

The International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan Studies (**IFIMES**) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, regularly analyses events in the Middle East and the Balkans. **Saffet Akkaya**, Colonel (Retd), Phd Candidate at the International Relations Middle East Technical University, Ankara/Turkey and Member of IFIMES International Institute has presented his views of the political, economic and security perspectives of China. His article entitled "**POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVES OF CHINA IN NEW GLOBAL ORDER**" is published in its entirety.



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## **POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVES OF CHINA IN NEW GLOBAL ORDER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the second half of the twentieth Century, the number of the great powers list in the world was short, including USA, USSR, Japan and Europe. It is not hard to predict that 21st Century will be different with the participation of new rising powers in the front rows such as China and India. It is a broad perception that by 2025, China will be the second largest economy opening the way for a multi-polar era in

world politics. The regimes such as liberal trade, open capital market, and nuclear non-proliferation established by “Real Existing Liberalism” with the hands of USA since 1940s are being challenged by a new shift of emerging regional or global powers since the end of Cold War. Before focusing over and to better understand China’s economic, military and political perspectives in new world order, there is a need to summarize the history of China, and later on to focus on the basic dynamics of political, economic and military patterns that are getting more dominant in the new global order since the demise of Cold War Era.

### **CHINA, THE SLEEPING GIANT**

In his book, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers”, Paul Kennedy describes 15<sup>th</sup> Century’s Chinese and Ottoman Empires as “Powder Empires”. Kennedy asserts that, these two empires were strong due to their giant military powers, limited by the capacity of their arms, mainly based on human strength with no dynamic economic or technological support behind.<sup>1</sup> Actually contrary to this general statement, during the reign of Ming Dynasty in the first half of 15<sup>th</sup> Century (1405-1453), China had managed some overseas campaigns with a considerably huge and modern navy fleet, many decades before colonial powers set sails into open seas. Chinese navy had sailed through South East Asia seas as far as to Africa shores. Later on, mainly based on a decision by Confucius Bureaucracy, China made a sharp and vital decision and closed its doors to the world, leaving that strong navy fleet to corrosion, limiting sea trade and enacting laws to ban trade with foreigners.<sup>2</sup>

In following centuries what China did was mainly focusing on farming, building inland water canal systems, and trying to stop assaults coming from north and west. The Manchu Dynasty that succeeded Ming Dynasty in mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century followed the same policy. As a result of this policy China paid a big price and since 1644 until 1911 it has been subject to colonial policies of European powers, particularly that of Great Britain. The colonial policies of Great Powers over China has reached such an unbearable level, the years 1839-1940 is called as “Century of Shame” by Chinese historians and statesmen.<sup>3</sup>

After World War I, China suffered another 25 years of civil war between nationalists and communists, to name Chiang Kai-Shek of National front and Mao Zedong of Communist front. At the end of WW II, Mao and his friends succeeded to establish the communist revolution and unified Chinese people under one government. The name of the new state was People’s Republic of China, and Chiang Kai-Shek and his followers fled to Taiwan and established own government under nationalist liberal rules with the support particularly from USA and European states.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Kennedy, *Büyük Güçlerin Yükseliş ve Çöküşleri*, (Ankara: Tisamat Basım, 1993) p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Barış Adıbelli, *Büyük Avrasya Projesi* (Ankara: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006) p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War) (14.03.2008)

Along Cold War era, China has been governed under strict communist ideology, with a huge population mainly dealing with farming, trying to create a powerful military and economy. Towards 1980s, after their legendary leader Mao Zedong died in 1976, the Chinese people, particularly the students in universities had problems with official communist program. Following the demise of one party communist system, the legitimacy of one-party-systems in China, as well as in other communist states, has come under question. With the collapse of communist ideology in global perspective, anti-Westernism lost its power of influence in society and its ability to become an alternative political model against liberalism.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the pressure of democratization calls grew stronger than before and Chinese leaders (Deng Xiaoping) made a decision to update their party program to pave the way for a socio-economic reform. In order to adopt communist system to new world's order, China Communist Party made some vital decisions and realized a political transformation during the term of President Jiang Zemin in 1993. This is called as "triple representation notion", simply envisaging; membership of capitalist persons to communist party, protection and development of Chinese culture, and Communist Party's embracing the whole society.<sup>6</sup>

