

*Nationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy**

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Is China increasingly a threat to the West? How is Chinese nationalism related to China's international behaviour? This study answers these questions by examining the relationship between Chinese nationalism and foreign policy since 1949. It argues that the influence of Chinese nationalism for the last half century has been consistently determined by an interaction between the need to preserve China's national independence and various means to serve this goal, in particular, the key means of development through economic openness. When foreign economic links contradicted the goal of national independence, China became isolated and aggressive. However, when openness supported the goal, China moderated its international behaviour. Thus, China's future foreign policy will depend on how the concern of seeking and preserving national independence is balanced with the concern of economic development through openness in a new international environment.

Introduction: Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy

Since 1979 China has experienced rapid economic development. While this economic achievement is well known to the world, an ever-growing

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China also causes alarm in some Western observers. They believe that China's economic power will develop into political and military power, which will pose a strong challenge to the post-Cold War international political and economic order, currently dominated by the West in general and the United States (US) in particular. Thus, there is much discussion of "the China threat" and "containing China."¹

It is important to note that the common element of these discussions is the rhetoric that the basis of "the China threat" is Chinese nationalism, which is stimulated by the country's growing economic strength, and will therefore become increasingly influential on its foreign policy. In particular, it is argued that since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, communism is no longer sufficiently strong to serve as the sole ideological basis for the Chinese communist rule, or even for holding China together. In its place, nationalism is becoming an increasingly important means of ruling. Because of this, it is argued that China in the early twenty-first century will become more like Germany and Japan in the late nineteenth century. In these cases, the countries became strong economic and military powers after a relatively short period of rapid economic growth under extreme nationalism, and eventually stepped onto the path of foreign expansion and aggression. All those who believe in "the China threat" or "containing China" tend to agree that the influence of Chinese nationalism on China's foreign policy has been increasing since 1979.

I argue two points in this study. First, that nationalism has always been a fundamental force in the making of Chinese foreign policy, not only since 1979, but from 1949. In support of this argument, I suggest that in relation to foreign policy making, there has hardly been any "restoration," "renewal," or "revival" of Chinese nationalism since 1979. It is therefore questionable whether "the China threat" is the product of rising Chinese nationalism. Second, that the continuing influence of nationalism on China's foreign policy does not mean that Chinese foreign policy has remained and will remain the same. I argue that changes in Chinese foreign policy depend on different ways of serving the ultimate goal of Chinese nationalism, which is *to seek and preserve China's national independence*. This is also the key for us to understand the future influence of Chinese nationalism on foreign policy. In particular, I argue that economic development through openness has been seen as the key means to serve the goal of Chinese nationalism since 1979, and to date this emphasis has ensured that China's international behaviour has remained quite moderate.

The above arguments will be further explained in the following

section, and the third part will present evidence. The main aim of this study is to seek to understand the relationship between nationalism and China's foreign policy, and in particular, how the interaction between the goal of Chinese nationalism, the means to reach it, and the conduct of China's foreign policy has initiated foreign policy changes. By doing this, I hope this discussion will provide not only a good understanding of the impact of Chinese nationalism on foreign policy since 1979, but also a framework for understanding the relationship between Chinese nationalism and foreign policy in the last 50 years. It should be noted that to focus on the relationship between Chinese nationalism and foreign policy is not to exclude the impact of other forces, which vary through historical periods. It is not the argument of this study that nationalism has always been the most important force determining China's foreign policy. Rather, this study argues that nationalism has had a consistent impact on foreign policy throughout the 50-year history of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy: Concepts and Focus

Nationalism is often closely associated with the nation-state. In his recent book *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, Yongnian Zheng notes, “[n]ation-state and national identity are two related aspects of nationalism.”² According to Peter Harris, nationalism in general can mean either of the following two things: “the process whereby a group or community that shares — or at least is convinced that it shares — a common history, culture, language and territory is persuaded to assert its own affairs, usually through the creation of an independent state,” or “the way that the government or other influential agents within a state already in existence, and having a sense of coherent, homogeneous identity, set about creating a strong, assertive national self-awareness.”³ Regardless which of the above definitions one uses, nationalism is closely associated to state building, which gives rise to a so-called “nation-state,” i.e. nationalism is the basis of the formation and development of the modern state.⁴ Some scholars further call this kind of pro-state-building nationalism “state nationalism.”⁵

The origin and development of Chinese nationalism is also largely associated with the formation and development of the modern Chinese state. John Fitzgerald argues that “the Chinese nation has been created and recreated in the struggle for state power, and it has ultimately been defined

by the state as a reward of victory.”⁶ The key factors that gave rise to Chinese nationalism were the repeated aggression against China by the Western powers, and their control over different parts of China since the Opium War of the 1840s. Given this history, generations of the Chinese elite came to the belief that only by building a strong China, could they fight against foreign aggression and become independent of foreign control.

