradual political liberalization, the establishment of a new model of relations with the international community, especially with the U.S. and the EU, on the basis of threat globalization and security interest principles. An open economic policy is implemented in the PRC, and territorial openness, or the development of regions with preferential foreign investment terms, is an integral part of it. Meanwhile, the *taoguang yanghui* principle in foreign policy has gradually begun to cause antagonism in military and expert circles. According to a number of Chinese experts, China can now easily come out of the shadows, propose its initiatives to the world and challenge the international leadership of the U.S. Many Chinese military experts have begun talking about the obsolescence of the conflict avoidance and maneuvering approach. Their suggestion is not to be

afraid of the conflicts, not to avoid them, but, on the contrary, to adopt a tough assertive stance, since today China is able to retaliate against any enemy.

Subsequent PRC leaders offered their own concepts, which exacerbated and efficiently developed Deng Xiaoping's fundamental principles. In particular, the "third generation" of Chinese leaders, headed by Jiang Zemin, has founded its policy on the new security system doctrine, which was sustained in the political agenda adopted by the fourth generation of PRC leaders. Hu Jintao suggested that PCR security is directly dependent on peaceful development principles. In April 2006, in his address at Yale University Hu Jintao had for the first time attempted to integrate the harmonious values of the Chinese tradition, PRC's contemporary objectives and the country's foreign policy. Meanwhile, the PRC leader emphasized that China had always valued social harmony and will continue to counteract the attempts "to impose values and civilizational structure on other countries." Experts have taken this statement as the beginning of a hardline confrontation with the U.S. and its "hard power" of promulgation of its values.¹

An important postulate at the core of the PRC's focus on the country's transformation into one of the world's political and economic centers is the idea of integrated state power. It is based on the concept that in the modern world a state's power and its influence on the international arena is determined not merely by its military potential, but also by the level of economic, sociocultural and scientific and technological development, as well as a measured foreign policy agenda. Chinese experts consider the relative shift of emphasis to a competition in aggregate state power to be the distinctive feature of the new world order formation. This power is defined as the integrated indicator of the country's economic, political, military, scientific and technical potential, which comprises an aggregate of factors that determine a country's ability to develop, counteract challenges, external pressure and disintegration processes, assert its value system, etc.²

In the late 1990s, PRC leaders have made adjustments to the country's foreign policy. From that time on we can speak of the formation of Beijing's foreign policy strategy as an integrated complex of measures that aim to implement global good neighborliness. Priority of domestic development objectives was previously emphasized by PRC. In the late 1990s, the foreign and domestic political aspects have leveled off in significance. Foreign policy was supposed not only to passively support external conditions favorable for Chinese reforms, but also actively counteract the U.S. or other countries in their attempts to thwart the rise of China. Western researchers refer to this policy as the global prevention of external threats.³ This policy was examined not only in a military and political context, but in the process of structuring the international system and changing China's place in it.

Chinese scientists have begun to use an entirely new ideologeme, which is directly related to the foreign policy sphere, namely, *China expanding beyond its borders*. Its introduction to the current political lexicon is linked to the anticipated increase of China's international economic and political competitiveness and a rise in its global and regional activity.⁴

Researchers draw attention to the numerous examples of China's growing influence in Southeast Asia, where Beijing sends its best diplomats and a significant amount of economic aid. The poorest countries in the region, such as Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar, have received hundreds of millions, and sometimes even billions of dollars over the course of several years. In order to raise the efficiency of its economic assistance, Beijing created an agency within the Chinese government, which is responsible for development assistance. The agency experts successfully coordinate their

¹ See: *Renmin ribao*, 26 April, 2006.

² See: M. Krupianko, L. Areshidze, "Novaia rasstanovka sil v Vostochnoi Azii: znachenie dlia interesov bezopasnosti Rossii," *Vostok*, No. 6, 2003, p. 27.