### **NEW GLOBAL ORDER**

As China was paving a new route for coming decades like an awakening dragon, the world was adapting itself to new global conditions. With the collapse of communist block the post-cold war era has started and the economic, social, cultural, military and political gap between the "Center" and the "Periphery" has widened to greater extends with a new world pregnant to new consequences. As Barry Buzan argues in his exceptional article "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century, 1991" new world order is completely different from the Cold War era classification, which was basically composed of a tri-apartheid system.<sup>7</sup> The old political, geographical or cultural principles to classify the states into different worlds are not relevant anymore. The world is basically defined under two names as "Center" and "Periphery" and a country that takes place in east geographically can be identified as a member of North, or the Center in new era. The Center is composed of economically and militarily strong states, which are the representatives of hegemonic liberalism, no matter at which geographic location they occupy on the planet. The Periphery is made by the states who were once the members of Second (communist block) or Third World and some others that are excluded from the center for cultural, religious or ideological reasons.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Barış Adıbelli, *Büyük Avrasya Projesi* (Ankara: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006) p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century", *International Affairs* 3 (1991): p. 440.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

## **CHINA'S POLITICAL STEPS AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL SYSTEM**

It is a common understanding for Chinese statesmen and scholars that a peaceful environment and stable international system is vital for Chinese economic improvement. This peaceful environment has been formulized by Chinese bureaucracy during cold war years as Mutual respect to territorial borders, Respect to internal affairs of other states, Equality in relations, Non-aggression, and Peace in the world. West is also paying attention to peaceful upsurge of China, in a supportive way. The economic relations of USA and China in APEC and the future promising relations between EU and China on economic issues are good samples for the positive approach of Western world to China, and its peaceful economic steps. In this regard, China has supported current uni-polar system but also working for a peaceful transition to multi-polar system envisaging USA, China, Russia, EU and Japan as great powers. China's transition from strict communist ideology commenced in early 1980s and due to severe economic conditions of which USSR suffered, it started to prepare for a better political and economic structure that is compatible to new global order. During cold war era, China kept initiating and warming certain policies around several geographies as a pre-attempt to prepare the conditions of post-cold war system.

As solid samples of this policy during cold war China has supported Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to gain the confidence of Middle East countries, from where it imported the majority of its oil. China has also supported the socialist governments in South America and managed to create a hub of sympathy in the rear garden of USA. Today, China is devoting special attention to some states that play a vital role for Chinese interests, such as supporting Iran's policies to create a forward post in the Middle East by transferring nuclear energy echnical and political assistance, by making Iran as a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) where US policies are losing ground in recent years.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, China is developing economic, military, political relations with Central Asian states to neutralize the American and Russian policies and effectively using SCO to increase its influence in Central Asia and making forward steps to control the flow of energy sources into the country either through land pipe lines, or by sea routes. For this aim, China has signed agreements with Pakistan and Burma (Myanmar).<sup>10</sup>

China and EU are also enjoying good relations in recent years mainly focusing on economic, political, cultural and environmental projects. It is possible to assert that both sides are sharing mutual views on international issues. China has always regarded its relations with EU from strategic perspective for long term. It is clear that good relations and collaboration on economic issues will also increase the effectiveness of China's involvement in global economic and political institutions

<sup>9</sup> Barış Adıbelli, *Çin'in Avrasya Stratejisi*, (Ankara: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006) p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

such as World Trade Organization (WTO). EU officials assume that peaceful and steady development of China will pose no threat to rest of the world, and they seek new opportunities to extend the cooperation into space science, higher education, and preventing international organized crime. EU believes that a prosperous China will contribute to close the gap between rich and poor countries and will surely promote a global security throughout the world.

