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# China's Response to the "New World Order"

Captain  
Jay A. Campbell  
U. S. Navy

*Faculty Research Advisor*  
Dr. Paul Godwin



The Industrial College of the Armed Forces  
National Defense University  
Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. 20319-6000

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## ABSTRACT

As world change swept the globe over the very recent past, U.S. President George Bush described an emerging "new world order." He stated a belief that the American system should form the basis of a new international system. He further stated that the U.S. must seek to take the lead in the new order forming such an international system.

China is the largest of the very few remaining Marxist-Leninist states. As the third leg of the former world strategic triangle, China remained a challenge to U.S. foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Now that the Cold War is over, China is integral to the formulation of any new order. China's long history and cultural background differ significantly from America's. It is important that the U.S. understand, to the extent possible, how those differences will be reflected in China's response to the new world order.

A review of Sino-American relations since normalization in the early 1970's shows reform that brought China increasingly closer to the U.S. until the Tiananmen Square tragedy in June, 1989. Since then, world events such as the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, the Unification of Germany, U.S. dominance in Operation Desert Storm and the Soviet Coup have had great effect on China's leaders and the course of reform.

The future is uncertain. But the key events of the last three years may provide insight to China's likely response to the new world order as envisioned by the U.S.

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**The Industrial College of the Armed Forces  
National Defense University  
Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. 20319-6000**

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## THE DAWN OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

Over the course of the past three years the world has greatly changed. The forty year clash between East and West that characterized the Cold War has ended. Except for last bastions in China, North Korea, Viet Nam and Cuba, communism lost its grip as the confrontational foe of western democracies.

The power struggles that typified the bi-polar Cold War world are changing, if not gone forever. In the emerging world there is controversy whether, as the last remaining super power, the U.S. will become a single, dominating influence or whether a multi-polar structure will represent various regions to influence international relations. It is in this context that China seeks its future position, assesses the pronouncements of the U.S., and must respond to the challenge of a new world order.

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The President's National Security Strategy of August, 1991, articulated a generic definition for the new world order. President Bush states it "is not a fact; it is an aspiration... to build a new international system in accordance with our own values and ideals, as old patterns and certainties crumble around us." He concludes his preface by stating, "We must not only

protect our citizens and our interests, but help create a new world in which our fundamental values not only survive but flourish. We must work with others, but we must also be a leader." It is this proposition we must relate to Sino-American relations and the PRC's interpretation and response to the "new world order."

### **Key Elements of China's View of World Order**

China's foreign policies, as they have evolved over the past forty-two years, hold the key to understanding how Beijing will respond to the rapidly shifting international order in the mid- and near-term. Further, when considering future Sino-American relations, it is clear that cultural and ideological values will fashion the roles of each nation in world order. As Gerrit Gong states regarding the unification of Northeast Asia, "Neither the United States nor any other country can dictate China's social structure or value system."<sup>1</sup> In terms of human rights and forms of governance, this implies tough sledding if the U. S. should attempt to impose "our own values and ideals."

This concept is further underscored in recent articles appearing in Chinese periodicals such as the Beijing Review. An article published in August, 1991<sup>1</sup> states:

The U.S. is concerned with the spreading of American values, ideology, political and economical models in the world. Backed by military forces, it will build a new world security structure to ensure stability and control arms proliferation, eliminating practical or potential threats to the interests of the United States. To safeguard its



strategical interests, the United States, if necessary, will not hesitate to resort to force.

The implication is clear. China fears a unilateral imposition of values and national goals, coupled with the bludgeon of military force to attain them.

The cultural and historical backgrounds of the U. S. and China are markedly different. Therefore perceptions from one side of the Pacific may not closely resemble the perceptions from the other side of the Pacific. To estimate China's response to a future world order, particularly one as defined by the U.S., it is necessary to review events in China which preceded the rapidly changing world of the 1990's.

China's foreign policy goals rest firmly on the foundation of the principles of security, independence, and development. Emphasizing one or the other of these principles to meet their foreign policy goals, China has forged it's seemingly inconsistent relations with other nations with a remarkable singleness of purpose. To enhance development and security against a U.S. policy of "containment" of communism in the 1950's, China closely aligned with the Soviet Union. As the decade progressed, China perceived the emergence of a balance of power between the West and the communist bloc, felt less "threatened" by Western containment strategies and more by the USSR. Following Moscow's severance of all economic and other assistance programs in 1960, Beijing severed its close tie with the Soviets. China placed new emphasis on independence while grappling with its concern for security as a priority in foreign

affairs.

