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HOW DOES LEADERSHIP AFFECT FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IN CHINA?

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Chinese New Diplomacy has emerged as a vector in the Asian region first, where it has achieved a considerable visibility. This paper aims to describe the model of the Chinese New Diplomacy, while analyzing its elements and profiles. Taking into account the remarkable influence and the newly centered desires, a fresh era in the Chinese foreign policy has stepped out. This work assembles some views from inside of China, making it more valuable for foreigners, who, in my opinion might be very easily biased by different state and non-state actors from abroad.

Keywords: *Asian Region, China, Chinese New Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Chinese Diplomacy, Ideology, Leadership, Administration, Public Opinion.*

CUM AFECTEAZĂ CONDUCEREA CENTRALĂ POLITICĂ EXTERNĂ ȘI CEA DECIZIONALĂ ÎN CHINA?

Noua Diplomatie Chineză a apărut ca vector relativ recent în regiunea asiatică, reușind să atingă o vizibilitate considerabilă. În această lucrare ne-am propus să descriem modelul Noii Diplomății Chineze, contextual analizând elementele și profilurile sale. Luând în considerare influența mondială remarcabilă și noile dorințe geopolitice, China a generat o eră nouă în politica externă. Sunt asamblate câteva puncte de vedere din interiorul Chinei, ceea ce face lucrarea valoroasă pentru străini, care, în opinia noastră, ar putea fi foarte ușor influențați de diferiți actori de stat atât din interior, cât și din exterior.

Cuvinte-cheie: *regiunea asiatică, China, Noua Diplomatie Chineză, politică externă, diplomație chineză, ideologie, conducere, administrație, opinie publică.*

Introduction

The last 30 years of Chinese history have been characterized by an unprecedented opening towards the outside world. It is strongly believed that economic growth is the pioneer of such a mature stand out on the global arena. Taking into account the remarkable influence and the newly centered desires, a fresh era in the Chinese foreign policy has stepped out. The conceptually innovative approaches of diplomacy and foreign policy are developed through a process of constant learning and feedback. During this course of action, new concepts such as New Development Approach, New Security Concept, New Civilization Outlook and the Harmonious World have been addressed [1]. Chinese New Diplomacy has emerged as a vector in the Asian region first, where it has achieved a considerable visibility.

This paper aims to describe the model of the Chinese New Diplomacy, while analyzing its elements and profiles. The concept will be portrayed through the players that generate Chinese Diplomacy and foreign policy on the internal level, by discussing their 'de jure' and 'de facto' power [2, p.385-472]. This work targets to assemble some views from inside of China, making it more valuable for foreigners, who, in my opinion might be very easily biased by different state and non-state actors from abroad. It will be modeled as a 'one layer deeper than usual'. Contextually, the paper will try to address the issue of continuing polarization of Chinese society when emphasizing the lust for growing independence.

One of the important aspects that are subject to analysis - is the multitude of factors that would affect the mindset of the decision makers in China, such as: ideology, education, nationalism and a predominant sense of inferiority. I tend to believe that the paper will give a brief insight on how China persistently interacts with the outside world and how and based on whom and what formulates its diplomatic and foreign policy.

General considerations about China's foreign policy

Early research on diplomacy treats China "as a unitary actor either influenced by its own tradition or communist ideology or by some rational calculation, as if China were a single individual" [3, p.240]. Hitherto, Chinese foreign policy has been repeatedly criticized by the West, especially US, for staying more of a 'free-rider' in the international community [4, p.941-958].

Since 1978, China has claimed for "peaceful development" which implies work toward harmony and internal development - with peace and external collaboration as a foreign policy aim (see Figure no.1). Therefore, the main goal of China's foreign policy was the attainment of harmony [5, p.488-507] which is defined as a mix of prosperity, peace and stability.

China's emphasis on stability, especially in its neighborhood is seen as a crucial objective for the prosperity of the Chinese civilization. Moreover, China is considered to be inward oriented and avoids external exploits, but adopting an approach that combines dialogue, discussions and negotiations to preserve its harmony [6, p.186-211].