### **ECONOMIC INITIATIVES OF CHINA**

Chinese initiatives against US dominated world order started with its own decision to adapt the communist system to the new global order. China, in particular, has already begun to create new institutional structures outside of the United States' reach. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization- SCO (founded 2001, named Shanghai five in 1996), for example, which consists of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (with India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan as observers since 2005), has facilitated military and energy cooperation among its members, although still at a low level. The total population of the member states is 2,5 billion and occupy an area of 37 million km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>11</sup>

Although the open aim of the SCO is to develop cooperation on security, economic and cultural issues, the covert aim is to balance the US influence in central Asia and preserve own rights and to mobilize their future aims on strategic energy sources. The situation of Iran and India poses a special perception in this respect. Iran's membership to the Shanghai Organization seems to provide special advantages to both sides. Iran, as a main role player on global energy sources (15% of total natural gas reserves) may use SCO to receive political support to suspend the pressure from USA and Europe on its nuclear program, or may even get technical assistance from other four nuclear-power states in the organization.<sup>12</sup> The position of India is also vital in this regard with its possible role to take either the side of USA or China. Both super powers, USA and China, want to make use of India's rising economic and technologic power against the other side and use India as a balance of power instrument. It seems that China is one step ahead with the membership of India to Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

There are other initiatives of China on economic field such as courting resource-rich countries of Africa and APEC member states. In October 2006, it hosted a summit in Beijing with more than 40 leaders from Africa to ensure continued access to the energy-rich continent. The official declaration asserted "a new type of strategic partnership" between China and Africa based on political equality, mutual trust, economic cooperation and cultural changes. Priority is envisaged to be given to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 85

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 15

agriculture, infrastructure, industry, fishing, information technology, public health and training. The trade volume of both sides is expected to reach 100 billion US dollars by 2010. The political gain of China from the summit is the will of African states to support the re-unification of China in a peaceful process.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, China is taking an active part in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation-APEC (21 member states including USA, Russia, Canada and South Eastern Asia States), and helping establish an open trading and investing circumstance to develop the economy and trade relations with APEC members. They also have great meaning for China's on-going reforming and long-term economic development.

### **CHINA – EU RELATIONS:**

Until recently, the legal basis for relations between both sides has been the 1985 Trade and Co-operation Agreement which does not reflect the depth and scope of the relationship. According to EU Commission's October 2006 report on EU-China relations EU foresees vital interests for both sides and also for a better world in coming decades.<sup>14</sup> The report explains the future plans and challenges in a very comprehensive way, to summarize:

- China has re-emerged as a major power in the last decade and has become the world's fourth economy and third exporter, but also an increasingly important political power.
- Europe needs to respond effectively to China's renewed strength in order to tackle the key challenges facing Europe today including climate change, employment, migration, and security. There is a need to leverage the potential of a dynamic relationship with China based on EU values.
- Based on the fact that both the EU and China gain from trade and economic partnership, it is not reasonable to close Europe's doors to Chinese competition.
- Internal stability remains the key driver for Chinese policy. Over recent decades, stability has been underpinned by delivery of strong economic growth. Since 1980 China has enjoyed 9% annual average growth and has seen its share of world GDP expand tenfold to reach 5% of global GDP.
- China is already the world's second largest energy consumer with a growing demand and the environmental cost of this economic and industrial growth is becoming more and more apparent.
- The EU should continue support for China's internal political and economic reform process, for a strong and stable China which fully respects fundamental rights and freedoms, protects minorities and guarantees the rule of law.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 182

<sup>14</sup> EU Commission Policy Paper, (Brussels, 24.10. 2006) p. 10.

- Democracy, human rights and the promotion of common values remain fundamental tenets of EU policy and of central importance to bilateral relations. The EU should support and encourage the development of a full, healthy and independent civil society in China.
- For Taiwan issue, on the basis of its One China Policy, the EU should continue to prove:
  - Opposition to change of the status quo;
  - Strong opposition to the use of force;
  - Encouragement for pragmatic solutions and confidence building measures;
  - Support for dialogue between all parties; and,
  - Continue with strong economic and trade links with Taiwan.