³ See: A. Goldstein, "The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy A Rising Power's Emerging Choice," *The China Quarterly*, No. 168, December 2001, pp. 835-864.

⁴ See: "The Decisions of the 16th Congress of the CPC," *Far Eastern Affairs*, No. 1, 2003.

projects with China's specific foreign policy objectives. For instance, the Chinese government generously finances internships and language training for the members of state authorities and nongovernmental organizations of Indochina and the Asia-Pacific Region.

Beijing has attained impressive results by practicing soft power in Southeast Asia over the last decade. As high-level officials from small and medium-sized member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) admit, their governments are always sensitive to China's opinion when making decisions at ASEAN negotiations. This occurs regardless of the fact that one of ASEAN's chief aims is to reduce the influence of great powers, including China, in Southeast Asia.⁵

After Hu Jintao's administration took office, new accents emerged in the work on establishing the image of China. Increasingly more often Chinese ideologists turn to the concept of soft power (*ruan shili*) introduced by the American scientist Joseph Nye,⁶ which implies the utilization of non-material power resources of cultural and political ideals for the purpose of influencing the behavior of people in other countries, unlike the hard power exerted by weapons or money. The transformation of this concept, borrowed from American political science, into a component of official party policy occurred at the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China, where an appeal sounded in Hu Jintao's Report to "increase the cultural soft power of the state."⁷ One of the sources of PRC's soft power should be harmonious diplomacy based on the ideas of diverse development patterns, maintenance of global stability, and creating the conditions for universal prosperity, which is, first and foremost, in the best interests of developing countries. Concepts of China's peaceful rise (*zhongguo jueqi*) and construction of a harmonious world (*jianshe hexie shijie*), adopted by the Hu-Wen tandem, have produced generally positive results,⁸ however, just prior to the 18th CPC Congress the tandem's foreign policy was criticized. Moreover, critical remarks sounded both in the Western media and Chinese dissidents' blogs, and in party periodicals. For instance, the article penned by Deng Yuwen, the deputy editor-in-chief of *Xuesi shibao*, published by the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, referred to the foreign policy agenda of fourth-generation leaders as "fire-fighting and aimed at maintaining stability." He believed that the key problem was in the inability to take advantage of the opportunities that the major shifts in the international situation afforded, and the fact that, as a result, the proposed international order alteration concepts were not implemented. All in all, this led to the passivity of Chinese diplomacy, which "only had goals and principles, but lacked strategic planning and a defined agenda." The root of these problems may be traced to the adherence to Deng Xiaoping's concept of staying in the shadows and trying to remain invisible (*taoguang yanghui*), which not only led to the worsening of China's position on the international arena, but also significantly shattered its citizens' trust.⁹

The *methodology* of foreign policy research is based on a multifactorial analysis of global and regional political events and specific elements of foreign policy structure, in which three models of foreign policy analysis are distinguished:

- I — classic, where it emerges as the result of conscious, goal-oriented, rational choice-best activity of the actor (entire states, governments and/or their leaders);

⁵ See: J. Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2007, p. 224.

⁶ See: J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2004.

⁷ Quoted from: D.A. Zhirmov, *Rossia i Kitai v sovremennykh mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh*, MGIMO (U), Moscow, 2002, p. 33.

⁸ For more details, see: K.L. Syroezhkin, *Nasledie tandema "Hu-Wen" i "piatoe pokolenie" kitaiskikh rukovoditelei*, KISI under the President of RK, Almaty, 2013.

⁹ See: Deng Yuwen, "The Hu-Wen Political Heritage," *Caijing*, No. 22, September 2012, available at [<http://www.magazine.caijing.com.cn/>] (in Chinese).

II — the impression of foreign policy as a result of a complex of organizational actions and processes;

III — foreign policy as a result of political bargaining held by state agencies and their leaders, which occurs within the government, as well as in its relations with lobbyists.

These models reflect the evolution of relevant theoretical thought, and reveal a new dimension in foreign policy analysis.