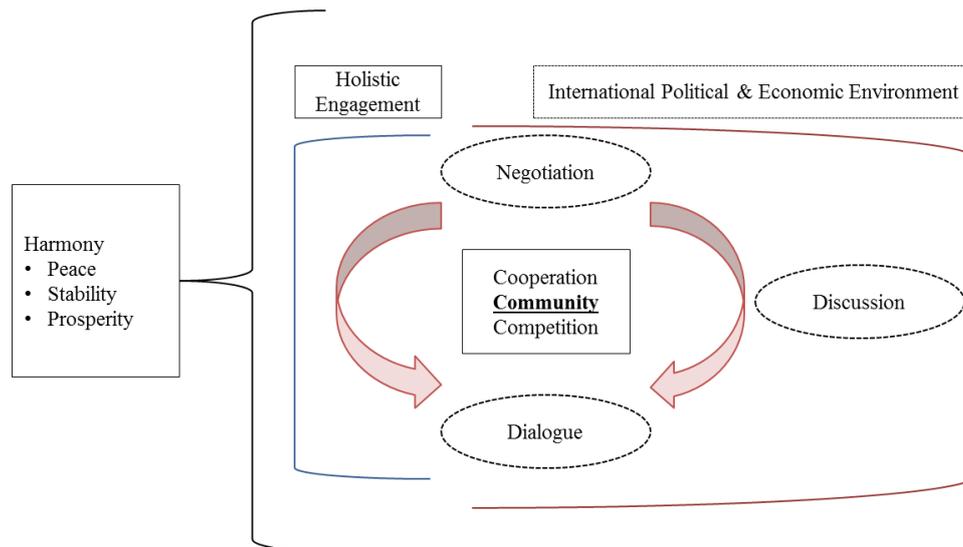


Fig.1. Harmony through Holistic Engagement: A Grounded Substantive Theory of Greater East Asian Regionalism.

Source: [7] von Feigenblatt. *Harmony through Holistic Engagement: An Emic Model of Greater East Asian Regionalism*, 2013, p.72.

Contemporary Chinese diplomacy continues to follow the theory of a state which promotes and upholds territorial integrity, sovereign equality, global harmony and anti-hegemony [8, p.75-88]. In addition, nowadays Chinese foreign policy making process is more dispersed as earlier regimes have basically centralized this area. However, this is exactly what the new leadership under Xi is trying to attain - the recentralization of the foreign policy decisions.

Finally, it's not straightforward to understand how the Chinese international agenda is prepared and who exactly is influencing this process. It is risky to name one particular authority or individual in charge of drafting the Chinese foreign policy. Definitely, China's diplomacy is better portrayed "as a combination of the foreign components of other policies" [9] (see Figure no.2).

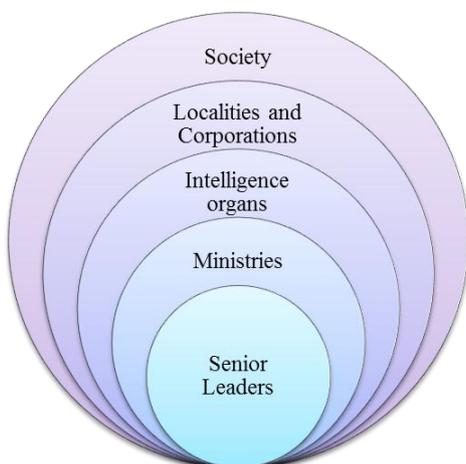


Fig.2. Actors in the foreign policy process in China.

Source: [9] Blaauw E. *The driving forces behind China's foreign policy - has China become more assertive?* 2013, p.4.

Foreign Policy Actors in China

As viewed from the internal structure perspective, the decision-making actors in China are separated between the Government of the People's Republic of China (GCPC) and the Communist Party of China (CPC). It is of crucial importance to mention that, although, the CPC has the supreme authority, some official decisions might be made by people who are not necessarily holding Governmental positions. For example, two influential foreign policy officials and members of the CPC Central Committee – Wang Jiarui (head of the Party's International Department) and Wang Huning (head of the Party's Policy Research Office) – did not hold governmental positions [10]. The ability to influence the decisions and the unquestionable authority of each individual are designated by the internal Party rank. Taking into account this model of power distribution, therefore, the supreme leader acts simultaneously as general secretary of the CPC, president of the PRC and chairman of the Central Military Commission [10]. The foreign and security policy is deliberated by the CPC leading small groups (LSGs) that are also chaired by the supreme leader. In this respect, one can undoubtedly claim that the **leadership** and **administration** are the pivotal decision making bodies in the Chinese foreign policy. However, I would assume that when analyzing China, it is important to view the structure as 'in within' rather than 'in between' the actors.