The early 1960's saw China pursue their independence, looking inward while still considering national security as the primary goal for its foreign relations. The turn inward was highlighted by the Cultural Revolution, which threatened security from within by eroding the legitimacy of the government, the party and the army. Meanwhile, the Soviets began to fortify and undertake troop build-ups on China's northern border. As the military build-ups became more apparent, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968. China perceived a shift in Soviet intentions, and considered the posture of the Soviet military on their border as an immediate external threat. It was at this time that the U.S., under the personal direction of President Nixon, sought to thaw relations with China to help mollify the involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam, and to weaken the Soviet grip on East Asia. Again, with security their primary concern, China leaned toward rapprochement with the U.S. and in November 1968, "issued a moderate foreign ministry statement calling for revived Sino-American ambassadorial talks after the new Nixon administration took power."<sup>3</sup> However, Sino-Soviet border tensions erupted into a clash in early 1969, and preoccupied with the extremis they faced in their own back yard, China canceled the talks.

Sino-Soviet border clashes increased through 1969 as the Soviet Premier, Leonid Brezhnev, expounded his policy for virtual Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. With significant Soviet

military aid and advice present in Vietnam, China may have perceived potential Soviet hegemony in Asia when Brezhnev openly implied a rationale for elimination China's nuclear capability as a threat to world peace. As a consequence, after secret negotiations between U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai in 1971, China invited President Nixon to the historic meeting of 1972. Relations with the U.S. were slow to develop after the Shanghai Communiqué, but were mutually beneficial to counter what both Beijing and Washington perceived as predatory Soviet foreign policies. Nixon had hoped that China would fill the void as the U.S. pulled out of Southeast Asia, but Vietnam collapsed so quickly the Soviets filled the gap instead. This, though, actually helped strengthen Sino-American relations, since China now saw a "two front" threat from the Soviets on both their northern and southern borders.

After the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978, China attacked Vietnam in 1979. In December of the same year the USSR invaded Afghanistan and in January 1980, the U.S. moved to "assist in the military modernization" of China. The end of the decade, then, saw China completely reverse its foreign relations with the two "super powers." The dominant thought in Beijing's national security strategy was to keep the "fingers" of Soviet aggression spread, rather than consolidated into a "fist." By aligning with the U.S., which was contesting Soviet pressures in the Middle East, Europe, Afghanistan, and Central America, Beijing reduced the concentration of a Soviet threat directed

toward China's northern border. It was a policy designed to fracture the solidity of Soviet hegemony.'

In the early years of Ronald Reagan's presidency China was affronted by the new President's policy toward Taiwan. Nonetheless, by 1982 China saw the Reagan administration take such a strong position to counter Soviet military strength that Beijing revised its foreign policy to emphasize China's independence and economic development. Sensing an implied singleness of purpose within the U.S. to counter Soviet hegemony that reduced China's need to place primary emphasis on its security concerns, Beijing began taking firm steps to build a "peaceful environment" around their border. At the 12th Party Congress in September 1982, China announced an "independent" foreign policy, and Sino-American relations cooled to an era of "normalization." In fact, the U.S. was reassessing its policy toward China during this period, asking, "do we really need China to confront the Soviets?" As a result, the U.S. made fewer overt gestures to improve relations with China.

Observing this shift, China renewed its effort to lean toward the U.S., ostensibly to help President Reagan "get re-elected" and to keep two legs of the strategic triangle solidly intact. China coupled this policy with a concerted effort to improve its association with bordering countries, intending to capitalize on emerging inroads to improve trade, technology transfer, and strengthen a weak economy. Truly, the 1980's saw

China's emphasis shift to a concern for economic development, through improved ties with Asia and the West.