Research Findings

Aspects of Xi Jinping's Foreign Policy Agenda

The growing power of China and its foreign policy ambitions, the rise of Han nationalism in the context of the shifts in the international climate and the exacerbation of the situation in the South China Sea, as well as the development tendencies in the domestic socioeconomic and political environment, required not only a new development strategy to be elaborated, but new foreign policy priorities to be set.

Although fifth-generation leaders did not dismiss their predecessors' best foreign policy practices, leaving them in their repertoire, they proposed both new foreign policy approaches and an entirely new position for China on the international arena. The new approach was defined by Xi Jinping as early as in January 2013. He made several meaningful proposals in his address at the third collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC, which was devoted to foreign policy issues.

- The first thing he emphasized was the need to subordinate China's foreign policy to its internal development interests. These are the attainment of the goals of the "two centenaries,"¹⁰ proposed at the 18th Congress of the CPC, and the fulfillment of the Chinese dream—the great revival of the Chinese nation. In order to attain these goals, China needs peace to provide the conditions for its internal development.
- The second point he underscored was that while China will continue to follow the path of peaceful development, it will never relinquish its lawful rights, or sacrifice the country's essential interests. No state should count on China trading in its key interests, or "swallowing the bitter fruit that infringes on the China's sovereignty, security and the interests of development."¹¹
- The third basic principle of the fifth-generation leaders' foreign policy is China's eagerness to share its success with other countries, especially with China's regional neighbors. One of the fundamental postulates is that cooperation should be implemented on the basis of positive interaction, mutual rewards and joint benefits.

¹⁰ The first aim is to establish a well-rounded, moderately prosperous society by 2021 (100th anniversary of the CPC). The second aim is to create a rich, prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmoniously modernized socialist state by 2049 (100th anniversary of PRC), and the attaining the great Chinese national revival over the course of the 21st century.

¹¹ See: "To Conduct Domestic and Foreign Policy Planning More Better and in a Uniform Way, To Strengthen the Foundation for Pursuing Peaceful Development" (28 January, 2013), in: Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, Foreign Languages Press, China, 2014; Idem, "To Conduct Domestic and Foreign Policy Planning More Better and in a Uniform Way, To Strengthen the Foundation for Pursuing Peaceful Development," *Xinhua Wang*, 29 January, 2013, available at [<http://cpc.people.com.cn/>] (in Chinese).

- In the fourth place, China believes that there is no universal development model or a uniform development path in the world. That's why the following should become the foundation of its relations with other countries:
 - respecting the rights of each Party to make an independent choice of its social structure and development path;
 - respecting every country's approach to the advancement of economic and social development;
 - establishing confidence in the strategic agenda of the other Party;
 - supporting each other in essential issues that arouse the other Party's concerns.

Finally, considering the fact that the international security system is in the midst of a crisis, and the international institutes designed to ensure security are practically dysfunctional, China is proposing a new security system that stipulates universality and equality for all. According to fifth-generation leaders, "no country should lay claim to the monopoly of regional security-related affairs to the disadvantage of other countries' lawful rights and interests."¹²

These are the general principles of the new Chinese diplomacy. However, relations with different groups of countries and in each direction of China's foreign policy activity have their special features. In his 27 June, 2013 address at the second World Peace Forum at the Tsinghua University the Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, specified seven directions of China's foreign policy work:

- (1) building a new type of rapport between great powers;
- (2) creation of a peaceful and stable environment with neighboring countries;
- (3) establishing rapport with developing countries on the basis of the notions of fairness and incentives;
- (4) furthering reform and openness policy;
- (5) active participation in resolving international and regional problems, formation of a new world order;
- (6) asserting objectives and principles of the U.N. Charter and recognized statutory norms of international law;
- (7) protection of legal rights of Chinese citizens abroad.¹³