This is not to deny other sources and types of Chinese nationalism. Prasenjit Duara argues that nationalism in China is not simply a modern phenomenon. Under long periods of foreign rule in the twelfth century, segments of the scholar class in China had already begun to advocate a notion of the Han community and fatherland (*guo*), bringing together state and people.⁷ James Townsend rejects the idea of a complete transformation from Chinese culturalism to nationalism in modern times. He argues that there are other types of nationalism co-existing with state nationalism in China, such as ethnic nationalism in which a certain existing ethnic group strives to become an independent state.⁸ However, Townsend agrees that state nationalism has dominated official doctrine and China’s political behaviour since 1949.⁹ Instead of promoting Han nationalism, the Chinese government has been constructing the “Chinese nation” (*zhonghua minzu*), which includes all ethnic groups in China. In fact, patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi*), rather than nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*), has been the officially preferred word to define people’s national sentiments. This again links nationalism to nation-state making and building. For this reason, the discussion on Chinese nationalism in this study intends to focus on state nationalism.

In his lecture on “the revival of Chinese nationalism,” Gungwu Wang argues that Chinese nationalism has many faces, and “the most common face concerns questions of polity and stresses the recovery of sovereignty, the unification of divided territory, and national self-respect.”¹⁰ What Wang calls “the most common face” of Chinese nationalism, I call the ultimate goal of Chinese nationalism (for simplicity, I will refer to it as “the goal of nationalism”) — that is, to seek and preserve national independence. To reach this goal, the state has to protect its territorial integrity, promote its good image in the international community, and engage in economic development in order to build a strong national power. These are key state interests, and are the means to reach the goal of nationalism (I will refer to them as the “means of nationalism”). Among these means, economic development is the most important. Given the history of foreign aggression against China, the elite realized that a strong

Chinese economy was central to becoming a strong military and political power in the world.

What, then, is the relationship between Chinese nationalism and foreign policy? In order to serve the goal of nationalism, the means of nationalism need to be incorporated into practical policies. Foreign policy should therefore aim to build friendly relations with other countries, especially the developed countries, in order to obtain resources and technology for domestic economic development. Through the interaction with other countries, foreign policy can also promote a good image of China. However, foreign relations, especially those with the developed countries, can also bring inconsistency to the relationship between the means and the goal of nationalism. On the one hand, economic development is the most important means of nationalism, and foreign assistance can play a positive role in promoting development. On the other hand, poor countries such as China can become politically and economically dependent on the rich and powerful countries by receiving assistance from them and making alliances with them. Thus, there is a danger of the means contradicting the goal of nationalism. This potential contradiction is apparent in modern Chinese history, as Michael Yahuda notes:

A deep division runs through modern Chinese history between the impulse to close the doors that had been forced open by the predatory West, so as to uphold the integrity of China's cultural identity (whether defined in Confucian or communist terms), and the rational necessity to interact with the outside world in order to acquire the modern technology that alone will ensure defence against being humiliated once again by more modern armies. The first course promises to uphold a national cultural identity, but at the risk of becoming vulnerable to more powerful adversaries. The second may end vulnerability to external attack, but it risks undermining the cultural identity it was meant to uphold.¹¹

This study is on the impact of this contradiction on foreign policy making. I argue that there is both continuity and change concerning the influence of nationalism on China's foreign policy from 1949. The continuing influence of Chinese nationalism is reflected by the fact that the goal of nationalism has consistently been one of the major forces determining China's foreign policy. The changes in Chinese foreign policy have resulted from transformations of the means of nationalism from one historical period to another. Thus, to know how Chinese nationalism has affected foreign policy and especially whether the idea of "the China threat" is well founded, one should examine the interaction between the

means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy. I will discuss this interaction in three historical periods — the 1950s, the 1960s–1970s, and the 1980s–1990s. The discussion will give emphasis to economic development as the main means of Chinese nationalism, but it will also deal with other means and their impact on China's foreign policy.

Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy: Past and Present

The 1950s: China and the Soviet Union

In the summer of 1949, Mao Zedong announced the principle of new Chinese foreign policy — “leaning to one side.” China would seek an alliance with the Soviet Union and fight against the US and its Western allies. At a first look, this announcement came as little surprise since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shared the same ideology as the Soviet government, and the latter had expressed its moral support, if not direct military support, for the CCP since it was founded in 1921. However, was ideology the main factor bringing China and the Soviet Union together?

Based on newly released documents detailing negotiations between Mao and Stalin for the alliance in 1949 and 1950, Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis and Litai Xue note that:

On balance, a striking feature of Mao and Stalin *in camera* is that neither was motivated by the ideology that so characterized their public declarations of the period.... Their private communications mostly carried a message of naked military-political interests and a priority for national security.¹²

Differences between Mao and Stalin had existed long before the 1950s. The problem was partly concerned with the application of Marx-Leninist theory to China's particular situation, but it was also because Mao did not want the CCP to be a puppet of the Soviet Union. Mao was a Chinese nationalist first and foremost. Chen Jian notes “Mao's concept of revolution reflected his generation's emotional commitment to China's national liberation as well as of its longing for China to take a central position in world politics.”¹³ As early as the Yan'an period (the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s), Mao had urged those cadres and students trained in the Soviet Union to have “Chinese style and attitude.”¹⁴

Only five years before the “leaning to one side” principle was announced, Mao had quite a different idea about the future direction of the

CCP's foreign policy. In 1944, Mao told a visiting American official that "China must industrialize. This can be done — in China — only by free enterprise and with the aid of foreign capital. Chinese and American interests are correlated and similar. They fit together economically and politically. We can and must work together."¹⁵ In January 1945 Mao even expressed a desire to visit Washington, which was repeated by Zhou Enlai to an American missionary a year later. Zhou told the missionary that Mao would prefer Washington to Moscow.¹⁶ Mao also made efforts to communicate with the US just before the "leaning to one side" policy was announced. For instance, on 28 June 1949, Mao and Zhou sent a message to the US ambassador, John Stuart, inviting him to attend the Yenching University reunion in Beijing.¹⁷ Other evidence of the CCP's efforts can be found in Stuart's report to the Secretary of State after Stuart's trip to Shanghai in June 1949. He wrote:

The trip to Shanghai gave me ample evidence local CCP authorities very anxious develop international trade and make utmost use Shanghai for promoting industry, communications, production, reconstruction. To this end they especially want friendly relations with USA.¹⁸

However, the domestic politics and ideological orientation of the US made it impossible to establish a close relationship with Communist China at that time.¹⁹ The outbreak of the Korean War further pushed the US to support the Kuomintang (KMT) government in Taiwan. Given the increasingly clear bipolar international system and the urgent need for recovering from the huge destruction caused by the civil war, China ultimately chose the Soviet Union as its ally. However, the above discussion shows that the "leaning to one side" principle was not a natural outcome of ideological similarity between China and the Soviet Union. It was a strategic decision based not on shared ideology, but on consideration of how to make China economically and politically strong — i.e. a consideration of Chinese nationalism. Goncharov, Lewis and Xue note, "[f]rom Mao's point of view, his alliance with the Soviet Union would only be a first step toward establishing China's rightful position in the world."²⁰

China's decision to enter the Korean War was another example of the influence of nationalism on foreign policy. It has been argued that Chinese intervention was not an ideological commitment, but was determined by national security considerations induced by the rapid advance of American and South Korean troops into North Korea.²¹ A Chinese researcher further points out that China's decision was not only based on a perception of the

security threat from the US, but also on the expectation of a strong Soviet presence in northeast China.²² According to him, Mao came to the belief that the take-over of North Korea by the US would give the Soviet Union an excuse to send its troops into the northeast in the name of defending China, which would seriously compromise China's sovereignty and its economic development (the northeast region was the largest industrial area in China at that time). This suggests that Mao's decision to go into the Korean War was based on a consideration of preserving national independence (which was potentially threatened by both the US and the Soviet Union). Clearly, Chinese nationalism played a dominant role in the decision to enter the Korean War.

So the "leaning to one side" principle was the product of practical considerations based on Chinese nationalism, and it did bring economic benefits to China in the 1950s. According to Klaus Knorr,²³ China received over US\$1.3 billion of Soviet aid in the 1950s. From 1952 to 1957, the Soviet Union delivered 166 complete industrial plants, and committed itself to 125 more plants for the period 1958–1962. Between 1950 and 1960, about 10,800 Soviet and 1,500 East European technicians went to China to help its economic development, and 8,000 Chinese skilled workers and engineers and 7,000 Chinese students were sent to the Soviet Union. China also received a large amount of military aid. Before the Korean War, the Soviet Union had already committed itself to the building up of China's air and naval capabilities, which were required to attack Taiwan in 1951.²⁴ During and after the war, the Soviet military support continued and met most of China's demands.²⁵

Although the alliance between China and the Soviet Union strengthened China's national power, which was important to the realization of the goal of Chinese nationalism, towards the end of the 1950s it became increasingly contradictory to that goal, and the contradiction eventually led to the break-up of the Sino-Soviet relationship in the early 1960s. In the eyes of Chinese leaders, towards the end of the 1950s, the alliance between China and the Soviet Union gave rise to a series of "unreasonable demands" which threatened China's national independence. Those demands included:

The permanent stationing of Soviet forces in Luda (Dairen and Port Arthur) in the northeast (Manchuria); the establishment of a joint Pacific fleet under the Soviet command; ... [and] establishment of a powerful longwave radio station for naval communication in China under Soviet control...²⁶

However, beyond those “unreasonable demands,” there was a deeper concern on the Chinese side about its economic relations with the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, the Soviet Union provided strong support for China’s economic development in the 1950s. However, this gradually gave rise to anxiety about increasing economic dependence on the Soviet Union. Mao believed that without economic independence, there could never be complete national independence.²⁷ He therefore began to advocate an economic strategy of “self-reliance,” i.e. relying on domestic resources to promote economic development. Steven Goldstein argues that from the mid-1950s, the Chinese leaders began to re-consider the applicability of the Soviet development model in China’s context. In addition, they later realized that because the two countries shared the same ideology, it was relatively easy for the Soviet model and policies to penetrate China.²⁸

Chinese leaders felt that the increasing economic dependence of China on the Soviet Union and the “unreasonable demands” were threatening national independence. Although China’s economy needed more technology transfers and aid from the Soviet Union, especially when it suffered severe setbacks from 1959 to 1962, China was apparently unwilling to trade its national independence for foreign economic support. The self-reliance strategy was the product of the consideration of protecting China’s national independence, i.e. preserving the goal of Chinese nationalism. Although the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s was also caused by their ideological and political differences, the issue of Chinese nationalism was crucial.