Beijing's revised security policies coincided with the arrival of Premier Gorbachev's radical revision of Soviet policy in the mid and late 1980's. Detente between the U.S. and the Soviets, long dormant during the early Reagan years, had now blossomed into a virtual thaw in the cold war, complete with significant arms agreements. With the demise of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" and overtures from Gorbachev, China used its tenuous and new found foothold in normalized relations with the West to ease relations with the Soviets, who for two decades had posed the most genuine threat to China. When the Soviets lowered their military posture on China's border and the "three obstacles" to normal relations were removed by Gorbachev over the years following his 1986 speech in Vladivostok, the USSR and China "normalized" relations during the Beijing Summit of May 1989.

In the Chinese view, the two "super powers" had so weakened each other's economic base in their mutual arms race and global contest for power that they were losing their dominant influence in international politics. The leadership in Beijing envisioned a major shift in world power. A purely bi-polar world dominated by America and the USSR would necessarily evolve into a multi-polar world in which Third World countries, West Europe and Japan could play an increasingly significant and more independent role. China, as the vocal and self-appointed leader of the Third World, perceived an emerging international system in which it would

assume a more dominant position through increased economic growth and influence gained by regional leadership. Further, because the Western European countries and Japan were becoming more "independent" and their economies were growing more competitive, China believed that the U.S. would continue to lose influence as a world leader. China saw the deterioration of the Soviet economy and the requirement the U.S. had for defense burden-sharing by its allies as true indicators of the erosion of a bipolar world.

More than ever, China saw a need for a peaceful and friendly regional environment to help build their own domestic strength. China recognized how quickly Japan had grown into an international power through economic development. Moreover, China seemed to view a strong, fast rising European Community, Japan, and other newly industrialized economies as competition. Beijing was concerned that these trends might reduce Chinese hopes for a leading role in international politics in the 21st century. Consequently, China committed itself to upgrade relations with the U.S., even as it took great strides in rapprochement with the Soviets. Sino-American relations improved rapidly in this short time frame, specifically in the areas of cultural relations, technology transfer, and military exchange.

#### **Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989**

As the world watched, literally, the scene in Tiananmen

Square erupted in violence when the previously restrained armed forces opened fire on the crowds. These shots, heard and seen around the world, ripped at the fabric of Sino-American relations, belying concerted effort over the previous two years to weave a policy of trust and concern for human rights. At the same time, it created an internal atmosphere of distrust, resentment and instability within the society causing the Chinese leadership to concentrate its focus on internal affairs. Abandoned by the Western powers, China could only watch as the Berlin Wall came crashing down, Eastern Europe gained national independence from the Soviets, and the USSR and Gorbachev dissolved its own communist party.

But as has been true of China's reaction to other rapidly changing world events, they "would not stand idly by." Numerous events and actions that have taken place since June 4, 1989, may show a course China will follow and will form the basis of my estimate of their response to a new world order. I will examine the events that have transpired over the past thirty-two months and attempt to evaluate China's reactions to them. From this vantage point I intend to assess the possible courses both China and the United States may choose, as they navigate the sea of change forecast for the 1990's, to the horizon of the twenty first century.

## PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE:

### **The Effects of a Collapsing Eastern Europe**

Since the Chinese people passed the Mandate of Heaven to the Communists in 1949, the PRC served as a sounding board for the more hard-line Stalinists in Eastern Europe against Soviet reformers. Such was the case in the 1950's during Nikita Khrushchev's leadership of the USSR, and throughout the 1970's and 1980's, when Romania openly sought greatly improved relations with China. Over the past twenty years, China and Romania reached agreements in areas ranging from politics, economics, science and technology, culture, sports and international tourism. In fact, during that period, Rumanian President Ceausescu made four official visits to China to cement "full-fledged Sino-Rumanian relations." Similarly, Yugoslavia and China began to "mend fences" in 1969, and in February, 1970, Yugoslavia established full diplomatic relations and a direct shipping line to China. In 1977 Yugoslav President Tito visited China and the Peoples' Daily commented that the visit "would promote the development of the just united struggle against hegemonism waged by various peoples."

Clearly, close links were initiated with most East European countries throughout the 1980's as China opened up in a pragmatic foreign policy that emphasized economic development. The Four Modernizations (Agriculture, Industry, Science and Technology,



and National Defense) were originally conceptualized as a policy to turn China into a major economic power by the end of the twentieth century. In September 1982, then General Secretary Hu Yaobang made specific reference to reassessing relations with others in his address to the 12th Party Congress. "He pointed out that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are applicable to China's relations with all countries, including socialist countries. This gave a clear signal that China was ready to improve relations with socialist countries, though he did not specify which countries were socialist besides Romania, Yugoslavia and North Korea."