As stated by Prof. Hüseyin Bağcı in his book *Zeitgeist*, despite some human rights problems and objections of domestic opposition parties, two leading countries in EU, Germany and France have also proved a realist policy (*realpolitik*) towards China. Lifting weapons embargo to China, is one step that is being initiated by these countries. On the other hand Germany and France are also seeking new opportunities to establish strong relations with China on forming new transatlantic forums, to some extent questioning the role of NATO in this respect.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, although economic developments are the admiral ship in EU-China relations, some other strong developments are also emerging on political and security issues.

## **CHINA'S MILITARY IN GLOBAL SECURITY**

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Before explaining the Chinese policies on force structure and future military projects on the way to be a global power, we need to have a look at the changing security perception of the world. Actually, China poses full compromise with the policies of US led military coalitions in order to assure a safe heaven for its economic development. On the other hand China has successfully used the instruments of “soft balancing” during first and second Gulf wars, to create an appropriate environment for future economic and political initiatives particularly in Middle East and Central Asia.

Until recent years, the term of “security” in a relatively narrow form was generally understood as a reflection of military means of power, which was meant to be the stronger army, the more security. In an environment of anarchy and seamless competition between the states, military assets were the leading instruments for governments to maintain the balance of power and the national interests became the utmost goals to pursue. The sovereign state policies based on the suppression of the opposite side by military means naturally caused a race of military capabilities and promoted the dynamics of a military industry, consequently led to formation of a less secure environment under the shadows of nuclear weapons. As another asset of intense militarization, ideological rivalry with communist block was intensely used

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<sup>15</sup> Hüseyin Bağcı, *Zeitgeist, Global Politics and Turkey*, (Ankara: Orion Publications.2008), p.631

asserting that collectivist system and communist ideology posed a challenge for free market and individualism.

During the Cold War era, the liberalism was represented by the Americans in a robust mode to assure security and defense of both its global achievements and to respond a possible threat by communist block, which was not solely military but also an ideological, social and economic challenge. China as a strong member of communist block, followed economic, societal and military policies parallel to above mentioned principals of the Cold War Era.

In 1980s, a new security agenda emerged questioning the position of military-political issues as the center of security concerns. A turbulence has started to surround the world politics, and two issues - international economy and environment - have risen to the front rows of security studies, which were once conceived as “low politics” of Cold War era. Some preeminent scholars like Ken Booth bring a deeper understanding and promote a broader approach to security beyond the classical threats and use of military force. Beside military aspects of international security such as disarmament, arms control, and nuclear proliferation, other indirect factors of security such as poverty, unfair distribution of resources and injustice between developed and underdeveloped parts of the world have also gained considerable attention.<sup>16</sup> According to Booth, key decisions need to be taken about world security before the end of the second decade of twenty-first century, otherwise human kind will inevitably face a kind of global turmoil never seen before. The reason why he is so pessimistic on the future of world security can be found in the description of the threats without a “solid enemy”. These threats are mainly non-military threats stemming from uneven distribution of natural resources, trans-boundary crimes, epidemics and disease, terrorist acts, mass migration, environmental degradation and similar ones.

Based on above mentioned perceptions on new global security requirements, China made first steps to reorganize People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in early 1980s. The PLA tried to transform itself from a land-based power, to a smaller, mobile, high-tech one capable of mounting defensive operations beyond its borders. In 1985, under the leadership of Communist Party the PLA hanged from being constantly prepared to “hit early, strike hard and to fight a nuclear war” to developing the military in an era of peace with the aim of being a world-class force. Further, 1991 [Gulf War](#) provided the Chinese leadership with a stark realization that the PLA was an oversized ineffective force. In addition, the lessons derived from 1999 Kosovo War, 2001 Afghanistan and 2003 Iraqi Operations enlightened the way for transformation of PLA from a quantity based to a quality based Army.

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<sup>16</sup> Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007) p., 321



One significant step in order to increase the efficiency of the PLA is acquiring some advanced weapons systems from Russia, including the production patents such as destroyers, aircrafts and submarines. China has managed to develop these arms systems and become an arms dealer state fulfilling the space left by USSR. In addition, the PLA has attempted to build an indigenous aerospace and military industry by its own production. According to the figures derived from “The Military Balance 2007” the Total number of active military personnel in PLA is 2, 355.000 including conscripts. (Army 1.600.000, Navy 255.000, Air force 400.000, Strategic Missile Forces 100.000).