The Sino-Soviet alliance was the main feature of China’s foreign policy in the 1950s. To summarize Sino-Soviet relations in this period, one cannot ignore the impact of Chinese nationalism on foreign policy. Due to the international and domestic situation of the early 1950s, China became an ally of the Soviet Union, and the latter became the main foreign support for China’s economic development. However, as China’s economy became more influenced by the Soviet development model and economic aid, the Chinese leaders came to believe that, as a means of nationalism, economic development based on Soviet support was inconsistent with the goal of Chinese nationalism — the goal of promoting and preserving national independence. The series of “unreasonable demands” from the Soviets towards the end of the 1950s further deepened the concern of the Chinese leadership, and eventually led to a great transformation in the making of Chinese domestic and foreign policies. This gave rise to the economic strategy of self-reliance and an anti-Soviet foreign policy. Thus,

Chinese nationalism played a fundamental role in transforming China's domestic and foreign policies in the early 1960s.

The 1960s and 1970s: China and the Third World

If Chinese foreign policy was pro-Soviet in the 1950s, it became anti-Soviet and anti-American and pro-Third World in the 1960s and 1970s. For most of the two decades, the US continued to regard the KMT government in Taiwan as the sole legal representative of the whole of China, and also continued its hostility towards Communist China. Thus, China's foreign policy towards the US did not change significantly during the 1960s and 1970s (though the hostility between the two began to decline from the early 1970s, as discussed in the next section). Meanwhile, China's foreign policy changed from pro-Soviet to anti-Soviet in the early 1960s.

China became isolated internationally because of its opposition to US and Soviet hegemony. This gave rise to a strong effort by China to develop foreign relations with Third World countries, which became the key feature of Chinese foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s. The beginning of the full effort was the visit of Premier Zhou Enlai to several newly independent African countries in 1963. From then on, China provided strong political and economic support to many developing countries, establishing and then consolidating its relations with the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s. The relationships were strengthened by China's firm identification with the Third World. In 1973, Mao told the visiting Malian President Moussa Traore "we all belong to the Third World, we are developing countries."²⁹ In 1974, he went further and put forward a theory of Three Worlds, arguing that the Soviet Union and the US formed the first world, their allies belonged to the second world, and China and other developing countries were in the Third World.

From the perspective of Chinese nationalism, developing relationships with the Third World served the goal of promoting and preserving national independence. As discussed in the introductory section, although economic development is the most important means of obtaining the goal of nationalism, there are also other ways. Given China's opposition to Soviet and US hegemony, developing and consolidating its relationship with the Third World was essential to China's image in the international community and to its efforts to break out of its international isolation. This served China's goal of promoting and preserving its national independence. The best test case for the impact of Chinese nationalism on foreign policy-

making in this period is China's aid policy, on which the rest of this section will concentrate.

It is a common belief that China's aid to the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s was determined by its belief in and practice of internationalism — the unselfish concern for other poor countries. The main reason for this argument is the huge gap between the large amount of aid China gave to the Third World and its own underdeveloped economy. By 1980, China had given aid to more than 70 countries on five continents. This aid totalled US\$9 billion — by far the largest amount given by any non-OPEC developing country donor.³⁰ In 1972, China surpassed the Soviet Union as a donor of economic aid, given that China's total GNP was only 28% of the Soviet Union's.³¹ In the same year, China sent over 22,000 technicians abroad — more than the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries combined.³²

China also gave aid on generous terms. Much of China's foreign assistance was in the form of gifts. The rest were low interest or non-interest provision loans with long-term repayment conditions. Very little Chinese aid was comprised of loans at standard interest rates, and none were given at higher than normal interest rates. Before 1979, grants made up between 70% and 80% of total aid from China. This was one of the highest grant ratios among international donors, matched only by Canada and Sweden, with the US next at 69%, Switzerland and the UK at 60%, and the Soviet Union at 52%. Other communist countries followed with significantly lower figures.³³ Moreover, most of the nations which were recipients of Chinese aid had a higher standard of living than the donor nation!³⁴ A commentator wrote that "China is a poor and backward country. However, it is the only poor country in the world that is not receiving aid but rather has an extensive aid program itself."³⁵

For many people, it was inconceivable that China had such an extensive and generous aid programme without solid economic foundations. Up to the mid-1970s, China belonged to the lower one-third of the world's nations in terms of the usual indicators of economic development. Its GNP per capita registered only one-fifteenth of that of Japan and one-fortieth of that of the US. Its economic growth rate, measured in increases in gross national product, was less than the world's average.³⁶ No wonder Knorr wrote that "China is becoming an important donor of aid, but little is known of her motives for doing so."³⁷ A common belief is that China's foreign aid in the 1960s and 1970s did not aim to serve its own national interests, but to provide unselfish support to other developing countries and

that it reflected the idealism and internationalism of the Chinese leaders at that time.

A careful analysis of China's foreign aid in this period shows that it not only had specific security objectives, but also largely reflected the interaction between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy. First, China's national security concerns can explain a significant part of the aid — military aid was about 27% of the total.³⁸ Although this is a considerably lower proportion compared to military aid given by the Soviet Union or the US, it was highly concentrated. Among all China's aid recipients up to 1975, North Korea, North Vietnam and Pakistan were the three largest, and most aid they received was military.³⁹ Clearly, this reflects China's responses to the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the threat of India along its south-western border.