Consequently, since China had historically sought to become a primary spokesman for the Third World and a bastion for support against "hegemonism," it was natural for Romania's dictator Nicolae Ceausescu to appeal to the PRC as the reform movement began to sweep all through Eastern Europe. In the Fall of 1989 Ceausescu proposed China join in "a Marxist-Leninist bloc upholding politically correct principles." ' Beijing perceived the gesture as ideologically correct, but in light of pressures from Western countries imposed since the Tiananmen incident they backed away from any formal agreement. Pragmatically, the PRC leadership realized their relations with other nations could be undermined by any such agreement. This time frame marked a period when China may not have recognized the profound nature of events sweeping Eastern Europe. But, as events progressed and one country after the other caught the wave of reform, China

realized that rhetoric and theory would not stand up to the will and determination of the Eastern European people.

Seeing the wave of reform crash across all of Eastern Europe, China shifted emphasis to another well used position-- defense of the respect for each nation's right to its own sovereignty and choice of governance. Although a seemingly dramatic shift in position, it is consistent with previous foreign policy statements in support so-called oppressed Third World countries. Nonetheless, Beijing was intent on shoring up its regime against similar waves of political reform and to stand as a bastion of communism. On the one hand, China could openly embrace the emerging Eastern European "democracies," and on the other hand retain Beijing's legitimacy in not allowing similar reform within its borders.

China attributed the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe to three factors: growing social-democratic and bourgeois elements; subversion and intervention by the Capitalists; and Premier Gorbachev's "traitorous policies,"<sup>16</sup> which were viewed as undermining socialist governments.

China has a reputation of standing alone in the U.N. Security Council, against even the Soviet form of Communism-- which they believed had not fully championed the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. The Cultural Revolution and, indeed, the 1989 Tiananmen Square violence exemplify China's commitment to sustain the concepts of Marxism-Leninism when threatened by reform or "pollution" from within. Although perhaps a "holier

than thou" attitude pervades the PRC leadership, they steadfastly opposed capitalistic bourgeois who encourage a divisive social-democratic element from within.

Similarly, some Chinese leaders characterized capitalism (particularly citing the United States) as an evil and subversive system that consumes the best interests of the common man. Yet China does have a centuries long history of trade, invention and innovation in design. Although the PRC, under the guidance of Chairman Mao stifled the entrepreneurial nature of the population, economic reforms led by Deng Xiaoping since 1978 when China opened up more to the outside world, loosened the tight grip of the CCP on initiative and private enterprise. As John Garver states:

while maintaining an open-door policy to the West, the Chinese leadership has been very watchful for the invasion of Western ideas--the so-called "spiritual pollution"--and its perceived dreadful consequences. The Chinese leadership has repeatedly made it clear that while absorbing advanced science and technology, universally applicable ways of administration and management, and healthy cultures from countries throughout the world, including developed capitalist countries, China should reject capitalist thinking and social systems that maintain exploitation and suppression, and all the 'ugly and rotten things' of capitalism...The Chinese leadership showed a certain distaste for Solidarity (in Poland) lest a comparable independent trade union might emerge in China.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusions drawn by the Chinese leadership on the reasons for the demise of Eastern European Communism reinforce, more than ever, the position of the aging leadership of the CCP--that the Chinese form of socialism and Marxism will prevail through integration of reform into Chinese socialism, to become a leading influence in world affairs.

The CCP leadership consider Gorbachev to be a traitor to Communism and to what was the Soviet Union. They contend that he sold-out the Eastern European countries through his desire to improve relations with the United States. Because the U.S. stated that the biggest impediment to further improved relations with the Soviets was their dominance and enforced rule over Eastern Europe, Gorbachev felt committed to encourage "glasnost" in the Warsaw Pact as well as in the USSR. When the Berlin Wall came tumbling down and political reform spread universally throughout Europe, Gorbachev removed the final obstacle to improved relations with the U.S. and "economic integration with the West."<sup>14</sup> This perception underscored China's opinion that the demise of communism in Eastern Europe was a political result of economic policy. The current leadership in Beijing, though intent to keep the door open for purposes of economic development, has placed the highest priority on China's independence, and the preservation of its existing political system.