Leadership under Xi Jinping

Compared to its economic growth China's international agenda is less dynamic. Nevertheless, substantial transformations are happening in this field and diplomacy undergoes a major change. With the new leadership, Chinese foreign policy moved from saying "no" (at best 'maybe') to the global system to a risk- embracing and an optimistic 'dreaming' state in a better world, where China has its rightful place. Moreover, China envisions its leading role and admits it has to increase its obligations and involvement to develop this better global community.

Xi predecessor Hu Jintao was seen as a risk-averse caution leader, being more worried about China's domestic development [4]. The ideological campaign of a "harmonious society" under Hu, occasionally, overflowed into the foreign policy advocating for harmony on international level. However, China was reluctant to any of the US or other states' attempts to get it involved in the international affairs [4].

Under Xi Jinping administration the central domestic campaign has become the "China dream" with the aim to restore the CCP's attractiveness and legitimacy. However, this idea started during the Hu Jintao's period as Li Junru (then deputy head of the CCP Central Party School) was the first one to write about this matter. He tried to enforce the CCP's ongoing rule based on achievement and historical memory. This dream of success was seen more related to a modern China than to an individual success of a Chinese citizen. Only the communist party could make it happen since it developed a 'powerful and rich, civilized and democratic, socialist-modernizing China' [11]. Therefore, the 'China dream' was spread within the society at the moment of Xi Jinping elevation as President. One important factor to mention with this campaign was the increasing confidence within the party, connected to country's economic development, when compared to both the developing world and the developed world [12, p.35-48]. This was further transmitted into the foreign policy, China being associated with a "re-awakening lion" [13] showing a triumphalism and more assertive foreign policy [4].

One could clearly notice Xi's aspirations of becoming a stronger leader compared to his predecessors Hu Jintao (2002–2012) and Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) (Hongqiu, 2013). He did not stop at amassing more power, but expressed a great interest in the foreign affairs issues. [10] notes, that this is uncommon for the Chinese system, after Deng Xiaoping retirement, to face such a personification of the foreign policy.

Hence, Xi was credited with the launch of several innovative policy concepts worthy of note.

- Firstly, a model of a "new form of Great Power relationship" is actively promoted to redefine the Sino-American affairs since Xi met with Obama [14, p.35-48].
- Secondly, the relationship with neighboring countries is being revised and a strategy of building a community with a common destiny in the region is prominently announced [15, p.769-772; 16, p.835-848].
- However, his most innovative and eye-catching foreign policy is considered the 'one belt, one road's initiative' (OBOR) which denotes his administration's effort to build a dynamic foreign policy with long lasting outcomes [4].

OBOR is an ambitious project which envisages the construction of a cross-border infrastructure that would engage more than 60 states, over 4 billion people and financial markets that represent one third of the global

GDP [17]. The overall time- frame for this project is expected to be roughly 35 years [18]. In general, this initiative would facilitate the cooperation in the foreign policy area and would diminish the risk of conflicts in the region.

On the other hand, this project requires active collaboration and rests upon the assumption that all the involved partners would answer with the same enthusiasm. Without cooperation the projected is sorted to fail and China could be blamed and found the main responsible actor for the failure. This is exactly what makes China's foreign policy so vulnerable and cautious (apart from being optimistic) - its accomplishment lies in too many foreign hands.

Regarding this matter, the Director of the China Program at the Carter Center in the US, Yawei Lin, published inside China the following assessment:

"There is no doubt the plan is one of great vision and potential. But it is also one with large [sic] number of uncertainties and carries a high risk of failure. It is doable. But making it work will be the greatest challenge President Xi and his team will face in the coming decade."