Second, the distribution of China's foreign aid across time basically fits the change of its foreign policy from pro-Soviet Union in the 1950s to anti-Soviet Union, anti-US and pro-Third World in the 1960s and 1970s. While China's aid increased between 1961 and 1969, before 1961 and after 1981 relatively lower amounts of aid were given. It reached its peak between 1970 and 1975, and then declined from 1976 to 1980.⁴⁰ These patterns of change can be explained by changes in China's foreign policy. Between 1949 and 1960, China was a member of the Soviet bloc, its geopolitical interests were closely related to the Soviet Union's, and the US was their common enemy. In this period, China directed most of its aid to communist countries to strengthen bloc unity. With a strong country on its side, China's aid level was generally low.⁴¹

The Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s changed all this. From that point on, China had to fight on two fronts. Given the situation, the Chinese leaders came to the belief that the Third World countries could be regarded as its allies and that this would enhance its strategic position in the world. So between 1961 and 1969, China increased its foreign aid to developing countries. Between 1970 and 1975, China further increased its aid, and this was directly related to China's efforts to join the United Nations (UN). In 1970, a year before the UN voted on the issue of China's membership, the aid nearly matched its total official aid to non-Communist countries up to that time and amounted to nearly 65% of the total communist bloc aid to underdeveloped countries.⁴² After the mid-1970s, as China's geopolitical interests gradually shifted to the formation of an alliance with the West (as detailed in the next section), its foreign aid to developing countries declined significantly.

Third, the distribution of China's foreign aid across countries shows that the main aim of the Chinese government was to build a good image in the international community. Among the 55 African and Latin American countries that China aided between 1960 and 1979, about 30 were only aided once, and 15 only twice.⁴³ Clearly, this aid tended to be more symbolic — giving aid to a country once or twice could not be of great assistance. Instead, based on very limited resources, China tried to maximize the dispersion of its aid in terms of the number of aid recipients, in order to build the image of a strong and friendly China. Given China's isolation in the 1960s and 1970s, this image building through aid became a particular means of promoting and preserving China's national independence.

Apart from the dispersion across countries, Chinese aid also tended to concentrate on certain projects, especially construction projects. For example, the Tanzania-Zambia railway cost China more than US\$455 million, which constituted almost one-fifth of China's economic aid to Africa and more than 10% of China's total aid to the Third World between 1956 and 1977.⁴⁴ Up to 1976, construction projects, including building roads, railways, ports, factories, sport stadiums, conference halls and so on made up 67% of China's economic aid programmes in terms of the number of contracts.⁴⁵ In the first half of the 1970s, China took on several ambitious prestige projects, including not only the Tanzania-Zambia railway, but also the road project in Somalia and the deep-water harbour in Mauritania. Projects such as factories, roads, and port facilities, which come quickly into operation, are highly visible and can therefore result in a good deal of publicity.⁴⁶ Since the building of a good image must include publicity, it is no surprise that China's aid programme tended to concentrate on such construction projects.

China's image building gave particular emphasis to the image of China as a strong power. For example, in 1972 China gave US\$45 million of aid to Malta. Wolfgang Bartke argues that from China's point of view, Malta's need demonstrated a failure of the European countries, which five decades previously had kept China in a semi-colonial state.⁴⁷ Similarly, China chose to build the Tanzania-Zambia railway because the Soviet Union and the West had rejected the countries' request due to practical difficulties.⁴⁸ This was clearly an opportunity for China to show its ability to do what other advanced countries could not.

In summary, image building in the international community and self-reliant economic development were the two key means to obtaining the

goal of Chinese nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. As argued earlier, Chinese nationalism was directly responsible for the rise of its opposition to Soviet and US hegemony and pro-Third World principles in the early 1960s. The goal of Chinese nationalism did not change from the 1950s to the 1960s. However, in view of the Soviet threat to China's national independence, the means of nationalism transformed fundamentally from the early 1960s. Domestically, China emphasized self-reliant economic development, and internationally it relied on a strategy of promoting a powerful and friendly image in the Third World. Thus, through the interaction between the means and the goal of nationalism and the conduct of foreign policy, Chinese nationalism played a key role in shaping China's domestic and international strategies in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1980s and 1990s: China and the West

Towards the end of the 1970s, China experienced a great change in its domestic politics and foreign relations. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China stepped onto the road of economic reform. At the domestic level, the Chinese government actively reformed the central planning system, and encouraged the development of a market economy. At the international level, the government actively promoted the so-called "open-door" policy to promote and strengthen China's interaction with other countries, in particular its economic ties to the Western countries. By establishing special economic zones (SEZs) and promoting trade, the Chinese government aimed to attract foreign investment and to obtain advanced technologies from the West.

Although China took steps to develop relations with countries all over the world from the late 1970s, its relations with the West in general and with the US in particular were the main feature of China's foreign policy in this period. It is important to note that China and the US had already established contact in the early 1970s, as the product of strategic considerations on both sides. On the Chinese side, the consideration was based on an increasing Soviet threat as Sino-Soviet relations worsened towards the late 1960s. The Soviet Union placed a large number of troops along the China-Russia border, and there were even armed clashes between the two countries. All this posed a great threat to China's security. So, apart from domestic mobilization, China also actively sought to form strategic alliances with powerful countries. On the American side, as Western Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union successfully recovered from the devastation of

World War II, American power experienced a relative decline towards the end of the 1960s. Given the Vietnam War and the Soviet global challenge, the US hoped to establish a strategic relationship with China, which could bring stability to East Asia as well as balance the Soviet challenge. In 1972, Nixon's visit to China was the beginning of a new relationship between China and the West.