### **The Implications of German Unification**

Within two weeks of the formal unification of East and West Germany on 3 October, 1990, the Beijing Review observed, "German unification means the end of the "Yalta pattern" of international relations in Europe...In addition, German unification will further destroy the existing security structure in Europe."<sup>15</sup>

The analysis included quotations from other Western and European countries' heads of states for a consensus that the unification promised a chance for a more stable Europe and world. Further quoting German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the article noted that "he reiterated that his country will respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of European countries and makes no territorial claims to any other countries."<sup>14</sup> From a security standpoint, China did not find an immediate threat in the unification.

However, the implications of a united Germany as a major economic power are not lost on the Beijing leadership. For them, the unification signals an opportunity for the emergence of a dominant force within the European Community (EC) that will effect the balance of world politics and power. Numerous other articles have appeared in Chinese media reflecting concern of both scholars and the leadership that the turbulence created by the economic imbalance of the East and West German territories will cause internal pressures for the next five to ten years. This internal dilemma may cause Germany to take a more independent position in the EC. Although China does not predict any disruption of harmony "previously predicted for the establishment of a single European market, scheduled for the end of 1992..." an observation points out that "the subsequent establishment of an economic and monetary union, scheduled for 1994, will be slowed down."<sup>15</sup> The observation stems from Germany's need to pour 75-100 billion West German marks into

unemployment relief, social security, wage increases and reconstruction for the east. Citing vast differences in the economic structure of the east and west regions of Germany, China feels it may cost as much as one trillion West German marks to upgrade the economic level of the east German region to the average EC level by the turn of the century.

Further indications of China's optimistic view of German reunification can be seen in a July, 1991 Beijing Review article<sup>16</sup>. It stated that despite the huge cost of reconstructing eastern Germany, investment and trade were stimulated in western Germany. Mr. Wan opined in the article that, therefore, the EC would be more motivated to "corral" Germany within its structure, preventing any schism between a strong, unified Germany and the rest of the EC which may threaten European security. Taking the implications of this concept one step further, China observed the trend "toward regional cooperation in the world economy." This implies a justification for Beijing to continue its own program of openness (kaifang) to become a strong player in the East Asian economic region. Further, the implication may indicate that China's current leaders believe its future success in economic reform depends on continuing a policy that uses market mechanisms, while not necessarily relying solely on free market principles that would spell the end of the current regime, and lead to the instability China perceives has been created in Germany (and all "democraticized" former communist countries throughout Europe).

## **Desert Storm--Coalition and Crisis**

To what extent did the events of the Fall of 1990 and early 1991 effect China and its perception of world order? The implications of the outcome of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm had a significant impact on the outlook of the leadership in Beijing, both in regard to bilateral Sino-American relations and to their concept of the emerging international system.

As we have seen, the Chinese opened up considerably in the late 1980's, just prior to the incident in Tiananmen Square midway through 1989. Their view of a multi-polar world was vaguely optimistic, envisioning a strong and growing European Community and Japan to compete with the long standing "super powers." China assumed that as Western countries, which fell under the dominance of the U.S., gained influence and became more independent economically, the opportunity for growth and development of "third world" countries increased. Moreover, the Beijing leadership boldly assumed that as the world moved toward multi-polarity, China would become increasingly stronger through its own economic growth.

Despite the setbacks in China's foreign relations resulting from Tiananmen, Premier Li Peng submitted an evaluation of the international situation as "positive," although somewhat pessimistic, to the Third Session of the Seventh National People's Congress in the summer of 1989.<sup>17</sup> After the conclusion of Desert Storm, Li Peng's report to the Fourth Session of the

Seventh National People's Congress on 25 March, 1991, was decidedly more pessimistic, stating, "hegemonism and the use of power politics continue to grow...and new power imbalance have given rise to new strife." The thinking of the Chinese leadership "formed a new mode...that is, imbalanced power--intensified troubles--aggravated turbulence, making a sharp contrast with the mode...before the war, that is, dialogue and detente--coexistence of opportunities and challenges--preservable peace."<sup>18</sup> This sentiment was conveyed to the 45th Session of the General Assembly of the U.N. where China made it clear they felt the war did not create stability, but ushered in a new era of turbulence with trouble ahead.