The dynamicity of the Chinese policy under the leadership of Xi is again noticed in his multidimensional activism both in the region and on the global level. Beside the aforementioned initiatives, the establishment of New Development Bank for the BRICS nations and the launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank could be discussed as well as successful achievements and 'major diplomatic initiatives' or 'innovations in diplomatic theory and practice' for Xi presidency [19]. This activism is further expressed with his global presence at numerous summit meetings and forums. . At the work conference in 2014, Xi specifically highlighted that China's international agenda should be performed 'with a salient Chinese feature and a Chinese vision' in defending China's core national interests, while developing 'a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role of a major country' [20]. Though, he gave more speeches on this respective matter compared to previous leaders, he is still caught with the same classical aphorism and motherhood statements [21,10].

Moreover, China is facing a sustained and significant departure from Xiaoping's central principle of 'hiding one's capacity and keeping a low profile' and an obvious shift towards 'striving for achievement' [22, p.153-184]. However, Xi is taking a huge risk with his will of personifying the foreign policy decision. Even if he has public opinion on his side, it could change against him in the event of any mistakes. Moreover, his PSC members could likely pass the entire blame to him since Xi is moving from a "collective leadership" and is considerably decreasing the prospect for his policies to be checked.

Although, President Xi is the ultimate decision maker and sole coordinator, his judgment is subjective to the regime's popular support and the desire to increase it within the country.

Administration

Many of China watchers are being puzzled and confused in their try to predict its foreign relations. This is caused by the plethora of divergent voices inside the country guiding China towards different directions.

The aim of external affairs became much broader and even the context became more specific requiring specialized knowledge apart from strategically thinking. Due to that new leader can no longer draft policies based exclusively on the administrative guidelines. This is why a wide array of agencies and departments are involved into foreign policies [23, p.453-468]. Each of them realizes the small contribution they have to overall China's national interests; however when it comes to policies, each agency or department attributes itself a great importance within the whole picture. Their decisions are justified since all foreign affairs participants claim to act accordingly to China's national interests [24, p.98-107]. Amid the extension of foreign affairs the number of the organizations involved in external relations gradually increased. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) expanded to 29 departments [23, p.453-468].

At the Central and local level nearly every ministry has developed its organization in charge with international affairs and the number of personnel has exponentially increased. Moreover, these various organizations are perceived as a challenge for the long established foreign affairs structures. Jakobson and Knox [10] accurately note, "the number of official actors vying to influence the top leadership's decisions has expanded considerably ... the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is today merely one actor in the realm of foreign policy, and not necessarily the most important one." MFA is acting more as a coordinator and facilitator rather than the only implementer for China's foreign policy and researchers started to study China's "Diplomacy beyond the Foreign Ministry" [25].

A foreseeable outcome of China's openness towards the global community is a foreign policy that pursues domestic politics. However the increase in the number of official actors has affected the understanding of domestic interests since each factor of influence is acting accordingly to his departmental benefit. This is considered to be a classic example of bureaucratic process [23, p.453-468]. Many of the participants in this process have the same rank meaning that they cannot give orders one to another. So the rules MFA adopts have no authority upon other ministry since they are in power to make their rules. This is causing a tremendous competition for the favors of higher ranked institutions ending with PSG. This infighting could often be vicious, which is described by the scholars as 'a fractious, highly competitive group of institutions with sometimes overlapping jurisdiction' [26]. At any time, the officials from the Party can overrule the MFA or State Councilor decisions. In the end, PSG, with its 7 members, headed by Xi Jinping, is the pivotal foreign decision maker.

Public opinion

Public opinion is playing an increasing role in determining decision makers' spheres of actions. Wang and Xu study the Chinese external behavior from a cultural perspective, suggesting that its shapes are defined by "more sophisticated political tradition, a longer history, and a prouder civilization." Furthermore the scholars note that the Chinese traditions and culture put accent on morality over interest, restraint over provocations and self-defense over offence [27].