In December of 2004 the People's Liberation Army issued a status report, the White Paper, summarizing its view of the global configuration of forces, and projecting its response.<sup>17</sup> The basic assumptions of this key document are interesting for being so much parallel to the perception of the western world:

- The international situation is stable, but there are factors of increasing instability, uncertainty, and insecurity. On the other hand, hegemonism and unilateralism are growing.
- The tendency towards multi-polarization is deepening.
- New changes are altering the existing balance of power.
- The gap between the North and the South is ever widening.
- The World Wide Revolution in Military Affairs requires both new technology and new doctrines.
- Localized wars of a geopolitical, ethnic and religious nature are a constant threat.
- Any attempt by Taiwan to separate will be crushed.
- Non-traditional threats are on the increase.

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As a state policy parallel to the direction of world public opinion, Chinese government has also given unconditional support to USA government and to its pre-emptive reactions after 9/11 events. China's concern over terrorism is mainly related to Uighur movement in Eastern Turkistan. This region is the soft belly of China, not only because of Uighur independence movement, but also being a cross point for Eurasia strategic energy lines.<sup>18</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

As Yongjin Zhang argues in his book “China Goes Global, 2005”, the emergence of a new global economic order at the beginning of the 21st century, has been facilitated

<sup>17</sup> Samuel J. Noumoff, “China's Military and the new World Order” Global research,(2005)

<sup>18</sup> <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wtc01/china.htm> (14.03.2008)

by political transformation, economic revolution and technological innovation. This new global economic order has two striking characteristics. These are truly global and increasingly market-oriented. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism created necessary political conditions for the participation of more and more developing economies and former communist countries in the global market system. With these emerging markets, a truly global economy was created.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, trade and investment barriers have been substantially reduced through negotiations at such global forums like World Trade Organization (WTO). Whilst neo-liberal agenda becomes widely accepted as a norm in the global economic system, more and more nations have been pursuing neo-liberal economic policies such as deregulation and privatization. China is an integral part of this emerging global economic order and its contribution to the emergence and construction of a market-oriented global economy is vital. It is commonly accepted that without successful accommodation of China into the WTO, there would not possibly be a truly global trading system. With the rise of China, the world has the real global economy now.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, there are two crucial questions to be answered concerning the future of new global order. Will China overturn the current international system like rising great powers did in the past? Is the current international system capacious enough to accommodate the awakening giant? So far, China has proved that it will not fight against current international system. Because it is vital for a smooth and steady rise of China, and it is spending very positive attempts to integrate with economic, political, and military institutions of global system as well as spending significant efforts to find peaceful solutions for regional clashes, non-proliferations of WMD and other future disputes in the world. There may be a third question concerning the future of three headache points; Taiwan, Tibet and Sin-Jiang (Eastern Turkistan). It seems that intensify demands of Western world particularly of the EU and US on human rights, democratization and promotion of common values may create new challenges for Chinese government. China may be forced to give some concessions on particularly Tibet and Sin-Jiang issues in order not to create a cease in current peaceful international system that is crucial for its economic rise.

Accordingly, as China is realizing its peaceful rise step by step, US is garnering also huge benefits and bilateral cooperation expands with growing mutual relationship between the two giants. From U.S. perspective, it would be preferable for China to advance its interests within U.S.-led global governance structures rather than stay outside of them. The United States could get something in return for accommodating China in institutions such as the IMF and give it the recognition and prestige.<sup>21</sup> Even

<sup>19</sup> Yongjin Zhang, *China goes global*, (London: Foreign Policy Center, 2005) p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070301faessay86203/daniel-w-drezner/new\\_world\\_order.html](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070301faessay86203/daniel-w-drezner/new_world_order.html) (14.03.2008)

with the admittance of India, the key rules of global game will be more attractive for US. Very promising cooperative relations between the EU and China should encourage US to realize more solid steps towards closer relations with China and other regional players. This will also help world public opinion to constitute a more optimistic perspective for a Global Security in 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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