More specifically, China changed its opinion of the U.S. and how the United States may behave as a result of its success in the Persian Gulf crisis. First, China contended it was both a participant and observer in the conflict based on Beijing's "friendship" with both Iraq and Kuwait. This conclusion was based on China's endorsement of the U.N. economic sanctions, and tacit approval (by not exercising the veto) of the U.N. resolution to resort to "all means" to remove the Iraqi forces occupying Kuwait. Second, the Chinese felt that the passive role the Soviets played indicated it was no longer able to compete with the U.S. as an international leader (power). And, third, that the U.S. had, in fact, won the struggle for world domination and was the only super power.

These opinions were formed as China watched the U.S. use its



influence to build a coalition within the U.N. and shape the Kuwait crisis to serve its national interests. With the turn of events in Eastern Europe in 1990, and the rising cry of nationalism within the Soviet Republics themselves, the Soviet Union was unwilling to confront a strong coalition, despite the fact that Iraq was a major recipient of its foreign military sales. China saw the U.S. manipulation of the coalition to accept the use of the American military power to achieve their goal as an indication that "nowadays, the United States would have no hesitation to use force to settle any international disputes."<sup>19</sup> The Chinese took the position that the U.S. had become spring-loaded to intervene in any regional dispute, and that they were, in fact, peace breakers and trouble makers. Returning to a recurrent concern of the Chinese in security analysis, they expressed their perception of the U.S. as imposing a new hegemonism by forcing other countries to provide the money necessary for the United States to pressure and punish those it opposes.

### **Disestablishment of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Coup**

The events that occurred in the Soviet Union in late August of 1991 must have sent shock waves through the heart of Beijing. Several aspects of the attempted coup and the resultant shift of political power which led to the break up of the Soviet Union are of significant interest to China. First, the nature of the coup

itself, and how the regime and military reacted to it, indicated a population determined to achieve reform and leadership able to cope with the challenge. Yet the end result--the dissolution of the regime--would seem to be an absolutely unacceptable solution in the minds of the current leaders in Beijing. Secondly, the ability of the leaders in the Soviet Union to sustain control, despite the regional turmoil in the critical months immediately after the failed coup, served as warning that world opinion would not tolerate an oppressive repeat of Tiananmen Square.

Memory of the "peaceful" protests in Tiananmen Square and the consequent bloodshed continued to diminish world opinion of China's leadership in handling internal reform. Yet in the Soviet Union, a super power state once seen as the model for world communism, an attempted "violent" overthrow was quelled in the course of three days, more through negotiation than confrontation and bloodshed. Early assessments made in weekly journals by Chinese scholars formed a consensus that Gorbachev had, in fact, lost the Cold War after the 19th of August, and that despite the final outcome of the failed coup, glasnost also failed. But the coup posed a dilemma for China's leaders. The coup could at once be hailed "as a vindication of the 'Chinese Road' which stresses economic restructuring while putting political reform on hold." At the same time, because it failed, the coup could "hardly commend the 'Chinese Road' to others."<sup>20</sup> The Chinese leaders may have taken some comfort in Gorbachev's temporary removal (as a vindication of their hard line

ideological stand), but now face a confrontation of those that support democratic reform within China.

The most far reaching effect of collapsed Soviet power is that it "dramatically reduced (Beijing's) ability to play off Washington against Moscow."<sup>21</sup> A second, but equally significant effect was the requirement for Beijing to quickly recognize the newly independent states because "China's hold on its minority regions could be threatened by developments in breakaway Soviet Asian republics, many of which have ethnic brethren in China."<sup>22</sup> By so recognizing these breakaway republics, China began forming "a potential bridge to the new Soviet leadership line-up, including Russian republic president Boris Yeltsin whom it has repeatedly snubbed."<sup>23</sup> Taken together, China no longer has a fulcrum in Moscow as the center of one super power with which to lever against Washington as the other super power, and all the while Beijing must cement new bi-lateral ties with new, diverse and considerably unstable republics which make up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). While some old agreements in trade relations and economic ties will continue in the region, Beijing will be committed to seek new agreements with those states that move farther from the center of the CIS. Clearly, China faces a new era of diplomacy and statesmanship now that the roles of the primary players have changed.