Diplomatic successes happen to be for the Chinese policy makers a significant mechanism to strengthen their influence at home. Finding a way to make use of the diplomatic tools in order to persuade Chinese leaders' decisions, especially in crisis time, could be difficult for foreign policymakers, but could bring important outcomes [28, p.701-733]. If applying carefully this tactic, other countries could shape Chinese leaders spheres of actions. At the same time dynamic "people-to-people" diplomacy is imperative for other states to build positive perceptions and image amongst the Chinese citizens [28, p.701-733].

Despite the ongoing changes towards a more pluralistic society, China still remains an authoritarian state, ruled by a single party. Even if China's leadership mentions citizens (expressing their opinions on the Internet, or media) as an important factor for international agenda decisions, they continuously 'seek to control' the public [24, p.98-107].

Among other influential actors we should mention the large state-owned companies, the expanding military, private companies and the Chinese wealthy elite eager to have their role in diplomacy [9]. Many of them have narrow insights about national interests or even rival intentions [10].

Media

Information and news published by official media in China undeniably persuade the angle throughout the public perception of country's foreign affairs. In regards to that one should outline the structure and the explicit authorization of their superiors required for most commentators in television, online forums and print media.

The authoritative and bureaucratic process, amplified by the myriad of actors concerned with foreign policy allows some other international participants try to pressure Chinese policies through informal channels or public opinion [24, p.98-107].

However, PLA propaganda specials are well infiltrated into this system and regularly articulate categorical opinions and inflammatory statements about China. Their aim is to encourage further the "netizens" and other commentators and to claim at the end that they have on their side the public opinion [24, p.98-107]. This suggests once again that foreign affair is perceived as a sphere of influence of the Party General Secretary - Xi Jinping; and with little regard to public opinion.

Domestic development and nationalism

As above mentioned, Chinese foreign policies are directly connected to national policies, being resource determined and reactive to specific events. A constant concern for the Chinese leaders is the domestic development and any foreign policy is analyzed through its cost and impact at the domestic level. This is again emphasizing the leading position of the domestic policies over the international affairs. When reforms are decided, domestic issues will always come first.

In addition, the Communist Party keeps on encouraging the nationalism, which is, again, influencing Chinese foreign policy. As China is progressively integrating in a globalized world and its self-confidence increases, the nationalism acquires a more positive expression. Perceived in this way, it is understandable why nationalism represents a pivotal force to general support for the regime.

Conclusion

China's foreign policy under Xi could be characterized with such buzzwords as "common destiny", "OBOR" and an attention to China's "periphery". These concepts, however, lack content and specificity, which is further legitimizing the divergent actions of the various participants from the decision making process.

Yet, all factors involved or struggling to persuade China's external affairs (government agencies, CPC organs, universities, state-owned enterprises, CPC organs, media, public and others) are subordinated to the CPC. The government fully controls the Internet while the CPC is controlling the government. There are no "independent actors" as they are named in the West [10].

Research on China's foreign affairs is still limited within China and the related participants are reluctant or afraid to unveil their experience. Moreover, scholars are restrained to the mainly positive existing analysis of the policies. This is diminishing the objectivity of the studies and possibility to grasp the realism of the Chinese foreign policies [23, p.453-468]. As the external commitment is progressively growing, the regime is putting more emphasizes on the public opinion. Certainly propagandist bodies have a primordial role in China's foreign policy [24, p.98-107].

In conclusion, China still aims to maintain the regime in power, protect the sovereignty, and boost the economic growth. Even if the economic growth is significant for the decision making process, the "China dream" starts to loom over [4, p.941-958]. Yet, China is not perceived as a diplomatic international superpower and its diplomacy is considered to be extremely passive for a state of such size and importance.

Moreover, efficient and successful foreign policies could help China to solve its internal issues. For that, China's leadership should reconsider their practices, methods and principles and to try harder to build sustainable and clear policies. In addition to that China should stop ignoring justice because economic diplomacy does not imply to ignore the human justice.

In order to be a leader on the international arena (not simply a follower), China has to redefine its reforms and to offer an example easily to be reproduced by others, based on a common accepted array of doctrines and values. The 'Chinese Dream' should further inspire other countries to follow their dreams. To give it an international version, it should focus more on the universal ideals of tolerance and openness rather than on the ideology particular only to China.

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