In November 2014, Xi Jinping took the stage at the Conference of the Central Committee of the CPC on international operations, the first such conference since 2006. In his address, he noted that the basic international trends remained the same as in the 1980s—multi-polarity, economic globalization, peace and development, the need to reform the international system, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific Region. The Chinese leader had also emphasized that China "is at a critical stage in accomplishing a great national revival," in the course of which the interdependence between China and other countries became particularly strong. He also stated that China's increased power should

¹² See: Wang Yi, "China Appeals to the Southern Pacific States to Share Trust, Common Interests, and Mutually Rewarding Cooperation," *Renmin ribao*, 24 November, 2014 (in Chinese); "Keep Up with the Time, Promote Peaceful Development on the Planet," 23 March, 2013, in: Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*; "Kommentarii: Kitai gotov delitsia blagami svoego ekonomicheskogo razvitiia s sosednimi stranami," Xinhua Agency, 3 November, 2013, available at [<http://www.russian.xinhuanet.com/>].

¹³ See: Wang Yi, "A Search for a Diplomatic Approach with the Chinese Characteristics of a Great Country," *Guojijiantianjiu*, No. 4, 2013, pp. 1-7 (in Chinese).

become an element of its new foreign policy.¹⁴ According to Xi Jinping, sustaining and furthering rapport with developing countries is the initial and the final point of Chinese foreign policy. For instance, in his address at the U.N. Headquarters in New York (26 September, 2015) the Chinese leader stated that South-South cooperation is a model of interaction characterized by solidarity and mutual assistance.¹⁵

The Chinese leader placed particular emphasis on the need for a consistent expansion of the role that U.N. and the U.N. Security Council hold in ensuring peace, for which purpose he proposed to strengthen the enforcement component along with the political and diplomatic vector of the organization's work. To that end, Xi Jinping revealed China's decision to establish a China-U.N. Peace and Development Foundation, pledging \$1 billion for U.N. needs. In addition, China decided to join the new U.N. peacekeeping mechanism, and create a specialized military unit comprising 8,000 people which could be used for U.N. peacekeeping purposes when necessary.¹⁶

In his first address at the annual U.N. General Assembly debates (28 September, 2015), Xi Jinping has called to create a new model of international relations based on mutually rewarding cooperation. Having noted that the U.N. Charter objectives have not been attained yet, Xi Jinping appealed to aim more efforts at attaining peace and development in the 21st century: "We have to confirm our commitment to the goals and principles of the U.N. Charter, establish a new type of international relations, which is founded on mutually rewarding communications and create a 'common fate community' for all humankind."¹⁷ On 17 January, 2017, Xi Jinping participated in the opening of the annual session of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and delivered the keynote address entitled *Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth*.

- First of all, Xi Jinping underscored that economic globalization gave a powerful impulse to global economy. Simultaneously, globalization had brought new problems, but simple shift of the blame for the troubles that afflict the world will not assist in their resolution. According to Xi Jinping's opinion, we have to adapt and direct economic globalization, eliminate its negative factors and strive for it to become beneficial to countries and people.¹⁸ Xi Jinping appealed to world leaders not to reject globalization, but to reformat it since, according to him, countries need to be treated more equally in the process.¹⁹
- Secondly, the Chinese leader remarked that after 38 years of reforms and openness China has already become the second largest economy in the world, and has attained great results. Additionally, Xi Jinping noted that China's development is an opportunity for the world. China does not merely benefit from economic globalization, but also makes an outstanding contribution to this process.
- In the third place, Xi Jinping stated that since the One Belt, One Road initiative was proposed, it was supported by over 100 countries and international organizations. Over 40 countries and international organizations have signed cooperation agreements with China. The amount of

¹⁴ Quoted from: M.Yu. Korostikov, "Dinamika vneshnei politiki KNR cherez prizmu natsionalnykh interesov," *Comparative Politics. Russia*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2016, available at [[http://dx.doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4\(25\)-108-126](http://dx.doi.org/10.18611/2221-3279-2016-7-4(25)-108-126)].