With no diplomatic leverage, China has been left out of a direct bi-lateral equation, and can no longer use the contending goals of the super powers to gain the status of preeminence it

seeks. Even as recently as May, 1991, the former U.S. Ambassador to Beijing, James Lilley, observed that when the (then) Soviet defense minister, Dimitri Yazov, visited Beijing, he was met with a "diatribe against American hegemonism and an appeal for the Soviets and Chinese to get back together to deal with it."<sup>14</sup> Beijing appears to be adrift, seeking a rudder with which it can resume its course to legitimacy and influence.

Yet, the "official" response to the Soviet coup and what followed as expressed by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, is that it is strictly an "internal affair." Even this pronouncement was contradicted in a more hard lined statement of Chinese Vice-President Wang Zhen that seemed to be quite defensive: "In these murky and changeable times the road may be winding and the struggle fierce, but the future is bright...a key tenet is to fortify the brains of the entire party--especially top cadres--with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought."<sup>15</sup> The mixed message seems to suggest that any early elation over Gorbachev's expulsion is now replaced with caution, both in terms of impact on foreign relations and of possible continued internal democratic reform movements.

The final chapter in the 19 August, 1991 coup attempt appears to have been written on Christmas day, when Mikhail Gorbachev resigned and the Soviet Union formally broke up. Chinese leaders view the vacuum created as one the CIS may not be able to fill, and foresee the possibility that even this loose union may further break up. Primarily concerned with the Central

Asian states, China may anticipate a more integrated, unified regional power emerging; one which may change both economic and security relations on China's northwestern borders. This will require China to be even more actively engaged in the region as these largely Muslim states seek new alignments with other neighboring countries, such as Turkey or Iran, to keep their populations more stable.

### **The United Nations' Role and the World Order**

China's leaders and analysts addressed the issue of the UN role in the peace process after the conflict in the Persian Gulf. The Chinese cite the United Nations' Charter on the principle that "all members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means" and they "shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force."<sup>26</sup> This principle is repeated in essays that reiterate the Chinese reluctance to endorse the "use of any means" to expel Iraq from Kuwait. There is a sentiment that the military confrontation in Desert Storm did not resolve regional issues. Indeed, as a result of the hostilities, new conflicts arose. In other writing, China expresses a resentment of a U.S. imposing itself on the UN as the sole leader for the 21st Century. Beijing is not content to "stand idly by" for what the U.S. views as an "American century."<sup>27</sup> Taking the banner for the less developed countries (LDC), or what is now frequently referred to as the "South,"

China supports sovereign independence while opposing "external interference and global hegemony."<sup>18</sup> Viewing itself as a fellow LDC, China sees the center for the argument of a strictly peaceful UN role in its Chinese Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.<sup>19</sup>

China challenges the UN to address the new world order under China's terms of the Five Principles within its interpretation of the UN Charter. Although the "Chinese side has no intention to replace the UN Charter with the Five Principles...to implement, to the letter and spirit, the purposes and principles of the UN under the new circumstances for the benefit of establishing a new fair international order,"<sup>20</sup> an article by Li Luye and Zhang Zhenhuang in the Beijing Review, and the statements of Premier Li Peng<sup>21</sup> repeatedly cite direct reference to the Five Principles. Clearly, China considers its role in the UN crucial to prevent domination by U.S. values or ideology. As Li Luye writes, "If one has faith in his own values, he should respect the right of other countries to choose independently their own social, political and economic systems." Further, "the establishment of a new international order depends on the participation and promotion of all the sovereign states and cannot be decided by a few big powers."<sup>22</sup> China believes the UN has a major role in shaping the world of the 21st century, but solely in context of Beijing's own terms.

## CHINA'S RESPONSE: A ROLE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Steeped in history, armed with a long memory, and viewing the world from its position as the "middle kingdom," China has a much different perspective of the world of the 21st century than does the U.S. Key to their view is Chinese resistance to the imposition of external power, and Beijing's long-standing premise that independence and sovereignty are the foundation of foreign relations. Ever suspicious of foreign incursion, and on the eve of regaining control of Hong Kong while attempting to resolve the Taiwan question, the Chinese gerentocracy continues to pursue its political aims, hoping to minimize the impact of any change caused by economic reform.