Although the Sino-American contact of the early 1970s provided a good precondition for the rise of the "open-door" policy at the end of the 1970s, the change in China's domestic politics and foreign relations can be better understood within the framework of the interaction between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy. As discussed earlier, from the early 1960s China engaged in self-reliant economic development. Although this economic strategy was consistent with the goal of nationalism, the 20-year experience and practice of economic development in China showed that an over-emphasis on self-reliance would lead to isolationism and economic inefficiency, which in the long-run hindered China's economic development. This self-reliance development model was therefore largely a failure. As argued earlier, economic development is the most important and basic means to promote and preserve national independence — the ultimate goal of Chinese nationalism. When China believed that the self-reliance strategy was not up to the task of obtaining the goal of nationalism, Deng and other second-generation Chinese leaders decided to change the development strategy. This gave rise to the economic reform and "open-door" policy, and to developing China's economy through promoting foreign trade and attracting foreign investment. Hu Yaobang, the General Secretary of the CCP, said in 1982:

Our modernization process should and can only aim to promote our national power. However, we should not limit ourselves to a small circle, and wrongly interpret self-reliance as isolationism. We should keep self-reliance as our basic principle, and extend our view from the domestic arena to the world — i.e. not only to mobilize what we have domestically, but also to mobilize what we can get from the outside world, which means using the strength of the outside world to overcome the weakness of our country.⁴⁹

With the change in the means of nationalism, Chinese foreign policy also began to change. If the Sino-American contact in the early 1970s was based on strategic considerations, China's relations with the US and the West since the reform have extended to many levels. The economic level

is especially important. As China's aid to other developing countries declined greatly after 1979, it received more and more assistance from the developed countries. For example, in terms of the amount of World Bank loans it received, China ranked only 70th among 125 member countries in 1981, but six years later it ranked 8th.⁵⁰ China also actively promoted trade with various countries. Between 1979 and 1992, the value of total imports to China increased from US\$20.6 billion to US\$165.6 billion, and its ranking in terms of import-flows in the world rose from 32nd to 11th.⁵¹ In 1997, China became one of the top 10 trading nations in the world. Since the mid-1980s, China has joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and at this very moment, China is just one step away from membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

China's new development strategy needed the support of a stable geopolitical environment. China's foreign policy was adjusted accordingly. First, concerning the issue of border disputes with neighbouring countries, China did its best to exercise restraint, and advocated peaceful negotiations to solve the problems. For some serious disputes, such as the one with Japan over the Diaoyu (Senkaku in Japanese) Islands, China announced that it would not seek an immediate solution in order to avoid a potential military confrontation. Second, concerning the questions of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, China also advocated peaceful solutions. For example, since the early 1980s the policy of "one country, two systems" has been promoted by the Chinese government. In contrast to China's involvement in the Korean War in the 1950s, the Sino-Indian conflict and Sino-Soviet conflict in the 1960s, and the short war against Vietnam in the late 1970s, since the early 1980s China has not engaged in direct military action against any country.

China's new development strategy also needed the support of peaceful diplomacy in general. Unlike the extreme policies adopted earlier — the policy of "leaning" towards the Soviet Union in the 1950s or the policy of isolation in the 1960s — from 1979 China developed normal relationships with various countries, and softened its attitude towards its former rivals. Before 1979, the government often organized mass rallies against a certain country or groups of countries in order to stimulate people's patriotism. After 1979, this kind of activity was drastically reduced. China has also actively participated in various kinds of international cooperation since 1979. For example, between 1949 and 1978, China signed 32 international conventions; since 1979, China has signed 144.⁵² Since the mid-1980s,

China has signed a series of agreements and conventions on international security and arms control. In recent years, China has also signed the UN conventions on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights.⁵³

Now we shall take a closer look at how China has tried to balance the means and the goal of nationalism in foreign policy making in the past two decades. For most of the 1980s, China basically maintained a stable relationship with the US and other developed countries. Although there were a few setbacks in the relationship, China was able to solve the problems in a restrained manner, and therefore keep economic development at the top of its agenda. For example, in the early 1980s, Japan increased its defence spending and changed its school textbooks to conceal its aggression against China during World War II. This gave rise to strong nationalist passions among the Chinese people and also led to a serious protest from the Chinese government. However, China did not cut off its ties with Japan. Instead, as some scholars have pointed out, the Chinese government used this opportunity to strengthen its patriotic education of the people while also forcing Japan to make political and economic concessions.⁵⁴ There were similar situations in Sino-American relations. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the US in 1978, the American Congress passed “the Taiwan Relations Act” to maintain its ties with Taiwan. This led to a strong protest from China, but Sino-American relations were not interrupted by this incident and continued to grow. In 1983, a Chinese tennis player, Hu Na, defected to Taiwan during her visit to the US. Because of this, the Chinese government withheld all sports interaction with the US for that year. However, it did not affect the participation of the Chinese team in the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984.

The new relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China’s foreign policy, formed in the late 1970s, was further consolidated during the 1980s. Michel Oksenberg called Chinese nationalism in this period “confident nationalism.”⁵⁵ The confidence of the Chinese leaders rested in their belief in strengthening the Chinese economy through the “open-door” policy while maintaining China’s national independence. Because of this confidence, extreme nationalist tendencies could also be restrained. Thus, in the late 1970s, the Chinese government adjusted the means to pursue the goal of nationalism, and this change prevented nationalism from having an extreme impact on China’s foreign policy in the 1980s.