¹⁵ See: "Xi Jinping podcherknul vazhnost sotrudnichestva Yug-Yug," 27 September, 2015, available at [<http://russian.people.com.cn/n/2015/0927/c31520-8956033.html>].

¹⁶ See: "Kitai neuklonno podderzhivaet mirotvorcheskie operatsii OON i zashchishchaet mir vo vsem mire," 13 September, 2015, available at [<http://russian.people.com.cn/n/2015/0930/c31521-8957217.html>].

¹⁷ See: "Predsedatel KNR predlozhl novuiu model mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii," 29 September, 2015, available at [http://russian.news.cn/2015-09/29/c_134671129.htm].

¹⁸ See: "Xi Jinping prinal uchastie v otkrytii ezhegodnoi sessii VEF v Davose i vystupil s osnovnym dokladom," available at [<http://russian.people.com.cn/n3/2017/0118/c31520-9168307.html>].

¹⁹ See: "Xi Jinping zashchitil v Davose svobodnuiu torgovliu," 20 January, 2017, available at [<https://artpodgotovka.news/si-czinp-zashchitil-v-davose-svobodnu/>].

Chinese investments in the countries along the One Belt, One Road route has exceeded \$50 billion. Thus, the One Belt, One Road initiative was proposed by China, but its results benefit the entire world.

- In the fourth place, Xi Jinping noted that large states should adhere to the principles of non-belligerence, non-confrontation, mutual respect and mutually rewarding cooperation, with large countries treating small countries as equals and placing fairness above their own interests.

These ideas were also articulated by the Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, at the 53rd Munich Security Conference.

First of all, Wang Yi stated that the world is facing numerous conflicts because of the departure from the key U.N. Charter objectives. If all the countries adhere to the main objectives and principles of the U.N. Charter, it is entirely possible to achieve peaceful conflict resolution, avoid conflicts and confrontations, and implement cooperation and mutual rewards on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Multilateralism is an efficient means to sustain peace, promote development and regulate global challenges.

Secondly, Wang Yi underscored that the states should not be categorized as large or small ones, and that they are all equal. At the same time, large countries have greater resources and opportunities. They are responsible for playing a greater role in ensuring peace and security in the world and making a greater contribution to the humankind's development and progress.²⁰ For instance, China has already become the world's second economy, the global leader in manufacturing and one of the principal trading states, and the country's leaders believe that China will, to the best of its abilities, take on greater international responsibilities and duties.

Conceptual Approaches to Cooperation with Neighboring Countries

The new policy in regard to neighboring countries emerged in late 2013. In early September, Xi Jinping toured four Central Asian countries, proposing the idea of establishing a Silk Road Economic Belt in his address in Astana. In early October, he visited Malaysia and Indonesia, articulating the idea of constructing the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. On 24 October, a meeting regarding diplomatic approaches to neighboring countries took place in Beijing, where new key points were highlighted in China's foreign policy agenda in respect to its neighbors.²¹ All of the preceding foreign policy initiatives were united by the One Belt, One Road (*yi dai yi lu*) concept, and were included in the repertoire of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the entire propaganda machine. Today this notion may be considered representative of the PRC's new geopolitical concept. Although the meeting was classified (which is a strange fact), certain theses articulated there became public knowledge.

The *strategic objectives* of diplomacy with neighboring countries:

- serving the purposes of “two centenaries” and the realization of the Chinese dream of the great Chinese national revival;

²⁰ See: “Glava MID KNR prinal uchastie v Miunkhenskoj konferentsii po bezopasnosti,” 18 February, 2017, available at [<http://russian.people.com.cn/n3/2017/0218/c31520-9179614.html>].

²¹ See: *Renmin ribao*, 26 October, 2013; Following the Concept of ‘Amity, Sincerity, Mutual Benefit and Inclusion’ in Diplomatic Relations with Neighboring Countries,” (24 October, 2013), in: Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*.