The aging Party elite of the PRC wants very much to remain in control through the programs and policies that secured their power over the past forty years. They believe China has much to gain if they can assume a leadership role in both the region and the world (much as they believe they have as a permanent member of the UN Security Council). It is to China's distinct advantage to promote a world in which Beijing is quickly thrust into such a leadership role by virtue of China's geography, population and position in the UN. To counter the effects of a unilateral U.S. domination of world affairs in the remainder of this century and into the next century, the Chinese leaders profess their ideals and values--embodied in the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence--while calling "foul" on the U.S. for pursuing

ambitious policies, seeking dominance (hegemony) in a defenseless world.

China's political views were expressed by Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in his speech before the General Assembly of the UN on 25 September, 1991, where he reiterated the link China sees between the UN Charter and their Five Principles.<sup>33</sup> The essence of the message very closely follows the tenets of China's "independent" foreign policy announced at the 12th Party Congress (September, 1982). During this period, China was "opening up" to global and regional opportunity in finance and trade, and relaxed its ideological concerns by dropping "talk of an alliance against hegemonism."<sup>34</sup> This political philosophy, based on foreign and domestic policies designed to maximize economic growth and reform is consistent with the current PRC approach to China's role in the world order:

Spokesman for the third world in North/South  
confrontations.

Proponent of their own Five Principles of Peaceful  
Coexistence as the basis for a "new world order."

Demand for the UN to lead (rather than the U.S.) arms  
limitation and peace agreements.

Sovereignty (rather than either UN or U.S.  
intervention) in resolving human rights issues.

Universal distrust of western "power politics" imposing  
political and social values.

China's response to the new world order is not altogether



negative. Put in perspective, it shifts emphasis as much as possible to the philosophical and economic areas that can best benefit the PRC. The differences in Beijing's perceptions of the future world from those expressed by President Bush reflect both China's past and its goals for the future. Yet despite these differences between U.S. and Chinese perceptions of the future, China's goals do not necessarily imply there is a direct conflict with American objectives. It is implicit, however, that an independent China will not willingly subject itself to others' imposed values or ideals. Moreover, whatever form world politics takes, China will consider itself at the center as the "middle kingdom" and will seek a position of leadership. China will "not stand idly by."

#### END NOTES

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5. The "three obstacles" were: 1) Soviet presence and influence in Vietnam, 2) Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, and 3) Soviet military posture on China's northern border.
6. Ming Chen, "Sino-East European Relations," The Chinese View of the World, ed. Yufan Hao and Guocang Huan, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989) p. 272.
7. Ibid., p. 271.
8. Ibid., p. 266.
9. John W. Garver, "Chinese Foreign Policy: The Diplomacy of Damage Control," The Journal Current History, Vol 90, No557, September, 1991, p. 242.
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18.Ibid., p. 5.

19.Ibid., p. 8.

20.Lincoln Kaye, "Little to Celebrate," Far Eastern Economic Review, 29 August 1991, p. 13.

21.Lincoln Kaye, Tai Ming Cheung and Julian Baum, "Bitter Medicine, China on the Defensive After Failed Soviet Coup," Far Eastern Economic Review, 5 September, 1991, p. 10.

22.Ibid.

23.Ibid.

24.Ibid., p. 11.

25.Ibid., pp. 11-12.

26.Hu Yumin, "UN's Role in a New World Order," Beijing Review, June 10-16, 1991, p. 12.

27.Zhang Zhenhuang, "Building a Just World Order," Beijing Review, August 12-18, 1991, p. 12.

28.Ibid., p. 12.

29.Proclaimed in the mid-1950's, they are: 1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, 2) non-aggression, 3) non-interference into each other's internal affairs, 4) equality and mutual benefit, and 5) Peaceful coexistence.

30.Li Luye, "UN Role in Establishing a New World Order," Beijing Review, September 30-October 6, 1991, p. 13.

31.Li Peng, public address, May 3, 1991, Pyongyang, DPRK.

32.Li Luye, "UN Role in Establishing a New World Order," Beijing Review, September 30-October 6, 1991, pg. 15.

33.Qian Qichen, "Establishing a Just and Equitable New International Order." Beijing Review, October 7-13, 1991, pp. 11-16.

34.Robert A Scalapino, "China's Relations with Its Neighbors." The China Challenge, (New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1991) p. 65.