However, the real test for the new relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy was the June 4th incident in 1989 and the great transformation of the international political system in the 1990s. After the June 4th incident, most Western countries imposed sanctions against China. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the shared Sino-American concern about the Soviet threat was no longer meaningful. This gave rise to an increasingly hostile relationship between China and the West. In this situation, the relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy faced a crisis like that of the late 1950s. As discussed earlier, a strong relationship with a powerful country may help a developing country to grow and therefore strengthen its national independence. However, it may also lead to economic and political dependence on the powerful country. This was an important reason for the break-up of the Sino-Soviet relationship. Given China's "open-door" policy and the increasingly hostile relationship between China and the US in the post-Cold War period, will this relationship deteriorate in the same way?

It is important to note that there are some key differences between the two relationships. First, China was very weak in the early 1950s, having just emerged from the destruction of the Chinese civil war and facing the challenge of the Korean War. At the international level, the Soviet Union alone offered help. So from the beginning, the Sino-Soviet relationship was not built on level ground. The Sino-American relationship is different. When this relationship began in the 1970s, China had become a significant force in international politics, and the US also saw China as a balancing power against the Soviet threat. So from the beginning, the Sino-American relationship was relatively equal.

Second, the economic ties between two centrally planned economies (the Sino-Soviet tie in the 1950s) are different from those between two market-based economies (the Sino-American tie in the 1990s). For the former, the states completely control their own economies, so it is not hard to use their economies as weapons to extend and protect their national interests. This means it was relatively easy for the Soviet Union to impose an unequal economic relationship on China, and it was also relatively easy for China to break such a relationship. However, states do not have complete control over more market-based economies. It would therefore be relatively hard for the US to impose a similar unequal economic relationship, and it would also be

relatively hard for China to break its economic ties with the US and world markets.

Third, China was in a completely different economic situation in the 1990s compared to the 1950s. The economy not only became more market-based, but experienced consistent growth for more than a decade. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD),⁵⁶ between 1980 and 1995, the average annual growth of GDP in China was 10.1%, and the average annual growth of GDP per capita was 8.6%. Both indicators ranked China number one in the world. In terms of total GDP measured on exchange rates, China had become one of the top 10 countries in the world by the early 1990s, and if the total GDP is measured on purchasing power parity, China ranked third in the world. The economic achievements of China from the early 1980s to the 1990s further strengthened China's position in its relations with the US.

As discussed in the introduction, those who believe in "the China threat" and "containing China" argue that its increasing economic strength will give rise to an extreme form of nationalism. Others argue that its increasing economic strength enhances China's confidence in its foreign relations, which should prevent Chinese nationalism from becoming extreme.⁵⁷ Regardless of which side is right, the above discussion shows that the Sino-American relationship in the 1990s is definitely different from the Sino-Soviet relationship in the 1950s. In fact, China's management of its post-1989 foreign relations seems to suggest that the new relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy did not change in the 1990s, and China therefore did not become extremely hostile to the US and the West as its economic strength increased.

Although China encountered both diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions from the West after the June 4th incident, the Chinese government continued to put economic development at the top of its agenda. During his tour of Southern China in 1992, Deng said,

We should seize the opportunity to develop our economy. The key is economic development. Now, there are some neighbouring countries and areas developing faster than we are. If we do not develop or develop, too slowly, people will raise questions once they make a comparison.⁵⁸

While the Chinese government insisted on economic development, it continued to carry out its "open-door" policy, and actively sought to improve relations with the West, even in the face of the diplomatic

isolation and economic sanctions that the West imposed. Deng argued that China should not submit to Western pressure and should insist on its own path of development, but he also argued that China should avoid a direct confrontation with the West and its foreign policy should focus on communication, rather than confrontation.⁵⁹

Since the early 1990s, China's relations with the West have been gradually normalized. However, in view of the new international political situation after the Cold War, China continued to face strong pressure from the West on issues like human rights and arms sales. In 1993, a Chinese merchant ship the "Yinhe" was searched by the US navy in the Middle East because it was suspected of carrying illegal arms. The US Congress also voted against Beijing's bid to host the Olympics in 2000 on the grounds of China's human rights violations. Faced with those problems, the Chinese government was able to exercise restraint, and continued to focus on communication with the US. Faced with more serious problems, such as the visit to the US by Lee Teng-hui (Taiwan's president) in 1995 and the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo conflict, China made strong protests, but also maintained lines of communication with the US, and even made efforts to repair the relationship later. For example, the top leaders of the two countries made successful mutual visits in 1997 and 1998.

The above discussion shows that from the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s, the interaction between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy has been consistently reflected by the practice of promoting economic development through the "open-door" policy. Although it has not always been easy for China to establish and consolidate its relationship with the West, China has been able to maintain a balance between its "open-door" policy and its consideration of national independence. This balance suggests that given the rapid growth of the Chinese economy, the impact of nationalism on China's foreign policy did not become extreme, and its foreign policy has therefore served the ultimate goal of Chinese nationalism. Jiang Zemin, the President of China, pointed out that the main aims of China's foreign policy "are to fight against hegemonism and to maintain world peace on the one hand, and to enhance international cooperation and promote common economic development on the other."⁶⁰ It was this kind of foreign policy that guaranteed China's rapid economic development, and therefore strengthened its national independence.