- comprehensive development of relations with neighboring countries, strengthening of good neighborliness and friendship, expanding mutually rewarding cooperation;
- maintenance and utilization of important strategic opportunities for the development of China, protection of state sovereignty, security and prospective development;
- exerting efforts to create more amicable political relations between China and neighboring countries, along with stronger economic ties, enhancement of security-related cooperation, closer cultural exchange.

In order for this work to be implemented, there are two common interests to pursue—domestic and international. The domestic concern is to attain the “two centenaries”, and realize the Chinese dream of a great national revival, and the international—to achieve favorable external conditions for reforms, development and stability in China, protect state sovereignty, security and prospective development, maintain peace and stability in the entire world and promote joint development.

The *main focus* in developing diplomatic relations with neighboring countries is to adhere to “a benevolent attitude towards neighbors, and treat them as partners,” insist on good “neighborliness, maintaining good relationships with neighboring countries and the attainment of joint prosperity,” which embody the concept of “amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusion” (*qin, cheng, hui, rong*).

The four hieroglyphs that describe this policy have a rich semantic palette, and their interpretation is associated with the conceptual heritage of ancient China.

Amity (*qin*) also means “affinity.” In Confucian culture the highest extent of love for one’s parents became the foundation of the universal virtue of humaneness (*ren*) when a person transposes the feeling of *qin* onto all people and the entire universe. The inclusion of *amity/affinity* among the key guidelines in China’s relations with its neighbors corresponds to the internal logic of a traditional culture, which insists on continual expansion of *qin* beyond one’s own clan and kingdom.

Sincerity (*cheng*) in Chinese tradition is inseparable from trust (*xin*), which became one of the moral pillars of classic Confucianism. In foreign policy, this idea reflects the endeavor to adopt a sincere approach in relations with neighbors in hopes of earning their trust.

Mutual benefit (*hui*) in traditional culture was synonymous with mercy and benevolence afforded by the ruler to his people. In response, the moral duty of the people was loyalty to the ruler.

Inclusion (*rong*) in ancient Chinese thought pointed to the ability of a wise man to respect the diversity of things, regardless of the differences between them. This idea corresponds to contemporary Chinese politics, which claims the value of different civilizations and cultures.²²

The *basic objectives* of diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries are as follows:

- maintaining good neighborliness and friendship, and continually provide mutual assistance when need arises;
- emphasize equality and respect feelings; meet more often and visit each other; underscore the things that win people’s sympathy and warm their hearts; strive for the neighboring countries to act towards China in a friendlier and more amicable manner, express greater support and approval, which would increase the powers of rapprochement, effect and influence;
- act wholeheartedly towards neighboring countries, find more friends and partners;
- maintain cooperation in compliance with the mutual reward principle, create more close-knit common interest networks and raise the integration of both sides’ interests to a greater level,

²² See: M. Titarenko, A. Lomanov, “Politicheskie i kulturnye aspekty strategii stanovlenia Kitaia kak velikoi derzhavy,” *Far Eastern Affairs*, No. 3, 2015, pp. 25-26.

so that adjoining countries receive greater rewards from the development of China, and China receive profit and assistance from joint development of neighboring countries;

- advocate inclusion in relations with neighboring countries, strengthening joint development in the Asia-Pacific Region, adopt a more open and active approach towards promoting regional cooperation;
- use comparative advantages efficiently, determine the points of strategic alignment that may promote mutually rewarding cooperation with neighboring countries, take active part in regional economic cooperation;
- unify the efforts of all states concerned for the speedy creation of an integrated infrastructure, which would allow to interact efficiently in the establishment of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road;
- continually strengthen regional cooperation in the financial sphere, actively prepare for the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, improve the regional financial security network;
- accelerate the development of border region openness, intensify these regions' mutually rewarding cooperation with adjoining countries;
- promote cooperation in the regional security sphere; strive for maintaining peace and stability in neighboring countries; adhere to the new security concept that is based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual rewards, equality and coordination;
- comprehensively promote cultural exchanges, strengthen friendly ties in tourism, science and education, cooperation between neighboring regions;
- create the conditions for the expansion of China's soft power influence, "integrating the essence of the Chinese dream with the desire of the people of neighboring countries for a better, prosperous life and with prospects of regional growth, striving for the seed of the collective faith notion to take root in the soil of the neighboring countries that it falls on."