Conclusion: Chinese Nationalism, Foreign Policy, and Future Challenges

The interaction between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy is the focus of this study. Given the modern history of foreign aggression against China, generations of Chinese elite naturally see promoting and preserving national independence as the ultimate goal of Chinese nationalism. To obtain this goal, the Chinese state must be able to protect its territorial integrity, promote its image in the international community and strengthen its economy. Among these means of nationalism, economic development is the most important.

In the 1950s, China was the ally of the Soviet Union. The Soviet economic model and assistance provided direct support to China's economic development. However, when this economic relationship became contradictory to the goal of Chinese nationalism, China made a great adjustment to its domestic and foreign policies. This led to the domestic strategy of self-reliance and the international strategy of China's opposition to Soviet and US hegemony in the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, China actively engaged in building its relations with developing countries. I argue that nationalism played an important role in this process, even in the area of China's aid to developing countries, which is commonly regarded as a strong case for illustrating Chinese internationalism.

Towards the end of the 1970s, it became obvious that the model of self-reliance could not serve the goal of Chinese nationalism well. Again, China made a great adjustment to its domestic and foreign policies. The "open-door" policy, aiming to establish and strengthen China's economic ties with the West, became the main strategy for China's economic development. Although there have been ups and downs in China's relations with the West since the end of the 1970s, China has consistently promoted the "open-door" policy and maintained a good balance between opening to the West and addressing its concern for national independence. China's experience in the past 20 years shows that the "open-door" strategy strengthened China's national power, enhanced national self-confidence, and is therefore the best means to realize the goal of Chinese nationalism.

The interaction between Chinese nationalism and foreign policy since the late 1970s is reflected by the continuing influence of the goal of Chinese nationalism on foreign policy, and also by the change in the means of obtaining this goal. This change did not give rise to an extreme

form of nationalism in China. In fact, it has caused China to maintain a generally good relationship with the West since 1979. China so far has not shown any willingness to damage this relationship and therefore to run the risk of harming China's economic prospects. Thus, from this perspective, growing economic power and declining communism do not necessarily lead to "the China threat." Whether there is going to be a future "China threat" will again depend on the interaction between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy.

The "open-door" policy as a key developmental strategy has continued in the beginning of the new century. However, adjusting the relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy is still one of the major challenges the third generation of Chinese leaders has to face. Domestically, China's relations with the West have been facing a new test since the mid-1990s. The fact that *The China That Says No*,⁶¹ published in 1996, quickly became a bestseller signalled there were growing anti-West sentiments among the Chinese population. Massive protests in Beijing against the US in response to the Embassy bombing incident in 1999 also showed such sentiments. While the Chinese government might have encouraged those actions initially, genuine resentment against the West does exist among Chinese intellectuals and college students.⁶² As China is becoming more open both economically and politically in the new century, it is a real challenge for the government to keep intense popular nationalism under control and therefore maintain a good balance between economic openness and concern for national independence.

Internationally, the Chinese leadership are also facing new challenges in the new century. If the US missile defence plan in Asia, its arms sales to Taiwan, and the US spy plane incident in April 2001 did not signal a new Cold War, they at least suggested a much tougher US policy towards China. Although China's response to the US spy plane incident did not seem different to responses in the past, what if there are more such incidents? Whether the Chinese leadership can maintain the right balance between economic openness and its concern for national independence under mounting political pressure from the US is an open question. Furthermore, there is an issue of ethnic nationalism. State nationalism may be the dominant version of nationalism in China, but ethnic nationalist movements do exist and have support from segments of ethnic groups. If they gain support from the West, they can certainly become a strong

challenge to the balance between economic openness and China's concern for national independence. Finally, there is the Taiwan question. This involves both Sino-American relations and the goal of Chinese nationalism, and it relates directly to the relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy. How to deal with the Taiwan issue therefore directly affects this interrelationship, and so is an important challenge to the new Chinese leadership.

Another big challenge to the Chinese leadership in the twenty-first century is globalization. The "open-door" policy has made a great contribution to China's economic development and nation-state building since the end of the 1970s. However, as discussed in this study, the "open-door" policy can be inconsistent and even contradictory to the goal of promoting and preserving national independence. A strong economic tie to powerful countries can bring economic benefits at home, but can also lead to political and economic dependence on those countries. With the trend of globalization and technological advances in communication, the world of the twenty-first century will be one of increased economic interdependence among nations. At the same time, the international political system dominated by the US will continue to put pressure on China concerning issues of human rights, arms sales and trade. Given the increased economic interdependence and continuing political pressure, it is not impossible for Chinese nationalism to become radical and extreme. Thus, the new Chinese leadership needs to make more effort to adjust the relationship between China's foreign economic relations and its goal of promoting and preserving national independence.

The history of China's foreign relations since 1949 suggests that China should not avoid contact with the existing international political and economic system. Rather, it should use the system to protect and strengthen itself, and as it becomes strong, to make the system more equal and fair. However, to stay in the international system, China must continue to adjust and readjust the relationship between the means and the goal of Chinese nationalism and the conduct of China's foreign policy, in order to match its growing economic and political power. At the same time, China should adjust its understanding of the goal of promoting and preserving national independence, in order to match the political and economic trends of world development. Only by doing this will China continue its rapid economic development and become a more stabilizing force in regional and international affairs.

Notes

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