Although most of the above-mentioned theses are not new, their emergence as priorities in the relations with neighboring countries is the first of its kind, which reveals China's desire to take its relations with neighboring countries to a new level.

Secondly, the following priorities in this agenda are newly established and deserve certain attention:

- the emphasis on the need to attain mutual rewards, common success and joint development;
- the focus on amity, sincerity, mutual rewards and inclusion;
- emphasis on the creation of a "common fate community" and "common interest community" with the neighboring countries;
- peaceful diplomacy as the main vector in the diplomatic relations between China and neighboring countries;
- new security concept proposal, which is based on the principles of comprehensiveness, universality and cooperation;
- initiative to establish the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Although all of the above-mentioned theses sound very appealing, they do not allow to definitively dismiss the concerns in regard to Chinese expansion.

Conclusions

- The above review demonstrates that Xi Jinping has significantly shifted the emphases in Chinese foreign policy. Although the basic thesis on China “continuing to follow the path of peaceful development” is still in place, it has, however, been substantially supplemented with a statement that China “will never relinquish its lawful rights or sacrifice the key interests of the country.” This means that fifth-generation leaders have set course for China’s more active involvement in international affairs and are oriented towards a tougher foreign policy, although with a greater emphasis on soft power. The five years that elapsed have brought many testaments to this fact, and not merely in the South China Sea area.
- Secondly, the strategic objective of China’s foreign policy is the attainment of “two centenaries” and great Chinese national revival. This means that, just as before, China’s foreign policy is entirely subordinated to its domestic policy. All China’s actions on the international arena are taken with one single goal—to create favorable international conditions for the implementation of domestic policy goals and establishing a positive image of China.
- In the third place, although Chinese diplomacy does not have any geographic limitations, it focuses primarily on working with neighboring countries. The basic diplomatic premise in relation to adjoining countries is approaching them as friends and partners, in order to provide them with a sense of security and assist in their development. In any case, that’s the thesis declared by the present leaders of the Communist Party of China and People’s Republic of China.
- The fourth essentially new foreign policy premise introduced by fifth-generation leaders states that China “is willing to share its economic development successes,” neighboring countries should derive profits from China’s development and China should receive benefits and support from developing jointly with neighboring countries. In order to attain this goal, China is proposing to accelerate the creation of free trade areas with neighbors, expand trade and investments, and create a new pattern of regional economic integration. The initiative to establish the Silk Road Economic Belt is proposed as the model for the Central Asian region.
- In the fifth place, China is beginning to assert itself not just as a regional, but as “a responsible world power,” concerned with the alteration of the current “game rules” on the international arena and proposing its own vision of these rules. The security concept proposed by China is based on the principles of universality, integration, interaction and stability, and is merely the first step in this direction. China’s objective in regard to the neighboring countries (and in regard to the rest of the world) is the creation of “global humanity with a common fate.”

For us all of the above means that we should learn to utilize China’s interest in the region for the benefit of socioeconomic development of the countries in the region. Fears and phobias are not productive. On the one hand, it is essential to be aware of the fact that there are no alternatives to cooperation with China under specific historical circumstances. It does, however, need to be established on a mutually rewarding foundation and serve the purpose of strengthening the countries in the region. On the other hand, it is clear that while strong China is a challenge, a weak, disintegrating China is a threat whose scale cannot be overstated.